



To: Interested Parties
From: Climate Power, Fossil Free Media, and Data for Progress
Date: November 1, 2023
Re: MEMO: New Polling on Oil and Gas Accountability

Summary

Over the last two years, oil and gas companies have posted [record profits](#), with companies like [ExxonMobil](#), [Chevron](#), and [Shell](#) all reporting historic earnings in the billions of dollars. Meanwhile, American consumers have felt the pinch as gas prices have fluctuated — reaching a [record high](#) of \$5.02 a gallon in 2022.

New [polling](#) from Data for Progress, Climate Power, and Fossil Free Media finds that **voters strongly blame high energy prices on large oil companies and their CEOs**, and believe these companies have **too much power in government**. Yet, voters remain optimistic about a transition away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy.

Key Takeaways

When asked whom they blame for higher energy prices, voters assign “a great deal” of blame to **members of OPEC+** (47%), market instability driven by **global conflict** (42%), **oil and gas CEOs** (42%), and **oil and gas companies** generally (39%).

Three-quarters of voters, including majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, further agree with the following statement: “**CEOs of fossil fuel companies are taking advantage of skyrocketing energy prices** caused by conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East.”

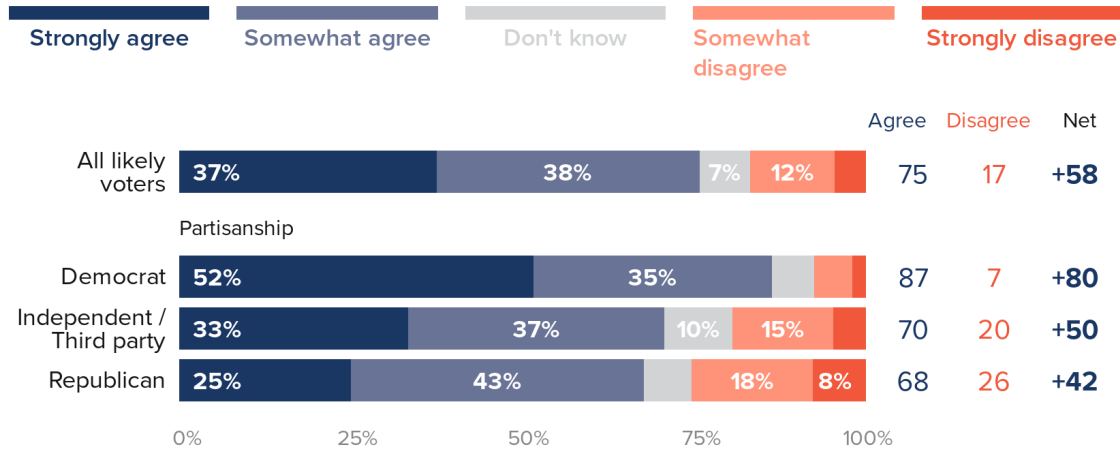
- When forced to choose, a plurality of voters (49%) see **fossil fuel company CEOs as more responsible for recent gas prices** than global conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East (41%). This includes a majority of **Democrats** (58%) and a plurality of **Independents** (49%).



Voters Across Partisanship Agree That Fossil Fuel CEOs Are Taking Advantage of International Conflict With High Prices

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"CEOs of fossil fuel companies are taking advantage of skyrocketing energy prices caused by conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East."



