

Center for American Progress Action Fund



Our Earth Is Worth Fighting For

Climate and Clean Energy: Winning Issues in 2020

*Key findings from a national survey of Democratic primary voters and a survey of general election voters across 2020 battleground states
Conducted June 2019*

Normington Petts



HART
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

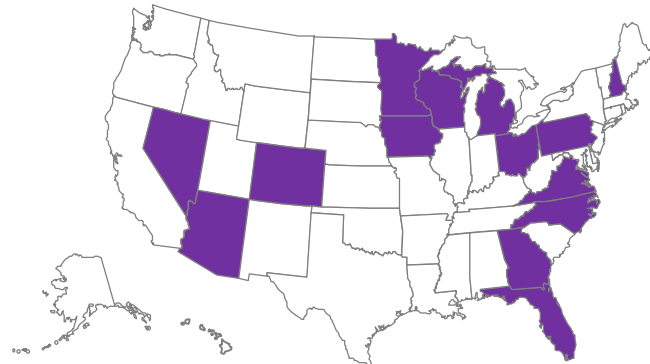
Methodology

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS SURVEY

- 1,000 registered voters nationally who are likely to vote in a Democratic presidential primary election or caucus in 2020
- Conducted online June 1 to 6, 2019
- Includes 230 Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), 300 African American, and 300 Hispanic/Latinx voters
- Results weighted to reflect the number of pledged delegates per state

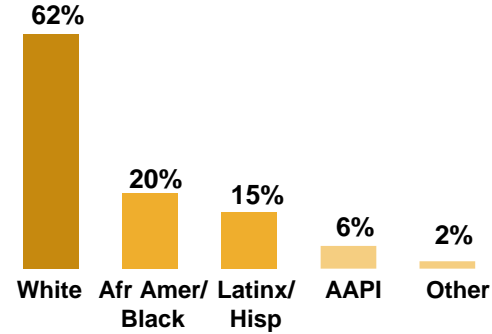
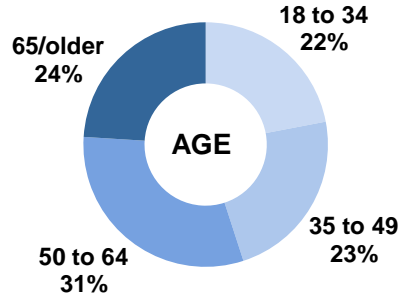
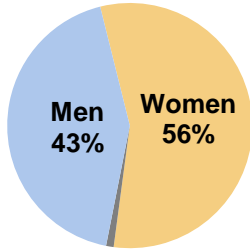
GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS SURVEY

- 1,201 registered voters in 2020 battleground states (AZ, CO, FL, GA, IA, MI, MN, NV, NH, NC, OH, PA, VA, WI)
- Conducted online June 3 to 10, 2019
- Includes 213 African Americans and 202 Hispanic/Latinx voters

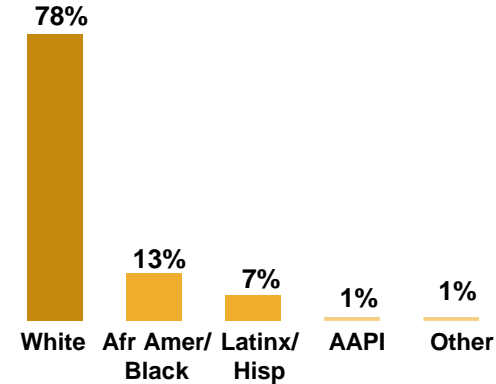
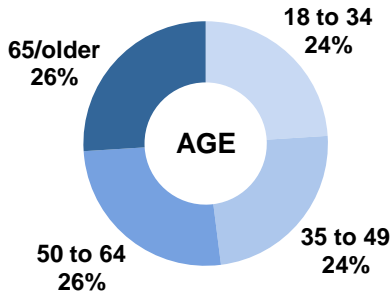
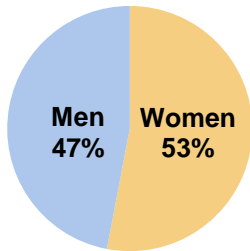


Sample Profiles

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS



GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS



PARTY ID

41% Democrats
19% Independents
40% Republicans

2016 PRESIDENTIAL

49% Trump
46% Clinton

Key Takeaways

- *Democratic primary voters expect and demand that candidates offer clear and effective plans for addressing climate change and moving the country to 100% clean energy. They want candidates to offer plans that do what scientists say is necessary to address the climate challenge, and they want candidates to take on fossil fuel special interests.*
- *Climate policy and clean energy can be important assets for the Democratic nominee in the general election. A large majority of voters disapprove of Trump's handling of these issues. They reject Trump's dismissal of climate science and his record of putting oil, gas, and coal company CEOs in charge of the country's climate and environmental policies.*
- *General election voters support moving America to 100% clean energy and believe this will create jobs. It is important for Democratic candidates to communicate their commitment to climate and energy policies that work for working families and promote a growing economy.*
- *The most powerful messages about the need for strong policies to address climate change focus on current and near-term costs, including economic costs; loss of life from climate-related disasters; and health and environmental impacts on clean air, clean water, and extinction of species.*

Defining the Problem: Several proof points on climate resonate with both primary and general election voters.



