



## Results from National Survey on Climate Liability Lawsuits, Messages, and Issue Support

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### Introduction and Context

The Center for Climate Integrity, a project of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, is driven by our mission to empower citizens and elected officials with the knowledge and tools they need to hold polluters accountable for their contributions to the climate crisis. We set out to learn how Americans view climate change, the cause and solutions to the crisis, and who should ultimately be responsible for the costs associated with adaptation and resiliency projects. This survey expands on smaller online surveys (two national and two state-specific) completed in 2017. The results—which echo on-the-ground evidence from campaigns in California and Florida—confirm: Voters support holding polluters accountable for the costs of addressing and adapting to the impacts of climate change. And after hearing about the fossil fuel industry’s decades-long and multi-million-dollar disinformation campaign and the financial costs of addressing climate change, both the strength of support and the proportion of voters wanting to hold polluters accountable for those costs increase dramatically.

### Top Line Findings

#### **Large majorities of voters support holding climate polluters responsible for climate costs.**

Even before reading about the fossil fuel industry’s deception, seven in ten respondents said that oil and gas companies should be responsible for some portion of costs to protect communities from the impacts of climate change. Similarly, 71% of respondents said they support suing climate polluters to help pay for damages related to climate change.

#### **Voters are more likely to want to hold Big Oil accountable when they learn about the**

**industry’s calculated deception campaign.** Sixty-seven percent of respondents said they hold oil and gas companies “very” or “somewhat” responsible for the impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, concentrated downpours, and extreme heat. The total figure jumps to 83%—and “very” responsible jumps from 23 to 42%—after reading about the industry’s deception. More importantly, the number of respondents who identified oil and gas companies as the entity most responsible for paying for climate adaptation surges from 22 to 45% after

learning the history of Big Oil's deception campaigns and the current push to hold them accountable through legal action.

**There is bipartisan support to make polluters pay for the damages and impacts of climate change, instead of shouldering taxpayers with the bill.** Despite other ideological divisions, when voters learn about Big Oil's disinformation campaign, 91% of Democrats, 78% of Independents, and 73% of Republicans support holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for the costs associated with climate change. Fifty-nine percent of Republicans, 68% of Independents, and 88% of Democrats said they support lawsuits to make climate polluters pay for climate damages and adaptation costs. Four in ten Independents named the oil and gas industry as most responsible for climate adaptation costs; 37% of Republicans said the same.

**Although voters feel some personal responsibility for climate change, they still believe polluters should be held accountable.** Forty-three percent of respondents said they "strongly" agree that every person is responsible for climate change; that figure drops to 35% after learning about Big Oil's deception campaign and ongoing legal efforts.

### **Methodological Notes**

The survey was completed by 16,798 registered voters in the United States via online panel from January 22-28, 2019. The sample was weighted based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey for registered voters in the United States based on age, gender, race, educational attainment, census region, and Hispanic ethnicity. Figures may or may not sum to 100% and this is due to the effects of rounding and weighting. The sample has not been normalized, nor have poststratification weights been applied. The standard deviation of the weights was 0.231115. The maximum weight was 2.7508007. The minimum weight was 0.3651548. Ninety-five percent of weights were between 0.5329689 and 1.5201713. Each reported N-size is the weighted N-size. Each stratum's N-size may or may not add up to the total N-size for any one specific question, and this is due to the effects of rounding and weighting. The 95% credibility interval for this survey is +/- 0.8%, which includes the square root of the design effect (DEFT): 1.0263581.