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Industrial Pollution: Attitudes

Voters widely support programs to reduce pollution from concrete and steel production, including investments in carbon capture and storage.

- Roughly seven in ten voters (71%) support the federal government investing in programs to reduce pollution in concrete and steel manufacturing processes after reading that, "given the amount of energy that is necessary for concrete and steel production, it is difficult to reduce pollution from these manufacturing processes."
[Data for Progress, Feb. 2022]
 - These programs earn overwhelming support from Democrats (89%) and independents (71%), as well as a narrow majority of Republicans (52%).

- Seven in ten voters (70%) also support “investments in new clean energy technologies to safely capture and store pollution from industrial activities such as steel and cement production” as part of the Inflation Reduction Act. [[Climate Power + Data for Progress](#), Nov. 2022]
 - Large majorities of Democrats (86%) and independents (70%) support these investments, as do most Republicans (54%).

Voters support stronger limits on industrial pollution in communities that have been disproportionately impacted.

- Roughly three-quarters of voters (77%) support “strengthening enforcement of industrial pollution limits in low-income communities and communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by air and water pollution.” [[Yale + GMU](#), May 2023]
 - Overwhelming majorities of Democrats (92%) and independents (83%) support stronger industrial pollution limits in these communities, as do the majority of Republicans (54%).

Industrial waste and plastics are the most concerning sources of water pollution for voters. There are also broad concerns about PFAS contamination, though the public is relatively less familiar with PFAS than with other water contaminants.

- The majority of voters say that they are “very” concerned about industrial waste, including heavy metals and toxic chemicals (63%), as a possible source of water pollution in their state. Most are also “very” concerned about plastic bags, bottles, and microplastics (59%) polluting their state’s water. [[Water Hub at Climate Nexus](#), June 2022]
 - These sources of pollution rank ahead of agricultural runoff (56%), oil and gas leaks and fracking chemicals (54%), sewage backups and overflows (52%), and urban and suburban runoff (48%) as potential sources of water pollution.
- Most voters (71%) are at least somewhat concerned about PFAS after learning that they are contaminants that are “sometimes found in water from the faucet,” including 45% who are “very” concerned about PFAS contamination. [[Water Hub at Climate Nexus](#), June 2022]
 - Voters are more likely to acknowledge that they aren’t sure how concerned they are about PFAS (18%) compared to other water contaminants that were included in the poll, such as nitrates (10%), arsenic (6%), and lead (4%)

Plastic Pollution: Attitudes

Voters have widespread, bipartisan concerns about plastic pollution.

- More than three-quarters of voters (78%) are at least “somewhat” concerned about plastic pollution and its impact on the environment and oceans. [[Data for Progress](#), Feb. 2023]
 - Large majorities of Democrats (87%), independents (81%), and Republicans (68%) all say that they are at least “somewhat” concerned about the problem, though Democrats (47%) are much more likely than Republicans (27%) to say that they are *very* concerned about plastic pollution.

Americans are particularly concerned about the impacts of plastic pollution on marine life, water quality, and human health.

- More than four in five Americans (86%) say that they’re concerned about the impacts of plastic waste on marine life. Additionally, roughly three-quarters say that they are concerned about the impacts of plastic waste on water quality (76%) and human health (74%). [[World Wildlife Fund](#), May 2022]
 - Concerns about the impacts of plastic waste on climate change (64%) and air quality (59%) rank relatively lower, but are still shared by most Americans.
- More Americans say that they are “extremely” or “very” worried about plastic pollution (70%) than about any other threat to the ocean and coastal communities, such as habitat loss, water quality, and overfishing. [[National Marine Sanctuary Foundation + NORC](#), Aug. 2022]
- More Americans believe that plastic pollution is having a negative impact on ocean life and habitats (78%) than any other activity or type of pollution, such as water pollution, coastal development, and oil and gas extraction. [[National Marine Sanctuary Foundation + NORC](#), Aug. 2022]

Voters are widely skeptical of the plastics industry and have little faith that industry and manufacturers will reduce plastic pollution if not required by the government.

