CLIMATE ACTION
IS SMART POLITICS IN SIX SWING STATES

Between June and November 2019, Nexus Polling, in partnership with the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, surveyed voters in six swing states – Florida, Michigan, Iowa, Texas, Ohio, and Georgia – on their attitudes toward climate change, their opinions on climate and clean energy policy, and the role climate change is playing in their voting intentions in the 2020 election.

These six states are likely to be among those that decide the outcome of the presidential election and the balance of power in the House and Senate. They will also be electing state legislators who will draw the lines in the next congressional redistricting. Further, the 2020 election will be crucial in determining whether the United States will act in time to limit the worst climate change impacts.

Voters in these states are sending an unambiguous message: They support policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions and expand the use of renewable energy, and are more likely to vote for candidates who support those policies.

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.*

State	I would ONLY support	I would be more likely	I would be less likely	I would NEVER support	I don't really care
Florida	19%	55%	10%	9%	8%
Georgia	19%	47%	11%	9%	14%
Iowa	13%	60%	12%	7%	8%
Michigan	15%	50%	13%	8%	13%
Ohio	14%	48%	12%	12%	14%
Texas	18%	48%	12%	11%	11%

0   20   40   60   80   100
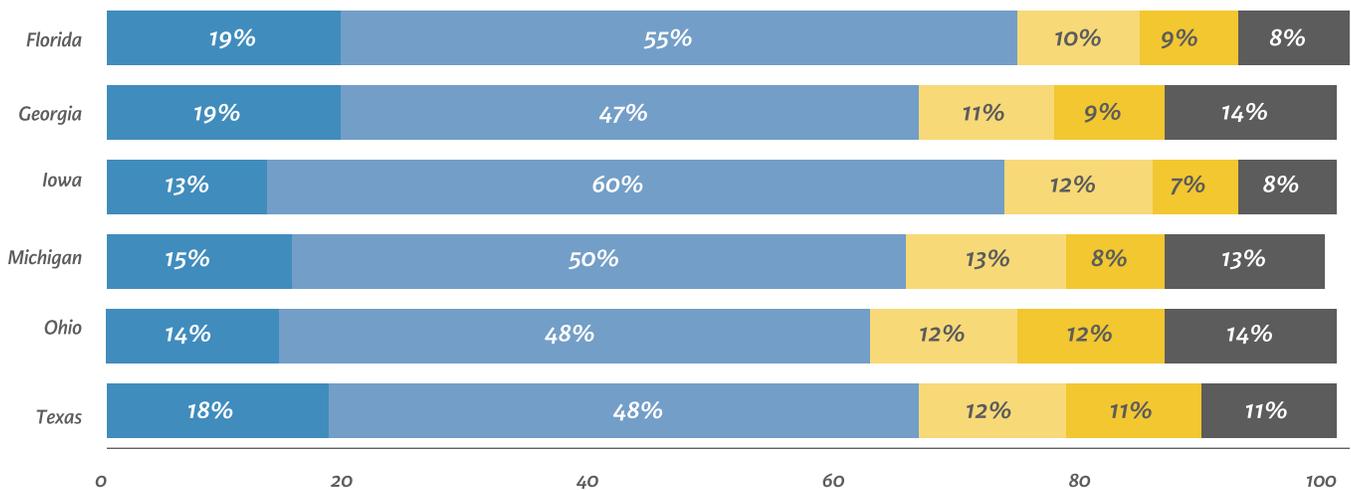
- ■ I would ONLY support a condidate who is in favor of this policy
- ■ I would be more likely to support a candidate who is in favor of this policy
- ■ I would be less likely to support a candidate who is in favor of this policy
- ■ I would NEVER support a candidate who is in favor of this policy
- ■ I don't really care about this issue

CLIMATE CHANGE IS POLITICALLY SALIENT

As the Democratic presidential primary got underway, and throughout the fall of 2019, Democratic and Democratic-leaning independent voters have indicated climate change is among their top priority issues in this election. When asked which two issues would be most important to their vote, climate change was picked second only to health care in Ohio (25%) and Michigan (26%), as well as nationally (28%). It was third in Texas (21%) behind health care and gun control and in Florida (21%), behind health care and the economy and jobs.

Across all six swing states, policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and expand renewable energy sources are not only very popular among voters regardless of party affiliation, they are clearly winning issues for political candidates. In fact, at

least six in 10 voters say they would be more likely to or would only support candidates who back each of the climate policies tested.

