



## SUMMARY: THE ENVIRONMENT 2013 OREGON VALUES & BELIEFS STUDY

*Project Background: This memo presents summary points related to the environment 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](http://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. In questions asking what residents personally value about living in Oregon, references to the environment and issues related to the environment, such as environmental friendliness, recycling, beauty/scenery, and nature, dominate the top responses (S1.2).
2. Oregonians believe **environmental awareness** is the number one reason Oregon will be a better place to live in 10 years (24%), even ahead of a **stronger economy and economic growth** (18%) (S2.2). On the flip side, residents think **overpopulation** is the number one reason Oregon will be a worse place to live in 10 years (18%)(S2.3).
3. From a list of twenty different public services with clear implications for taxation, 74% of all Oregonians believe **protection of water and air quality** is very important or somewhat important, with 44% who believe it is very important (S1.15). Only K-12 education services and public safety rank higher.
4. Given two statements, six in 10 (57%) residents agree more with the view that **protection of the environment should be given more priority even at the risk**



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**of slowing economic growth**, compared to a third (35%) who agree more that **economic growth should be given priority even if the environment suffers to some extent** (S1.27).

5. Two thirds (67%) of all Oregonians agree (strongly or somewhat) that **stronger regulations are needed to make a polluter pay for the costs to the larger public** (S3.45).
6. Choosing between two statements, seven in 10 Oregonians (72%) agree more that **climate change requires us to change our way of life such as driving less or living simply**, while two in 10 (21%) agree more that **if climate change becomes a problem we can deal with it later** (S1.32).
7. Six in 10 Oregonians (61%) disagree (strongly or somewhat) with the statement that **science and human ingenuity will solve climate change with little need to change our way of life** (S3.47). The ratio of those who disagree strongly to agree strongly is 6:1.
8. Nearly six in 10 Oregonians (57%) agree (strongly or somewhat) that there should be **stronger government policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** compared to 22% who disagree and 19% who take a neutral position (S3.46).
9. Half of all Oregonians (50%) believe a **carbon emission tax** is strongly or somewhat desirable compared to 26% who say it is undesirable and 20% who are neutral. (S3.48).
10. Just under half of all Oregonians (48%) think a **consumption tax** is strongly or somewhat desirable (S3.49).
11. Nearly six in ten Oregonians (56%) feel that **increasing investments in public transportation** is desirable (S3.50). **Desirable** was a more frequent response than **undesirable** on this statement across all five geographic regions.
12. More than two thirds of all Oregonians (68%) believe that **tax breaks for conservation** are desirable (S3.51).

## **Observations and Conclusions**

On the whole, Oregonians value the state's natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and relatively clean air and water. They also value a good economy, but they want an approach to economic development that recognizes the importance of the state's natural environment to its quality of life.

This finding is validated through all three surveys using a number of different question styles, levels of detail, and relationships with other cultural values. When asked qualitatively what they value about Oregon (as an open response in their own words), fully 78% of the responses included environmentally positive terms, 17% referred to the friendliness of the people and Oregon's climate, and 5%

touched broadly on other topics. "Natural landscapes," "cleanness of air and water," "green landscape," "forests and mountains," and "open spaces" are the kinds of spontaneous replies we encountered again and again, demonstrating that values related to environmental quality are paramount to Oregon's citizens.

Oregonians also feel climate change is a problem requiring life style changes. In general, the majority of Oregonians support pro-environment measures and regulations, although they are less supportive of measures involving taxes.