A 2020 Election Preview
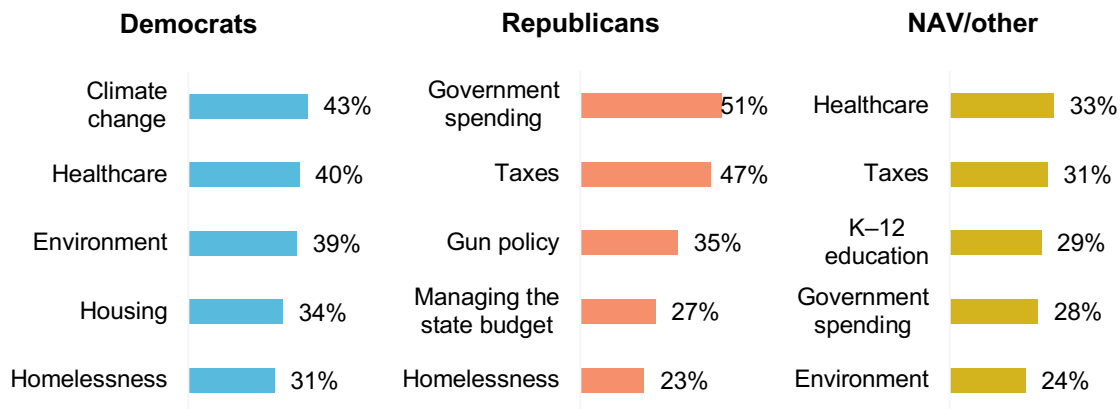
A first look at Oregonians' priorities for the next year's state legislative elections

DHM Panel November 2019 Survey Results
December 10, 2019

For last month's DHM Panel Survey, we took our first look at how opinions are shaping up for next year's elections. To learn voters' priorities, we presented panelists with a list of fifteen issues and asked them to choose the three that will be the most important to them when choosing which candidates to vote for in the 2020 Oregon state legislative elections.

These findings come from the November 2019 fielding of our DHM Panel. The survey was conducted from November 13 to 19, 2019, and surveyed 582 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 ranges from ±4.1% to ±4.3%.

Democrats, Republicans and NAV/other voters have different priorities.

Democrats

Issue	%
Climate change	43%
Healthcare	40%
Environment	39%
Housing	34%
Homelessness	31%

Republicans

Issue	%
Government spending	51%
Taxes	47%
Gun policy	35%
Managing the state budget	27%
Homelessness	23%

NAV/other

Issue	%
Healthcare	33%
Taxes	31%
K–12 education	29%
Government spending	28%
Environment	24%

Democrats' top five priorities are climate change, healthcare, environment, homelessness and housing. Among these, just one (homelessness) is one of the top five priorities for Republicans, and only two (healthcare and environment) are in the top five for NAV/other voters.
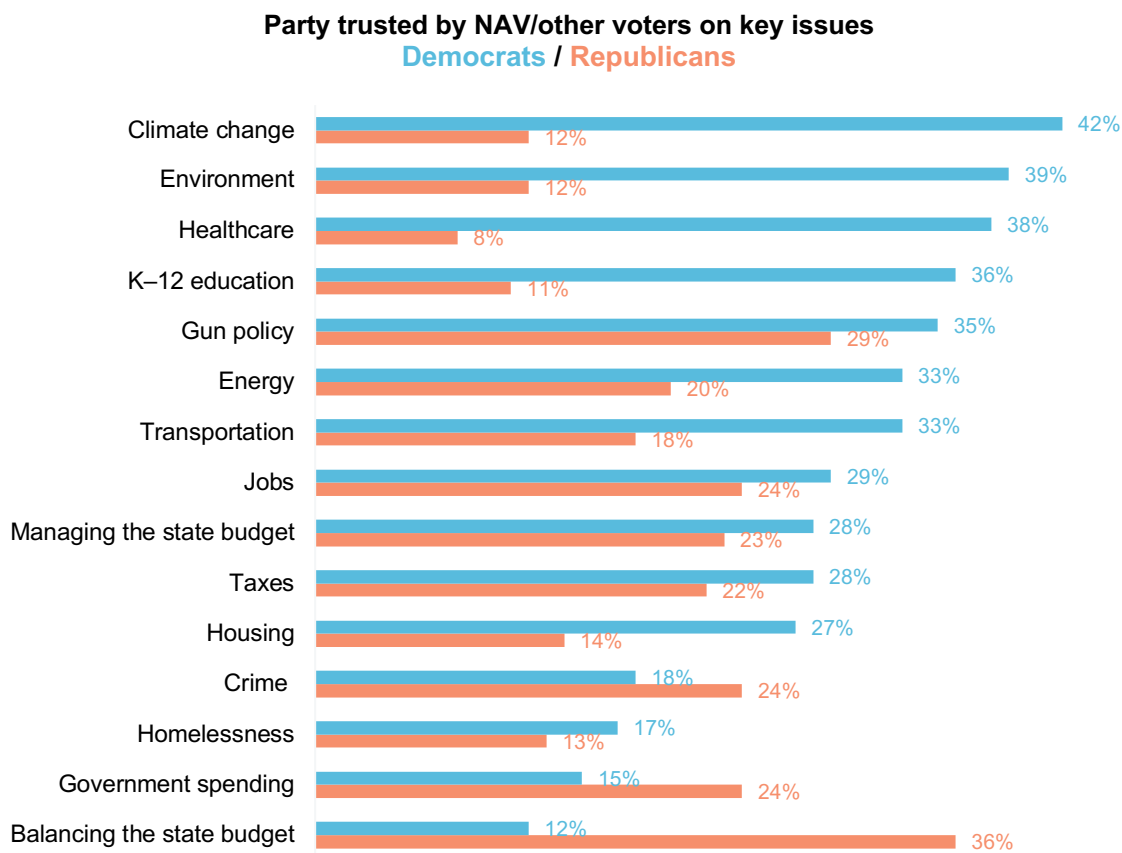
For Republicans, the top issues include government spending, taxes, gun policy, managing the state budget and homelessness. The top issues for NAV/others are healthcare, taxes, K–12 education, government spending, and the environment.

