



Are Environmentally Sustainable Changes Here to Stay?¹

A Complicated Picture of the Spillover from COVID-19

Oregon Values and Beliefs Panel Survey

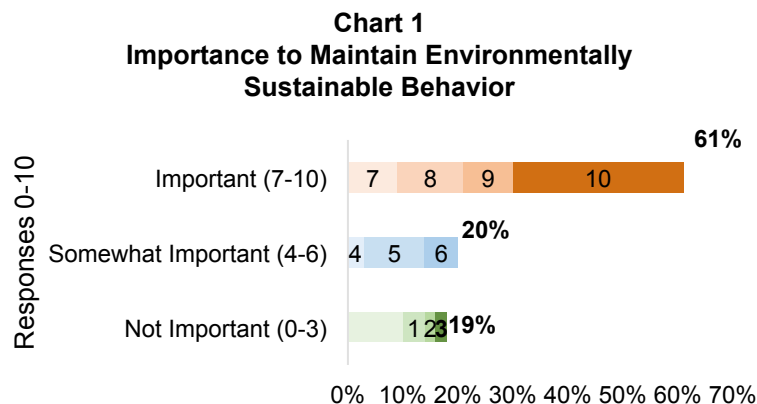
June 2020

As a result of COVID-19, Oregonians have been forced to change how they live. A positive outcome of this has been a transition to more environmentally sustainable behavior. We are curious to know how Oregonians view these changes in behavior and their expectations regarding environmentally sustainable behavior in the future.

These findings come from the fielding of the monthly DHM-OVBC Oregon Values and Beliefs Panel Survey. The online survey was conducted from May 29-June 7, 2020. It surveyed 900 Oregonians. To ensure a representative statewide sample, demographic quotas were set, and the data was weighted by area of the state, gender, age, and education. The survey's margin of error is $\pm 2.0\%$ to $\pm 3.3\%$ depending on how the response category percentages split for any given question.

How important do Oregonians think it is to maintain environmentally sustainable behavior following the pandemic?

A majority of Oregonians (61%) believe it is important to maintain environmentally sustainable behavior to reduce CO2 emissions as we come out of the coronavirus pandemic (importance was determined by responses of 7 and higher on a 0-to-10 scale). Thirty-one percent (31%) believe it is 10/10 important to maintain these behaviors while 10% of Oregonians believe it is 0/10 important to maintain them. The mean score for Oregonians was 6.7, indicating that most Oregonians do believe it is important to stay environmentally sustainable.

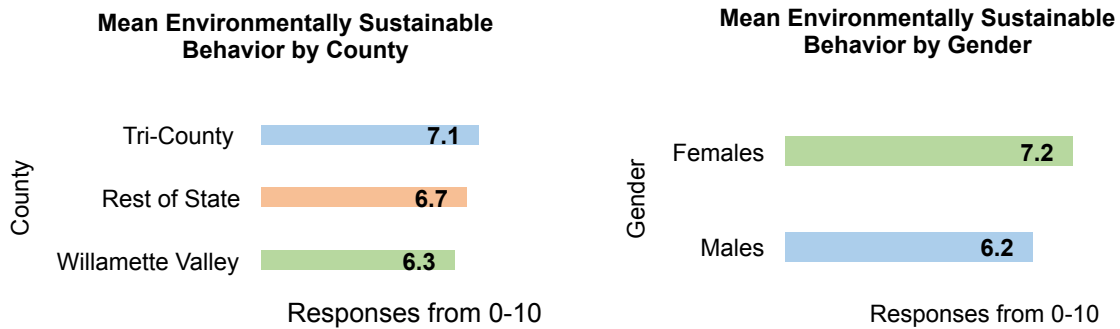


¹ The research was completed as a community service by DHM Research in partnership with the Oregon Values and Beliefs Center. Both organizations are independent and non-partisan. DHM is a Certified B Corporation and OVBC is an Oregon charitable nonprofit corporation.

For inquiries, please contact John Horvick, DHM Research Director of Client Relations and Political Research, at jhorvick@dhmresearch.com or 503.757.3051.

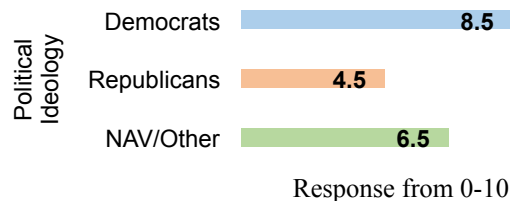
The results varied by the respondents' region, gender, and political affiliation. Individuals in the Willamette Valley (Mean=6.3) believe it was less important to maintain environmentally sustainable behaviors than individuals in Tri-County (mean=7.1) and the rest of the state (mean=6.7). And, women (mean=7.2) feel it is more important than men (mean=6.2).

Chart 2



Predictably, the perceived importance of maintaining environmentally sustainable behaviors also varied by political ideology, with Democrats (mean=8.5) considerably more likely to say it is important than Republicans (mean=4.5), and NAV/Other (mean=6.5) fell directly in between.

