

PORTLAND COMMUNITY STUDY

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What We Wanted to Learn



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Problem: People are searching, but Jesus isn't in their consideration set.

Approach: Come near and listen

- 1) Emotional, relational & spiritual needs
- 2) What keeps people from trusting Jesus?

02

PDX Methodology, Findings

DETAILED FINDINGS

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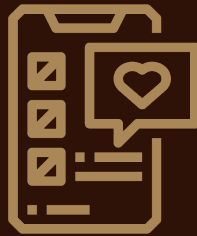
Methodology

EXPERT INTERVIEWS



Faith, Business,
Nonprofit, Govt

QUANTITATIVE



N=1K, 40 Mi.

DESKTOP



History, Media,
Context

QUALITATIVE



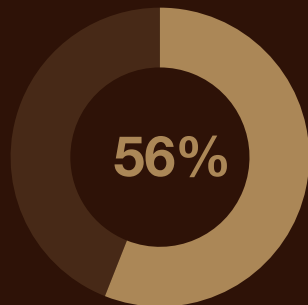
5 Focus Groups
5 Ethnographies

The Stakes – Impending PDX Exodus



| IN 5 YEARS...

Only ...

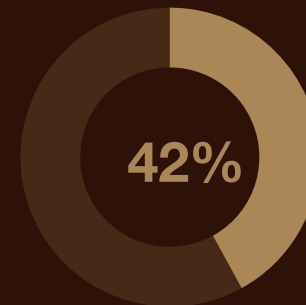


of Portlanders see themselves living in Portland

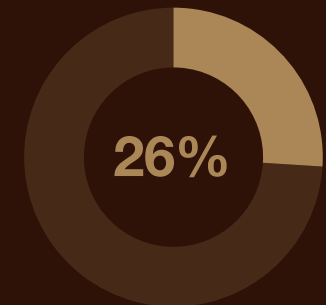


| IN 10 YEARS...

Only ...



Of Portlanders see themselves living in Portland



of Gen Z see themselves living in Portland

FAITH PERSPECTIVES

Portland feels far from Jesus

	NATIONAL	PORTLAND
% that feel close to Jesus	46%	28%
% interested in learning more	74%	41%
% who think Jesus is personally important	76%	43%

CJ1: How close would you say you are to Jesus today?

CJ2: Looking ahead, how interested are you in learning more about Jesus?

JJ2: Overall, how important is Jesus in your daily life?

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COMPARISON TO NATIONAL

CN Targets: Spiritual Distinctions

	SPIRITUALLY SEEKING SKEPTICS		GEN Z	
	NATIONAL SAMPLE	PORTLAND	NATIONAL SAMPLE	PORTLAND
% that feel close to Jesus	N/A		26%	11%
% interested in learning more	40%	23%	69%	24%
% who think Jesus is personally important	35%	8%	61%	27%

- CJ1 How close would you say you are to Jesus today?
CJ2 Looking ahead, how interested are you in learning more about Jesus?
JJ2 Overall, how important is Jesus in your daily life?

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03

Portland: The Essence

DETAILED FINDINGS

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What's afoot in Portland?

Individualism obstructs
collective action

- “Pioneering” ethos creates distrust in convention and institutions and makes Portlanders difficult to organize
- Focus on self (e.g., purpose, identity) pushes external issues to the periphery of their minds

Chronic crisis environment
warped Portland's psyche

- Mass development, pandemic, drug legalization, natural disasters, civil unrest, etc.
- Portlanders have become more isolated, more defensive, and more narrow-minded

Portland's become less
“weird”

- Essence of “Portland Weird” = extraordinary, honest, experimental, expressive
- Current state of Portland = performative, judgmental, passive (virtue-signaling), stifling

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Portland Challenge

INDIVIDUAL > COLLECTIVE

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KEEP PORTLAND WEIRD

When you bring strange, extraordinary characters together, the interpersonal tension inspires expansive creativity, experimentation, and action.

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Portland is conflicted about conflict as it grasps for a weirdness that was.

The friction that used to provide creative tension now descends into intellectual attack.

Portland has become protective and insecure.

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External crises dominated headlines

Mass development, Covid,
Drug legalization,
Wildfires, 100 days of
protests, Proud Boys vs.
Antifa, etc.

