

## The Portland Tribune

### Better off or not? Oregonians divided on issue, poll finds

*By Jim Redden*

*July 12, 2016*

Although the Great Recession officially has been over for years and all indicators suggest Oregon's economy has more than recovered, the state is deeply divided between those who say they are doing well and those who say they are not.

A new poll by icitizen found 53 percent of Oregonians say their personal economic situation is only fair or even poor. In contrast, 47 percent say their situation is either good or even excellent.

But there are significant demographic differences within those figures. For example, the poll found about two-thirds of Oregon college graduates say they are in good financial shape. In contrast, about two-thirds of those with less education say they are struggling financially.

The same split shows up in households that are earning above or below \$55,000 a year.

"It's a tale of two Oregons," says Mark Keida, icitizen's director of research and polling. "Post Great Recession, many Oregonians are still trying to catch up. Those without a four-year degree or a \$50,000 or higher household income are struggling mightily with personal finances; those with them say they are in good shape."

There also are geographic divides. In the Portland metro area, where the cost of living is high, 53 percent of residents say their personal financial situation is fair or poor. An even larger majority of those in the Willamette Valley, 63 percent, say the same thing. But only 43 percent of those who live in the rest of the state characterize their personal finances as fair or poor.

Not surprisingly in these politically polarized times, there also are significant partisan divides. A majority of Democrats, 58 percent, say their personal finances are good or excellent. By comparison, 57 percent of Republicans say their finances are fair or poor. But an even larger percentage of third-party and nonaffiliated voters say that — 61 percent. Significantly, their numbers far exceed registered Democrats or Republicans.

#### **Young people optimistic**

Age also affects Oregonians' views. A majority of the young and old feel positive about their personal financial situations. But a majority of those in the middle — between the ages of 35 and 64 — do not.

The positive view by those between 18 and 34 may seem surprising (52 percent described their personal economic situation as good or excellent). Conventional wisdom holds that many so-called millennials are burdened with college debt and struggling to find meaningful work.

And young people are even more positive on the economic direction of the state. When asked to rate the Oregon economy, 60 percent of those between ages 18 and 34 said "good" or "excellent." Only 40 percent said "fair" or "poor."

The same also is true when asked whether they think the state is going in the right direction or wrong direction. Sixty-one percent said Oregon is on the right track.

Keida said the positive economic outlook held by young Oregonians is a good sign for the state.

“Youth are optimistic about the direction of the state and the state’s economy,” he noted. “States need this for [population] retention and the growth of their taxable base.”

### Country, state views differ

Researchers note that voters are usually much more positive about their state than the rest of the country. That helps explain why so many incumbents are consistently re-elected to Congress, even though many polls show most voters view it — and the rest of the federal government — with disdain.

The situation is no different in Oregon, according to the icitizen poll. It found that 70 percent of Oregonians think the country’s on the wrong track, compared to only 49 percent who think the same about Oregon.

The negative feelings about the direction of the country are almost universal, although 57 percent of Democrats think it is on the right track. Those most convinced it is going in the wrong direction include 77 percent of women, 78 percent of those 50 to 64, 80 percent of third-party and nonaffiliated voters, and 94 percent of Republicans.

The feelings about Oregon’s direction are more evenly split. Democrats and young people are the most positive while Republicans and retirees are the most negative.

When asked how the Oregon economy is doing, the overall responses are very close to those for personal economic situations. Fifty-five percent believe the state economy is fair or poor, compared to 45 percent who say good or excellent. However, far more seniors, Republicans and those living outside of the Portland area believe the state’s economy is in worse shape than their personal finances.

Asked to pick the most important problem facing the state, the largest block, 30 percent said jobs and the economy. Education came in second at 11 percent. Transportation/infrastructure, immigration and social issues, tied at 8 percent each. Some of the most heavily reported issues of the day garnered 6 percent or less, including crime, taxes, environment, gun policy, terrorism/homeland security and racism.

There were some demographic differences, however. Jobs and the economy was easily the No. 1 issue for young people, despite their optimism over their personal finances, the Oregon economy and the direction of the state.

### **About the poll**

The online poll or icitizen, a nonpartisan public involvement organization, reached 555 registered Oregon voters and was conducted between June 23 and 27. The data were weighted to U.S. Census benchmarks for gender, age, region, education, income and race. The margin of error for the full sample was plus or minus 4 percent.