In Florida, for example, 74% of voters say they are more likely to or would only back a candidate who favors a policy, known as a renewable portfolio standard (RPS), to require their state to generate 100% of its electricity from renewables such as wind and solar by 2050, compared to only 18% who say supporting a 100% RPS would make them less likely to vote for that candidate. In Michigan, a candidate's support for a carbon tax would make 63% of voters more likely to support that candidate, and in Ohio, nearly two-thirds (66%) of voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate who favors stronger fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks. And nearly three-quarters (74%) of Texas voters say they are more likely to support candidates who want to expand government funding for renewables.

Q: *Percent who say climate change is having a large effect or some effect on each of the following*

Extreme weather events in the state

Florida 69%
Georgia 62%
Iowa 70%
Michigan 63%
Ohio 62%
Texas 67%

Health of residents in the state

Florida 63%
Georgia 58%
Iowa 57%
Michigan 52%
Ohio 55%
Texas 59%

State's agriculture

Florida 68%
Georgia 65%
Iowa 74%
Michigan 69%
Ohio 66%
Texas 67%

State's economy

Florida 59%
Georgia 54%
Iowa 59%
Michigan 53%
Ohio 52%
Texas 54%
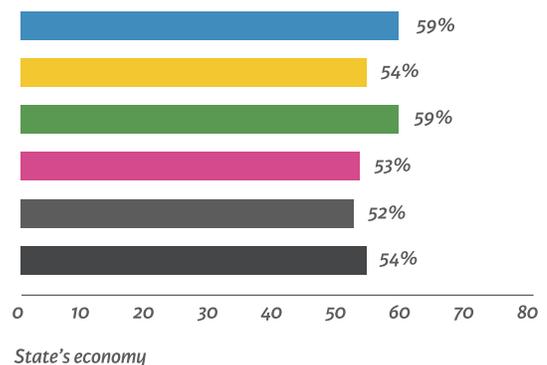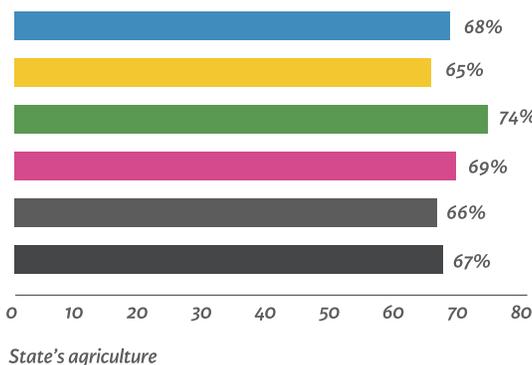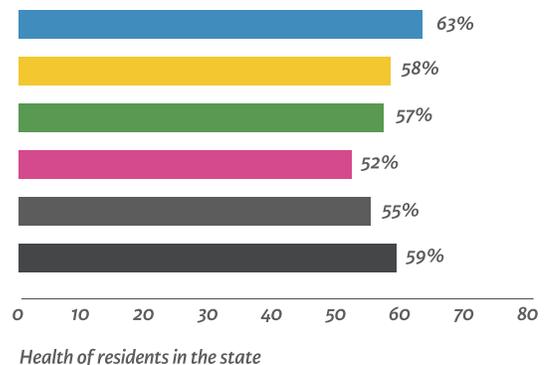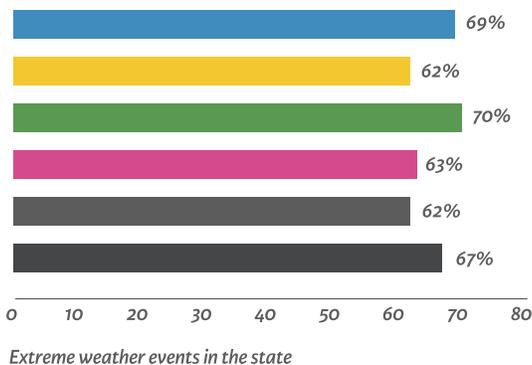
Legend: Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Texas

VOTERS ARE FEELING CLIMATE IMPACTS

For more and more Americans, climate change is no longer a problem for the future, but one that has arrived on their doorsteps. Many voters now say climate change is affecting extreme weather events across the country, and note its impact in their own lives and communities.

Majorities of voters across five states are concerned about their local environment – particularly pollution in rivers, lakes, and streams, and the quality of infrastructure. In Michigan, for example, 95% of voters say the condition of infrastructure is a serious problem, and 89% are concerned about pollution in waterways where they live. More than seven in 10 (71%) Iowans are concerned about decreasing crop yields, while more than six in 10 (61%) Texans are concerned about explosions at oil and gas facilities nearby.

