



Texas Voters Support Expanding Clean Energy Production and Strengthening Regulations on Oil and Gas Producers

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By **Danielle Deiseroth**

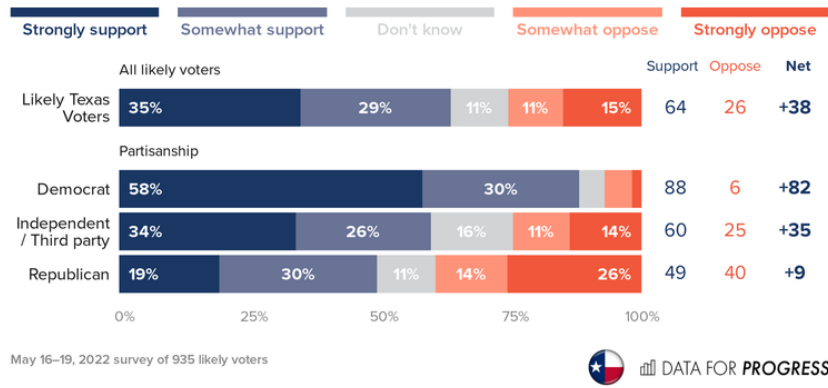
Though Winter Storm Uri occurred over a year ago, Texans are still reeling from the grid's massive failure. As Texans prepare for the summer heat, many fear that the grid once again may not be able to handle extreme weather.

In a May 2022 statewide survey, Data for Progress asked likely Texas voters a wide range of questions pertaining to energy production and regulation in the state. **We find that Texas voters view improving grid reliability as a major priority.** To improve grid reliability, **Texas voters want to both strengthen regulations and expand clean energy production.**

During Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, the grid failure and resulting energy crisis left consumers footing astronomical energy bills. Now, nearly 2 in 3 Texas voters (64 percent) say they support more regulations on power companies and oil and gas producers in the wake of Winter Storm Uri. Support is bipartisan: Nearly all Democrats (88 percent), a majority of Independents (60 percent), and a plurality of Republicans (49 percent) all support strengthening regulations on power companies and oil and gas producers.

Texas Voters Support More Regulations on Power Companies and Oil and Gas Producers

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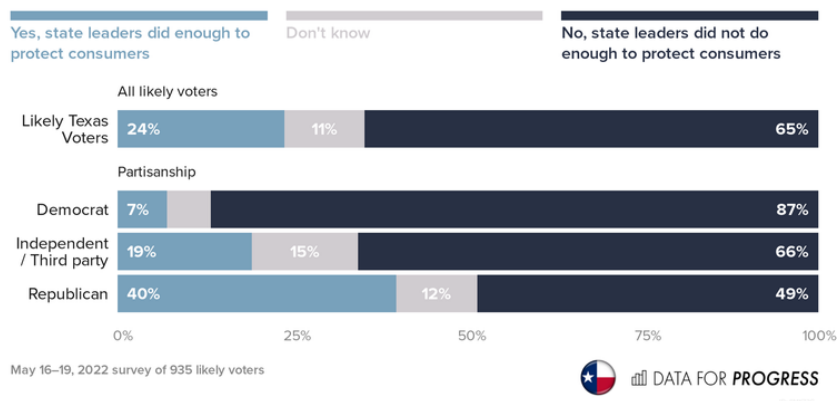


Nearly two-thirds of Texas voters (65 percent) say that Attorney General Ken Paxton, Governor Greg Abbott, and other state lawmakers failed to protect Texans from high energy prices during Winter Storm Uri. There is a bipartisan consensus: Nearly all Democrats (87 percent), two-thirds of Independents (66 percent), and roughly half of Republicans (49 percent) say these state leaders left consumers subject to paying egregiously high energy prices during last year’s storm.

Texas Voters Don't Think State Leaders Did Enough to Protect Residents From High Energy Prices During Winter Storm Uri

During Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, the price of gas soared to record highs, leaving consumers with higher home energy bills following the storm.

