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Texas Voters Want to Transition to Clean Energy

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Executive Summary

President Biden's newly released American Jobs Plan, if passed, would create millions of good-paying, union jobs modernizing America's infrastructure and energy grid. The \$2 trillion package calls for landmark new investments that would boost our economy and reduce hazardous pollution while accelerating America's transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. New nationwide polling from Data for Progress shows that voters across party lines overwhelmingly support this investment.

Despite the fact that the bill would greatly expand employment and revitalize local economies across the U.S., some lawmakers who oppose this investment are already attempting to strike back with a familiar — and inaccurate — talking point: “This agenda will be a job-killer.” The ability to refute these talking points is especially critical in Texas, which produces nearly half of American crude oil and serves as the nation's leader in natural gas production, but is also positioning itself as a new national leader in renewable energy production.

In a recent statewide survey, Data for Progress assessed the attitudes of likely Texas voters, including an oversample of Latino voters, toward climate change, pollution, and transitioning to clean energy. Furthermore, Data for Progress assessed how support for clean energy investments is impacted when voters are faced with oppositional arguments claiming these investments will be “job-killers.”

Data for Progress polling finds that Texans support a clean energy transition even when presented with bad-faith attacks that the clean energy transition would devastate the state's economy. Texas voters firmly believe in remaining a global energy leader while transitioning the economy away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy, even after being presented with arguments that this transition would disrupt the state's economy and way of life. As part of the clean energy transition, Texas voters also strongly support lawmakers prioritizing key proposals to guarantee jobs and financial assistance to ensure no workers are left behind.

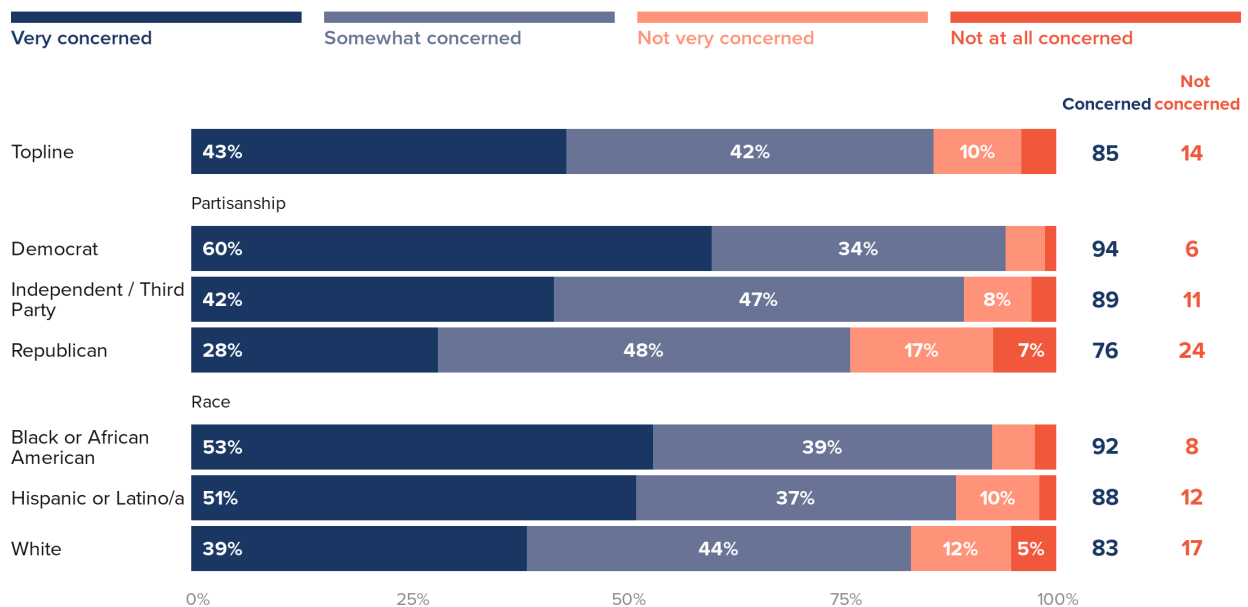
While this survey was conducted in the weeks prior to the statewide Texas power outages, these findings align closely with findings from an August 2020 Data for Progress statewide survey that assessed the attitudes of likely Texas voters toward bold climate actions.

