

Executive Summary

A grassroots organization that started with next to no funding was just 574,291 votes away from doing what established organizations and elected leaders have been discussing for years. These following results further demonstrate that the general public has reached a consensus around “should” we act on climate change, but not “how” we act.

This initiative received endorsements from groups and individuals who identified as Republican, Democrat, Green Party, and Socialist Alternative. The majority of the general public has reached a consensus that climate change is happening. Polling has consistently shown that over 60 % of Washington voters support state action on climate change. The challenge lies with motivating those who are undecided about taking action. I-732 identified 41 % of the electorate that is ready to take action on climate change right now. Future climate efforts will have a considerably easier time with this base of support in place. Compared to trying to identify and mobilize 51 % of the electorate, the next effort must consolidate the 41 % of the electorate that already supports climate action and engage an additional 10 % of the electorate to act on climate by supporting a price on carbon pollution.

This report builds on findings from outside research to complete a picture of the electorate. These findings are meant to provide analysis and recommendations for Carbon Washington’s next steps. Currently, there are at least two carbon tax proposals in the state legislature. There are additional challenges with funding education, as well as many new committee leaders. Regardless of the outcome of this legislative session, Carbon Washington has fostered a grassroots base that will continue to advocate for an equitable carbon tax.

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Demographics of voters on I-732 (Puget Sound Region)

Results indicate that partisanship is the best predictor of support for I-732. At the precinct level, parts of Washington that leaned Democratic voted for I-732 at far greater margins than those that trend Republican. By comparing correlations to other issues on the ballot, there is evidence that indicates that I-732 was viewed foremost as a tax increase.

- The average 100% minority district (there are 7) had 61% support
- The average majority minority precinct had 52% support for I-732
- The district with a 100% white district had 33% support

Results suggest that most minorities supported I-732, but maybe a few percentage points less than would be expected when measuring for partisanship.

Compared to the 2008 general election, there was a weaker voter turnout (77 % in 2016, compared to 85 % in 2008). This likely led to a drop in support for Initiative-732. About one-third of Washingtonians live in King County, where voter turnout dropped from 84 percent in 2008 to 82 percent in 2016. In addition, blank-votes in more moderate districts were detrimental.

Characteristics of precincts opposing and supporting I-732

Demographics of precincts opposing I-732		Demographics of precincts supporting I-732	
Support I-732:	34%	Support I-732:	59%
Support Patty Murray:	54%	Support Patty Murray:	84%
Average income:	\$ 68,000	Average income:	\$ 69,000
Median age:	40	Median age:	37
Drive to work:	86%	Drive to work:	67%
White:	85%	White:	77%
Hold 4-year degree:	33%	Hold 4-year degree:	55%
Male:	49%	Male:	49%

- Support for I-732 is correlated strongest with precincts where fewer residents drive to work, and to a lesser degree, those that spend a longer time getting to work. Precincts in which more people take public transportation would represent this statistic.
- I-732 is also strongly correlated with more residents holding a four-year degree.
- It also has a strong association with a higher percentage of minorities in each precinct.
- It is also correlated with precincts with a higher fraction of males and younger people.
- It is also correlated with a higher median household income. In this instance, higher income is more likely to support, but less likely to support after controlling for

partisanship.

I-732 won at the county-level in two counties, San Juan and King County.

- Support was highest overall in San Juan County.
- Among cities in King County, support was highest in Seattle, and lowest in Black Diamond.
- I-732 won significant support from parts of Washington with majority-minority population compositions, as well as the most liberal precincts in the state, including most of Seattle.
- Support was lowest in Columbia County in southeast Washington, which is the third least-populated county in the state.

Within Sound Transit district, I-732 was more correlated with Sound Transit 3 than with other any major statewide ballot item.

- For both measures, the strongest correlation is with fewer residents driving to work.
- Both Sound Transit 3 and I-732 are positively correlated with the fraction holding a 4-year degree, but I-732 is to a larger extent.
- It is also possible from these results that those with better access to transit both expect to benefit more from Sound Transit 3 and expect to pay less gasoline tax under I-732. In this sense, correlations between Sound Transit 3 and demographic variables look very similar to those between I-732 and demographic variables.

In the Sound Transit 3 area, Murray outperformed I-732. Sound Transit 3 also outpolled I-732 within this area. This loss occurred in precincts where Murray outperformed I-732 despite a strong correlation in other parts of the state.

- Across the state, I-732 got 1.265 million votes in support, and 1.839 million votes opposed, totaling 3.104 million.
- In order to win, I-732 needed to pick up every Murray vote within the Sound Transit 3 area.
- Alternatively, if I-732 had picked up every Sound Transit 3 voter, it would have only needed an additional 200,000 votes in the rest of the Puget Sound to win.
- There is no evidence that I-732 had particular appeal among moderates. In fact, blank votes in I-732 were more common in moderate districts.
- There was a also drop in moderate votes with Sound Transit 3.

