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Voters Support a Progressive Federal Climate Innovation Agenda

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Key Findings

- ▶ Two-thirds of voters (66 percent) support expanding federal tax credits for domestic production of renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles
- ▶ Over two-thirds of voters (68 percent) support expanding federal funding for researching and developing new energy technologies to reduce emissions in hard-to-abate industries
- ▶ Even when presented with oppositional talking points about the cost, a majority of voters (57 percent) support expanding federal procurement of American-made clean vehicles
- ▶ Nearly three-quarters of voters (73 percent) support increasing inter-agency collaboration to reduce emissions in the housing, agriculture, and transportation sectors
- ▶ By a 38-percentage-point margin, voters support the Department of Energy updating its mission to reflect climate, clean energy, and environmental justice goals
- ▶ Over two-thirds of voters (68 percent) support the government prioritizing funding for researching and developing technologies that target frontline communities

Introduction

In August 2020, Data for Progress published [policy recommendations and polling](#) on a progressive climate innovation agenda. In its first 100 days, the Biden Administration has introduced several exciting initiatives to jumpstart federal climate and energy innovation. Most recently, the White House has proposed significant legislative measures to ramp up federal innovation spending. The [American Jobs Plan](#) includes \$35 billion for clean energy innovation and \$80 billion for broader federal innovation infrastructure alongside government-wide investments in infrastructure. The [White House's initial 2022 budget request](#) also significantly ramps up federal innovation spending, including \$14 billion in new climate investments across the government and expanding the clean energy innovation budget to \$10 billion across non-defense agencies.

To fully meet the moment and tackle the climate crisis in the coming decades, both the White House and Congress will need to pass these initial legislative priorities and continue expanding government-wide innovation initiatives. In their new set of policy recommendations for Data for Progress, researchers Jake Higdon and Arjun Krishnaswami outline progressive climate innovation priorities centered on three key pillars: expansion, emissions, and equity.

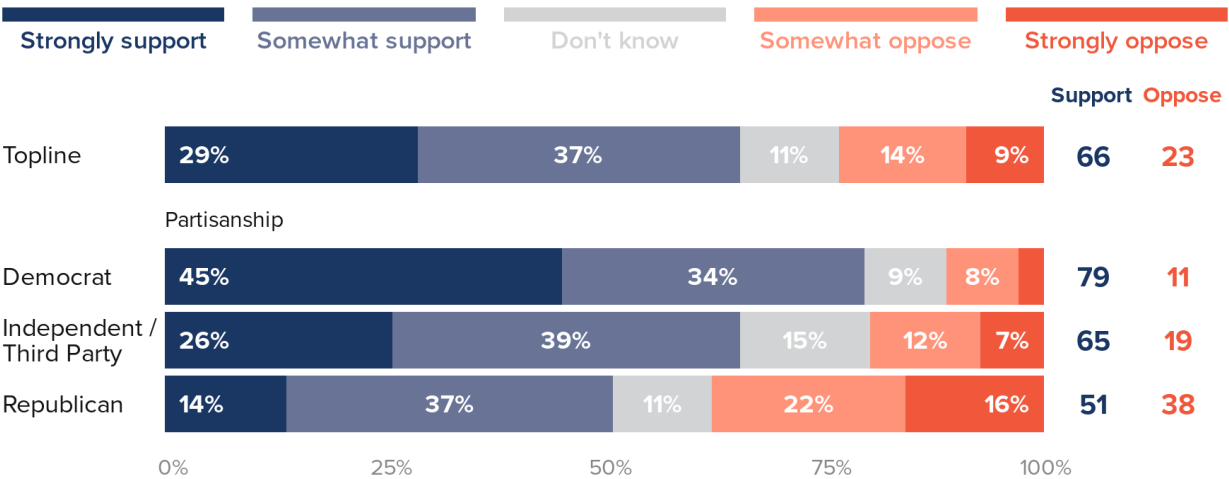
In a March 2021 nationwide survey, Data for Progress assessed the attitudes of likely voters toward increasing funding for federal climate innovation initiatives, expanding government-wide efforts to reduce emissions, and prioritizing equity in federal funding and resource allocation decisions. Data for Progress finds there is widespread bipartisan support for expanding federal climate innovation funding, ensuring the Department of Energy plays a central role in reducing emissions across the economy, and advancing equity to ensure frontline communities reap benefits from innovation and decarbonization initiatives.

