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Expanding Domestic Critical Mineral Production Has Bipartisan Support, Though Voters Have Reservations About Its Impact

By Grace Adcox, Catherine Fraser, and Eva Brungard

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Executive Summary

In the name of national security and in service of the clean energy transition, the United States has increasingly focused on reducing its dependence on foreign supply chains, including sources of energy transition minerals, often called critical minerals. Critical minerals, like lithium or silicon, have been deemed essential to the manufacturing of clean energy technologies, national defense systems, and other high-tech sectors, but are subject to supply risks. With limited domestic mining capacity, the U.S. is 100% import-reliant on 12 of the 50 designated critical minerals. In response, the Trump administration has announced intentions to expand mineral production on public lands at the expense of other land uses such as recreation, conservation, or Indigenous stewardship, as well as plans to "acquire" Greenland and Canada, and trade Ukrainian security for exclusive mineral rights. While rhetoric about the need for U.S. dominance in critical mineral production has notably escalated under the current administration, as political scientist Thea Riofrancos points out, it is important to recognize that Trump's recent policy actions on critical minerals follow a long legacy of neo-colonial exploitation and resource extraction pursued by past administrations, both Democratic and Republican.

What's more, Riofrancos challenges the use of the term "critical minerals" in the first place. Rather than taking the term at face value, Riofrancos describes its origins in U.S. foreign policy during the lead up to World War II and the term's resurgence during the Cold War era, writing:

At each moment, labelling resources as "critical" has justified government support for extraction and access, deregulation of safeguards, and a preference for strong-arm tactics over co-operation. The consequences are deadly: mining ranks high among economic sectors for human rights violations. The idea of "critical minerals" shuts down debate. Critical for who? And extracted for whose benefit and whose expense?

As critical minerals take center stage in Trump's foreign policy, they also form an important domestic priority for the administration. With China suspending its export flow of critical minerals to the U.S., the president and the Department of Energy have repeatedly called for the pursuit and expansion of domestic mineral production. Amid global economic upheaval and the potential for more mining in the U.S., the need for international cooperation and strong environmental, labor, and social protections in the mining sector is undeniable. To this end, Data for Progress surveyed 1,172 likely voters to gauge their awareness of and perspectives on critical mineral mining within the U.S. The findings reveal a majority of voters across party lines believe expanding domestic critical mineral production is important, with few voters saying they would oppose a new mine in the U.S. under any circumstances.

Voters recognize the ability of domestic critical mineral production to reduce reliance on foreign sources, and they support federal involvement to advance domestic manufacturing in key sectors. However, they worry about potential impacts to the environment and public health, and want developers to follow through on commitments to local community well-being. Notably, support for new domestic critical mineral production is not uniform, with Black and Latino voters expressing less support than white voters. Historic and ongoing patterns of environmental and social injustice in mining and extractive industries demonstrate the importance of addressing public health and environmental concerns, particularly to ensure that such injustices are not replicated.

Overall, these results show support for expanding domestic critical mineral production, though voters express concerns about the potential environmental and human health impacts from increased mining.

Introduction

In the largest tariff announcement since the Great Depression, the Trump administration imposed a minimum tariff of 10% on nearly all goods imported to the United States, with some countries facing tariffs of up to 50%. In a stunning reversal, reciprocal tariffs were paused for 90 days from all countries except for China, which saw an increase to a 125% tariff. China responded subsequently by suspending its exports of critical minerals to the U.S. In the meantime, all countries will still be subject to the 10% minimum tariff. Goods deemed "strategically important" — including critical minerals, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and lumber — are some of the few goods exempted from the across-the-board tariffs. The exempted critical minerals include copper, zinc, rare earths, germanium, antimony, uranium, lithium, cobalt, tungsten, platinum, and ferromanganese. Prior to the new tariff announcement, subsequent reversal, and ongoing negotiations happening between the administration and global leaders on the subject, Data for Progress surveyed U.S. voters on the perceived importance of critical mineral mining and views of federal efforts to expand domestic production.

