

Energy in the West

Three-quarters of Western voters believe it is possible to both increase production of clean energy and preserve natural areas, wildlife habitat, and communities. There is majority support for only allowing drilling and mining in areas that are likely to yield gas and oil, and there is deep opposition to lifting existing natural land protections to allow drilling and mining. Voters also strongly support requiring oil and gas companies to pay for all the clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling.

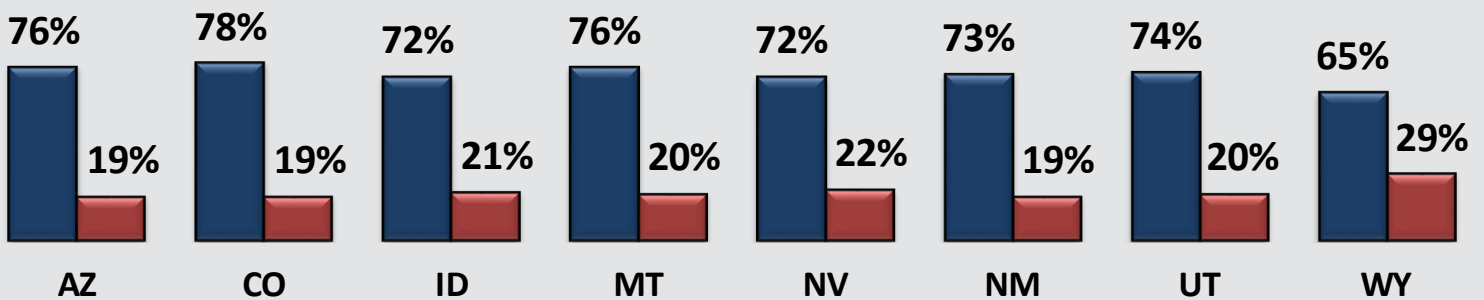
By more than a 3-to-1 margin, Western voters believe clean energy production and preserving natural areas can co-exist rather than having to prioritize one over the



other. Fully, three quarters (75 percent) of voters say, “we can both increase the production of clean energy while also preserving natural areas, wildlife habitat, and the character of our communities,” versus just 20 percent who say, “we need to choose between increasing the production of clean energy and preserving natural areas, wildlife habitat, and the character of our communities.” There is broad agreement across party on this point, with 70 percent of Republicans, 75 percent of Independents, and 81 percent of Democrats saying both can be achieved. Moreover, solid majorities across all types of communities believe both goals are possible,

including 77 percent in urban areas, 78 percent in the suburbs, 73 percent in small towns, and 67 percent in rural areas.

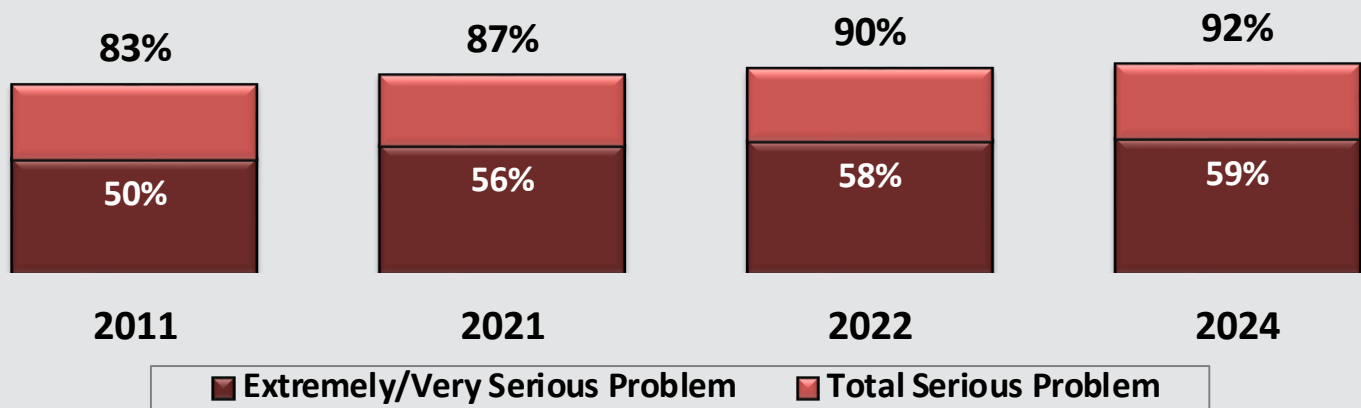
Clean Energy Production vs. Natural Area Preservation



