

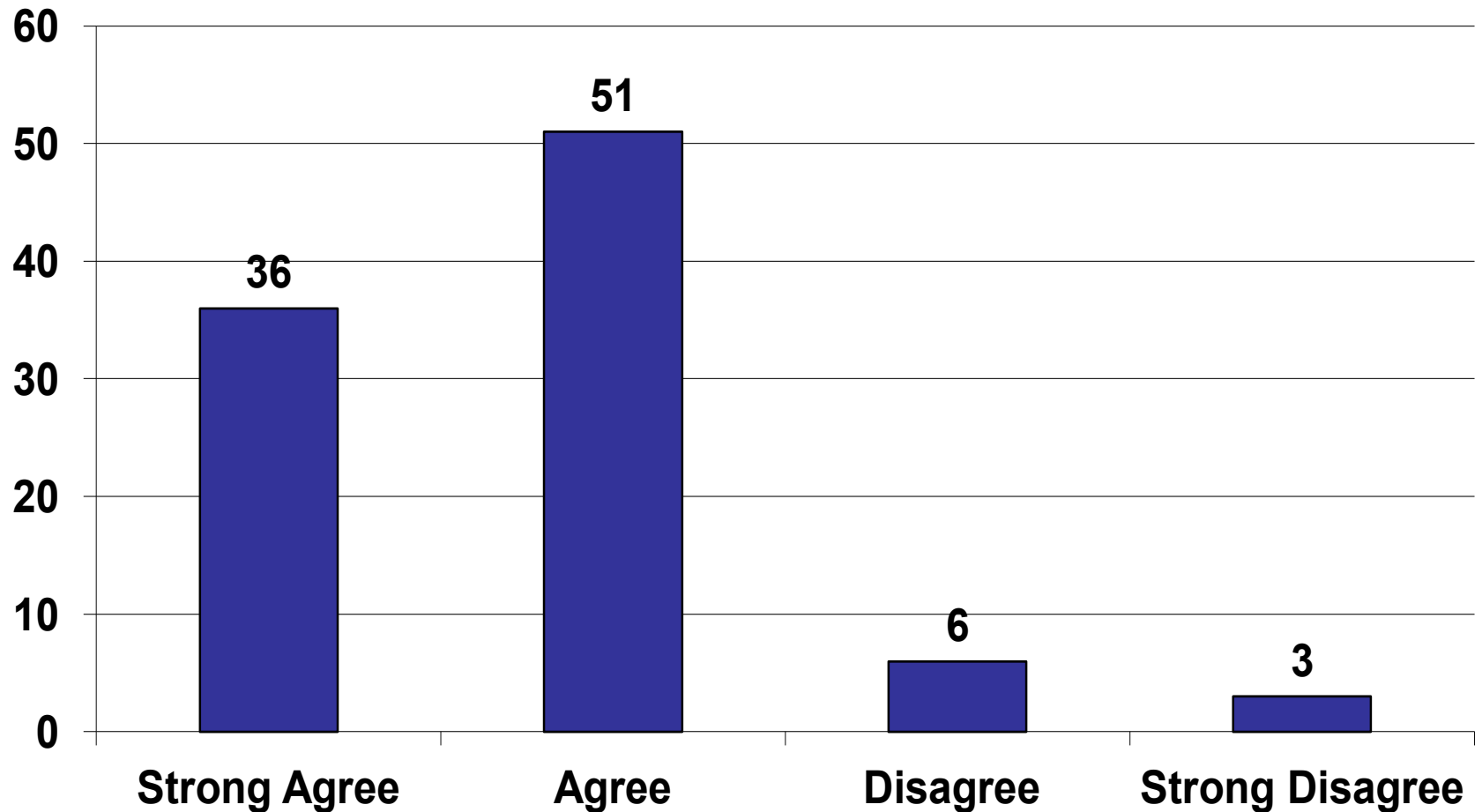
Living Guilt Free in a Society of Mass Consumption

Public Interest Law Conference 2015



Our country would be a better place if we all consumed less.

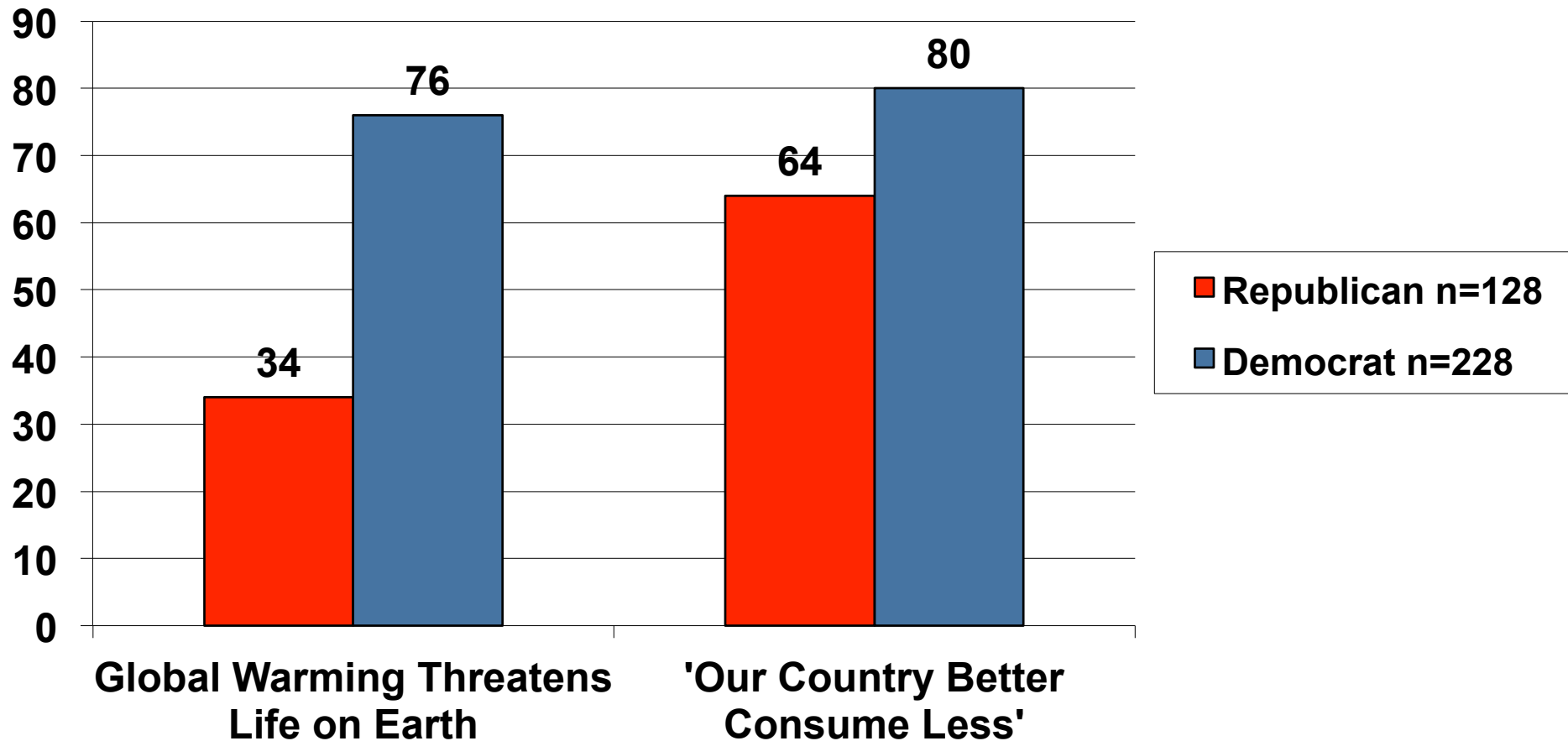
PI - March 2008 n=400



Political Party Ideology Comparison

Compare - Global Warming : Consume less

PI November 2008 n=400 V4A/V1A (% Combined Agreement of Sector)





Robin Quirke, PolicyInteractive
Associate Researcher

**When values and behaviors align:
A study of individuals with pro-environmental
values who live a low carbon lifestyle**



People who walk their talk

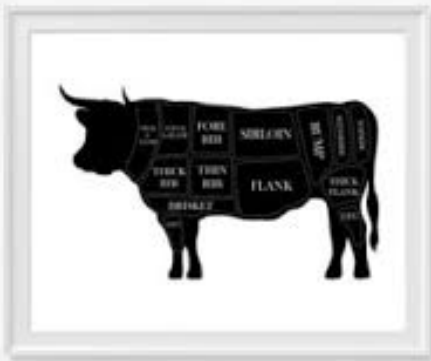


Study aim

The study aim of this project is to contribute to the understanding of what guides individuals to choose low carbon lifestyles.

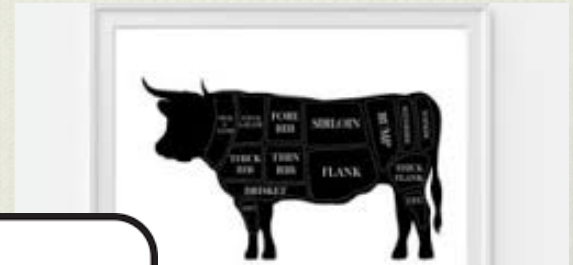
Why is this research important?

Understanding why or why not individuals are lowering their carbon footprints can be helpful in guiding consumptive behaviors to a more globally sustainable level.



= HARMFUL LEVELS OF GREENHOUSE GASES

VALUE-BEHAVIOR DISCONNECT



Example of value-behavior disconnect



New Environmental Paradigm

NEP1 The so-called 'ecological crisis' ... been greatly exaggerated. [Reversed]

