

Voters Support Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Extraction

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Limiting planetary warming requires significant investment in building clean and renewable energy infrastructure. But that is only the half of it: an energy transition also necessitates putting an end to greenhouse gas emissions—which means ending the extraction of fossil fuels, the largest driver of the climate crisis. In 2021, the International Energy Agency reported that reaching the goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 to limit warming to less than 1.5 °C requires immediately halting investment in new fossil fuel projects. Continued fossil fuel production perpetuates environmental and health crises that disproportionately harm working people.

Thus far, the United States has gone in the complete opposite direction. Recent climate policy, including the Inflation Reduction Act passed under the Biden-Harris administration, has focused on building out much-needed green energy infrastructure and supply chains through policies enacting subsidies and tax credits aimed at renewable energy and electric vehicles. However, these crucial investments alone will not enable the United States to meet its climate goals, especially when paired with the ongoing expansion of fossil fuel extraction—which will likely intensify under the incoming Trump administration. Indeed, policymakers on both sides of the aisle openly embrace the continued development of new fossil fuel reserves. The United States is currently the world's largest producer, exporter, and expander of oil and gas, and, under President Biden, achieved the infamous goal of producing more crude oil annually than any nation in history. These actions are at odds with the United States' stated goal to limit planetary warming to 1.5-2 °C in accordance with international climate goals outlined in the Paris Agreement. In addition to stymieing climate progress, increased production to support export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) increases household costs.

To actually achieve the goal of limiting planetary warming, two things need to be accomplished: the United States must embark on a massive buildout of clean and renewable energy and simultaneously wind down fossil fuel extraction. A great deal of progress has been made in accomplishing the first goal, but there has been very little serious discussion of the second. This is due in part to the belief pervasive among politicians that halting new

fossil fuel production and winding down existing production is politically unpopular, yet there is surprisingly limited data testing this hypothesis. To better understand how the general public views policies aimed at phasing out fossil fuel production, we conducted a nationally representative survey to gauge public opinion. The survey of 2,444 participants over the age of 18 was conducted from July 25th to August 2nd, 2024.

Respondents overwhelmingly support measures to curtail existing fossil fuel production—despite fielding in the heat of a presidential campaign in which both major party candidates touted expanded oil and gas production. The majority of respondents support ending fossil fuel production subsidies (net 31.4%) and a phase out of new fossil fuel production (net 24.2%). Respondents were evenly split when asked if they supported phasing out all fossil fuel production (net -1.3%).

US adults overwhelmingly support measures to curtail existing fossil fuel production

Strongly oppose Somewhat oppose Neutral Somewhat support Strongly support

ENDING FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES



Oppose: 22.7% Support: 54.1% Net: +31.4%

PHASING OUT NEW FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION



Oppose: 26.8% Support: 50.9% Net: +24.2%

PHASING OUT ALL FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION



Oppose: 38.1% Support: 36.8% Net: -1.3%

Source: Nationally representative survey of 2,444 US adults conducted July 25 to August 2, 2024

