



The Elway Poll

An independent nonpartisan analysis of public opinion trends in Washington and the Northwest

13 NOVEMBER 2017

Is There a Hole in the “Cascade Curtain”?

The “Cascade Curtain” has been a mainstay of political punditry in Washington state for decades. Republican on the dry side of the Cascade range, Democratic on the wet side. The stereotype has never been quite as accurate as it has been fun and convenient. There have been Democrats and Republicans elected from both sides of the mountains since statehood – clear evidence of Republican and Democratic voters all over the state. But the meme has persisted.

The 2016 election tore a hole in the Cascade Curtain model, when several coastal counties went for the GOP presidential candidate for the first time since Herbert Hoover. This has prompted a consideration of the “urban-rural divide” Washington politics, paralleling the national exercise.

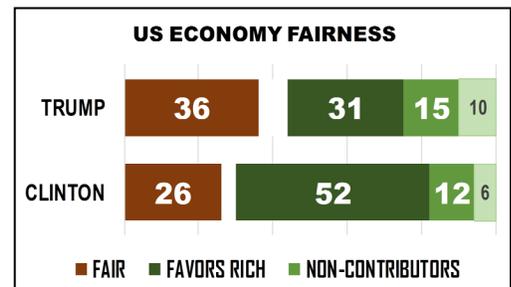
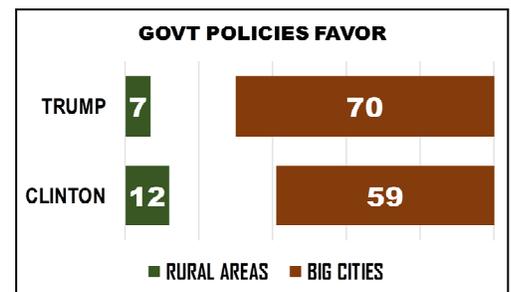
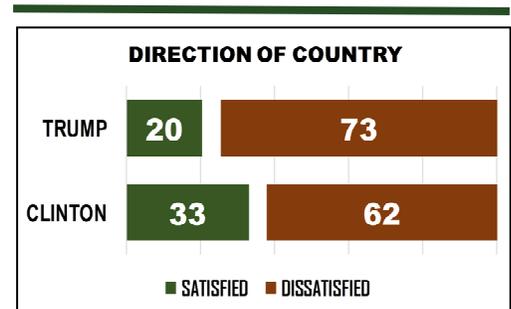
This edition of *The Elway Poll* continues that exploration, begun in April (4/7/17), by looking at fundamental political attitudes in Clinton vs. Trump areas. The April survey compared attitudes in counties that Clinton won vs. counties that Trump won. This time, we sliced the geography thinner to compare legislative districts won by the respective candidates to account for political diversity within counties. We also compared answers from voters in cities, suburbs, towns and rural areas.

The topics explored in this survey are fundamental attitudes, not specific policies. This was done to bring philosophical contrasts into high relief, not competing policy proposals.

As in April, the findings reveal deep divisions between Republican and Democrat partisans, which play out differently in different areas of the state. Eastern Washington is still mostly red and Seattle is still deep blue. Elsewhere, where the parties are in closer balance, political issues are more open for debate. These are the “swing” districts that will determine the power balance in the legislature until the 2020 census results in new district boundaries.

Three of the eight issues were widely agreed upon:

- Dissatisfaction with the direction of the country – although that is really an agreement to disagree, because there are quite different ideas about what a satisfactory direction would be. Notably, voters in Trump districts were more likely to be dissatisfied than voters in Clinton districts (73% v. 62%).
- By a ratio of 6:1, most said government does more to help people “in and around large cities” than it does to help “people in rural areas and small towns.” Trump district voters were more likely than Clinton district voters to say that (70% v. 59%).
- Most voters agreed that the US economy was not fair to people like them, but that is where the unity ended:
- Most Clinton district voters said that the economy favored the rich, while
- Trump district voters were much less likely to agree and more likely to say that the economy was fair to people like them.
- A minority in both types of district said the economy was unfair in favor of “people who don’t contribute to the economy.”



Prevalent Attitudes in Legislative Districts won by Clinton and Trump

The comparison of legislative districts won by the respective presidential candidates indicates that there is considerable disagreement on fundamental issues within both Republican and Democrat districts, which comes as no surprise, but does serve as a check on the impulse to stereotype these districts.