Voters are also noticing climate impacts in their own lives. In Florida, more than four in 10 (42%) voters say they or members of their family have experienced anxiety about extreme weather events in the past year. Nearly four in 10 (38%) voters in Ohio say they or their families are experiencing worse seasonal allergies, and more than a quarter (27%) of Georgians say extreme weather forced them or someone in their family to take a day off work in the past year.

Majorities also recognize climate change is impacting their state, directly linking trends in their community to the global climate crisis. In Florida, for example, almost seven in 10 say climate change is impacting extreme weather (69%) and agriculture in the state (68%). About six in 10 say it is having an effect on Floridians' health (63%) and on the state's economy (59%).

Q: *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 how climate impacts these events?*

	Talk about climate change as the event is occuring	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	Not sure
Florida	49%	9%	7%	5%	2%	15%	13%
Georgia	51%	11%	6%	2%	2%	13%	15%
Iowa	54%	10%	5%	2%	1%	15%	13%
Michigan	53%	10%	5%	2%	2%	15%	14%
Ohio	48%	10%	7%	2%	2%	17%	14%
Texas	49%	10%	7%	2%	3%	15%	13%

Legend:
- Talk about climate change as the event is occuring
- 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

Chart 1:

State	Percent
Florida	71%
Georgia	64%
Iowa	70%
Michigan	62%
Ohio	64%
Texas	65%

Government action to address climate change

Chart 2:

State	Percent
Georgia	80%
Iowa	72%
Michigan	81%
Ohio	76%
Texas	81%
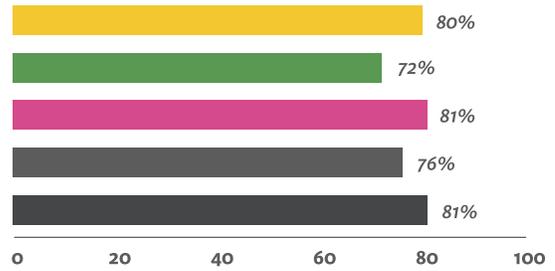
Setting stronger pollution standards for business and industry

Chart 3:

State	Percent
Georgia	74%
Iowa	77%
Michigan	68%
Ohio	67%
Texas	80%
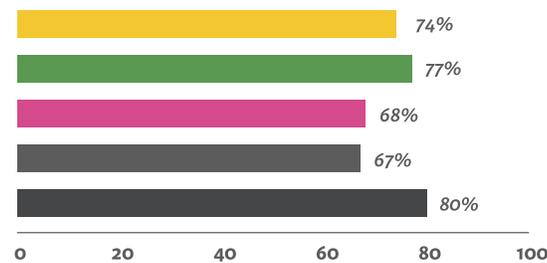
Requiring new infrastructure projects in your state to be built to withstand extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall and flooding, even if it costs taxpayers more

Chart 4:

State	Percent
Georgia	72%
Iowa	78%
Michigan	73%
Ohio	70%
Texas	76%
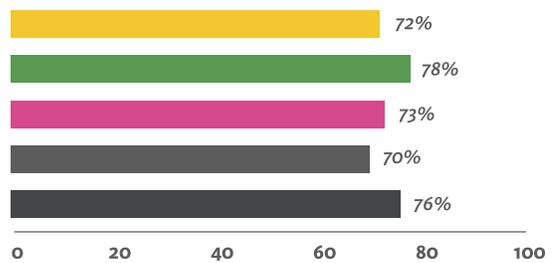
Setting stronger fuel efficiency standards for cars, trucks and SUVs

Legend: ■ Florida ■ Georgia ■ Iowa ■ Michigan ■ Ohio ■ Texas

In fact, in all six states, no fewer than 62% of voters (in Georgia and Ohio) and as many as 70% (in Iowa) make the connection between climate change and worsening extreme weather. Given that, it is perhaps no surprise voters say they want the news media to link the two issues in their real-time coverage of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, or heat waves. About six in 10 voters in all six states (between 58% in Ohio and Florida and 64% in Iowa) say the media should discuss climate change's impact on extreme weather, even as those events are still unfolding or within a day or two.

VOTERS SUPPORT CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Voters in these six swing states want to see more action on climate: Half or almost half of voters in each state want to see the federal government do "much more" to address climate change.