Poll results are at: [www.icitizen.com/insights/oregon-poll-results-june-2016/](http://www.icitizen.com/insights/oregon-poll-results-june-2016/)

## Willamette Week

### Portland Transportation Chief Explains Why Women Love Bike Sharing

On the eve of BikeTown, Leah Treat also talks about why bike helmets are very unlike bowling shoes.

*By Beth Slovic*

*July 12, 2016*

Leah Treat sees advantages to bringing up the rear of the bike-share pack.

When Portland launches its bike-sharing program July 19, the top-rated city for bicycling won't be the first U.S. city to do so—or even one of the first 50. It'll be the 65th, behind tourist hot spots like Spartanburg, S.C., and Omaha, Neb. (And, of course, New York City, Chicago and Washington, D.C.)

It took eight years and several failed attempts for Portland to get to this point. But backers of the new system, dubbed BikeTown by corporate sponsor Nike, aren't upset about the wheel-spinning.

"We've learned and been able to watch what other cities have done," says Treat, director of the Portland Bureau of Transportation. "Our system is going to be the largest smart-bike system when we launch. It's going to be awesome."

WW sat down with Treat this week to talk about her expectations for BikeTown. We also talked about the features of the new system—and why bike helmets are very unlike bowling shoes.

#### **WW: How many riders are you expecting in the first month? The first year?**

Leah Treat: We've already passed the 500 mark for founding members [with 600 members signed up for annual passes], so we'll have a minimum of 600 and likely a lot more as tourists are visiting. Tourists adopt bike share at a much higher rate. As people are visiting the city, they're going to be getting on bike share.

#### **I'm picturing a lot of tourists tooling around without helmets. Will they have any?**

They will either have to bring their own, or they can go to a local store and buy one. There's not a helmet law, so we're not providing helmets. We are looking at options to have helmet vending machines, but we still don't have good options available for that.

#### **Helmet vending machines? That's a thing?**

Seattle tried a helmet vending option. They're the only city I'm aware of, but I don't think it's gone very well, which is why other people haven't adopted it. There are issues with hygiene. There has to be a means in place to get those helmets sanitized and back into the system. [Side note: Boston has experimented with helmet vending machines, too.]

**If bowling alleys can figure out how to disinfect shoes, why can't bike shares figure out how to sanitize helmets?**

Their shoes don't leave their site! They have all the equipment right there in one location, and there's somebody there running the business. With 100 bike-share stations, it's not really the same.

**How do you ensure that this program doesn't become just another amenity for privileged Portlanders?**

The data in other cities doesn't bear that out. Women adopt bike share at rates greater than in the commuting population. It's picked up by tourists, who are visiting the city. The more infrastructure that's provided, the more numbers of people who use it. In the area where we are launching, there's more than 50 percent of the affordable housing located within 500 feet of a station. We have bike-share stations near affordable housing, near transit, near retail. We have a really low price point. For \$2.50, which is the equivalent of a bus ticket, you can get a bike-share trip.

**But for \$2.50 on TriMet you can travel to your destination and get home as long as you do it in 2½ hours. You only have 30 minutes by bike. So why is that a good option for low-income riders?**

I think it depends on where you're going and how fast you need to be there. Bike-share bikes are immediately accessible, and you don't have to wait for them to show up. You don't make stops along the way, and if you have a short quick trip to make bike share is a faster, same-price option.

**Why are women who won't commute by bike willing to use the bike-share system?**

There are a lot of theories. Women constantly say they want to be safe. They want to feel safe in order to ride bikes. Women have adopted bicycles in their own households at a much lower rate, so they don't own bikes. A bike-share bike presents them with the opportunity to try out biking. So they get on the bike, and [the bikes are] very heavy, they're very big, and they're easy to maneuver and they're safe. They start using the bike share bike as a trial and discover that they like it.

**How do you respond to criticism that bike share doesn't allow disabled riders to participate?**

We're going to be launching a pilot program [in spring 2017] for adaptive bikes. It's going to be separate from the bike share system. But we're going to try out a few different types of bikes and see what works.

**You've said cities that adopted systems early didn't anticipate how popular they would be. So what's the biggest lesson from those cities?**

It's important to have the stations relatively close together, because they're meant for shorter trips. So station density is incredibly important. It's very important to launch your system in an

area where it's going to get picked up and adopted quickly, which is a dense area. That's why we targeted the central city. We have to make sure we keep the system balanced, so we're being incredibly watchful about how the bikes migrate.

**So what does that mean? You'll have trucks out and about moving the bikes around?**

We're going to try to avoid using trucks as often as possible because we're very aware of our carbon footprint. We are looking to have the bikes rebalanced with bike trailers.

