

China, Climate Change, and Clean Energy

U.S. Public Opinion

[National Survey, August 5-6, 2020, 1984 registered voters]

Summary

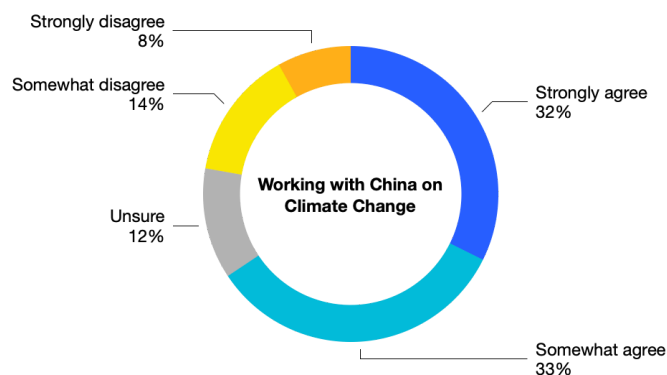
Polling conducted in August of 2020 reports that American voters hold a positive and very pragmatic view on working with China to make the clean energy transition and limit global warming.

A representative subsample of voters in rust belt states (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, upstate and western New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Wisconsin) returned the same results.

Climate Nexus, in partnership with the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, conducted a representative survey August 5-6, 2020 of registered voters in the United States.

In this survey a majority of American voters report support a partnership with China, but are wary. A majority of voters surveyed do not trust or approve of the Chinese government, but agree that working with China is necessary for success on climate change. The results also indicate that voters prefer cooperation with China over competition in making the clean energy transition to limit global warming. Finally, this survey reports that voters strongly support U.S. global leadership and action on climate change even if China does not act.

A majority of American voters agree (by a margin of 65% to 22%) that *“working with China to address climate change shows the rest of the world that the United States is a global leader, while ensuring a safe climate for Americans.”*



Further, a majority of American voters agree (by a margin of 58% to 25%) that *“The only way that we can limit global warming to less than 1.5°C is if the United States and China work together to address climate change.”*

However, Americans’ support for a partnership with China is not unqualified. More than six in 10 (62%) voters also agree with the statement that *“We can’t trust China to hold up its end of any agreements, including agreements on limiting global warming,”* indicating the importance of concrete near-term action by China as well as procedures to verify the steps taken by all countries to reduce carbon pollution.

Despite their wariness, close to six in 10 voters (57%) prefer to *“partner”* with China, rather than *“compete”* in order to *“increase production of clean and renewable energy to limit global warming.”* This

further underscores the pragmatic view of American voters on engaging China. These voters recognize the necessity of working with China, as opposed to antagonism, given the threat of climate change and the economic opportunity in the clean energy transition.

[Survey questions and data below]

1) Voters strongly believe that the U.S. should step up as a global leader on climate change and strongly believe that the U.S. should move first even if China does not.

Question (yes/no): *Do you think it's in America's national interest to be a world leader on the issue of climate change?*

Response	Percent	N
Yes	61%	1,194
No	23%	457
Not sure	16%	333

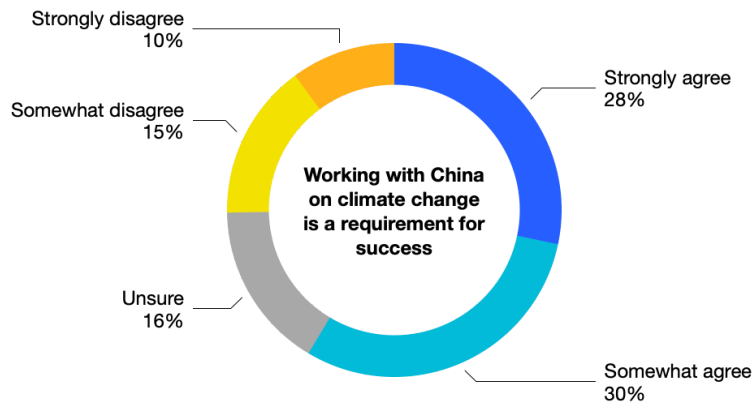
Question (agree/disagree): *As a global leader, the United States should take action on climate change even if countries like China and India do not.* (agree/disagree)

Response	Percent	N
Strongly agree	50%	981
Somewhat agree	30%	612
Somewhat disagree	13%	256
Strongly disagree	7%	135

2) Voters believe that the U.S. should engage/partner with China on climate change.