Voters Support Expanding Federal Initiatives to Incentivize Clean Energy Innovation

Over the past decade, federal tax credits have played a key role in expanding production and lowering the costs of renewable energy. Two-thirds of voters (66 percent) support the federal government expanding tax credits and other financial incentives to increase domestic production of renewable energy and electric vehicles. Support is overwhelmingly bipartisan: A majority of Democrats (79 percent), Independents (65 percent), and Republicans (51 percent) all support expanding federal incentives to ramp up domestic renewable energy and electric vehicle production.

Voters Support Expanding Federal Tax Credits for Renewable Energy and Electric Vehicle Production

Would you support or oppose the federal government expanding tax credits and other financial incentives to increase American manufacturing of renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles?



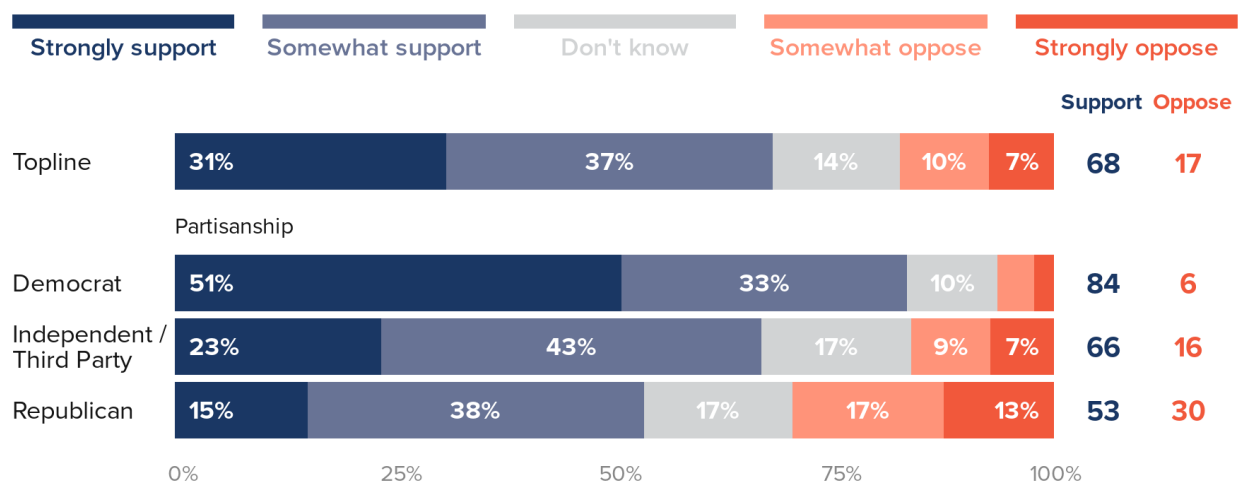
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Another proposal that enjoys widespread bipartisan support is the expansion of federal funding to improve energy efficiency and reduce pollution from heavy industries. These sectors are currently underrepresented in the federal innovation portfolio relative to their share of pollution. Over two-thirds of voters (68 percent) support expanding federal funding for innovating solutions to reduce emissions and pollution in hard-to-abate industries such as shipping, chemical production, and long-distance trucking. A majority of Democrats (84 percent), Independents (66 percent), and Republicans (53 percent) all support this proposal.

Voters Support Expanding Federal Funding to Reduce Emissions from Heavy Industries

Some heavy industries like shipping, concrete and steel manufacturing, chemical production, and long-distance trucking are considered "hard-to-abate", which means it is more difficult to transition these industries to clean energy and reduce harmful pollution from them. Would you support or oppose the federal government and the Department of Energy expanding funding to research, develop, and deploy new clean energy technologies to improve energy efficiency and reduce harmful pollution in these industries?



