

 DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

VOTERS SUPPORT A PROGRESSIVE CLIMATE INNOVATION AGENDA

Danielle Deiseroth
Julian Brave NoiseCat
Marcela Mulholland
Jake Higdon

August 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ A majority of all voters (51 percent) support a trillion dollar investment in green technology through the Department of Energy
- ▶ Voters support investing in clean energy technologies rather than new military weapons by a 68-point margin
- ▶ A majority of all voters (66 percent) support the federal government investing in the research and development of technologies to benefit communities most impacted by pollution

Democrats have recently put forward a number of proposals to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In June of 2020, the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis published a lengthy report detailing policy recommendations that would transition the United States to a clean energy economy and reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. In July, presumptive Democratic nominee

Joe Biden committed to zero out emissions from the power sector by 2035 and achieve net-zero emissions across the economy by 2050.

To achieve these ambitious goals, lawmakers need to embrace a progressive innovation agenda, as Arjun Krishnaswami and Jake Higdon argue in their new report, *A Progressive Climate Innovation Agenda*. In their report, Krishnaswami and Higdon outline a vision of historic federal investments for the research and development of advanced green technologies to decarbonize the United States and support the communities on the frontlines of hazardous pollution and climate impacts.

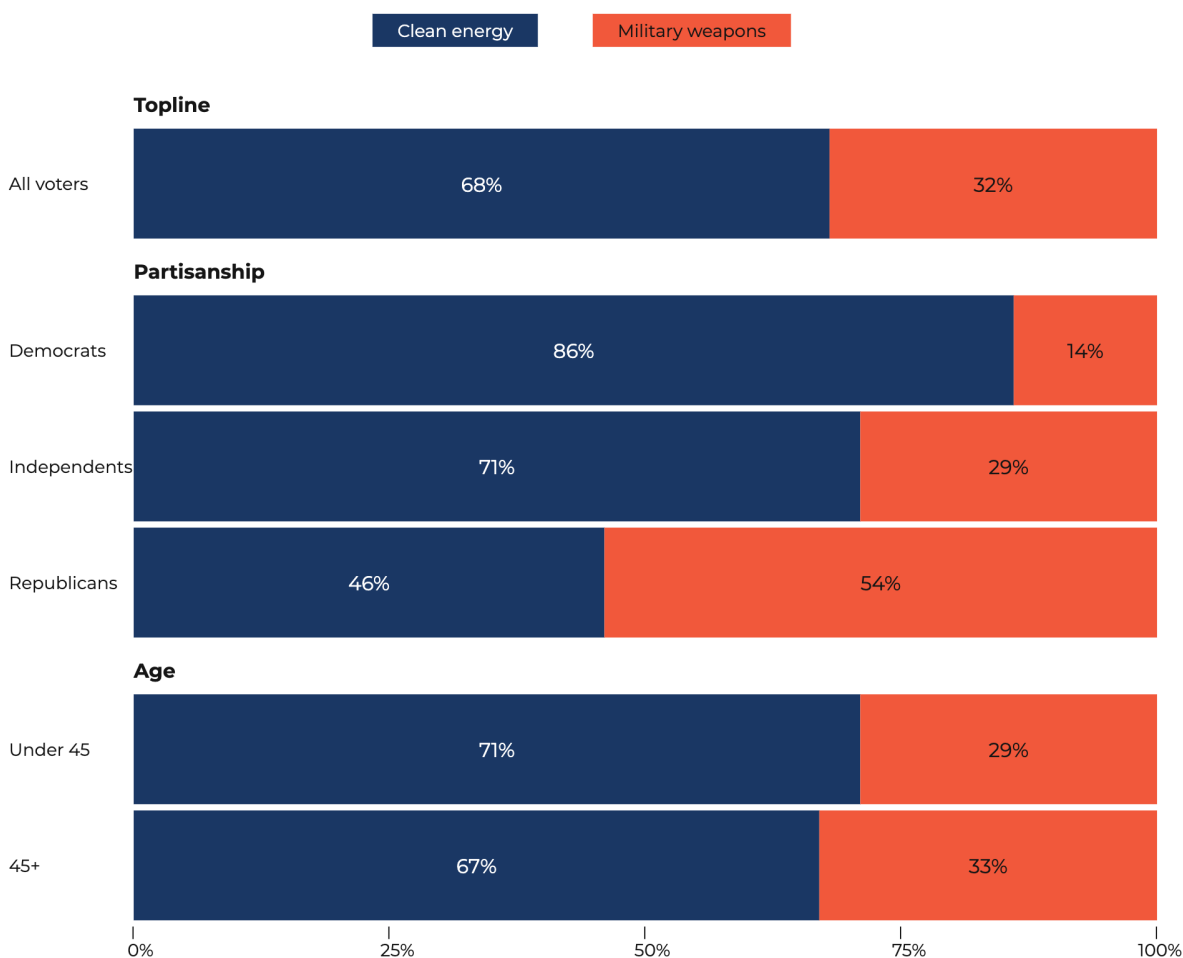
As part of a July 2020 survey, Data for Progress sought to test attitudes about federal research and development priorities and investments in advanced green technologies to benefit communities most impacted by pollution and climate change.