Do you think state leaders like Attorney General Ken Paxton and Governor Greg Abbott and legislative leaders did enough to protect consumers from these high prices?

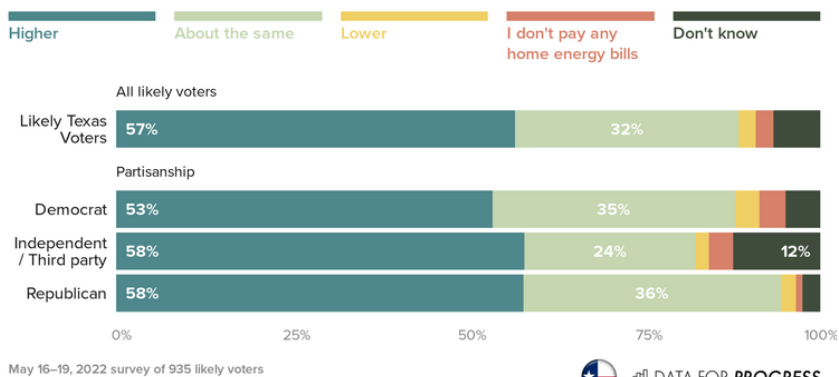


Moreover, over half of Texas voters (57 percent) say they’re paying higher home energy bills than they were around last year at this time.

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Are Higher Than They Were a Year Ago

Would you say that your home energy bills (e.g., electricity and gas) are higher, lower, or about the same as they were last year at this time?

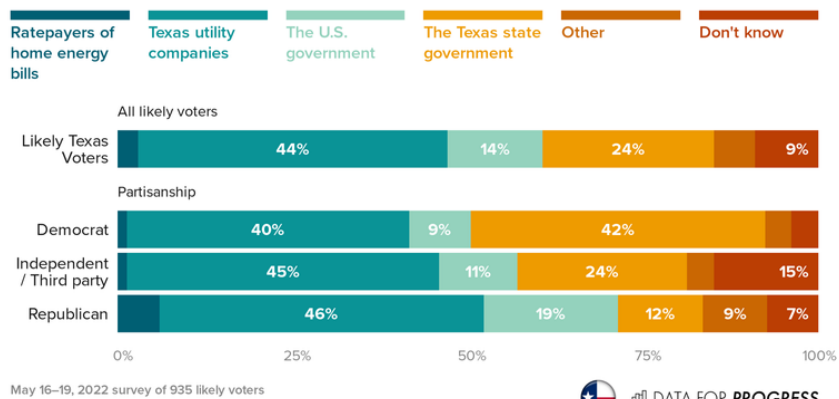


However, across party lines, voters agree that Texas utility companies — not ratepayers — should bear the cost of last year’s grid failure. While pluralities of Independents (45 percent) and Republicans (46 percent) say utility companies are most responsible, Democrats are nearly split between assigning the cost to utility companies (40 percent) and the Texas state government (42 percent).

Texas Voters Think Utility Companies, Not Ratepayers, Are Responsible for Paying the Winter Storm Surcharge

In February 2021, Winter Storm Uri caused massive disruptions to the Texas power grid. As a result, many ratepayers in Texas have or will soon have a surcharge on their home energy bills to cover the costs of the disruptions to the power grid.

Who do you think should pay for the surcharge on utility bills due to Winter Storm Uri?