Concerned About Pollution and Climate Change, Texas Voters Are Ready to Tackle These Challenges

Across party lines, Texas voters are overwhelmingly concerned about air and water pollution. Nearly all Democrats (94 percent) and independents (89 percent) -- and over three-quarters of Republicans (76 percent) -- say they are “Very” or “Somewhat” concerned about air and water pollution. Nearly all Black (92 percent) and Latino voters (88 percent) are “Very” or “Somewhat” concerned about air and water pollution, as well as 83 percent of white voters.

Texas Voters Are Overwhelmingly Concerned About Air and Water Pollution

How concerned are you about air and water pollution?



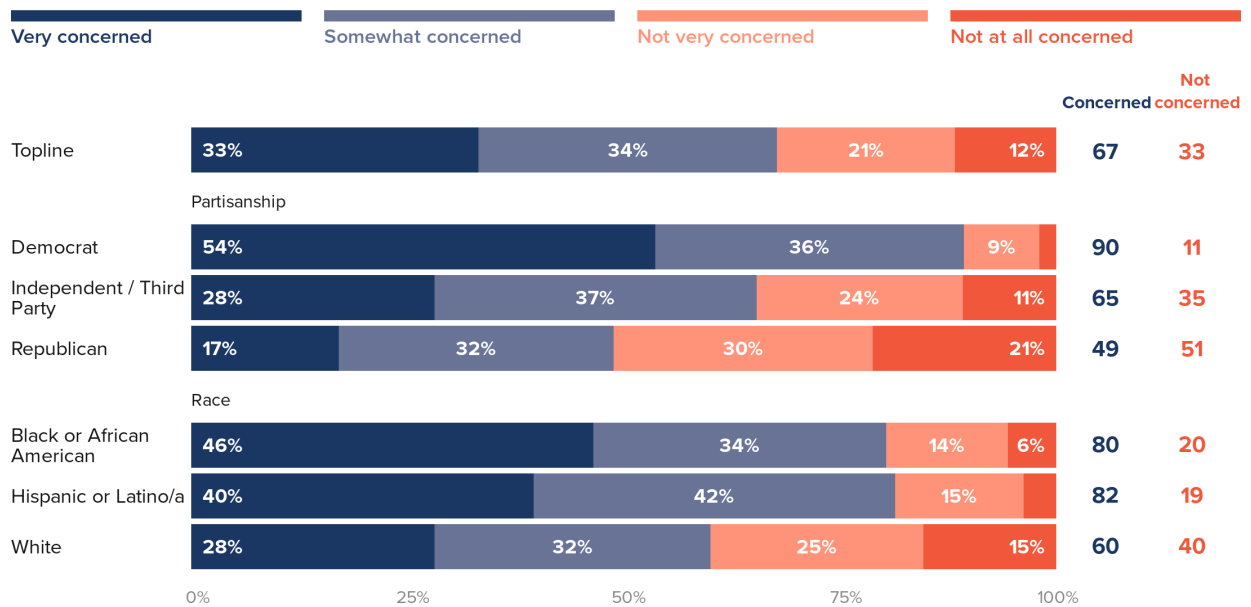
Jan 22 to Feb 2, 2021 survey of 1194 likely voters

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Voters express similar levels of concern over climate change. Over two-thirds of all Texas voters (67 percent) say they are “Very” or “Somewhat” concerned about climate change. While nearly all Democrats (90 percent) and a majority of independents (65 percent) express this concern, Republicans are nearly divided: 49 percent of Republicans express concern about climate change, while 51 percent say they are “Not very” or “Not at all” concerned. Notably, Black and Latino voters are significantly more concerned about climate change than white voters. A majority of Black voters (80 percent) and Latino voters (82 percent) say they are “Very” or “Somewhat” concerned about climate change, as well as a majority of white voters (60 percent).

Texas Voters are Concerned About Climate Change

How concerned are you about climate change?