Climate-related natural disasters have cost the country more than \$450 billion in the past three years and could **cost \$54 trillion worldwide by 2040**.



The U.S. economy could shrink by as much as 10% or upward of **\$500 billion a year in crop damage, lost labor, and extreme weather damages**. This is almost double the economic blow of the Great Recession of 2009.



In the past two years, more than **3,000 Americans died in climate-related disasters**. (*especially among general election voters*).



Scientists report that more than **one million species are on the verge of extinction** because of climate change and human activity.



Public health experts say **climate change threatens the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink**.

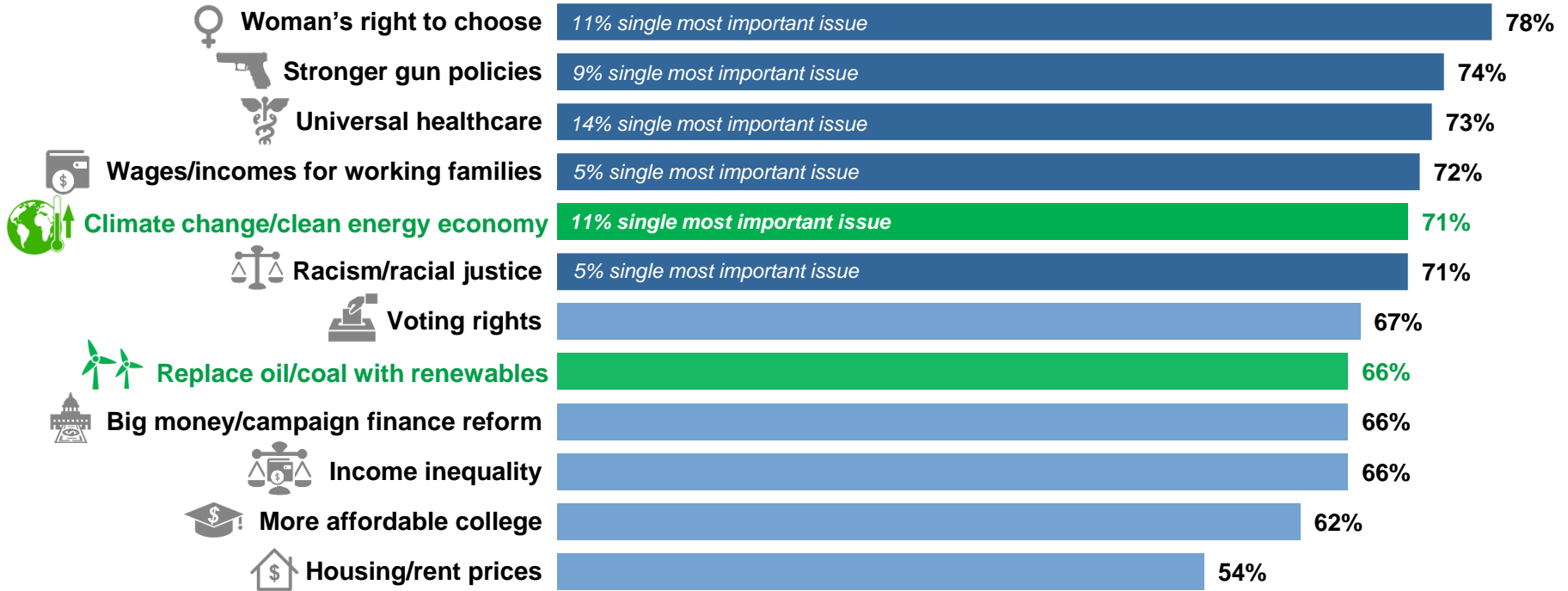
Please see the Appendix for the full wording of messages

Climate and Clean Energy in 2020

Climate change and clean energy are top-tier issues for primary voters.

Importance of Presidential Candidates' Positions on Selected Issues in My Democratic Primary Vote

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS: Most important/very important issue

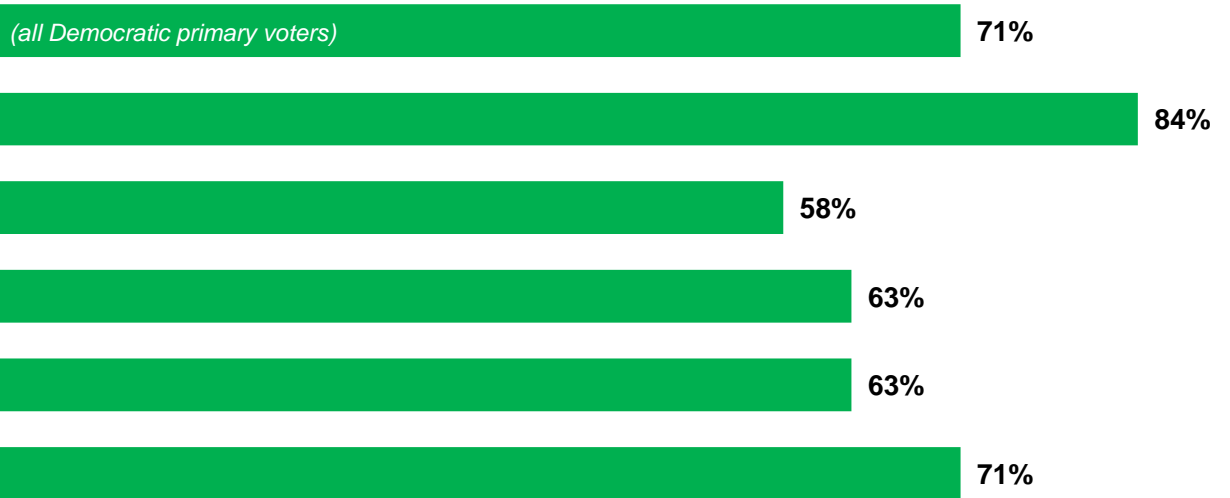


Climate and clean energy are priorities across key segments of the Democratic primary electorate.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS: *Most important/very important issue*

