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
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**
- Men: 43%
- Women: 56%

**AGE**
- 18 to 34: 22%
- 35 to 49: 23%
- 50 to 64: 31%
- 65/older: 24%

**GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS**
- Men: 47%
- Women: 53%

**AGE**
- 18 to 34: 24%
- 35 to 49: 24%
- 50 to 64: 26%
- 65/older: 26%

**PARTY ID**
- 41% Democrats
- 19% Independents
- 40% Republicans

**2016 PRESIDENTIAL**
- 49% Trump
- 46% Clinton

Women: 56% Men: 44%
Women: 53% Men: 47%
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

- **Woman’s right to choose**: 11% single most important issue
- **Stronger gun policies**: 9% single most important issue
- **Universal healthcare**: 14% single most important issue
- **Wages/incomes for working families**: 5% single most important issue
- **Climate change/clean energy economy**: 11% single most important issue
- **Racism/racial justice**: 5% single most important issue
- **Voting rights**: 67%
- **Replace oil/coal with renewables**: 73%
- **Big money/campaign finance reform**: 66%
- **Income inequality**: 66%
- **More affordable college**: 62%
- **Housing/rent prices**: 54%
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**
  - All Democratic primary voters: 71%
  - White liberals: 84%
  - White moderates/conservatives: 58%
  - African Americans: 63%
  - AAPI: 63%
  - Hispanics/Latinx: 71%
Democrats have a clear advantage relative to Trump/GOP on climate change and the environment.

**GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS**

**Net: Trust Democrats minus trust Trump**

- Address climate change: +30
- Move to clean energy: +26
- Clean air/water: +25
- Stop corporate polluters: +24
- Protect public lands/natural places: +19

**Net: Trust Democrats minus trust Republicans**

- Address climate change: +37
- Move to clean energy: +24
- Clean air/water: +18
- Stop corporate polluters: +29
- Protect public lands/natural places: +23
A majority of general election voters say climate change is a crisis or a very serious problem.

**DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS**

- Already feeling effects of climate change: 48%
- Not feeling effects yet but worry about climate change: 42%
- Doubts/not a concern: 10%

**GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS**

- Climate change is a crisis/very serious problem: 55%
- Climate change is a somewhat serious problem: 24%
- Climate change is less/not a problem: 21%

### Voter Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Climate change is a crisis/very serious problem</th>
<th>Climate change is a somewhat serious problem</th>
<th>Climate change is less/not a problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White non-college grads</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White college grads</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Whites: 46% (Already feeling), 46% (Not yet/worry), 8% (Doubts/not a concern)
- African Americans: 49% (Already feeling), 36% (Not yet/worry), 15% (Doubts/not a concern)
- Hispanics: 54% (Already feeling), 35% (Not yet/worry), 11% (Doubts/not a concern)
- API: 56% (Already feeling), 30% (Not yet/worry), 14% (Doubts/not a concern)
The upward trend lines are unmistakable among Democrats and Independents saying climate change is a serious problem.

% Who Say that say Global Climate Change has been Established as a Serious Problem and Immediate Action is Necessary

Democrats | Independents | Republicans
---|---|---
July 1999: 25% | 15% | 13%
June 2006: 34% | 36% | 16%
Jan. 2007: 39% | 48% | 23%
Oct. 2009: 47% | 41% | 21%
Dec. 2009: 50% | 26% | 12%
June 2014: 61% | 39% | 13%
April 2017: 65% | 38% | 11%
Sept. 2017: 71% | 47% | 15%
Dec. 2018: 71% | 47% | 15%

Change since 1999:
- Democrats: +42%
- Independents: +22%
- Republicans: --

Source: NBC News/Wall Street Journal
In the general, a generic Democrat has the lead over Trump but a significant number remain undecided.

**General Election Trial Heat for President**

**GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic candidate</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunbelt</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White non-college grads</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White college grads</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics/Latinx</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Climate Policies
What Democratic primary voters most want is a plan that is feasible and will help beat Trump.

**DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps the candidate <strong>defeat Trump</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realistic</strong>, can actually be turned into law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meets scientists’ recommendation</strong> to limit global warming to 1.5°C, requires cutting global greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030/100% by 2050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspires a new generation</strong> of voters to demand action on climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforms U.S. economy with <strong>scope, scale, speed to avoid worst effects of climate change</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to attract <strong>bipartisan support</strong> in Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates millions of <strong>good-paying jobs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively eliminates greenhouse gas pollution by <strong>no later than 2050</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizes pollution reductions <strong>first in communities with worst air quality</strong>, particularly communities of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures <strong>workers in fossil fuel industry</strong> meaningful work opportunities in green economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is <strong>broadly popular</strong> with the American people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

- **Has plan to address climate change in time to avoid worst effects**
  - Would ONLY vote for candidate like this: 25%
  - More likely to support: 85%

- **Supports moving U.S. to 100% clean energy economy by 2050**
  - Would ONLY vote for candidate like this: 20%
  - More likely to support: 83%
  (same results if year is 2030)

- **Supports moving from oil/gas to renewable energy**
  - Would ONLY vote for candidate like this: 21%
  - More likely to support: 81%
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

- **Very favorable**: 22%
- **Favorable**: 56%
- **Unfavorable**: 16%
- **Don’t know what this is**: 28%

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

- **Supports the Green New Deal**: 7%
- **Supports plan to move U.S. to 100% clean energy economy**: 38%
- **Both equally**: 39%
- **Neither**: 16%
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Favorable (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Unfavorable (%)</th>
<th>Uncommitted/favorable (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We need to address climate change and build clean energy economy, in a way that works for working people/focuses on good jobs</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has detailed/specific plan to move to 100% clean energy by 2050, with clear benchmarks to make sure we stay on track</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change is a major threat to our future; we need immediate action to prevent a true climate crisis</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Will create jobs</th>
<th>Will cost jobs</th>
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<td>Midwest</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncommitted</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adding the phrase “and away from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas” yields: 50% create jobs, 22% cost jobs.*
Democrats’ trust advantage on climate includes independents; many grassroots Republicans don’t side with Trump on this.

**GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS**

Addressing climate change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Trust Democrats more</th>
<th>Trust Trump more</th>
<th>Trust neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncommitteds</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Moving country to clean energy sources

<table>
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<th>Trust Democrats more</th>
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<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>52%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
General election voters are concerned about Trump’s climate denialism and his alliance with oil interests.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core swing states</th>
<th>Uncommitted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High concern</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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**POPULIST**

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.

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<td>54%</td>
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**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.

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<tr>
<td>High concern</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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* Based on ratings on a 0-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely concerning, 8-10 = high concern
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.