Heightens existing issues:
homelessness, addiction, racism,
polarization

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THE PORTLAND MINDSET

Internal turmoil bubbles below the surface

ISOLATED

Less personal, more abstract interactions
National news as entertainment
People become more attached to distant commentary than Portland

NARROW

Weird becomes less strange or extraordinary...rather crystalized as a specific set of values to defend against more powerful outside forces (e.g., the oppressor, the institution, Trump / MAGA, climate change)



DEFENSIVE

Portland...becomes emblematic of cultural strife, environmental anxiety, and social failure
Portlanders...feel attacked from afar and isolated at home...become less creative and expansive, and more judgmental and reductive

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THE PORTLAND MINDSET

Portlanders are becoming...

MORE

Performative

Judgmental (closed off)

Passive (virtue-signaling)

LESS

Honest

Experimental (open)

Productive (applied values)

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A large, colorful mural on a wall. The mural features a stylized face with a green nose and a person in the foreground. The text "THE PORTLAND MINDSET" is visible in the top left corner of the mural.

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Ethos

Portland is losing its capacity to embrace the friction of independent expression and dissonance, while retaining (and perhaps amplifying) its individuality of responsibility

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Opportunity: From → To

FROM...

Trying to “protect” what Portland was

*Protect = backward-looking,
reactionary, closed off, brittle*

TO...

Creating the circumstances or dynamics to be
“weird”

*Embrace natural, interpersonal human friction
through shared action and purpose*

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04

Portland: The Issues

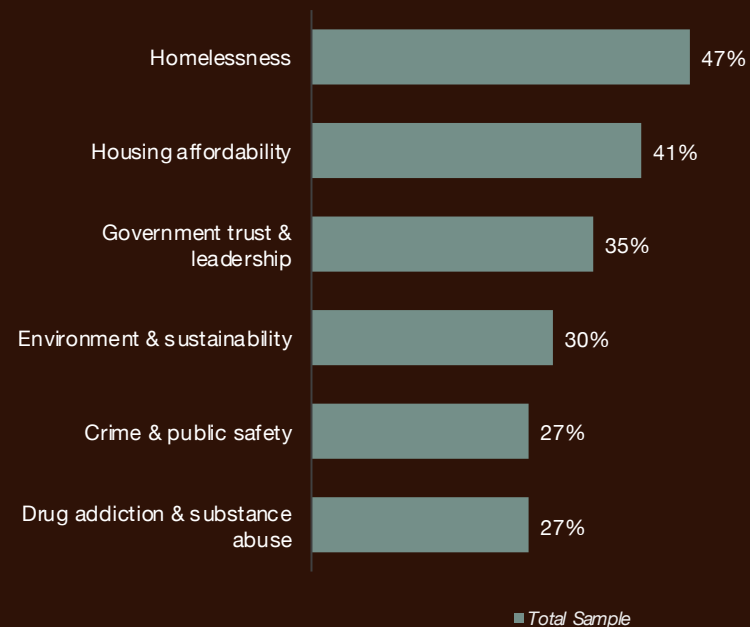
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CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY

Housing crisis is top of mind

PRIORITIES FOR PORTLAND (% FIRST RANK)



Our Neighbor is more concerned about the environment (44%) and community polarization & social cohesion (33%) than the total population

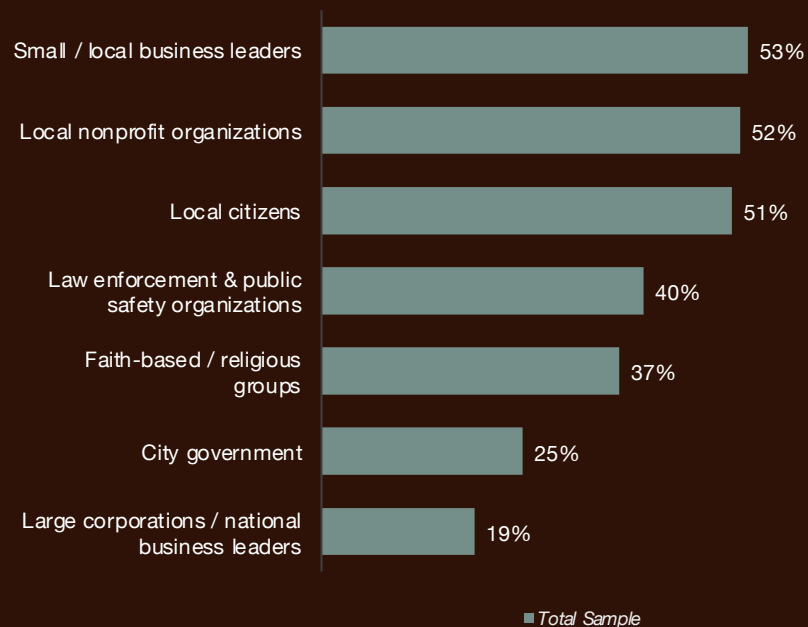
Gen Z is more concerned about safety and security than older Portlanders