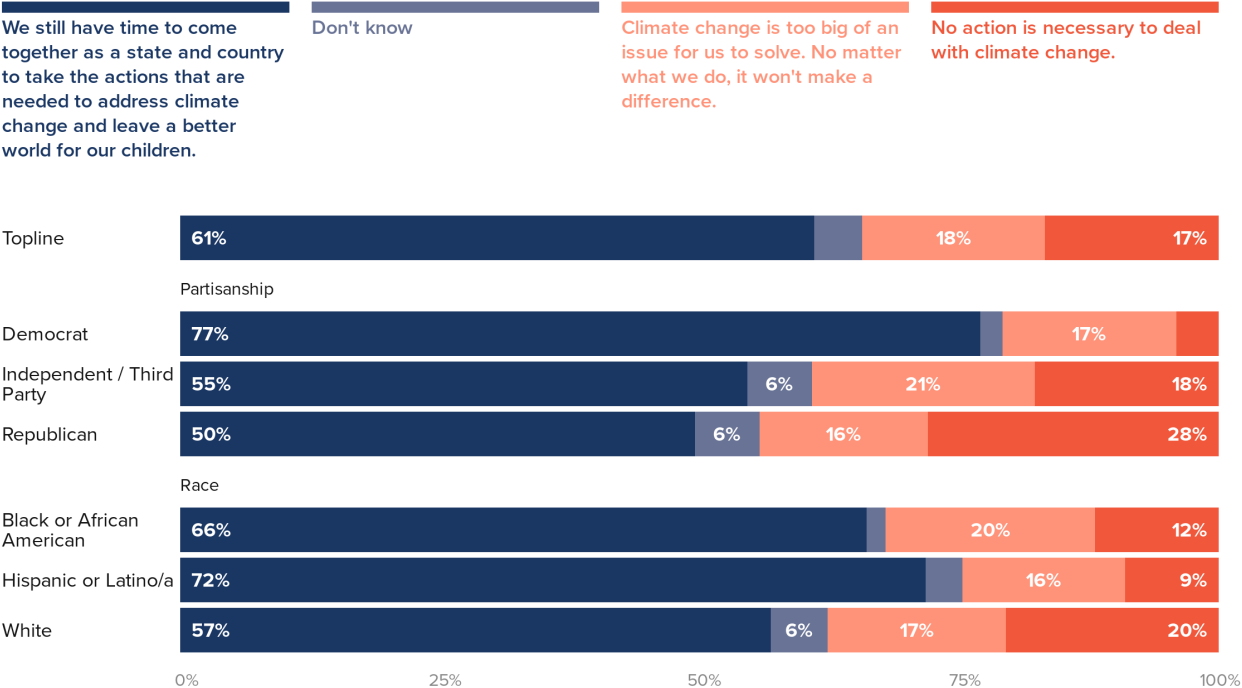
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Though Texas voters express high levels of concern around pollution and climate change, a majority (61 percent) agree that there is still time to come together as a state and country to take the actions that are necessary to address climate change and leave a better world for generations to come. Nearly three-quarters of Democrats (77 percent), a majority of independents (55 percent), and a plurality of Republicans (50 percent) agree with this over statements that climate change is too big of an issue to solve or that no action should be taken at all to address climate change. Two-thirds of Black voters (66 percent), nearly three-quarters of Latino voters (72 percent), and a majority of white voters (57 percent) agree that there is time to unify and tackle climate change together as a state and nation.

Texas Voters Reject Arguments that Climate Change is “Too Big to Solve”

When thinking about climate change, which statement comes closer to your view?