**So if you have too many bikes near Pioneer Courthouse Square and not enough at Portland State University, someone will move them by bike trailer?**

One of the employees of Motivate [the operator] would do that.

**How will you prevent bicyclists from locking their own bikes to your racks, something that's already been a problem?**

We're never going to be able to prevent people from locking up to the racks, but as the bike-share bikes come into the system they're going to take up most of the space. We'll start with warnings, and if it does become a problem, we will end up with having to remove [personal] bikes from the system.

The great thing about our bike-share system, though, is that the bikes don't have to be on that dock. The bikes are the smart component. In other cities, where it's really a problem when people lock up their bikes to the bike share dock, it's because the docks are the smart part of it, so the bikes have to go into that dock to get its computer synced up and all that. All of our logistics and technology are on the bike, but we still don't want people locking their bikes to the bike-share dock.

**Tell me something about bike share that people don't already know.**

Nike has the right to wrap 100 of the bikes per year in their own branding. They're going to call them "unicorns." They're going to look different than the orange bikes.

**Why are the bikes orange?**

It's the Nike shoebox color, and the basket on the front is supposed to look like a Nike shoebox.

**How much do bike-sharing apps like Spinlister worry you?**

Not at all. This is a biking town. People are excited about biking, and any new transportation option that you can bring to the city is going to be well-used.

**So what's the biggest risk?**

I don't see any. I think it's such a good program, I don't see what the risk is.

**Come on, there has to be some stumbling block you're worried about.**

Nope. We've had so many intentional, intense conversations. We have a great operator. We have a great sponsor. We have great staff and community partners. I don't see any risk to what we're doing. I'm excited about expanding it and keeping it going.

**In the end are you glad it took Portland this long to launch bike share?**

Yes, in some weird way, there are a lot of benefits to being the 65th city to launch bike share in the country.

## **Murmurs: The Oregonian Took \$100,000 in Tax Credits From a Program Its Editorial Board Slammed**

**In other news: 911 dispatchers hang up on contract talks.**

*By WW Staff*

*July 12, 2016*

### **Oregonian Among Companies Getting Energy Credits**

For years, The Oregonian has criticized the Oregon Department of Energy for the Business Energy Tax Credit program, a near billion-dollar boondoggle that subsidized many questionable projects. After a June 27 hearing in which ODOE director Michael Kaplan defended the economic benefits of the program, Oregonian editorial writer Helen Jung challenged Kaplan in an email exchange (obtained by WW through a public records request) to provide examples of successful projects that wouldn't have been done without the BETC subsidy. "Thousands of projects throughout the state could be used as examples, including two at your newspaper," Kaplan responded in a June 30 email. "The Oregonian received just over \$100,000 in Oregon Department of Energy tax credits for lighting projects." Jung's response: "Funny! I did not know that." Editorial page editor Eric Lukens tells WW that The O "probably should have" disclosed receiving the credits.

### **Contract Talks With 911 Dispatchers Break Down**

The union representing city of Portland employees who answer 911 calls says contract negotiations have broken down over salary demands, and the union is declaring an impasse. Call takers and dispatchers with Portland's Bureau of Emergency Communications have long complained about understaffing and forced overtime at the bureau that responds to emergencies for the entire region. Increasing wait times for callers prompted City Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees the bureau, to pay for 13 new positions this year. But that won't solve the problem, says Rob Wheaton, a representative of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 189. The bureau has serious trouble recruiting and retaining call takers and dispatchers, says Wheaton, so the new slots are likely to remain vacant unless the city improves pay and vacation time. "The only people who notice," he says, "are the people who are unfortunate enough to call 911 when we have a huge call volume."

## **WW Wins National Prizes**

WW received eight national awards from the Association of Alternative News media last weekend, including a first-place multimedia prize to Lucas Chemotti for the video "Burnside Skatepark Turns 25." Nigel Jaquiss took second place for public service for his reporting on Oregon's foster care system.

## **Mayor Charlie Hales Considered Turning the Ground Floor of Portland City Hall Into a Homeless Shelter**

*By Nigel Jaquiss*

*July 12, 2016*

As tensions over finding shelter for Portland's homeless people came to a boil in May, Mayor Charlie Hales started texting.

The city faced the closure of the Jerome Sears Center in Southwest Portland. Hales had promised the neighborhood he'd close the temporary shelter after six months and find a new place to put the 165 people living there. On May 20, Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury told *The Oregonian* that Hales, "at the 11th hour, is worried about his ego more than he's worried about the lives of 165 people in the shelter."