First, we asked voters if they thought the federal government should invest more in developing new military weapons, or invest more in developing clean energy technologies. By a 36-percentage-point margin, voters agree that the federal government should invest more in developing clean energy technologies than new military

weapons. An overwhelming majority of voters who self-identify as Democrats and Independents support investing more in clean energy technologies than in new military weapons. However, a majority of Republicans (54 percent) agree that the government should prioritize investments in new military weapons.

Voters Want to Prioritize Investments in Clean Energy over Military Weapons

What do you think the United States should invest in more: developing new military weapons or clean energy technologies?



Data for Progress

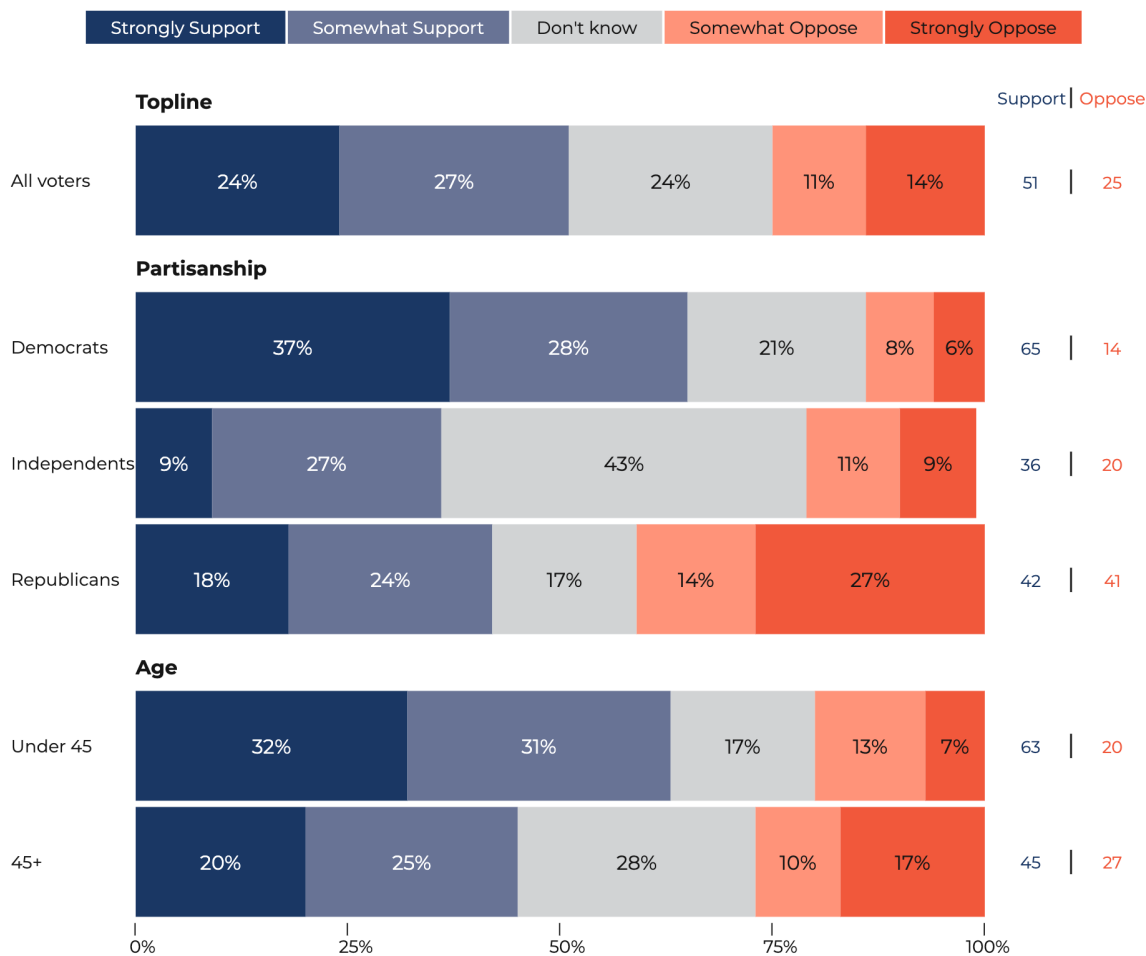
DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

