

Politics and Global Warming December 2020

Introduction

This report is based on findings from a nationally representative survey – *Climate Change in the American Mind* – conducted by the [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication \(climatecommunication.yale.edu\)](https://climatecommunication.yale.edu) and the [George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication \(climatechangecommunication.org\)](https://climatechangecommunication.org). Interview dates: December 3 – 16, 2020. Interviews: 1,036 adults (18+), 949 of whom are registered to vote. Average margin of error for registered voters: +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The research was funded by the 11th Hour Project, the Energy Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Grantham Foundation.

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Executive Summary

Drawing on a nationally representative survey ($N = 1,036$; including 949 registered voters), this report describes how registered voters view a variety of climate and energy policies. This survey was fielded from December 3 – 16, 2020 – after the results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election were known, but before control of the U.S. Senate was determined. This executive summary reports the results from all registered voters, while the report breaks the results down by political party and ideology.

Global Warming and Clean Energy as Government Priorities

- 53% of registered voters say global warming should be a high or very high priority for the president and Congress.
- 66% of registered voters say developing sources of clean energy should be a high or very high priority for the president and Congress.

Global Warming and Energy Policies

Majorities of registered voters support a range of policies to reduce carbon pollution and promote clean energy. These include:

- 82% support providing tax rebates to people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels.
- 82% support funding more research into renewable energy sources.
- 80% support generating renewable energy (solar and wind) on public land in the U.S.
- 78% support providing federal funding to put solar panels on the roofs of public schools.
- 74% support regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant.
- 72% support transitioning the U.S. economy (including electric utilities, transportation, buildings, and industry) from fossil fuels to 100% clean energy by 2050.
- 67% support requiring fossil fuel companies to pay a tax on the carbon pollution they produce, and using that revenue to reduce other taxes (such as the federal income tax) by an equal amount (i.e., a revenue-neutral carbon tax).
- 66% support requiring electric utilities to produce 100% of their electricity from renewable energy sources by the year 2035.
- 66% support eliminating all carbon pollution created by coal, oil, and natural gas from the U.S. economy by 2050.
- 55% support increasing federal subsidies for the renewable energy while 49% support *decreasing* subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.

Majorities of registered voters also support a range of policies to reduce energy use and improve efficiency. These include:

- 88% support providing tax incentives or rebates to homeowners, landlords, and businesses to make existing buildings more energy efficient.
- 86% support setting stronger energy efficiency standards for new buildings.
- 83% support setting stronger energy efficiency standards for appliances.
- 80% support providing tax incentives or rebates to homeowners, landlords, and businesses to purchase appliances that can be powered without burning fossil fuels (such as electric water heaters, electric heat pumps, and electric induction cooktops).
- 78% support setting stronger fuel efficiency standards for cars, trucks, and SUVs.
- 67% support installing 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations across the U.S. by 2030.

- Additionally, 44% support requiring that, by 2030, all new cars, trucks, and SUVs sold in the U.S. are electric vehicles.

Registered voters across the political spectrum also support a range of conservation and restoration policies, including:

- 86% support providing federal funding to help farmers improve farming practices to protect and restore the soil so it absorbs and stores more carbon.
- 85% support re-establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps, which would employ workers to protect natural ecosystems, plant trees in rural and urban areas, and restore the soil on farmlands.
- 83% support creating a jobs program that would hire unemployed coal workers to safely close down old coal mines and restore the natural landscape.
- 83% support creating a jobs program that would hire unemployed oil and gas workers to safely close down thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells, which are a source of water and methane pollution.
- 76% support setting aside 30% of America's lands and waters for conservation by 2030.
- 68% support increasing federal funding to low-income communities and communities of color who are disproportionately harmed by air and water pollution.

Fewer registered voters support policies to increase fossil-fuel production, including:

- 47% support expanding oil and natural gas drilling off the U.S. coast.
- 40% support drilling and mining fossil fuels on public land in the U.S.
- 28% support drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

International Cooperation on Global Warming

- 75% support U.S. participation in the Paris Climate Agreement.
- 79% support the next U.S. president hosting a meeting of the leaders of large industrialized nations to urge them to do more to reduce global warming.
- 79% say that it is in America's national interest to increase diplomatic and trade pressure on China to reduce its carbon pollution, and 74% say the U.S. should cooperate with China to reduce global warming.
- 64% say that the U.S. should reduce greenhouse emissions regardless of what other countries do.

Declaring Climate Change a National Emergency

- 56% support a U.S. president declaring global warming a national emergency if Congress does not act.

The Green New Deal

- 66% support the Green New Deal, although only 18% say they have heard "a lot" about it.

Energy Production as an Economic Issue

- 56% say that policies to promote clean energy will improve economic growth and create jobs.
- 29% say these policies will reduce growth and cost jobs.

- 61% say that increasing production of clean energy in the U.S. will produce more new jobs than will increasing fossil fuel production.

Support for Infrastructure Investments

68% of registered voters support a major government investment in the nation's infrastructure, including:

- 93% support investments to repair and improve the nation's roads, bridges, and highways, and 90% support investments to repair and improve public water supply systems.
- 84% support investments to modernize and upgrade the nation's electricity grid and repair, and 81% support investments to improve dams and levees.
- 74% support funds to repair and improve National Parks.
- 65% support funds to install solar panels and wind turbines across the country, 65% to modernize and upgrade the nation's oil pipelines and natural gas lines, and 61% to repair and improve the nation's ports and harbors.

Acting on Global Warming

- 70% say corporations and industry should do more to address global warming.
- Half or more say citizens (63%), the Republican Party (62%), the U.S. Congress (62%), their local government officials (56%), the Democratic Party (56%), their governor (55%), the media (50%), and they themselves (50%) should do more to address global warming.

Educating Students About Global Warming

- 78% support schools teaching children the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to global warming.

Global Warming as a Voting Issue in the 2020 Election

- 48% say the issue of global warming was an important factor in determining how they voted in 2020.