Text messages first obtained by KXL Radio show Hales and his then-chief of staff, Josh Alpert, were considering every possibility—including turning the first floor of Portland City Hall into a homeless shelter. That idea was first raised by Marc Jolin, who manages homelessness for the county. Then the *Oregonian* story broke, and burned up the big idea.

Ultimately, the 165 people were relocated to the Peace Shelter, a temporary space owned by Barry and Jordan Menashe. The partnership with the county is back on, too: The people sheltered in the Menashe space will soon move to the county-owned Hansen Building on Northeast 122nd Avenue.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **A New Lawsuit Says Covered Water Reservoirs Will Poison Portlanders**

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*July 11, 2016*

As the city moved ever closer to shutting down its open air drinking water reservoirs in recent years, lots of opponents offered a steady refrain: They argued the shift to covered reservoirs would result in the harmful gas radon being released via Portlander's tap water.

Now, with the reservoirs formally disconnected from the water system, those claims are poised to get a day in court for the first time.

Scott Fernandez, a credentialed microbiologist who's long railed against closed reservoirs, has sued to get the reservoirs at Washington Park and on Mt. Tabor back into use—or at least

disrupt their demise. In a 10-page complaint [PDF] filed last week, Fernandez argues the city is trespassing against him by potentially forcing radon—a radioactive gas and carcinogen—into his home. And he argues the city's causing a public nuisance by doing the same thing citywide.

Fernandez has asked a judge to put the brakes on any existing work to further destroy Portland's celebrated open reservoirs. He says officials need to be stopped from "degrading, demolishing, or further impairing the open reservoir system until such time as this case can be adjudicated."

Kristian Roggendorf, the Lake Oswego attorney representing Fernandez, tells the Mercury his client wants what a great many activists in Portland have clamored for over the years: For the city to continue fighting for a waiver to federal rules that require open-air reservoirs be capped. After seven years of pushing for that waiver, officials announced in 2013 they'd give up the fight and move forward with covering the reservoirs.

Advocates like Fernandez say the city hasn't fought hard enough, and is imperiling citizens by storing water in enormous underground tanks beneath Powell Butte.

"He's a scientist—he's not some wild-eyed crazed hippy living in a camper somewhere," says Roggendorf. "Microbiology and water chemistry are his fields."

The city has two central sources of water: The pristine and jealously guarded Bull Run Watershed and a collection of groundwater aquifers known as the Columbia South Shore Well Field. It's the second one that Fernandez says will wreak havoc this summer (when water from the well field is tapped in the largest amounts). He argues that radon levels in that groundwater won't have the chance to dissipate in the city's closed reservoirs, as they would naturally in open reservoirs.

"In open reservoirs, radon is naturally off-gassed into the atmosphere in a safe and unconcentrated form," the suit says. "In covered reservoirs, the radon cannot escape efficiently....The State of Oregon recognizes and advises that 'there is no safe level of radon.'"

According to its 2016 Drinking Water Quality Report, Portland water had an average of 202 picocuries (a measurement of radioactivity) per liter of radon in 2015, with a maximum reading of 370 picocuries per liter. Roggendorf says the upper levels came from the Columbia South Shore Well Field, and that they're concerning.

But in an FAQ about radon in water, the city downplays those levels.

"Although no standard has been adopted, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed regulating radon in drinking water at 4,000 pCi/L," it says. "This level is approximately 10-30 times higher than what the Water Bureau has recorded from the Columbia South Shore Well Field."

It continues: "The EPA has proposed to regulate radon in water, but since a major portion of the associated risk with radon is due to soil under homes, the EPA has not determined how regulating radon in drinking water would lower health risks."

With that said, radon's unquestionably a health concern. Portland Public Schools—amid a scandal over crisis in drinking water—is also scrambling to fix high radon levels at some schools.

The new lawsuit isn't Fernandez's first attempt to kill the covered reservoirs. He recently challenged the land-use decision that will enable the city to demolish two reservoirs in Washington Park and replace them with new water features. When the state Land Use Board of

Appeals agreed with the city in that matter, Fernandez pressed his case with the Oregon Court of Appeals, and lost.

"Mr. Fernandez has brought numerous legal challenges to the City's efforts to comply with" federal rules, Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the Portland Water Bureau, said in a statement to the Mercury. "None have been successful. While we admire Mr. Fernandez's tenacity, the City has an obligation to comply with federal law and to ensure that our water supply to Westside customers survives the 'Big One.'" (Fish is referring to a finding that the Washington Park reservoirs were unsafe in an earthquake.)