Next, we presented voters with arguments for and against a proposal to invest \$1 trillion in advanced green technologies through the Department of Energy and asked if voters support or oppose the investment. A majority of all voters (51 percent) support this trillion dollar investment in advanced clean energy technologies. The proposal

enjoys support from a majority of Democrats (65 percent) and voters under 45 (63 percent), as well as a plurality of Independents (36 percent) and voters over 45 (45 percent). The proposal also enjoys a narrow margin of support from Republicans: 42 percent of Republicans support the investment, compared to 41 percent who oppose it.

Voters Support a Trillion-Dollar Investment in Advanced Green Technologies

Some lawmakers have proposed a trillion-dollar investment to grow existing programs in the Department of Energy for funding for advanced green technologies. Supporters believe that massive public investment will grow the 21st century green economy and ensure that new technologies are affordable to everyone. Opponents believe the government should let businesses choose what to invest in, and that public funding doesn't work. Do you support or oppose this policy?



Data for Progress

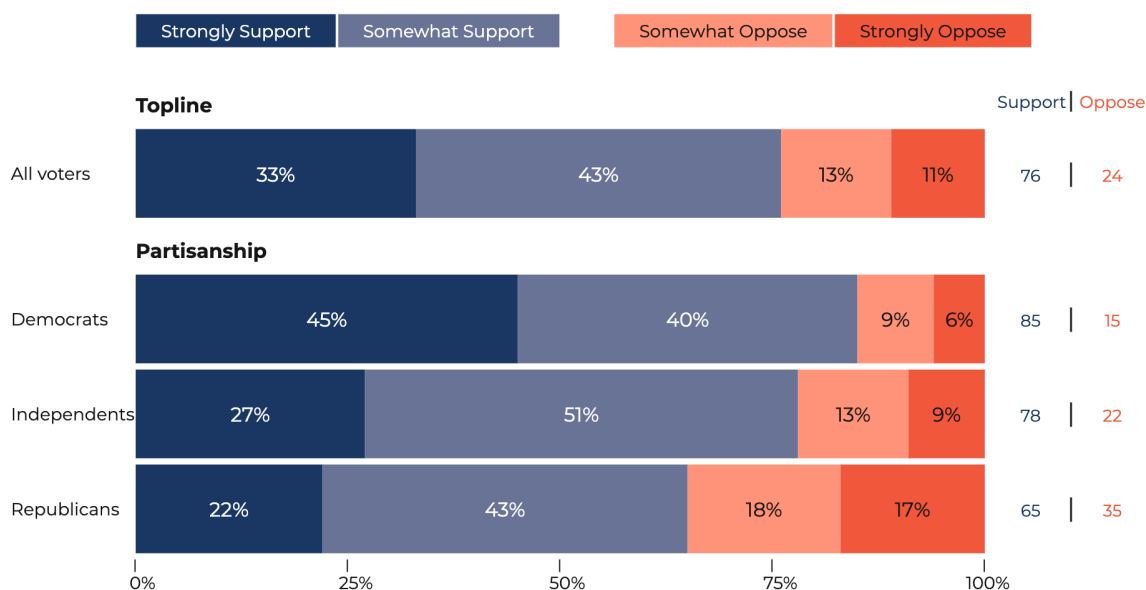
DATA FOR PROGRESS

We also asked voters if they support a proposal to provide targeted funds for the research and development of technologies for “hard-to-abate” industries, such as steel production and the transportation of heavy materials. Overall, voters support this investment by an overwhelming