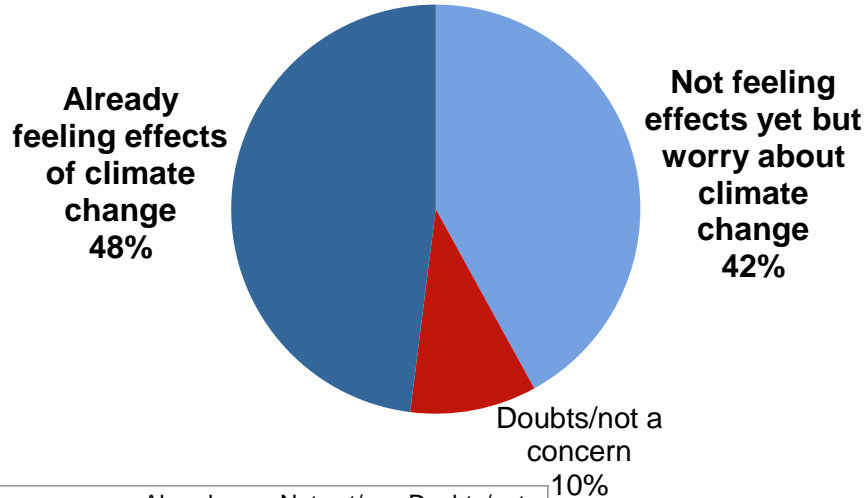


Climate change/clean energy economy



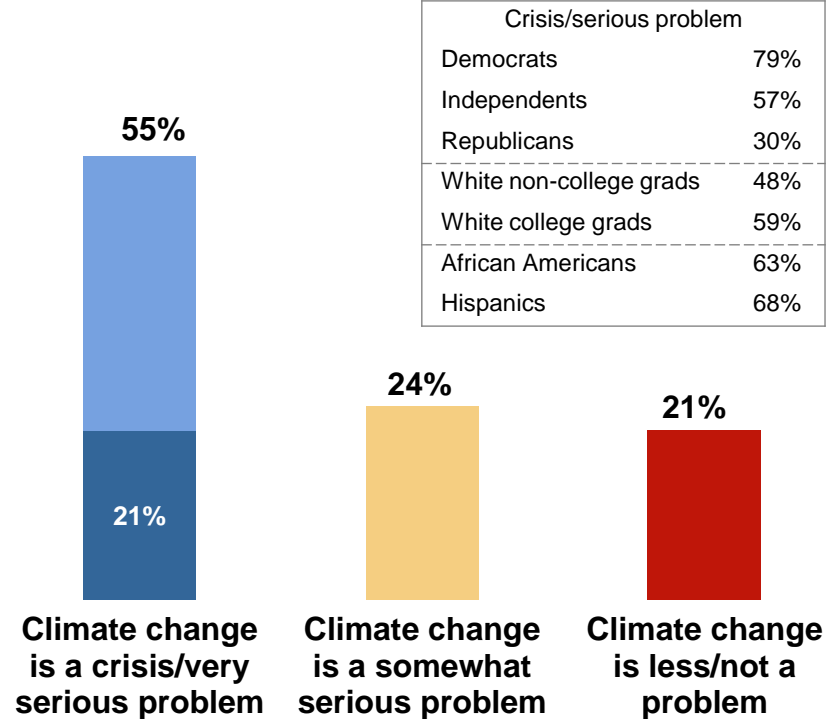
A majority of general election voters say climate change is a crisis or a very serious problem.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS



	Already feeling	Not yet/worry	Doubts/not a concern
Whites	46%	46%	8%
African Americans	49%	36%	15%
Hispanics	54%	35%	11%
AAPI	56%	30%	14%

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS



Climate Policies

What Democratic primary voters most want is a plan that is feasible and will help beat Trump.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS

