Welcome and Introduction

Richard G. Newell, RFF President and CEO

• The **third installment in a six-part series**, *Climate Insights 2020: Policies and Politics* explores in depth how Americans think about climate change and the policies they’d like to see to address it.

• The report gives policymakers and the public a ‘pulse check’ on **American public opinion amid historic upheaval** as numerous issues, from racial injustice to mass unemployment, compete for national attention.
Welcome and Introduction

Richard G. Newell, RFF President and CEO

- This new survey provides a snapshot of American opinion on the policies and politics of climate change mitigation as the nation’s public health, economy, and social identity are put to the test.

- Survey polled a representative national sample of 999 American adults from May 28 through August 16, 2020
Republicans Claim Addressing Climate Change Is Too Expensive. Americans Aren't Buying It, a New Poll Shows

The number of Americans who say climate change is rising sharply, and the issue appears likely to play a more important role in this year's election than ever before, a new survey shows.

Climate Is Taking On a Growing Role for Voters, Research Suggests

Concern about global warming is steady despite other crises, a survey found, and the number of voters who are deeply engaged on the issue is rising sharply.
Report Briefing

Jon Krosnick
Stanford University Professor and RFF University Fellow
• The latest installment of this report surveys American opinion before they head to the polls on key issues related to the policies—and politics—of climate change mitigation.

• The 2020 survey asked Americans about their opinions on a wide array of such policies, which allows us to not only assess current attitudes, but also to track changes in those attitudes over the past two decades through comparisons with responses to comparable questions asked in earlier national surveys.
2020 Delivered the Perfect “Natural Experiment”
As Americans prepare to head to the polls:

What government policies most resonate with American citizens?

How have attitudes on mitigation strategies changed over time?

Are American beliefs driven by community or personal interests?

What candidate stances—“green” or “non-green”—are Americans more likely to vote for in 2020?
Fundamentals
Percent of Americans Who Believed That Global Warming Has Probably Been Happening

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Of the Americans Who Believed That the Earth’s Temperature **Has** Been Going Up, the Percent Who Were Extremely or Very Sure

![Bar chart showing the percentage of Americans who believed the Earth's temperature has been going up, with data from October 1997 to August 2020.](chart.png)
Of the Americans Who Believed That the Earth’s Temperature Has Not Been Going Up, the Percent Who Were Extremely or Very Sure
Percent of Americans Who Believed That Human Action Has Been at Least Partly Causing Global Warming
Threat
Percent of Americans Who Believed That Global Warming Will Be a Very or Somewhat Serious Problem For the Unite States

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believed That Global Warming Will Be a Very or Somewhat Serious Problem For the World

Mar-06: 85%
Nov-09: 76%
Jun-10: 81%
Nov-10: 78%
Jun-12: 81%
Dec-13: 83%
Jan-15: 83%
May-18: 81%
Aug-20: 82%
Percent of Americans Who Thought That Global Warming Would **Hurt** Future Generations At Least a Moderate Amount

- **Nov-09**: 76%
- **Jun-10**: 80%
- **Nov-10**: 76%
- **Dec-13**: 80%
- **Jan-15**: 74%
- **Aug-20**: 74%

*Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter*
Passion and Engagement
Percent of Americans Who Felt They Knew At Least a Moderate Amount About Global Warming

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Had Very or Extremely Strong Opinions on Global Warming

- Jun-10: 41%
- Nov-10: 44%
- Jun-12: 39%
- Dec-13: 46%
- Jan-15: 45%
- May-18: 54%
- Aug-20: 55%

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Thought Global Warming is Extremely Personally Important
Desired Levels of US Government Remedial Effort and Observed Levels
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government **Should Do At Least a Moderate Amount** to Deal with Global Warming
Percent of Americans Who Thought the US Government *Was Currently Doing* At Least a Moderate Amount to Deal with Global Warming
Percent of Americans Who Believe That The US Government **Should Do More** to Deal with Global Warming

![Chart showing percent of Americans who believe the US government should do more to deal with global warming over time.](chart-image)
Government Limit Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Businesses
Carbon Pricing
Percent of Americans Who Thought the Government Should Charge Companies a Tax For Every Ton of Greenhouse Gases They Put Out If the Government Redistributes the Tax Money Equally to All Americans Each Year, Increasing Each Following Year (2020)

- Should tax: 62%
- If each American got $200: 58%
- If each American got $600: 63%
- If each American got $800: 57%
Percent of Americans Who Favored a Cap-and-Dividend Policy

- Dec-13: 65%
- Jan-15: 62%
- Aug-20: 61%
Elite Cues: Attitudes Toward Federal Policies that President Trump Has Scaled Back
The Trump Administration Is Reversing 100 Environmental Rules. Here’s the Full List.

