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VOTERS WANT TO CANCEL FOSSIL FUELS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ By an overwhelming margin, voters agree that minimizing our reliance on fossil fuels will create millions of new jobs in the clean energy economy
- ▶ Overall, 44 percent of voters would be more likely to vote for a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money
- ▶ Voters oppose fossil fuel industry lobbyists or representatives working in the executive branch by a 22-point margin
- ▶ A majority of voters support policies that promote clean energy job growth and regulate the fossil fuel industry
- ▶ Voters agree that the fossil fuel industry has a net negative impact on communities of color by an 11-point margin, and voters support a range of executive actions on environmental justice

INTRODUCTION

Amidst significant legal challenges and pushback from protestors, several major oil and gas pipeline projects were halted in July 2020. A federal judge ordered the Dakota Access pipeline to stop operations pending an environmental review, and the Supreme Court ruled against the Trump administration's request to construct the Keystone XL pipeline. That same week, two of the nation's largest energy companies, Duke Energy and Dominion Energy, cancelled the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline that would have crossed the Appalachian Trail. While fossil fuel companies are losing legal challenges, Democrats in Congress and on the presidential campaign trail are releasing ambitious plans to build a clean energy economy. As a result, the future of the fossil fuel industry will be on the ballot come November.

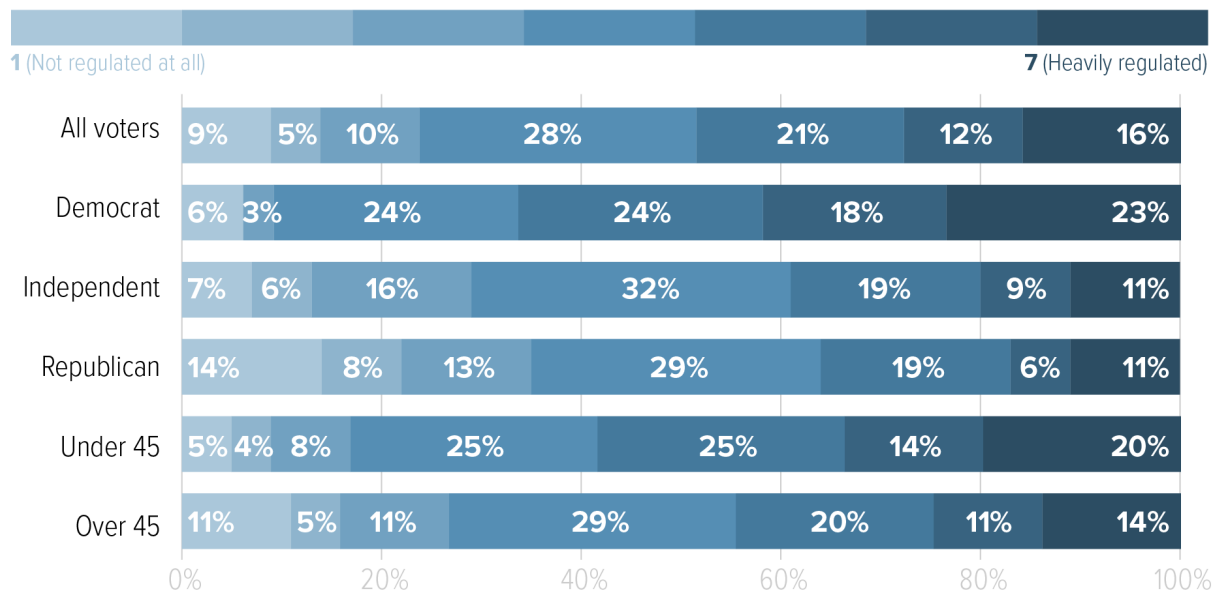
As part of a June 2020 survey, Data for Progress sought to test voter's attitudes around a series of issues surrounding the fossil fuel industry. We were especially interested in exploring the ways that voters perceive the role of the fossil fuel industry as a contributor to climate change and attitudes surrounding the role that the federal government should play in decarbonizing America.

POLLING DATA

First, we provided arguments for and against regulating the fossil fuel industry and asked voters to rank on a 1 to 7 scale how regulated they think the fossil fuel industry should be. Overall, voters are in favor of regulation by a 25-percentage-point margin. Voters that self-identify as Democrats and voters under 45 are most supportive of regulation. Sixty-five percent of Democrats and 59 percent of voters under 45 think the fossil fuel industry should be “very heavily” or “somewhat heavily regulated”.

Some people think the federal government needs to regulate fossil fuel pollution to protect the environment and the public. Others think that the federal government should not regulate fossil fuel pollution because it will destroy jobs.

On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "Not regulated at all" and 7 means "Heavily regulated", how regulated do you think the fossil fuel industry should be?