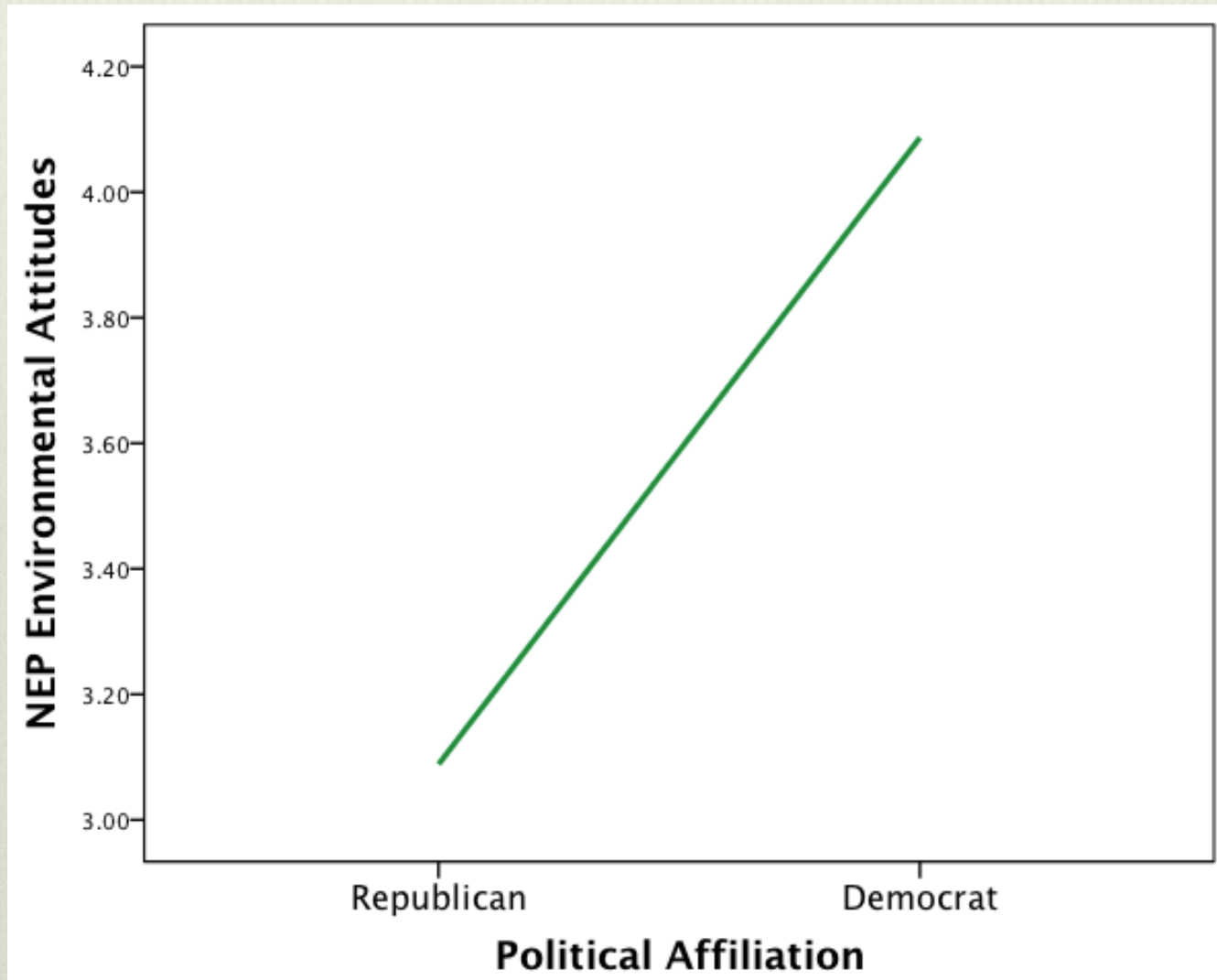
NEP2 The earth is like a spaceship with limited room and resources.

NEP3 ...we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.

NEP4 The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations. [Reversed]

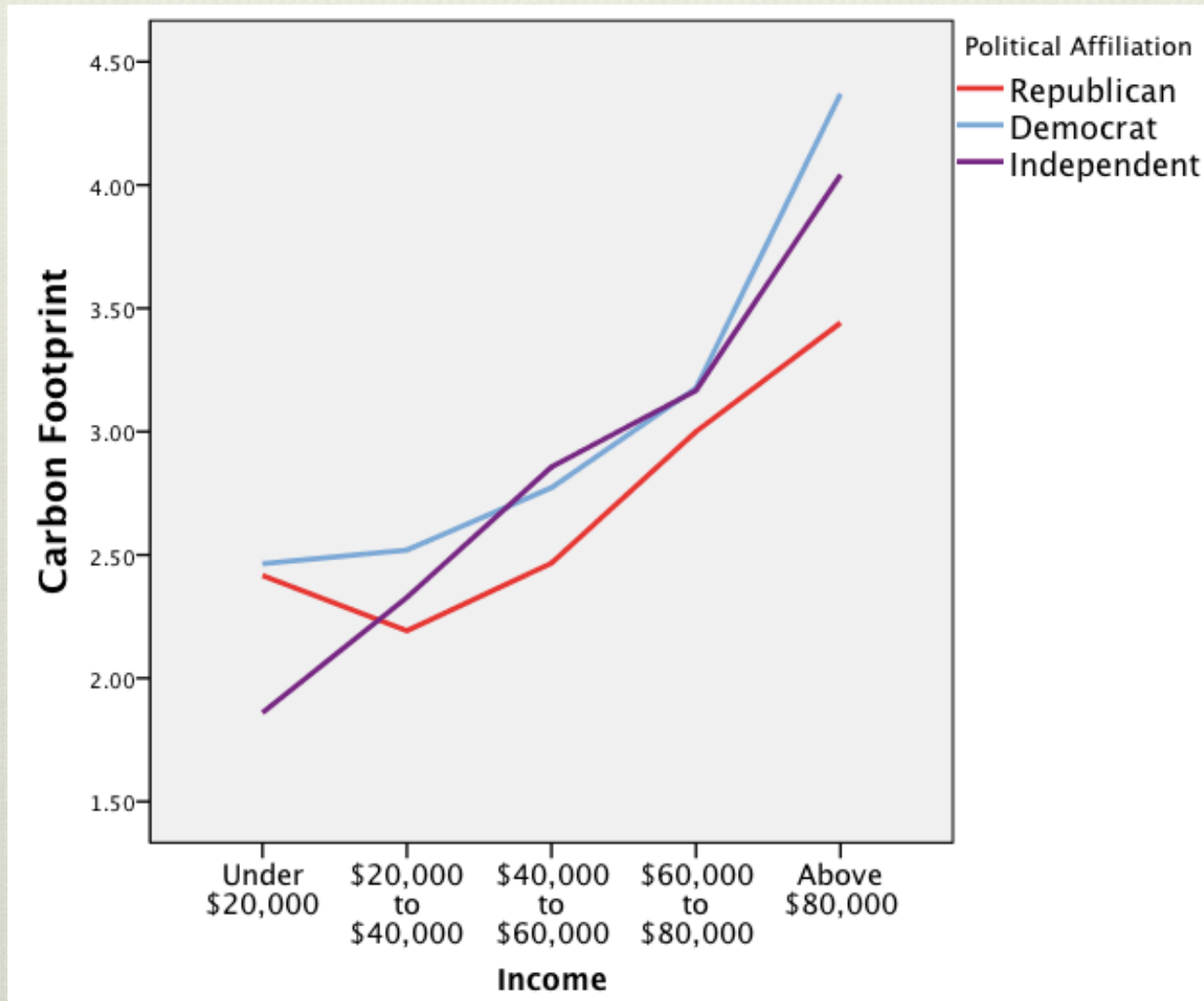
NEP5 Humans are severely abusing the environment.

Democrats: Higher environmental care



$F(1, 201) = 73.73, p < .001^{***}$ Republicans $n = 70$, Democrats $n = 133$ (PolicyInteractive/SFSU, 2011).

Income as predictor of carbon footprint



$F(2, 311) = 1.668, p < .190$ Republicans $n = 70$, Democrats $n = 133$, Independent $n = 111$
(PolicyInteractive/SFSU, 2011).

Theories on why people are slow to adjust environmental behaviors

Drop in the bucket effect

Sympathy and callousness: The impact of deliberative thought on donations to identifiable and statistical victims, Small, et. al., 2007.

Individualistic culture, hedonistic

An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values, Schwartz, 2012.

“Time-delayed, abstract, and often the statistical nature of the risks of global warming does not evoke strong visceral reactions.”

Experience-based and description-based perceptions of long-term risk: Why global warming does not scare us (yet), Weber, 2006.

See others as responsible: oil industry, the government

Emotional reactions to environmental risks: Consequentialist versus ethical evaluation,
Bohm, 2003.





How do they feel and think about why they have chosen a low carbon lifestyle?

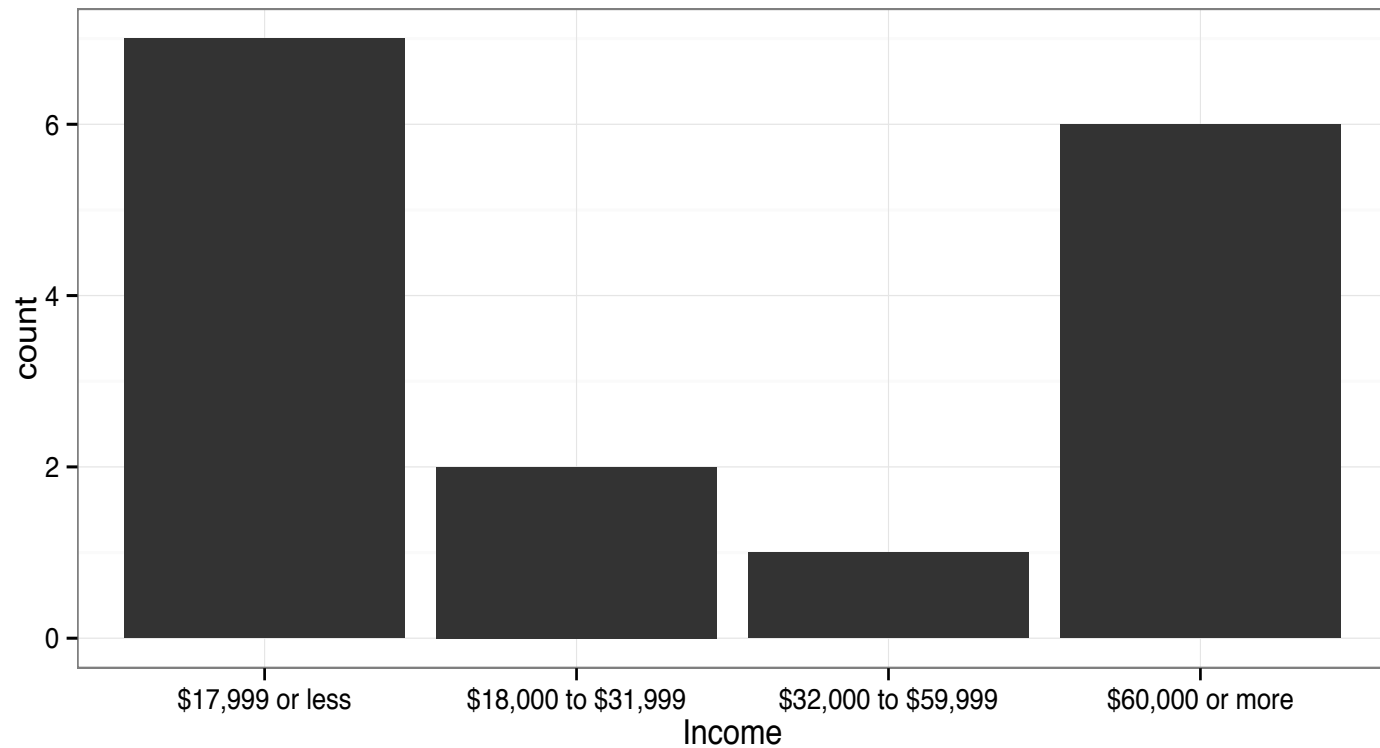
Sample

- ❖ 16 American adults
- ❖ Live low carbon lifestyles by choice
- ❖ Using DEQ's Oregon Carbon Calculator, each participant's carbon footprint had to be at least 50% smaller than the average American household with a similar income, same # of people in household, and similar local economy.
- ❖ 4 females, 12 men
- ❖ 15 white, 1 Hawaiian (3 people chose "other": Celt, Italian, American)