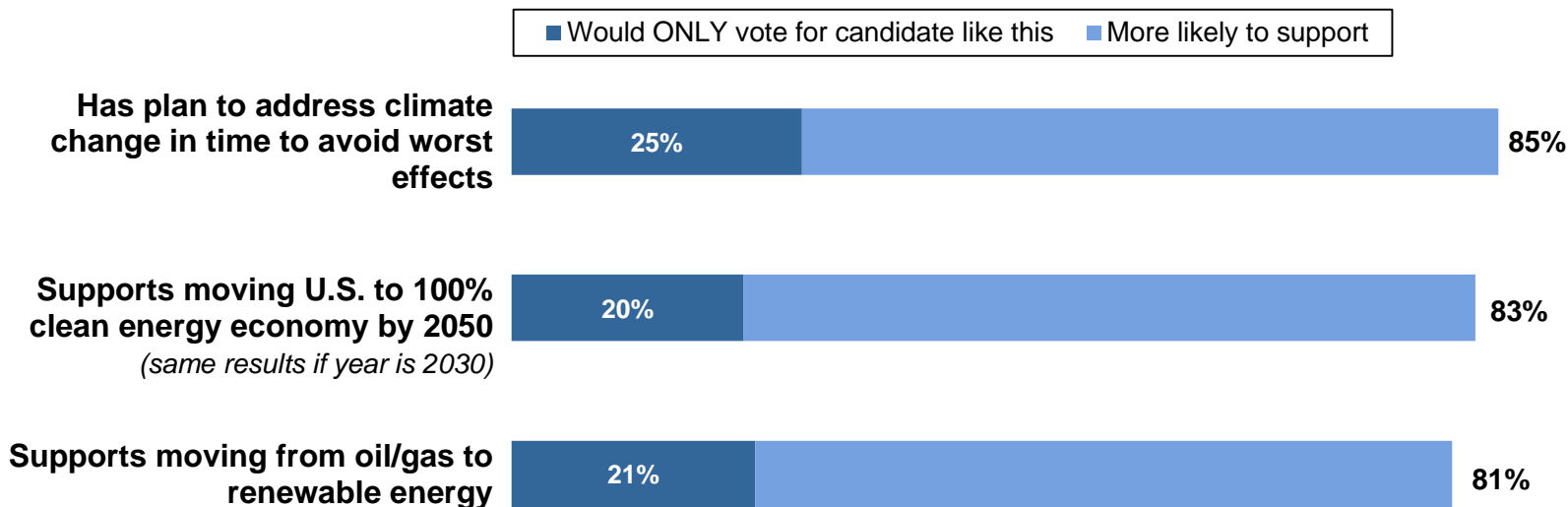
Essential/very important element in a Democratic plan to address climate change

	Essential element	Essential/ important
✓ Helps the candidate defeat Trump	47%	71%
✓ Realistic , can actually be turned into law	42%	79%
✓ Meets scientists' recommendation to limit global warming to 1.5°C, requires cutting global greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030/100% by 2050	32%	74%
✓ Inspires a new generation of voters to demand action on climate change	31%	73%
✓ Transforms U.S. economy with scope, scale, speed to avoid worst effects of climate change	30%	76%
✓ Is able to attract bipartisan support in Congress	30%	71%
✓ Creates millions of good-paying jobs	29%	73%
✓ Effectively eliminates greenhouse gas pollution by no later than 2050	27%	69%
✓ Prioritizes pollution reductions first in communities with worst air quality , particularly communities of color	26%	71%
✓ Ensures workers in fossil fuel industry meaningful work opportunities in green economy	25%	72%
✓ Is broadly popular with the American people	18%	59%

Several progressive approaches to climate and clean energy appeal to Democratic primary voters.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS

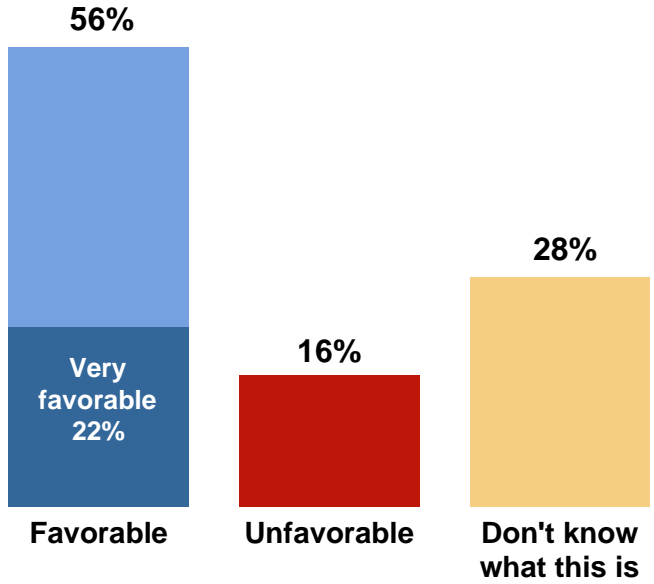
Likelihood of supporting a Democratic presidential candidate with the following issue positions



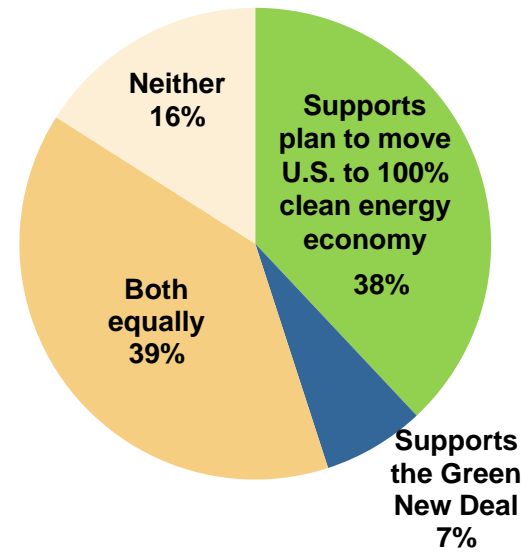
There's initial support for a Green New Deal among Democrats – but many do not know about it. “100% clean energy” is more broadly popular.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS

Feelings toward the Green New Deal



I would be more likely to vote for a candidate who...