October 20–21, 2023 survey of 1,222 likely voters

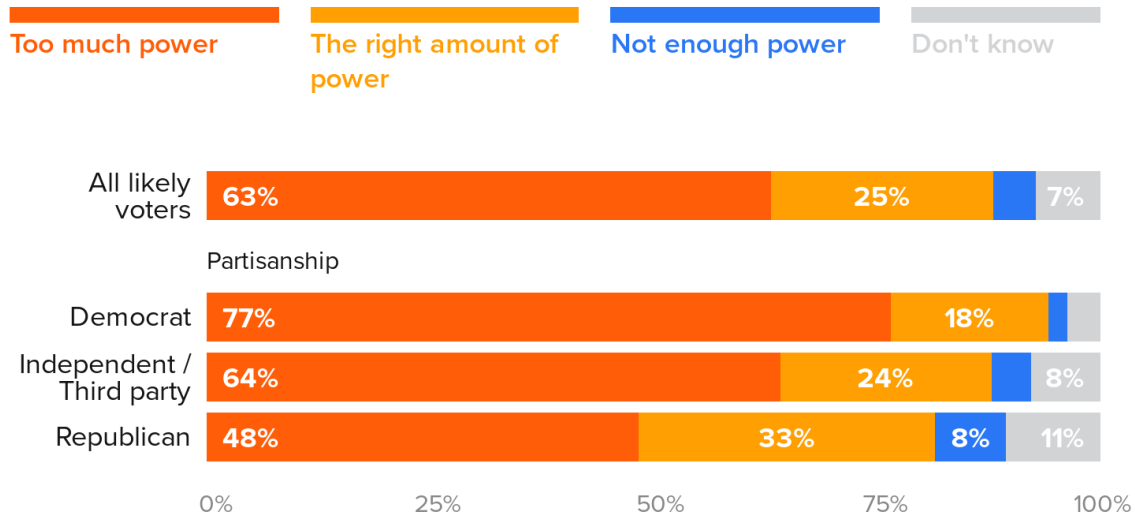


Voters generally agree that **oil and gas company CEOs have too much power** (63%) in the U.S. political system, including 77% of Democrats and 64% of Independents. When asked whom they **trust more to hold these companies accountable for high gas prices and home energy costs**, 33% say Democrats in Congress, compared with 25% who trust Republicans in Congress more, and a plurality (36%) who trust neither.



A Strong Majority of Voters Believe Oil and Gas CEOs Have Too Much Power in America's Political System

Do you think CEOs of oil and gas companies have too much power, the right amount of power, or not enough power in America's political system?



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ID: P12381

While only 35% of voters trust oil and gas companies to adhere to their own pollution reduction promises without oversight and enforcement, there is **strong voter appetite for the government making polluters pay**. Three-quarters of voters would support making oil and gas companies **pay a tax on their excess profits**, while 70% would support making polluters **pay for climate damages**. Notably, majorities of **Independents and Republicans support both** of these proposals.

- More than three-quarters of voters (77%), including majorities across partisanship, also agree with the following statement: “If **oil and gas companies have known for decades** that their products were hurting the climate, **but lied to the public** about it, they should **pay some of the costs** for the damages we're now experiencing.”

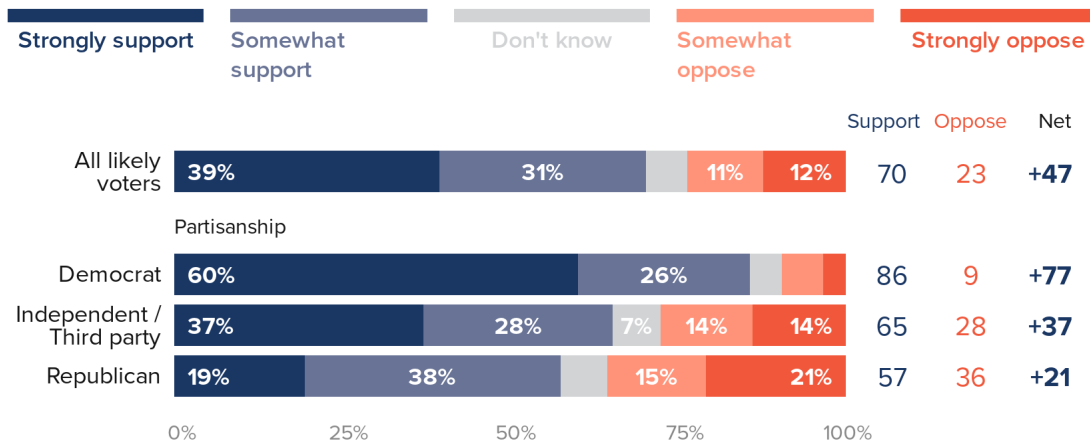


Making Polluters Pay for Climate Damages Is Popular Across the Electorate

Cities and states across the United States are paying billions of dollars to deal with climate disasters like wildfires, droughts, and floods.

Now, a number of those cities and states are suing fossil fuel companies to make them pay their fair share of the damage their pollution has caused.

Would you support or oppose making polluters pay for climate damages?



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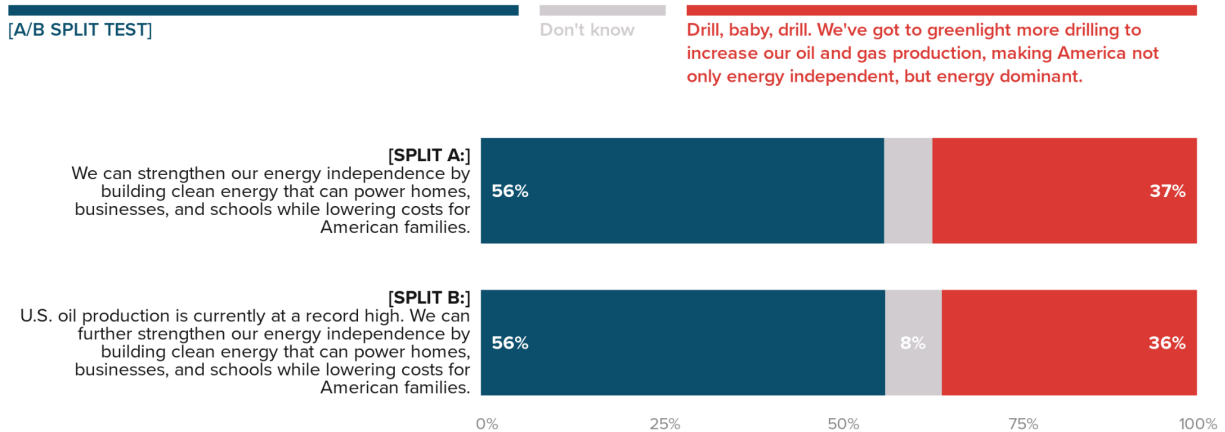