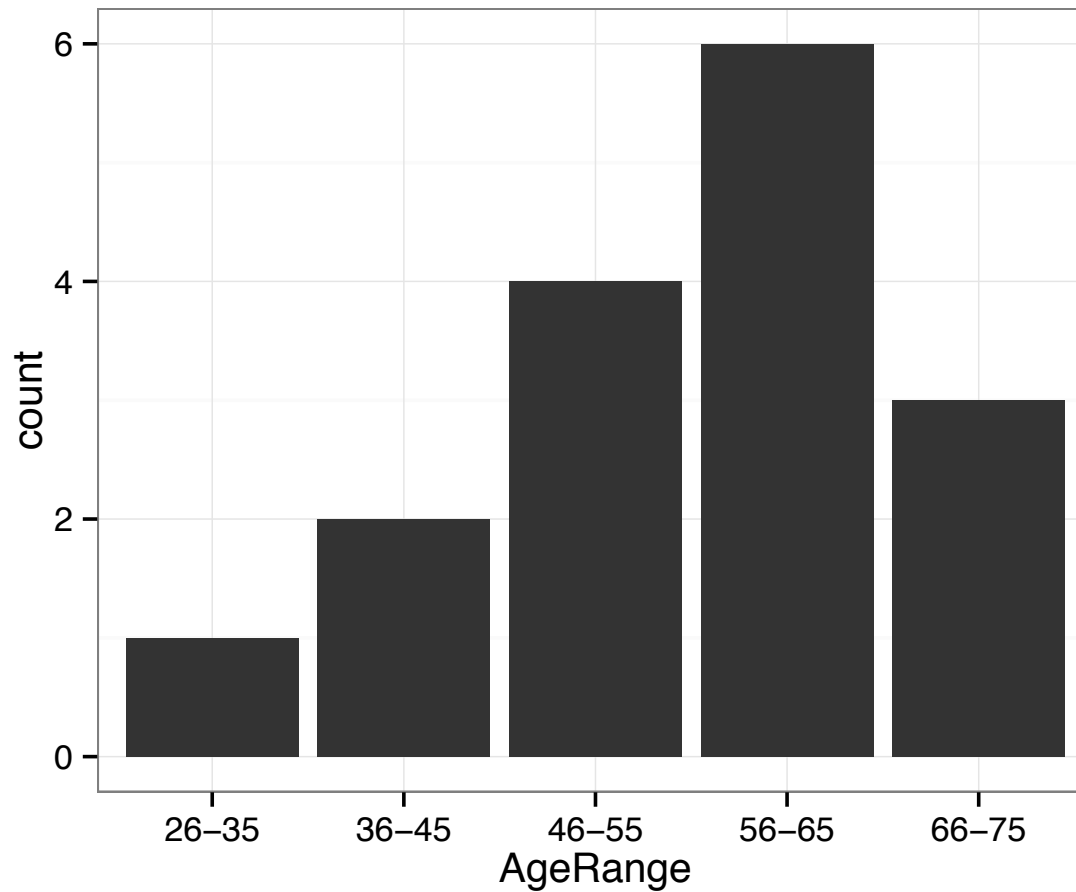
Occupations

- ❖ Construction worker
- ❖ Registered nurse
- ❖ Urban Homesteader
- ❖ Local government, city planner
- ❖ UO Computer System Administrator
- ❖ Adjunct professor, semi-retired
- ❖ Tinkerer
- ❖ Teaching assistant
- ❖ Downtown business-owner
- ❖ Yoga Instructor/LMT
- ❖ Landscaper
- ❖ UO Energy Systems Program Assistant
- ❖ Wildlife Worker
- ❖ Permaculturalist/Gardner
- ❖ Retired (2)

Household income ranges



Age ranges



Commonalities among interviewees

1. Societally unique

Societally unique

024: “I always felt like an outlier. [...] Being an outlier, you’re freer. Don’t have to worry about what people think.”

028: “I tried for 40 years to prove I was the same...but apparently there is something different.”

037: “I definitely don’t conform very well to things; I never really have. Like seeing what’s going on and not really wanting to participate because it doesn’t go with the way I live my life or based on my integrity of living my life.”

2. Different from their family

Different from their family

023: “I think my siblings have always been more accepting of me. My parents were accepting in a way, but they were also like don’t you want to get a house and get a car and get this and that?”

037: [Referring to 4 brothers] “None of them even remotely [laughs] in any way are doing what I am doing.”

035: [Robin: Why are you different from your siblings?] “[...] having a regular job with a certain amount of money wasn’t a priority.”

3. Low materialism

Low materialism

001: “My mother once told me that she thought I was unusual as a child in that I didn't ask for a lot of things.”

005: “I never cared about appearances; never wanted fancy clothes or ‘stuff.’”

003: “When I started going back to school, [...] to me that was following what was important to me, and placing satisfying work above material wealth.”

4. Egalitarian

A belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs

Egalitarian

032: “It’s very important to share with people so they can help support their families.”

035: “I think Americans, we consume more than our share...”

034: [Robin: What are your guiding principles?] “Don’t take more than you need.”

5. Deeply aware of cause and effect

Cause and effect

024: “At some point it dawns on you that this is a bad design. Having that much volume of this stuff going into a finite, it’s just, they didn’t do the math on it to recognize the effects, or if they did, they suppressed it.”

027: “If I won the lottery tomorrow, I would not move to that fantasy seventeen acres just outside of town, because it’s just not feasible. Just think about how much I’d be driving my truck to and from that fantasy life. It’s a logical conclusion. Just do the math.”

6. Melancholic

Melancholic

002: [Apologizing for tears] “Sorry, I just love nature, and we’re destroying it.”

003: [Through tears] “I struggle a lot with the place that we’re in, and especially what feels sort of inevitable. [...] There’s this sense of hopelessness and that’s what causes me so much frustration, is that it does feel like we could if we wanted to, but then to see us just pissing away the opportunity on so many fronts, on so many levels...”

7. Frugal

Frugal

032: “I am a pragmatic, cheap bastard. I am very frugal and unapologetic about it. I don’t like fancy. I like simple, plain stuff that lasts a long time, is durable, and works. Goes with humility. I like to do things that benefit my family and community instead of making me look good or just for pleasure.”

037: “I’ve always been conservative when it comes to spending money.”

038: “If it costs a lot of money, it’s probably worse than nothing.”

8. Scientific intelligence

Scientific intelligence

023: “I did well in math and science. That was my primary focus.”

028: “Out of 100 guys, I’d be #2 in intelligence.”

032: “I’m a very scientific person.”

038: “I aced everything in school.”

006: [About IQ] “Certainly it's way above average, but I don't think that's it, I just think I think things through. I think about things a lot.”

9. Innate

Innate

021: [Robin: Why are you different from the average American?] “I don’t know. It just resonates.”

032: “There are a whole lot of rednecks who live like I do. I do it by choice, which probably sets me apart.”

035: “I think it’s something in my nature.”

023: “I guess I was always attracted to plants and animals.”

10. Universalistic

Universalistic

020: “It just seems really silly to do something that might be slightly more convenient for us, but it's obviously to the detriment of lots of people around us or animals or plants.”

003: “I certainly don't feel like humans are the most important thing on the planet.”

037: “My respect for all living life on the planet is more important than my luxuries or my existence.”

Conclusion

UTILITARIAN



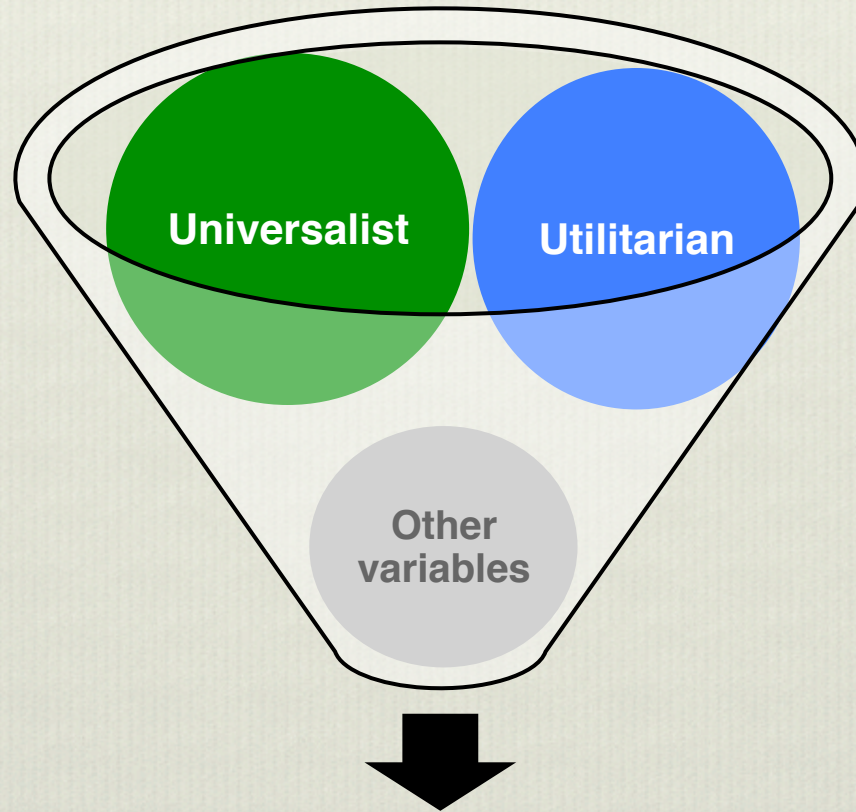
- ❖ Frugal
- ❖ Low materialism
- ❖ Mathematical intelligence
- ❖ Awareness of cause and effect

UNIVERSALISTIC



- ❖ Egalitarian
- ❖ Melancholia
- ❖ Moral obligation: “It’s the right thing to do.”
- ❖ Pro-environmental awareness

Current hypothesis



Small carbon footprint

What can we learn from them?

- ❖ Positive example [It can be done!]
- ❖ What our culture needs to improve on:
 - Frugality (less materialism)
 - Mechanistic thinking (mathematical, cause and effect)
 - Empathy for the powerless (plants, non-human animals, less affluent human populations)

Future Research/Questions

1. National survey to investigate if the commonalities of these sixteen study participants are anomalous results or if utilitarian and/or Universalistic values positively predict an individual's carbon footprint.
2. What has the strongest influence on the development of these characteristics— inborn tendencies or taught behaviors?
3. What is the “rock, paper, scissors” type trumping order of competing values that affect carbon-emitting behaviors?



Robin Quirke, PolicyInteractive

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Joanne Gross

Urban Homesteader

Living Guilt Free in a Society of Mass Consumption

> DIFFERING WORLDVIEWS <

Denial & Dismissive:

- No problem, it doesn't exist.
- Nothing really matters, we are unimportant, live for the moment.
- The problem is beyond our ability to solve.
- I'm already doing my part (likely without much effect).
- I'm working on something more important.

