

# MICHIGAN VOTERS SUPPORT CLIMATE ACTION



Ahead of the Democrats’ second presidential primary debate in Detroit, a new survey finds Michigan voters have deep concerns about the impacts of climate change and the quality of their state’s environment and infrastructure. Democratic voters in Michigan say climate change is one of the most important issues they’ll consider when deciding whom to support for president in 2020 – more than any other issue except health care. Voters in the state strongly support federal and state policies to expand renewable energy sources, including policies that would encourage people to buy and drive electric vehicles. To assess Michiganders’ attitudes towards various climate policies, as well as their experiences with impacts of climate change, Climate Nexus, in partnership with the Yale University Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, conducted a representative survey of 820 registered voters in Michigan from July 14-17, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.4% at the 95% percent confidence level.

## MICHIGAN VOTERS WORRY ABOUT CLIMATE IMPACTS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND WATER

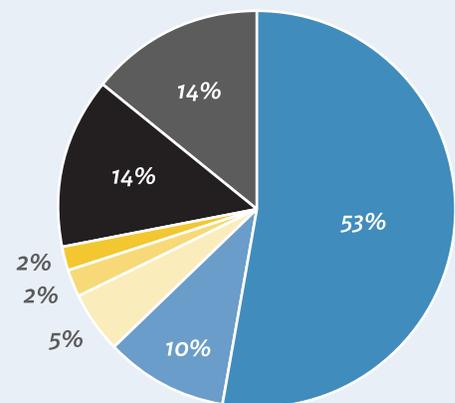
Michigan voters are very concerned about climate change broadly and its impacts closer to home. Almost two-thirds of Michigan voters say they are very worried (32%) or somewhat worried (33%) about climate change. Sixty-five percent of Michigan voters say water-level rise in the Great Lakes is a very or somewhat serious problem facing the state and 62% say the same of extreme weather.

Further, Michiganders say the impacts of climate change show up in various ways. Almost seven in 10 (69%) voters see climate change having a large or some effect on agriculture, while 63% say the same about extreme weather in the state. Majorities also say climate change has affected recreation (57%), the Michigan economy (53%), and Michiganders’ health (52%).



**When extreme weather events (such as hurricanes, floods, or heat waves) occur, when do you think is the proper time for the news media to talk about how climate change impacts these events?**

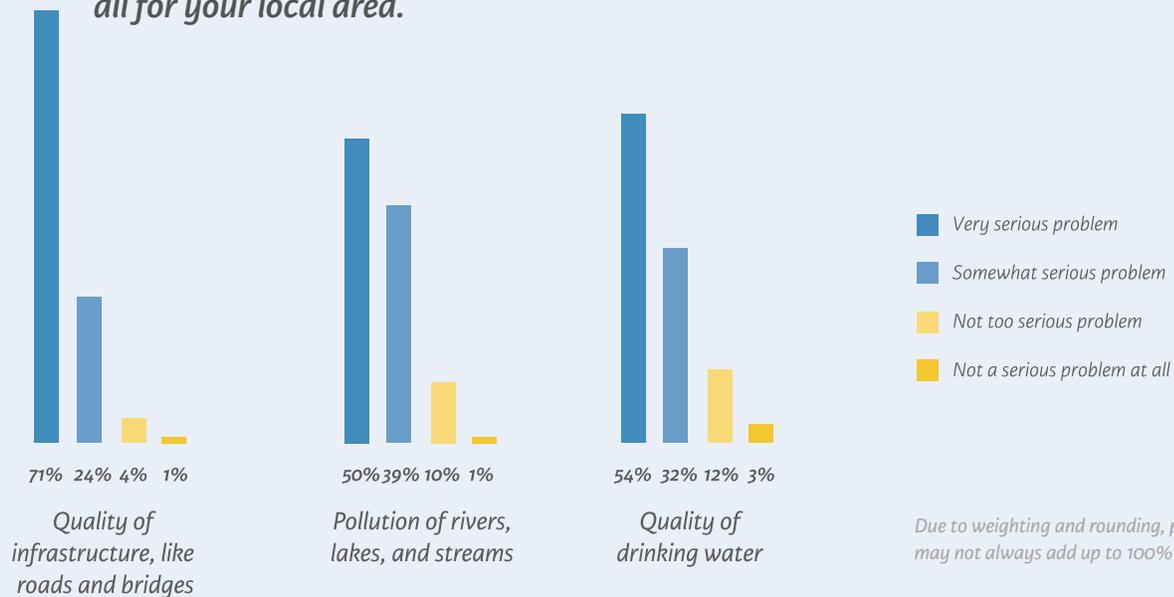
- Talk about climate change as the event is occurring
- Wait about a day or two after the event
- Wait about a week after the event
- Wait about a month after the event
- Wait longer than a month after the event
- Never talk about climate change and its role in weather-related disasters and extreme weather events
- Not sure