■ Increase renewables while preserving ■ Choose between renewables or preservation

The view that clean energy can coexist peacefully with land, wildlife and communities is also notable given that concern about loss of family farms and ranches is at a 14-year high. Overall, 92 percent are concerned about the loss of family farms and ranches, with roughly six-in-ten (59 percent) saying it is an “extremely” or “very” serious concern – both numbers represent all-time highs since 2011 across voters in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. Interestingly, even among those who say loss of farmland is a serious problem, there is still solid majority (73 percent) belief that both clean energy production and preserving natural areas/community character can co-exist versus just 22 percent who believe we have to choose between those options.

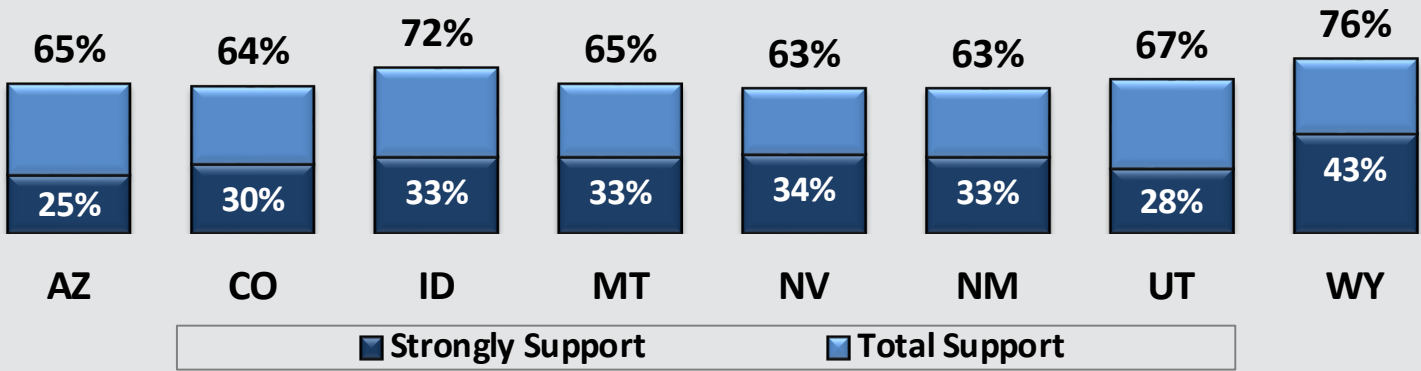
Loss of Family Farms & Ranches



Two-thirds of Westerners support only allowing oil and gas companies the right to drill in areas of public land where there is high likelihood to actually produce oil and gas. Indeed, 63 percent or more voters across every state support this proposal and the highest level of support comes from the energy-intensive state of Wyoming (76 percent support). Given that this involves any drilling on public lands, support is actually highest among Republicans (77 percent), and more modest with Independents (61 percent) and Democrats (56 percent) in the West.



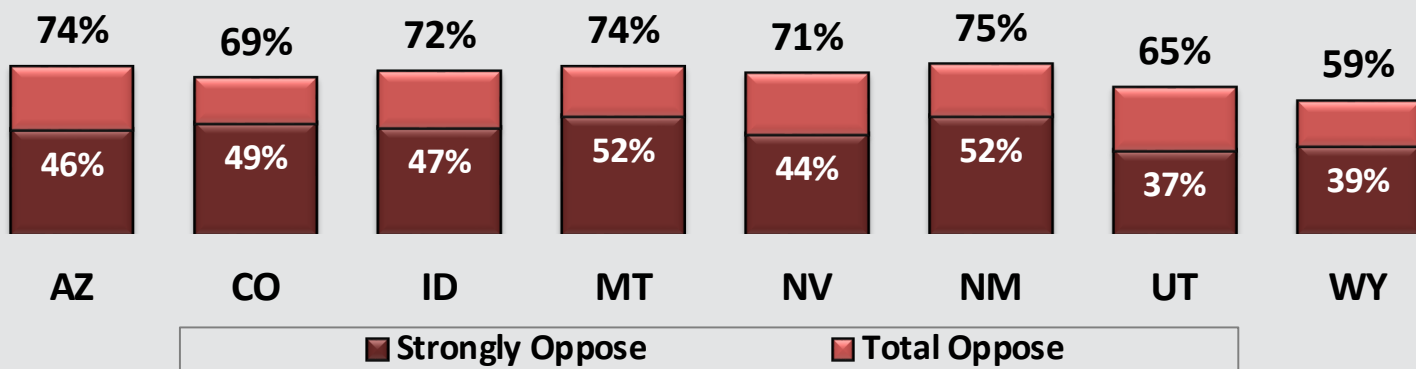
Allowing Oil & Gas Companies Right to Drill in Areas of High Likelihood to Produce Oil & Gas



