

# COME TOGETHER, RIGHT NOW?

## OREGONIANS DIVIDED ON OUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

DHM Panel July Survey Results  
August 18, 2016

Despite Oregon's recent string of true-blue policies, such as automatic voter registration and paid sick leave, it's clear from the results of a recent DHM panel survey that the state remains divided. Depending on their political persuasion, their age, and their level of education, Oregonians have strongly diverging feelings about our past, our present, and what our future should look like.

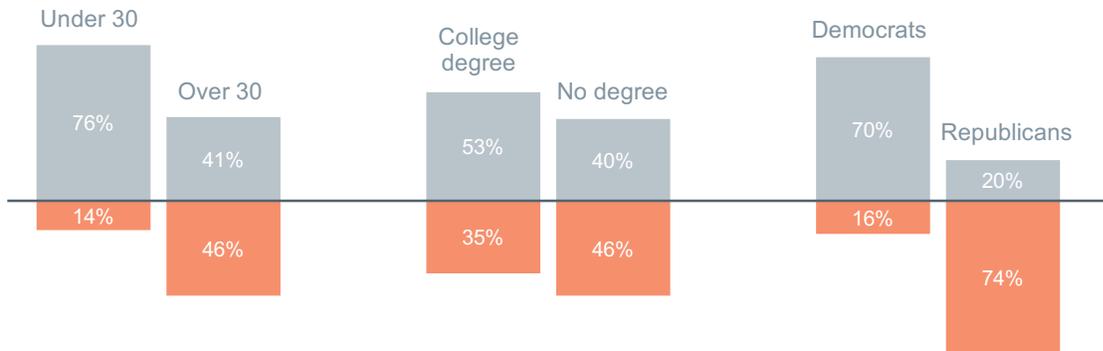
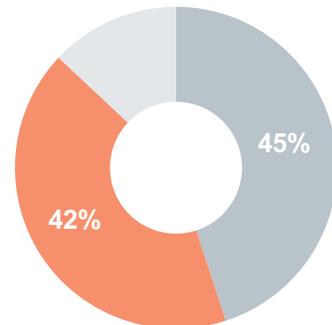
These findings come from the July 2016 fielding of our DHM Panel, which provides Northwest residents with the opportunity to weigh in on issues that affect their state, their community, and their daily lives. The survey was conducted from July 14-20, 2016 and surveyed 630 Oregon residents. The results were weighted by age, gender, area of the state, political party, and level of education to ensure a representative sample. The margin of error for this survey ranges from +/-3.9% to +/-4.1%.

### Oregonians are divided about the direction of the state.

A plurality of Oregonians say things in our state are headed in the right direction, but nearly as many think they are off on the wrong track.

*Is Oregon moving in the right direction or is it off on the wrong track?*

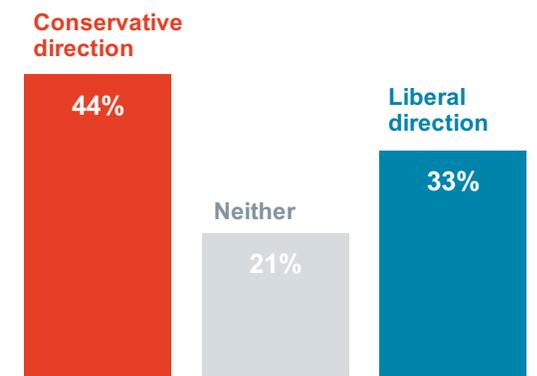
Those who are optimistic about the direction of the state tend to be younger, Democrats, and have more education. Those who are concerned about the direction the state is headed are more likely to be Republicans.