- Voters are 20 points more likely to say that they feel unfavorably toward the plastics industry than to say that they feel favorably about it (28% favorable / 48% unfavorable). [[Data for Progress](#), Feb. 2023]
- Only around one-third of voters (36%) say that they have at least “some” trust in major industries and manufacturers to address plastic pollution without the government’s enforcement, while most (60%) say that they trust major industries and manufacturers “only a little” or “not at all” to address the problem on their OWN. [[Data for Progress](#), Feb. 2023]

Voters back several proposals to reduce plastic waste, including cutting back plastic consumption and production and shifting away from single-use plastics.

- Voters support each of the proposals below by wide margins based on brief descriptions of them. [[Data for Progress](#), Feb. 2023]
 - 82% support federal legislation to reduce plastic pollution with the goals of cutting back plastic consumption and production to sustainable levels; creating standards for plastic durability, recyclability, and safety; and establishing processes for environmentally sound management and recycling of plastic waste
 - 78% support a reuse program in their community that would allow people to purchase items in reusable containers and drop off the containers to be collected, sanitized, and returned to partnering organizations to be used again
 - 69% support a ban on single-use plastics in their community after learning that single-use plastics like beverage bottles, grocery bags, and takeout food containers are typically used only once or a few times and generally aren't included in regular community recycling programs
 - 62% support a “Skip-the-Stuff Bill” that would prohibit takeout and delivery restaurants from providing single-use plastic utensils, condiments, or napkins unless these items are requested by the customer

Messaging

Several proof points about plastic pollution are effective at illustrating the seriousness of the problem to the public, including statements about the amount of plastic waste and about plastic's contribution to climate change.

- Around half of Americans report being “very concerned” about plastic pollution in response to each of the statements below. [[Oceana](#), Dec. 2022]
 - Roughly 33 billion pounds of plastic enter the ocean every year — the equivalent of dumping two garbage trucks full of plastic into the oceans every minute (51% very concerned)
 - Plastic has now been found everywhere, including the deepest part of the ocean, the air in remote mountains, the rain in our national parks, and even our own bodies (49% very concerned)
 - Tiny plastic particles known as microplastics have been found in honey, beer, salt, tea bags, fruit, vegetables, seafood, meat, and many foods packaged in plastic. (49% very concerned)
 - An estimated 900 ocean species, many of which are endangered, are affected by plastic pollution. Sea turtles, dolphins, whales, and other

ocean animals are consuming and becoming entangled in plastic, which can be deadly. (48% very concerned)

- o Even though many people are putting plastic in recycling bins, less than 6% of the plastic waste in the United States is recycled. The rest is sent to landfills, exported, incinerated, or discarded into the environment. (45% very concerned)
- o Plastic is a significant contributor to climate change. In fact, if plastic were a country, it would be the fifth largest emitter of greenhouse gases. (45% very concerned)

In messaging about “chemical recycling,” Americans are most concerned about toxic pollution and health impacts.