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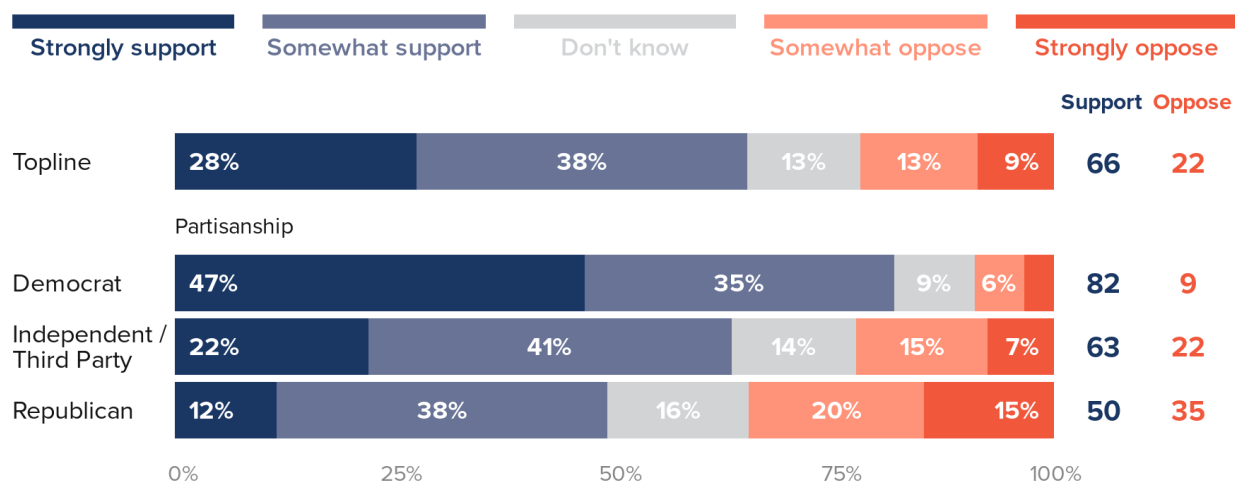
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Voters across party lines also support expanding funding for demonstration projects and deployment incentives to commercialize next-generation clean energy technologies in hard-to-abate industries. After being provided a brief description about previous government-funded technology success stories, two-thirds of voters (66 percent) say they support the government and Department of Energy expanding funding for demonstration projects and deployment initiatives of industries such as energy storage and trucking. A majority of Democrats (82 percent) and Independents (63 percent), as well as a plurality of Republicans (50 percent), support this proposal.

Voters Support Expanding Funding to Deploy and Commercialize Next-Generation Energy Technologies

Past technology success stories like GPS, the Internet, and flat-screen displays relied on government-funded research and development paired with public funding for pilot "demonstration" projects and deployment incentives to get new technologies out of the lab and into the market.

Would you support or oppose the federal government and the Department of Energy expanding funding for demonstration projects and deployment incentives as part of an energy innovation package to commercialize the next generation of technologies like energy storage and clean trucks?



