



Oregon's Kitchen Table – First Consultation Education Outcome Area and Justice System Findings

Methodology

An online consultation was conducted among members of Oregon's Kitchen Table to inform the Governor of public priorities in developing the state's 10 Year Plan and the 2013-15 budget. For comparison purposes, the survey was also administered independently to a statewide representative sample. Below are the results for the education outcome and justice system sections of the questionnaire. Future reports will include the other sections: healthy people, economy and jobs, healthy environment, and revenue.

Research Design: DHM Research emailed all Oregon's Kitchen Table panel members and invited them to participate in a consultation between June 11 and June 24, 2012. Project partners also emailed invites to different groups to complete the questionnaire. A total of 2,790 Oregonians participated in the consultation.

An additional 423 Oregonians participated in a companion scientific survey which was administered separately by Knowledge Networks.¹

Note to the Reader: Currently an experiment, Oregon's Kitchen Table gives Oregonians the chance to weigh in on tough public policy tradeoffs. The project gathers real-time feedback from every corner of our state to share with decision makers in Salem. In addition to providing participants an opportunity to prioritize public investments, the pilot consultation provided them an opportunity to record comments. This particular outreach effort engaged more than 3,000 Oregonians, generating 4,158 comments, at a much lower cost and less time than conducting a series of public meetings across the state. In the months ahead, Oregon's Kitchen Table is committed to involving more Oregonians in helping shape the state's future, targeting population subgroups that are currently not proportionally

¹ Oregon's Kitchen Table would like to thank the Program for Public Consultation, a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, for its assistance with the scientific survey and its contribution of time and money to the First Consultation.

represented in the panel. The project partners also look forward to conducting additional consultations which will involve administration of the full consultation, or parts of it, to a random sample of Oregonians for comparative analysis.

Education

Oregon’s goal is that by 2025, all Oregonians will graduate from high school; at least 40 percent will get two years of post-secondary education or training; and another 40 percent will earn a bachelor’s degree or higher. Here are some strategies for improving the quality of education in Oregon. Next to each one please enter how many of your \$100 dollars you want to allocate to that strategy.²

Public Investments	Oregon’s Kitchen Table	Representative Statewide Sample
Invest in early learning, including pre-school and health and nutrition programs to ensure all children are ready to learn when they reach kindergarten	\$18.90	\$13.50
Reduce class size and provide more tutoring in Kindergarten through 3 rd grade	\$19.90	\$20.40
Restore programs for art and music that were previously cut	\$18.40	\$17.30
Restore vocational education for high school students that was previously cut	\$22.40	\$26.20
Provide more financial support to college students who could not otherwise go to college and finish their degree	\$15.00	\$18.10

Representative Comments

- “I think we should allow teachers more control of their classroom and require more accountability from the students. I also think we should require results from our teachers and administrators.”
- “I think we spend too much at the present on education. We are not getting the needed return for our investment. I don't see why they need a union if one does not want to join one. Unions are a negative in the education process.”
- “Instill the concept of lifelong learning. Not every student is suited for college. Consider trade school paths in high school.”
- “Oregon's educational goals are lofty, but they're not going to happen without solid investment into our schools. Oregon currently funds education at about 65% of the Quality Education Model, and bemoans that the graduation rate is about 62%. Imagine if schools were funded at 100%. To demand that all

² The questionnaire instructed respondents that they did not have to allocate all \$100.

Oregonians graduate from high school, and then 80% will go on to some kind of post-secondary education is to forget individual free will and opportunities, or lack thereof.”

- “While the college experience has value, it can be equally valuable to apprentice with a mentor. School also shouldn't be about kids learning to just spit out numbers, it should be about developing a whole, healthily functioning person. There is too much focus on logic, left brained thinking, things like the arts and emotional intelligence need to be a part of their education as well.”

Observations

Respondents chose to allocate the most money to restoring vocational education for high school students that was previously cut, with a mean amount of \$22.40 allocated by OKT panel members and a mean amount of \$26.20 allocated by respondents in the companion scientific statewide survey.