52-percentage-point margin. This proposal enjoys high support across party lines: A majority of Democrats (88 percent), Independents (78 percent), and Republicans (65 percent) support investments for the research and development of technologies to reduce carbon emissions from “hard-to-abate” industries.

A Majority of All Voters Support R&D Investments in "Hard to Abate" Industries

Some industries are considered "hard-to-abate", which means it is more difficult to reduce carbon pollution from them. Examples of "hard-to-abate" industries include the production of cement and steel and the transportation of heavy materials. These activities account for a significant and growing portion of global carbon pollution. Do you support or oppose the government providing targeted funds for the research and development of technologies to reduce carbon pollution in "hard-to-abate" industries?



Data for Progress

DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

We also asked voters several questions about targeting research and development investments for technologies that would most benefit low-income communities that are disproportionately affected by pollution and climate change. We presented voters with three different statements about whether the federal government should prioritize directing funds to research and develop technologies that will help low-income communities already experiencing the impacts of pollution and climate change.

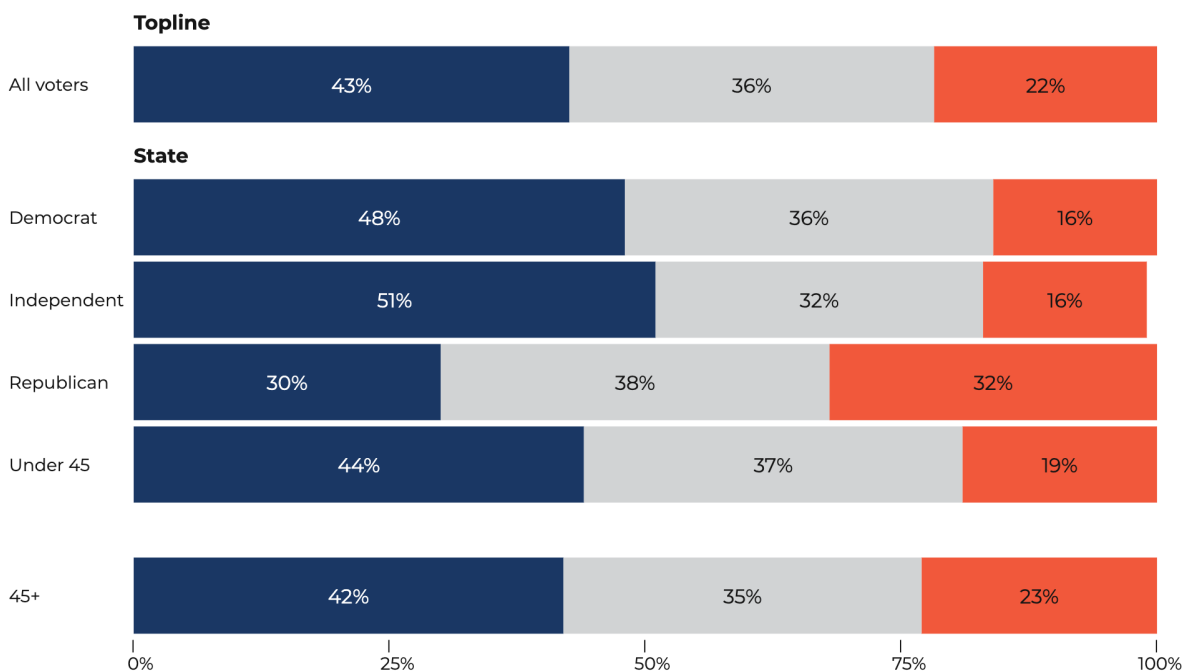
Overall, a plurality of voters (43 percent) agree that the federal government should prioritize

