



To: Interested Parties
From: Center for Climate Integrity and Data for Progress
Date: June 2024
Re: MEMO: Wisconsin Voters Support Litigation to Make Polluters Pay

Summary

As the nation comes to terms with the increasing costs of adapting to climate change, communities across the country are debating who bears the most responsibility for this hefty price tag to protect residents and infrastructure.

The [Center for Climate Integrity](#) and [Data for Progress](#) recently [surveyed](#) 802 likely voters in Wisconsin to understand the importance of climate change to them and to assess their openness to climate accountability lawsuits that seek to make major oil and gas companies pay their fair share of climate damages.

To gauge voter perceptions of climate change and its effects on the taxpayer, the survey showed respondents two opposing statements: one positing that climate change increases costs for taxpayers due to extreme weather events, and another proposing that extreme weather events largely do not cost taxpayers money. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) identify with the first statement, saying that taxpayers face increased costs due to climate change.

This finding holds for a majority of Democrats (82%) and Independents (59%), and nearly half of Republicans (49%). Democrats intensely identify with this statement, with 48% saying they agree “strongly” with Statement 1, along with 31% of women and 31% of college-educated voters.

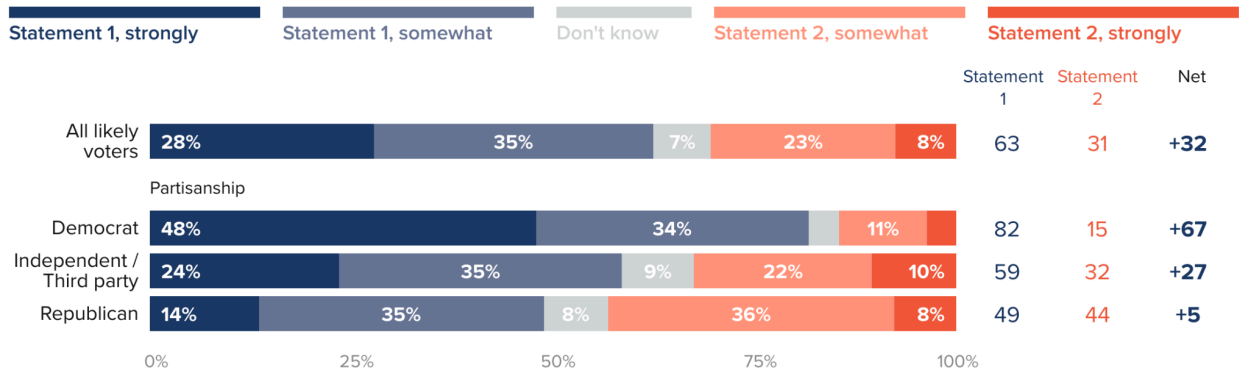
Across Party Lines, Wisconsin Voters Agree That Extreme Weather Events Lead to Increased Costs

Below is a statement pair. Please indicate which statement comes closest to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

STATEMENT 1: *Wisconsin taxpayers are facing increased costs from extreme weather events fueled by climate change.*

OR

STATEMENT 2: *Extreme weather events fueled by climate change largely do not cost taxpayers money.*



May 28-June 4, 2024 survey of 802 likely voters in Wisconsin



Next, respondents were shown an estimate of the climate costs that Wisconsin will be on the hook for in the coming decades, then were asked what portion, if any, of those costs different groups should be responsible for.

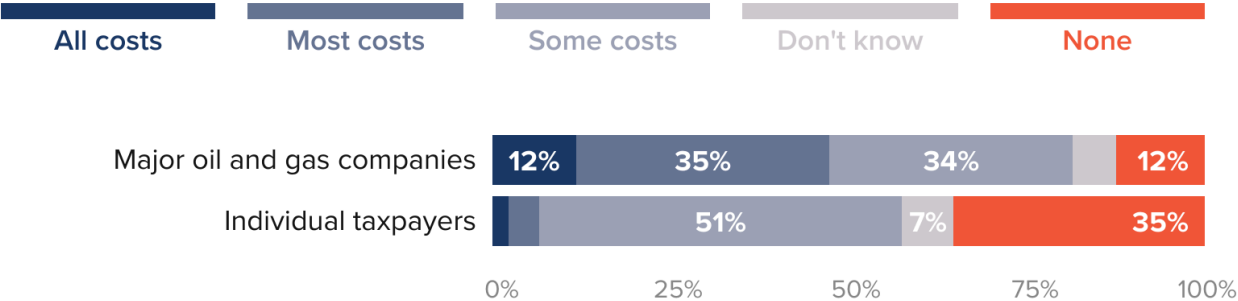
Eighty-one percent of voters in the state say that major oil and gas companies should be responsible for at least **some** portion of the climate costs that Wisconsin will face in the coming decades, while nearly half (47%) believe that major oil and gas companies should be responsible for **all** or **most** of the climate costs that the state will face.

