

Diehl Won the Debate. Bethell Won the Night.

Post-Debate Voter Reaction Survey — n=110 — April 16, 2026

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Diehl: Dominated the perceived winner vote (47.3%) and leads on every electability and persuasion metric. But he lost 10 net supporters from before the debate to after. His post-debate floor held; his ceiling didn't expand.

Bethell: 30.9% said she personally won the debate — but only 20% think others would agree. That 11-point gap is the largest in the field and is a textbook spiral of silence: her supporters are systematically underestimating how much company they have. Net +13 preference gain. She won the preference shift.

Dudley: Net +3. His floor is sticky but his ceiling is still low. Not gaining new voters despite significant financial investment.

Drazan: Net -3. The highest departure rate in the field — two-thirds of pre-debate supporters moved to Bethell. Electability and persuasion scores lowest in the field. Enters the final four weeks in a difficult position, with significant financial resources still in play.

Q1 — Who Won the Debate?

Respondents were asked who they personally believed won the debate. Diehl led with 47.3%, followed by Bethell at 30.9%. The gap between first and second is substantial, but 30 points smaller than Diehl's commanding lead in the pre-debate primary preference. Bethell's debate performance clearly registered with a substantial portion of the audience.

Candidate	Votes	Pct
Diehl	52	47.3%
Bethell	34	30.9%
No clear winner	11	10.0%
Dudley	7	6.4%
Drazan	6	5.5%
TOTAL	110	100%

Q2 — Spiral of Silence: Who Do Others Think Won?

After answering for themselves, respondents were asked who they thought most other viewers would say won the debate. Most people are familiar with polls that ask who you're voting for. Fewer have

encountered a question that asks: *who do you think everyone else thinks won?* That second question is the point of departure for a concept called the Spiral of Silence — a theory first developed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in the 1970s and now a well-established tool in political research.

The core idea is this: people are social animals. Before they speak (or vote) they scan the room. When people sense their view is in the minority — even if it isn't — they are more likely to stay quiet. Over time, that silence reinforces the perception of minority status, which produces more silence. That silence makes the minority view appear even smaller than it actually is, and the perceived majority view appears even larger. The spiral tightens.

Applied to a debate, the gap between *who you personally think won* and *who you think most others think won* reveals something that a simple who-won question cannot: hidden momentum.

A candidate with a large negative gap (respondents credit others with seeing a win they don't personally acknowledge) has hidden momentum: their support is likely larger than it appears because supporters are self-silencing. That is suppressed energy — because their supporters consistently underestimate how much company they have. It's energy that can convert to visible support once people realize they're not alone in thinking what they think.

A large positive gap signals the opposite: a reputation premium, where respondents assign the candidate credit that exceeds genuine personal conviction. A candidate who scores high on perceived winner but low on personal winner is an indication they may be benefiting from reputation more than performance.

The gap is the signal.

Candidate	Personal Win (Q1)	Perceived Winner (Q2)	Gap
Diehl	52 (47.3%)	53 (48.2%)	+1
Bethell	34 (30.9%)	22 (20.0%)	-12
Drazan	6 (5.5%)	10 (9.1%)	+4
Dudley	7 (6.4%)	9 (8.2%)	+2
No clear winner	11 (10.0%)	16 (14.5%)	+5

THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE FINDING

Bethell's gap of -12 is the largest in the field and the most analytically significant finding of the night. Thirty-four respondents believed she personally won the debate — but only 22 believed others would agree. Her supporters are systematically underestimating how much company they have.

Diehl, by contrast, is nearly perfectly calibrated: 52 personal, 53 perceived. His supporters have no suppression effect. They feel like the majority because, in this sample, they are.

Drazan and Dudley show modest positive gaps (+4 and +2, respectively). Drazan's result is notable: she was perceived as doing better than her actual personal win share — respondents assigned her credit beyond what they personally felt, though both numbers are low. Dudley's slight positive gap

mirrors Drazan's pattern. Neither candidate generated the kind of strong personal conviction that drives large gap numbers in either direction.

The "no clear winner" category posting a +5 gap suggests a meaningful share of respondents believe others will think the debate settled less than they personally felt it did.

Classic spiral of silence dynamics imply hidden momentum for Bethell. Her debate performance may be doing more work than her vote numbers immediately suggest.