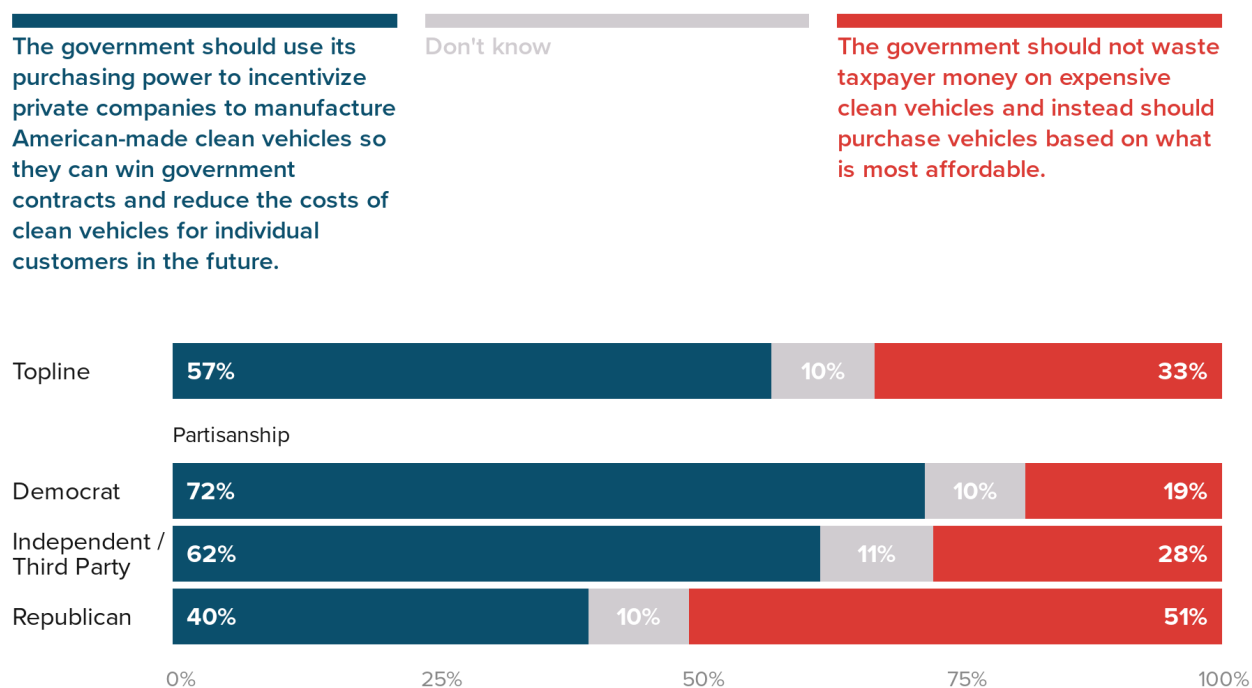
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As one of the nation's largest purchasers, federal procurement rules can catalyze innovation across supply chains. Even when given the option to choose an oppositional stance centered on the potential cost of expanding the federal fleet with clean vehicles, a majority of voters (57 percent) agree the government should use its purchasing power to incentivize domestic innovation and production of clean vehicles. A majority of Democrats (72 percent) and Independents (62 percent) support expanding federal procurement of clean vehicles, while a majority of Republicans (51 percent) agree affordability should be the government's top priority. That said, 40 percent of Republicans support expanding federal procurement of clean vehicles, an indication there is room to grow bipartisan support on this issue.

Voters Agree the Government Should Leverage Procurement to Incentivize Production of American-Made Clean Vehicles

The federal government is one of the biggest purchasers in the economy. Some lawmakers have proposed using the purchasing power of the federal government, sometimes called "procurement", to purchase American-made clean vehicles for federal, state, tribal, postal, and local fleets, which comprise nearly 3 million vehicles. Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



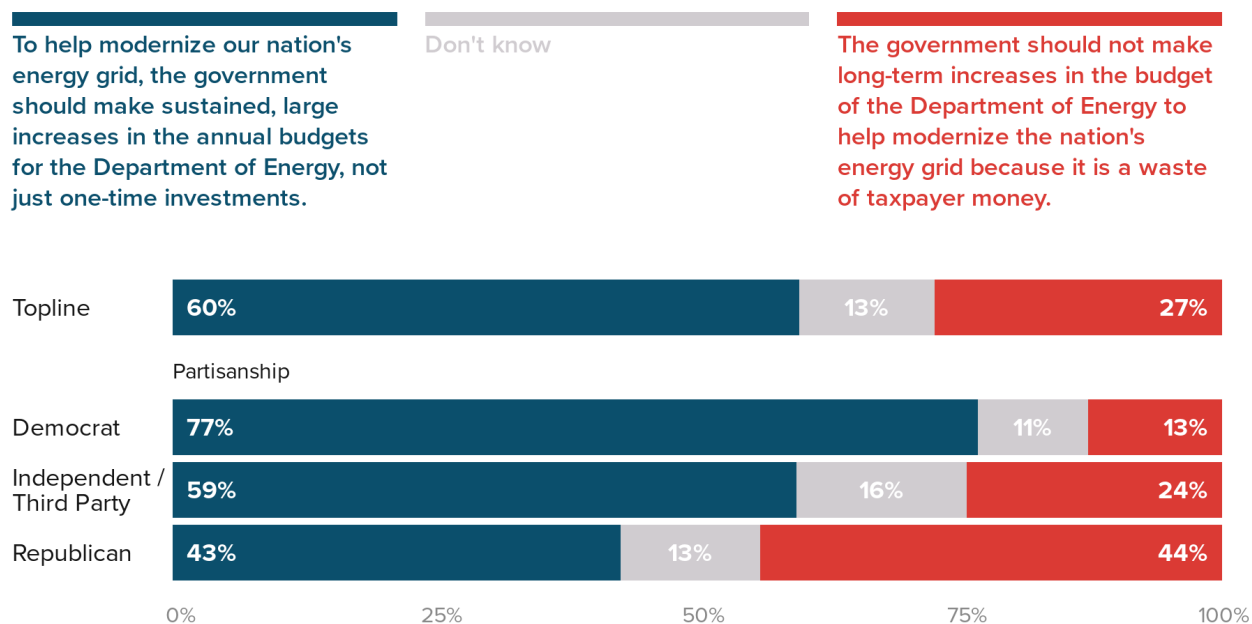
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As outlined in Data for Progress’ policy recommendations, to fully tackle the climate crisis over the coming decades, the federal government will need to make long-term increases — not one-time investments — in federal climate innovation programs, which are currently drastically underfunded. Even when given the option to choose an oppositional position claiming this investment will be a waste of taxpayer money, voters agree by a 33-percentage-point margin that the government should make sustained, long-term increases in the Department of Energy’s budget. Over three-quarters of Democrats (77 percent) and a majority of independents (59 percent) support this long-term funding expansion. Though Republicans are nearly split — 43 percent support long-term increases to the Department of Energy’s budget, while 44 percent oppose them — it is encouraging that this proposal garners so much support among typically cost-conscious Republicans.