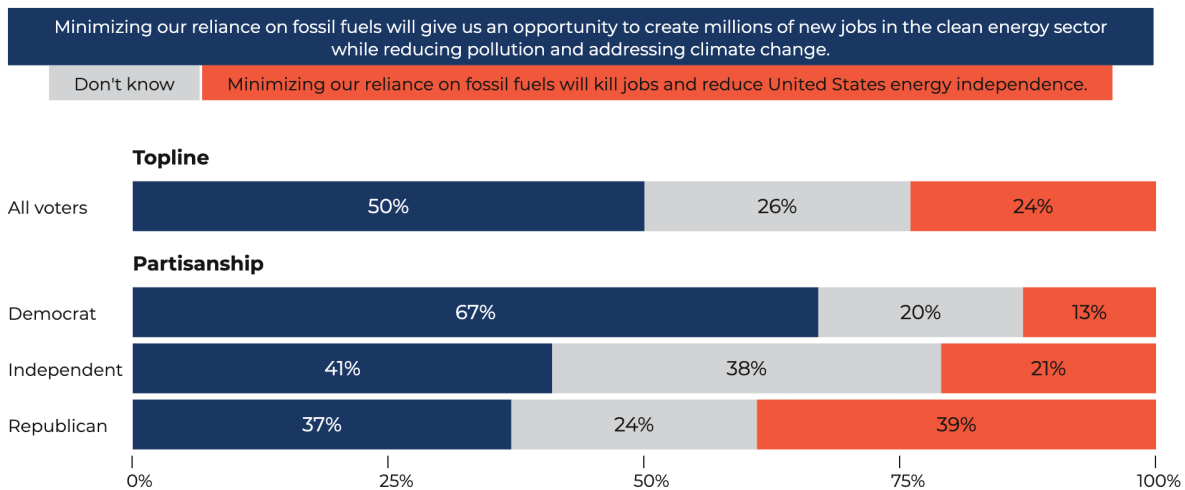


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Next, we presented voters with two statements about fossil fuel job creation and asked them to select the statement they most closely agreed with. By a 2:1 margin, voters agree that minimizing our reliance on fossil fuels will create millions of new jobs in the clean energy economy, rather than kill jobs or reduce our nation's energy independence. A majority of Democrats (67 percent) and voters under 45 (51 percent) agree that minimizing our reliance on fossil fuels will create millions of clean energy jobs. However, this proposal faces a narrow margin of opposition from Republicans: Thirty-seven percent of Republicans agree that minimizing our reliance on fossil fuels will create millions of new jobs in clean energy, while 39 percent think doing so will kill jobs and reduce our nation's energy independence.

Voters Want to Minimize Our Reliance on Fossil Fuels

Which statement comes closer to your view:



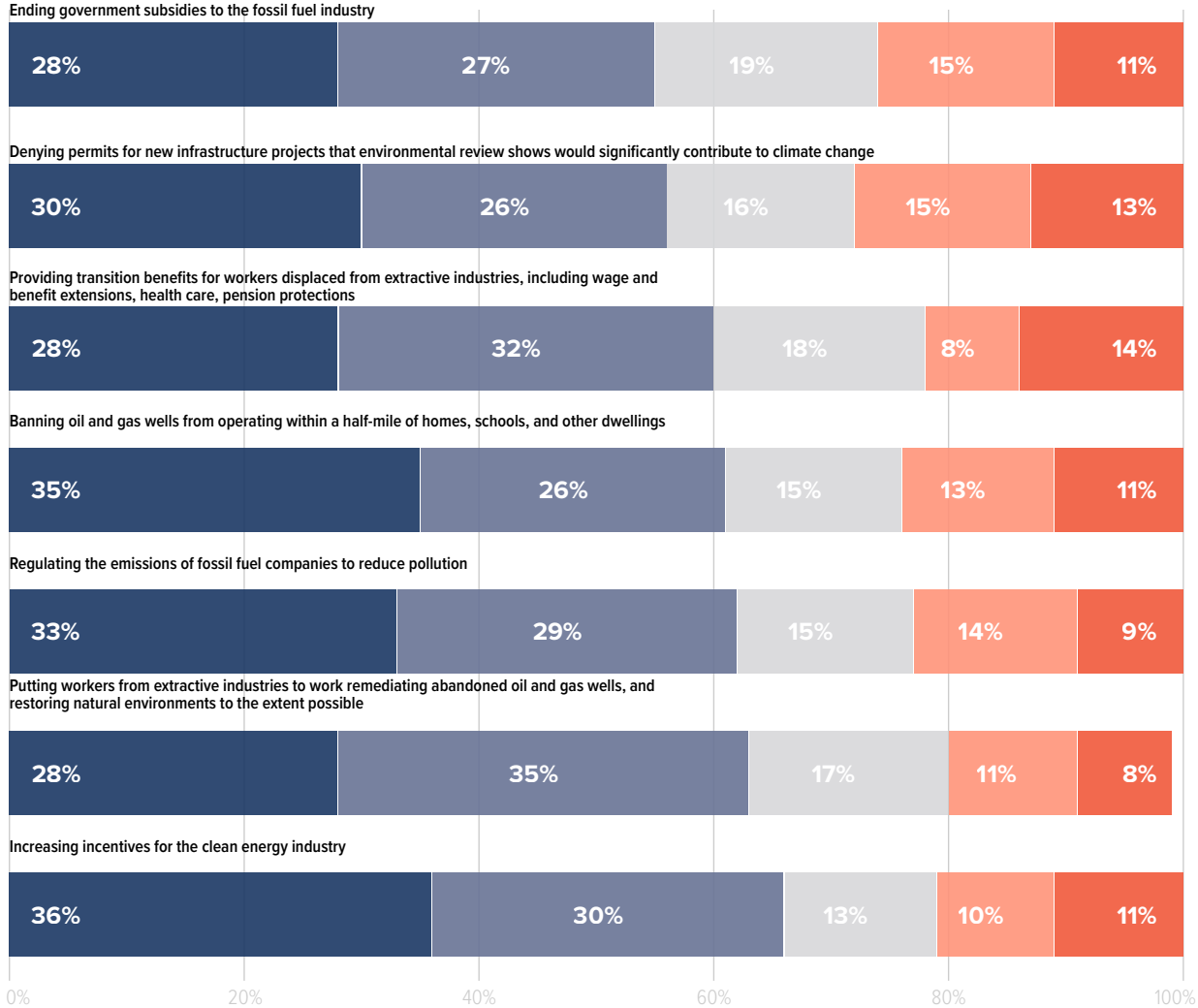
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We also presented voters with a series of different policy proposals regarding the fossil fuel industry and clean energy production, and asked if they support or oppose each one. A majority of all voters support federal policies that advance the growth of clean energy production and shift energy production away from the fossil fuel industry. Sixty-six percent of voters support increasing incentives for the clean energy industry, and 60 percent support providing benefits to workers displaced by the transition away from fossil fuels. Additionally, 62 percent of all voters support regulating emissions to reduce pollution, 55 percent support ending government subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, and 56 percent support denying permits for infrastructure projects that would significantly contribute to climate change.