Western voters offer almost unanimous agreement that oil and gas companies should be required to pay for all the clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling is finished. Support for this proposal is staggering (90 percent) and consistent with previous years (91 percent support in 2023 and 2022, and 93 percent in 2021). This year, 88 percent or more voters in each state support requiring companies pay for clean-up and restoration, with 65 percent or more saying they “strongly” support the clean-up requirements. Overwhelming support for this proposal transcends gender, age, party lines, community type, and ethnic background.

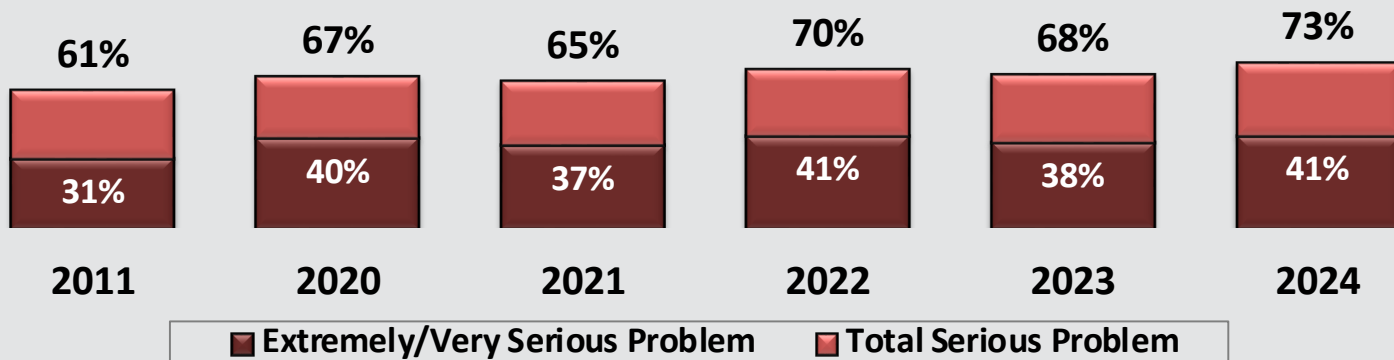
Western voters are solidly opposed to the idea of lifting public land protections in favor of more energy development. More than seven in ten (71 percent) voters oppose a proposal that would remove “protections on some areas of existing national public lands, particularly national monuments, to allow for more drilling, mining, and other development.” Rejection is both deep and broad, with majorities across every major sub-group (i.e., gender, age, party, education, race, and ethnicity) expressing opposition, and almost half (46 percent) of voters saying they “strongly” oppose the proposal. Just over one-quarter (27 percent) express support for the proposal.

Removing Protections to Allow More Drilling, Mining & Other Development



Concern about the impact of oil and gas drilling being a serious problem is at an all-time high this year. Among the five states asked this question since 2011 (Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming), almost three-quarters (73 percent) say “the impact of oil and gas drilling on our land, air, and water” is a serious problem. This concern is up markedly compared to prior years.

Impact of Oil & Gas Drilling



Concern about air pollution and smog also reached a high point this year. For the first time since 2011, a majority (55 percent) of Western voters across Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming say air pollution and smog is an “extremely” or “very” serious concern. More than eight-in-ten Westerners (82 percent) say the pollution and smog are at least a somewhat serious concern, with broad agreement across all sub-groups. Women of color (66 percent characterize it as extremely or very serious problem), suburban women (64 percent) and Gen Z voters (64 percent) are some of the most likely to say this issue is a very serious problem.



Air Pollution & Smog