- In comparison to other geographic regions, allocations for vocational education were noticeably high among residents of Central/Eastern Oregon, with more than four in ten (43%) residents allocating between \$21-30 on the companion statewide survey (twice as much as any other regional group), and nearly three in ten (27%) OKT panel members allocating that much ($\geq 5\%$ more than any other regional group).
- With Oregon’s unemployment rate higher than the national average, vocational education remains alluring as it provides direct job training for high school students entering a challenging job market. Support among residents of Central/Eastern Oregon could be tied to high rates of unemployment in those counties (Crook Co. 13.6%; Grant Co. 13.2%; Harney Co. 12.8%)³.
- OKT panel members and respondents on the companion statewide survey were most likely to choose reducing class sizes as their second highest priority (\$19.90 mean allocation and \$20.40 mean allocation, respectively). With Oregon ranked 49th in the nation in terms of class size (19.4 students for every teacher)⁴, a high level of concern on this issue is to be expected.
- OKT members were least likely to allocate funds to provide financial support to college students (\$15.00 mean allocation), while respondents in the statewide companion survey were least likely to allocate for investments in early learning, i.e. pre-school, nutrition programs, etc. (\$13.50 mean allocation). Verbatim responses indicate Oregonians often think of these issues as the responsibility of the family and/or individual, and not the state.

³ Source: Oregon Employment Department

⁴ Source: National Center for Education Statistics - 2009

Below are several representative comments further illustrating the tie between vocational training and concerns about unemployment, as well as discontent with large class sizes:

- “We need people who are happy to work straight out of high school - electricians, plumbers, construction of all kinds, service workers of all kinds. Make people feel good about themselves by emphasizing all kinds of learning, not only college learning.”
- “I believe that the high school curriculum is out of step with the job market; vocational and practical training should be a valid, high quality alternative to expensive higher education.”
- “Reduced class sizes all through elementary school (not to mention high school) greatly benefits students. They get more help, attention, concentrated work in areas they lack, and so on. Given what we pay teachers, we should make classes smaller so that dedicated talented people stay in the profession rather than go elsewhere for more money.”
- “Small class size is key - in a large class, the teacher has to spend more time on behavior and managing the class, rather than teaching. Arts/music/etc. are very important, but how much will kids get out of it if they spend all their arts time with the teacher dealing with multiple behavior issues in a 30 person class?”
- “When I started college, I was earning 1.25 per hour and paying about 300.00 per quarter. Now the kids earn \$9.00 to 10.00 per hour and pay \$3000.00 per quarter. Nothing has changed! I chose not to whine and worked two jobs outside of school until I had my degree (with a wife and child).”

Justice System

Now, let us explore one more area. As you may know one of the largest areas of Oregon state spending is its prison system. The prison system has grown substantially from 3,120 prison beds 30 years ago, to 14,300 today. Much of this growth is due to laws that require judges to impose certain mandatory sentences and that limit the ability of parole boards to modify sentences. These laws are estimated to require an additional 2,000 prison beds over the next decade at a cost of \$600 million.

There is some discussion about using alternative approaches to imprisonment and parole when dealing with non-violent offenders. Please select how good an idea each of the following would be for Oregon to try over the next ten years: not good at all, not very good, somewhat good, very good.

Justice System Approaches	Oregon's Kitchen Table	Representative Statewide Sample
	% Very Good Idea	% Very Good Idea
Give judges more flexibility in deciding sentences based on good data about effective programs, the specifics of the crime and the background of the offender.	64%	49%
Develop stronger community supervision programs, so that judges can include in the sentence of non-violent offenders time in a program that closely monitors them and help their re-entry into society.	59%	47%
Allow prison inmates convicted of non-violent crimes to earn more time off their prison terms for completing programs like literacy training and substance abuse treatment while in prison.	50%	46%
Keep the mandatory sentencing system the way it is, and pay the necessary costs as an investment in Oregon's public safety.	8%	14%

