

## OREGONIANS BELIEVE HEAT IS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE Express Big Concerns about Threat of Drought and Wildfire

### DHM Panel August Survey Results September 10, 2019

Despite abnormally dry conditions in Northwest Oregon in 2019, most of the state has so far remained free of drought. And with the exception of the Milepost 97 Fire, which burned over 13,000 acres south of Roseburg, this year's wildfire season has been comparatively mild. But most Oregonians still expect the next ten years to bring hotter summers, increased drought, growing conflicts among water users, and a greater number of more severe wildfires.

These findings come from the August 2019 fielding of our DHM Panel. The survey was conducted from August 14 to 21, 2019, 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 Oregonians. The margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 4.16\%$ .

#### Oregonians believe summers will only get hotter.



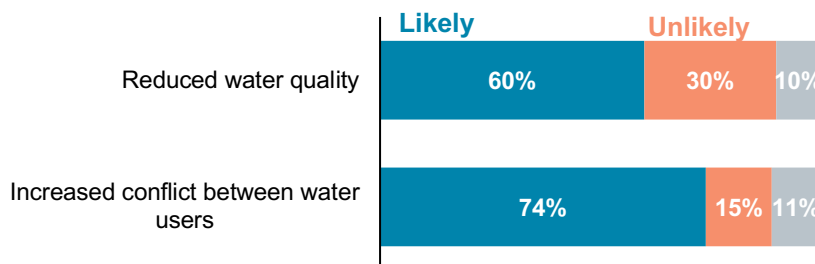
More than three-quarters (76%) of Oregonians expect hotter summers over the next ten years. These concerns about higher temperatures are shared among Oregonians across the state, but young people, Democrats, and women are the most apprehensive. Young people ages 18–24 (100%) are more likely than their older counterparts (74%) to believe summer temperatures will increase. Democrats (99%), more so than Republicans (33%), also predict hotter summers in coming years, as do women more so than men (83%, 69%).

#### Oregonians are very worried about the threat of drought and believe the problem will get worse.

While most Oregonians (72%) believe there is enough water in the state to meet current needs, their optimism begins to fade when thinking about the next decade. Less than half of Oregonians (42%) are confident there will be enough water to meet future demand.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) believe Oregon will experience increased conflict between water users during the next ten years, with a slightly smaller majority (60%) worried that water quality will also decline.

#### During the next 10 years, how likely is it that Oregon will experience:

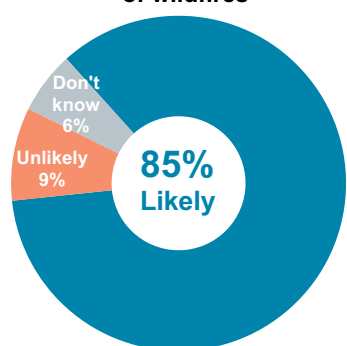


Here too, concerns about water quality are felt more strongly among Democrats (83%) than Republicans (26%), among young people ages 18–24 (88%) more than their older counterparts (58%), and among women (71%) more than men (49%).

Despite these high levels of concern, only about a third of Oregonians (31%) are confident that the state’s water agencies can effectively manage water supplies during drought.