At the same time, there are clear pitfalls where candidates' policies can fall short in voters' eyes.

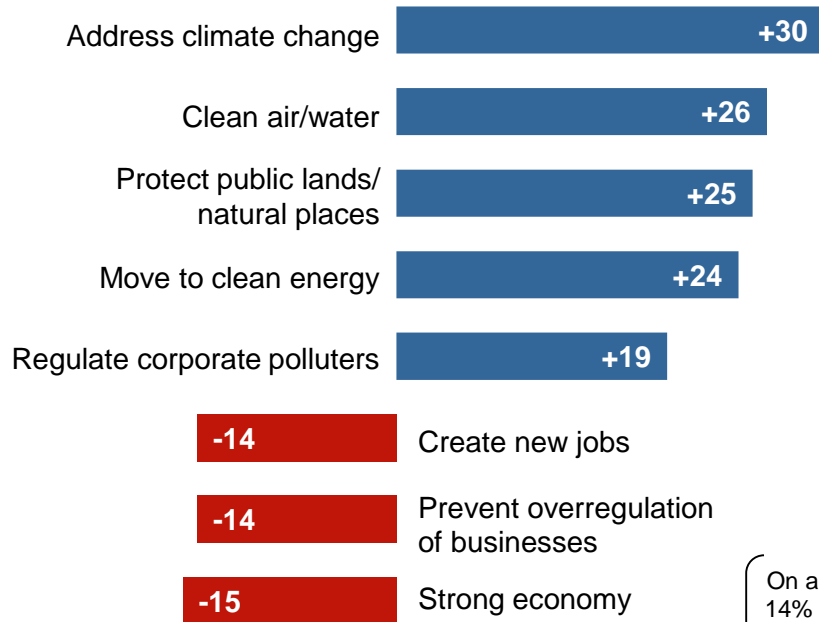
DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS

- **Supporting a plan that falls short of addressing the established science on climate change** (*Democratic primary voters are clear that this issue is important, and it is already affecting many of them. 54% would be LESS likely to support a candidate who backs a plan that falls short of what scientists say is needed.*)
- **Taking \$\$ from the fossil fuel industry** (*59% would be LESS likely to support a candidate who does so.*)
- **Talking about the issue without mentioning how it will lift up workers and create jobs** (*By 17 points, Democratic primary voters prefer a candidate who says we need a clean energy economy but it has to be worker-led, as compared to one whose plan does not address workers/jobs.*)

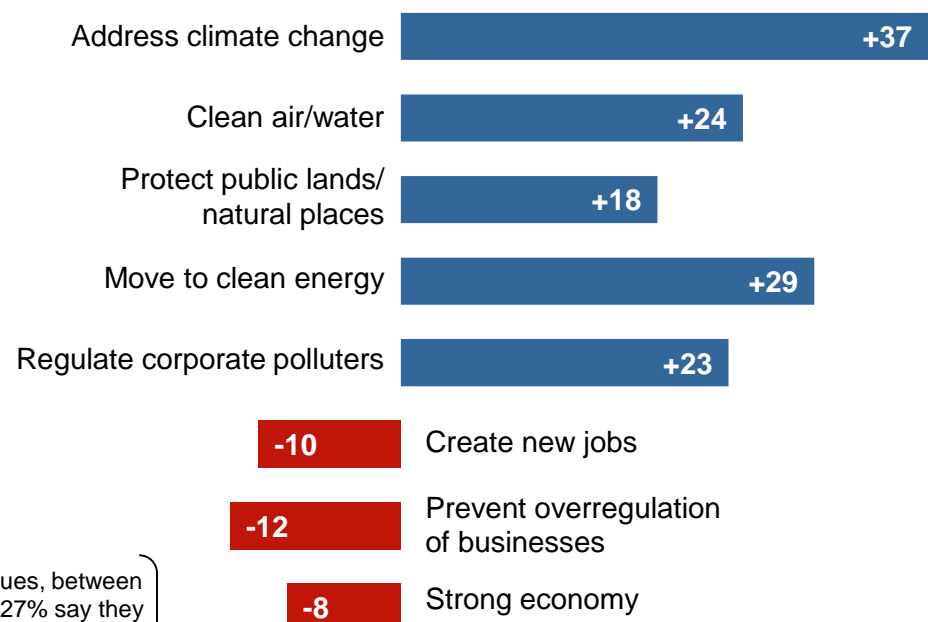
For the general, Democrats have a clear advantage relative to Trump/GOP on climate change and the environment, but are weaker on jobs and the economy.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