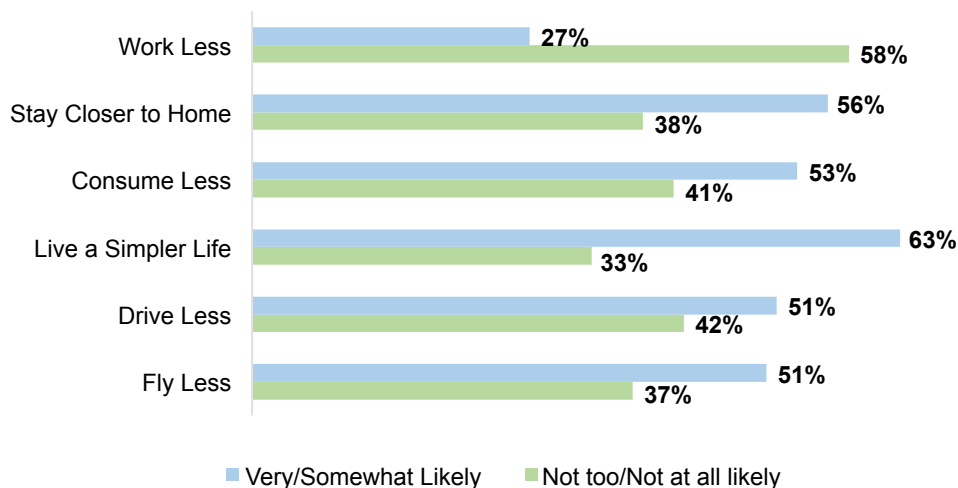
Chart 3
Mean Environmentally Sustainable Behavior by Political Ideology



Will behavior stick?

We asked Oregonians how likely they thought these new behaviors would continue following the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the polled behaviors are considered likely or somewhat likely to continue by about 50% of respondents. Sixty-three percent (63%) believe that living a simpler life is likely to be a lasting change while just 27% of Oregonians think they will work less following the pandemic.

Chart 4
How Likely to do Listed Activities Following COVID-19



If we exclude work less, an item perceived to be not likely of continuing for most Oregonians, we can identify trends by demographic. Across the other five behaviors (stay closer to home during vacations, consuming less, living a simpler life, driving less, and flying less), the average affirmative response varies by gender, income, and political ideology.

Average Likely/Somewhat Likely Scores Across Behaviors by Demographic						
Women	Men	High-Income	Low-Income	Democrats	Republicans	NAV/Other
61.8	48.4	50.6	59.2	66.2	39.6	53

Women (mean=61.8) are more likely to commit to these COVID-19 changed behaviors than are men (mean=48.4). This is consistent with the results from the importance to maintain behaviors. So, women both find it more important to maintain environmentally sustainable behaviors and report higher likelihoods of continuing new sustainable behaviors.

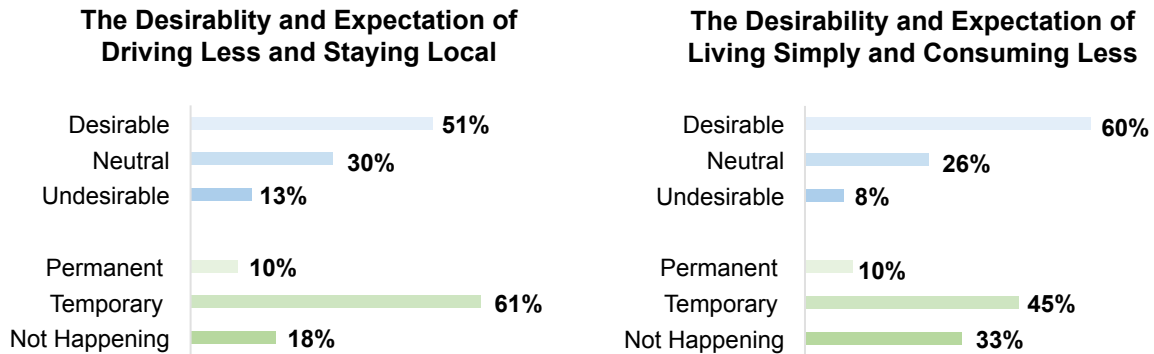
Similar to the gender, we again see that Republicans (mean=39.6), compared to Democrats (mean=66.2) and NAV/Other (mean=53), perceive it less likely that they will continue these new COVID-19 induced habits.

By comparing high-income Oregonians (over \$100,000 a year) and low-income Oregonians (under \$25,000 a year), we find that well-off respondents (mean=50.6) report that they are less likely to continue to engage in sustainable behavior than those in the low-income group (mean=59.2). This is especially important because high-income Oregonians likely changed their lifestyles more than low-income Oregonians. This may suggest that wealthier individuals are more likely to revert to the behaviors of pre-COVID days. Still, a narrow majority of the wealthy respondents reported they were likely or somewhat likely to maintain their new behaviors.

