

American Justice: Another Partisan Issue

Political Battles Shape Viewpoints

DHM Panel January Survey Results February 28, 2020

Like many other issues, Oregonians' opinions about the justice system are growing more and more partisan. Whether we trust the FBI, Supreme Court, or our local police department, is now more closely related to how we identify politically than anything else.

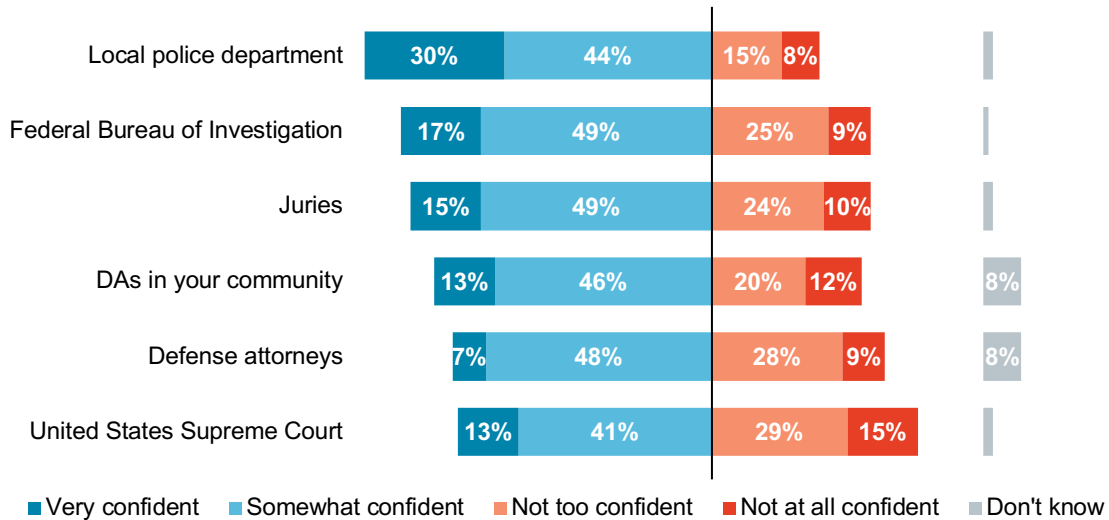
These findings come from the January 2020 fielding of our DHM Panel. The survey was conducted from January 28 to February 4, 2020 and surveyed 552 Oregonians. The results were weighted by age, gender, area of the state, political party, and level of education to ensure a representative sample of Oregon residents. The margin of error for this survey is $\pm 4.17\%$.

Oregonians are divided about several aspects of the justice system.

DHM Panelists rated their level of confidence in several aspects of the American justice system. They reported the highest levels of confidence in their local police department, with 74% saying that there are very or somewhat confident. This was followed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), with 67% confidence. However, even at these relatively high levels, between 23%–44% of Oregonians lack confidence in key law enforcement agencies. These are notably high percentages considering the level of power we grant these agencies.

Among the agencies tested, Oregonians have the least confidence in the US Supreme Court. Only a slim majority (54%) said that they are confident in the Supreme Court, with 44% not confident.

Confidence in the Justice System by Agency



Oregonians' confidence in the FBI and the Supreme Court has declined as these agencies have been tied to intense political battle.

The FBI became wrapped up in partisan politics in 2016, when many Democrats were angered by the way it handled the investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails; Republicans have frequently complained about its role investigating Russia's election interference.

The politicization of the Supreme Court goes back further than 2016, only intensifying when the Senate denied hearings for President Obama's Supreme Court nominee and when President Trump made two appointments to the Court.