directing funds to research and develop technologies for low-income communities. A majority of Independents (51 percent) and a plurality of Democrats (48 percent) support this statement. While 30 percent of Republicans also agree funds should be directed to research and develop technologies for low-income communities, a plurality of Republicans (38 percent) think that the federal government should direct funds to research and development technologies to mitigate the impacts of pollution and climate change without prioritizing low-income communities.

A Plurality of All Voters Agree the Government Should Fund R&D to Help Low-Income Communities

Please select the statement you most closely agree with:

The federal government should prioritize directing funds to research and develop technologies that will help low income communities already experiencing the effects of pollution and climate change.
The federal government should direct funds to research and develop technologies that address the effects of pollution and climate change for all Americans and does not need to prioritize low income communities
The federal government should not direct funds to research and develop technologies that address the effects of pollution and climate change



Data for Progress

DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

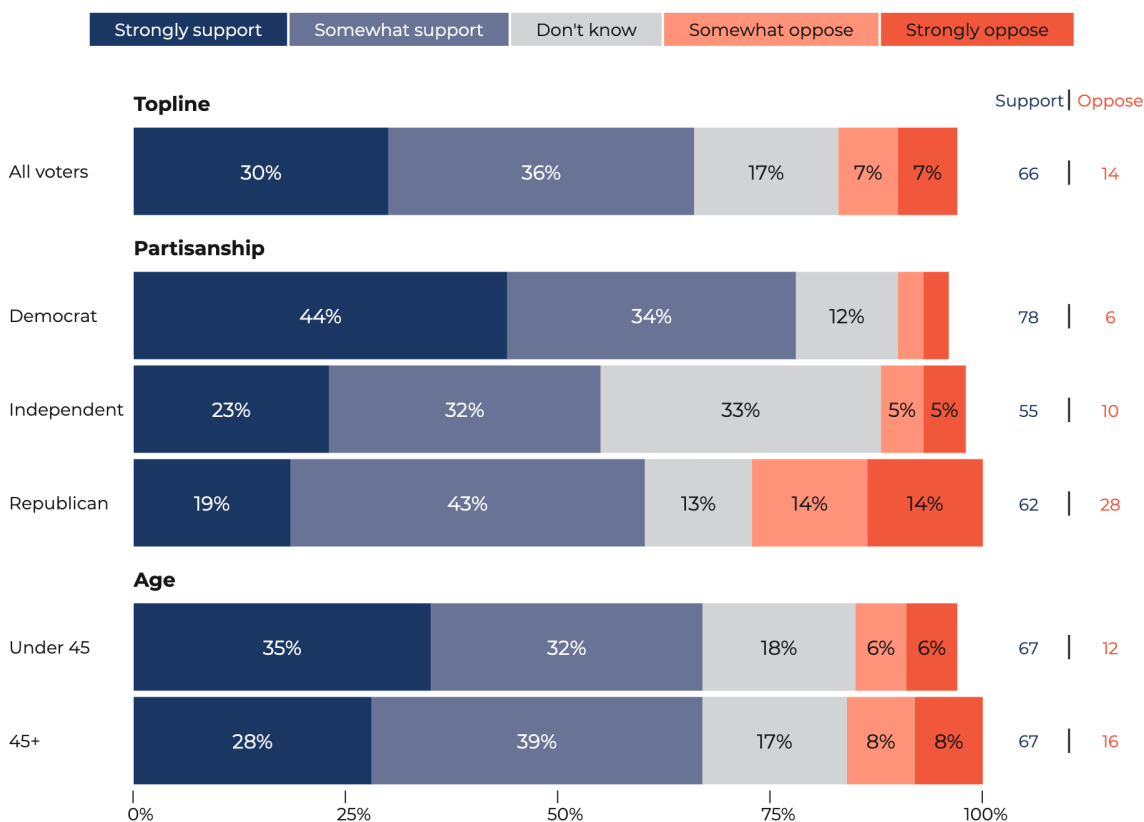
Lastly, we asked voters if they support or oppose the federal government providing financial incentives to research and develop technologies that will benefit the communities most affected by pollution. This proposal enjoys 66 percent support among all voters, and enjoys high support across party lines. Seventy-eight percent of Democrats, 55 percent of Independents, and 62 percent of Republicans support financial incentives to research and develop technologies that will benefit frontline communities.

