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Voters Support Holding Fossil Fuel Companies Accountable for Addressing Climate Change

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Key Findings

- ▶ **Over three-quarters of likely voters (77 percent)** think fossil fuel companies have a responsibility to address climate change
- ▶ **By a 40-point margin**, likely voters support a \$500 billion fee on major fossil fuel companies to compensate for their contributions to climate change
- ▶ **A majority of likely voters (61 percent)** think it is important that low-income communities and communities of color receive compensation from fossil fuel companies to improve community health and sustainability

Introduction

This summer, Americans from coast to coast have experienced historic wildfires, droughts, and floods. Meanwhile, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released [a new report](#) detailing that greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities are exacerbating climate change and putting the world on a path towards potentially irreversible global warming. As Americans reckon with the cost of climate change, lawmakers are debating how to pay for the hefty price of both rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the damages of worsening extreme weather events and natural disasters. In August 2021, Senators Chris Van Hollen, Bernie Sanders, Ed Markey, Sheldon Whitehouse, and Elizabeth Warren introduced the [Polluters Pay Climate Fund Act](#) to hold fossil fuel companies financially accountable for their contributions to climate change.

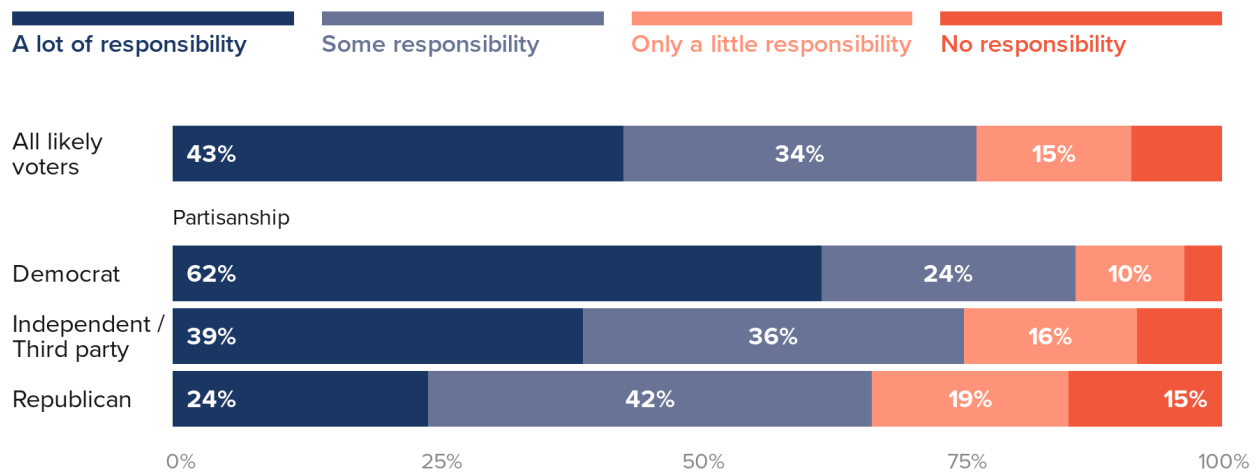
In a July 2021 [national survey](#), Data for Progress assessed the attitudes of likely voters towards fossil fuel companies, a corporate polluter fee, and the importance of providing compensation to communities that are disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel pollution. We find that a majority of voters think fossil fuel companies are responsible for addressing climate change and support a \$500 billion fee on corporate polluters. Moreover, voters think it is important that low-income communities and communities of color receive compensation from fossil fuel companies to improve community health and sustainability.

Voters Widely Support Holding Fossil Fuel Companies Accountable for Their Contributions to Climate Change

First, we asked likely voters how responsible or not responsible they think fossil fuel companies have to address climate change. Over three-quarters of all likely voters (77 percent) think fossil fuel companies have “A lot” or “Some” responsibility to address climate change. Consensus is bipartisan: majorities of Democrats (86 percent), Independents (75 percent), and Republicans (66 percent) all think fossil fuel companies have “A lot” or “Some” responsibility to address climate change.

A Majority of Voters Think Fossil Fuel Companies Are Responsible for Addressing Climate Change

How much responsibility do you think fossil fuel companies have to address climate change?



July 16–19, 2021 survey of 1,169 likely voters

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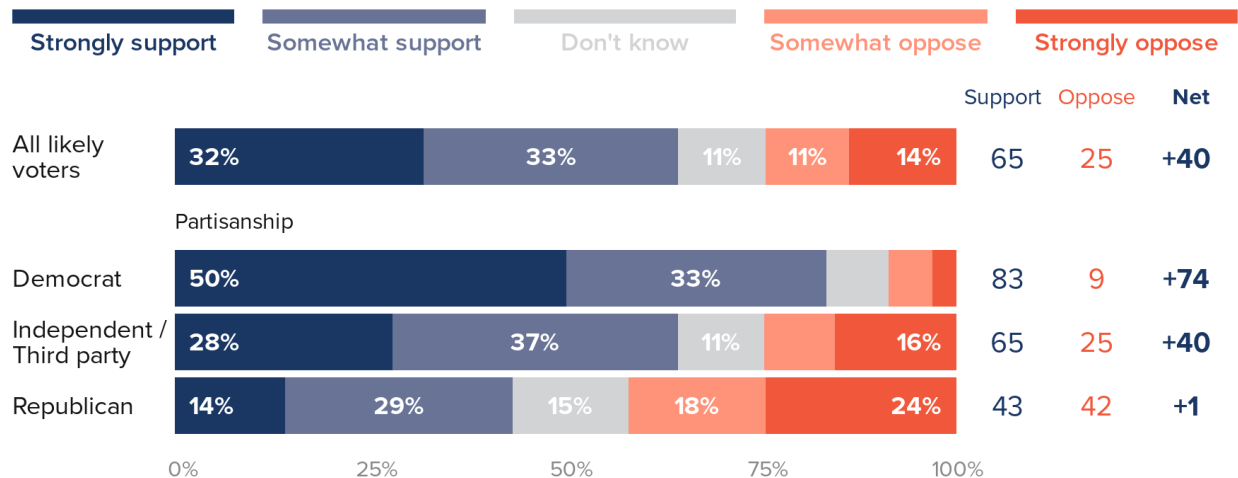