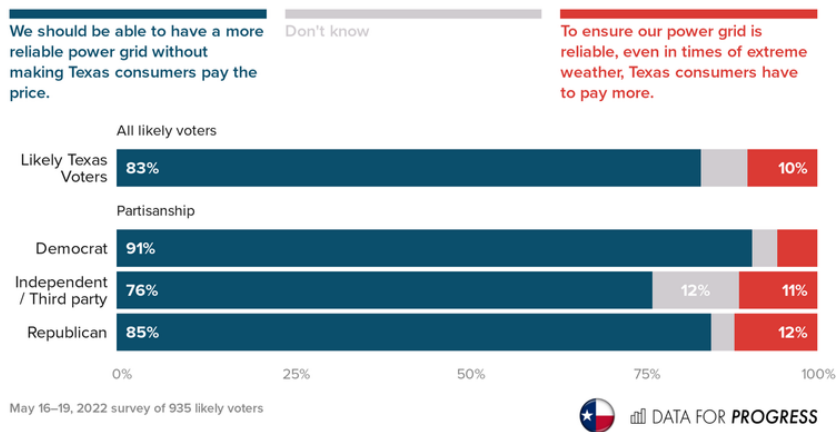
Additionally, there is near unanimity among Texas voters that ratepayers should not bear the brunt of paying for grid reliability improvements.

Texans should not pay the price for massive grid failure.

Texas Voters Widely Agree Texans Shouldn't Bear the Burden of Improving Grid Reliability

Some state leaders say that because reliability must take priority over affordability, Texans will support paying higher electricity bills going forward.

Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

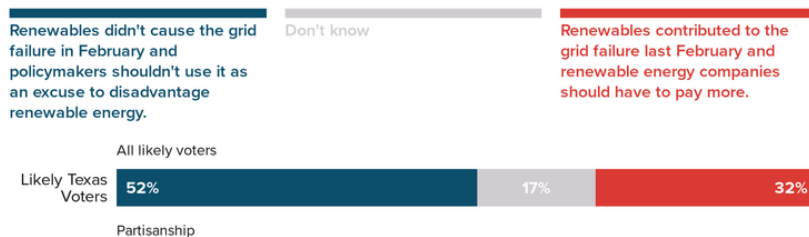


Moreover, by a +20-point margin, Texas voters agree that renewables didn't cause last winter's grid failure and state lawmakers shouldn't use it as an excuse to disadvantage renewable energy production. Nearly three-quarters of Democrats (72 percent) and over half of Independents (53 percent) agree with this sentiment. Though a slim plurality of Republicans (41 percent) say renewables contributed to last year's grid failure and energy companies should pay more for them, they are nearly split, as 36 percent of Republicans do not think renewables caused the grid failure.

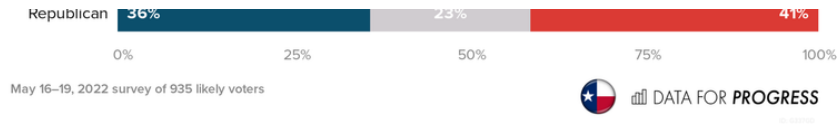
Texas Voters Agree Leaders Shouldn't Use Renewables as a Scapegoat for Last Year's Grid Failure

The Texas Public Utility Commission, which regulates the state's electricity grid, is considering a proposal to add fees to renewable energy production.

Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



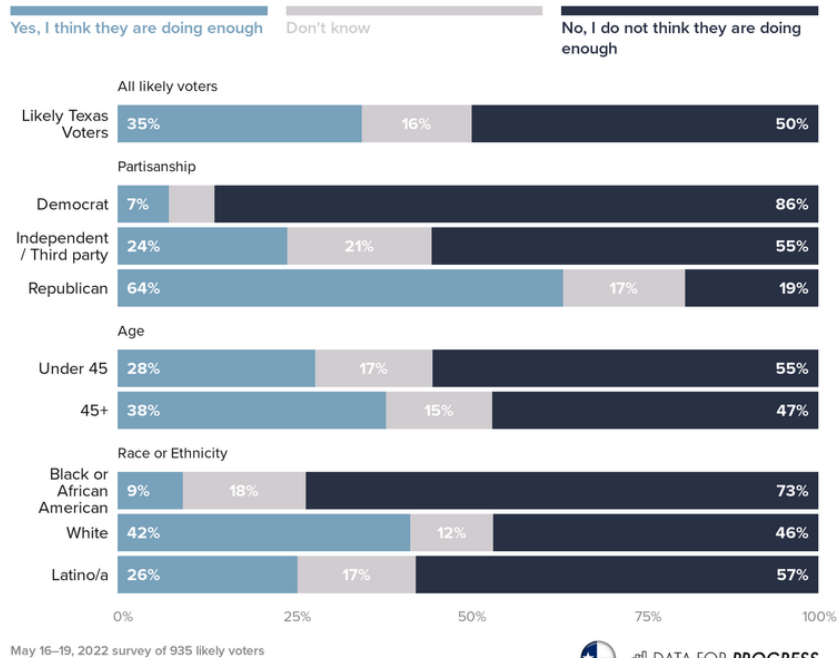
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When asked whether Abbott and state leaders are doing enough to prepare Texas for the impacts of climate change, half of Texas voters (50 percent) say they are not. Notably, over half of Independents (55 percent), young voters (55 percent), and Latino/a voters (57 percent) say that state leaders are failing to prepare Texas for the impacts of climate change.