Question (agree/disagree): *"The only way that we can limit global warming to less than 1.5°C is if the United States and China work together to address climate change."*

Response	Percent	N
Strongly agree	28%	554
Somewhat agree	30%	601
Somewhat disagree	15%	297
Strongly disagree	10%	209
Not sure	16%	323

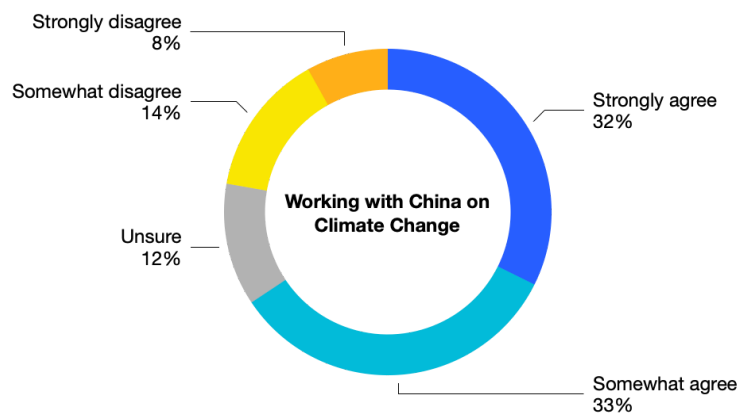


Question (yes/no): *“Do you think it’s in America’s national interest to cooperate with China to combat climate change?”*

Response	Percent	N
Yes	44%	867
No	27%	542
Not sure	29%	575

Question (agree/disagree): *“Working with China to address climate change shows the rest of the world that the United States is a global leader, while ensuring a safe climate for Americans.”*

Response	Percent	N
Strongly agree	32%	629
Somewhat agree	33%	665
Somewhat disagree	14%	279
Strongly disagree	8%	167
Not sure	12%	244



3) However, Americans' support for a partnership with China is not unqualified. The American public has an extremely negative view of the Chinese government and does not trust China to hold up its end of any agreements, including agreements on limiting global warming.

Question (positive/negative): "Do you have a positive or negative opinion of the Chinese government?"
(positive/negative)

Response	Percent	N
Very positive	4%	85
Somewhat positive	7%	142
Somewhat negative	25%	479
Very negative	52%	1,041
Not sure	12%	237

"We can't trust China to hold up its end of any agreements, including agreements on limiting global warming." (agree/disagree)

Response	Percent	N
Strongly agree	31%	610
Somewhat agree	31%	622
Somewhat disagree	19%	367
Strongly disagree	6%	127
Not sure	13%	258

4) Despite their views about China, American voters prefer cooperation with China over competition. They understand the necessity of working with China as opposed to antagonism.

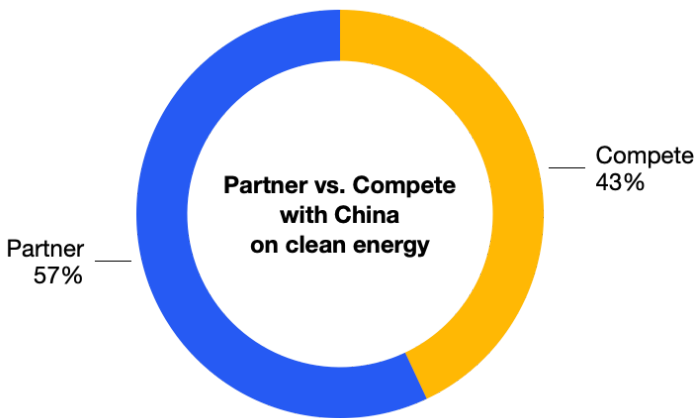
Question: “Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view, even if neither is exactly right?” [RANDOM HALF SAMPLE]

Response	Percent	N
The United States should compete with China and focus on American production of clean and renewable energy so we stay the world energy leader.	43%	447
The United States should partner with China and work together to increase production of clean and renewable energy to limit global warming.	57%	572

Question: “Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view, even if neither is exactly right?” [RANDOM HALF SAMPLE]

Response	Percent	N
The United States should compete with China and focus on American production of clean and renewable energy so we stay the world energy leader.	42%	403
The United States should engage with China and work together to increase production of clean and renewable energy to limit global warming.	58%	562

NOTE: These two questions above test the difference (using a split sample) in support for partnering with China vs. engaging with China. The survey found almost identical levels of support.



Question (agree/disagree): *“Healthy competition between countries, including between the United States and China, will encourage innovation and job growth.”*

Response	Percent	N
Strongly agree	24%	485
Somewhat agree	40%	786
Somewhat disagree	16%	309
Strongly disagree	7%	135
Not sure	14%	269

Methodology: Climate Nexus, in partnership with the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, conducted a representative survey August 5-6, 2020 of 1,984 registered voters in the United States. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.3% at the 95% confidence level.

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