Voters Support Long-Term Increases in the Department of Energy’s Budget

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



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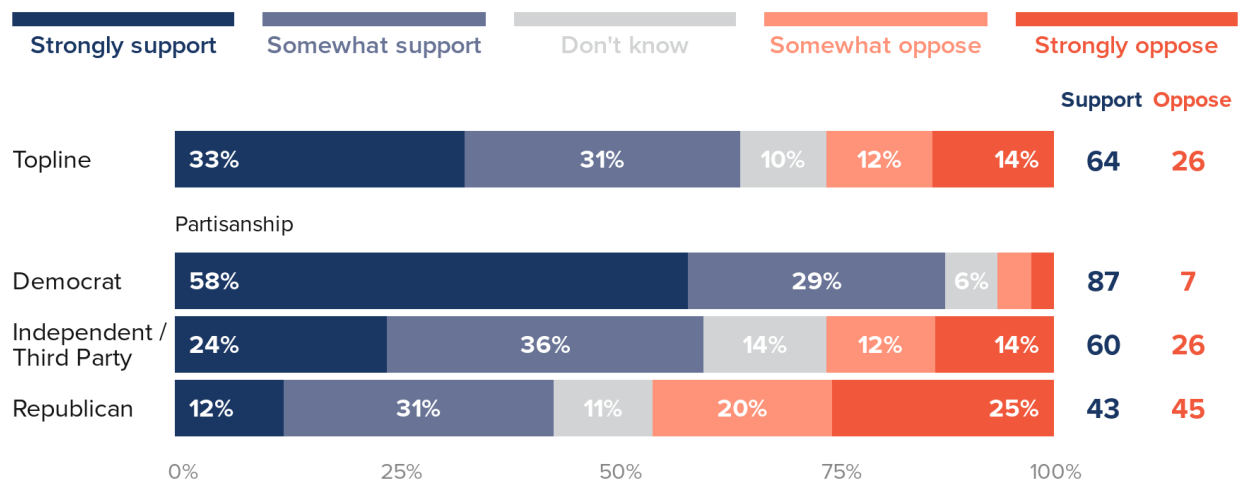
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Voters Support Government-Wide Initiatives to Reduce Emissions

As Secretary Granholm and the Biden Administration position the Department of Energy to play a significant role in America's clean energy transition, nearly two-thirds of voters (64 percent) support the Department of Energy officially updating its mission to include addressing climate change, achieving net-zero emissions across the economy, advancing environmental and energy justice, and cutting harmful pollution. Nearly all Democrats (87 percent) and a majority of Independents (60 percent) support updating the Department of Energy's mission to include climate, clean energy, and equity goals. While Republicans are nearly split — 43 percent support the Department of Energy updating its mission with these goals, while 45 percent oppose this proposal — it is incredibly encouraging that even in an environment where climate change has become a polarizing partisan issue, nearly a plurality of Republicans want the Department of Energy to explicitly reflect its climate, clean energy, and equity goals in its mission.

