

## Crosscut.Elway | Poll

### Poll: Washington voters less optimistic, more split by party

*Economy tops concerns; worries about COVID seem to drop entering third year of pandemic*

**SEATTLE**—While most Washingtonians feel good about the future for themselves and their households, a [new Crosscut/Elway Poll](#) finds fewer than half expect things to get better over the next year in their communities, the state or the country.

The “voter outlook index”—which measures how people feel things will go during the next year in their households, communities, state and country—is the lowest it’s been since the summer of 2011. The statewide survey was conducted in the last week of December among registered voters.

Almost 60% of voters said things were looking up in their own households. But only 48% said the same for their communities, 47% for the state, and just 43% for the country. All four measures are lower than they were a year ago. It’s common for people polled to feel better about their own lives than how things look more broadly.

Perspectives on the future were split by party, as were responses to most questions. Supermajorities of Democrats, and majorities of independents, said things will go well at every level. Supermajorities of Republicans said things are getting worse.

Topping voter concerns were economic issues such as inflation, named by nearly one-third as the most important issue for the Legislature to tackle this year.

People are seemingly settling into life during the COVID era. As the pandemic enters its third year, 23% of voters said it was their top concern—down almost 30 points from the same time last year. More than three-quarters of respondents said they knew someone who had contracted COVID, up from 55% a year ago.

Fifty-two percent favor vaccine and mask mandates in public places, but the same number opposed forcing private businesses to place those mandates on employees. Democrats overwhelmingly agreed with both mandates, while Republicans overwhelmingly opposed both.

“The general take-away from this survey is that voters are weary of the pandemic and wary of the economy,” said pollster Stuart Elway. “But they are deeply divided by party over what to do about either.”

Homelessness, which had dropped last year as the top concern of 13% of participants, rose back up to 21%, placing it third among voter priorities.

“Getting a sense of what people in the state are concerned about, especially in an election year, is critical,” said Crosscut Executive Editor M. David Lee III. “These are some of the issues we need to continue covering. These are issues that journalism needs to hold people accountable on.”

Approval of job performance for Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat in his third term, fell to its lowest point. Sixty percent said he was doing a fair or poor job; 39% rated him excellent or good.

Meanwhile, political party identification is closer than it's been in four years. If party registration were required, 36% said they would register Democrat; 27% Independent; 29% Republican.

Though Democrats still hold a lead in support, it has fallen. Forty-two percent of respondents said they were inclined to vote for all or mostly Democrats in state legislative races this year; 39% said they'd vote for GOP candidates. In January 2020, Democrats had a 17-point lead on this question.

"Democrats have had a double-digit advantage over the last few years, but the results of this survey are right in line with the 30-year average of a 6 or 7 point Democrat advantage," Elway said.

The poll was conducted Dec. 26-28, 2021 with 400 registered voters living throughout Washington state. A quarter of respondents participated in live calls by landline; another 25% by live cell phone calls; and the remaining half online after text message invitation.

It has a margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$  at a 95% confidence level. This means that had this same survey been conducted 100 times, the results would be within 5 percentage points of the results reported here at least 95 times.

Crosscut's reporting on the Crosscut/Elway Poll is available for free republication by any news outlet as part of the [Republish Collection](#).

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