It is important to keep in mind that this analysis focuses on the districts, not the individual voters. Thus “Clinton district voters” refers to all the voters in legislative districts won by Clinton, not just people who voted for Clinton. In this survey, 61% of respondents live in a district won by Clinton; 39% live in a district won by Trump. Clinton won the state 54% to 38%.

Generally, there was more unity in the Clinton districts than in the Trump districts. There was a majority for all six of these questions in the Clinton districts. In the Trump districts, there were smaller majorities on two of the six issues, and no majority on either side for another two.

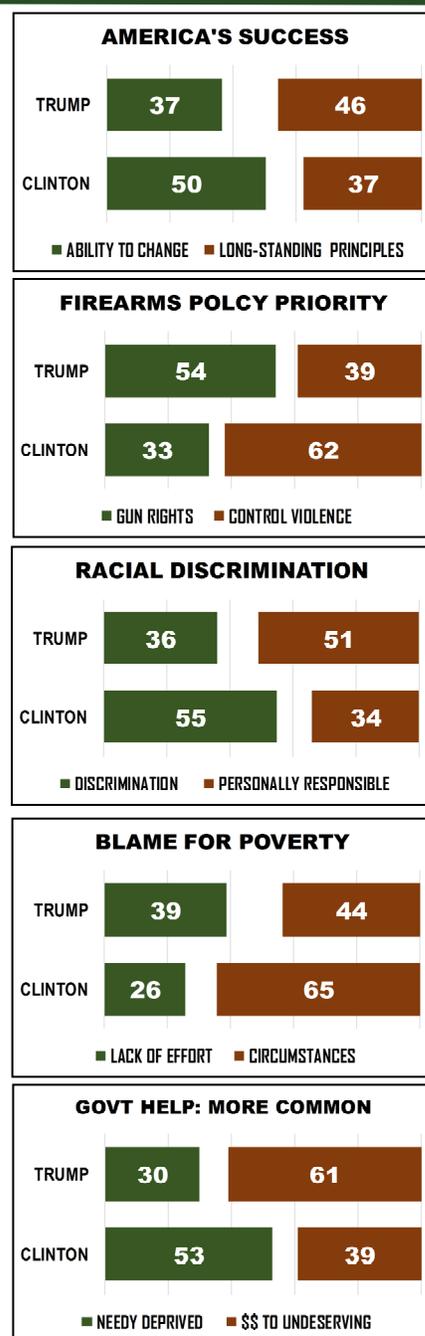
In districts won by Clinton:

- 65% said that circumstances beyond a person’s control are mostly to blame if that person is poor;
- 62% favored controlling gun violence over protecting gun owners’ rights;
- 59% said that government does more to help people in big cities than people in rural areas;
- 55% said racial discrimination is the main reason why many minorities can’t get ahead;
- 53% thought it is more common for needy people to go without government assistance than it is for irresponsible people to get assistance they do not deserve;
- 50% said America’s success is due to its ability to change.

In districts won by Trump:

- 70% said that government does more to help people in big cities than people in rural areas;
- 61% thought it more common for irresponsible people to get government help they don’t deserve than it is for needy people to go without government assistance;
- 54% prioritized protecting gun owners’ rights over controlling gun violence;
- 51% said that minorities who can’t get ahead are mostly responsible for their own condition;
- Voters were divided on the source of American success, but a 46% plurality believed that it had more to do with reliance on long-standing principles than ability to change;
- Voters were somewhat divided on the cause of poverty, but a 44% plurality said that if a person is poor, it is mainly due to a lack of effort on their part.

Values questions asked in this survey are from the Pew Center American Values study: <http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/> or The Washington Post/ Kaiser Foundation survey of Rural America: www.kff.org



Exploring the “Urban-Rural Divide”

There were definite differences in attitude related to community type in these findings. Respondents were asked to describe their community as large city, smaller city, suburban, small town or rural.

The most significant differences between urban and rural voters were around gun laws and government assistance:

- 56% of rural respondents prioritized gun owner rights over controlling gun violence; while
- 67% of large city and 56% of suburban voters said controlling violence was more important.
- Voters in smaller cities and small towns leaned toward controlling gun violence but were more evenly divided: 50% to 46% in smaller cities and 48% to 47% in small towns.