Voters Support a Broad Range of Clean Energy Policies

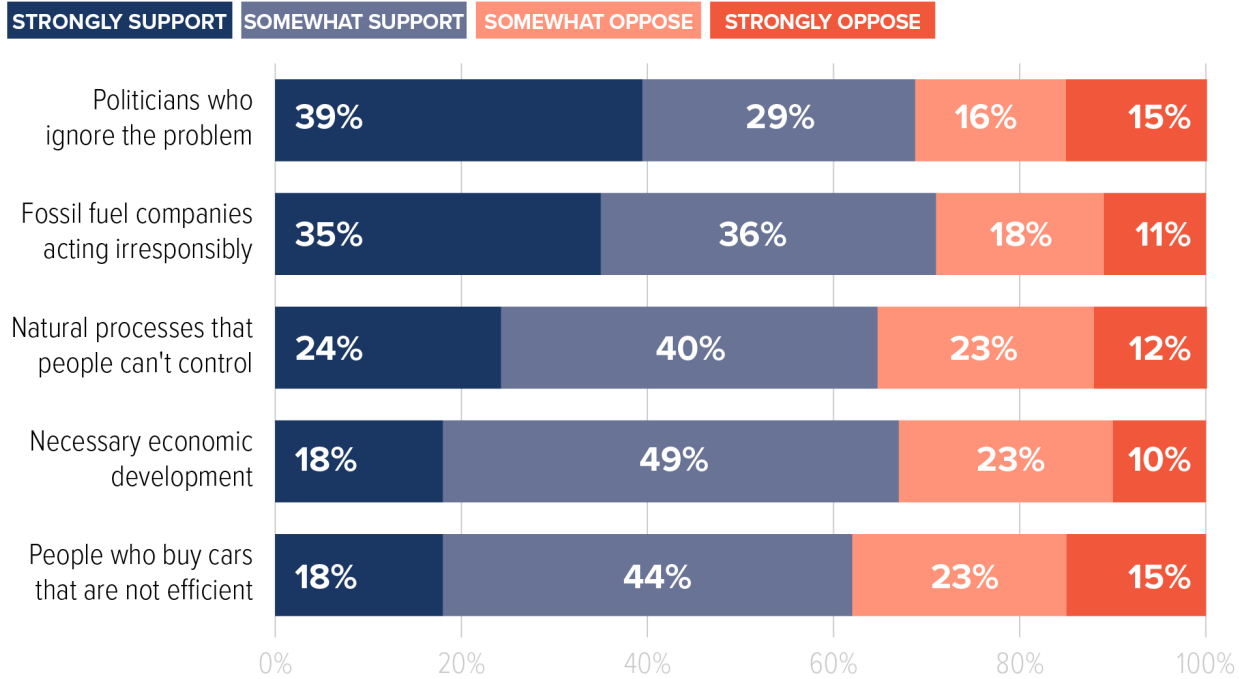
Would you support or oppose the following policies?



To understand who voters hold accountable for the climate crisis, we presented voters with a series of options and asked how responsible they think each is for causing climate change. Overall, voters hold fossil fuel companies and politicians most accountable for their roles in causing climate change. Seventy one percent of all voters think irresponsible fossil fuel companies should be held accountable, and 68 percent of voters think politicians who ignored the problem should be held accountable. Voters view politicians as the most liable, as 39 percent of voters think inactive politicians are “very responsible” for causing climate change, compared to 35 percent of voters who think fossil fuel companies are “very responsible”.

Voters Find Fossil Fuel Companies and Politicians Most Responsible for the Climate Crisis

How responsible do you think each of the following are for causing climate change?

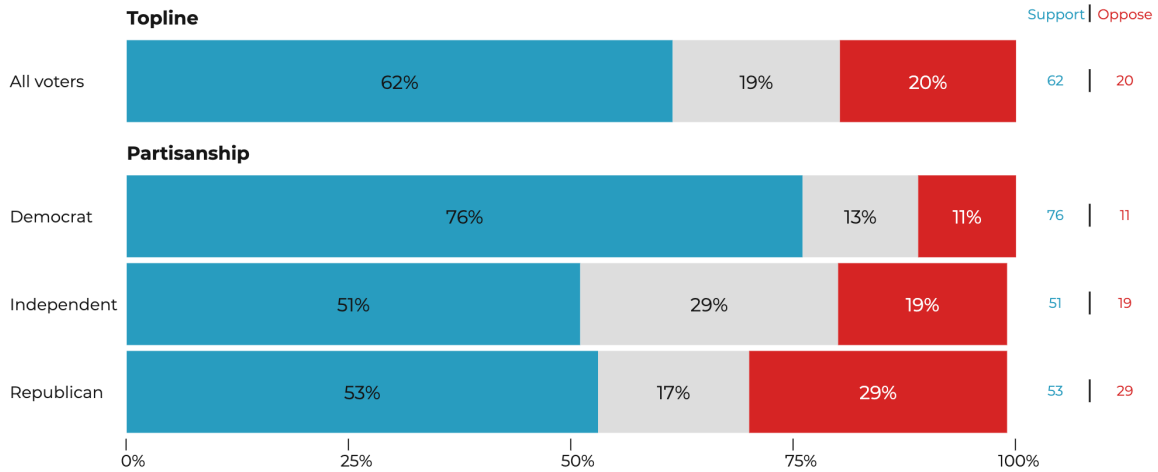


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We then posed a series of questions asking voters to choose which approach to energy production or energy infrastructure they would most prefer from two different proposals. By a 42-point margin, voters think new energy infrastructure projects should undergo review to assess climate impacts. This proposal is popular across party lines: A majority of Democrats (76 percent), Independents (51 percent), and Republicans (53 percent) all prefer that new energy infrastructure projects are reviewed for their impact on the climate.