CONCLUSION

These results indicate that voters are in favor of a bold progressive climate innovation agenda. Voters overwhelmingly want the federal government to direct research and development funding towards developing clean energy technologies instead of new military weapons, and a majority of voters support the Department of Energy investing \$1 trillion in developing new advanced green

Voters Overwhelmingly Support R&D Investments to Benefit Frontline Communities

Would you support or oppose the federal government providing financial incentives to research and develop technologies that will benefit communities most affected by pollution?



Data for Progress

DATA FOR PROGRESS

technologies. Proposals to target research and development funds towards new technologies for “hard-to-abate” industries and for frontline communities enjoy high support from all voters, even across party lines. As lawmakers develop and execute policies to address the climate crisis, they should include a [progressive climate innovation agenda](#) to bring the benefits of clean energy to all Americans and ensure the United States successfully transforms to a clean-energy economy.

METHODOLOGY

From July 10 through July 12, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,390 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is +/- 2.6 percent

Question Wording:

Which do you think the United States should invest in more: developing new military weapons or clean energy technologies?

- ▶ Military weapons
- ▶ Clean energy technology

Please select the statement you most closely agree with:

- ▶ The federal government should prioritize directing funds to research and develop technologies that will help low income communities already experiencing the effects of pollution and climate change.

- ▶ The federal government should direct funds to research and develop technologies that address the effects of pollution and climate change for all Americans and does not need to prioritize low income communities
- ▶ The federal government should not direct funds to research and develop technologies that address the effects of pollution and climate change

Some industries are considered “hard-to-abate”, which means it is more difficult to reduce carbon pollution from them. Examples of “hard-to-abate” industries include the production of cement and steel and the transportation of heavy materials. These activities account for a significant and growing portion of global carbon pollution. Do you support or oppose the government providing targeted funds for the research and development of technologies to reduce carbon pollution in “hard-to-abate” industries?

- ▶ Strongly support
- ▶ Somewhat support
- ▶ Somewhat oppose
- ▶ Strongly oppose

Some lawmakers have proposed a trillion-dollar investment to grow existing programs in the Department of Energy for funding for advanced green technologies. Supporters believe that massive public investment will grow the 21st century green economy and ensure that new technologies are affordable to everyone. Opponents believe the government should let businesses choose what to

invest in, and that public funding doesn't work. Do you support or oppose this policy?

- ▶ Strongly support
- ▶ Somewhat support
- ▶ Somewhat oppose
- ▶ Strongly oppose
- ▶ Don't know

Would you support or oppose the federal government providing financial incentives to research and develop technologies that will benefit communities most affected by pollution?

- ▶ Strongly support
- ▶ Somewhat support
- ▶ Somewhat oppose
- ▶ Strongly oppose
- ▶ Don't know