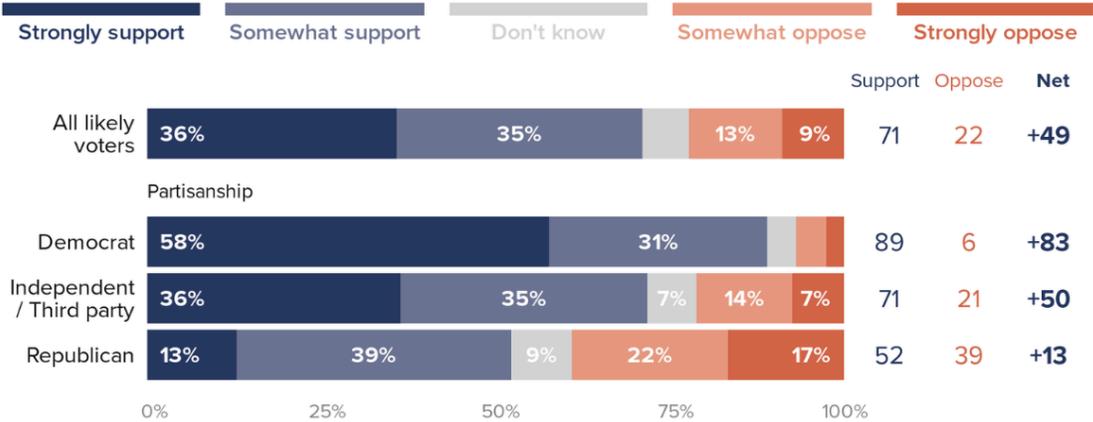
- Health-focused messaging stands out above the other statements below about the harms of “chemical recycling” to turn plastic waste into fuel or new plastic. [\[Oceana, Dec. 2022\]](#)
 - o Pollution generated by chemical recycling facilities includes toxic chemicals that can cause cancer and lead to other serious health problems. (44% very concerned)
 - o Chemical recycling facilities disproportionately impact close-by neighborhoods. (38% very concerned)
 - o Chemical recycling often requires more energy and emits more pollution than conventional recycling. (37% very concerned)
 - o Chemical recycling increases plastic pollution’s contribution to climate change. (37% very concerned)

Charts

Voters Support Federal Investments to Reduce Pollution from Industrial Manufacturing Processes

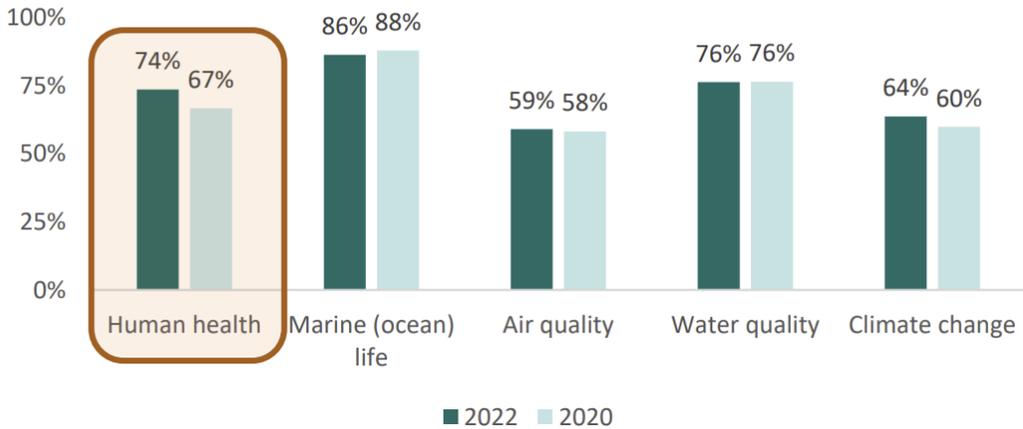
Given the amount of energy that is necessary for concrete and steel production, it is difficult to reduce pollution from these manufacturing processes.

Would you support or oppose the federal government investing in programs to reduce pollution in these manufacturing processes?