By NADIA POPOVICH LIVIA ALBRECHT KENDRA PIERRE-LOUIS UPDATED July 19, 2020

After three years in office, the Trump administration has dismantled most of the major climate and environmental policies the president promised to undo.

Calling the rules unnecessary and burdensome to the fossil fuel industry and other businesses, his administration has weakened Obama-era limits on planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and from cars and trucks, and rolled back many more rules governing clean air, water and toxic chemicals. Several major reversals have been finalized in recent months as the country has struggled to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

In all, a New York Times analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School and other sources, counts nearly 70 environmental rules and regulations officially reversed, revoked or otherwise rolled back under Mr. Trump. More than 30 additional rollbacks are still in progress.
Percent Of Americans Who Thought the Government Should Continue to Try to Lower its Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 25% from 2015 Levels by 2025 despite There Being No Penalty for Noncompliance (Paris Agreement)

- The U.S. should continue to try to do this: 81%
- The U.S. should continue to try to do this as per the agreement President Obama signed: 74%
- The U.S. should not withdraw from this agreement as President Trump did: 70%
- The U.S. should not withdraw from this agreement that President Obama signed as President Trump did: 72%
The government should require this rule issued by President Obama. President Trump should not have cancelled this rule.

Percent of Americans Who Thought the Government Should Require That by Ten Years from Now, American Power Plants Put Out 30% Less Greenhouse Gases Than They Did in 2005 (Clean Power Plan)
Percent of Americans Who Thought the Government Should Be Required to Put Out 40% Less Greenhouse Gases Than It Did in 2015 (Executive Order)

The government should be required to do this: 66%
The government should be required to do this as per the rule issued by President Obama: 67%
President Trump should not have cancelled this rule: 73%
President Trump should not have cancelled this rule issued by President Obama: 72%
Percent of Americans Who Thought the Government Should Require That All New Cars and Trucks Made in the US after 2025 Get at Least 55 Miles Per Gallon (*Increased CAFE Standards*)

- The government should require this: 64%
- The government should require new cars and trucks get at least 40 miles per gallon: 60%
- The government should require this as per the rule issued by President Obama: 60%
- The government should require new cars and trucks get at least 40 miles per gallon as per the rule issued by President Trump: 64%
- President Trump should not lower the requirement to at least 40 miles instead of President Obama’s at least 55 mile requirement: 60%
Percentage of Americans Who Support Various Policies Implemented by the Obama Administration That the Trump Administration Rolled Back or Was Working to Roll Back

- **81%** The Paris Agreement
- **77%** The Clean Power Plan
- **66%** An executive order to cut federal greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2025
- **64%** An increase to the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards
Other Specific Government Policies
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Should Give Companies Tax Breaks to Produce Electricity from Water, Wind, and Solar Power

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Should Either Require or Give Tax Breaks to Lower Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Power Plants

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Should Either Require or Give Tax Breaks to Construct More Energy Efficient ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Appliances</th>
<th>Buildings</th>
<th>Cars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar-06</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-07</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-09</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-10</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-12</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-12</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-13</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-15</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-18</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-20</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Consumer Disincentives
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Should Increase Taxes on Electricity to Cause People to Use Less

Mar-06 Apr-07 Nov-09 Jun-10 Nov-10 Mar-12 Jun-12 Jan-15 May-18 Aug-20

19% 20% 20% 22% 24% 18% 25% 25% 27% 28%
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Should Increase Taxes on Gasoline to Cause People to Use Less

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Economic Effects Of Mitigation Efforts
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Taking Action on Global Warming Will **Hurt** the US Economy

- Nov-09: 27%
- Jun-10: 20%
- Nov-10: 23%
- Dec-13: 30%
- Jun-14: 27%
- Jan-15: 30%
- May-18: 30%
- Aug-20: 29%
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Taking Action on Global Warming Will Help the US Economy

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believe the US Government Taking Action on Global Warming Will Affect...