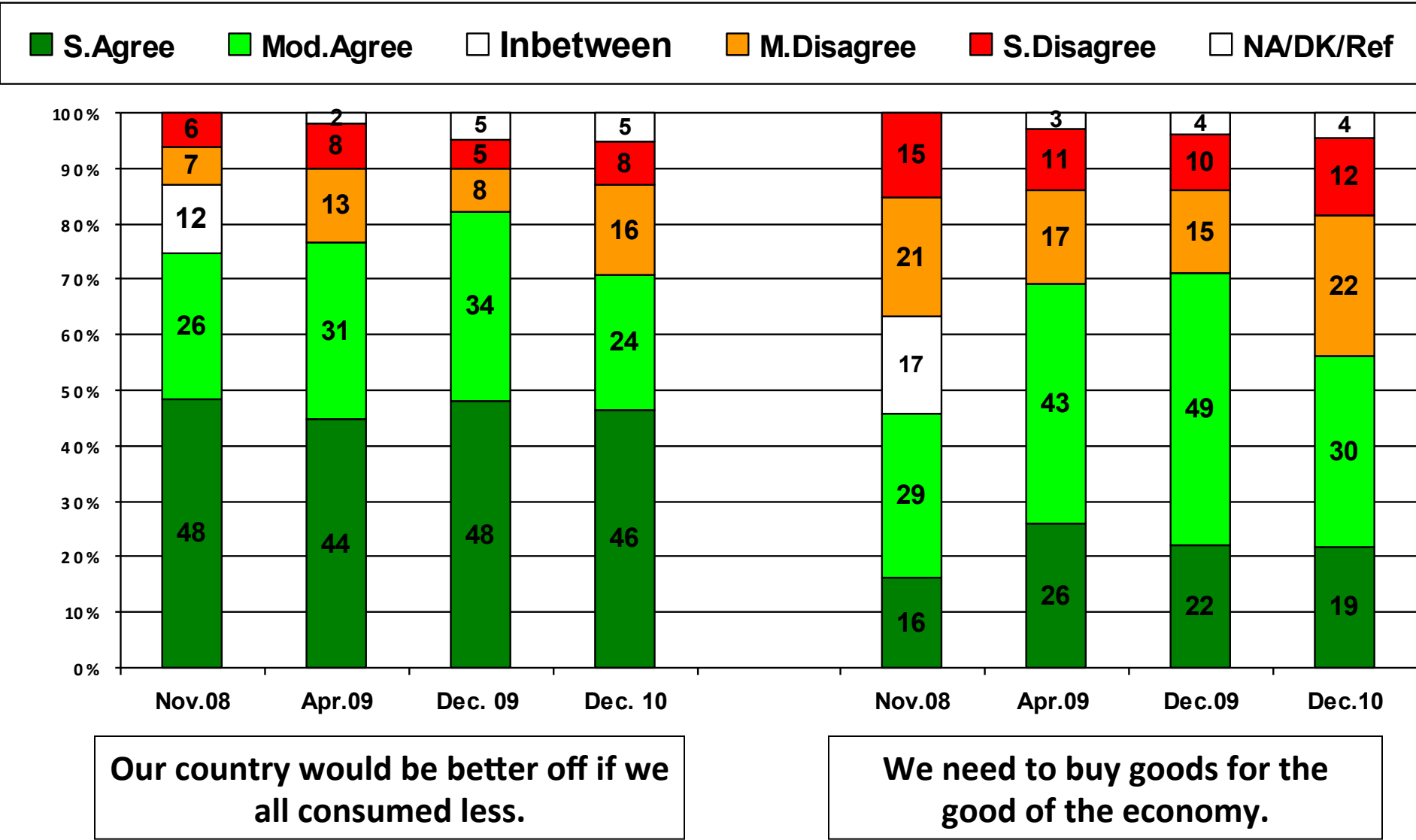
OR

Living with Intention & Personal Efficacy .

> Observing Public Attitudes About Consumption <

I'll read some statements we sometimes hear people say about the current economic downturn. Please tell me: strongly disagree, moderately disagree, moderately agree or strongly agree with each statement: (Items Rotate)

(compare PI Nov08/Apr09/Nov09/Dec10)

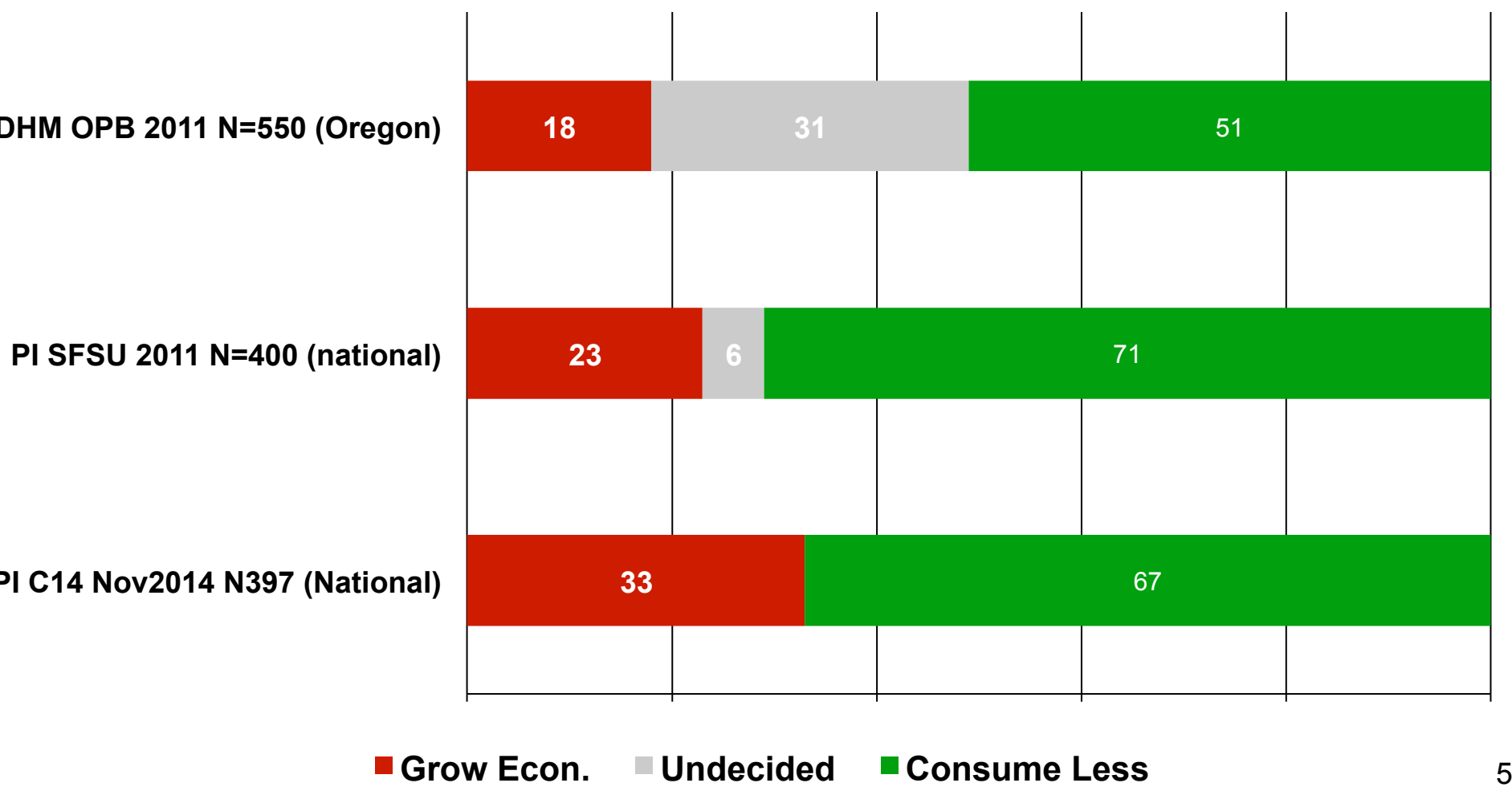


Which statement comes closest to your view (statement rotates):

A. We need grow the economy by consuming goods and services.

or

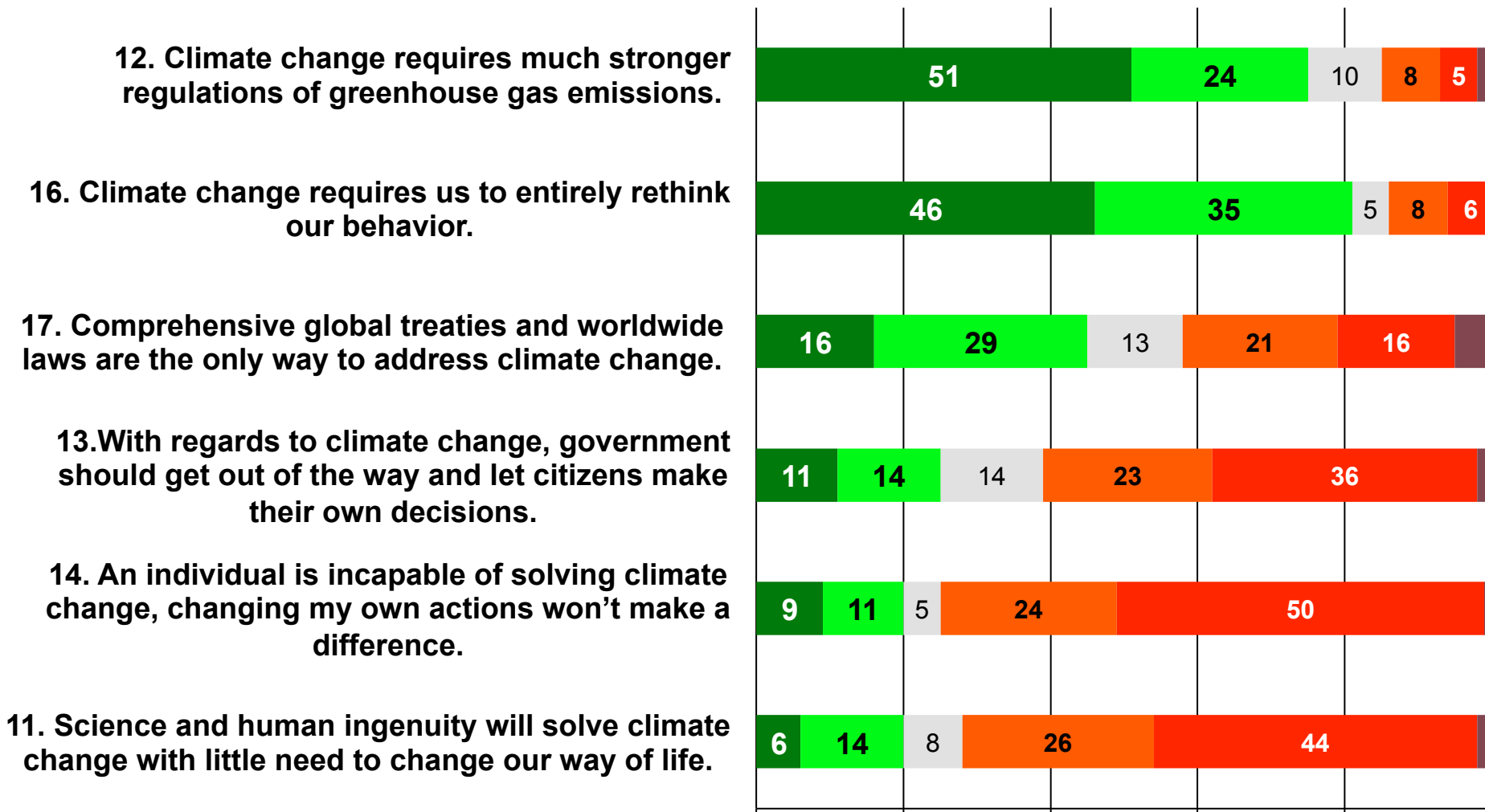
B. Our country would be better off if we all consumed less.



