

FAMILIARITY BREEDS COMFORT

Oregonians more familiar with, more comfortable using non-binary pronouns

DHM Panel September Survey Results
October 8, 2019

While Western culture has long articulated gender as a binary between men and women (in that order, unfortunately), there have always been people whose identities are not accounted for by this framing. In 2017, Oregon recognized non-binary and gender non-conforming people by becoming the first state to allow a third category of “X” on driver licenses and identification cards.

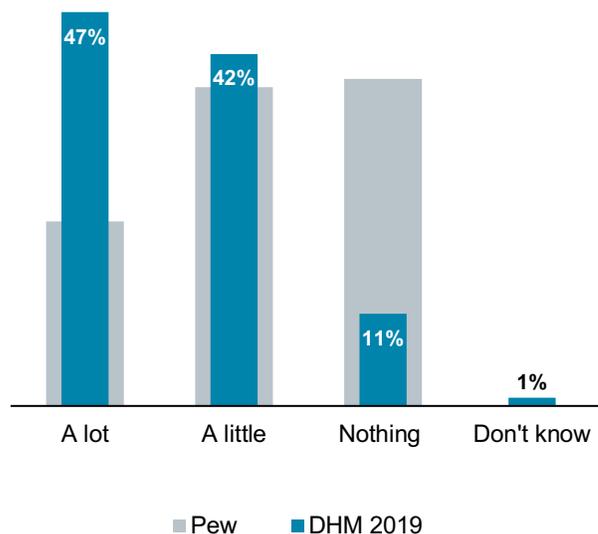
Non-binary and gender non-conforming people often prefer that others use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they” instead of “he” or “she” when referring to them. This month, we wanted to see how Oregonians compare to the rest of the country when it comes to exposure, familiarity, and comfort with the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

These findings come from the September 2019 fielding of our DHM Panel. The survey was conducted September 10–18, 2019, and surveyed 562 Oregonians. The results were weighted by age, gender, area of the state, political party, and level of education to ensure a representative sample of Oregon voters. The margin of error for this survey is $\pm 4.4\%$. National data comes from a survey done by Pew Research Center published in January 2019¹.

Oregonians are more familiar and more comfortable with the use of gender-neutral pronouns than Americans.

Oregonians (47%) are more than twice as likely to say they have heard a lot about gender-neutral and non-binary pronouns than Americans (22%). Additionally, the number of Oregonians (11%) who say they haven’t heard anything about people using gender-neutral pronouns is less than one-third that of Americans who say the same (39%). While the difference is not as stark, Oregonians (37%) are also more likely than Americans (30%) to personally know someone who prefers that others use gender-neutral pronouns when referring to them.

Oregonians (37%) are also more likely than Americans (30%) to say they would feel *very* comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns if asked to do so. While a majority of Oregonians and Americans would feel comfortable, about one-quarter of all respondents in both groups reported that they would feel very uncomfortable.



¹ <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/01/17/generation-z-looks-a-lot-like-millennials-on-key-social-and-political-issues/>



About one in four Oregonians and Americans would feel **very uncomfortable** using gender-neutral pronouns.

Familiarity may be an important factor in determining comfort. Oregonians' who know someone personally who prefers to go by gender-neutral pronouns are more likely to both have heard a lot about the preference (83%) and to feel comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns (73%).

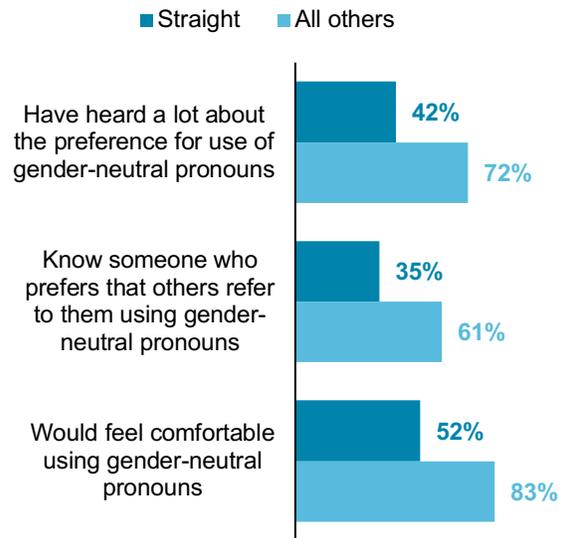
Exposure, familiarity, and comfort vary based on demographic differences of Oregonians.

Religion is an important factor in determining Oregonians' level of familiarity and comfort with the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

Atheist, agnostic, and others without religious affiliations (45%) are more likely to know someone who prefers to go by gender-neutral pronouns than their Protestant or Roman Catholic counterparts (20%). These Oregonians are also more likely to feel comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns (67% vs. 39%). In addition to religious affiliation, religious salience impacts how comfortable Oregonians feel using gender-neutral pronouns. One-third of those who say religion is important to them (33%) would feel very uncomfortable, compared to only 12% of those who say religion is not important.