Voters Support Updating the Department of Energy's Mission to Reflect Climate Goals

Would you support or oppose the government officially updating the Department of Energy's mission to include addressing climate change, achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the economy, advancing environmental and energy justice, and cutting harmful pollution?



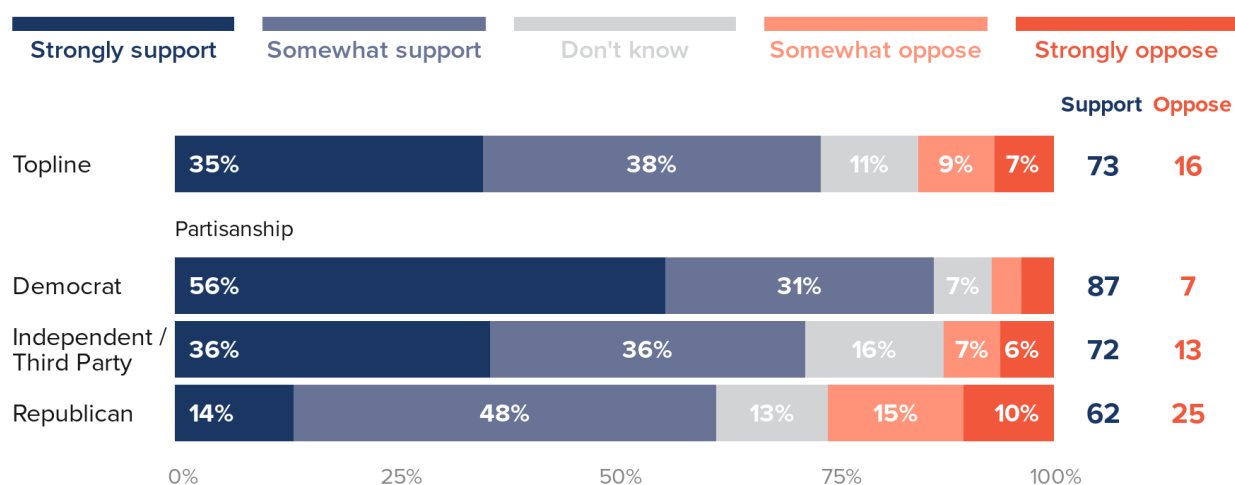
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In addition to updating the agency's mission to reflect climate, clean energy, and justice goals, voters across party lines support the Department of Energy increasing collaboration with other federal agencies to drive energy innovation across different sectors of the economy. Nearly three-quarters of voters (73 percent) support the Department of Energy increasing collaboration with the Departments of Transportation, Agriculture, and Housing to drive energy innovation that will improve energy efficiency and reduce pollution in America's housing, agriculture, and transportation sectors. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (87 percent), Independents (72 percent), and Republicans (62 percent) all support increasing inter-agency collaboration to improve economy-wide decarbonization efforts.

Voters Support Inter-Agency Collaboration to Improve Energy Efficiency and Reduce Emissions

Would you support or oppose the Department of Energy increasing collaboration with the Departments of Transportation, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development to drive energy innovation that will improve energy efficiency and reduce pollution in America's transportation, farming, and housing sectors?