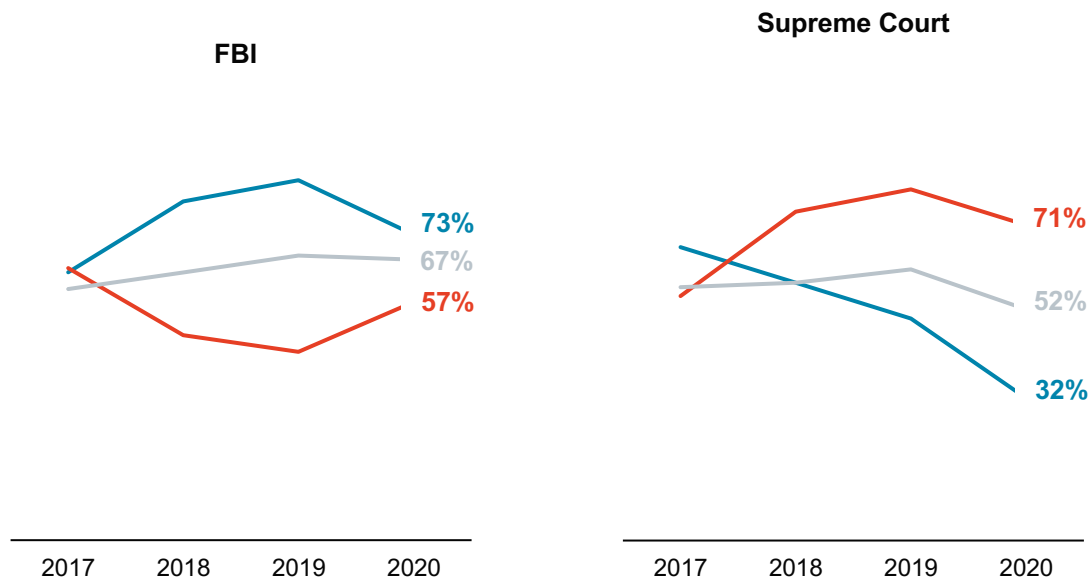
Consequently, Oregonians are now less confident in both the FBI and Supreme Court. And more significantly, Democrats and Republicans' opinions have diverged.

Since 2016, between 60%–68% of Oregonians have reported being confident in the FBI. However, what looks like relative stability masks large changes in attitudes by party. In 2017, the partisan gap was just one percentage point. By 2019, it grew to 41 points. It moderated in 2020 and now sits at 17 points, with 73% of Democrats confident compared to 57% of Republicans.

Oregonians' confidence ratings of the Supreme Court have fallen from 57% in 2017 to 52% in 2020. However, feelings among Democrats and Republicans have moved in opposite directions. Confidence has increased by 16 points among Republicans (55% to 71%) but has fallen a whopping 34 points among Democrats (66% to 32%).

Changes in confidence in the FBI and Supreme Court

Democrat / Republican / Total



DHM RESEARCH | JANUARY 2020

Confidence that our justice system is fair to all is key to a successful democracy. The diversion in confidence that Democrats and Republicans have in federal law enforcement and courts should concern us all.

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**DHM Research Panel
Criminal Justice Reform
January 2019**

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

Response category	n=552
Right direction	44%
Wrong track	43%
Don't know	13%

LEGAL SYSTEM AND JURIES

Please rate your overall confidence in the following people and organizations in the public safety and justice system.

Response category	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	Don't know
2. United States Supreme Court (n=539)	13%	41%	29%	15%	2%
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (n=539)	17%	49%	25%	9%	1%
4. District attorneys in your community (n=539)	17%	46%	17%	11%	8%
5. Defense attorneys (n=538)	9%	50%	24%	8%	9%
6. Your local police department (n=537)	32%	43%	14%	9%	2%
7. Juries (n=538)	13%	50%	24%	10%	4%

DEMOGRAPHICS

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

8. In what county do you live?

Response category	n=516
Tri-county	44%
Willamette Valley	27%
Rest of state	29%

9. What is your zip code? **[Open]**

10. In what year were you born?

Response category	n=515
18–34	9%
35–44	24%
45–54	20%
55–64	17%
65+	30%

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

Response category	n=516
Male	48%
Female	53%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	2%
Trans	2%
Other	1%

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

Response category	n=510
African	<1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic or Latino	6%
Middle Eastern or North African	1%
Native American or American Indian	5%
Slavic	1%
White or Caucasian	95%
Other	5%

13. What is your party registration?

Response category	n=516
Democrat	39%
Republican	32%
Independent Party of Oregon	4%
Registered with some other party	5%
Not registered as a member of a party (non-affiliated voter)	20%
Not registered to vote	n=1

14. When it comes to politics and elections, are you:

Response category	n=514
Very liberal	17%
Somewhat liberal	30%
Middle of the road	22%
Somewhat conservative	24%
Very conservative	8%

15. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Response category	n=511
Less than high school diploma	n=1
High school diploma	9%
2-year degree/some college/trade	48%
4-year degree	21%
Graduate degree	21%

16. What was your total household income in 2019? Remember to include everyone and your best guess is okay.

Response category	n=507
Less than \$25,000	9%
\$25,00– \$49,999	16%
\$50,000–\$74,999	23%
\$75,000–\$99,999	23%
\$100,000–\$149,999	20%
\$150,000 or more	9%