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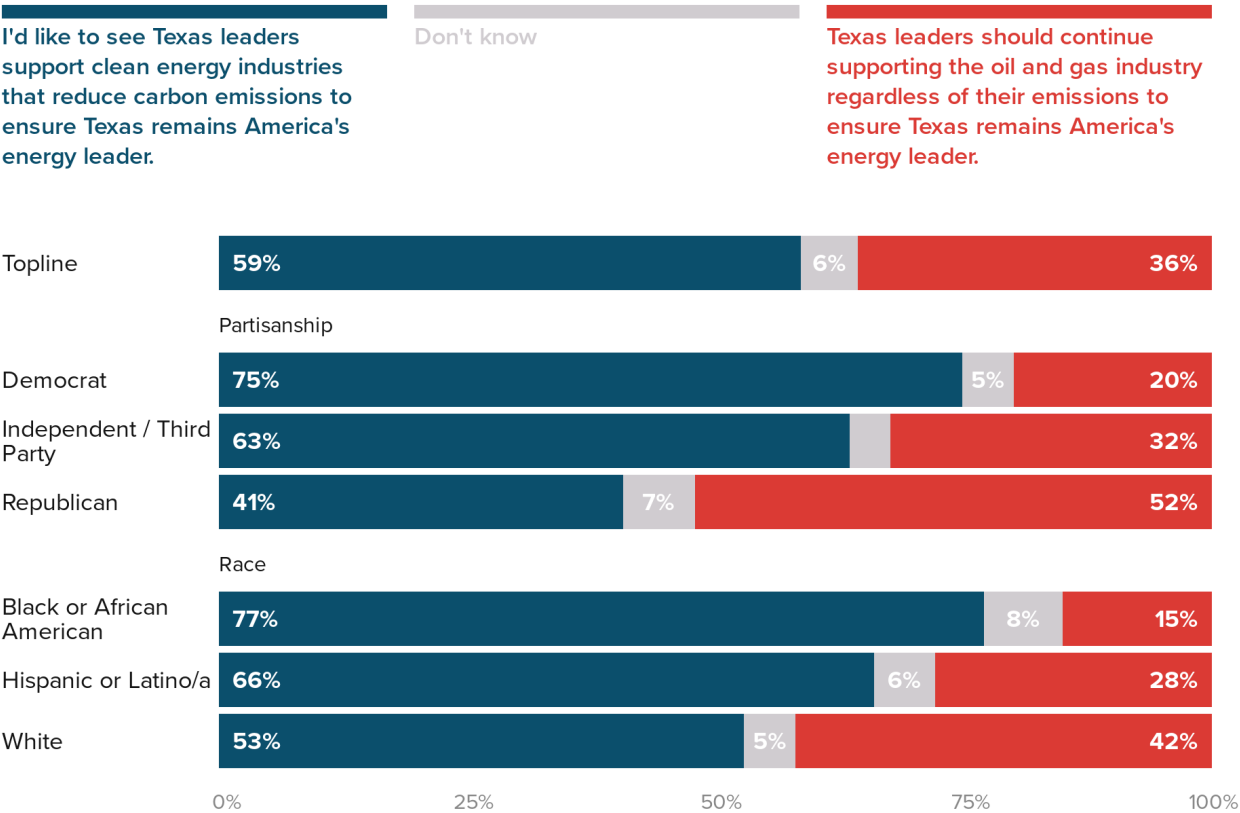
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Texans Voters Want State Lawmakers to Support Clean Energy so Texas Remains a Global Energy Leader

By a 23-percentage-point margin, Texas voters would like to see their leaders support clean energy industries to reduce carbon emissions and ensure Texas remains America’s energy leader. A majority of Texas voters (59 percent) agree with this statement, while only 36 percent agree that Texas leaders should continue supporting the oil and gas industry regardless of their emissions so that Texas maintains its status as America’s energy leader. While a majority of Democrats (75 percent) and independents (63 percent) would like to see Texas leaders bolster clean energy industries, a majority of Republicans (52 percent) think the oil and gas industry should continue to receive support from state leaders. Black and Latino voters are especially supportive of Texas leaders supporting clean energy industries (77 percent and 66 percent, respectively), in addition to a majority of white voters (53 percent).