For Gen Z, government trust & leadership is not a priority (8%)... or it's a lost cause

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY

Trust small and local, not BIG

DEGREE OF TRUST (% TOP 3 BOX)



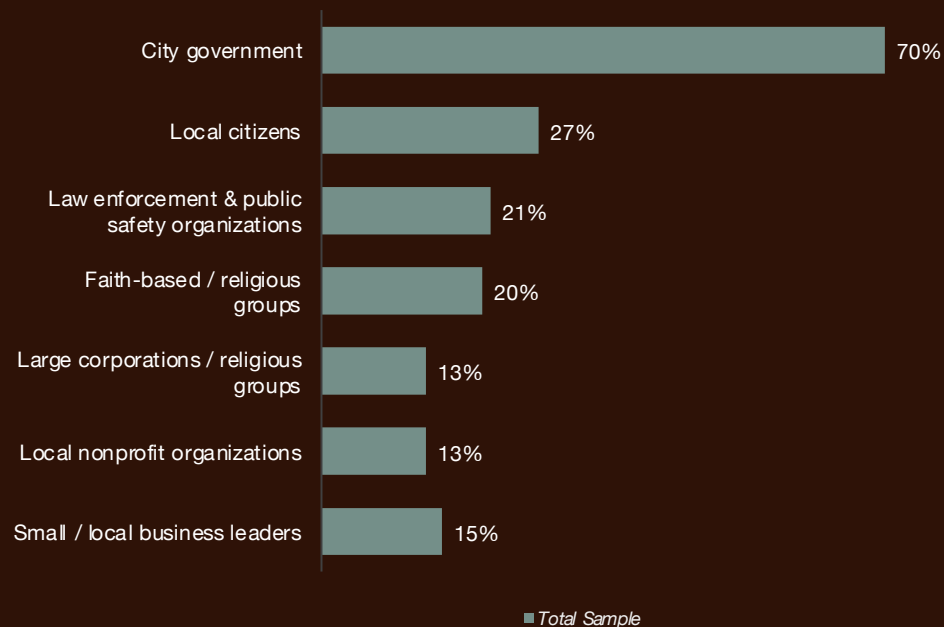
Our Neighbor has more trust in small businesses (60%) and less trust in large corporations (14%)

Gen Z has less trust in law enforcement (26%)

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY

City government bears responsibility

GROUPS TO TAKE LEAD IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES (% FIRST RANK)



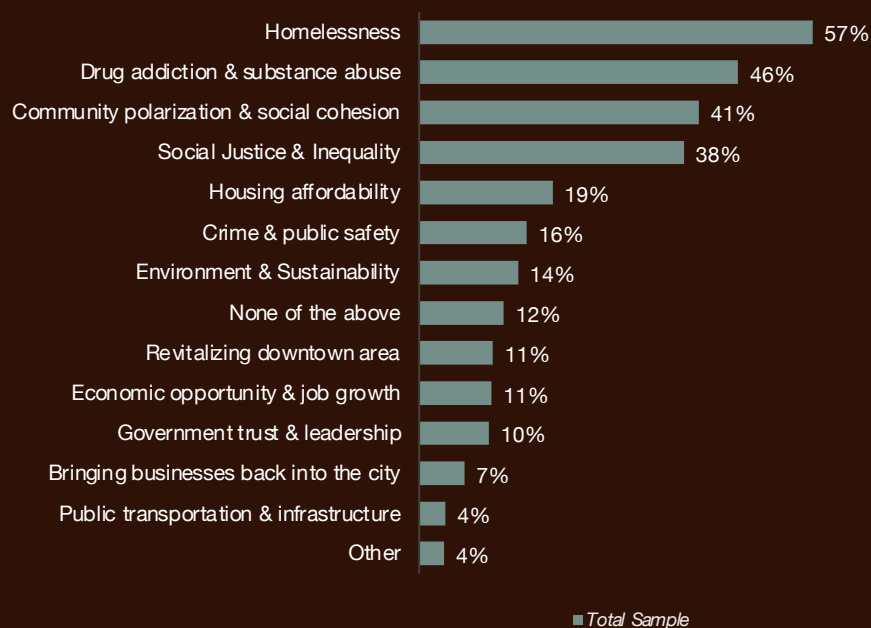
Our Neighbor places more responsibility on law enforcement (30%) and less on city government (65%)