Half of Texas Voters Say Abbott and the Legislature Haven't Done Enough to Address Climate Change

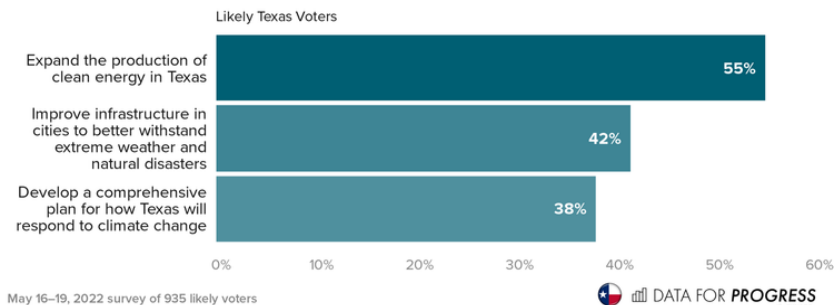
Would you say that Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas state government is doing enough to prepare Texas for the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather and natural disasters?



Of those who say Abbott and state leaders haven't done enough to address climate change, over half (55 percent) say they would most want to see them expand the production of clean energy in Texas. Other top priorities for voters include investments in resilient infrastructure projects and the

Texas Voters Want to Address Climate Change by Expanding Clean Energy Production and Improving Infrastructure

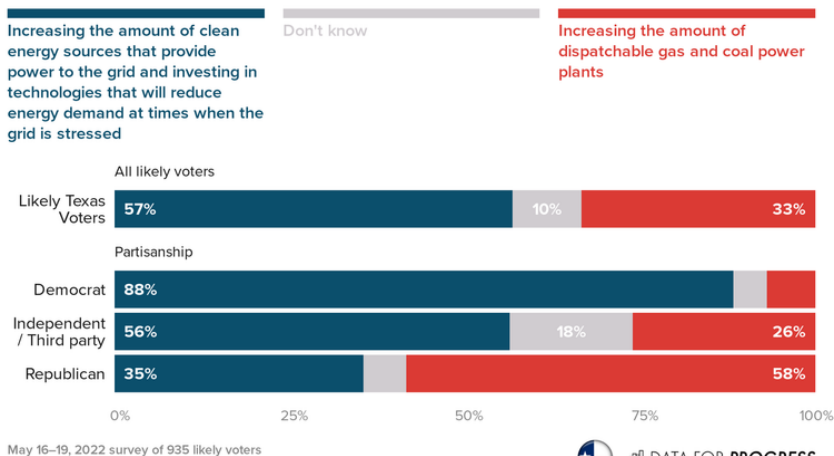
Please select the **three actions** you would **most want** to see Governor Abbott and the Texas state government do to help the state prepare for climate change:



To improve grid reliability, a majority of Texas voters (57 percent) say they prefer increasing the amount of clean energy sources providing power to the grid and investing in technologies to reduce stress on the grid during periods of high demand. Meanwhile, only a third (33 percent), primarily Republicans, say they prefer increasing the amount of dispatchable gas and coal power plants.