Net: Trust Democrats minus trust Trump



Net: Trust Democrats minus trust Republicans

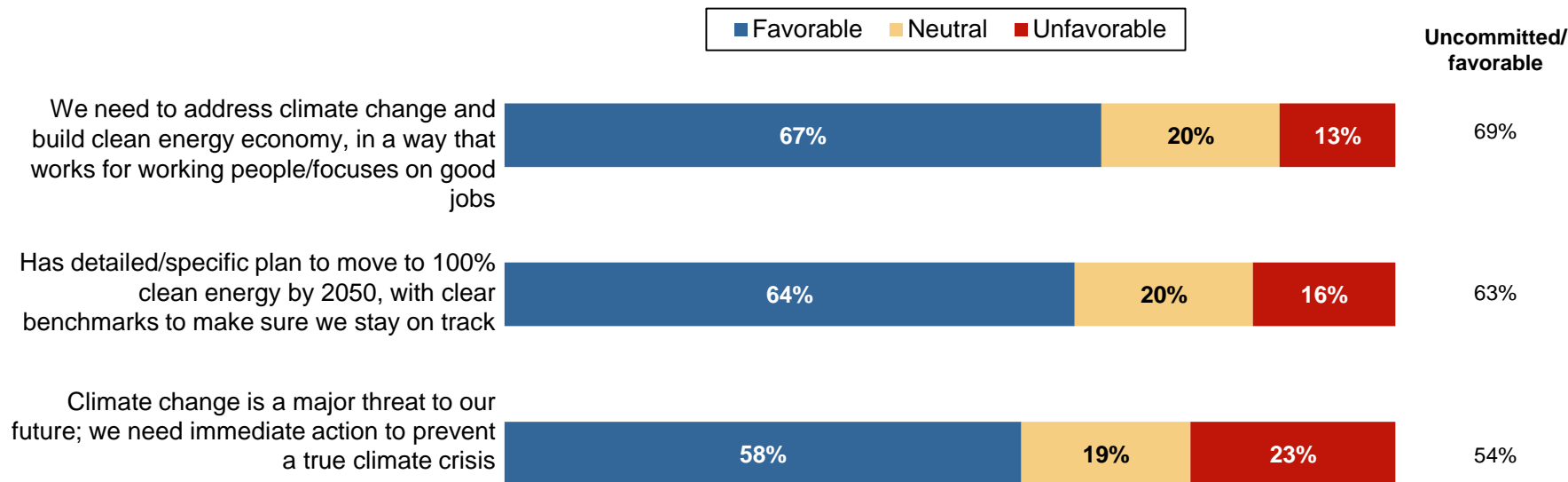


On all issues, between 14% and 27% say they don't trust either.

It is important to connect climate and clean energy policy to the interests of working people and a commitment to good jobs.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

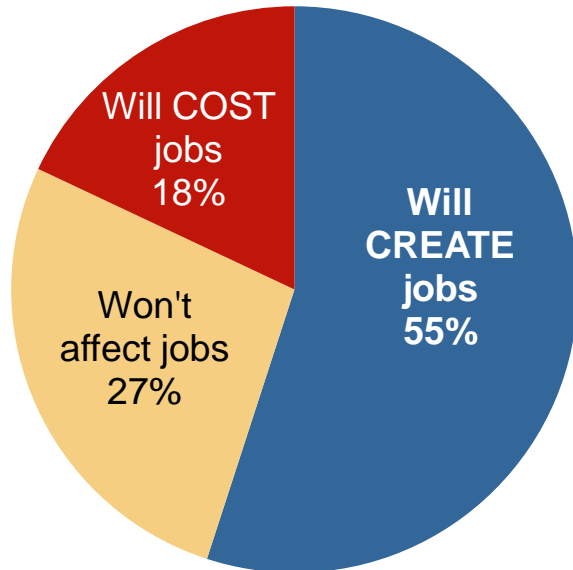
Reaction to Democratic presidential candidate with the following positions on climate change



General election voters see moving to clean/renewable energy as a job generator.

Moving the country to clean and renewable energy sources like wind and solar power:

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS



	Will create jobs	Will cost jobs
Midwest	50%	24%
Sunbelt	58%	14%
Democrats	71%	8%
Independents	51%	15%
Republicans	41%	29%
Uncommitted	57%	16%

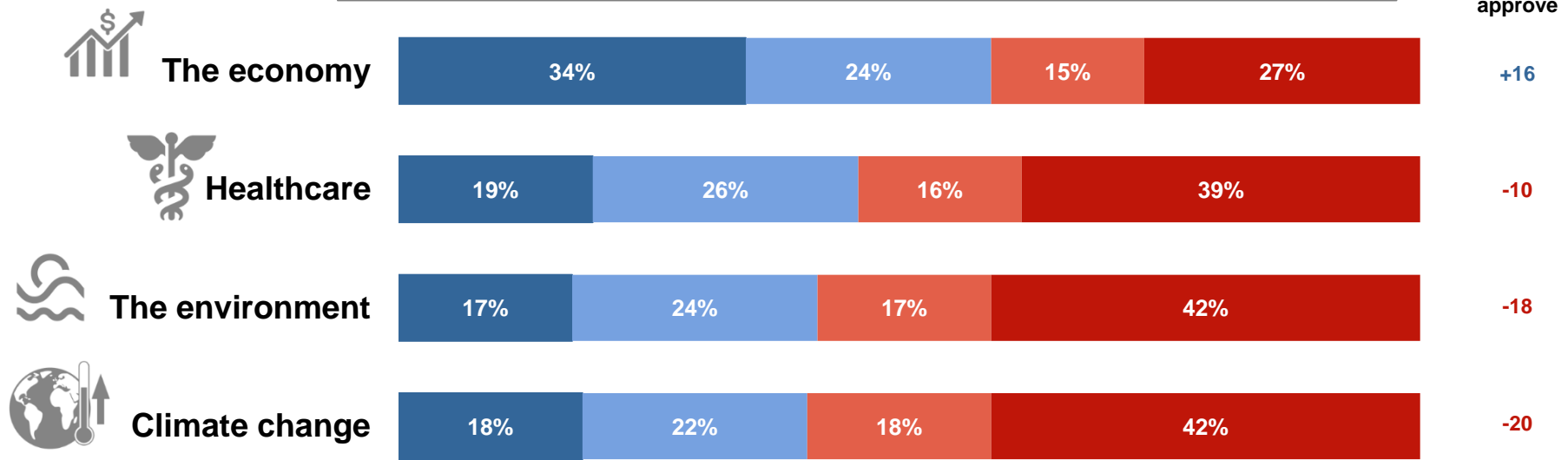
Adding the phrase “and away from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas” yields: 50% create jobs, 22% cost jobs.