> Public Attitudes toward Climate Change <

Now here are views some people have about addressing climate change. For each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, lean toward disagree, are undecided, lean toward agree, or strongly agree. (Randomize Q11-Q17) (Listed in order of “Strongly Agree”)

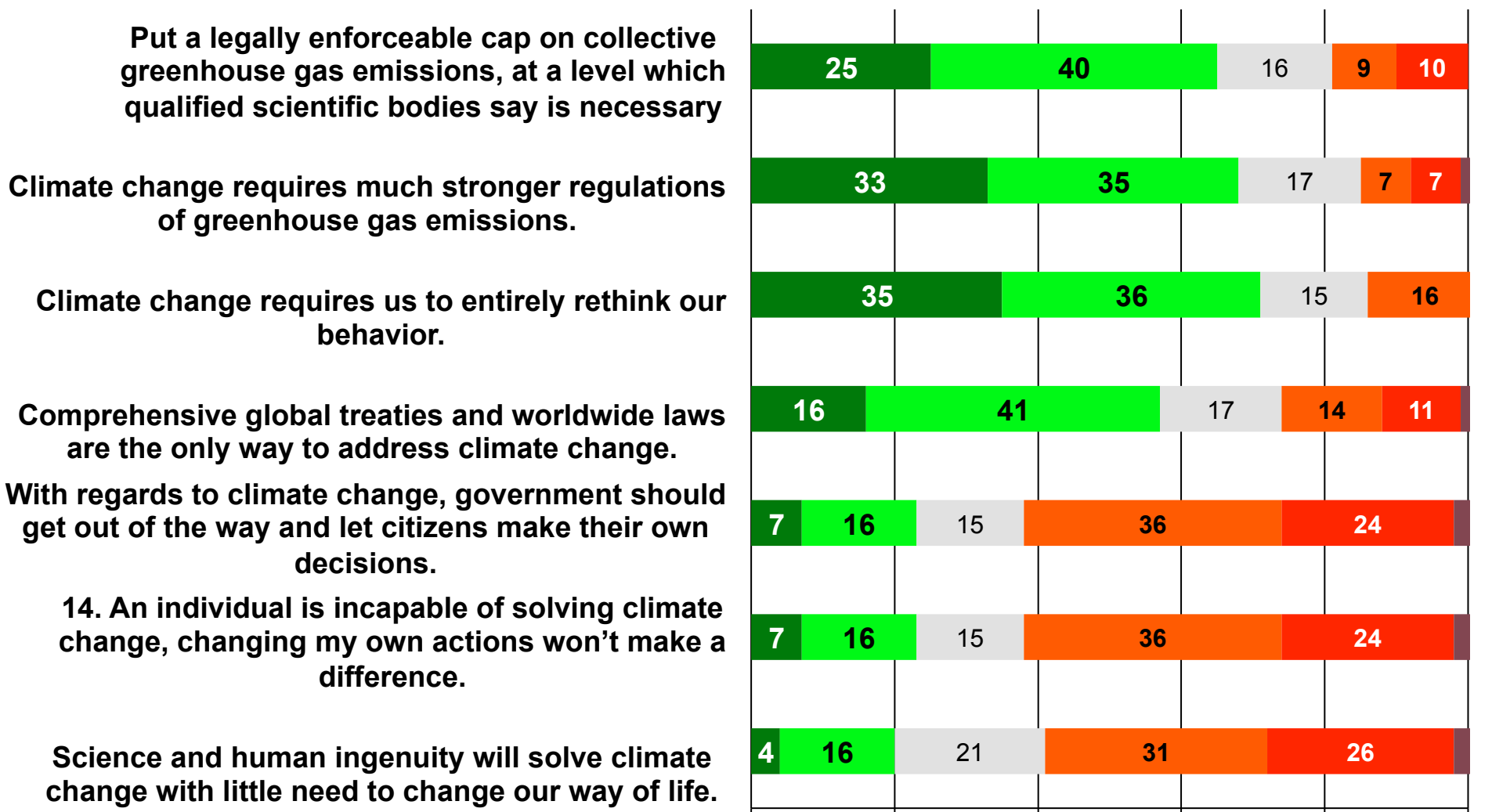
Eugene 2011 Random Sample Telephone Survey N=300



■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Lean Agree
 ■ Undecided
 ■ Lean Disagree
 ■ Stng. Disagree
 ■ DK

Now here are views some people have about addressing climate change. For each statement please tell me if you strongly disagree, lean toward disagree, are undecided, lean toward agree, or strongly agree. (Randomize Q11-Q17) (Listed in order of “Strongly Agree”)

National Mturk Opt-in Panel April 2014 N=397

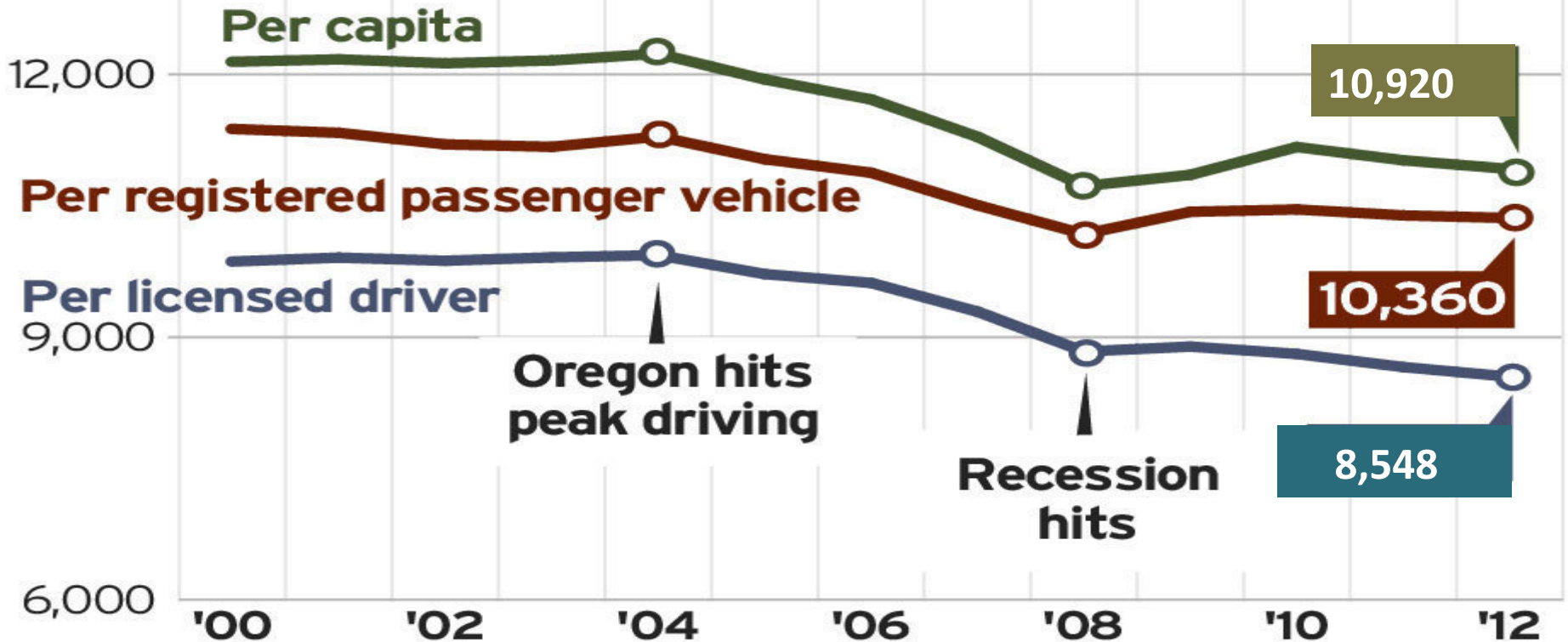


■ Strong Agree ■ Lean Agree ■ Undecided ■ Lean Disagree ■ Strong Disagree ■ Don't Know

Peak driving in Oregon

Oregonians began driving less long before the recession.

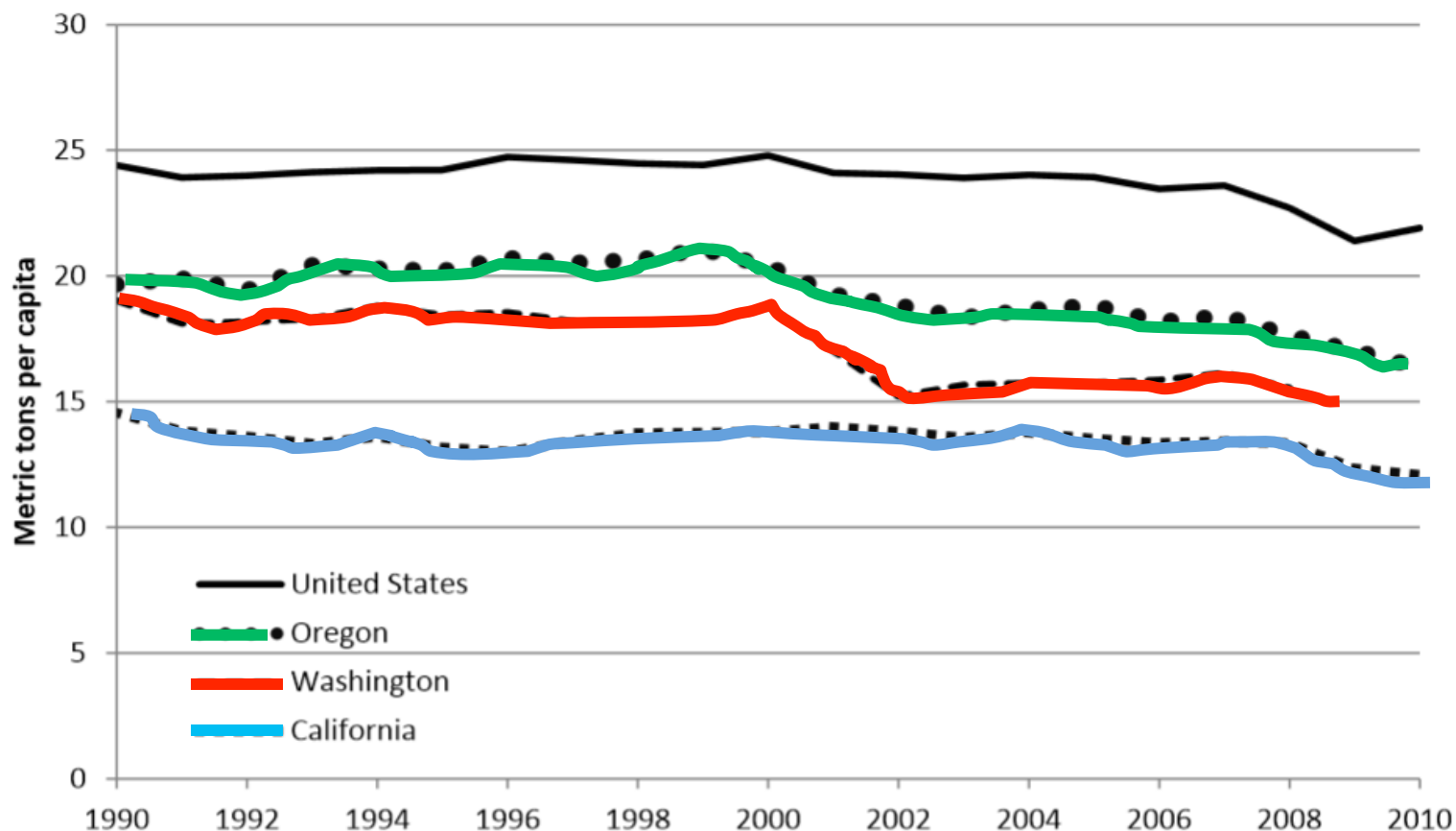
Miles traveled:



Source: Oregon Department of Transportation

PAM MARTIN/THE OREGONIAN

Figure 2.12⁸
Per-capita emissions for United States, Oregon, Washington⁹, and California¹⁰



⁸ United States data is published in the US EPA's Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990 -2010. This data is available online at: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/usinventoryreport.html>

⁹ Data from Washington Department of Ecology, available on their website: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/ghg_inventory.htm Washington data is currently only available through 2008.