Jobs and K–12 education are now lower priorities for many voters.

A couple other notable findings are the relatively low prioritization of jobs and K–12 education. In past years, especially during the height of the Great Recession, jobs was consistently the top issue among voters of all political stripes. Historically, too, K–12 education has been a top issue for voters. Here it was the third-rated issue for NAV/other voters, but sixth for Democrats and tenth for Republicans. The relatively low rating of K–12 education could be a result of other issues becoming more urgent to address.

It could also be the result of the passage of the Student Success Act, which will add $1 billion per year of new spending to K–12 education. With the new funding, perhaps K–12 education is no longer as urgent of a priority.

Non-affiliated and third-party voter have more trust in Democrats than Republicans on most issues.

Party trusted by NAV/other voters on key issues
Democrats / Republicans

Issue	Democrats	Republicans
Climate change	42%	12%
Environment	39%	12%
Healthcare	38%	8%
K–12 education	36%	11%
Gun policy	35%	29%
Energy	33%	20%
Transportation	33%	18%
Jobs	29%	24%
Managing the state budget	28%	23%
Taxes	28%	22%
Housing	27%	14%
Crime	18%	24%
Homelessness	17%	13%
Government spending	15%	24%
Balancing the state budget	12%	36%

NAV/other voters are a rapidly increasing share of the Oregon electorate. They now represent 40% of Oregon voters, compared to registered Democrats (35%) and registered Republicans (25%). Despite this increase in NAV/other voters, all 90 of Oregon's legislators are Democrats and Republicans. Knowing which party NAV/others trust more on the issues can provide some early insight into 2020 elections.

Among the fifteen issues, we asked all survey participants to indicate if they generally trust the Democratic or Republican party more. Among NAV/other voters, they indicated they trust the Democratic party more on twelve of the issues. The only three that they trusted the Republican party more were government spending, balancing the state budget, and crime. The issues for which they tend to trust the Democrats most were climate change, environment, healthcare, and K–12 education.

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

Response category	n=582
Right direction—strongly	8%
Right direction—somewhat	40%
Wrong track—somewhat	14%
Wrong track—strongly	33%
Don't know	5%

The following are issues in Oregon. For each, indicate which Oregon political party you trust more to handle that issue. **[Randomize]**

Response category	Democrat	Republican	Another party	None	Don't know
2. Healthcare	48%	17%	9%	21%	5%
3. Housing	38%	18%	8%	27%	9%
4. K–12 education	41%	18%	8%	26%	7%
5. Taxes	36%	27%	8%	22%	7%
6. Government spending	29%	25%	8%	28%	10%
7. Balancing the state budget	28%	31%	8%	24%	9%
8. Transportation	41%	22%	8%	18%	11%
9. Environment	49%	16%	10%	19%	6%
10. Energy	45%	22%	10%	15%	8%
11. Jobs	37%	29%	8%	17%	9%
12. Climate change	50%	16%	9%	19%	5%
13. Homelessness	31%	19%	9%	33%	9%
14. Crime	31%	28%	8%	21%	11%
15. Gun policy	44%	32%	6%	15%	3%
16. Managing the state budget	35%	25%	8%	23%	9%

[New page]

17. About one year from now, there will be an election in Oregon for most state legislators. From the same list, which three issues do you think will be most important to you when choosing which candidate to vote for?

Response category	n=548
Healthcare	32%
Housing	18%
K–12 education	24%
Taxes	29%
Government spending	28%
Balancing the state budget	13%
Transportation	12%
Environment	27%
Energy	3%
Jobs	10%
Climate change	25%
Homelessness	26%
Crime	10%
Gun policy	25%

Response category	n=548
Managing the state budget	18%

DEMOGRAPHICS

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

18. In what county do you live?

Response category	n=535
Tri county	44%
Willamette Valley	27%
Rest of state	29%

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

20. In what year were you born?

Response category	n=533
18–29	3%
30–44	30%
45–64	37%
65+	30%

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

Response category	n=531
Male	47%
Female	51%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	2%
Trans	1%
Other	n=2

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

Response category	n=526
African	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%
Black or African American	2%
Hispanic or Latino	5%
Middle Eastern or North African	n=3
Native American or American Indian	7%
Slavic	2%
White or Caucasian	92%
Other	4%

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

Response category	n=529
Very liberal	22%
Somewhat liberal	24%
Middle of the road	17%
Somewhat conservative	23%
Very conservative	14%

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

Response category	n=528
Less than high school diploma	1%
High school diploma	9%

2-year degree/some college/trade	48%
4-year degree	21%
Graduate degree	21%

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

Response category	n=520
Less than $25,000	10%
$25,00– $49,999	16%
$50,000–$74,999	25%
$75,000–$99,999	18%
$100,000–$149,999	23%
$150,000 or more	9%