At the federal level, the push to increase domestic mining is tightly linked to efforts to expand domestic manufacturing of so-called strategic technologies, such as computer chips, wind turbines, or munitions. Amid efforts to reshore manufacturing, nearly half of voters (48%) rate the state of U.S. manufacturing as "not so good" or "poor." Beyond domestic efforts, the Trump administration has also looked internationally to secure critical minerals, proposing to take over Greenland — rich in rare earth minerals, uranium, and iron — and attempting to trade exclusive rights to Ukraine's mineral resources for U.S. security assurances in its ongoing war against Russia.

We Need More Mining—but Smarter Strategies Could Dramatically Reduce How Much

It is widely acknowledged that global decarbonization efforts will require additional mining, as critical minerals are key inputs for electric vehicles (EVs), batteries, and renewable energy technologies. However, there is debate over the scale of mining necessary to meet this demand. Some experts argue that demand can be significantly reduced through strategies like cutting vehicle dependency and expanding public transit, right-sizing to smaller EV batteries, redirecting minerals from the Pentagon to the public, and improving critical mineral recycling.

Battery recycling alone holds the potential to meet more than 25% of lithium and cobalt supply as soon as 2040. Unlike fossil fuels, which are combusted upon use, critical minerals are recyclable, significantly reducing the need to mine new minerals. However, the end-of-life of existing EV batteries, a large source of potential recyclable materials, is further away than the demand for critical minerals can wait. In the meantime, some new mining will be necessary until critical mineral inputs in the recycling supply stream can match demand. Taken altogether, these actions can limit the environmental and social harms associated with mining, such as water pollution, human rights violations, permanent land changes, and encroachment upon Indigenous lands and violations of Tribal sovereignty.

Protecting Tribal sovereignty is especially pressing, as an estimated 97% of nickel, 89% of copper, 79% of lithium and 68% of cobalt reserves in the U.S. are located within 35 miles of Indigenous land in the U.S. Historically, mining operations have disproportionately impacted Indigenous communities, often proceeding without adequate consultation, consent, or compensation. Without safeguards, the push to expand domestic mining in the name of energy and national security risks repeating historic patterns of environmental injustice. Proactive stakeholder engagement, including Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) for Indigenous peoples to give or withhold approval for a project, or community benefits frameworks (CBFs) to guarantee local benefits are some of the tools available to ensure the protection of local communities.

In General, Voters Support Efforts to Increase Domestic Mining of Critical Minerals

When asked if they support or oppose the federal government taking a more active role in the mining of critical minerals, 67% of voters support greater involvement, including 59% of Democrats, 68% of Independents, and 75% of Republicans. However, 20% of voters are opposed to the idea of the federal government taking a more active role in mining, and 13% are unsure either way. Support among Black and Latino voters is also lower, at 64% and 56%, respectively, than it is among white voters (72%). The ongoing legacies of social and environmental harm from extractive processes like mining, in the U.S. and across the globe, along with racist and discriminatory policies like redlining, have disproportionately been borne by Black and Latino communities, Indigenous communities, and other people of color. These histories of injustice may impact the views of voters of color toward the government playing a role in expanding mining.

Overall, voters are more supportive of the federal government taking a more active role in critical mineral development (67%) than in nuclear energy (63%), electric vehicle manufacturing (51%), and artificial intelligence (48%). By comparison, support for the federal government taking a more active role in renewable energy is similar, with 69% of voters in support and 22% opposed. However, with renewable energy, the partisan breakdown *flips* to 81% of Democrats, 73% of Independents, and 55% of Republicans in support.

Voters Want the Federal Government to Take a More Active Role in a Variety of Industries, Including Critical Minerals

Please say whether you support or oppose the federal government taking **a more active role** to support the following industries in the U.S.:

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly support or Somewhat support*

	All likely voters	Democrat	Independent / Third party	Republican	Black or African American	White	Latino
Prescription drug manufacturing	71%	75%	75%	63%	67%	72%	66%
Renewable energy (e.g., solar or wind)	69%	81%	73%	55%	74%	69%	67%
Semiconductor manufacturing (e.g., microchips for cell phones, computers, and other electronic devices)	69%	68%	70%	70%	66%	71%	67%
Mining for critical minerals (e.g., lithium, aluminum, etc.)	67%	59%	68%	75%	64%	72%	56%
Nuclear energy	63%	56%	67%	68%	62%	67%	56%
Electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging stations	51%	63%	51%	38%	59%	48%	57%
Artificial intelligence	48%	45%	44%	51%	58%	48%	47%