**Oregonians believe that wildfires pose a serious threat and that such fires will become more frequent and severe.**

**Assumed likelihood of increased number and severity of wildfires**

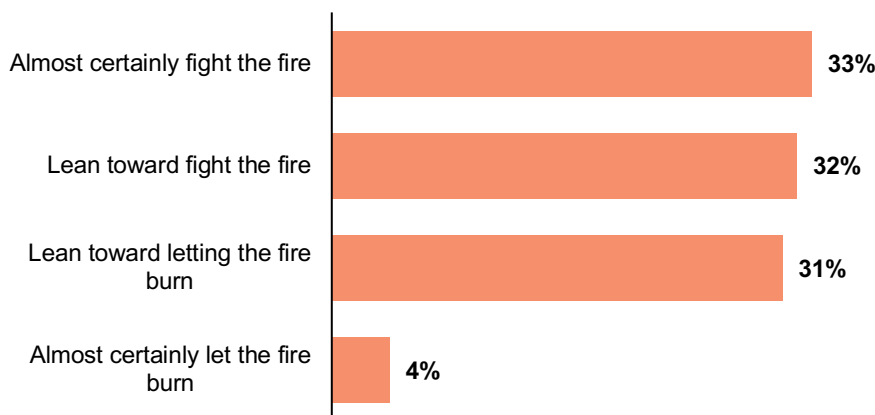


While a significant minority of residents of the Portland metro area (40%) and Willamette Valley (39%) are concerned about the threat of wildfire to their communities, these concerns are much higher among residents in the rest of the state (82%). An overwhelming majority of Oregonians (85%), however, are in agreement that the number and severity of wildfires will increase—again with young people (96%), Democrats (98%), and women (95%) the most concerned.

There’s plenty of uncertainty about land management practices to minimize the threat of severe wildfires. In general, more Oregonians believe private landholders are managing their lands well (42%) than poorly (21%) when it comes to preventing wildfires, although plenty simply don’t know (22%).

But Oregonians’ assessment of state and federal agencies is less complementary. Roughly one-third of Oregonians (34%) say that state government is performing well when it comes to land management to prevent wildfire, with only one-fifth (19%) believing that federal agencies are doing a good job.

**Oregonians express a wide range of views when it comes to how to respond to human-caused or nature-caused wildfires in undeveloped areas of the state.**



Roughly one-third (33%) of Oregonians endorse a strategy of always fighting wildfires in undeveloped areas, with nearly one-third (32%) believing authorities should lean toward fighting fires, and another third (31%) leaning toward letting fires burn. Few Oregonians think that authorities should almost certainly let fires burn (4%).

When asked to choose among the major approaches above to dealing with wildfires, older residents (44%) and Republicans (51%) prefer always fighting wildfires, Portland metro residents (39%) lean toward fighting fires, and Democrats (39%) are most likely to lean towards letting fires burn.

Most Oregonians anticipate a future with hotter summers, increased severity of drought and wildfire, and growing tensions over water resources. These concerns are widely shared across the state and are most intensely felt among Democrats, women, and young people. But while concerns about severe drought and wildfire are high, confidence in the ability of state and federal agencies to manage them are low.

**DHM Panel Drought and Wildfire  
August 2019  
August 14–21, 2019  
N=552; margin of error ±4.17%  
8 minutes**

**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=552
Right direction	45%
Wrong track	44%
Don't know	12%

**DROUGHT**

Let's now turn specifically to the topic of drought.

In general, how serious of a threat is drought to: **[Randomize]**

Response category	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not at all serious	Don't know
2. You and your family n=538	16%	26%	32%	25%	2%
3. People living in your local community n=538	17%	30%	31%	20%	2%
4. People living in Oregon n=539	34%	39%	13%	12%	2%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Response category n=539	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
5. There is enough water in Oregon to meet <u>current</u> needs	21%	51%	15%	5%	8%
6. There is enough water in Oregon to meet <u>future</u> needs	10%	31%	25%	19%	13%
7. Oregon's water agencies effectively manage water supplies during droughts	8%	32%	22%	9%	29%

Thinking about the next ten years, how likely is it that Oregon will experience: **[Randomize]**

Response category	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not too likely	Not likely at all	Don't know
8. Reduced water quality n=539	26%	34%	24%	6%	10%
9. Increased number and severity of wildfires n=539	58%	27%	8%	1%	6%
10. Increased conflict between water users n=538	48%	26%	11%	4%	11%
11. Hotter summers n=539	53%	23%	10%	5%	8%

**[New page]**

The main sources of water in Oregon are surface water and groundwater. Surface water is water that is found on the surface of the earth, such as in lakes and rivers. Groundwater is water found in underground cracks and spaces in rocks, sand, and soil, such as in aquifers and wells.