Voters Want to Review New Infrastructure Projects for their Impacts on the Climate

Which of the following approaches to new energy infrastructure would you prefer:



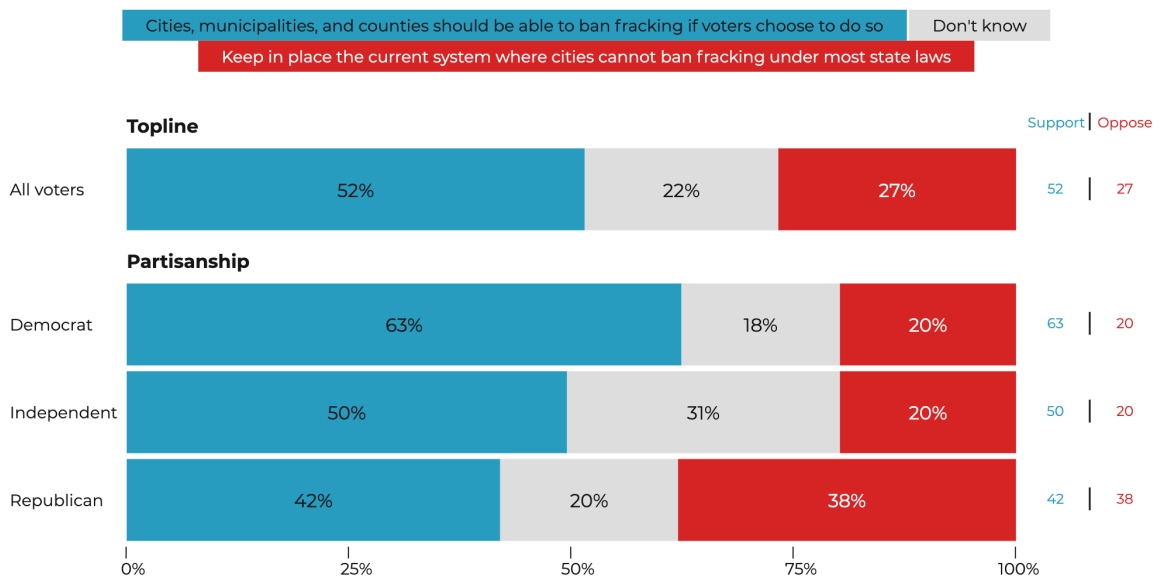
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Next, we asked voters if they would prefer the option for local governments to ban fracking if residents choose to do so, or if current state laws preventing local governments from banning fracking should be kept in place. Fifty-two percent of all voters prefer the approach of local governments banning fracking if residents choose to do so, compared to 27 percent of voters that prefer keeping state laws preventing local governments from banning fracking in place. The proposal to allow local governments to ban fracking enjoys support from a majority of Democrats (63 percent), a plurality of Independents (50 percent), and notably, a narrow plurality of Republicans (42 percent).

Voters Want to Allow Local Governments to Ban Fracking

Which of the following approaches to energy production would you prefer:



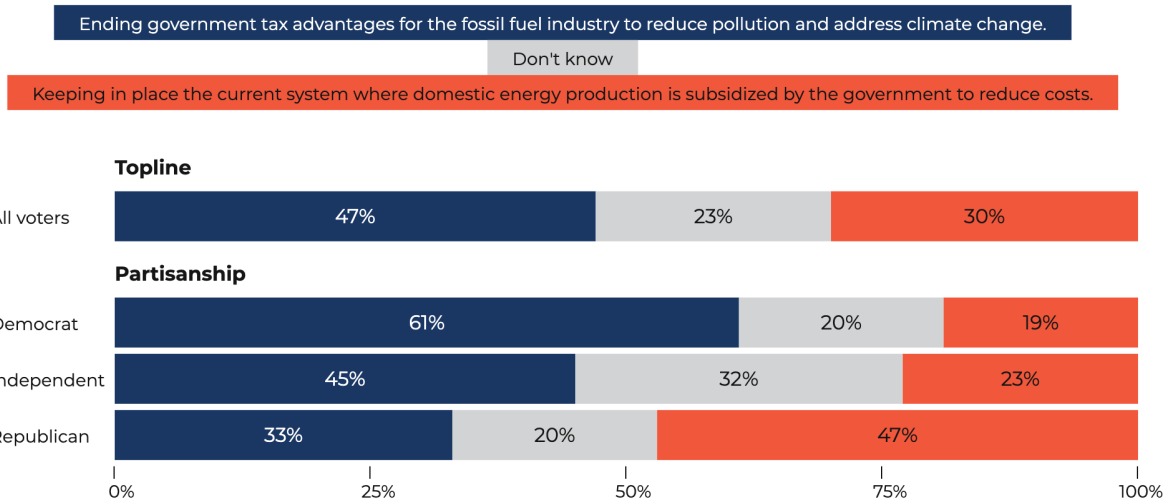
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We then asked voters if they would prefer ending tax advantages for the fossil fuel industry, or continuing the status quo where domestic energy production is subsidized by the government. Voters support ending tax incentives for the fossil fuel industry by a 17-point margin. Though a majority of Democrats (61 percent) and a plurality of Independents (45 percent) agree with ending tax advantages for the fossil fuel industry, a plurality of Republicans (47 percent) support keeping the subsidies in place.