Amount of **money** they have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Money</th>
<th>Percent of Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More money</td>
<td>~20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less money</td>
<td>~70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same amount of money</td>
<td>~10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chances of having a **good-paying job**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chance to have a good-paying job</th>
<th>Percent of Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>~20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>~70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same chance</td>
<td>~10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the Government Taking Action On Global Warming Will **Increase the Number of Jobs** in the Country

![Bar Chart]

- Nov-09: 40%
- Jun-10: 50%
- Nov-10: 48%
- Aug-20: 40%

---

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the US Government Taking Action about Global Warming Will **Affect the Economy in Their State**

- **48%** (Nov-10) for Help economy
- **21%** (Nov-10) for Hurt economy
- **48%** (Aug-20) for Help economy
- **23%** (Aug-20) for Hurt economy
Percent of Americans Who Believed That the Government Taking Action On Global Warming Will Affect the **Number of Jobs in Their State**

- More Jobs (Nov-10): 45%
- Fewer Jobs (Nov-10): 19%
- More Jobs (Aug-20): 37%
- Fewer Jobs (Aug-20): 22%
2020 Federal Economic Stimulus Packages

- Creating new jobs and new technologies to reduce future global warming
- Planting large numbers of trees to absorb and store greenhouse gases
- Helping invent new ways of making electricity that put out less greenhouse gases

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
Percent of Americans Who Favored the Government Spending Money During the Economic Crisis on Helping Companies ...

- Make more cars and trucks that run on electricity: 45%
- Install charging equipment in parking lots for electric cars and trucks: 51%
- Strengthen oil and gas pipelines to reduce leaking and pollution: 54%
- Make smaller, longer-lasting batteries: 56%
- Devise more energy-efficient ways to produce electricity: 60%
Are the many policy preferences outlined in this report just talk, or do they inspire action?
Voting in the 2020 Election
Percent of Americans Who Were **More Likely** to Vote For a Candidate Who Expressed “Green” Views

- Jan-15: 66%
- Aug-20: 64%

*Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter*
Percent of Americans Who Were **Less Likely** to Vote For a Candidate Who Expressed “Not-Green” Views
Impact on Voting of Hearing a Candidate Make a “Green” or “Not Green” Statement, **By Party** (2020)

Percentage of Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Less likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
<td>“Not-green” statement</td>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Less likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
<td>“Not-green” statement</td>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>Less likely</strong></td>
<td><strong>More likely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
<td>“Not-green” statement</td>
<td>“Green” statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Climate Insights 2020: Climate Change and the American Voter
These results point out climate change mitigation policies that may be pursued in the future with widespread and bipartisan public support.
Panel Moderator

Justin Worland
TIME Magazine
Panel Discussion

Christina Chan  
World Resources Institute

Katharine Hayhoe  
Texas Tech University

Jon Krosnick  
Stanford University

Richard G. Newell  
Resources for the Future

Justin Worland  
TIME Magazine
Introducing the Panel

Christina Chan is the director for the Climate Resilience Practice at World Resources Institute. Prior to joining WRI, Christina was a Branch Chief at the US State Department’s climate change office, where she led US-government efforts on global adaptation policy.

Katharine Hayhoe is a climate scientist and endowed professor of public policy and law at Texas Tech University who can often be found talking to people about why climate change matters and what we can do to fix it.

Jon Krosnick is a social psychologist, RFF University Fellow, Frederic O. Glover Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Communication, Political Science, and Psychology at Stanford University, where he directs the Political Psychology Research Group.

Richard G. Newell is the president and CEO of Resources for the Future. From 2009 to 2011, he served as the administrator of the US Energy Information Administration. Richard is also an adjunct professor at Duke University.
Thank you.

- Follow the *Climate Insights* report release series: [https://www.rff.org/climateinsights/](https://www.rff.org/climateinsights/)
- Find out more about RFF online: [www.rff.org](http://www.rff.org)
- Follow us on Twitter: [@rff](https://twitter.com/rff)
- Subscribe to receive updates: [rff.org/subscribe](http://rff.org/subscribe)