¹⁰ California greenhouse gas data are published by the California Air Resources Board. These data are available online here: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/inventory/data/data.htm>

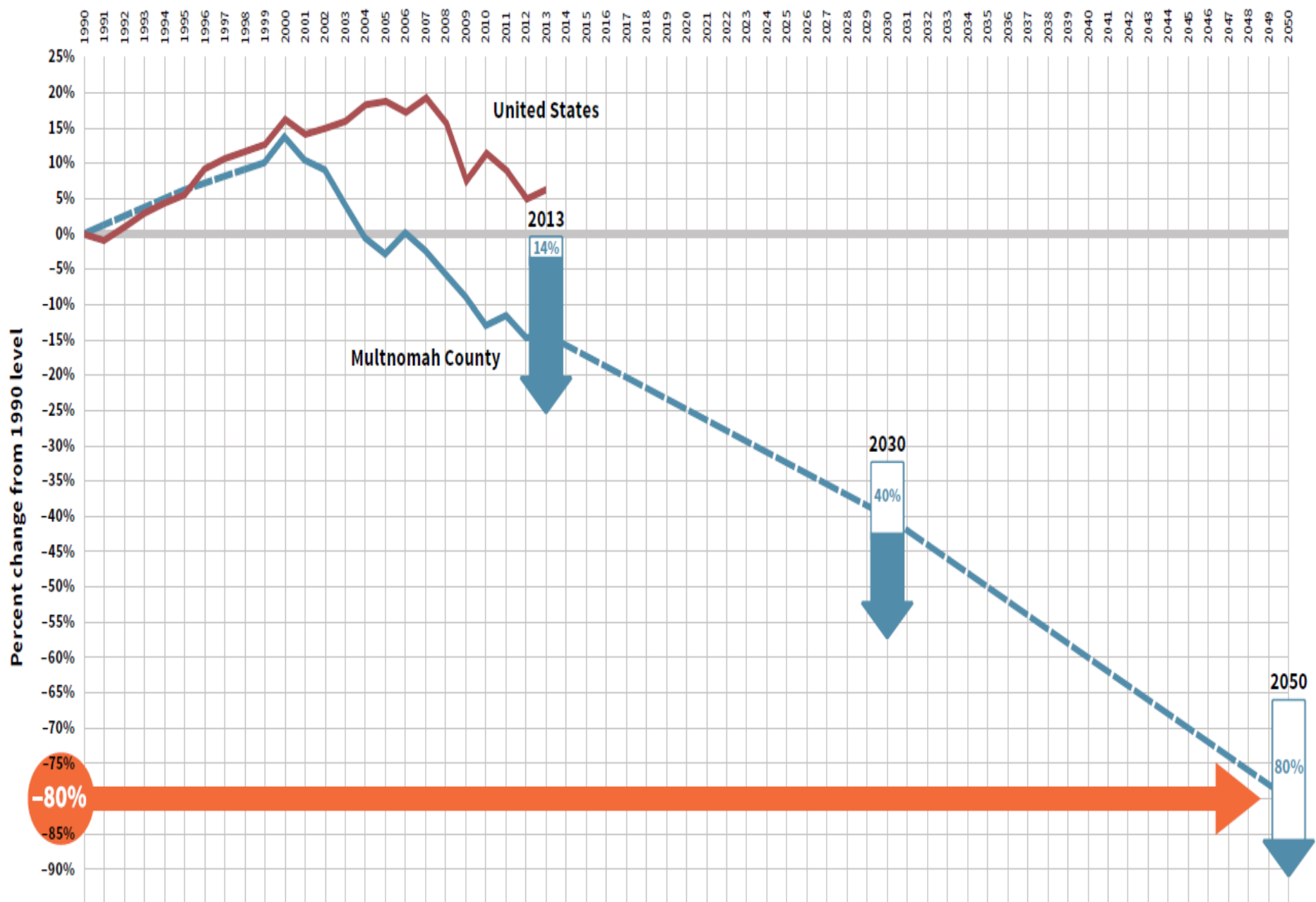
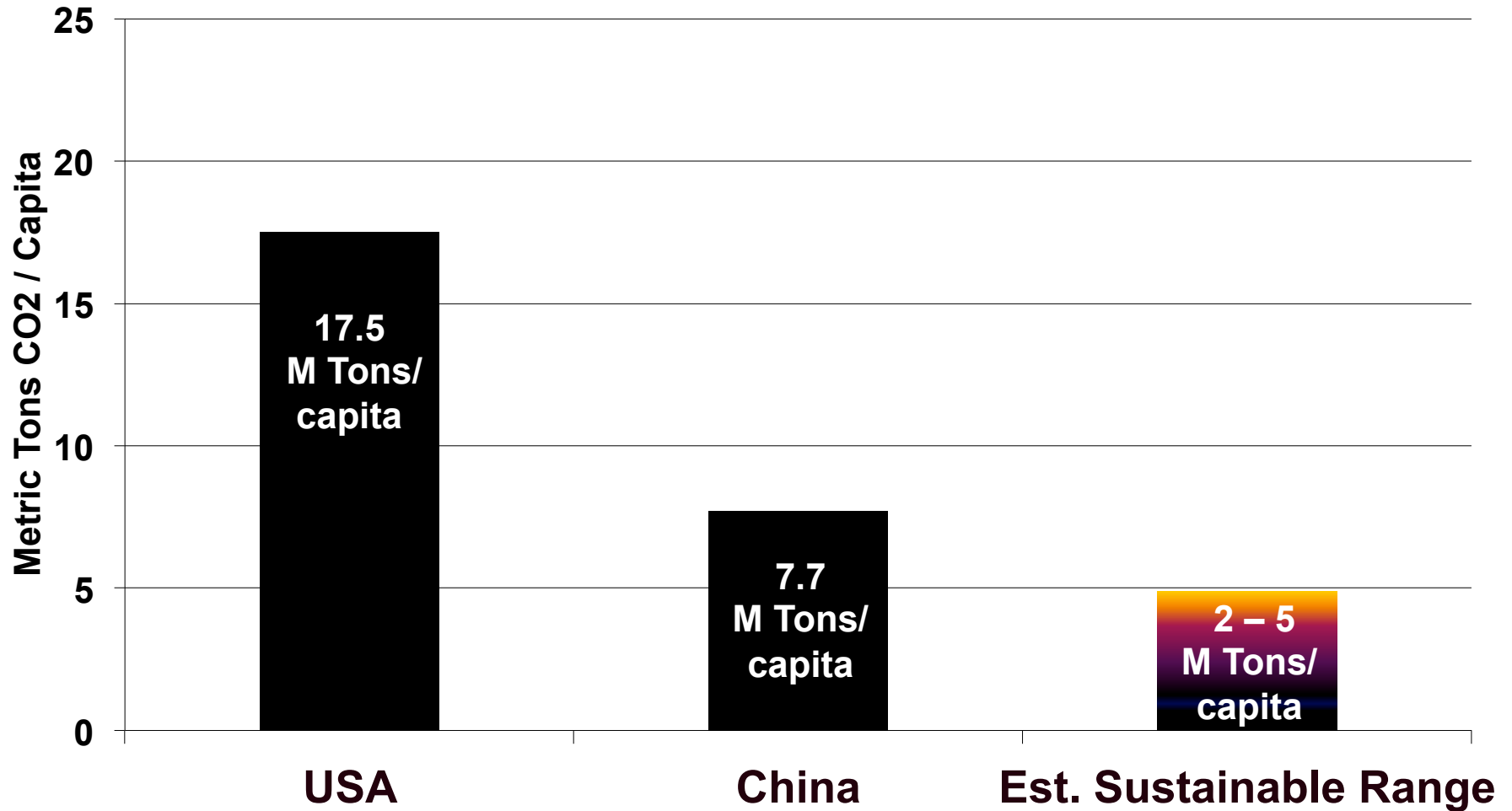


Figure 2. Carbon emission trend and reduction goals. Source: Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