Representative Comments

- "Drug and mental health issues should be treated not punished-you don't put people with heart problems and cancer in jail-sick people need help-mandatory sentencing is a very, very bad concept."
- "I believe that if we start promoting more 'personal responsibility' for our choices/responses that over the long run we will start to see continued drops in the crime rate. It's only one of the many pieces but it is a piece of the overall puzzle."
- "Legalize and tax marijuana. This would reduce prison roles greatly and would provide revenue. The current state is that there is a whole sub-economy and those getting rich from it are not the people we would like to see benefitting."
- "We should focus on the violent offenders. Each case should be looked at in terms of the danger that person is to the public welfare. I really need to know more about this issue to answer intelligently. Perhaps you could provide more information on exactly what constitutes a non-violent crime?"
- "When a sentence is issued, make it that and not molly-coddle them. If the sentence is 10 years, make it 10 years to the day."

Observations

Respondents were provided a list of alternative approaches to imprisonment and parole when dealing with non-violent offenders, and were then asked to select how good each idea would be for Oregon to try over the next ten years. Additionally, respondents were given information on the rising costs incurred through Oregon's current sentencing laws (they are estimated to require an additional 2,000 prison beds over the next decade at a cost of \$600 million).

Respondents were most likely to choose giving judges more flexibility in deciding sentences based on good data about effective programs, the specifics of the crime and the background of the offender (64% of OKT panel members rated it a very good idea, compared to 49% from the statewide companion survey). Respondents for both surveys were least likely to keep the mandatory sentencing system the way it is (8% for OKT; 14% for the statewide companion survey).

- Given the cost information, respondents were receptive to the idea of allowing greater sentencing flexibility. Support for allowing judges added sentencing flexibility was strong across all subgroups for both surveys, never dropping below a 75% "somewhat/very" good rating.
- By allowing judges to evaluate criminal sentences on a case-by-case basis, respondents in their comments anticipated significant cost savings from reduced incarceration of low-level drug offenders, while still maintaining the judicial authority to award stern sentences in unique cases. This would allow the state to focus more on violent offenders.
- Notably, many respondents were unsure whether mandatory minimum sentencing served as an effective crime deterrent.

Respondents were then provided an opportunity to comment on their priorities and to make further recommendations to the state. Below are several representative comments further illustrating the interest in allowing more flexibility and judicial control over criminal sentencing:

- "Educated judges should have discretion in sentencing, as opposed to mandatory minimum sentences. Does the data indicate mandatory minimum sentences are effective at increasing public safety?"
- "We need to undo the mandatory sentencing system, which has been clearly shown to drive costs and the growing prison population. Increasing the educational opportunities for inmates (including GED, basic education, and advanced educational opportunities). These have been shown to help build skills and self-esteem and reduce recidivism rates. Oregon may also want to consider

revamping many of the laws that criminalize drug use. A significant portion of the inmate population is in for drug-related crimes, some of which could/should be treated differently (e.g. rehab and other programs).”

What Do You Think About Oregon’s Kitchen Table?

(Statewide Representative Sample Only) Now that you have completed this process, we have a few questions about how you feel about this type of process.

Do you think that this process of citizens giving the Oregon government input on its priorities is:

	Rep. Statewide Sample
A very good idea	69%
A somewhat good idea	28%
A somewhat bad idea	0%
A very bad idea	1%
Don’t know/refused	0%

How confident are you that the government will pay attention to the input from this process?

	Rep. Statewide Sample
Very confident	2%
Somewhat confident	29%
Not very confident	47%
Not confident at all	21%
Don’t know/refused	1%

How confident are you that the views of Oregonians from this process will have some influence on government decisions?

	Rep. Statewide Sample
Very confident	4%
Somewhat confident	27%
Not very confident	50%
Not confident at all	18%
Don’t know/refused	1%

Would you like to see the Oregon government consult the people on its priorities in this way in the future, or not? (Statewide Representative Sample Only)

	Rep. Statewide Sample
Would	95%
Would not	4%