

# Voter views on water + climate resilience



## Water is a bipartisan political winner

- Reliable water service polls as [the top issue for voters](#), above the economy, education, and climate action.
  - Drinking water safety and reliability tends to poll higher than drought, flooding, or river health and be less polarized. When asked about issues for the federal government to tackle this year<sup>1</sup>:
    - 88% of voters say “ensuring reliable water service” is extremely or very important (96% of Democrats, 80% of Republicans.)
    - 82% say “addressing drinking water contamination” is extremely or very important (91% Democrats, 74% of Republicans.)
    - 74% say “reducing pollution in rivers, lakes and oceans” is extremely or very important (91% of Democrats, 60% of Republicans.)
    - 54% say “addressing drought” is extremely or very important (75% of Democrats and 32% of Republicans.)
    - 44% say “protecting against sea level rise” is extremely or very important (68% of Democrats and 21% of Republicans.)
    - 53% say “addressing climate change” is extremely or very important (88% of Democrats and 19% of Republicans.)
- Similarly, drinking water and sewage [rank as voters’ top priority](#) for infrastructure spending, above roads, housing or energy.
- About [9 in 10 voters](#) agree safe, affordable water is a human right.

## Climate concerns are rising, but still polarized

- [72% of Americans](#) believe global warming is happening, and 58% understand that it is human-caused.
  - [Around 6 in 10](#) recognize that global warming is impacting drought, water shortages, flooding, snowpack, and water pollution.
- The partisan divide [is growing](#): 73% of Democrats consider climate change a major threat (up 20% from 2010) compared with 23% of Republicans (down 2% from 2010.)

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<sup>1</sup> These bullets are from the Value of Water’s [March 2024 poll](#). Walton Family Foundation’s [November 2023 poll](#) also found overwhelming voter support for protecting safe drinking water and healthy waterways.

- Extreme weather is slightly less politicized: 89% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans worry about it, versus 90% of Democrats and 49% of Republicans on climate.<sup>2</sup>
- On the upside, [61% of voters disagree](#) that it's already too late to do something about global warming.

## Voters ❤️ nature-based solutions

- Voters rank [flood](#) and [drought](#) preparedness well below other water priorities, but [strongly support](#) nature-based flood and drought solutions.
- While [energy interventions remain polarized](#), support for natural climate solutions is [remarkably bipartisan](#), especially when co-benefits are communicated. For example<sup>3</sup>:
  - 82% of voters support “planting trees in cities to provide shade, reduce heat and lower energy costs” (86% of Democrats and 79% of Republicans.)
  - 82% of voters support “protecting grasslands that support wildlife and improve water quality” (89% of Democrats and 78% of Republicans.)
  - 76% of voters support “incentivizing farmers to plant cover crops that reduce erosion and increase water efficiency” (82% of Democrats and 62% of Republicans.)

## How we can tap current concerns to push progress

- Continue working to elevate water in the climate conversation:
  - Leverage shared concern around safe drinking water and healthy waterways to build opposition to fossil fuel development.
  - Tap into strong support for natural infrastructure to advance climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Bridge the [gap between voters' attitudes and actions](#) by:
  - Leading with love: ultimately, voters' positions are informed by their values. Move people to action by connecting with their care for friends, family, and place.
  - Painting a picture of the future we want: safe water for all, communities that can weather storms and droughts, swimmable and fishable rivers, etc.
  - Connecting the dots: Frame threats and solutions in a way that speaks to home and heart, and reflect lived local experiences.
  - Instilling hope: Recognize incremental progress, and reinforce the idea that change is possible if we work together.
  - Normalizing civic engagement: Spotlight the people and groups already pushing for climate and water justice.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Walton Family Foundation's November 2023 poll.

<sup>3</sup> The Water Hub also asked questions about nature-based solutions for drought and flooding in our [Aug. 2023 poll](#).