Gen Z places more responsibility on local citizens (39%) and faith-based groups (33%) than older generations

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY

Faith groups positioned to address key issues

ISSUES FAITH / RELIGIOUS GROUPS BEST POSITIONED FOR



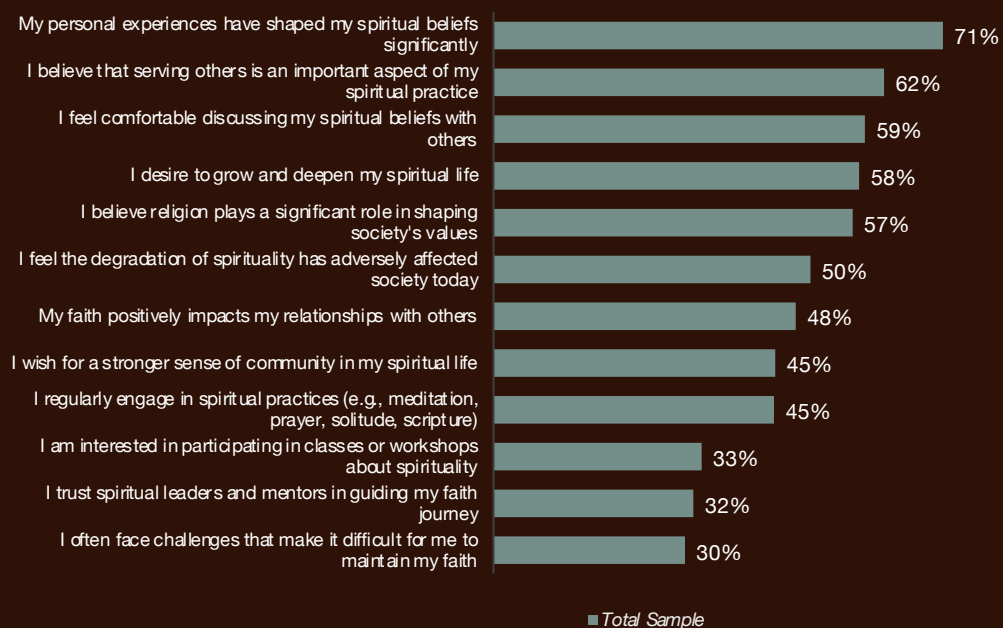
Our Neighbor thinks faith groups are best positioned to address homelessness (64%), drug addiction (62%), and social justice (48%) more than the total population

Gen Z has lower expectations for faith groups in addressing homelessness (44%), drug addiction (38%), and community polarization (33%) compared to older generations

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CITY

Service is a spiritual act for Our Neighbor

SPIRITUAL GROUP & DEVELOPMENT (% TOP 3 BOX)



Serving others is an important aspect of spiritual practice for 80% of Our Neighbors (but for only 41% of Gen Z)

05

Portland: Faith Perspectives

DETAILED FINDINGS

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Christianity as an impersonal institution

INSTITUTIONAL NEGATIVITY DOMINATES PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Nefarious motives – judgment, recruitment / conversion, money, power

Historical baggage – scandal, bigotry, hypocrisy, misogyny (from national/global high profile faith leaders or congregants)

MAGA stench – anything that smells like MAGA is condemned. Anything that is right of left is MAGA-adjacent

Dogmatic or naïve – association with people who don't think critically

INTERACTIONS WITH LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITIES ARE POSITIVE BUT LIMITED

Examples: my barber, the teachers at my daughter's Catholic school, fellow community volunteers, a church I pass in my neighborhood

These are considered good people in spite of their Christian practices

FAITH PERSPECTIVES

Our Neighbors more open to faith partnership than total pop despite concerns over expressing faith

Portlanders are afraid to openly admit they are Christians...or in some cases, spiritual at all

66%

(and only 50% of Our Neighbors) feel they can profess their faith without persecution