Due to weighting and rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%



**Q:** Below are some specific issues facing Michigan. For each, please indicate whether you think it's a very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a serious problem at all for your local area.



Michigan voters prefer that the news media not wait to report on how climate change impacts extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, or heat waves. A majority (53%) of Michigan voters say the news media should discuss how climate change affects extreme weather as the weather event is occurring. Just 10% say the media should wait even a day or two after the weather event ends, while 5% say the media should wait at least a week and 4% prefer the media wait a month or longer.

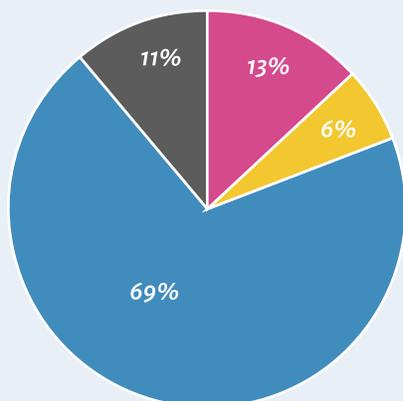
Michigan voters express significant concern about the safety and quality of their state's infrastructure and the environment. Nearly all voters – 95% – say the infrastructure in their local area poses a very serious (71%) or somewhat serious (24%) problem, while just 1% say the state of Michigan's infrastructure is not a serious problem at all. The condition of natural and structural waterways is also of deep concern to Michiganders: 89% say pollution in lakes, streams, and rivers is a serious problem where they live, while 86% say the same about the quality of drinking water in their area. More than two-thirds (68%) say they are very worried (29%) or somewhat worried (39%) about contamination in their own drinking water by lead, waste, or sewage.

## MICHIGAN VOTERS WANT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION, SUPPORT ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Michigan voters support government action to address climate change, including state efforts to develop renewable energy, such as offshore wind, and to promote electric vehicles. More than six in 10 (62%) support government action to address climate change, including more than one-third (36%) who strongly support government action.

When it comes to specific policies, large majorities of Michigan voters support a variety of climate solutions. More than eight in 10 (81%) support setting stronger pollution standards for business and industry and roughly two-thirds (68%) of Michigan voters support requiring new infrastructure projects in Michigan to be built to withstand extreme weather, even if it costs taxpayers more. Two-thirds (67%) favor increasing state funding for large-scale solar power farms and more than six in 10 (63%) support developing offshore wind farms in the Great Lakes.

**Q:** *Right now, which of the following do you think should be the most important priority for addressing Michigan's energy needs?*



- Developing more renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar
- Building more natural gas power plants
- Building more nuclear power plants
- Not sure

*Due to weighting and rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%*

Michigan voters support expanding access to electric vehicles (EVs) in the state. Roughly seven in 10 support installing EV charging stations at state parks and local park and ride lots (71%) and offering small businesses and apartment buildings tax incentives to install EV charging stations (67%). And Michigan voters favor expanding the tax credit for those who purchase EVs — close to two-thirds (66%) agree the federal tax credit for EVs should extend beyond each manufacturer's first 200,000 vehicles.

Voters in Michigan say government action on climate change will improve the economy, including employment and wages, bring electricity costs down, and improve the environment and health of Michiganders. More than two-thirds (68%) support a statewide standard requiring 100% of energy generated in the state to come from renewable sources by 2050. Further, voters agree developing renewables in the state will help reduce pollution (82%) and improve health and save lives

(78%). Majorities of Michigan voters expect a 100% renewable energy policy would have a positive impact on the state's environment (80%) and its economy (63%), and would drive down electricity costs (62%) and improve the state's farms and rural areas (59%). Pluralities of Michigan voters also see such a policy as likely to bring down the state's unemployment rate (45%) and improve wages (45%).