Trump's Vulnerabilities on Climate

Voters approve of Trump on the economy, but he is weak on the environment and climate change.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

How would you rate how much you approve or disapprove of Donald Trump's handling of this issue?



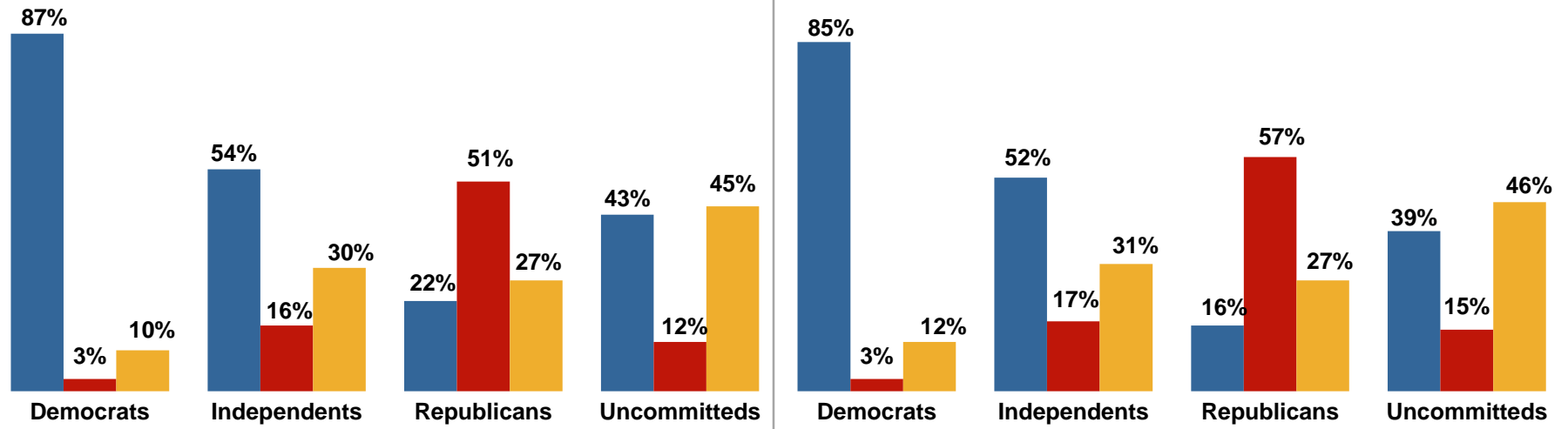
Democrats' trust advantage on climate includes independents; many grassroots Republicans don't side with Trump on this.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

Addressing climate change

Moving country to clean energy sources

■ Trust Democrats more ■ Trust Trump more ■ Trust neither



General election voters need context to see Trump as most to blame on climate, but not much.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

Who do you blame most for blocking policies to address climate change?

The fossil fuel industry, like oil, gas, coal companies, and their lobbyists

41%

Donald Trump, who denies the science of climate change and is rolling back policies that address climate change

38%

Donald Trump

29%

Politicians in Congress who take money from the fossil fuel industry and vote their way on climate change

31%

Politicians in Congress

20%

The fossil fuel industry, like oil, gas, and coal companies that spend millions to stop action on climate change

23%

Democrats vs. Trump: Criticisms of Trump on climate are more concerning than criticisms of Democrats.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

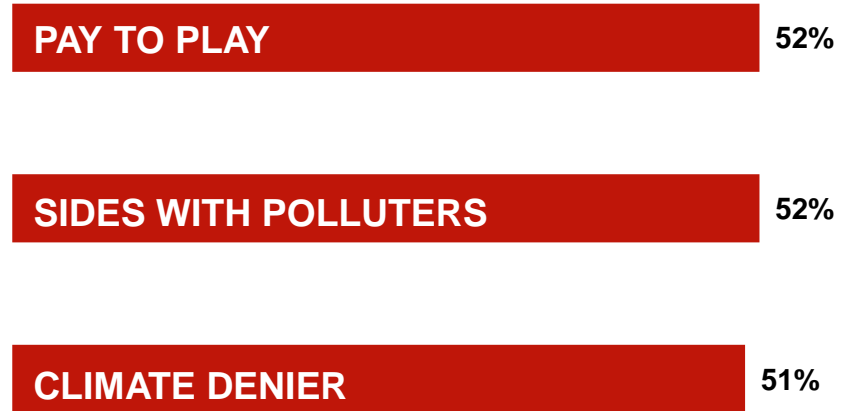
Proportions rating each as a highly concerning* criticism of Democrats/Trump



Criticisms of Democrats



Criticisms of Trump



* Based on ratings on a 0-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely concerning, 8-10 = highly concerning

General election voters are concerned about Trump's climate denialism and his alliance with oil interests.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

PAY TO PLAY

After oil, gas, and coal companies poured millions of dollars into Trump's campaign, Donald Trump let former lobbyists for the fossil fuel industry take over key positions in the Trump administration that oversee corporate polluters. Now these former oil and coal lobbyists are rewriting laws to weaken environmental protections and have opened up the nation's public lands and coastal areas to drilling and mining.