Q3 – Q4: Preference Before and After the Debate

Respondents were asked their candidate preference before the debate (Q3) and again after the debate concluded (Q4). The percentages in the chart below reflect each candidate's share of all 110 respondents. The shift data measures the debate's persuasive impact at the individual level.

Candidate	Before (Q3)	After (Q4)	Net Shift	% of Q3 Supporters Shifted
Diehl	68 (61.8%)	58 (52.7%)	-10	23.5%
Bethell	12 (10.9%)	25 (22.7%)	+13	8.3%
Dudley	7 (6.4%)	10 (9.1%)	+3	14.3%
Drazan	6 (5.5%)	3 (2.7%)	-3	66.7%
Undecided/Other	17 (15.5%)	14 (12.7%)	-3	—

The overall movement picture: Bethell was the clear beneficiary of the debate, gaining from every direction. Diehl lost ground in absolute terms but remains the frontrunner. Dudley consolidated without expanding. Drazan's collapse was decisive — two-thirds of her pre-debate supporters moved elsewhere, most of them directly to Bethell rather than to the undecided pool.

Where Did Diehl's Supporters Go?

From → To	Count	% of Pre-Debate Supporters	Notes
Diehl → Bethell	6	8.8%	Direct conversion — the debate moved them
Diehl → Still Undecided	8	11.8%	Not lost to Bethell; persuadable again
Diehl → Dudley	2	2.9%	Minor drift to alternative
Bethell → Diehl	1	—	One back-conversion
Total movement (out)	16	23.5%	Of 68 pre-debate Diehl supporters

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DIEHL

The 8 respondents who moved from Diehl to "Still Undecided" are arguably more significant than the 6 who moved directly to Bethell. A dominant debate performance doesn't produce 8 new fence-sitters — it produces consolidation. Something in the debate gave Diehl's existing supporters pause. They haven't left; they're wobbling. Combined with the undecided pool splitting evenly between Diehl (5) and Bethell (5) — when historically undecideds break toward frontrunners — this is a quiet signal that the race is not over.

Where Did Bethell's Supporters Go?

From → To	Count	% of Pre-Debate Supporters	Notes
Bethell → Still Undecided	1	8.3%	Sole departure from Bethell pre-debate base
Net gain	+13	—	Strongest net shift in the field

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BETHELL

Bethell's retention rate is remarkable: only 1 of her 12 pre-debate supporters left (8.3%), the lowest departure rate in the field. She gained from every direction — directly from Diehl (6, the largest single conversion flow of the night), pulled from the undecided pool (5), and gained 50% (3) of Drazan's pre-debate support. The combination of near-zero attrition and multi-source inflow is the strongest movement profile of the night.

Where Did Dudley's Supporters Go?

From → To	Count	% of Pre-Debate Supporters	Notes
Diehl → Dudley	2	—	Minor drift from frontrunner
Undecided → Dudley	2	—	Small pull from undecided pool
Dudley → [departed]	1	14.3%	Single departure from pre-debate base
Net gain	+3	14.3% attrition	Solid floor, limited ceiling expansion

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DUDLEY

Dudley's floor is genuinely sticky — only 1 of 7 pre-debate supporters left. But with significant financial resources and an established profile at this stage of a contested primary, adding only 3 net supporters is a ceiling problem, not a floor problem. The debate confirmed his existing support without expanding it.

Where Did Drazan’s Supporters Go?

From → To	Count	% of Pre-Debate Supporters	Notes
Drazan → Bethell	3	50.0%	Direct conversion to nearest rival
Drazan → Still Undecided	1	16.7%	One supporter held, not transferred
Drazan → [stayed]	2	—	Retained base
Net loss	-3	66.7% departed	Highest departure rate in the field

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DRAZAN

Two-thirds of Drazan's pre-debate supporters left during the debate. They moved to Bethell, not to the undecided pool – which means they are not persuadable back. The departure pattern is decisive rather than hesitant. With approximately four weeks to the primary, the window for recovery is narrow.

Q5 – Q6: Electability Against Kotek and Cross-Party Persuasion

Respondents rated each candidate on two 1–5 scales: electability against incumbent Governor Tina Kotek (Q5) and ability to persuade voters outside the Republican base (Q6). These are general election viability measures. Scale definitions are provided below the results table.