Balancing Desirability with Expectations

Respondents were asked to assess the desirability and predict the permanence of two general habits: driving less and staying in one's local area and living simply and consuming less. Overall, respondents tended to see these new environmentally sustainable behaviors as desirable but perceived them to likely be not happening or only temporary changes.

Chart 5

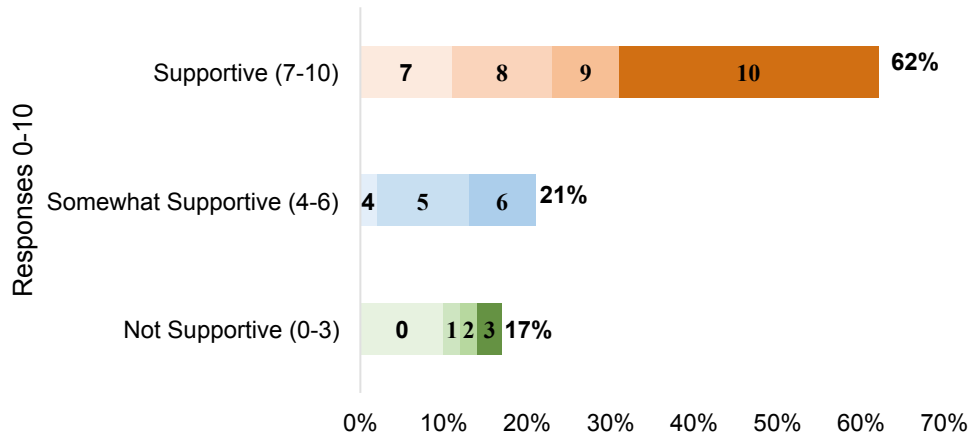


In both cases, just 10% of Oregonians thought these habits would become permanent changes. This is in striking contrast to the previous questions where Oregonians perceived it as likely that they would adopt environmentally sustainable behaviors.

Oregonians Support a Green Jobs Training Program

Oregonians tend to be supportive of a new Green Jobs Training Program (mean=6.8). Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents were very supportive and just 17% were not supportive. Consistent with the other findings, Republicans remain in opposition to something environmentally friendly (mean=4.6) compared to Democrats (mean=8.6) and NAV/Other (mean=6.7). Gender also remained divided, but the gap was narrow. Females (mean=7.0) were slightly more supportive of the program compared to males (mean=6.6).

Chart 6
Support for Oregon Green Jobs Training Program



Summary

Oregonians believe it is important to maintain COVID-19 induced environmentally sustainable behaviors and overwhelmingly support a Green Jobs Training Program. Still, it is not all good news for environmental sustainability. Although respondents report it likely that they will adopt new behaviors and believe it would be desirable for Oregonians to live simpler and more local lives, they do not see permanent changes and a new normal. Common trends of gender (women caring more than men) and political ideology (Republicans caring less than Democrats and NAV/Other) consistently influence Oregonians beliefs on environmentally sustainable matters. Overall, Oregonians support an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, but it is unclear if the new behaviors that arose out of the COVID-19 pandemic are here to stay.

Oregon Values and Belief Panel Survey

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N=900, ±2.0% to ±3.3%

As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19), which of the following changes will happen in Oregon over the next few years and will they be temporary or permanent changes, and become the new normal? **[Randomize]**

Response category	Will not happen	Will be-temporary	Will be permanent	Don't know
29. People will drive less and spend more time locally, close to where they live	18%	61%	10%	11%
30. People will live simpler lives and consume less	33%	45%	10%	12%

Here is the list again of possible changes that may happen in Oregon because of the coronavirus (COVID-19). For each, indicate your opinion about the desirability of the potential change.

{Randomize}.

Response category	Desirable	Neutral	Undesirable	Don't know
37. People will drive less and spend more time locally close wo there they live	51%	30%	13%	5%
38. People will live simpler lives and consume less	60%	26%	8%	6%

43. How important is it to you that Oregonians maintain environmentally sustainable behaviors to reduce CO2 emissions as we come out of the coronavirus pandemic? [Scale: Not at all (0) - Very important (10)]

Response Category	n=900
Mean	6.7

How likely are you to do the following as we come out of the coronavirus pandemic in order to reduce CO2 emissions?

Response category	Very likely	Some-what likely	Not too likely	Not likely at all	Don't know
44. Fly less	31%	19%	21%	16%	12%
45. Drive less	24%	27%	22%	20%	7%
46. Live a simpler lifestyle	22%	41%	19%	14%	4%
47. Consume less products and services	19%	34%	23%	18%	5%
48. Stay at home or closer to home for vacations	23%	33%	20%	18%	6%
49. Work less	12%	15%	25%	33%	15%

50. Do you support an Oregon Green Jobs Training Program to specifically support laid-off workers during the coronavirus pandemic, so they may transition to new green/clean economy jobs? [Scale: Not at all (0) - Very supportive (10)]

Response Category	n=900
Mean	6.8