

TO: Interested Parties
 FR: EMC Research
 DT: 1/30/25
 RE: Washington State Budget Research

Methodology

This memo reflects the results from a statewide multi-modal survey of 600 registered voters in Washington state. The survey was conducted January 13-21, 2025 and has an overall margin of error ± 4.0 percentage points

Summary

Voters in Washington State are more pessimistic than optimistic and there is concern about the economy and the availability of good paying jobs. But despite this current pessimism, a majority of voters are optimistic about the future of Washington state, and most say they are proud to be Washingtonians.

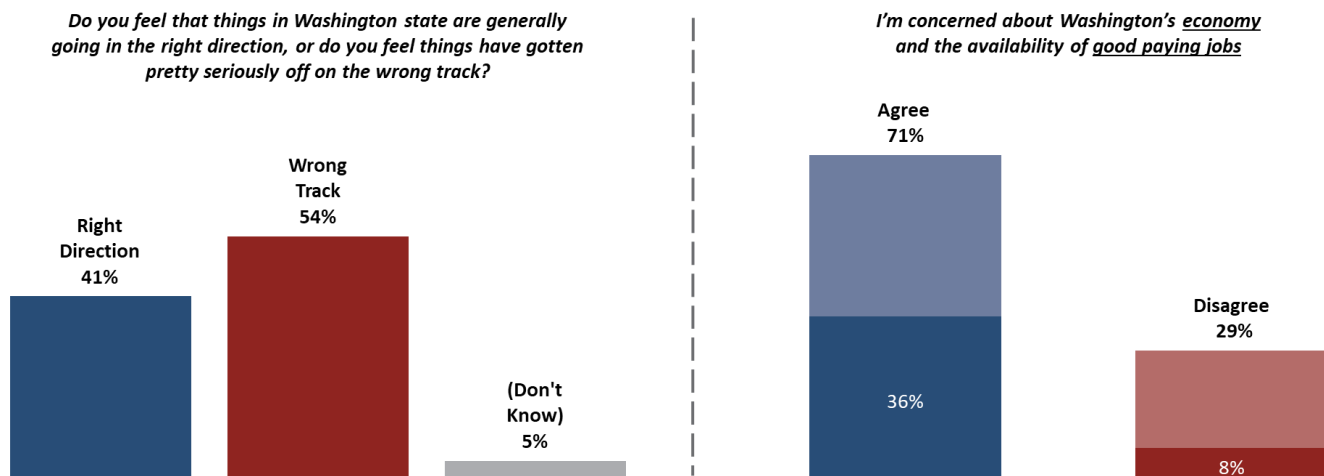
Before any messaging:

- *voters are significantly more likely to say that the state deficit is “primarily due to the legislature failing to control spending” rather than being a result of “inflation, population growth, and increased demand”*
- *voters overwhelmingly believe that the cost of any increased spending will be passed on to them, making affordability even worse*
- *nearly two-thirds believe our state will lose good paying jobs as a result of increased spending*
- *fewer than 1-in-4 think past state spending has improved quality of life and a majority think it is unlikely that this new spending will be any different*

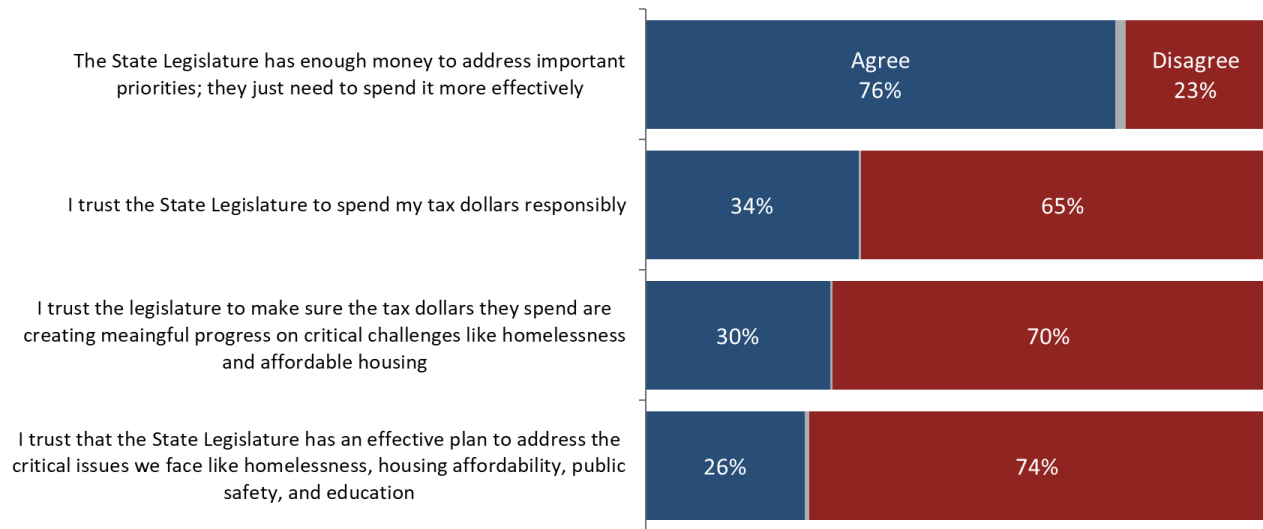
These attitudes lead a majority of Washington State voters to oppose this new spending - prior to any messaging - and opposition grows after voters hear messaging from both sides.