Next, we provided voters with a brief description of a \$500 billion polluter fee proposal and asked voters whether they support or oppose this measure. By a 40-percentage-point margin, voters support a \$500 billion polluter fee (65 percent support, 25 percent oppose). An overwhelming majority of Democrats (83 percent) support this proposal, as well as nearly two-thirds of Independents (65 percent). Meanwhile, Republicans are nearly split on the proposal (43 percent, 42 percent oppose).

A Majority of Voters Support a \$500 Billion Polluter Fee Proposal

Some lawmakers have proposed a new bill to impose a \$500 billion fee on major fossil fuel companies as partial compensation for the damages caused by these companies' emissions that have contributed to climate change. Collected over the next ten years, companies would pay their share of this fee based on the scale of their emissions. For example, large fossil fuel companies like Exxon, BP, Shell, and Chevron would likely pay between \$5 to \$6 billion each year.

Would you support or oppose this bill?



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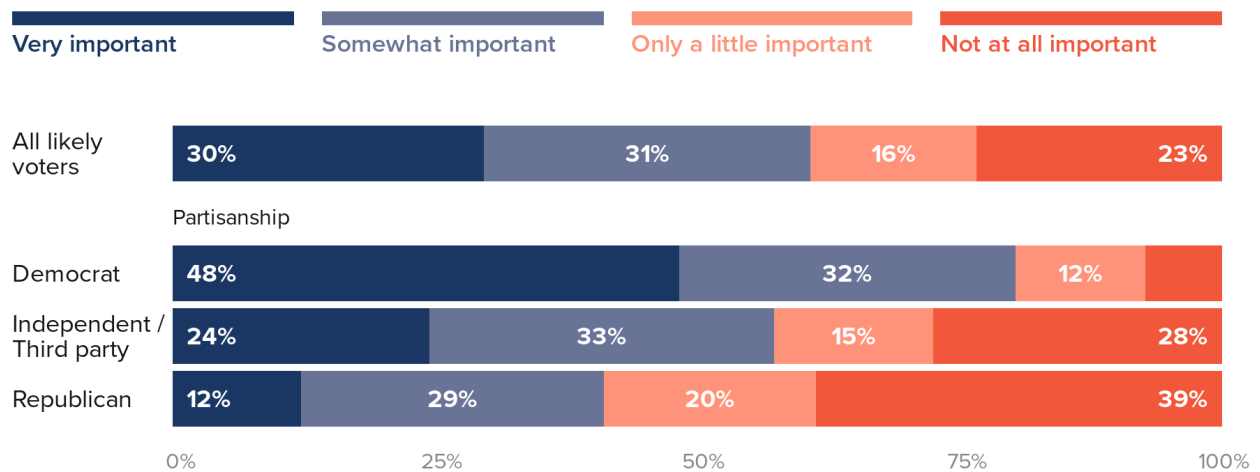


Lastly, we asked voters how important or not important they think it is for fossil fuel companies to provide compensation to low-income communities and communities of color, which have historically borne the brunt of hazardous pollution. A majority of all likely voters (61 percent) think it is “Very” or “Somewhat” important that these communities receive compensation to improve community health and sustainability. Over three-quarters of Democrats (80 percent), a majority of Independents (57 percent), and 41 percent of Republicans think it is “Very” or “Somewhat” important for fossil fuel companies to provide this compensation.

Voters Want to Ensure Environmental Justice Communities Receive Compensation from Fossil Fuel Companies

Low-income communities and communities of color have historically been more significantly impacted by hazardous pollution because fossil fuel companies are more likely to be located in these communities than in affluent communities.

How important or not important do you think it is to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color receive compensation from fossil fuel companies to help make their communities healthier and more sustainable?



July 16–19, 2021 survey of 1,169 likely voters

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Conclusion

After decades of generating emissions that harm both people and the planet, fossil fuel companies are under scrutiny from voters who think they are responsible for addressing climate change. As such, voters — especially Democrats and Independents — widely support a polluter fee proposal that would hold the largest corporate polluters accountable for their damages. Moreover, voters also think it is important that historically disadvantaged communities on the front lines of pollution and climate change receive compensation from fossil fuel companies. As lawmakers debate legislation to address the climate crisis, they should feel confident passing a polluter fee measure that would ensure corporate polluters pay their fair share.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

From July 16 to 19, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,169 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.