

Trump is pushing hard to rollback Obama's climate change regulations, expand the use of fossil fuels, and discourage renewables. Where does the public stand on all this? The answer is that the public is mostly on the other side, but more needs to be done to heighten public awareness.

A recent [survey](#) conducted jointly by Politico and Harvard had some intriguing findings. Sixty percent of Americans favored staying in the Paris Agreement after it was explained to them. Not surprisingly, a clear majority of Republicans disagreed – but somewhat more surprisingly, 39% percent of Republicans favored staying in the agreement, far more than I would have guessed. Moreover, except for Republicans, Americans don't seem to be buying the idea that environmental regulations destroy jobs, and even a third of Republicans reject the idea.

According to the survey: "A majority (51%) instead think that government regulation to address climate change makes no difference to U.S. jobs, while roughly equal parts think it creates (21%) or costs (20%) U.S. jobs. Democrats are more likely to say it creates jobs (31%), while Republicans say it costs jobs (31%)." About the same share of Republicans endorse Trump's proposed budget cuts at EPA, while 81% of Democrats and 60% of Independents reject the cuts.

I wondered how this survey compared with other polls. An April Gallup poll showed a similar pro-environmental lean. Seventy percent or more favored a greater emphasis on solar and wind power. Gallup also reported that "nearly three-quarters of Americans (71%) said they favored protecting the environment over a focus on increased production of coal, oil and natural gas." In a March [poll](#), Gallup found that "[s]ixty-four percent of U.S. adults say they are worried a 'great deal' or 'fair amount' about global warming. In terms of the Paris Agreement specifically, a [Yale survey](#) found even higher even higher levels of support among Republicans as well as among the general public, so the Politico/Harvard survey doesn't seem to be a fluke in this respect.

A May poll by [Pew](#) confirmed that Americans strongly favor renewable energy: "83% of Americans say increasing use of renewable energy sources is a top or important priority for the country's energy policies." But there was a much closer divide about whether the Trump Administration is doing enough to protect the environment, with about half saying yes and half saying no. This reflects a predictable partisan split on the issue.

The [Washington Post](#) reported Monday on a 2016 poll by [the](#) Cooperative Congressional Election Study, which has a huge sample (forty to fifty thousand). The Post did a statistical analysis and found that "large majorities in the country, the Midwest states, and

formerly industrial cities such as Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Detroit” favored the EPA regulating carbon emissions.” Indeed, the same was true in other states that Trump favored, such as Wisconsin and Iowa. The only state where a majority went the other way was Wyoming, a big coal producer, and margins were tight in other fossil fuel producing states such as Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia.

The [Post](#) also reported on Monday that Trump’s decision to leave the Paris Agreement is broadly unpopular, with even a third of Republicans disapproving:

*Opposition to Trump’s decision outpaces support for it by a roughly 2 to 1 margin, with 59 percent opposing the move and 28 percent in support. The reactions also break down sharply among partisan lines, though Republicans are not as united in support of the withdrawal as Democrats are in opposition of it. A 67 percent majority of Republicans support Trump’s action, but that drops to 22 percent among political independents and 8 percent of Democrats. Just over 6 in 10 independents and 8 in 10 Democrats oppose Trump’s action.*

These polls asked different questions, making a direct comparison of the results difficult. They indicate that Trump’s attacks on climate regulations and the Paris Agreement lack broad public support and face dissension even within his party. There is also continuing strong public support for renewable energy, and that’s an issue Democrats should stress strongly. Finally, the public doesn’t yet understand how far Trump wants to go in eliminating protections for clean air, clean water, and wilderness. That’s an area where more public education is needed.

Environment is typically not a high priority issue for voters. The big question is whether actions like disavowing the Paris Agreement will increase the salience of environmental issues for voters. Environmentalists should hope that Trump will do a lot of tweets on the subject, so as to raise public awareness of the threat he poses to the environment.