Candidate	Electability vs. Kotek (Q5)	Crossover Persuasion (Q6)	Q6 – Q5
Diehl	3.98	3.84	-0.14
Bethell	2.99	3.25	+0.26
Dudley	2.74	2.91	+0.17
Drazan	2.59	2.58	-0.01

Q5 Scale — Electability vs. Kotek	Q6 Scale — Crossover Persuasion
1 = Kotek definitely wins	1 = Highly unlikely to persuade outside base
2 = Kotek likely wins	2 = Unlikely to persuade outside base
3 = Toss-up / competitive race	3 = Might persuade some outside the base
4 = Candidate likely wins	4 = Likely to persuade outside the base
5 = Candidate definitely wins	5 = Highly likely to persuade outside base

THE BETHELL PERSUASION PREMIUM

Bethell is the only candidate rated higher on crossover persuasion than on electability. The +0.26 gap suggests respondents believe she can appeal to voters outside the base in ways her overall electability number doesn't yet reflect — possibly constrained by name recognition or the ongoing investigations. Her persuasion ceiling may be higher than her current perceived electability. Diehl's small negative (-0.14) is not damaging — it simply means respondents think he's more likely to win than he is to persuade Democrats and independents. That's a conventional frontrunner profile.

Q7 — Party Affiliation

Q7 asked respondents to identify their party affiliation. Results: 103 Republican (93.6%), 4 NAV (3.6%), 2 Libertarian (1.8%), 1 Independent (0.9%). The overwhelmingly Republican composition of the sample is expected given the event — this was a Republican gubernatorial primary debate. The small non-Republican cohort (7 respondents) is addressed in Q8B below.

Q8A — Republican Unity and Nominee Support

Respondents who identified as Republican were asked whether they would support the Republican nominee in the general election, regardless of who wins the primary. Party unity numbers in a heated primary are a meaningful downstream indicator.

Response	Count	Pct
Will absolutely back the nominee	92	89.3%
Will probably back the nominee	8	7.8%
Not sure	3	2.9%
No	0	0.0%

Unity is strong. 97.1% of Republican respondents indicate they will back the nominee (absolutely + probably). Zero respondents said no. This is a healthy primary — one where the debate sharpens choices without fracturing the coalition.

Q8B — Non-Republican Respondents: Party Switch Consideration

Non-Republican respondents (n=7) were asked whether the debate had made them more likely to consider switching their registration to Republican. The debate did not function as a recruitment event: 5 of 7 said no. The 2 who said yes represent a narrow openness, not a meaningful conversion signal from a sample this small.

Response (n=7 non-Republican respondents)	Count	Pct
No — not considering switching to Republican	5	71.4%
Yes — considering switching to Republican	2	28.6%

Post-Debate Candidate Profiles

Diehl: Still Leading, But the Race Got More Interesting

Diehl won the debate in most people’s eyes and leads on every electability and persuasion metric. He is the clear frontrunner. But this was not a consolidating performance — the debate confirmed his lead without widening it. He entered the debate with 68 supporters in this sample and exited with 58. Eight of those departures moved to undecided rather than to another candidate, which matters: they haven’t left the Diehl coalition, they’re pausing. No rival achieved a breakthrough that meaningfully threatens his lead with approximately four weeks to the primary. But dominant frontrunners consolidate after strong debates. The gap between first and second didn’t widen — it shrank.

Bethell: Hidden Momentum, Real Investigations

Bethell posted the strongest individual performance in the survey. Net +13 preference gain. The largest spiral of silence gap in the field. The highest persuasion premium. She is the only candidate who meaningfully expanded support during the debate. What the data may be reflecting: she came across as confident in her policy positions and assured in her ability to implement them — in part because she already has, at the county level. That’s a different kind of credibility than a candidate who speaks in abstractions. The structural headwind: two ongoing investigations remain a factor, and name recognition is still building. Her supporters believe she won the debate; they’re just not sure everyone else sees it yet. If the investigations resolve or recede and visibility increases, her numbers have room to move.

Dudley: A Solid Foundation, An Open Question

Dudley brought significant financial resources and an established profile into this debate. His floor proved genuinely sticky — only 1 of his 7 pre-debate supporters left, the second-lowest departure rate in the field. He finished net +3, gaining two supporters from Diehl’s camp and two from the undecided pool. His crossover persuasion score (2.91) edged above the midpoint and sits slightly above his electability rating — a modestly positive signal that suggests he’s seen as having broader appeal than his overall numbers currently reflect.

