



SUMMARY: PUBLIC SAFETY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT 2013 OREGON VALUES & BELIEFS STUDY

Project Background: This memo presents summary points related to public safety and law enforcement from the 2013 Oregon Values & Beliefs study. The summary draws from three surveys conducted in April and May 2013. Final sample sizes were 3971 respondents for Survey #1, 1958 for Survey #2, and 1865 for Survey #3. The questionnaires and findings are available at www.oregonvaluesproject.org.

DHM Research and PolicyInteractive Research designed and conducted the surveys using telephone and online formats to aid accessibility and help obtain a representative sample. Enough interviews were completed in five geographic regions (Central, Eastern, Portland Metro, Southern, and Willamette) to permit statistically reliable analysis at the regional level. The research design used quotas and statistical weighting based on the U.S. Census to ensure representativeness within regions by age, gender, and income. The regions were then weighted proportionally by population per the U.S. Census to yield statewide results.

This study stands out from others in that, when asking questions about policy priorities with cost implications, we informed respondents that rating an item as "important" or "desirable" meant willingness to support some increase in taxes or reallocation of funds from other public services. The visual surveys used \$ symbols to emphasize the real-world implications of policy preferences.

Another distinctive feature of the study is that focal topics recur across the three surveys in a variety of question forms and contexts. High-quality research uses this "test-retest" or "triangulation" method to improve confidence in response validity.

This summary of key findings, observations and conclusions reflects the judgment of the research partners and not necessarily the views of the sponsoring organizations.

Findings

1. Asking Oregonians an open-ended question about what they want local government officials to do something about, we find that 6% of responses involve **crime/public safety**, the sixth most commonly mentioned category. **Gun control** was the most frequently volunteered public safety issue that Oregonians would like state government officials to do something about, mentioned by 4% of respondents for an overall ranking of seventh (S1.4-5 open).
2. Other public safety and law enforcement issues that Oregonians mention spontaneously for local officials to address (2% or less) include: gun laws, drug usage, overcrowded jails, increasing law enforcement resources, legalizing marijuana, bicycle safety funding, speed limit/traffic enforcement, increased fire and emergency department resources, and better police performance. (S1.4).
3. Other public safety and law enforcement issues that Oregonians mention spontaneously for state officials to address (3% or less) include: illegal



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immigration, legalize gay marriage, legalize marijuana, keeping our rights and liberties, increasing law enforcement, crime in general, enforce laws for criminals, oppose legalizing gay marriage, and death penalty (S1.5).

4. From a list of 20 public policy preferences, **public safety such as police and fire protection** ranked second highest with 79% indicating strongly or somewhat important, in response to a question where the tax implications of answering "important" were explicit (S1.7). Only **K-12 education services** rated higher.
5. Sixty-five percent (65%) of Oregonians consider **emergency and disaster preparedness** important and indicate they would support some increase or reallocation in tax dollars to increase such services (S1.6).
6. Sixty-three percent (63%) of Oregonians consider **the justice system, courts & jails** important and indicate they would support some increase or reallocation in tax dollars to increase such services (S1.11).
7. When asked to choose between criminal incarceration or rehabilitation, two in three Oregonians (66%) agree that **criminals should be rehabilitated** while one in four (27%) would rather **punish criminals by locking them up** (S1.26).
8. Respondents were asked if they thought Oregon and their community would be a better or worse place to live 10 years from now, with a follow up question explaining why. Public safety and law enforcement did not arise frequently as a reason Oregon will be a better or worse place 10 years from now (S2.2). But **crime** (12%) is the top reason people think their community will be worse off in 10 years (S2.3).

Observations and Conclusions

Oregonians highly value public safety and law enforcement, and majorities support allocating additional dollars to fund **public safety services like police and fire protection, emergency disaster and preparedness**, and the **justice system, courts and jails**. Meanwhile, **crime** is the most frequently cited reason why people think their community will be worse off 10 years from now. As for what to do about it, Oregonians prefer rehabilitation of criminals through counseling and job training over locking them up in prison by more than a 2:1 margin.