

May 2023

Key Findings from a Survey of Voters in Deschutes County, Oregon on Natural Gas and Natural Gas Policy Options

From April 4-10, 2023, DHM Research conducted a survey sponsored by Cascade Natural Gas in Deschutes County to assess opinions about natural gas and potential policies to ban natural gas. The survey consisted of 500 registered voters (300 from the City of Bend and 200 from the rest of the county) and took approximately 12 minutes to complete. The margin for error, at 95% probability, is ±4.4%.

- **Deschutes County voters overwhelmingly oppose natural gas bans.** Some elected leaders and advocates are considering proposals to ban natural gas. The survey tested two ways of describing these proposals: (1) banning natural gas in new homes and buildings and (2) requiring new homes and buildings to use only electricity for heating and cooking, sometimes called electrification. 69% of Deschutes County voters oppose natural gas bans and 73% oppose electrification.
- **County voters like natural gas.** 71% of county voters have a positive impression of natural gas, similar to the percentage of voters with positive impressions of solar (71%) and hydropower (72%).
- **County voters value choice.** 86% agree that families and businesses should have a choice of energy options to meet their needs, and 84% agree that they shouldn't be forced to use only electric appliances.
- **81% of voters would support Deschutes County encouraging the use of renewable natural gas.** Only 10% would oppose such efforts.
- **County voters expect convincing evidence before restricting natural gas.** 89% of county voters agree that the county should be required to determine the likely impacts of carbon emissions and costs to families and businesses before banning natural gas.
- **90% of county voters believe the County Commission should refer any proposal to ban natural gas to the ballot for a public vote.** Only 10% think the County Commission should act on its own.
- **Voters think the most important issues in the county are homelessness and housing affordability.** Asked open-ended to name the top problem in the county, 39% named homelessness and 20% mentioned housing affordability. Together, most voters think the top issues to focus on are ensuring people have housing and can afford to stay in their homes

DHM Research has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States for more than 40 years. The firm is nonpartisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making. Its clients include media, governmental agencies, environmental organizations, business associations and corporations.