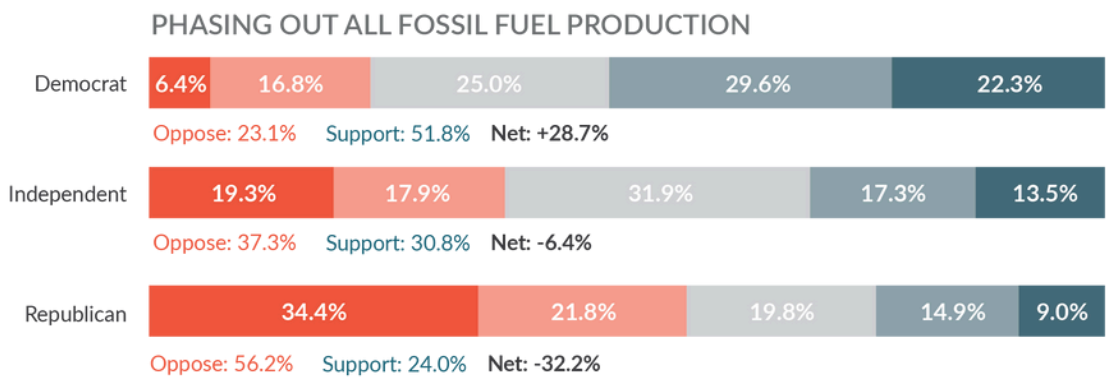
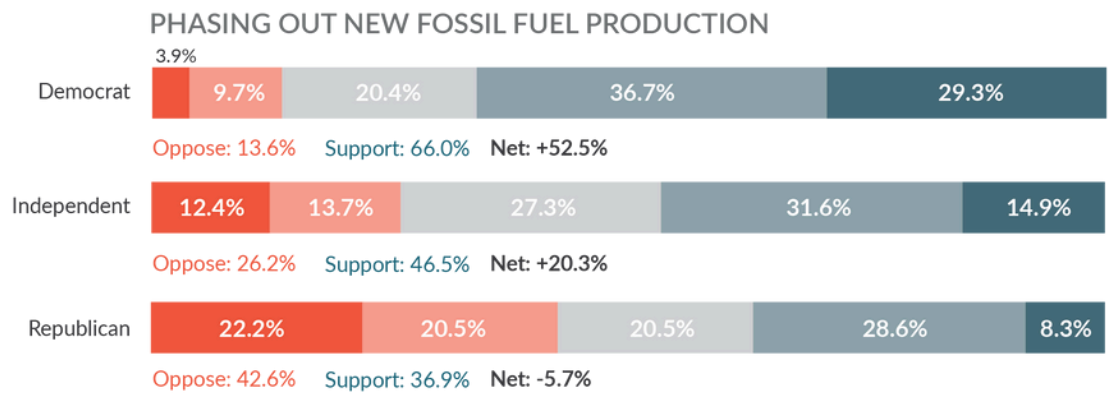
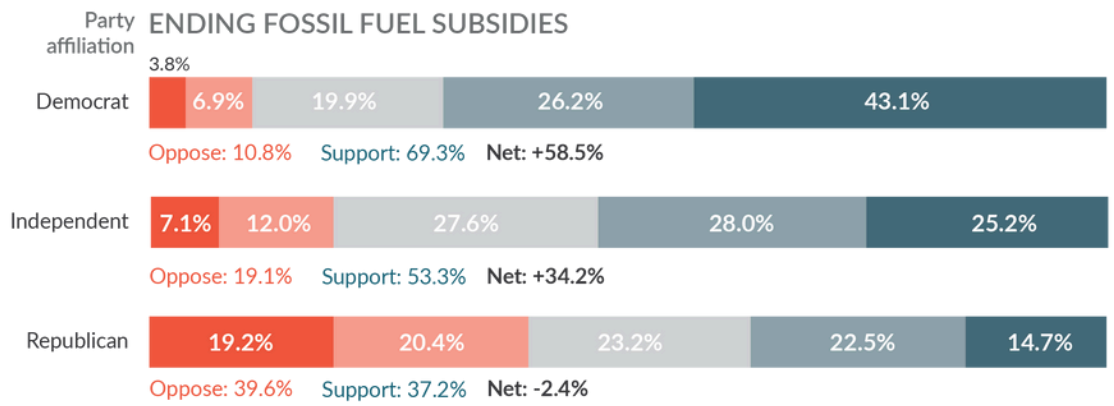
When looking across self-reported party identification, we find that Democrats (net 58.5%) and Independents (net 34.2%) overwhelmingly support ending fossil fuel subsidies. Republicans only modestly oppose ending subsidies (net -2.4%). When it comes to phasing out new fossil fuel production, both Democrats (net 52.5%) and Independents (net 20.3%) strongly favor action to stop new production, while Republicans are modestly opposed (net,

-5.7%). When it comes to more robust policies, such as phasing out all fossil fuel production results are more mixed. Democrats strongly support the measure (net 28.7%), while Independents are modestly against the measure (net -6.4%) and Republicans are substantially opposed (net -32.2%).

Democrats overwhelmingly support all three measures

Independents strongly support ending fossil fuel subsidies and phasing out new production

Strongly oppose Somewhat oppose Neutral Somewhat support Strongly support



Source: Nationally representative survey of 2,444 US adults conducted July 25 to August 2, 2024