Key Findings

Voters are pessimistic about the direction of Washington state, and they are very concerned about the economy and the availability of good paying jobs.



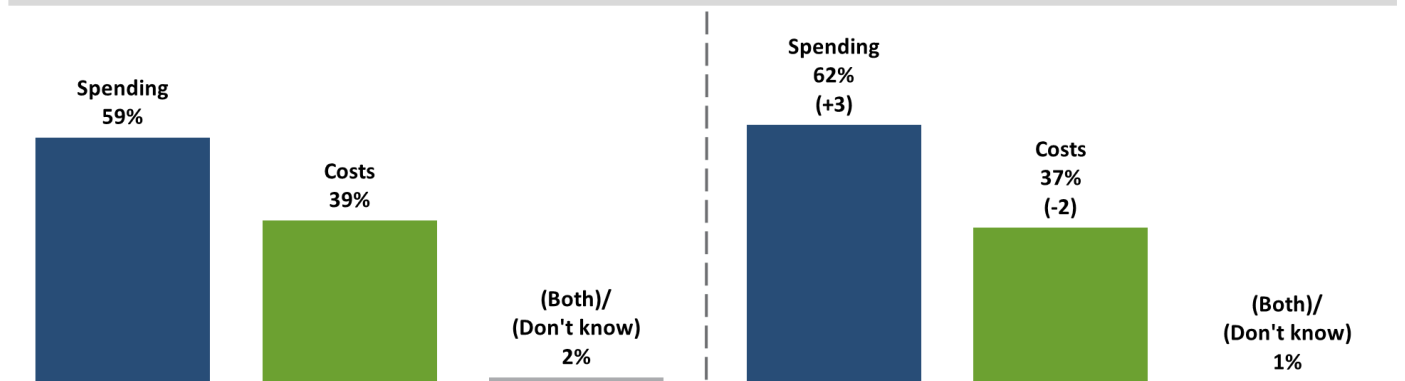
Voters do not trust the state legislature: most voters believe the legislature already has enough money to address important priorities, most do not trust that the legislature has an effective plan to address critical issues, and most do not trust the legislature on spending or fiscal responsibility.



Prior to any messaging, voters are more likely to say the state deficit is “primarily due to the legislature failing to control spending” rather than being a result of “inflation, population growth, and increased demand.”

- Messaging for and against new spending reinforces voters’ belief that the state deficit is a spending issue.

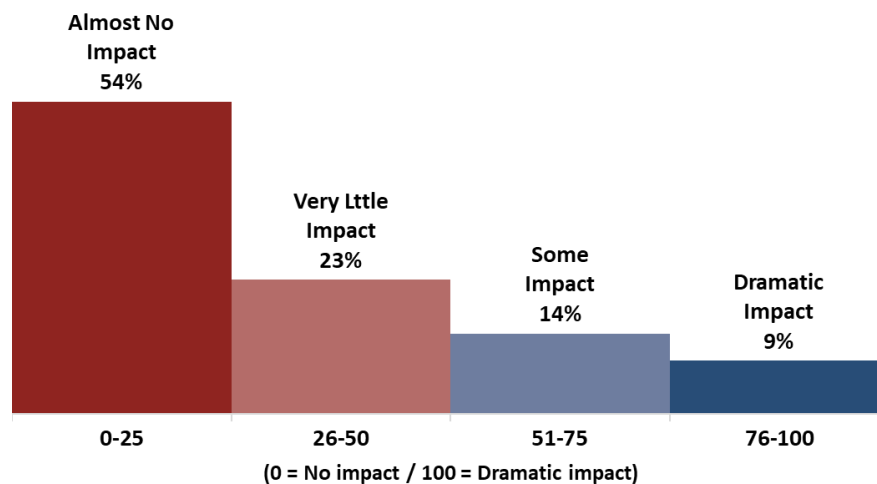
*As you may know, Washington state is currently facing a \$12B budget shortfall. Do you believe that this deficit is: primarily due to the legislature failing to control spending **OR** primarily due to inflation, population growth, and increased demand driving up the cost of the services?*