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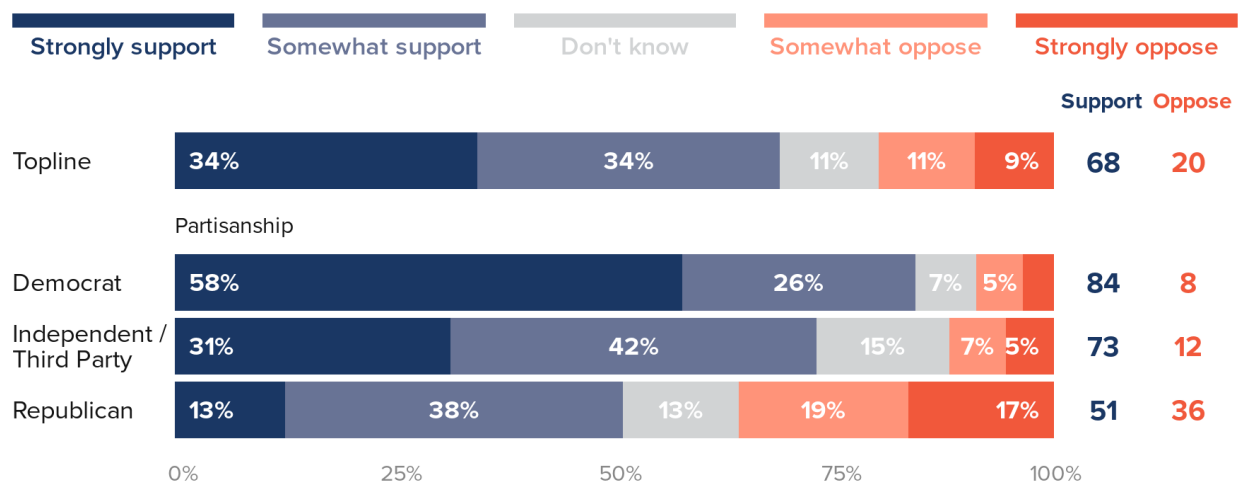
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Voters Want Federal Innovation Initiatives to Prioritize Equity

After campaigning and winning on a climate platform committed to addressing systemic environmental injustices, President Biden has already taken early actions to ensure equity is at the forefront of the government's climate and energy agenda. Voters across party lines overwhelmingly support several measures that the Biden Administration can take to advance equity and environmental justice in federal innovation initiatives.

Voters Want to Prioritize Developing Technologies That Help Communities on the Front Lines of Pollution

Would you support or oppose the federal government prioritizing funding to research and develop energy technologies that will help low-income communities, communities of color, and other disadvantaged communities that are exposed to higher levels of harmful pollution?



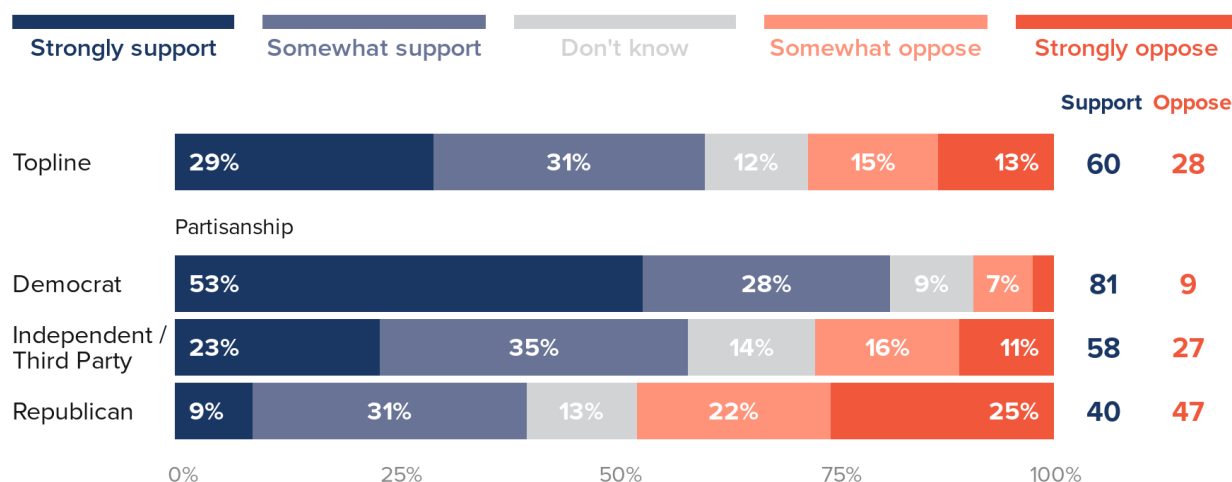
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Over two-thirds of voters (68 percent) support the government prioritizing funding to research and develop energy technologies that will help communities on the front lines of harmful pollution. A majority of Democrats (84 percent), Independents (73 percent), and Republicans (51 percent) all support prioritizing funding for projects that will make long-overdue improvements in low-income communities, communities of color, and other disadvantaged communities that are disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Voters Support Directing Federal Research Funds to Energy Innovators in Underrepresented Communities

Would you support or oppose the government directing funds to support clean energy research conducted by innovators who typically do not receive funding from federal energy programs, such as minority- and women-owned businesses, researchers and students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, researchers of color, or researchers at institutions with fewer resources?