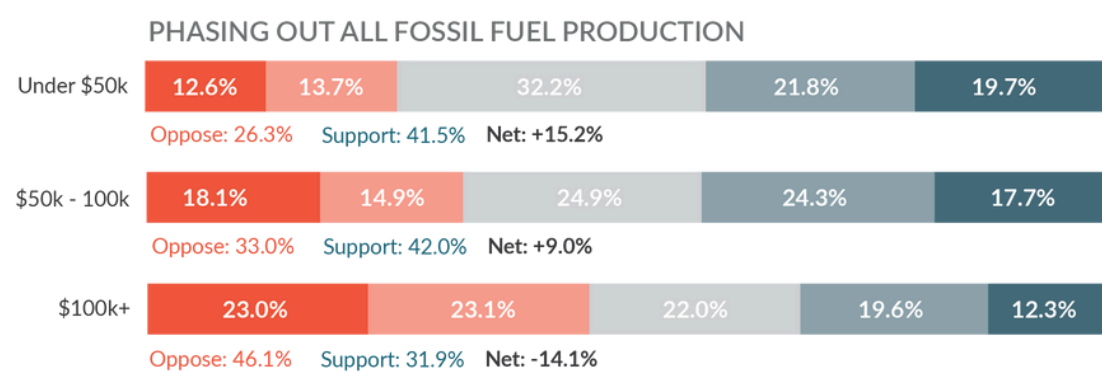
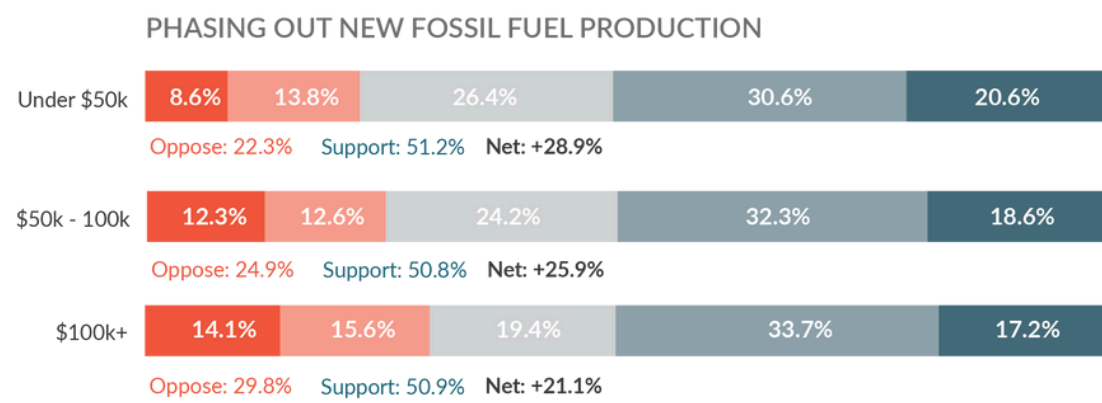
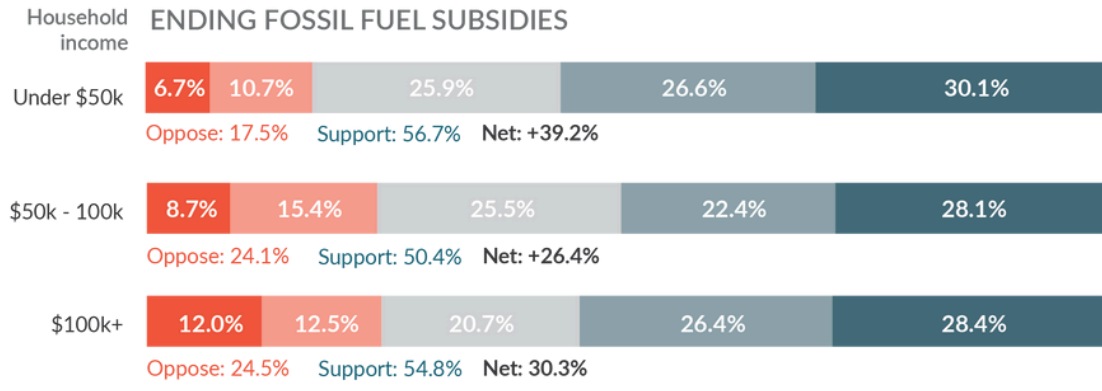
During the survey, respondents were also asked how worried they are about energy costs. 48% of respondents report being “very worried” about energy costs and 39% “somewhat worried”; only 13% of respondents reported being “not very worried” or “not at all worried.” Respondents noting that they are “very worried” about energy costs overwhelmingly support ending fossil fuel subsidies (net 27.9%) and phasing out new fossil fuel production (net 22.6%), while they are evenly split on phasing out all fossil fuel production (net 0.02%). This aligns with long standing research showing that the vast majority of subsidies to fossil fuel production serve to boost corporate profits rather than reduce costs for consumers.

We find widespread support for ending fossil fuel subsidies and phasing out new fossil fuel production across the income spectrum. Respondents with household incomes below \$50,000 are the most supportive of actions to curtail extraction across the policies we tested. This is particularly true for phasing out all fossil fuel production, which is supported by those making below \$50,000 annually (net 15.2%), and those making \$50,000-\$100,000 (net 9.0%), but does not have support amongst those with incomes over \$100,000 (net -14.1%).

There is widespread support for ending fossil fuel subsidies and phasing out new production across the income spectrum

Those with household incomes over \$100k/year are less likely to support phasing out all production.

Strongly oppose Somewhat oppose Neutral Somewhat support Strongly support



Source: Nationally representative survey of 2,444 US adults conducted July 25 to August 2, 2024

Overall, the polling demonstrates *widespread support* for policies to curtail the extraction of fossil fuels. Respondents are particularly supportive of phasing out new fossil fuel production and ending production subsidies. If this were to be done, it would prevent future lock-in of fossil fuel infrastructure, infrastructure which often remains in use for many decades once built. Reducing lock-in is crucial, as infrastructure is significantly more challenging to shut down for both political and economic reasons once it is already built. Interestingly, our findings demonstrate that there is significant support for these policy measures across income groups, and that Republicans have only weak opposition to ending subsidies and phasing out new production.

While the Federal Government is likely to work towards a continued expansion of fossil fuel production under Donald Trump, many local and state governments will consider moratoriums on new extraction and phase out plans of existing fossil fuel production. **These findings indicate that policymakers should confidently cease expansion of fossil fuel exploration and extraction while pursuing strategies to curtail existing extraction, especially at the state and local level.**

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