The open question is whether that foundation grows. His gains came from within the existing movement pool rather than from rival camps — a pattern that will need to shift in the final stretch. At this stage of a contested primary, holding ground is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one. The debate confirmed that his existing supporters are committed; it didn’t yet show the mechanism by which new ones arrive.

Drazan: A Difficult Night, Clear Data

The numbers for Drazan are straightforward and worth reading clearly, which is how good campaigns use data. Two-thirds of her pre-debate supporters moved elsewhere during the debate — the highest

departure rate in the field — and three of the four moved directly to Bethell rather than to the undecided pool. Direct conversions to a rival are harder to recover than voters who move to undecided. Her electability (2.59) and crossover persuasion (2.58) scores are the lowest in the field. Despite significant financial resources, she enters the final four weeks of the primary in a difficult position.

Her electability and persuasion scores may reflect less a judgment about her capabilities than a question Republican primary voters haven't yet heard answered: what's different this time? She is the most familiar general-election name in the field, which cuts both ways. Voters know her 2022 near-miss; they're also rating her on what they've seen since. The path forward likely runs through demonstrating something new, not relitigating something close.

One number worth noting: her spiral of silence gap of +4 means respondents perceived her as performing better than they personally felt. That's a modest silver lining — some residual name recognition and goodwill is still operating in the background.

THE OREGON CONTEXT: WHAT EVERY REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE IS REALLY RUNNING AGAINST

The data in this survey measures one debate on one night. But every number in it exists inside a larger reality that shapes what Republican candidates in Oregon are up against: *Oregon voters have no clear understanding of what it's like to live under Republican policies.* This creates a communication and marketing gap — not just for Republican candidates, but for Republican voters trying to make that case to their neighbors.

Oregon has been governed by Democrats for more than four decades. That isn't just a political fact; it's an experiential one. A majority of Oregon voters — including many who are genuinely frustrated with the direction of the state — have no genuine experience, no frame of reference, for what Republican governance actually looks like. They know Democratic policy because they are living it. Republican candidates and Republican voters who try to persuade non-Republicans are effectively asking them to jump into the void. Blindfolded.

In economic and marketing terms, it's a switching cost problem. Oregon Democrats are a known brand to Oregon voters. A successful economy under Republican policies is theoretical to them. Voters don't just weigh candidates against each other; they weigh the familiar against the unknown. The case for change has to overcome not just disagreement with the alternative, but unfamiliarity with it. Republicans can't simply be better — because that "better" is simply unknown.

Every Republican candidate on the stage faces this. Every Republican on social media faces this. Their task isn't only to win the primary; it's to build a November argument now that translates Republican governance into terms that land with voters who have never experienced it. That's a harder job than most political coverage acknowledges — and it's the real hill whoever wins this primary will have to climb.

Sample Composition & Methodology

Characteristic	Detail
Total completed responses	n=110
Party composition	93.6% Republican, 3.6% NAV, 1.8% Libertarian, 0.9% Independent
Ideology	67.3% Strong Conservative, 29.1% Lean Conservative, 3.6% Moderate
Average completion time	10.5 minutes
Poll open	Approximately 8:48 PM – 10:40 PM, April 16, 2026
Recruitment	Oregon-focused political social media; organic sharing
Flagged responses	9 (5 duplicate IP, 4 fast completion); none removed
Validated responses	110 clean

METHODOLOGY NOTES

n=110 self-selected respondents, recruited via Oregon-focused political social media communities and organic sharing following the ORP Republican Gubernatorial Debate, April 16, 2026. Poll originally announced for a 15-minute window immediately post-debate; window extended to approximately 90 minutes due to a late debate start caused by technical difficulties at the venue.

A preliminary count and validation was performed to remove potentially fraudulent votes (duplicate submissions/attempts, etc.); final verified response count confirmed at n=110.

Non-probability sample; traditional margin of error calculations do not apply and are not reported. Results are directional indicators. Party composition: 93.6% Republican. Average completion time: 10.5 minutes. Approximately 1,000 link requests were recorded in advance of the debate; 110 completed responses represents meaningful engagement from a self-selected debate-watching audience.

ABOUT PREDICT OREGON

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