March 21–22, 2025 survey of 1,172 U.S. likely voters

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Voters have a +51-point net favorable opinion of critical minerals in general, including strong positive net favorability across Democrats (+43), Independents (+51), and Republicans (+60). However, critical minerals are not particularly salient compared with other energy technologies, with 26% of all respondents and 35% of Democrats saying they “don’t know” whether they have a favorable or unfavorable view of them. As with support for federal investment in these industries, there is a flip in the partisan breakdown, with Democrats more favorable toward renewables and Republicans more favorable toward critical minerals.

Voters View Energy Technologies Favorably

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the following types of energy technologies and related terms?

Survey respondents who selected: *Very favorable or Somewhat favorable*

	All likely voters	Democrat	Independent / Third party	Republican
Natural gas	80%	73%	74%	89%
Renewable energy (e.g., solar or wind)	72%	81%	76%	62%
Hydropower	70%	67%	74%	70%
Hydrogen power	64%	61%	62%	68%
Battery storage	63%	60%	65%	66%
Carbon removal and carbon capture technologies	62%	65%	61%	58%
Critical minerals	62%	54%	62%	72%
Geothermal energy	61%	59%	66%	60%
Nuclear energy	60%	50%	58%	71%

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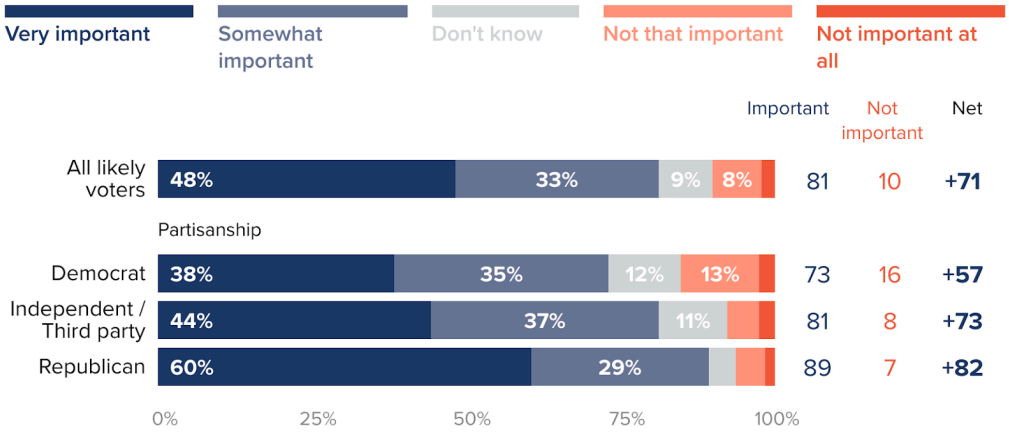
Overall, 81% of voters believe it is somewhat or very important to expand domestic critical mineral production in the U.S., including 73% of Democrats, 81% of Independents, and 89% of Republicans.

A Strong Majority of Voters Think It Is Important to Expand Domestic Critical Mineral Production

Some minerals, including lithium, aluminum, and copper, are called "critical minerals" since they're frequently used in batteries, electronics, and other essential devices.

In your opinion, how important is it to expand domestic critical mineral production in the U.S., if at all?