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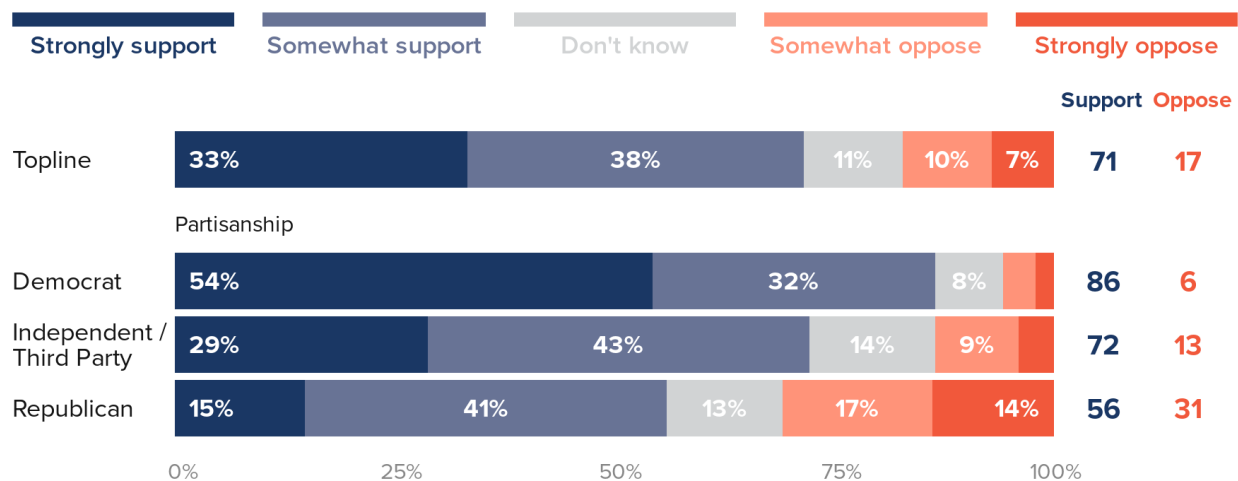
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Voters also support targeting federal clean energy research funds to institutions and businesses that historically have been underrepresented in funding and resource allocation decisions. A majority of voters (60 percent), including a majority of Democrats (81 percent) and Independents (58 percent), support directing federal funds to historically under-funded groups such as minority- and women-owned businesses and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. While a plurality of Republicans (47 percent) oppose these targeted investments, 40 percent do support them.

To ensure no communities are left behind in America's energy transition, voters across party lines overwhelmingly support federal workforce development programs to ensure workers learn the skills needed to succeed in good-paying clean energy jobs. Nearly three-quarters of all voters (71 percent) support expanding funding for workforce development programs through the Department of Energy and other federal agencies to train workers, including members of disadvantaged communities and those that currently work in the fossil fuel industry, for jobs in the clean energy sector. This proposal enjoys high levels of bipartisan support. A majority of Democrats (86 percent), Independents (72 percent), and Republicans (56 percent) all support expanding federal clean energy workforce development programs.

Voters Overwhelmingly Support Federal Workforce Development Programs for Clean Energy Jobs

Would you support or oppose the federal government expanding funding for workforce development programs through the Department of Energy and other federal agencies to train workers, including members of disadvantaged communities and those who currently work in the fossil fuel industry, for jobs in the clean energy sector?



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Conclusion

Voters across party lines support a progressive federal climate innovation agenda centered on expansion, emissions, and equity. Given the high levels of bipartisan support for robust federal innovation spending, lawmakers should ensure climate and energy innovation proposals are passed through the American Jobs Plan, the 2022 federal budget, and additional legislative measures. The White House and lawmakers can confidently kickstart a decade of historic climate and energy innovation knowing that voters overwhelmingly back a progressive federal climate innovation agenda.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

From March 31 to April 2, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,207 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 ± 3 percentage points.