- There is such a thing as a measure that appeals disproportionately to moderates, but it does not appear that I-732 was such a measure.
- In comparison, I-1501, the seniors protection measure, was actually more popular in moderate districts, compared to liberal or conservative districts.
- To a lesser extent, I-1491 the gun control measure, was also more popular in moderate districts.

I-732 voting results are highly correlated with leftist voting positions all major statewide candidates and measures.

Strength of correlation

1.0000	perfect correlation
0.50 to 1.00	strong correlation
0.30 to 0.50	medium correlation
0.10 to 0.30	low correlation
0.000	no correlation

Whether the correlation is negative (-) or positive (+) indicates the direction of the relationship. If positive, variables will increase together. If negative, one variable will increase as the other decreases. For example, - 0.95 indicates a strongly correlated, inverse relationship.

- Correlations are slightly higher on economic than on social issues. Correlations are slightly higher with Franz or Inslee, who are seen as specifically pro-environment, as opposed to Murray, who is liberal, but not specifically seen as an environmental candidate.

	Franz	Inslee	Murray
i732	0.9312	0.9296	0.9234

- Murray, the baseline liberal vote, is not quite as correlated with I-732 as with Initiative 1433, the minimum wage measure (minwage). However, Murray is correlated more with I-732 than with Initiative 1491, the gun control measure (guncont) or Initiative 1464, the campaign finance reform measure (campfin).

	minwage	i732	guncont	campfin
Murray	0.9430	0.9234	0.9102	0.8477

- I-732 results positively correlated with local fire and roads tax measures in Bellevue. Moreover, I-732 is more correlated with the local tax measures than with any statewide

votes (with the exception of Bellevue fire levy being correlated with minimum wage just slightly more than I-732).

These results suggest that I-732 was seen as a relatively generic left-leaning economic policy measure, and specifically as a tax increase.

	blvroad	blvfire
i732	0.6860	0.6016

- I-732's weaker correlation with Bellevue proposals than with ST3 suggest that the carbon tax was seen as a big complicated tax increase. This suggests that Sound Transit 3 and the Bellevue proposals were seen as a small targeted tax increase.
- In the 7th congressional district race, I-732 was positively correlated with support for Jayapal in spite of the fact that she opposed it and Walkinshaw endorsed it.
- In a precinct-by-precinct examination of the data found that there were several precincts where it is almost mathematically impossible that more than half voted the same way on I-732 as their preferred House candidate.
- These results suggest very low information voting. Another possible explanation is that voters assumed they could support Jayapal and I-732 without any conflict.

In the days following the election, the Nature Conservancy and Vulcan, Inc. commissioned a study about I-732, and published a summary of their findings in a blog.

Stroo, Hans D. (2016, Nov 28). Washington State Opinion Polling Shows Strong Support for Climate Action. *Plan Washington*. Retrieved from <http://planwashington.org/blog/archive/washington-state-opinion-polling-shows-strong-support-for-climate-action/>

- Findings showed that the majority of voters based their decision on ballot language, citing that “only 20 % of voters said they had ‘heard a great deal about I-732.’” Compare this to Sound Transit 3, for which 60 percent had heard a “great deal” about it.
- The findings also show that support for climate action remains strong

80 % said they “are sure climate change is occurring.”

62 % said they believe human-activities are mostly to blame

69 % said they support the state of Washington taking action to reduce carbon pollution

- Respondents were read three statements and asked to choose the one that was closest to their own opinion:

38 % chose: “Even if I-732 is not perfect, it’s an important step forward in fighting climate change.”

29 % chose: “I-732 is too flawed. I support action on climate change but want to wait for a better measure.”

23 % chose: “Washington State does not need to take additional action on climate change.”

**10 % must have said “other”, “none” or chose not to respond*

- The percentage of respondents who chose the first statement is roughly equal to the 41 % percent of voters that [supported 732 at the ballot](#). The sum of the percentage of respondents who chose the second or third statements equals 52 %, which is just 7 percentage points away from those who voted to oppose at the ballot.

Ultimately, it seemed that voter comprehension, not their lack of concern for climate change, was the major obstacle to passing a carbon tax.

- Subsequently, Carbon Washington achieved the largest voter education effort in our state’s history. We can continue to build on this knowledge to achieve equitable and effective policy.
- While working on passing policy, organizations should actively engage groups that represent social justice and communities of color.
- Moderate voters will require the most effort, and represent the part of the electorate that remains undecided about climate action, despite having reached a consensus about climate change.
- It is clear that taking sufficient action on climate change will have to occur in steps.
- It is recommended that Carbon Washington forms action committees to address the growing concerns of climate change in our state.
- The voters who supported I-732 represent those who are ready to take action on climate change, and understand that a carbon tax should be effective and equitable.