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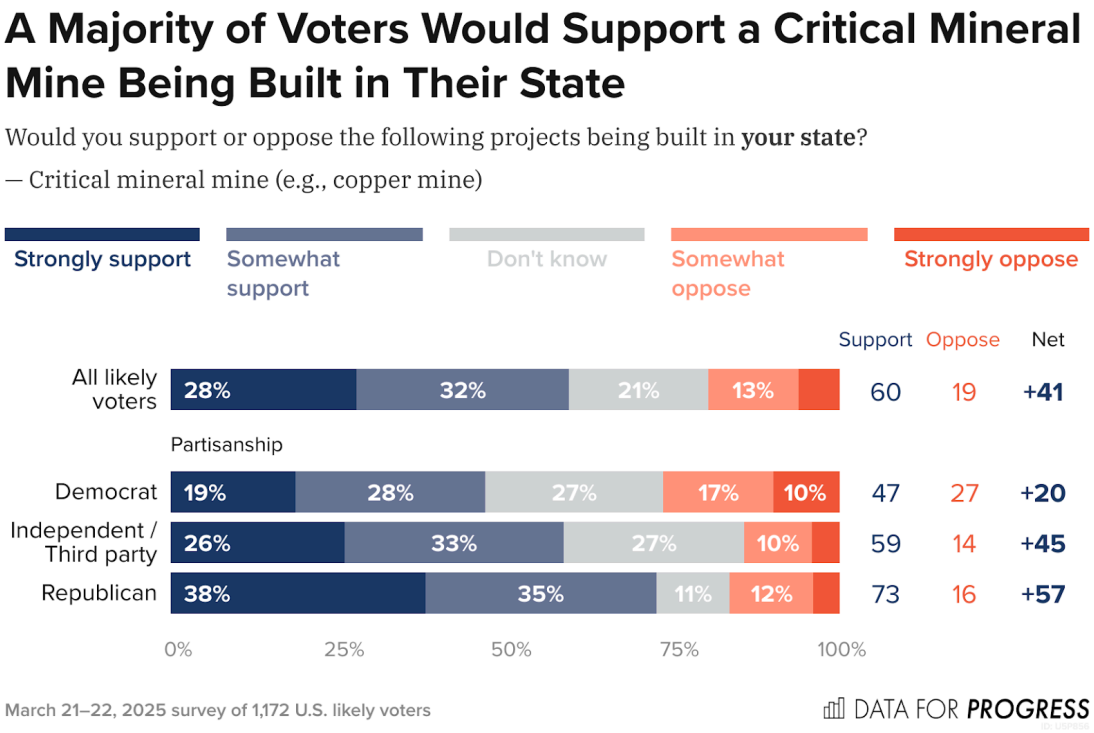
Data for Progress also asked voters if they would support or oppose a critical mineral mine being built in their state. Findings reveal that 60% of voters support such a mine being built in their state, with 19% opposed and 21% unsure. A significantly higher percentage of Republicans (73%) support a mine in their state, compared with 47% of Democrats and 59% of Independents. Fewer voters overall are opposed to a critical mineral mine in their state than a solar panel farm (21% opposed), wind turbine farm (26% opposed), or a nuclear power plant (32% opposed).