Texas Voters Want State Lawmakers to Support Clean Energy Development

Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



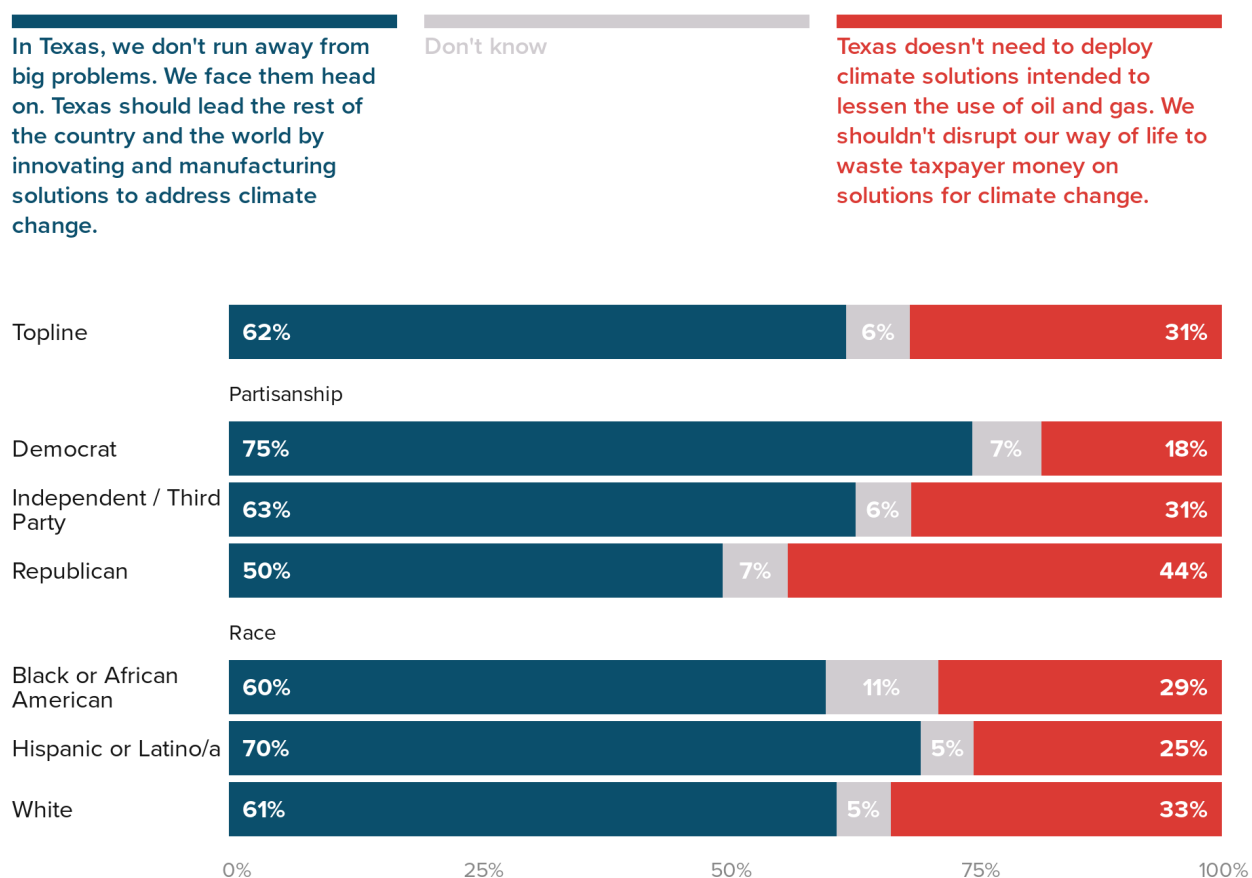
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A message that resonates across party lines is that Texas can face tough problems and can leverage its status as a national and global energy leader to become a champion of a new global energy economy. By a 31-point margin, voters agree that Texas doesn't run away from big problems and should lead the nation and the world in innovating and manufacturing solutions to address climate change. This statement enjoys bipartisan agreement: Three-quarters of Democrats (75 percent), nearly two-thirds of independents (63 percent), and a plurality of Republicans (50 percent) agree that Texas can use this opportunity to cement its status as a leader in the new clean energy economy. A majority of Black voters (60 percent), Latino voters (70 percent), and white voters (60 percent) also agree with this position.