A Majority of Texas Voters Say Expanding Clean Energy Production Will Improve Grid Reliability

When thinking about how to make the Texas power grid more reliable, which approach do you prefer?



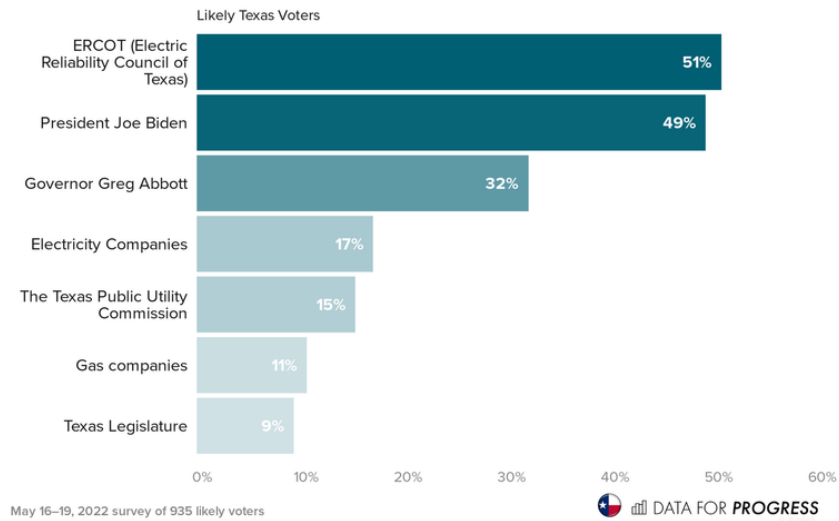
Though nearly half of voters blame President Biden for the high energy bills they’re currently paying, a majority (51 percent) blame the Electric



blame Abbott. Meanwhile, voters do not place as much blame on gas companies, electric utilities, or state leaders.

Voters Blame ERCOT, Biden, and Abbott for High Energy Bills

What are the two people or entities you blame the most for your higher energy bills?



Given the perceived absence in state leadership, roughly 2 in 3 Texas voters (67 percent) think the federal government should step in and investigate whether power companies charged unfairly high prices during Winter Storm Uri. Again, there is agreement across party lines. Majorities of Democrats (87 percent), Independents (63 percent), and Republicans (57 percent) say the price gouging during the storm merits a federal investigation.

Two-Thirds of Texas Voters Want the Federal Government to Investigate Price Gouging During Winter Storm Uri

Do you think the federal government should investigate these high prices to uncover if any power companies were charging unfairly high prices during the storm, beyond what was reasonable according to energy markets?



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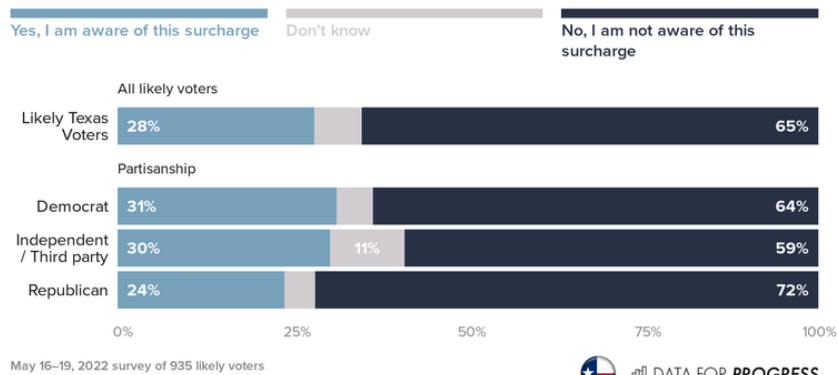


As Texas ratepayers start receiving surcharges on their home energy bills to cover the costs of the grid failure during Winter Storm Uri, fewer than a third (28 percent) say they are aware of this surcharge.