> Case Statement of the Challenge <

Tons CO2 Emissions per Capita per Year Compared

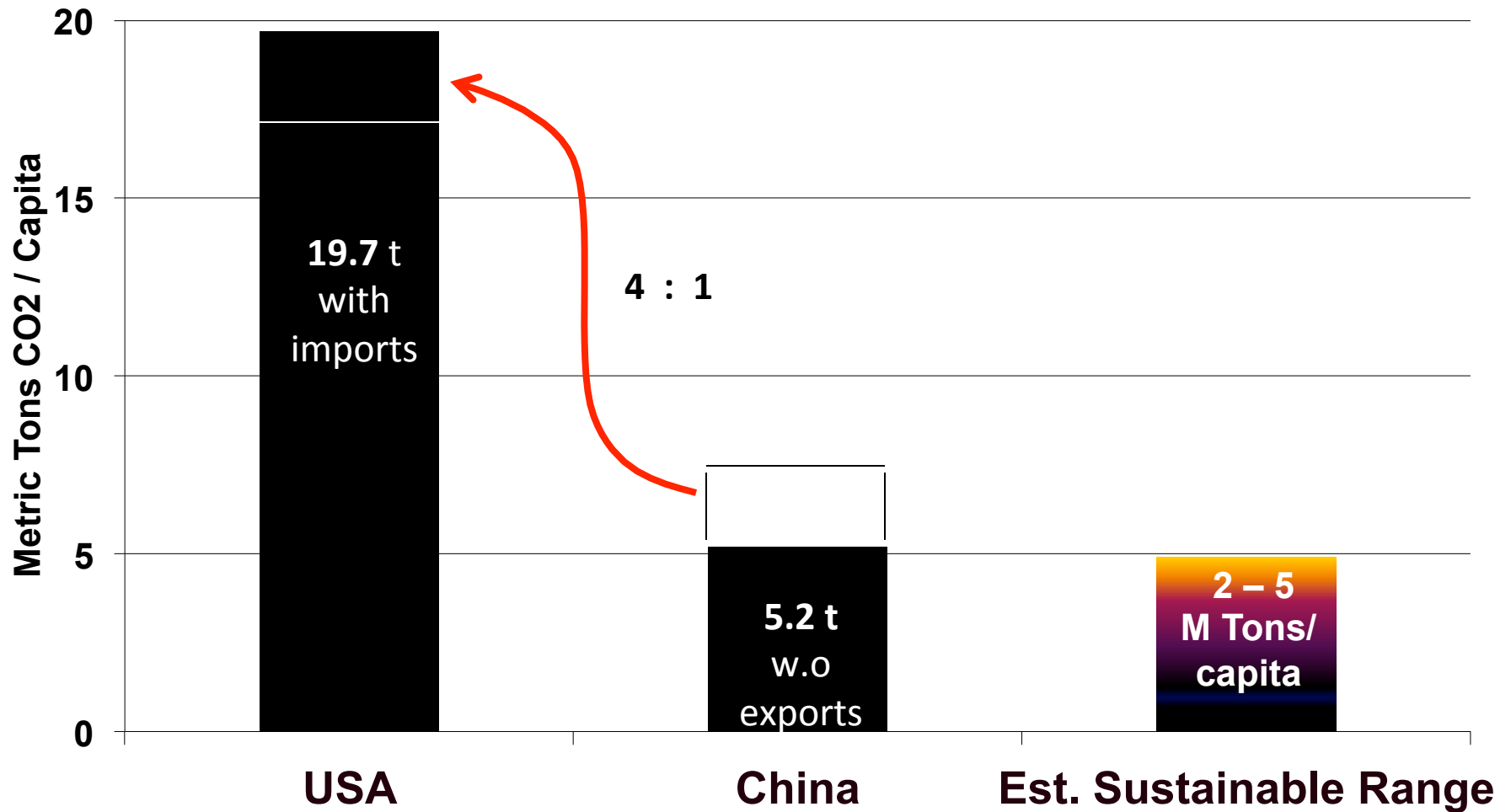


Emissions: Tons CO2/capita World Resources Institute (Source:Nationmaster)

Sustainable estimate range, multiple sources: PI citations on file

Import – Export Emissions: https://carnegiescience.edu/news/carbon_emissions_outsourced_developing_countries

67 Tons CO2 Emissions per Capita per Year Compared – Consumption Based



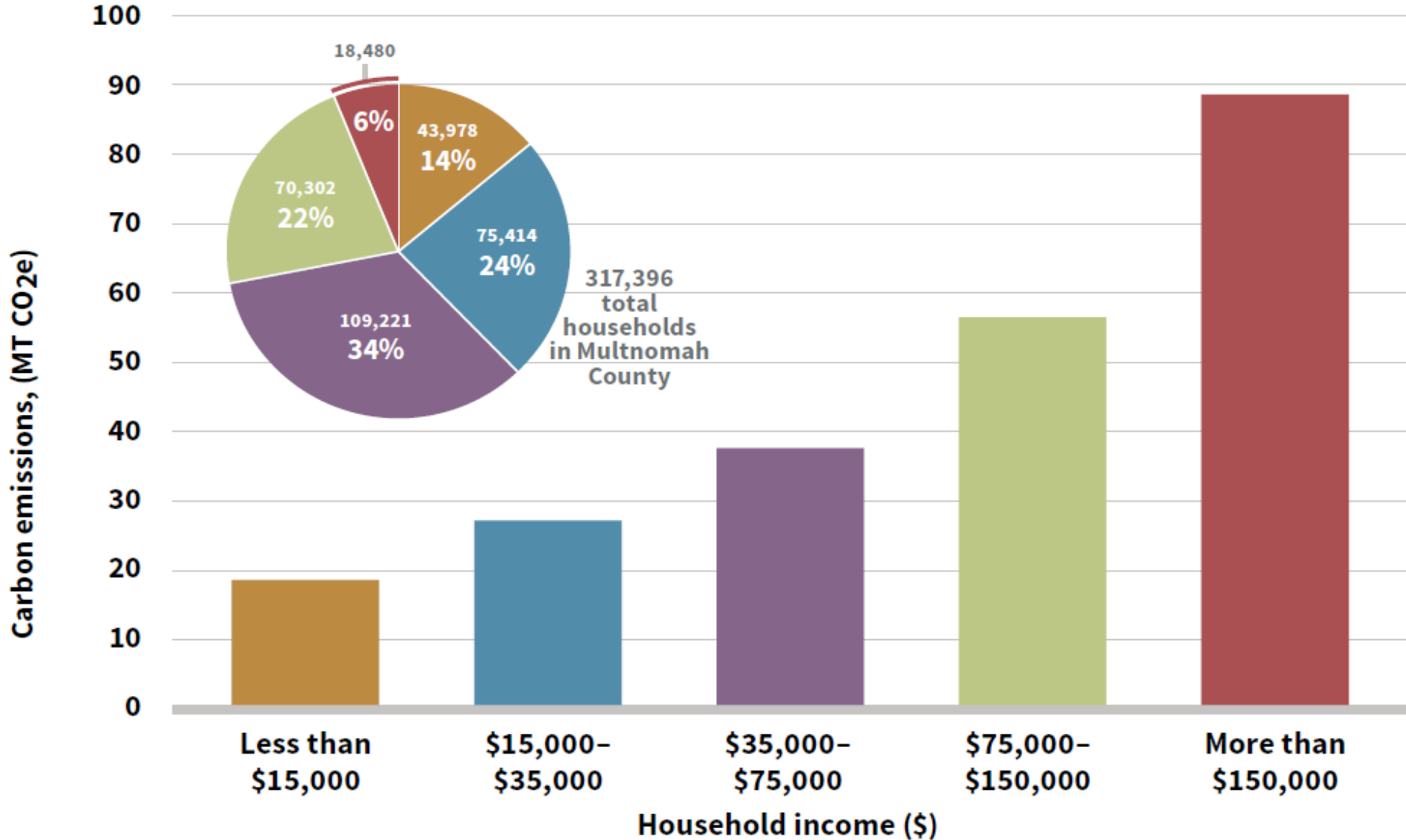
Emissions: Tons CO2/capita World Resources Institute (Source:Nationmaster)

Sustainable estimate range, multiple sources: PI citations on file

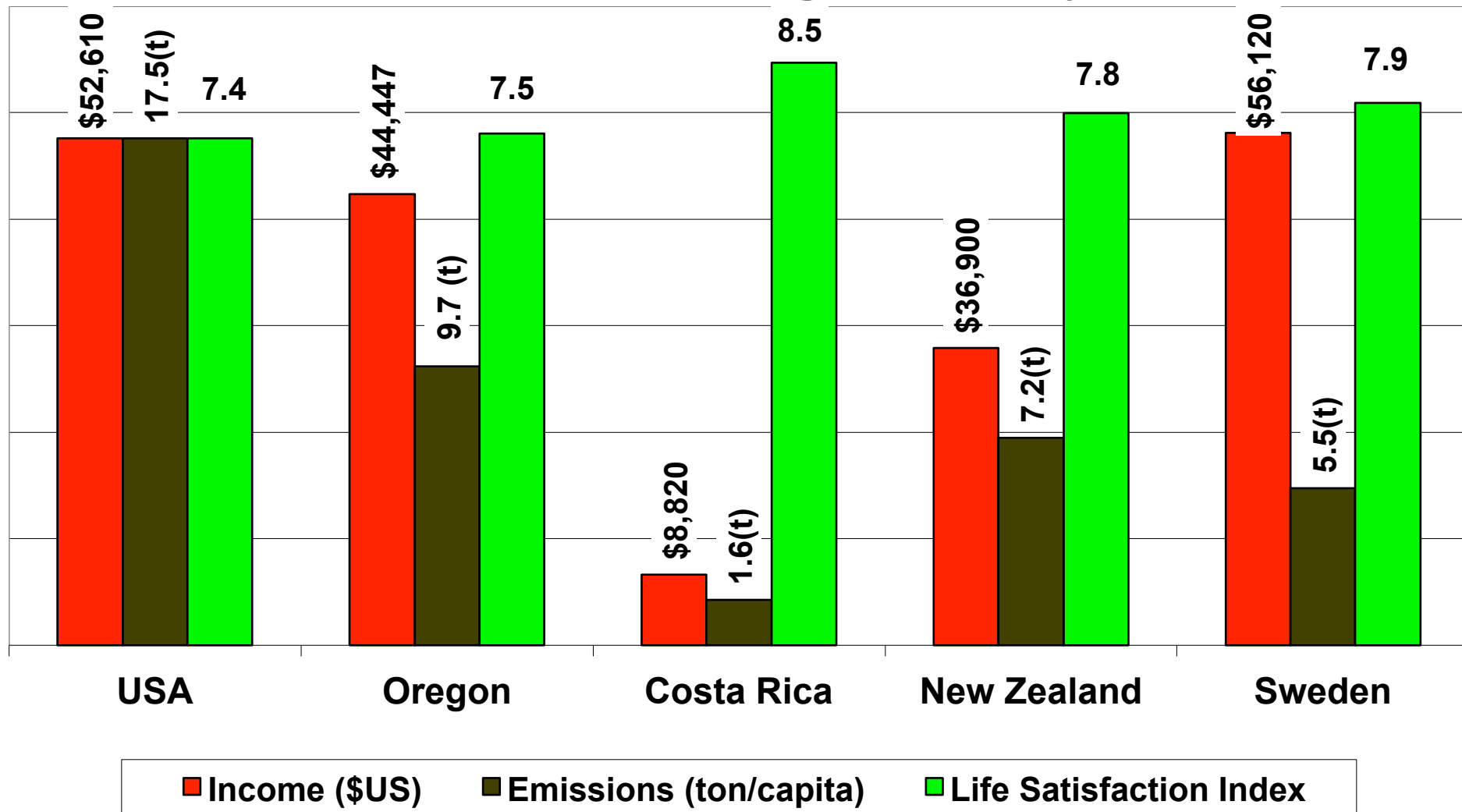
Import – Export Emissions: https://carnegiescience.edu/news/carbon_emissions_outsourced_developing_countries

Higher Income = Higher Carbon Emissions

(2015 Climate Action Plan, City of Portland and Multnomah County)