Age is also an important factor, with younger Oregonians, those between the ages of 18 and 54 (53%–79%), more likely than their older counterparts (30%) to have been exposed to the preference for use of gender-neutral pronouns.

Trends in political ideology and sexual orientation can be seen across all three items: exposure, familiarity, and comfort. Those with a liberal political ideology are more likely than their counterparts to have heard a lot about (57%), to know someone who prefers (55%), and to be comfortable with (84%), the use of gender-neutral pronouns than their conservative or moderate counterparts. The same trends exist for those whose sexual orientation is something other than straight, as show in the chart.



**DHM Panel
Gender
September 2019
September 10–18, 2019
N=562; margin of error $\pm 4.4\%$.**

WARM UP

1. All things considered, do you think Oregon is headed in the right direction, or off on the wrong track?

Response category	n=562
Right direction	40%
Wrong track	45%
Don't know	15%

[New page]

GENDER

Now, we'd like to ask you a few questions about gender.

[New page]

Some people who don't identify as either a man or a woman may prefer that others use gender-neutral pronouns such as "they" instead of "he" or "she" when referring to them.

2. How much, if anything, have you heard about people preferring that others use gender-neutral pronouns such as "they" instead of "he" or "she" when referring to them?

Response category	DHM n=506	Pew
A lot	47%	22%
A little	42%	38%
Nothing at all	11%	39%
Don't know	1%	--

3. Do you personally know anyone who prefers that others use gender-neutral pronouns such as "they" instead of "he" or "she" when referring to them?*

Response category	DHM n=506	Pew n=6942
Yes	37%	30%
No	61%	70%
Don't know	2%	--

4. How comfortable, if at all, would you feel using a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to someone if they asked you to do so?

Response category	DHM n=503	Pew
Very comfortable	39%	27%
Somewhat comfortable	16%	25%
Somewhat uncomfortable	17%	24%
Very uncomfortable	24%	23%
Don't know	4%	--

5. Why? [Open]

[New page]

DEMOGRAPHICS

These last questions are for demographic purposes only. Your responses are confidential

6. What is your zip code? [Open]

7. In what year were you born?

Response category	n=560
18–34	8%
35–44	18%
45–54	37%
55–64	18%
65+	19%

8. With which of the following gender identities do you identify? Check all that apply.

Response category	n=562
Male	49%
Female	50%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	1%
Trans	1%
Other	n=3

9. With which of the following races of ethnicities do you identify? Check all that apply.

Response category	n=496
African	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic or Latino	3%
Middle Eastern or North African	n=2
Native American or Alaska Native	2%
Slavic	2%
White or Caucasian	96%
Other	4%

10. What is your party registration?

Response category	n=503
Democrat	47%
Republican	28%
Independent Party of Oregon	6%
Registered with some other party	5%
Not registered as a member of a party (non-affiliated voter)	15%
Not registered to vote	n=2

11. When it comes to politics and elections are you?

Response category	n=502
Very liberal	17%
Somewhat liberal	29%
Middle of the road	20%
Somewhat conservative	24%
Very conservative	9%

12. What is the highest level of education you have received?

Response category	n=503
Less than high school diploma	3%
High school diploma	9%
2-year degree/some college/trade	61%
4-year degree	14%
Graduate degree	13%

13. What was your total household income for 2018? Remember to include everyone and your best guess is okay.

Response category	n=496
Less than \$25,000	11%
\$25,00–\$49,999	18%
\$50,000–\$74,999	25%
\$75,000–\$99,999	15%
\$100,000–\$149,999	24%
\$150,000 or more	7%

14. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? *Select all that apply.*

Response category	n=497
Heterosexual or straight	87%
Gay or lesbian	4%
Bisexual	5%
Pansexual	3%
Asexual	n=1
Queer	2%
Something else: [Open]	1%
I prefer not to respond	2%

15. Do you identify as LGBTQIA+?

Response category	n=481
Yes	8%
No	90%
I prefer not to respond	3%

16. How important is religion in your life?

Response category	n=487
Very important	19%
Somewhat important	17%
Not too important	20%
Not at all important	41%
Don't know	n=1
I prefer not to respond	2%

17. What is your present religion, if any?

Response category	n=485
Protestant	23%
Roman Catholic	7%
Mormon	n=2
Orthodox, such as Greek or Russian Orthodox	n=1
Jewish	3%
Muslim	--
Buddhist	1%
Hindu	--
Atheist	15%
Agnostic	15%
Nothing in particular	20%
Something else: [Open]	16%
I prefer not to respond	--

[New page]

18. The questions this month were chosen based on feedback from previous respondents. Is there a topic you would like to see covered in next month's survey? **[Open]**