Nearly 2 in 3 Texas Voters Aren't Aware of the New Energy Bill Surcharge Caused by Winter Storm Uri

In recent months, many ratepayers in Texas will start receiving a surcharge on their home energy bills for the next 10-20 years to cover the costs of the power grid failure during Winter Storm Uri in February 2021.

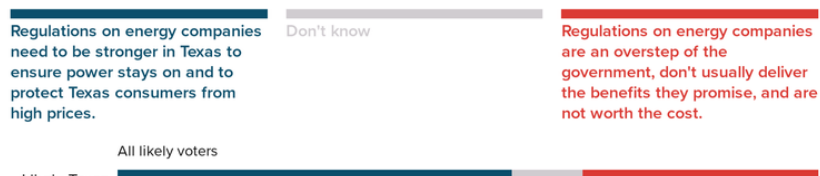
Are you aware of this surcharge on utility bills from Winter Storm Uri?



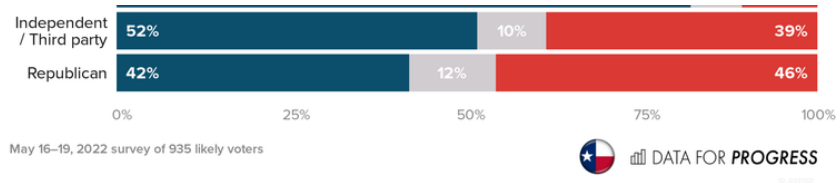
To prevent future grid failures that cause energy price shocks, Texas voters back strengthening regulations. By a +22-point margin, voters agree that stronger regulations are necessary to ensure reliable service and protect consumers. Meanwhile, only about a third of voters (34 percent), primarily Republicans, think that the costs of regulations outweigh the benefits.

Texas Voters Widely Agree That Strengthening Regulations Is Critical for Maintaining Reliability and Affordability

When thinking about the regulation of the energy industry in Texas, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



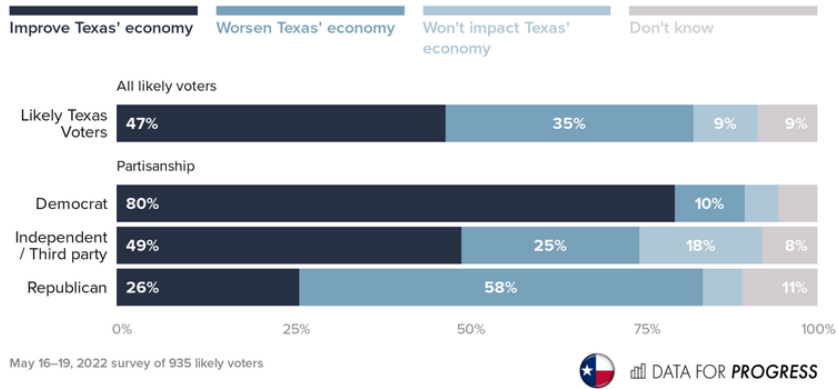
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Finally, Texas voters agree that clean energy will not only improve grid reliability, but also the state’s economy. A majority of Democrats (80 percent) and nearly half of Independents (49 percent) say the clean energy transition will positively impact Texas’ economy. Though Republicans are more skeptical, roughly a quarter (26 percent) acknowledge the economic benefits of clean energy production.

A Majority of Texas Voters Agree the Clean Energy Transition Will Improve the State's Economy

Do you think the clean energy transition will improve or worsen Texas' economy?



It is clear that Texas voters are galvanized to ensure the grid failure during Winter Storm Uri never happens again. Texas voters want to hold state leaders accountable both for their failure to protect consumers during last year’s storm and their inadequate preparation for the impacts of climate change. As Texas looks toward the future, voters in the state see renewables as a path forward to address grid reliability, prepare for the worsening impacts of climate change, and improve the state’s economy.

The status quo of unchecked oil and gas production is no longer a viable

note.

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Survey Methodology



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