



June 2020

## Highlights from a City of Eugene Survey about Climate Change & Related Issues

From June 2 – 6, 2020, on behalf of NW Natural, DHM Research conducted a survey in the City of Eugene to assess voters' priorities and opinions about natural gas, including a policy to ban new natural gas hookups to heat homes and commercial buildings, which some Eugene city councilors are considering. The survey sampling consisted of 319 voters with a margin of error +/- 5.5 percent.

Generally, Eugene voters are concerned about climate change and want to take action within the context of affordability and choice. The proposed ban generated significant opposition, even though it was limited to new natural gas hookups to heat homes and buildings.

- When asked an open-ended question about what they thought the most important issue that the Eugene's mayor and city council should do something about now, respondents overwhelmingly selected homelessness and affordable housing (44% and 8%, respectively). The next most important issue is public safety / police and protests (19% and 4%). Somewhat surprisingly, COVID-19 was the key issue for only 2% of respondents, and only 1% of respondents listed climate change as their top-of-mind, most important issue.
- The City of Eugene recently updated its Climate Action Plan with an option that would ban the use of natural gas for heating new homes and businesses. 63% of voters oppose the policy (40% strongly, 23% somewhat). Only 25% support the ban. Note that the 40% strong opposition by itself is significantly more than the combined 25% strong and somewhat support for the ban – a comparison that shows the depth of opposition.
- However, 81% of voters strongly (48%) or somewhat support (33%) the City of Eugene encouraging the use of "renewable natural gas." Renewable natural gas is not a fossil fuel, but is natural gas derived from organic waste material from farms, landfills, and treatment plants.
- 81% of voters believe that before Eugene councilors considers bans on natural gas, they should be required to determine the impacts on carbon emissions and the costs to families and businesses. Of that support, 58% strongly agree and 23% somewhat agree – a ratio that demonstrates the depth of support.
- 80% agree that all forms of renewable energy – hydro, wind, solar and renewable natural gas – are needed in a balanced, low-carbon future. In a related question, 81% of respondents strongly (48%) or somewhat (33%) supported local Eugene government encouraging the use of renewable natural gas.
- A total of 75% strongly (47%) or somewhat (28%) agreed that families and business should have a choice of energy options to meet their needs and not have their choices mandated by city councilors.

Finally, a solid majority (65%) thinks the best course of action is to use energy efficiency and carbon offsets to cut short-term emissions as we transition from traditional to renewable natural gas.

*DHM Research has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States for over 40 years. The firm is nonpartisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making.*