Voters Want to End Tax Advantages for the Fossil Fuel Industry

Which of the following approaches to energy production would you prefer:



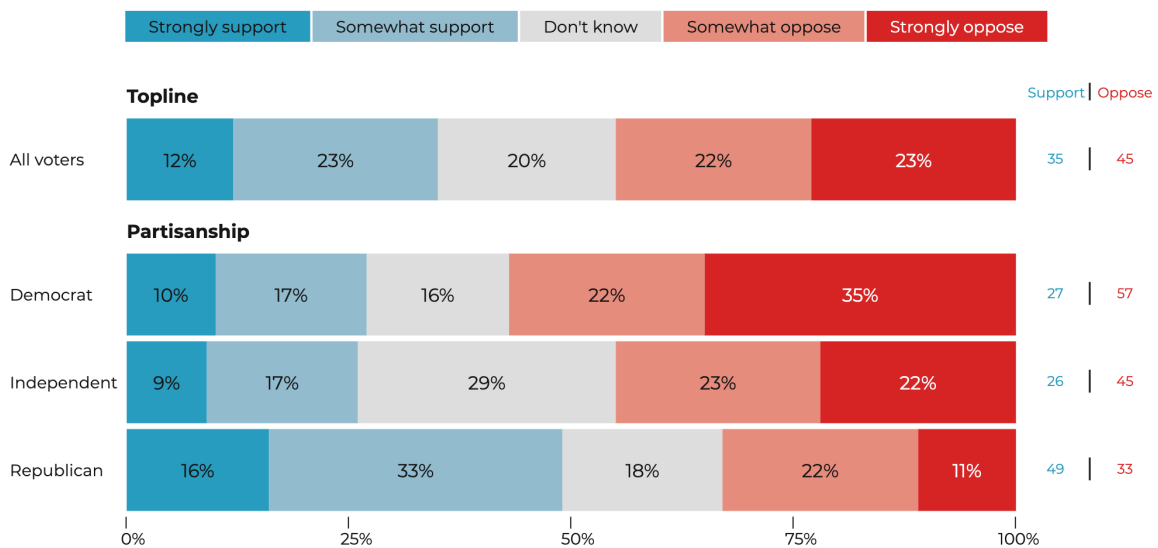
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We also asked voters if they support federal aid for the fossil fuel industry being included as part of coronavirus economic relief packages. Forty-five percent of all voters oppose the Federal Reserve directing money to the fossil fuel industry, while only 35 percent of voters support directing federal money to the fossil fuel industry.

Voters Oppose Government Bailouts of the Fossil Fuel Industry

Oil, gas and coal companies are expected to receive tens of billions of dollars in federal aid from coronavirus relief packages. These companies are largely responsible for the climate crisis and many are also deeply in debt. Because of this, some have argued that the Federal Reserve, the central bank of the United States, should not allocate any funds toward the fossil fuel industry. Do you support or oppose the Federal Reserve directing money to the fossil fuel industry?



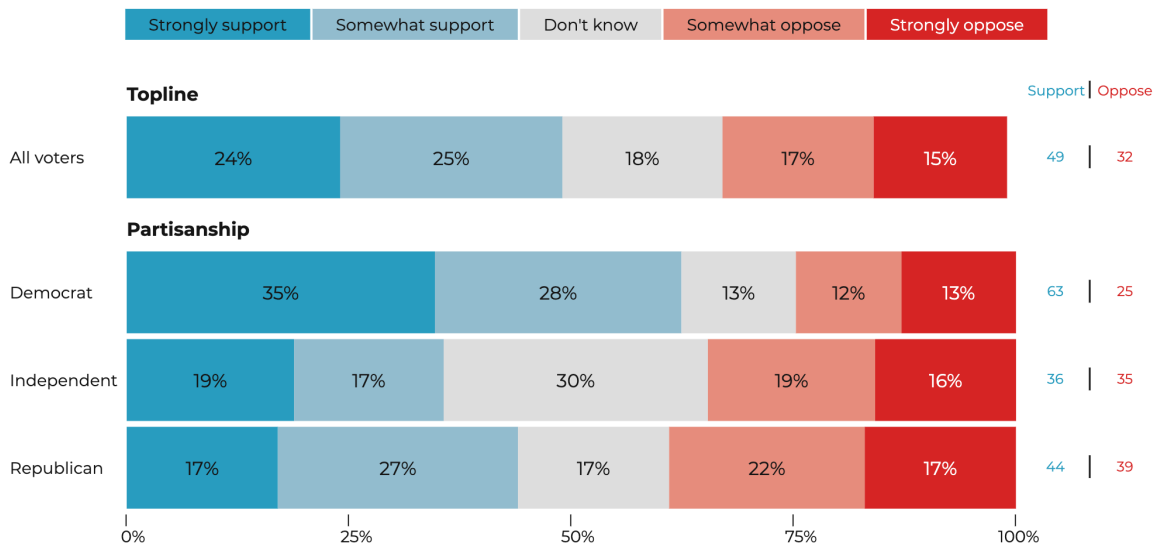
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When asked if they would prefer ending the practice of extracting fossil fuels on public lands, voters support ending the practice by a 10-point margin. However, there is a clear partisan divide over this proposal. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (62 percent) support ending fossil fuel extraction on public land, but a majority of Republicans (54 percent) prefer the current system of allowing fossil fuel extraction on public land.

Voters Want to End Fossil Fuel Extraction on Public Lands

Some Democrats have proposed preventing companies from extracting fossil fuels on land owned by state, local, and federal governments. Democrats say that this will keep parks, forest, fishing, grazing lands, and other public lands free from dangerous and extractive industries. Republicans say that extraction on public lands makes money for taxpayers and keeps the United States energy independent. Would you support or oppose preventing companies from extracting fossil fuels from public lands?