Portlanders are open to working with a faith-based group...on the right initiative

45%

(but 62% of Our Neighbors) would be open to working with a faith-based group

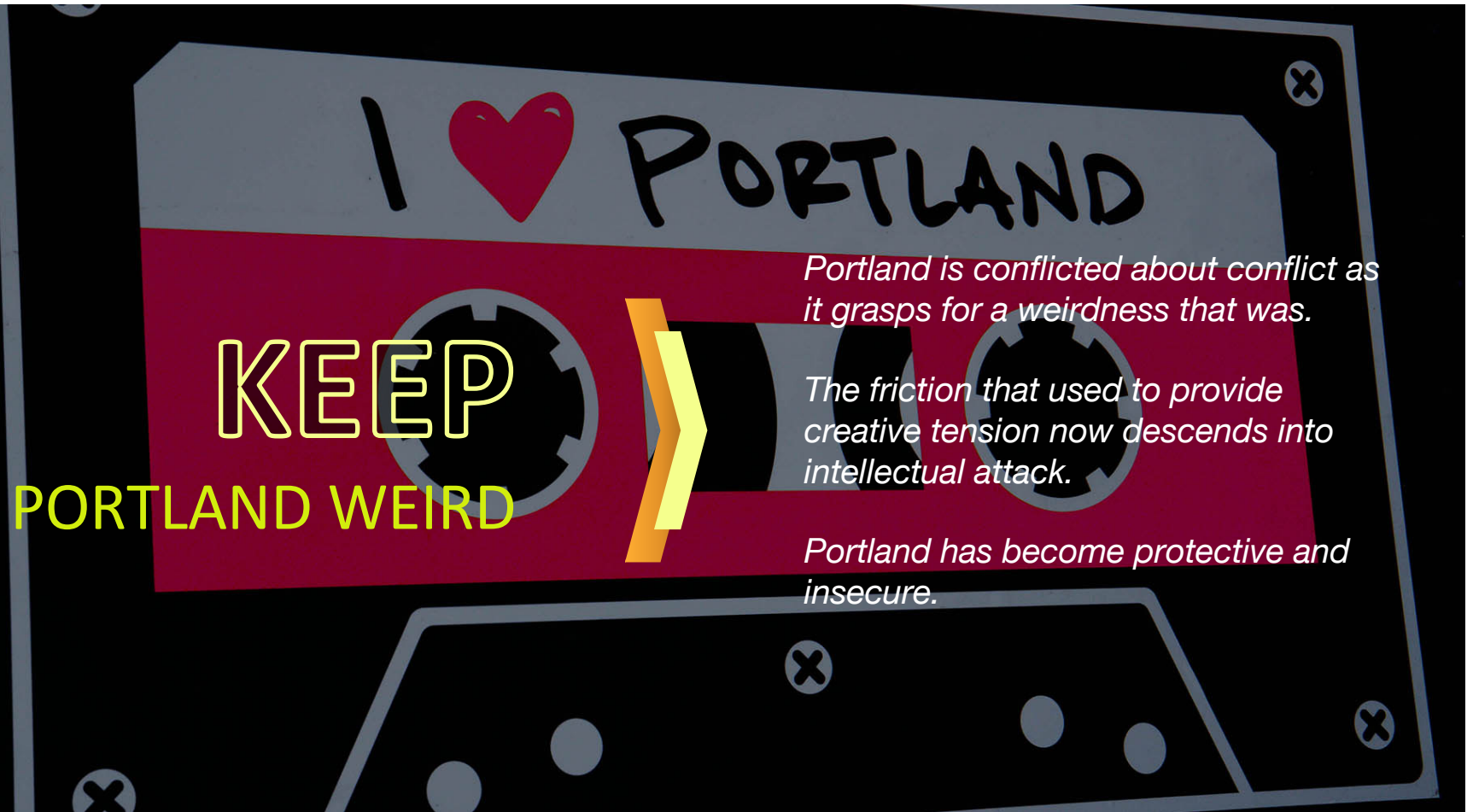
Still, skepticism of the initiative's "agenda" arises any time Christian faith is involved

37%

(but 49% of Our Neighbors) trust an organization that includes a statement of Christian faith in its mission

- P21 Would you be open to working with a Faith-based / religious group on community issues?
- P22 How much trust do you have in an organization that...?
- P23 How do you feel about the following statements about Christianity?

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