It's hard to lump the latest lawsuit with Fernandez's wonky land-use challenges, though. This will be the first time the long-held concerns over radon get a hearing in court. Roggendorf—who's made fights against the Water Bureau something of a specialty in recent years (see here and here)—says people will be concerned when they learn the facts.

"I don't want to be alarmist, but this is alarming," he says. "It is so counterintuitive and backwards what the city is doing, it's amazing."

## **The Portland Observer**

### **Bike Share System Debut**

#### **1,000 rental bikes to dot inner city**

*July 12, 2016*

Biketown, Portland's new bike share system is ready to launch with 1,000 bright orange rental bikes dotting downtown and close-in neighborhoods.

Starting on Tuesday, July 19, customers who sign up for the service will be able to check out a bike using a smartphone, a computer, a member card, or by typing in their member number and PIN into a keypad.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation, in cooperation with the Nike-sponsored Biketown organization, a company operated by Motivate, the world's leading bike share operator, has installed 100 inner city stations where the bikes will be available. The system was designed for quick trips with convenience in mind, as well as a fun and affordable way to get around.

Annual memberships for Biketown will cost \$12 per month, and include 90 minutes of riding time each day. Single-ride passes for \$2.50 and 24-hour passes for \$12 will also be available for those who want to use the program more occasionally, including tourists.

Nike designed Biketown's standard bike, which is modeled after the Nike orange shoe box. For a map and more information about the rental bike service, visit [biketownpdx.com](http://biketownpdx.com).

### Portland Ranks Near the Bottom for Best Cities to Drive in

*By GoLocalPDX News Team*

*July 12, 2016*

Portland ranks as the 73rd best city for driving out of 100 cities that were ranked, according to a recent study done by WalletHub.

Portland ranks 66 for ownership & maintenance, 73 for traffic conditions and infrastructure quality, 68 for auto safety and 19 for auto availability and maintenance accessibility.

#### The Rankings

Portland ranks 73 behind Fremont, California and St. Paul Minnesota at 71 and 72, while ranking ahead of New Orleans Louisiana and Cincinnati Ohio at 74 and 75.

Scottsdale, Arizona is ranked as the best place for driving, while Washington, D.C. is ranked as the worst.

#### The Method

WalletHub's analysts compared the 100 most populated U.S. cities across four key dimensions including ownership and maintenance costs, traffic conditions and infrastructure quality, auto safety and auto availability and maintenance accessibility.

WalletHub first identified 21 relevant metrics. Each metric was given a value between 0 and 100, where 100 is the most favorable.

WalletHub then calculated the overall score for each city using the weighted average across all of the metrics and ranked the cities.

#### Ownership & Maintenance Costs – Total Points: 30

- Average Gas Prices: Double Weight (~10.00 Points)
- Average Annual Car Insurance Premium: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Auto-Maintenance Costs: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Average Parking Rate: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)
- Cost of a New Car: Full Weight (~5.00 Points)

#### Traffic Conditions & Infrastructure Quality – Total Points: 30

- Average Annual Hours of Traffic Delays: Full Weight (~6.32 Points)
- Number of Days with Precipitation: Full Weight (~6.32 Points)
- Number of Cold Days: Full Weight (~6.32 Points)

- Note: This metric specifically measures the mean number of days with a minimum temperature of 32 degrees F or lower.
- Average Commute Time: Full Weight (~6.32 Points)
- Quality of Roads: Half\* Weight (~3.16 Points)
- Quality of Bridges: Quarter\* Weight (~1.58 Points)

#### **Auto Safety – Total Points: 30**

- Accident Likelihood in City vs. National Average: Full Weight (~5.45 Points)
- Number of Motor-Vehicle Crash Deaths per Capita: Full Weight (~5.45 Points)
- Rate of Car Thefts: Full Weight (~5.45 Points)
- Rate of Larceny: Full Weight (~5.45 Points)
- WalletHub “DUI Punishment Strictness” Ranking: Half\* Weight (~2.73 Points)
- WalletHub “High-Risk Driver Insurance-Premium Penalty” Ranking: Half\* Weight (~2.73 Points)
- Driving-Laws Rating: Half\* Weight (~2.73 Points)

#### **Auto Availability & Maintenance Accessibility – Total Points: 10**

- Number of Car Dealerships per 100,000 Residents: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)
- Number of Auto-Repair Shops per 100,000 Residents: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)
- Number of Car Washes per 100,000 Residents: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)