As to government assistance:

- 60% of rural, 58% of small town, and 52% of small city residents said it was more common for irresponsible people to receive government assistance than for needy people to go without it.
- 56% of big city dwellers and 52% in the suburbs had the opposite view.
- Small town residents were more likely than others to say that minorities who can’t get ahead are responsible for their own condition (58%) and that poverty is due to lack of effort (48%) more than external circumstances (40%).

	STATE	LARGE CITY	SUB-URB	SMALL CITY	SMALL TOWN	RURAL
Direction of the country						
Satisfied	25%	20%	21%	30%	29%	29%
Dissatisfied	75%	75%	78%	65%	65%	64%
Do you think the gov’t does more to help...						
People in rural areas and small towns	10%	14%	12%	7%	10%	7%
People in and around large cities	64%	59%	57%	73%	64%	68%
Economic system fairness						
Generally fair to people like you	30%	25%	29%	38%	30%	31%
Unfair in favor of the rich and powerful	44%	48%	55%	37%	44%	32%
Unfair in favor of people who don’t contribute to the economy	13%	13%	6%	18%	15%	15%
America’s success more due to...						
Its ability to change	45%	49%	46%	48%	39%	45%
Its reliance on long-standing principles?	40%	33%	46%	44%	41%	41%
Gun laws: More important						
Protecting gun owner rights	41%	28%	34%	46%	47%	56%
Controlling gun violence	53%	67%	56%	50%	48%	40%
Main reason many minorities can’t get ahead:						
Racial discrimination	48%	55%	59%	46%	31%	42%
Mostly responsible for their own condition	41%	30%	32%	45%	58%	46%
More often the reason a person is poor:						
Circumstances beyond his/her control	56%	63%	68%	54%	40%	47%
Lack of effort	31%	25%	25%	35%	48%	31%
Govt assistance: more common						
Needy people going without govt help	44%	56%	52%	42%	32%	33%
Irresponsible people getting help they don’t deserve	48%	34%	40%	52%	58%	60%

Sample Profile

500 registered voters, selected at random from registered voter lists in Washington state, were interviewed October 26-29 by live, professional interviewers. 33% of the interviews were conducted on cell phones. The margin of sampling error is ±4.5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means, in theory, had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within ±4.5% of the results reported here at least 95 times.

REGION

King County	30%
Pierce + Kitsap	15%
North Sound (Snohomish to Whatcom)	17%
Western Washington (Clallam to Clark)	17%
Eastern Washington	20%

GENDER

Male	48%
Female	52%

AGE

18-35	11%
36-50	22%
51-64	34%
65+	30%

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Democrat	35%
Republican	26%
Independent	39%

OCCUPATION

Retired	34%
Self Employed / Owner	12%
Professional	20%
White Collar	14%
Blue Collar	11%
Not Employed	7%

EDUCATION

High School	12%
Some College	29%
College Graduate	34%
Post Graduate	24%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

<\$50,000	19%
\$50 - 74,000	20%
\$75 - 99,000	13%
\$100,000+	27%
No Answer	22%

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PROPRIETARY QUESTIONS: Each quarter, space is reserved in the questionnaire to allow for proprietary questions. The fee for proprietary questions is \$1000 per question. You will receive the results of your question(s) with full crosstabulations within three days after the interviews are completed.

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Partisan Divide Deep and Wide

As in the April survey, this one found the partisan divides to be much stronger than the geographic divides. Democratic and Republican majorities were on opposite sides on 6 of these 8 questions. There is more cohesion among Democrats than Republicans.

Independents were between the partisan positions on each issue.

Most divisive—besides guns—were questions of societal vs. personal responsibility for a person's well-being, and government's role in that equation.

As seen elsewhere in this report, there are cross-cutting winds in less densely populated areas of the state, which may make some areas more competitive that they have been in the past.

Democrats hold a 9-point identification advantage—just under their 8-year average of 10 points.

This means Republicans still must pick up 60% + of the Independents to win statewide.

With Independents tilted toward the Democrats on 6 of these 8 issues, Republicans will continue to be tacking into the wind in statewide races.