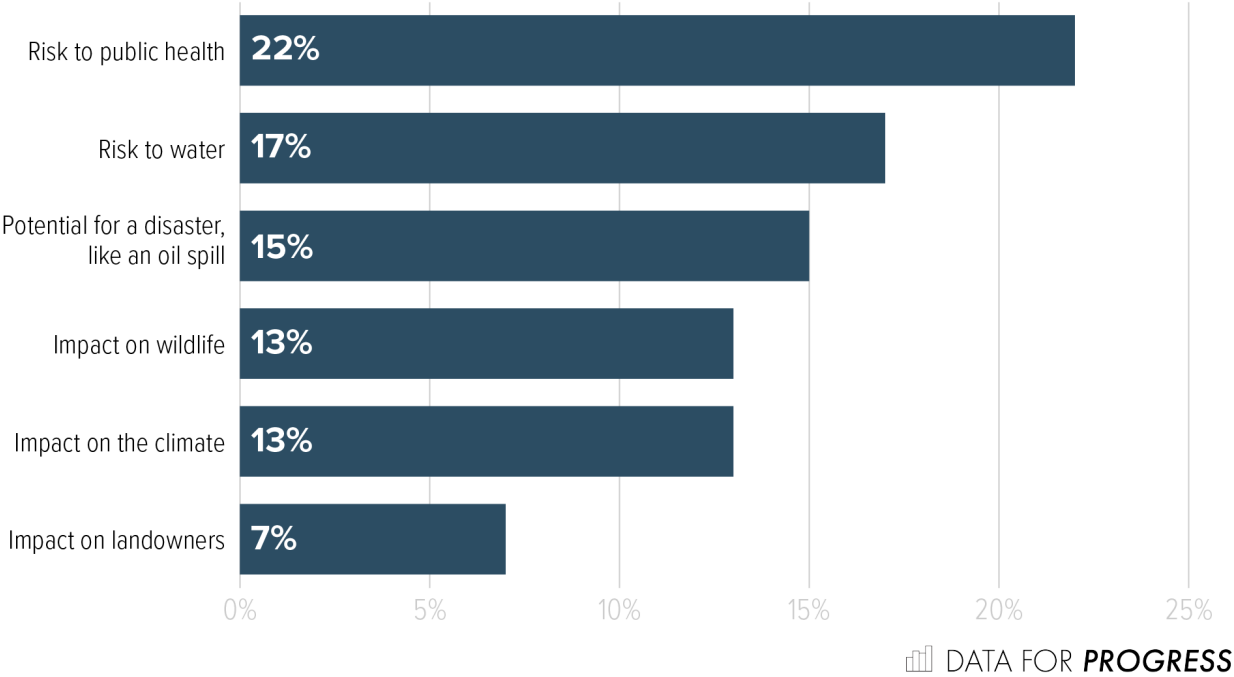
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We also presented voters with several potential impacts of new fossil fuel infrastructure projects and asked voters to choose which impact they are most concerned about. Overall, voters think the most concerning potential impact from a new fossil fuel infrastructure project is the risk to public health (22 percent), closely followed by the risk to water supplies (17 percent). Of lesser concern to voters is the impact on landowners (7 percent).

Voters Are Concerned About the Impact of New Fossil Fuel Projects on Public Health

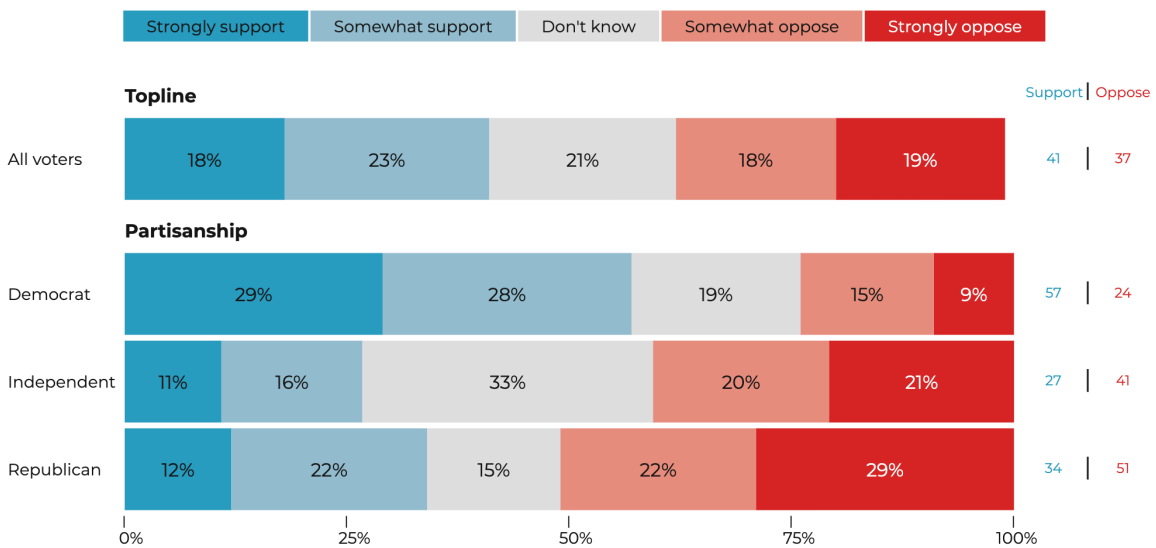
Which of the following do you find most concerning when it comes to new fossil fuel infrastructure, like an oil pipeline?



When presented with partisan arguments for and against the public ownership of fossil fuel production, voters overall support public ownership by a narrow 4-point margin. However, public ownership of fossil fuels enjoys uneven support across party lines: 57 percent of Democrats support public ownership, but only 34 percent of Republicans and 27 percent of Independents support public ownership.

Voters Want to End Fossil Fuel Extraction on Public Lands

Some Democrats have proposed public ownership of fossil fuel production. Democrats say that this will allow the government to reduce the use of fossil fuels and move towards more energy efficient mechanisms, while also allowing Americans to benefit from oil revenues before our natural resources are fully depleted. Republicans say that this would be a socialist takeover of the energy sector just like in Venezuela and that when fossil fuel companies are publicly owned, it leads to less efficient extraction of resources and unions that are too strong. Would you support or oppose the government controlling fossil fuel production?