Across demographics, it is clear that Wisconsin voters **do not** believe that individual taxpayers should bear the brunt of the responsibility for climate costs in the state: Over one-third (35%) of voters say individual taxpayers should not be responsible for **any** climate costs in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Voters Say That Major Oil and Gas Companies Have a Responsibility to Pay for Climate Costs

New research shows that Wisconsin will have to spend more than \$16 billion by 2041 to protect communities from increasing extreme weather such as hotter temperatures and increased rainfall.

What portion of costs do you think each of the following groups should be **responsible** for?



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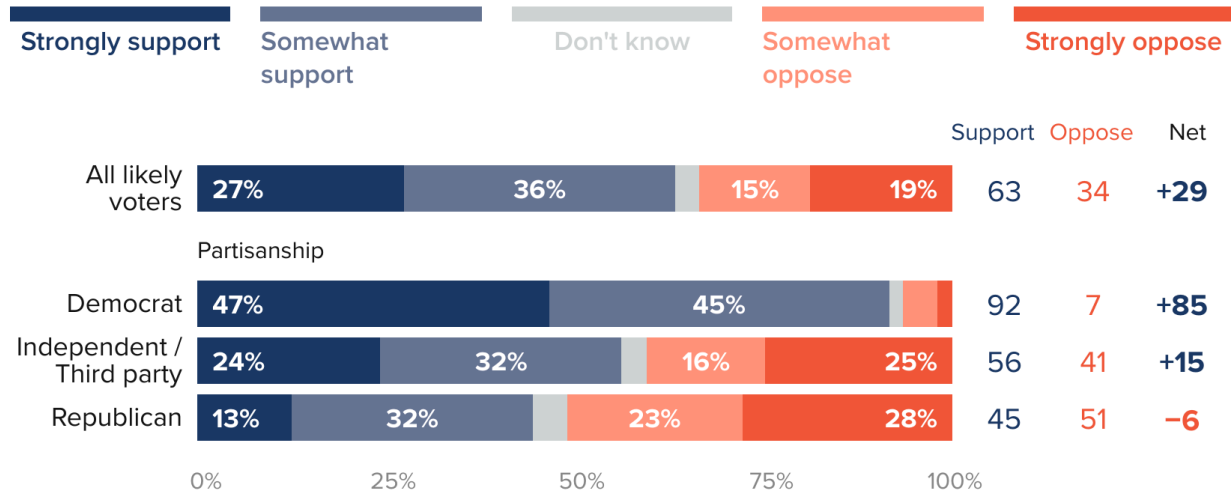


Lastly, voters were asked directly about their support for litigation against oil and gas companies, like ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, and Shell, to make them pay their fair share of climate costs that local communities in Wisconsin will face in the coming decades. We find strong support among Wisconsin voters for this proposal, with 63% supporting such litigation, including 92% of Democrats and 56% of Independents.

Republicans are more split on this proposal, with 45% in support and 51% opposed. All other demographic groups surveyed strongly support suing oil and gas companies to make them pay their fair share of climate costs.

Wisconsin Voters Strongly Support Suing Polluters to Make Them Pay Their Share of Climate Costs

Would you support or oppose suing oil and gas companies, like ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, and Shell, to make them pay their fair share of the costs that local communities in Wisconsin face in adapting to climate change?



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Conclusion

In the coming years and decades, Wisconsin must figure out how to pay the rising costs of protecting residents and infrastructure from climate impacts. The data is clear: Wisconsin voters support legal action to make oil and gas companies pay their fair share of climate costs.

Survey Methodology

From May 28 to June 4, 2024, Data for Progress and the Center for Climate Integrity conducted a [survey](#) of 802 likely voters in Wisconsin using SMS and web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of Wisconsin likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and 2020 recalled vote. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error associated with the sample size is ± 3 percentage points. Results for subgroups of the sample are subject to increased margins of error. Partisanship reflected in tabulations is based on self-identified party affiliation, not partisan registration. For more information please visit dataforprogress.org/our-methodology.