High concern

Core swing states	54%
Uncommitted	39%

SIDES WITH POLLUTERS

Donald Trump promised to look out for everyday people and hold special interests accountable. But as president, Trump has repeatedly sided with big oil companies and other corporate polluters, giving them billions in new tax cuts. While oil companies have gotten richer, everyone else is left with dirtier air and more health risks like asthma and polluted water.

High concern

Core swing states	54%
Uncommitted	45%

CLIMATE DENIER

Donald Trump continues to deny the overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change--he calls it a hoax--while putting interests of polluters ahead of the environment and public health. While scientists say that unless we take action to address carbon emissions, the worst consequences of climate change will be unavoidable, Trump named a climate change denier to head the climate scientist committee.

High concern

Core swing states	52%
Uncommitted	41%

* Based on ratings on a 0-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely concerning, 8-10 = high concern

The most potent criticisms against Democrats relate to the economic consequences of their policies.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS

COST

Big government climate change proposals would be **fiscally and economically catastrophic** for American families and businesses. Restricting the use of conventional energy sources will **hit regular consumers hardest**, with higher energy prices and increases in costs for almost all the goods and services people depend on. The result will be **fewer opportunities for American workers, lower incomes, and less economic growth**.

High concern

All voters	42%
Uncommitted	36%

REGULATIONS/JOB

Unnecessary **environmental laws have already hurt job growth** in areas of the country that need it most and have taken a significant toll on American manufacturing across the nation. According to some estimates, the **Green New Deal could result in 1.4 million more jobs lost**.

High concern

All voters	44%
Uncommitted	37%

GND: SOCIALISM

The Green New Deal is less about addressing climate change and more of a **blueprint for turning America into a socialist state**. It is a massive tax-and-spend proposal that would ultimately result in **giving the government unprecedented power** over people's lives and our entire economy. This will change what we eat, how we travel, and even what cars we are allowed to drive.

High concern

All voters	43%
Uncommitted	38%

CHINA

Liberal environmentalists are pushing their agenda based on unproven theories about climate change. Their policies **put us at an economic disadvantage and won't even stop the climate from changing**. Countries such as China and India continue to increase their use of coal and other fossil fuels. In fact, **China is the world's largest emitter of pollution**.

High concern

All voters	42%
Uncommitted	35%

* Based on ratings on a 0-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely concerning, 8-10 = high concern

After messaging, key swing groups are more concerned by Trump’s backward policies on climate than by an economic argument against the Democrats.

GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS



I worry more about Donald Trump because he denies the science of climate change, lets the fossil fuel industry dictate its climate policies, and has pushed an agenda that has made climate change worse



I worry more about the Democratic candidates who are proposing policies that will result in higher energy costs, fewer jobs, higher prices for consumers, and more government control of the economy



	Worry about Trump	Worry about Dems
Democrats	87%	13%
Independents	64%	36%
Republicans	19%	81%
Midwest	56%	44%
Sunbelt	56%	44%
Core swing states	57%	43%
Uncommitted	53%	47%

Appendix: Full Text of Climate Messages

Effective Messages with Both Primary and General Voters



ECONOMIC/WALLET: Climate change has **real consequences for Americans' wallets**—**food prices** increasing because droughts hurt crop yields, home and business **insurance rates** increasing because of stronger and more frequent storms, **more than \$1 trillion of property** and structures are at risk of flooding from rising sea levels. **Unless we take action to reduce climate change, these problems will only worsen**, costing us more money every year.



DEADLY/WEATHER: Extreme weather is already taking a deadly toll on communities across the country and it's expected to get worse. **In the past two years, more than 3,000 Americans died in climate-related disasters.** Scientists expect that extreme heat will lead to an additional 2,000 premature deaths a year in the Midwest alone. Once-rare events like “500-year floods” and the California wildfires are happening more frequently and getting more dangerous.



WILDLIFE: A growing number of the world's animal and plant species are being pushed to the brink of extinction—from polar bears and Bengal tigers to sea turtles and whales. **Scientists report that more than one million species are on the verge of extinction because of climate change and human activity.**



CLEAN AIR/CLEAN WATER: Public health experts say **climate change threatens the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink.** High temperatures raise the amount of harmful pollutants in the air and can trap smog and smoke from wildfires. Safe drinking water is also at risk as rising temperatures increase the amount of bacteria and other pathogens in fresh water supplies, while runoff from floods and powerful storms contaminate waterways.



HEALTH: Climate change is a public health emergency: releasing toxic chemicals that increase the risk of asthma attacks and heart disease nationwide each year, impacts that **especially affect people of color.** Doctors and public health experts say that **infectious diseases like West Nile, Lyme disease, the Zika virus**, and other life-threatening diseases will become more and more common with rising temperatures.