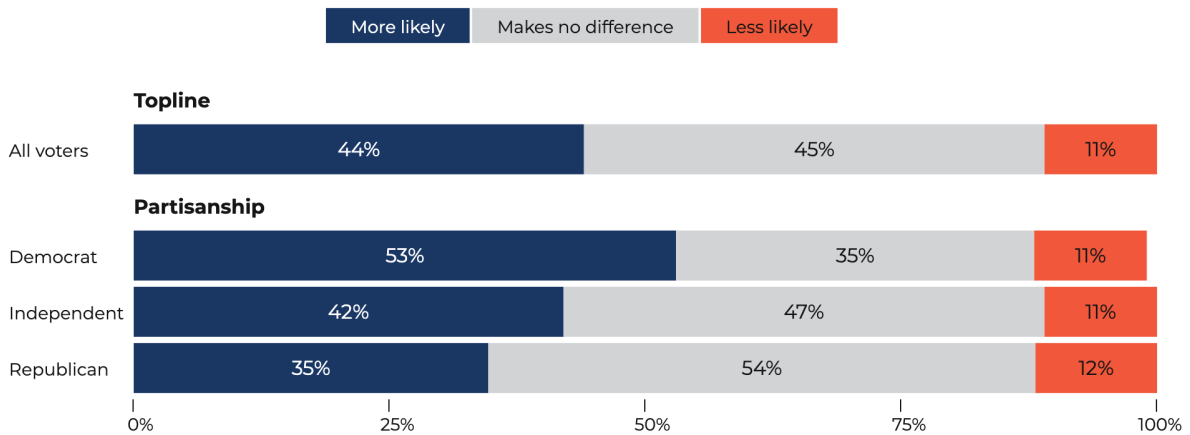
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Voters were asked if they would be more or less likely to support a candidate if they refused to take campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies. Overall, 44 percent of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money, while 45 percent of all voters say an anti-fossil fuel money pledge would not affect their voting choice. A majority of Democrats (53 percent) and a plurality of Independents (42 percent) are more likely to support a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money. Notably, Republicans are more likely to support a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money by a 23-point margin: Thirty-five percent of Republicans are more likely to support a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money, compared to only 12 percent of Republicans who are less likely to support a candidate that refuses fossil fuel money.

Voters Prefer Candidates That Refuse Fossil Fuel Money

Would you be more likely or less likely to support a candidate if they refused to take money from fossil fuel companies, executives, or lobbyists, regardless of the candidate's party?



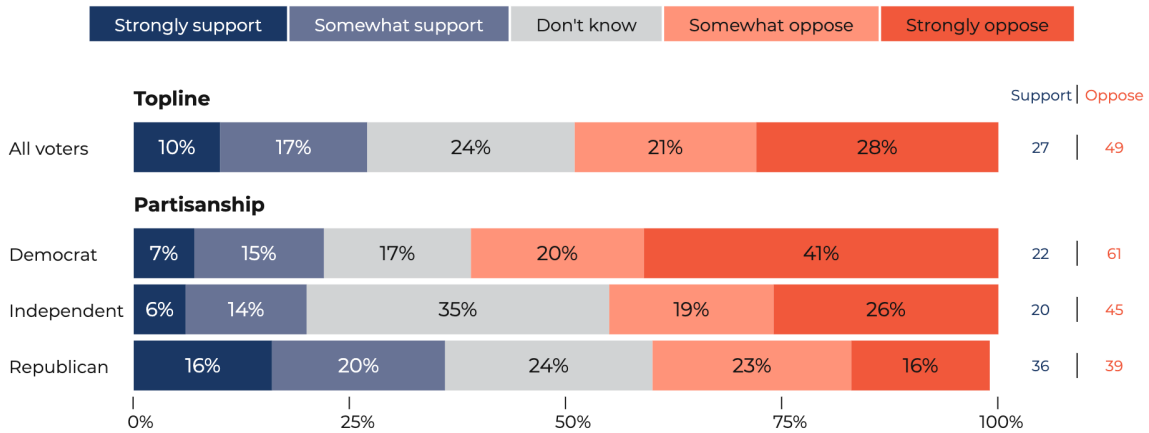
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We also asked voters if they support or oppose fossil fuel industry lobbyists or representatives working in the White House and other government agencies. By a 22-point margin, voters oppose having fossil fuel industry lobbyists or representatives in the executive branch. Voters across party lines agree: A majority of Democrats (61 percent), a plurality of Independents (45 percent), and a plurality of Republicans (39 percent) all oppose fossil fuel industry lobbyists or representatives holding positions in the White House and federal agencies.

Voters Want to Keep Fossil Fuel Representatives out of the Executive Branch

Do you support or oppose fossil fuel industry lobbyists or representatives working in the White House and other government agencies?



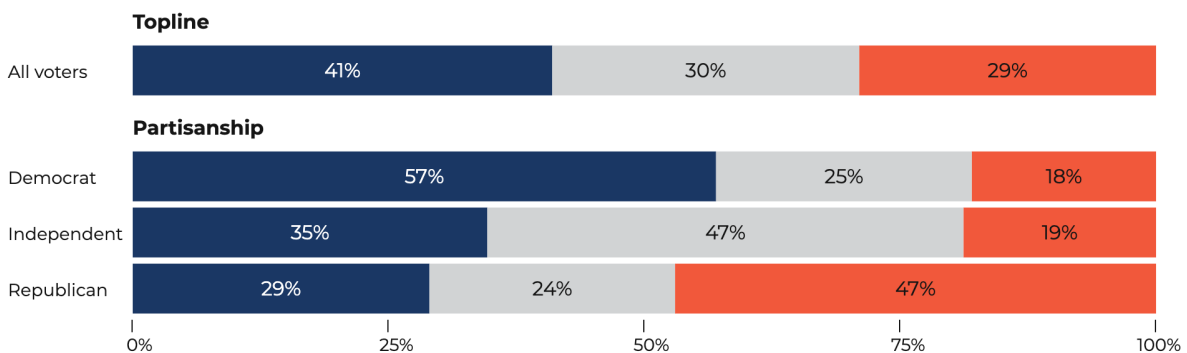
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To assess how voters view fossil fuel companies through the lens of environmental justice, we asked voters to choose amongst various statements about how fossil fuel companies impact communities of color. By an 11-point margin, voters agree that fossil fuel companies have a net negative impact on communities of color. This statement enjoys the most support from Democrats (57 percent), Black voters (52 percent), and voters under 45 (48 percent). Conversely, a plurality of Republicans (48 percent) agree that fossil fuel companies have a net positive impact on communities of color.