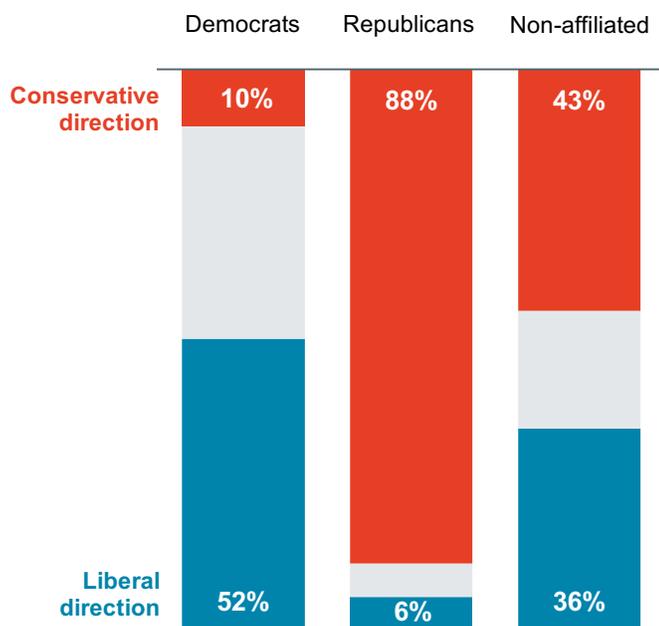
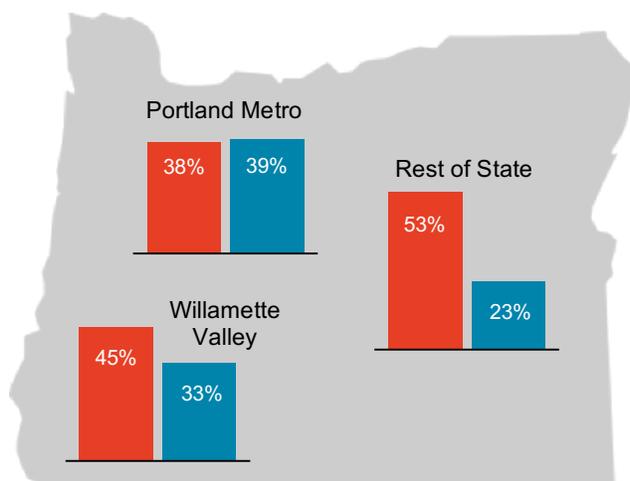
## Should the state head in a more conservative or more liberal direction under the next governor? Voters are split.

The schism between those who say things are headed in the right direction and those who say they are on the wrong track is illuminated by results found elsewhere in the survey. To dive deeper into Oregonian's views on the direction of the state, we asked whether voters would prefer Oregon's next governor—regardless of who is elected—to lead the state in a more liberal or more conservative direction.

The results show a similar divide: a plurality said that the governor should be at least somewhat more conservative, but nearly as many said that he or she should be at least somewhat more liberal. Many Oregonians indicated things were good the way they are, and said neither more conservative nor more liberal.



Tri-County residents were more likely than Oregonians from the Willamette Valley or elsewhere in the state to suggest that next governor should lead the state in a more liberal direction. On the flipside, residents outside both the Tri-County area and the Willamette Valley said they'd like to see things turn more conservative.

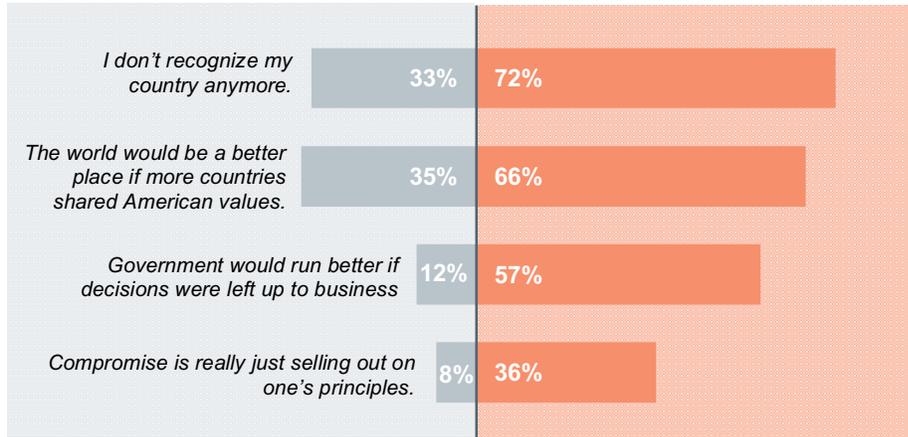


Naturally, the two parties showed preference for their own political goals, with Democrats suggesting a more liberal direction and Republicans preferring a more conservative approach. Republicans, however, were much stronger in their conviction. Non-affiliated voters were more likely to say the state should head in a more conservative direction than a more liberal one.

Those who said things are headed in the right direction aren't *quite* satisfied yet. More than half of these residents still want the state to lean more liberal in the future. And those who think the state is off on the wrong track want to pump the brakes, with four in five saying the next governor should lead the state in a more conservative direction.

## The divide between voters may be fueled by different values associated with compromise and life in the United States.

### Agreement with statements: Those who think Oregon is moving in the right direction vs. off on the wrong track



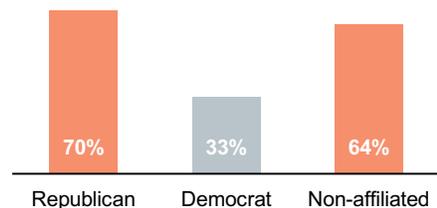
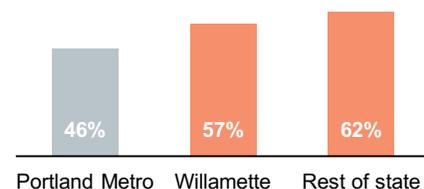
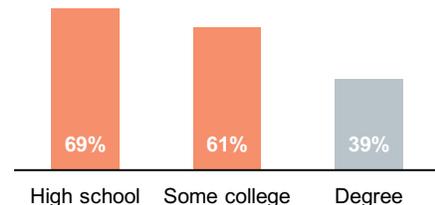
Voters were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about politics in the US. A few of the statements elicited strong agreement from voters overall, but most showcased significant differences between demographic groups.