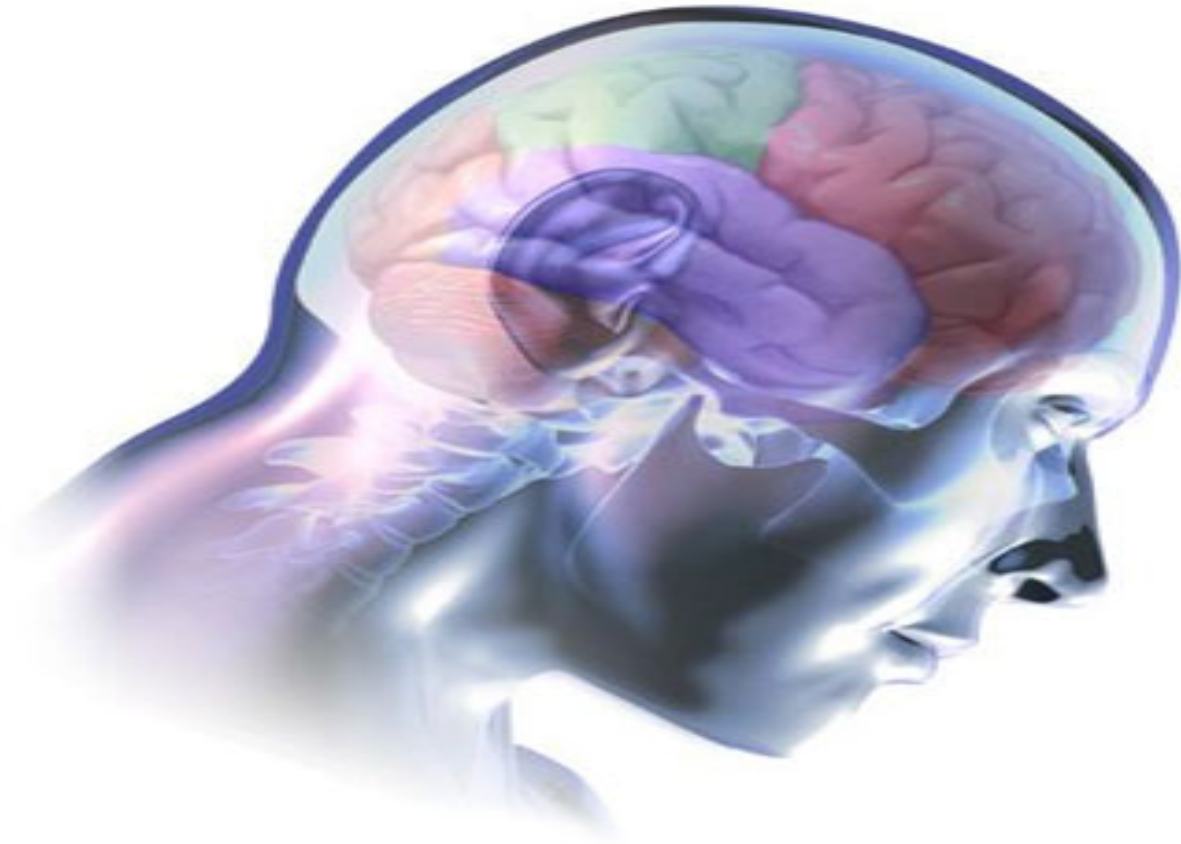


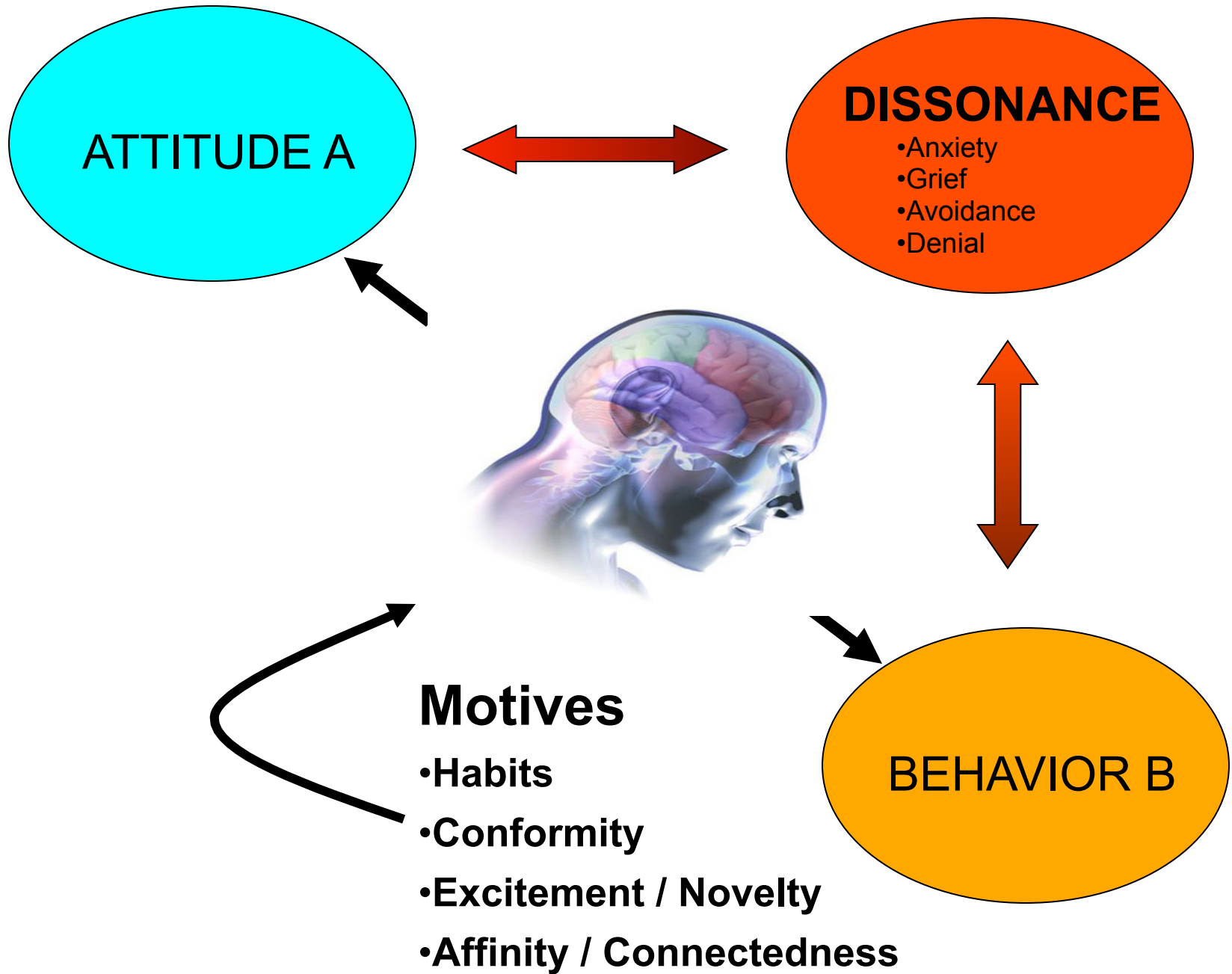
Income/Emissions/Life Satisfaction Four Nations & Oregon Compared



Income: Per Capita World Bank 2013 estimate (Atlas Method), Oregon: US Bureau of Economic Analysis
Emissions: Tons CO₂/capita 2012 World Bank & EPA for Oregon
Life Satisfaction: Life Satisfaction Index Gallup World Survey 2008 (Source: Happiness Foundation); Oregon PI Dec 09

Climate Change & Consumption: What's going on in our heads?





How Does Social Change Happen?

Social Change Theory – Albert Bandura

Rapid Change Occurs in High Stress or
Through Observation of Others

Social Learning Theory

- ***VICARIOUS LEARNING*** or observational learning occurs by watching someone else and reward occurs.
- ***LEARN FROM EXEMPLARS*** who exhibit qualities the individual perceives important.
- ***SELF-REINFORCEMENT*** from outcomes a person can give themselves; personal reward.
- ***SELF-EFFICACY*** is a belief in one's ability to perform a behavior successfully.

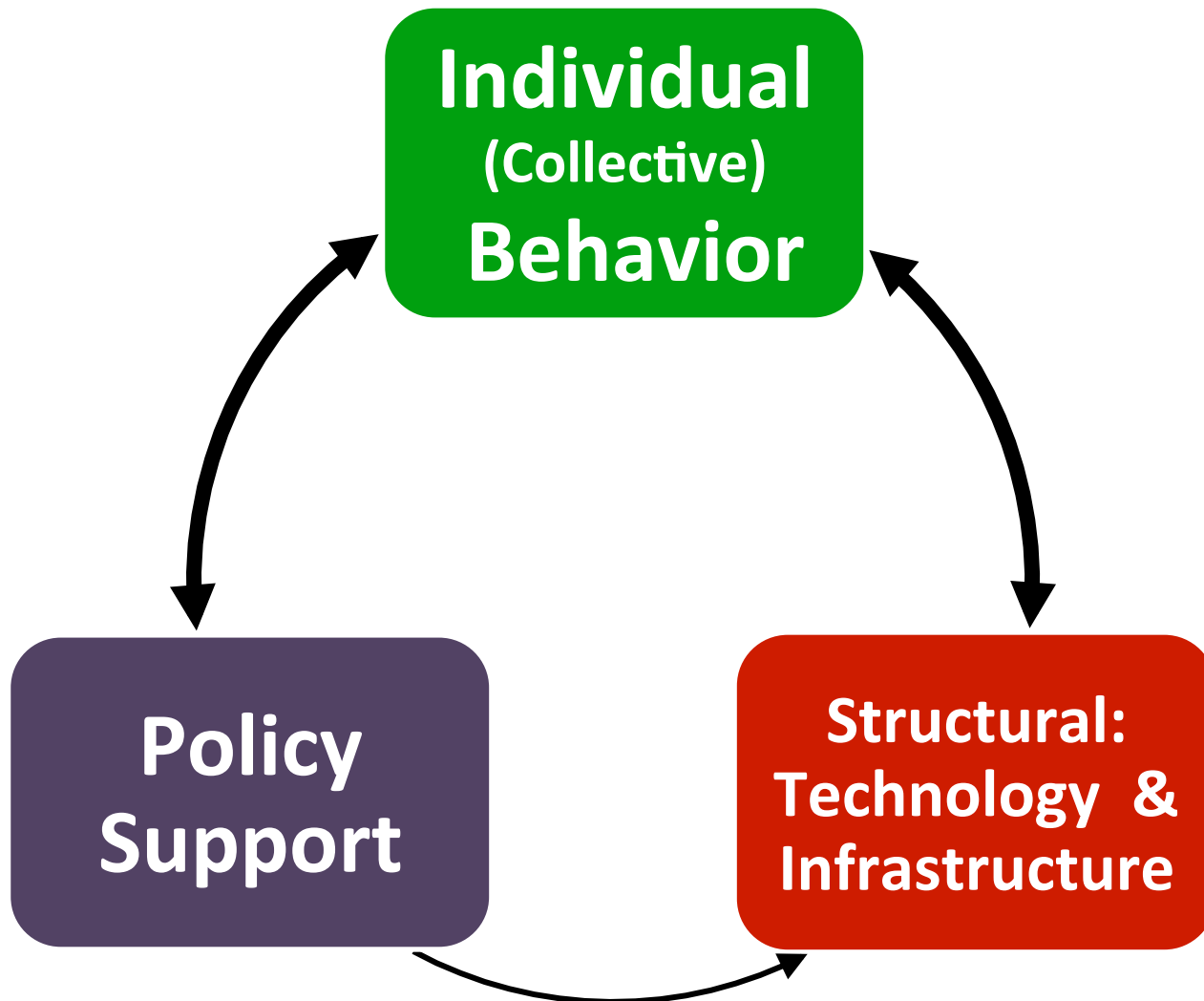
Social Learning Theory + Tipping Point Theory

- Individual Behavior Does Count
- People Watch Other People = Mimic
- Critical Mass = Tipping Point
- Exemplification Counts in Social Change

Motivations & De-motivations:

- Pent-up Concern; Morality, Guilt & Justice
- Corrosiveness of Talk but not Walk

Circle of Implementation



Key to Change

- Awareness – thoughtful engagement
- Intentionality – purposefulness
- Confidence – can do attitude
- Vision & Purpose – desired outcome
- True Behavior – forms habit & social change
- Inner & Outer Actions

PolicyInteractive

Feedback and Critique Welcome

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