Voters Agree that Fossil Fuel Companies Have A Negative Impact on Communities of Color

Which statement do you agree with more?



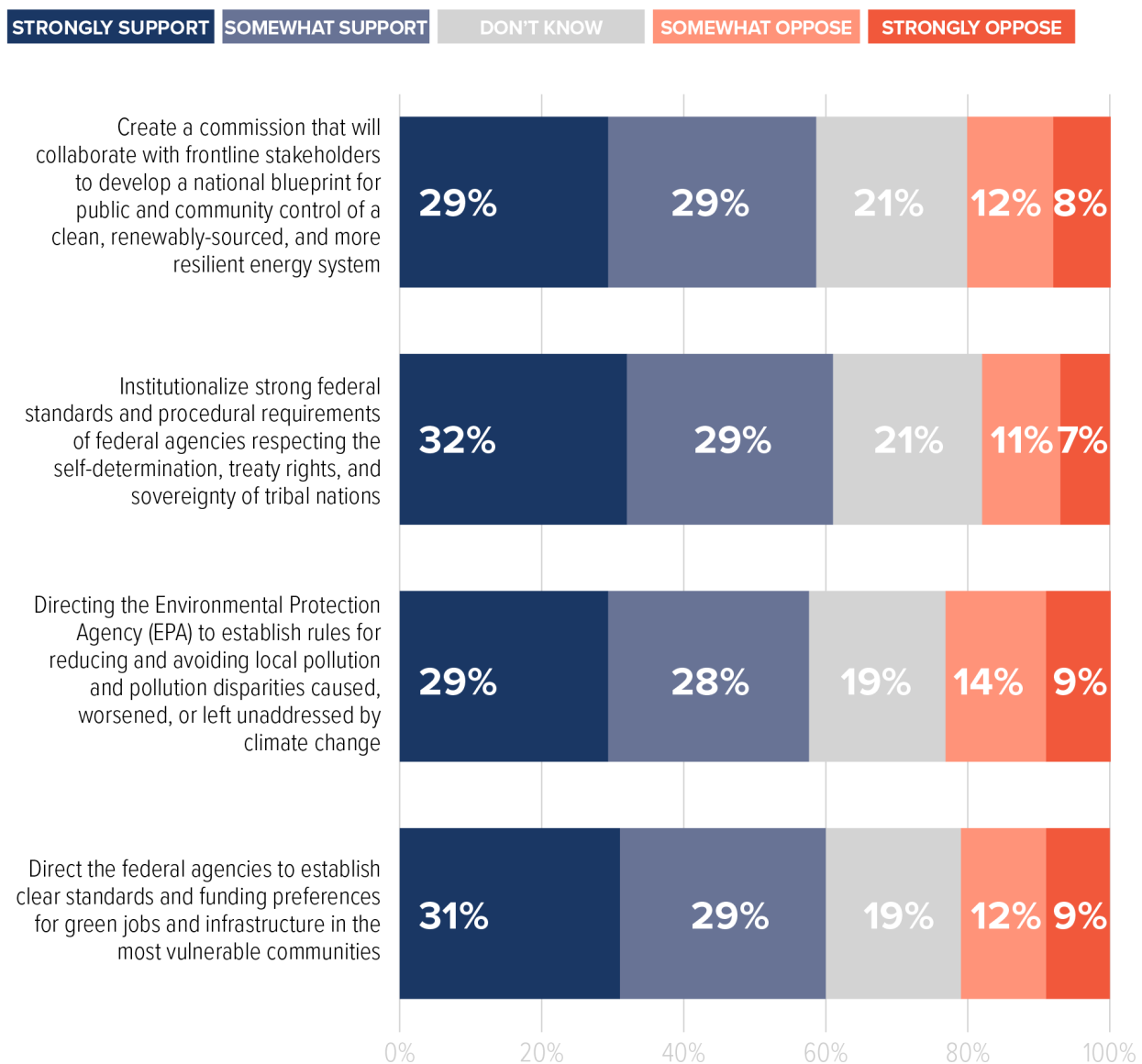
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We also asked voters if they support or oppose a series of executive orders that would address the needs of communities living on the frontlines of fossil fuel production and pollution, and found that a majority of all voters support each one. Overall, 61 percent of voters support strong federal standards that respect the self-determination, treaty rights, and sovereignty of tribal nations. Voters want federal agencies to address the communities most affected by pollution: 57 percent of voters support an executive order to force the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce pollution disparities in local communities, and 60 percent support an executive order to direct federal funding for green jobs and infrastructure in the most vulnerable communities. Furthermore, 58 percent of voters support an executive order to create a commission that develops national policies for a clean energy economy and includes members from frontline communities.

Voters Support Executive Actions on Environmental Justice Measures

An executive order is a rule or order issued by the president to an executive branch of the government and having the force of law. Would you support or oppose a president taking the following actions by executive order?



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CONCLUSION

Our findings clearly show that voters are enthusiastic about transitioning away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy. Voters hold fossil fuel companies and politicians responsible for causing climate change, and oppose the influence of fossil fuel lobbyists and representatives in our government.

To make the transition to a clean energy economy, voters broadly support federal actions, such as investments in clean energy jobs and emissions standards. Voters recognize the negative impact that fossil fuel companies have on communities of color, and support executive actions on environmental justice to support frontline communities. Lawmakers and candidates should recognize that public support is clearly behind clean energy rather than fossil fuels, and should not be afraid to take bold stances against the fossil fuel industry in the halls of Congress and on the campaign trail.

METHODOLOGY

From June 26 through June 27, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,388 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