The following are proposals for how to manage groundwater used by farmers and ranchers in Oregon. Indicate how much you support or oppose each proposal. **[Randomize]**

Response category	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
12. Prohibit wells that deplete surface water n=529	20%	29%	16%	19%	17%
13. Charge groundwater users a fee to fund groundwater research n=531	12%	27%	22%	32%	7%
14. Increase subsidies for high-efficiency irrigation equipment n=528	36%	38%	5%	13%	8%
15. Require meters on all groundwater wells n=530	20%	32%	11%	29%	7%
16. Require groundwater users to submit annual usage reports to regulators n=530	27%	31%	12%	24%	7%
17. Increase state general fund budget for groundwater research to ensure future water availability n=531	29%	40%	5%	19%	7%
18. Cap total water use and create a market allowing users to buy and sell portions of their water allotments n=529	9%	20%	19%	40%	12%
19. Expand state control of water supply for future generations n=527	14%	30%	20%	28%	7%

## WILDFIRES

Now let's turn to the topic of wildfires.

In general, how serious of a threat is wildfire to: **[Randomize]**

Response category	n=528	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not at all serious	Don't know
20. You and your family		17%	25%	33%	24%	<1%
21. People living in your local community		20%	32%	29%	19%	1%
22. People living in Oregon		48%	40%	11%	1%	<1%

In general, how well do you think: **[Randomize]**

Response category	n=528	Very well	Somewhat well	Somewhat poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
23. Private landowners are managing their lands to prevent wildfire		9%	33%	21%	15%	22%
24. The state is managing state-owned lands to prevent wildfire		4%	30%	25%	27%	14%
25. The federal government is managing federally-owned lands to prevent wildfire		1%	19%	36%	34%	11%

26. If a human-caused or nature-caused wildfire started in an undeveloped area of Oregon, what should be done?

Response category	n=526
Almost certainly fight the fire	33%
Lean toward fight the fire	32%
Lean toward letting the fire burn	31%
Almost certainly let the fire burn	4%

27. **[if 1 or 2]** Why did you say that the fire should be fought? **[Record in text box]**

28. **[if 3 or 4]** Why did you say the fire should be allowed to burn? **[Record in text box]**

## EARTHQUAKES

Back in 2015 we asked Oregonians a question about earthquakes. We thought we'd return to that same question again.

29. \*Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? **[Rotate or Randomize]**:

Response category	n=526
There is a real likelihood that Oregon will experience a major earthquake in my lifetime, and I feel that the state should be making major taxpayer investments to upgrade infrastructure like schools and bridges and educating the public about the risk.	56%
The risk of a major earthquake in Oregon happening in my lifetime is low. There are many more pressing challenges for the state that should be the immediate focus of taxpayer investments. We should address the risk of earthquakes later.	30%
Don't know	14%

## DEMOGRAPHICS

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

30. In what year were you born?

Response category	n=550
18–34	11%
35–44	35%
45–54	17%
55–64	18%
65+	19%

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

Response category	n=543
Male	50%
Female	50%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	1%
Trans	n=1
Other	n=1

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

Response category	n=516
African	n=2
Asian or Pacific Islander	2%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic or Latino	3%
Middle Eastern or North African	--
Native American or Alaska Native	6%
Slavic	1%
White or Caucasian	96%
Other	3%

33. What is your party registration?

Response category	n=519
Democrat	48%
Republican	21%
Independent Party of Oregon	7%
Registered with some other party	6%
Not registered as a member of a party (non-affiliated voter)	18%
Not registered to vote	1%

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

Response category	n=520
Very liberal	19%
Somewhat liberal	28%
Middle of the road	23%
Somewhat conservative	23%
Very conservative	7%

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

Response category	n=521
Less than high school diploma	2%
High school diploma	7%
2-year degree/some college/trade	64%
4-year degree	15%
Graduate degree	13%

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

Response category	n=514
Less than \$25,000	12%
\$25,00–\$49,999	18%
\$50,000–\$74,999	22%
\$75,000–\$99,999	16%
\$100,000–\$149,999	22%
\$150,000 or more	10%

### New page

37. 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]**