



Where Strategy Meets Science

To: Manufacturers' Accountability Project
From: Brenda Gianiny
President, Axis Research
Date: January 13, 2021
RE: Recent Nationwide Public Opinion Poll on Climate Change Litigation

Objectives

On behalf of the Manufacturers' Accountability Project, an initiative of the NAM, Axis Research conducted a nationwide poll of 1,003 voters to better understand voters' prioritization of lawsuits directed at manufacturers to pay for damage caused by climate change. The poll also explored reactions and agreement with common statements made by both sides on this issue to learn the intensity of opinion among the electorate.

Poll Findings

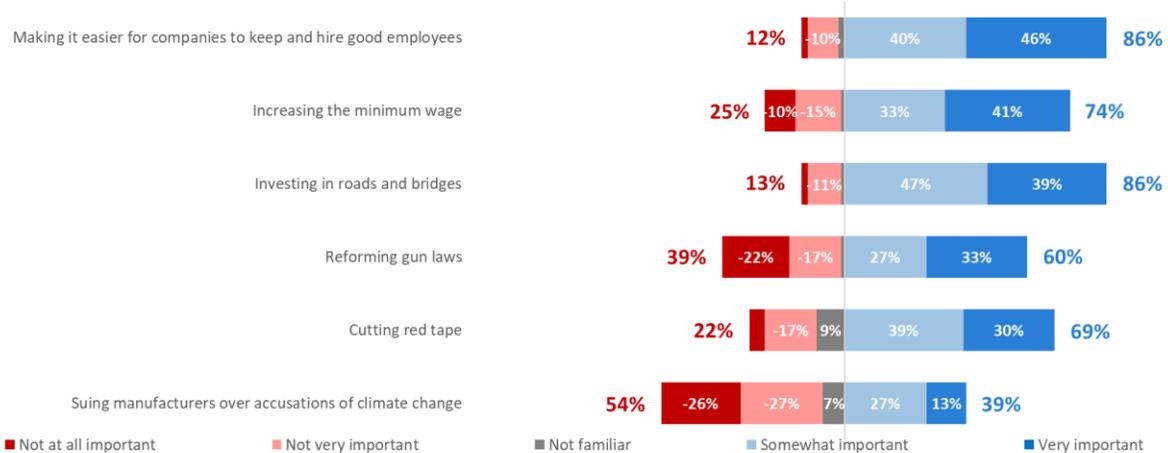
When asked to think about the most important issues for elected officials to focus on, beyond COVID, voters want the priorities to be: the cost of living in their community (9%), healthcare (17%), and jobs (34%). In contrast, climate change ranks as a low priority when it comes to what voters want their elected officials to focus on. When asked, beyond COVID, what leaders in their communities should focus on, just 6% choose climate change. The only voters to somewhat prioritize climate change are upper income households (10%), although climate change is still far from their top priority.

Echoing this, when voters are asked independently how important it is to sue manufacturers over accusations of climate change, just 13% say it is "very important" and a majority say it's "not important" (54%). This places suing manufacturers over climate change well at the bottom of a list of current priorities for many local and state jurisdictions, as illustrated on the following page. Voters would much rather have lawmakers focused on helping employers and employees with issues like "making it easier for companies to keep and hire good employees" (46% "very important") and "increasing the minimum wage" (41% "very important") rising to the top.



Even among those most likely to prioritize climate change as an issue for lawmakers to address, those upper income households, just 13% say it's "very important" to sue manufacturers over climate change.

Below is a list of issues currently being discussed at the state and federal level. For each one, please tell me how important that issue is to you.



Just 29% of voters have heard about lawsuits targeting manufacturers to pay for damage caused by climate change. Those most likely to be aware of the lawsuits are middle-aged men (between the ages of 30-49), led by Hispanic men. When informed of the lawsuits, greater percentages of voters believe the money from these lawsuits would go towards "lawyers' fees and compensation" (38%) and "other political priorities and projects" (32%) than say the money would go towards "combating climate change and rising sea levels" (30%).

Rather than a local approach, voters would prefer a global or federal approach to climate change solutions. When asked to rank where the greatest impact could be made in stopping climate change, a "global approach" received an average ranking of 2.0, while a "local approach" received an average ranking of 3.2 (both on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the greatest impact). Blacks and Hispanics prefer a "federal approach" while seniors and Whites prefer a "global approach".

Given that a global or federal approach is preferred, it comes as no surprise that voters agree with statements that reflect unity in addressing climate change and reject blaming any one industry or segment as responsible. As shown below, voters support state elected officials working together **with** industry to find solutions to climate change, not targeting and working against manufacturers.

- *We must work to develop and innovate meaningful solutions to climate change, not blame one industry for a problem we've all contributed to.* (50% STRONGLY AGREE)
- *Politicians in my state and community should work with manufacturers to help drive solutions to address climate change.* (48% STRONGLY AGREE)



- *It's not fair to blame one company, or one industry, for climate change, we all have a role to play in caring for the environment. (47% STRONGLY AGREE)*

These types of 'we're all in this together' messages are agreed with to an even greater extent than those focused on affordability and keeping prices low for consumers. Even more than focusing on the personal implications of the lawsuits (increased prices), voters are focused on a unified and shared approach for the best solutions.

In contrast, messaging pointing the finger directly at manufacturers does not test well. In part, voters do not agree that these lawsuits do anything to solve the challenge of climate change. Additionally, the public does not agree that oil and gas companies should be the ones to "pay the price" of climate change.

- *This is simple, oil and gas companies have been making products that contribute to climate change and they should be held accountable and have to pay the price. (21% STRONGLY AGREE)*
- *Our coastal cities are suffering from the impacts of climate change, which is expected to cost millions to counteract, large energy manufacturers should be the ones to pay for these improvements and repairs. (20% STRONGLY AGREE)*
- *Suing manufacturers in my state is the best way to solve the global challenge of climate change. (8% STRONGLY AGREE)*

In the end, after hearing from both sides, a clear majority of Americans believe to best way to pay for existing damage caused by climate change is through federal policy solutions. Just 2% say suing companies is the best way to pay for existing damage. Those most likely to say federal policy solutions are the best way include: climate change voters (72% say federal policy solutions), racial equality voters (69%), Democrats (68%), Black men (66%), and liberals (63%).

Finally, what is the best way to address or pay for existing damage caused by climate change in our cities?





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Methodology

These results are from a nationwide poll of 1,003 voters distributed proportionate to the population in terms of region, ethnicity/race, gender, age, and political affiliation. Partisanship came in at 37% Democrat, 31% Republican, and 29% Independent (with 3% choosing “other” as an affiliation).

The poll was fielded online from January 3rd through January 7th, 2021 and the margin of error on these results is $\pm 3.1\%$.