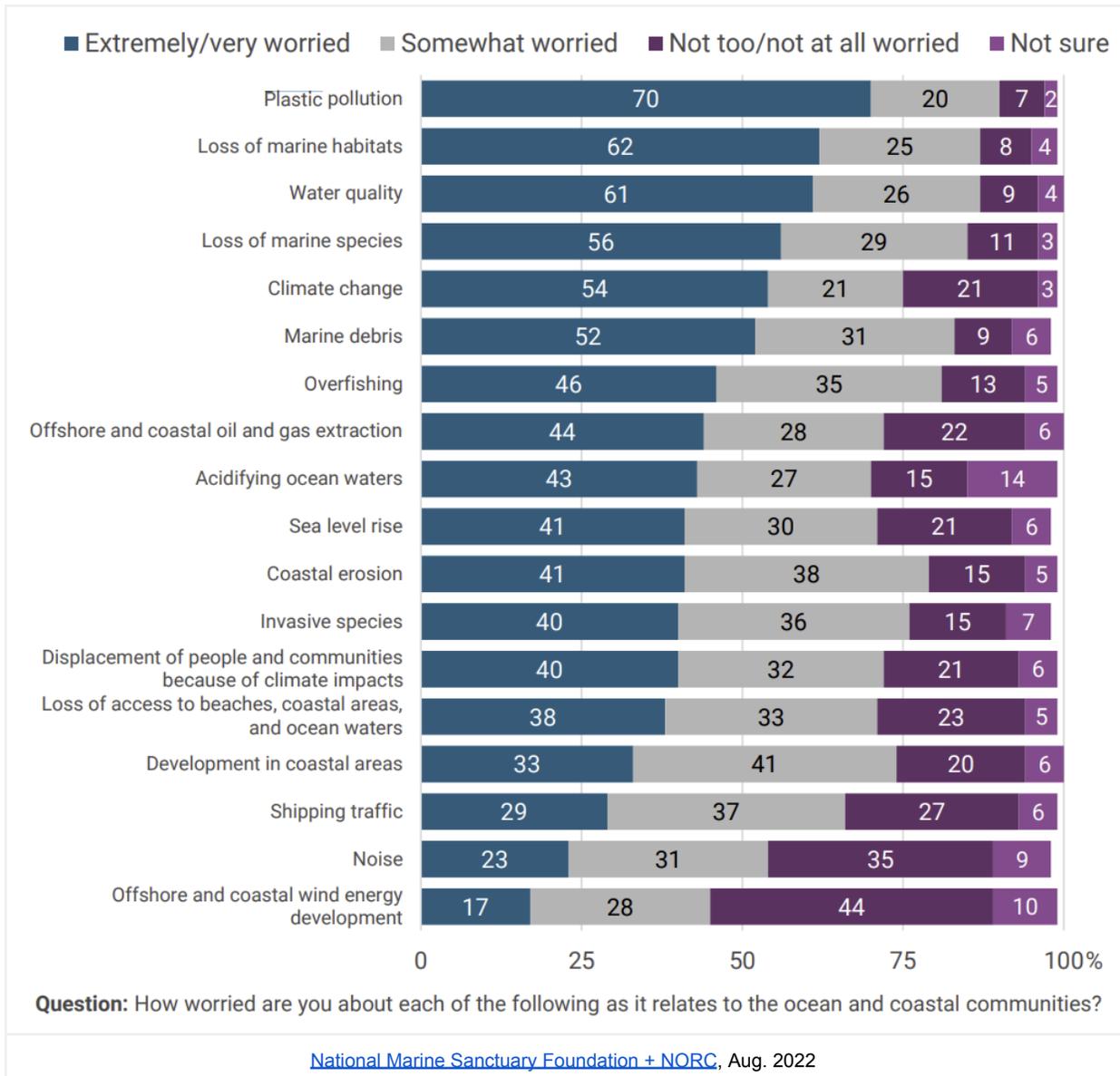


[Data for Progress](#), Feb. 2022

Percentage of Respondents Concerned about Negative Impacts of Plastics



[World Wildlife Fund](#), May 2022



Additional Resources

[Oceana National Chemical Recycling Survey \(Oceana, Nov. 2023\)](#)

[Voters Express Concern About Plastic Pollution, Strongly Support Mitigation Proposals \(Data for Progress, Mar. 2023\)](#)

[Oceana National Plastic Pollution Survey \(Oceana, Feb. 2023\)](#)

[National Voter Poll on Water \(Water Hub at Climate Nexus, June 2022\)](#)

[Public Opinion Surrounding Plastic Consumption and Waste Management of Consumer Packaging \(World Wildlife Fund, May 2022\)](#)

[Ocean Protection in the United States: Exploring the Public's Thoughts \(National Marine Sanctuary Foundation + NORC, Aug. 2022\)](#)

[Voters Support Federal Investments to Reduce Pollution From the Manufacturing Sector \(Data for Progress, Feb. 2022\)](#)