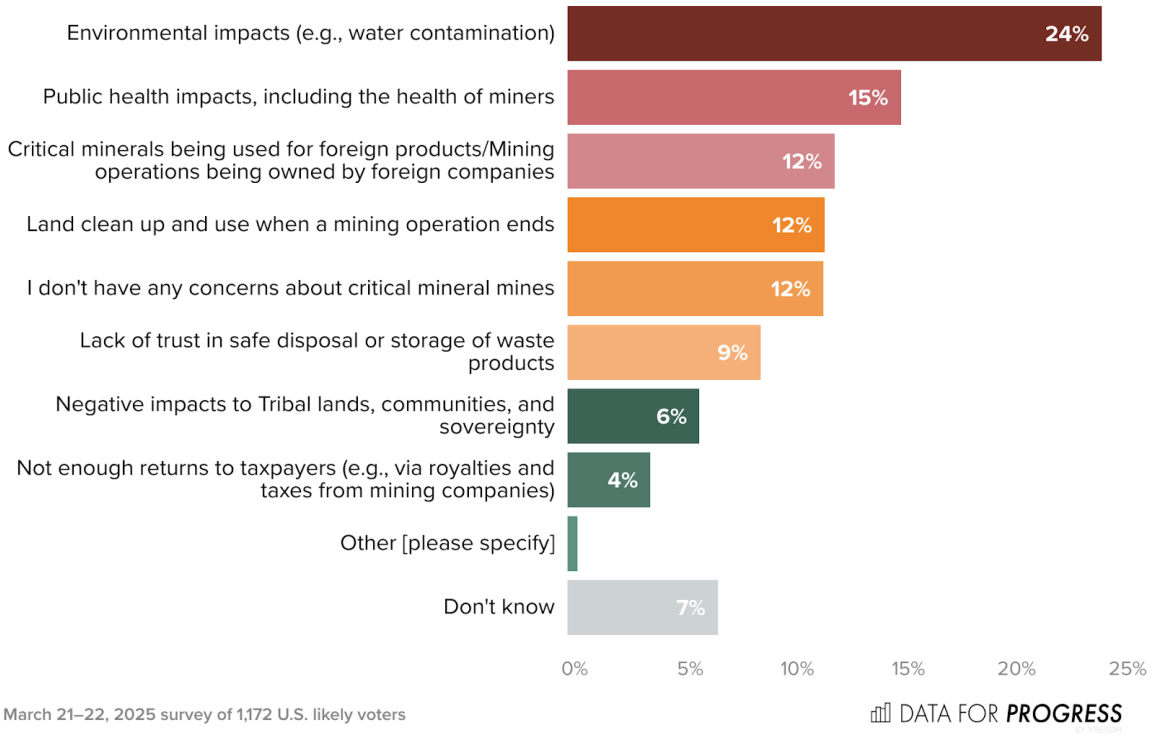


Voters Are Concerned About the Environment, Public Health, and Foreign Control

To better understand opposition toward a critical mineral mine beginning operation in the U.S., DFP presented respondents with a list of potential concerns and asked which one listed was the most important concern they have. Voters are most concerned about the environmental impact of a mine (24%), followed by the public health impacts (15%), mining operations being owned by foreign companies or used in foreign products (12%), and land reclamation after a mining operation ends (12%). The top concern among Republicans is that minerals will be used in foreign products or mined by foreign-owned companies (18%). Overall, 12% of voters report not having any concerns at all about critical mineral mines.

Voters Are Most Concerned About the Environmental and Public Health Impacts of a Critical Mineral Mine

Which of the following is the **most important concern** that you have about a critical mineral mine, such as a copper or lithium mine, beginning operation in the U.S.?

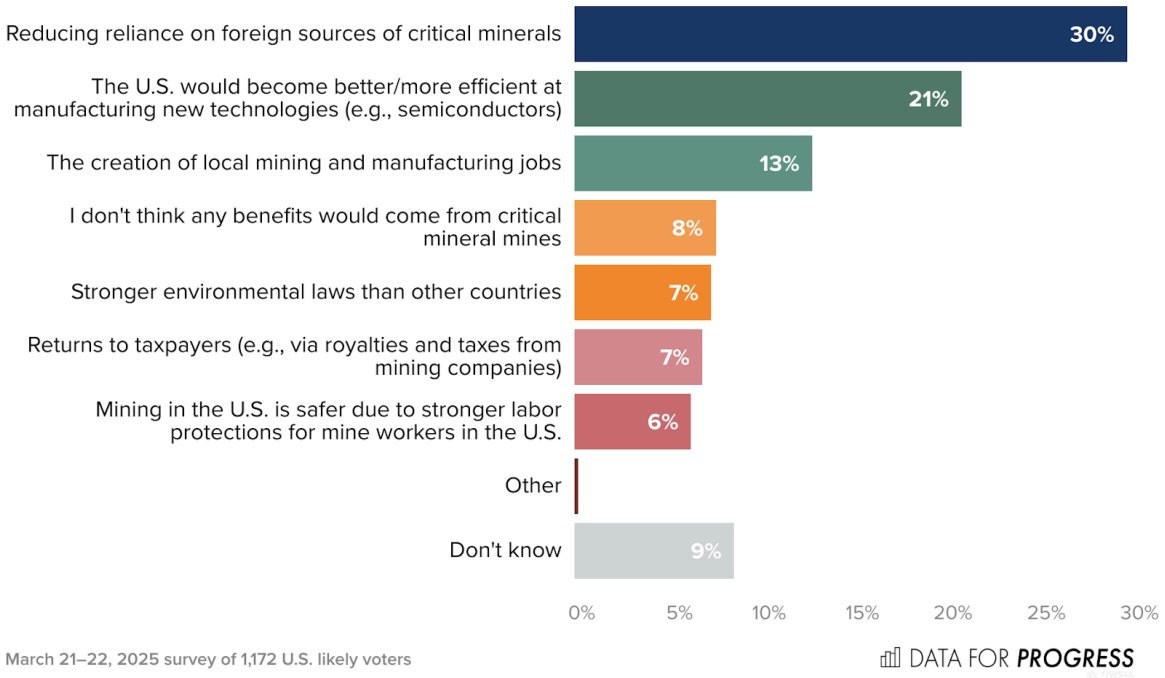


What Voters Want in Return: Voters Expect New Mining Activities to Provide Benefits, Including Reduced Reliance on Foreign Sources and Local Job Creation