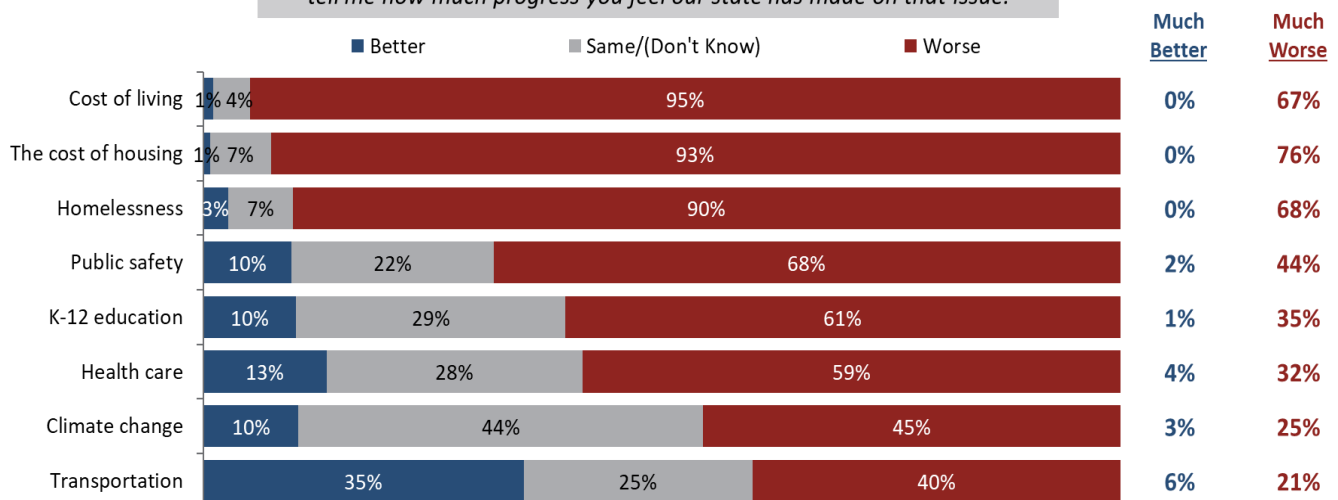
Very few voters believe that the doubling of state spending over the last decade has had any meaningful impact on quality of life.

- More than three quarters (77%) of voters say that the doubling of state spending over the last decade has had almost no impact or very little impact on improving quality of life in Washington state.
- Almost all voters (90%+) believe cost of living, cost of housing, and homelessness have gotten worse and supermajorities think these issues are “much worse.”
- Voters are the most optimistic about transportation, but even on this issue, only a third believe transportation has gotten better and only 6% think transportation has gotten “much better.”

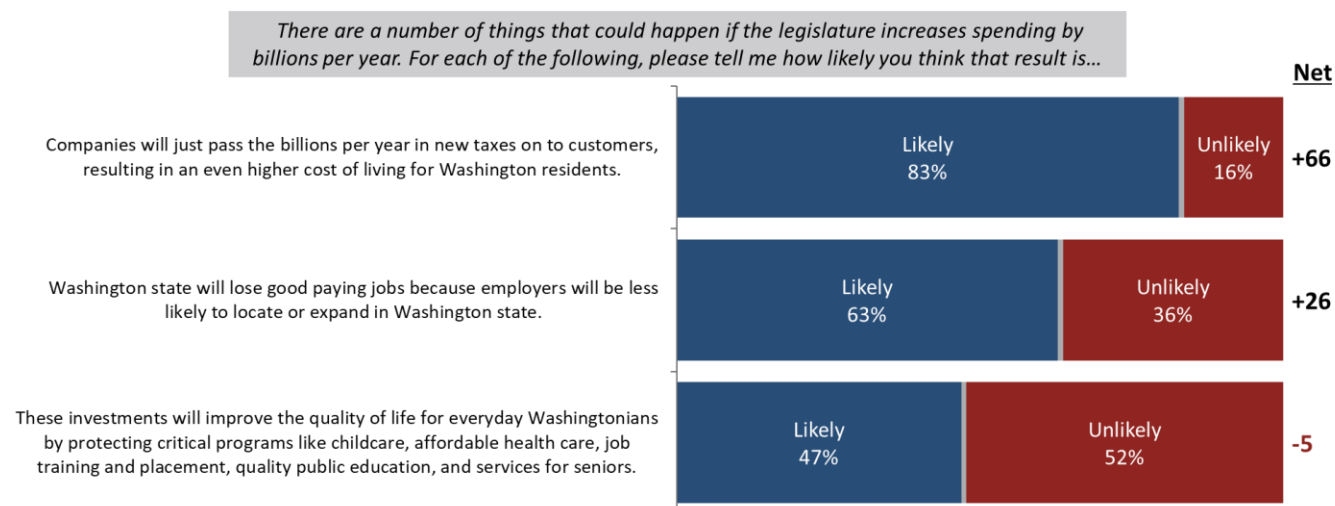
State spending has doubled over the last 10 years. How much do you think this increased spending has improved quality of life in Washington state?



For each of the following areas that receive significant state funding, please tell me how much progress you feel our state has made on that issue.



Voters aren't convinced that increasing spending by billions more per year will improve quality of life, but they do overwhelmingly believe it will drive up cost of living and that it will cost the state good paying jobs.



Voters start out believing that increasing state spending by billions per year is a “bad idea” and after hearing messaging from both sides that belief solidifies.

- Opposition messaging is particularly effective with voters because it is consistent with what voters already believe: that the cost of this new spending will get passed on to them, that past spending hasn't led to a better quality of life, and that increased taxes will hurt jobs and the economy.
- Arguments about the benefits to everyday Washingtonians of increased investments, about tax fairness and ability to pay, and about the consequences of going through another cycle of significant budget and program cuts like the state did in 2008 are much less effective than opposition messages.