Texas Voters Want to Lead the Country and the World as a New Clean Energy Leader

Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



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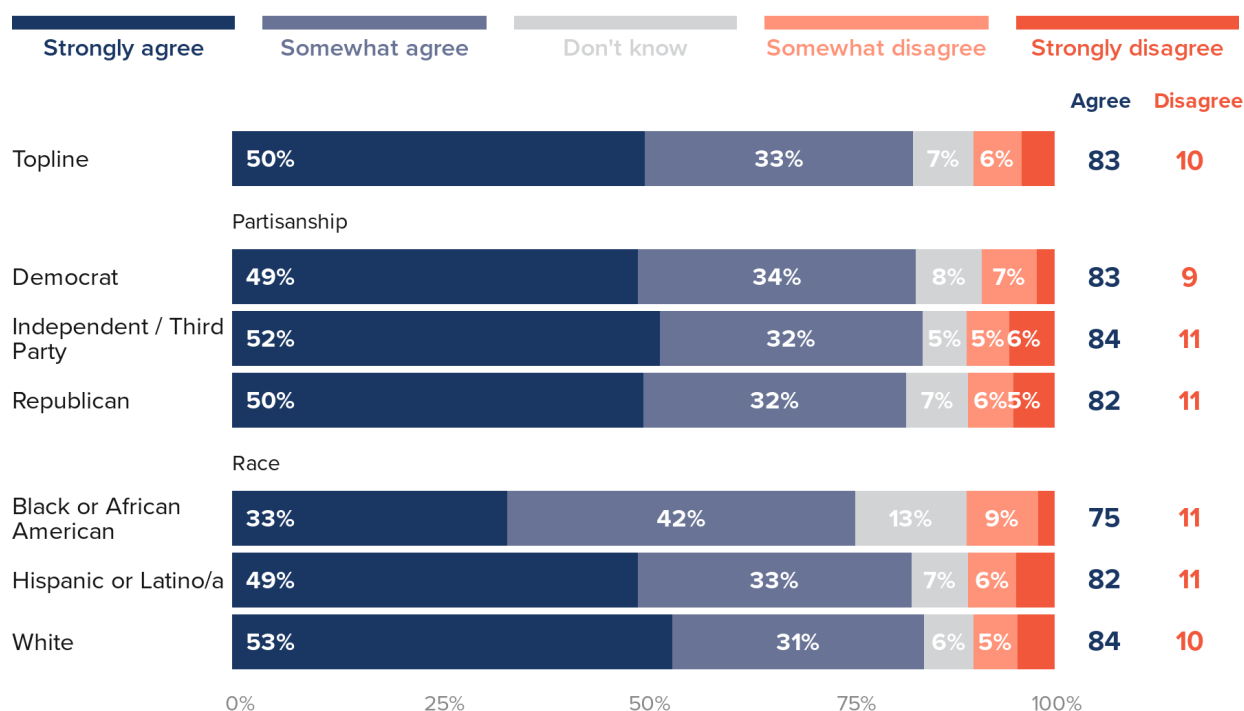
Texas Voters Want to Ensure No Workers Are Left Behind in the Clean Energy Transition

A majority of Texas voters (83 percent) agree that Texas should make sure no oil and gas workers are left behind as America transitions away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy. There is near-unanimous agreement among Democrats (83 percent), independents (84), and Republicans (82 percent). A majority of Black voters (75 percent), Latino voters (82 percent), and white voters (84 percent) also agree with prioritizing fossil fuel workers in the clean energy transition.

An Overwhelming, Bipartisan Majority of Texas Voters Support a Just Transition for Fossil Fuel Workers

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Texas should make sure no oil and gas workers are left behind as we transition energy production away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy.



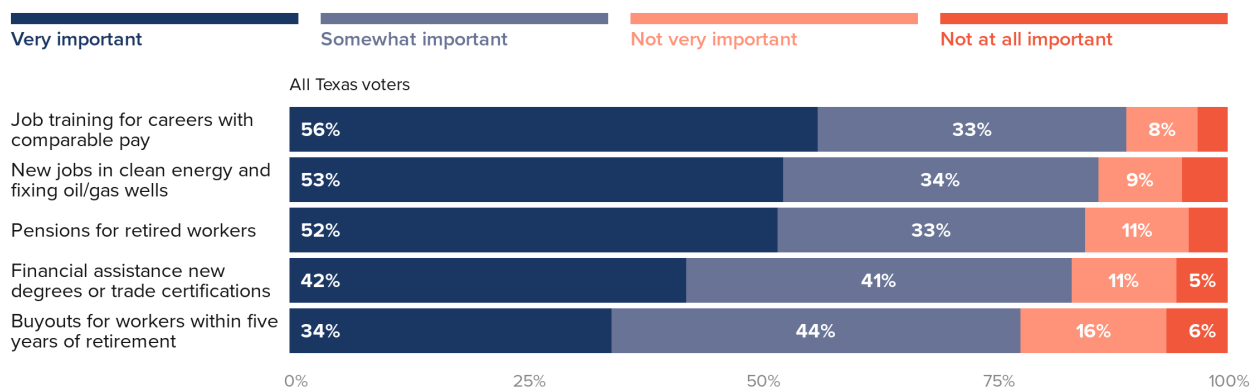
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Texas voters want lawmakers to prioritize passing legislation that will ensure fossil fuel workers are not left behind in the clean energy transition. A majority of Texas voters think it is “Very important” or “Somewhat important” to include proposals for job training (89 percent important), new jobs in clean energy (87 percent important), pensions for retired workers (85 percent important), financial assistance for new degrees or trade certifications (83 percent), and buyouts for workers within five years of retirement (78 percent) in this transition bill.