Respondents then read a list of possible benefits from a critical mineral mine beginning operation in the U.S. Across partisanship, voters say the most important benefit of a mine is reducing reliance on foreign sources of critical minerals (30%), followed by improving U.S. manufacturing of new technologies (21%) and creating local jobs (13%).

Voters Think The Most Important Benefit of a New Critical Mineral Mine Would Be Reducing Reliance on Foreign Supply Chains

Which of the following is the **most important benefit** that you think could come from a critical mineral mine beginning operation in the United States?



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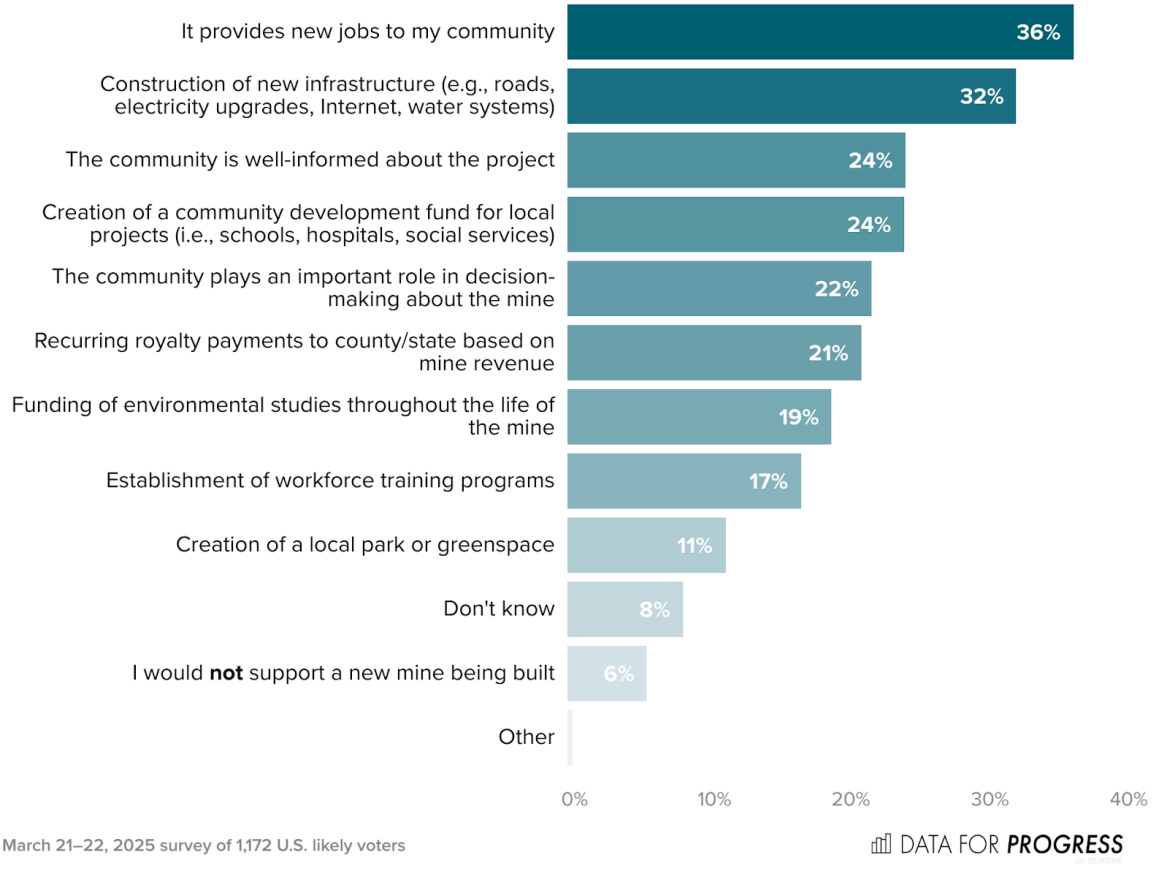
Voters were also asked about additional benefits that a developer could provide to the communities that host new critical mineral mining operations. According to voters, the most important benefits a developer can provide a community to increase their likelihood of support for a new critical mineral mine include providing new jobs to the community (36%), constructing new infrastructure like roads (32%), ensuring the community is well-informed about the project (24%), and creating a community development fund (24%). Only 6% of voters say they would not support a new mine in the U.S. under any circumstances.

