

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: December 2, 2021
RE: Support for EPA Action on Power Plant Pollution Standards

On behalf of the Climate Action Campaign, Hart Research Associates conducted a national survey of 1,200 registered voters, along with oversamples of voters in five battleground states: Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Interviewing was done online from November 1 to 11, 2021; the credibility interval for the overall national results is ± 2.8 percentage points.

Summary

After hearing about potential EPA regulation of pollution from power plants, American voters—both nationally and in battleground states—are strongly and broadly supportive of limits on pollution from power plants that run on coal and gas, including pollution that fuels the climate crisis.

Indeed, these findings are very encouraging and favorable on several fronts: voters in nearly all subgroups support EPA action to curb power plant pollution, and each of the potential component standards the EPA might consider (e.g., soot, ozone, carbon) enjoys significant backing.

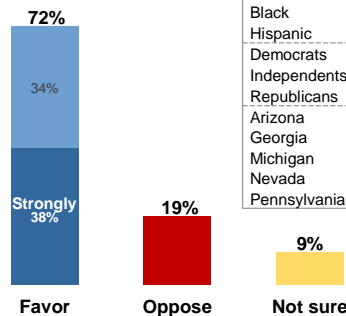
Both health benefits and reducing the most catastrophic impacts of climate change and extreme weather events are powerful reasons that voters see as credible and important. The following findings offer an overview to, first, understand the context of voters' views on this issue, and then to guide effective communication efforts in support of EPA action to reduce power plant pollution.

Key Points

- 1. By an overwhelming 53 points (72% to 19%), voters favor a hypothetical EPA plan to limit pollution from power plants that generate electricity from coal and gas.**
 - This support is so broad that it crosses nearly all demographic lines and includes a majority (55%) of Republicans as well as voters in all five battleground states (Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, Michigan and Pennsylvania).

There is strong support for EPA pollution limits on power plants.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may consider a plan that would set new pollution standards for electric power plants that generate electricity from coal and gas. The plan would require power plants to significantly reduce the amount of carbon pollution, soot, and smog they release. These reductions would apply both to existing power plants and new ones that are built.



| | Favor | Oppose | Net favor |
|--------------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Men | 69% | 25% | +44 |
| Women | 74% | 14% | +60 |
| White | 70% | 21% | +49 |
| Black | 81% | 9% | +72 |
| Hispanic | 76% | 19% | +57 |
| Democrats | 90% | 4% | +86 |
| Independents | 65% | 20% | +45 |
| Republicans | 55% | 34% | +21 |
| Arizona | 72% | 21% | +51 |
| Georgia | 69% | 21% | +48 |
| Michigan | 69% | 22% | +47 |
| Nevada | 76% | 15% | +61 |
| Pennsylvania | 70% | 23% | +47 |

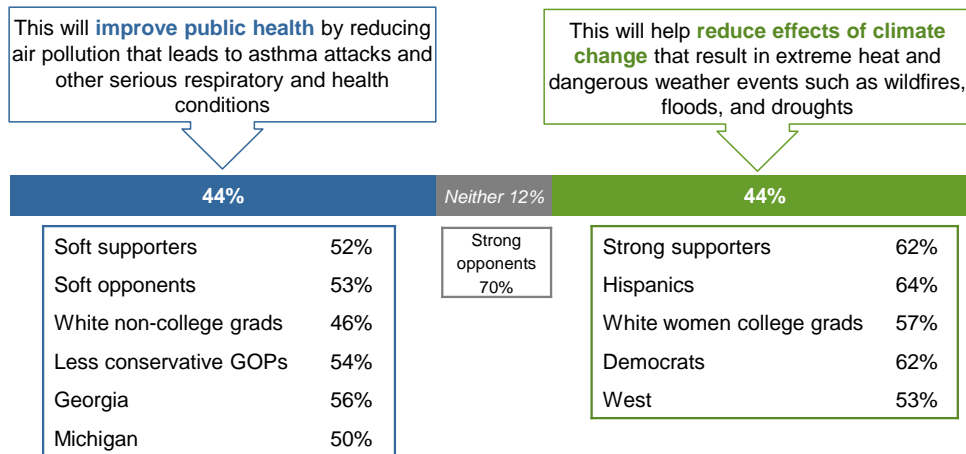
2. It is helpful to (briefly) list or describe each of the component standards that the EPA might include in its regulatory action. In fact, all four potential pollution standards are viewed extremely favorably.