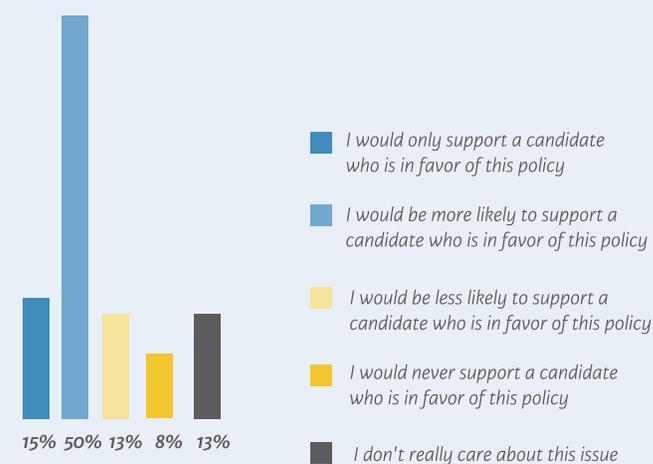
In building new energy infrastructure, Michigan voters say the state should prioritize renewables and that the state's energy needs can be met without adding additional fossil fuel generation. More than two-thirds (69%) think developing more renewable energy sources should be the most important priority to address the state's energy needs, significantly more than those who say building more natural gas power plants (13%) or nuclear power plants (6%) should be the top priority. Furthermore, nearly six in 10 (59%) Michigan voters agree that today, the state has the technology available to meet increasing energy demands without adding more fossil fuel infrastructure such as oil and gas pipelines. Close to half (46%) of voters in the state oppose building new oil and gas pipelines in the Great Lakes.

Michigan voters recognize the automotive industry is very important to the state's economy. Nearly all Michigan voters say the automotive manufacturing industry is very (69%) or somewhat (28%) important to Michigan's economy. More than nine in 10 (92%) say trade agreements with other countries are important to Michigan's economy, and nearly eight in 10 (79%) say the same about labor unions.

## MICHIGAN VOTERS SAY CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS FOR 2020

Climate change ranks as a top-tier issue for Michigan Democrats when looking toward their presidential vote. When asked to identify the two most important issues to their vote for president in 2020, Democrats in the state identify health care (43%), and climate change (26%), and Trump's record as president (21%). Fifteen percent of voters overall in the state say climate change is one of

**Q:** Please indicate how likely you would be to support a candidate for political office who is in favor of requiring electric utility companies in the United States to generate 100% of their electricity from renewable sources, like wind and solar, by the year 2050. If you don't care about this policy, just say so.



Due to weighting and rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%

the two most important issues to their vote for president in 2020.

Michigan voters say they'd be more likely to support candidates for political office who support a broad array of climate policies, including increasing government funding for renewable energy and setting a national renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS) of 100% by 2050. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Michigan voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate for office who favors increasing government funding for renewable energy, including wind and solar, and more than two-thirds (68%) say the same about setting stronger fuel efficiency standards. More than six in 10 say they would be more likely to support a candidate who supports establishing an RPS of 100% by 2050 (65%), implementing a carbon tax (63%), or giving tax cuts to energy companies to build offshore wind turbines in the Great Lakes (61%).

Among those who watched the first Democratic presidential primary debates in June, more than one in five (22%) think Kamala Harris did the best job in the debates, though Elizabeth Warren (17%), Bernie Sanders (16%), and Joe Biden (16%) also received high marks from those who watched the debates.

Going into the second Democratic presidential primary debates, Joe Biden leads the field among Michigan voters who plan to vote in the Democratic primary, with more than one-third (35%) selecting him as their top choice. Sixteen percent pick Bernie Sanders as their top choice, and 14% pick Elizabeth Warren, followed by Kamala Harris (8%), Pete Buttigieg (4%), and Cory Booker (2%), with none of the remaining Democratic candidates receiving more than 1%. Notably, 13% say they prefer another candidate or are unsure who they would like to see as the Democratic presidential nominee.

When asked who they would vote for if the election for president were held today, Michigan voters prefer all of the top Democratic contenders to President Trump, with Joe Biden (49% vs. 36%), Bernie Sanders (48% vs. 37%), and Elizabeth Warren (44% vs. 38%) leading Trump. There is a smaller margin for Kamala Harris (41% vs. 38%), Pete Buttigieg (40% vs. 37%), and Cory Booker (39% vs. 37%) in head-to-head matchups against President Trump.