Voters Want to See New Jobs, Improved Local Infrastructure, and Strong Community Engagement in New Critical Mineral Mines

Of the following, which are the **three most important** benefits a mining developer could provide that would make you more likely to **support** a new critical mineral mine being built?

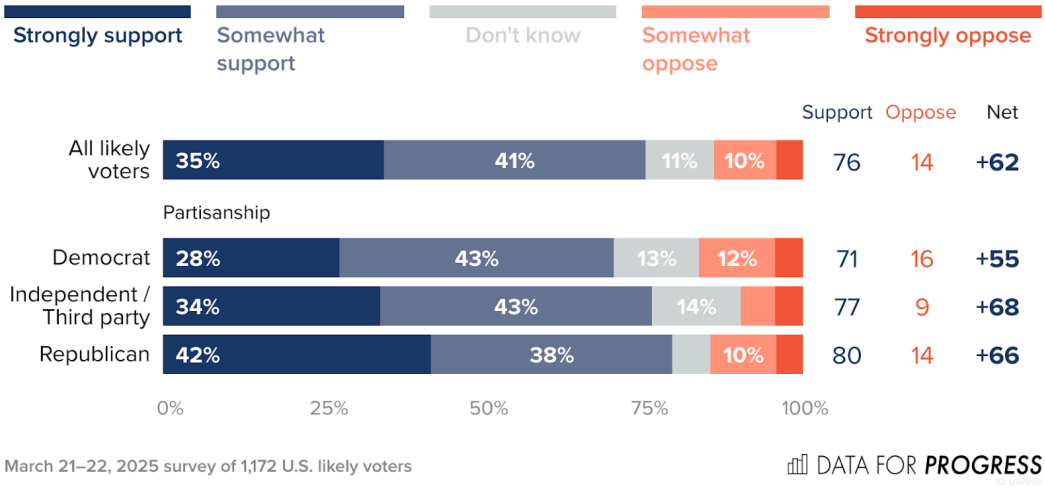


Finally, after reading a description of critical minerals and their role in clean energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries, 76% of voters support expanding domestic critical mineral production, including 71% of Democrats, 77% of Independents, and 80% of Republicans.

More Than 3 in 4 Voters Support Expanding Critical Mineral Production in the U.S.

Critical minerals are essential inputs for many of the technologies needed to enable a transition to a clean energy-powered economy. These technologies can include clean energy power sources, like solar panels and wind turbines, as well as other technologies, like batteries and other components for electric vehicles.

After reading this information, do you support or oppose expanding domestic critical mineral production?



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Conclusion

Most voters back domestic mining, though support is not unconditional. Voters understand the role critical minerals can play in expanding domestic manufacturing, spurring economic productivity, and enabling the clean energy transition. However, voters have concerns regarding the environmental and public health impacts of a new mine and want to see developers engage responsibly when proposing new mining activities, such as by providing new local jobs or concurrently investing in local infrastructure improvements that benefit the wider community. This will require inclusive and thoughtful decision making on the potential expansion of domestic mining operations and strong policies to limit the amount of extraction and mining needed to provide minerals for the energy transition.

The path forward for critical mineral development in the U.S. must balance the urgency of decarbonization with social accountability and cooperative foreign policy. Smart mining policies that center frontline communities, emphasize international cooperation, and minimize harm to the environment and local communities can help avoid replicating the past and ongoing harms of extractive industry.

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Survey Methodology

From March 21 to 22, 2025, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,172 U.S. likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and recalled presidential vote. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error associated with the sample size is ±3 percentage points. Results for subgroups of the sample are subject to increased margins of error. Partisanship reflected in tabulations is based on self-identified party affiliation, not partisan registration. For more information please visit dataforprogress.org/our-methodology.