- When told that the EPA plan could include standards that would specifically **reduce the amount of soot, smog, and carbon pollution** from both **new and existing power plants**, more than eight in 10 voters have a favorable reaction to each of these individual standards.
- Therefore, it is helpful to briefly outline the component standards and provide some definition and clarity to the proposed EPA action. However, it is also important to keep the descriptions simple and (whenever possible) specifically include the words **soot, smog, and carbon pollution**.

3. An important goal of this research was to determine the primary message "lane" for allies to communicate about potential EPA action on power plants. It found that both health and climate/extreme weather are powerful message frames, though they motivate different audiences. Additional proactive frames that reinforce and build support include our obligation to future generations and the disparate impact that pollution has on certain communities.

- When asked to choose between improved health and mitigating the impact of climate change and extreme weather as the primary reason for the EPA to take action on power plant pollution, voters overall are divided evenly (44% choose each argument).
- While this a case of "and" and not "or" in laying a broad, effective message foundation, the appeals to health and to climate/extreme weather have relative traction with different audiences, as noted in the chart below: **base audiences** are more motivated by references to **climate change**, whereas **swing or reach audiences** find more unity in the **health frame**.

Both health and climate/extreme weather are powerful frames, though they motivate different audiences.



- Notably, voters identify a range of specific benefits around both health and climate as personally important to them and highly credible, including reduced respiratory and heart disease, lower healthcare costs, and reduced disruption to people's lives because of extreme weather events.
- The health and climate/extreme weather frames are rounded out by additional appeals that test well: specifically, how EPA action on power plant pollution would serve to advance our moral obligation to future generations (a secondary message, but one that elicits consensus) and help communities that suffer the disproportionate impact of pollution (a solid message to target to Black voters).

4. While pro-EPA-pollution-limit messages strongly and consistently outperform opponents' messages, it is important to be cognizant of and prepared for attacks based on government spending and the overall cost of potential EPA action as well as the potential impact on consumer utility bills (especially amidst concerns about inflation).

- Of the six robust opponent messages tested, **none were especially powerful as measured against the relative strength of advocates' arguments.** That said, in the current political and economic environment, **two critiques appear to have potential to gain momentum: the total price tag** of the plan (especially when set against the context of other Biden administration spending) and its **impact on electricity bills** (especially as consumers are enduring, and are increasingly worried about, rising prices for gas, food, and housing). Swing audiences are especially vulnerable to these attacks.
- Effective counters to both attacks should be part of advocates' proactive communication strategy.
 - First, emphasizing the real (and in voters' minds very credible) savings from healthcare costs to reduced emergency spending on weather disasters is a predicate that should be laid well before opponents begin to make alarming claims about overall cost.
 - Second, while voters intuitively see many health and climate benefits to EPA action around curbing power plant pollution, they are uncertain about the impact on their utility bills: it is important to have solid, credible, and consistent evidence around reduced (or at least stable) rates.

6. Finally, the following chart offers a simple visual reference and summary of the messaging guidance outlined in this memo.

| Leveraging Proactive Communication | |
|--|---|
| Foundational Messages | |
| <u>Message</u> | <u>Purpose</u> |
| Reduce climate change | Most powerful motivator for core/base supporters |
| Cleaner air and improved health | Most powerful motivator for soft supporters (while also engage core/base supporters) |
| Supplemental Messages <i>(to be used as targeted compliment to foundational messages)</i> | |
| <u>Message</u> | <u>Purpose</u> |
| Moral obligation to future generations | Broad appeal (including to undecideds and soft opponents) |
| Disproportionate impact on communities of color/justice | Resonates with voters of color |
| Proactive Anticipation/Responding to Opponents | |
| <u>Message</u> | <u>Purpose</u> |
| Economic savings/cost reduction | Answering top criticism and highlighting ignored costs by opposition |
| Consumer utility bills/savings | Neutralizing potent argument in current political/economic landscape |