To assess whether voters view a tradeoff between building out clean energy and fossil fuel production when informed about domestic oil production, we conducted a split test which randomized treatments across respondents. Half of respondents were assigned to read an argument prioritizing investments in clean energy after stating that U.S. oil production is currently at a record level; the other half of respondents were assigned to only read the argument about clean energy buildout, without mention of oil production. All respondents then also read a statement that called for more drilling to increase oil and gas production.

With both halves of the split test, we find that 56% of respondents agree that **prioritizing clean energy investments can strengthen energy independence while lowering costs for American families**, while between 36% and 37% agree that greenlighting additional oil and gas drilling will strengthen energy independence and lead to energy dominance.

Across a Split Test, a Majority of Voters Agree Clean Energy Can Strengthen Domestic Energy Independence

Which of these statements best describes your view, even if neither is exactly right?

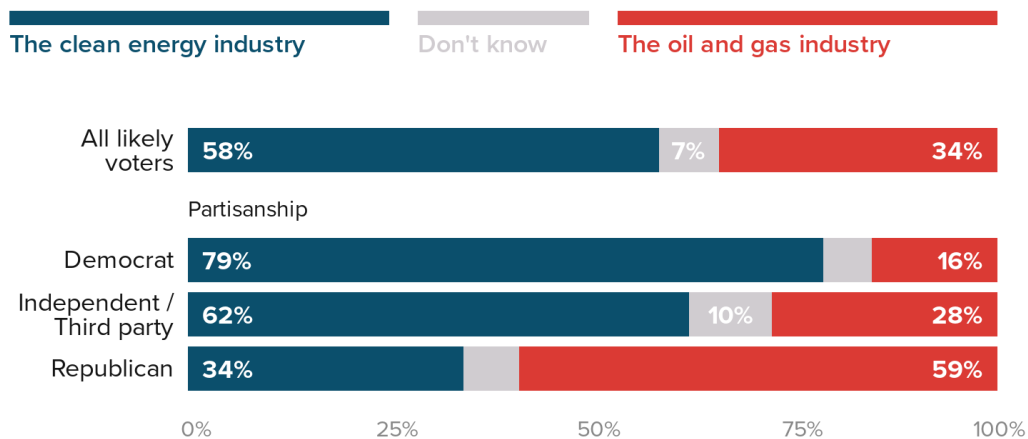


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Indeed, the survey also finds that 68% of voters view the **growth of the clean energy industry as a positive economic force**, with 58% believing it will be a **greater driver of job creation** than the fossil fuel industry (34%). However, a plurality of voters (44%) think that the **rollout of renewable energy is taking place “too slowly,”** including 63% of Democrats and 47% of Independents, compared with only 20% who are concerned about the rollout expanding “too quickly.”

Voters View the Clean Energy Industry as More Conducive to Job Growth

Over the next several decades, which industry do you think will create more new jobs in America?



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Conclusion

After more than two years of high energy prices and record profits, this polling reflects a general distrust of oil and gas companies. Voters support holding these companies accountable for the damage they cause to the climate, and see the expansion of clean energy production as an overall benefit to the American economy. More than twice as many voters say the clean energy boom is happening too slowly, compared with the small minority (20%) who say it is happening too quickly.

By a large margin, voters decisively reject the “drill, baby, drill” rhetoric that Donald Trump and other Republicans have been deploying on the campaign trail. Instead, they favor strengthening our energy independence by building clean energy that can power homes, businesses, and schools while lowering costs for American families. And voters of all political persuasions overwhelmingly favor (71%) candidates who will stand up to oil and gas CEOs.

Full crosstabs of the survey are available [here](#).

Survey Methodology

From October 20 to 21, 2023, Data for Progress, in collaboration with Climate Power and Fossil Free Media, conducted a survey of 1,222 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.