Those who said things in Oregon are off on the wrong track were very likely to agree with the statement *I don't recognize my country anymore*. Voters from outside the Portland Metro and Willamette Valley regions were also more likely to agree, and agreement grew weaker as education levels increased. Republicans were more than twice as likely as Democrats to agree, and independent voters responded more like Republicans.

The breakdown was similar with respect to the statement *When you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead in America*. Again, voters from outside the Portland Metro and Willamette Valley areas were more likely to agree, as were those who said things are off on the wrong track. This statement also brought to light a difference by age: younger voters (18-29) were the least likely to agree with the statement, and agreement increased with age.

And then there was the issue of compromise. When asked whether *Compromise is really just selling out on one's principles*, there were notable differences. While few Democrats agreed with the statement, four in ten Republicans did, along with a healthy portion of independent voters. Agreement with this statement fell as education and income increased.

### Agreement: *I don't recognize my country anymore*



## Oregonians find common ground when it comes to frustrations about the political process.

All of this is not to say that Oregonians can't agree on any issue or value. There was broad agreement among regions and political parties that *Elected officials would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action.* Although, notably, agreement dropped as education and income increased.

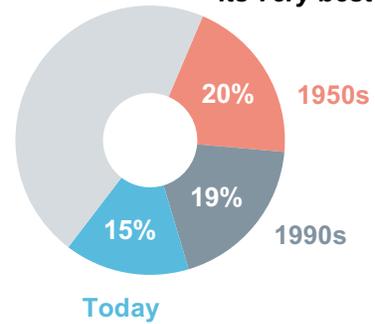


Image credits: Kjpargeter and freepik.com

## Are our best days behind us?

Whether or not Oregonians believe the state is headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track may also depend on perceptions of our country's past. To find out more, we asked voters: *Since the year 1900, in which decade was America at its very best?* Turns out Oregonians are a nostalgic bunch, as 85% said a decade other than our current one.

**In which decade was America at its very best?**



### The 1950s: Prosperity and Compromise

One in five Oregonians believes that America was at its best in the 1950s, many of them citing a time of economic growth after World War II. Open-ended comments (see *inserts*) describing why focused specifically on taxes, wealth, government investments, and a collaborative spirit in politics.

*"The top marginal tax rates were high, which encouraged reinvestment and economic growth. The economy boomed."*  
—Male, 65

The groups most likely to say America was at its best in the 1950s were voters from outside the Portland Metro or Willamette

Valley regions, Republicans, and those who said things in Oregon are off on the wrong track. Voters under 30 were the least likely to say that America's heyday was the 50s.

*"Honesty in politics, parties worked together."*  
—Male, 62

*"People had jobs, they had homes, college was affordable, retirement included pensions."*  
—Female, 38

*"The economy was strong. There were lots of jobs and people seemed to be able to get ahead."*

—Female, 46

### The 1990s: The Economy, Stupid



But the 1950s aren't the only decade for which Oregonians are feeling nostalgic: nearly as many Oregonians said the 1990s was the best for America. The reasons provided were remarkably similar when it came to economic prosperity, and voters again pointed to politicians working together.

The Oregonians that showed a preference for the 90s were more likely to be between the ages of 30 and 44 and believe the state is headed in the right direction. Interestingly, just as with the 1950s, voters from outside the Portland Metro and Willamette Valley regions were more likely to pick this decade.

*"We had a balanced budget."*  
—Male, 44

*"The country was doing well economically and compromise in both the Senate and House of Representatives was taking place on a regular basis."*  
—Male, 51



## Today: Continued Progress

Finally, there are those who think the current decade showcases the best side of America. These voters focused more on opportunity and social advancement than economics, although open-ended responses touch on both. A recurring theme was that *every decade has its issues*, and that there is always room for progress.

*My whole life, I've heard people lamenting about days gone by and how great they were, but that happens with every generation. That tell me that every generation has their positive and their negative situations, and so I'm looking forward to what is to come in our future.*  
--Female, 56

These voters were more likely to be under 30, be registered Democrats, hold college degrees, and think Oregon is heading in the right direction.

*"The past wasn't this idyllic time where everything was wonderful for everyone. The more rights everyone has, the better it is for all."*  
--Female, 44