Texas Voters Want Lawmakers to Ensure No Fossil Fuel Workers Are Left Behind in the Clean Energy Transition

As lawmakers consider legislation that will shift energy production away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy, how important do you think each of the following are for lawmakers to include in a transition bill for fossil fuel employees?



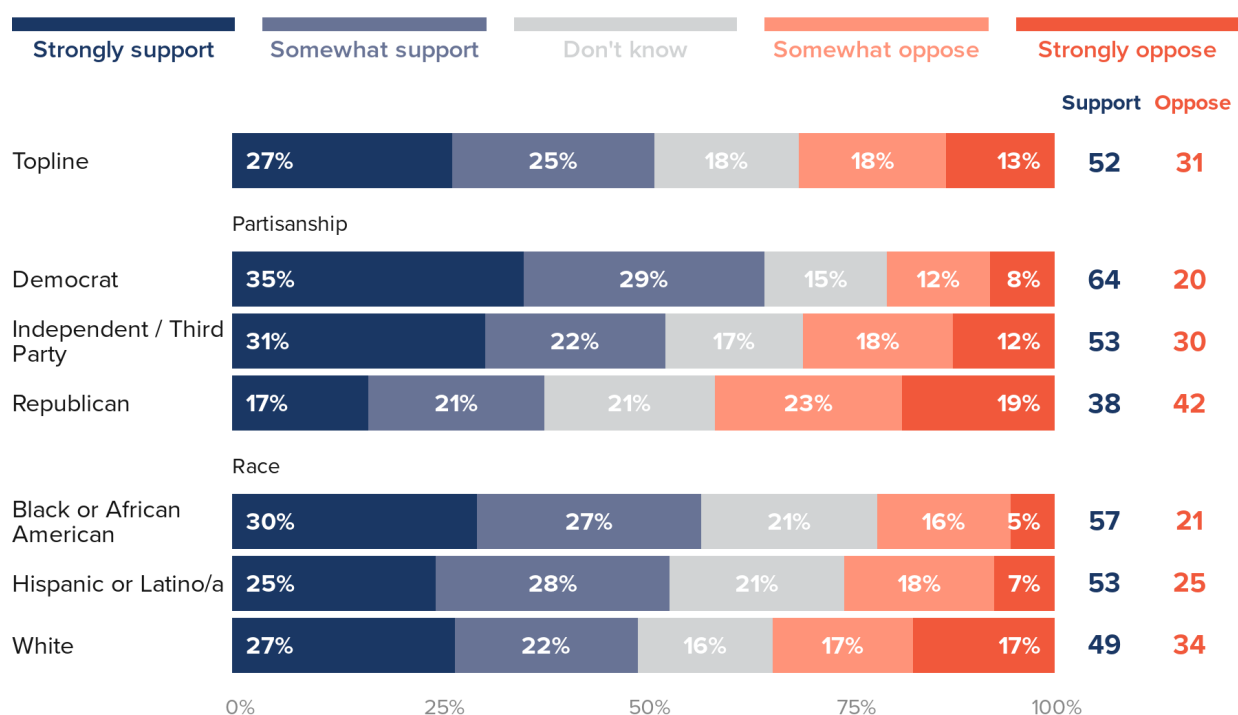
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Texas voters also support closing the revolving door of government officials becoming lobbyists for the fossil fuel industry. A majority of all Texas voters (52 percent), including a majority of Democrats (64 percent) and independents (53 percent) agree with a proposal to stop this revolving door, while Republicans are narrowly divided (38 percent support, 42 percent oppose). Additionally, a majority of Black voters (57 percent) and Latino voters (53 percent), as well as a plurality of white voters (49 percent), support this proposal.

Texas Voters Want to Stop the Government-to-Lobbying Pipeline

Would you support or oppose a proposal that prevents former Texas state lawmakers and government officials from becoming lobbyists for the oil and gas industry immediately after they leave office?



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Conclusion

Despite decades of dominance from the oil and gas industry, Texas voters are ready to take on the challenge of positioning themselves as leaders in a new clean energy economy — even when voters are exposed to arguments that the plan would be a “job killer.” Lawmakers should be confident in advocating for proposals to ensure Texas remains a leader in a new global clean energy economy, especially if they emphasize how it will create jobs, cement Texas’ status as a global energy leader, and facilitate a just transition for fossil fuel workers.

METHODOLOGY

From January 22 to February 2, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,194 likely voters in Texas 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 and Spanish. The margin of error is ±3 percentage points.