Most voters want to see an increase in the amount and availability of renewable energy in their states, as well as other efforts to blunt damaging climate change impacts. Policies such as a statewide 100% renewable standard (RPS) enjoy support ranging from nearly two-thirds (65%) in Ohio to eight in 10 (80%) in Florida. In the two states where it was tested, Georgia and Ohio, roughly seven in 10 voters support a carbon tax. And at least eight in 10 voters favor stronger pollution standards for business and industry in Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, and Texas. While there is bare majority or plurality support for building new pipelines in three of four states (59% in

State	Developing more renewable energy sources	Building more natural gas power plants	Building more nuclear power plants	Not sure
Georgia	64%	9%	9%	18%
Michigan	69%	13%	6%	11%
Ohio	63%	12%	7%	17%
Texas	67%	12%	7%	14%

- Developing more renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar
- Building more natural gas power plants
- Building more nuclear power plants
- Not sure
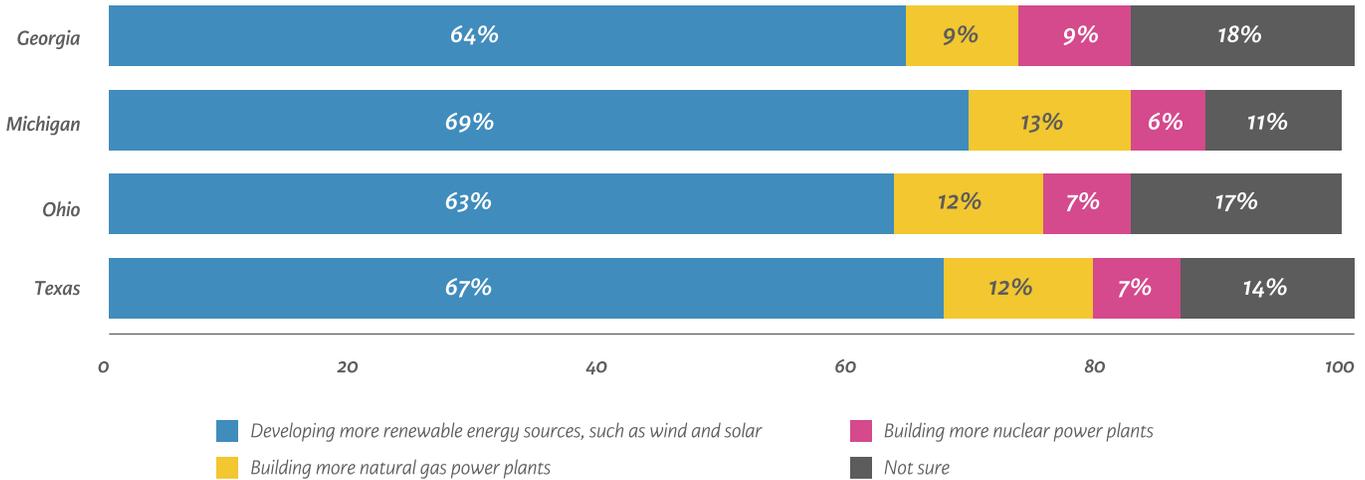
Texas, 51% in Georgia, and 48% in Ohio), support in those same states for increasing government funding of renewables is much higher (77% in Texas, 75% in Georgia, and 71% in Ohio).

At least seven in 10 voters in five states support stronger vehicle fuel efficiency standards, and about two-thirds of voters in those states say they want to see expansion of the federal tax credit that supports purchases of electric vehicles (EVs) beyond each manufacturer's first 200,000 vehicles sold.

Far more voters say their states should prioritize expanding renewables over building either more natural gas or nuclear power plants. About two-thirds (69% in Michigan, 67% in Texas, 64% in Georgia, and 63% in Ohio) of voters in each state said developing renewable sources such as wind and solar should be the priority for meeting their state's energy needs. That compares extremely favorably to both natural gas (13% in Michigan, 12% in Texas, 9% in Georgia, and 12% in Ohio) and nuclear, which does not exceed single-digit support in any state.

Moreover, voters believe policies that support growing renewable energy production will be good for their state economies. Asked which policy they thought would be more likely to create more jobs,

voters in Iowa (67%), Georgia (55%), and Ohio (54%) said increasing renewables such as wind and solar would be more successful than expanding domestic oil and gas production (14% in Iowa, 21% in Georgia, 28% in Ohio).

Voters have similarly positive expectations about the potential benefits of their states establishing RPS laws. At least six in 10 voters in five states say shifting off fossil fuel energy generation would improve their state's economy generally. About seven in 10 Georgians (70%) and Ohioans (69%) say such a policy would improve the health of people in their state; more than six in 10 in Georgia (65%), Iowa (64%), Texas (64%), and Michigan (62%) say it would bring down electricity costs. Around half of voters say they anticipate such a policy would have a positive impact on wages and unemployment in their states.

These survey results send an unambiguous message heading into 2020: Voters understand climate change is already impacting their lives, and they prefer candidates that will support policies to mitigate climate damage while cutting carbon emissions and converting the energy system to clean and renewable energy sources.

Methodology
Climate Nexus, in partnership with the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, conducted the following representative surveys cited in this memo:

- *1,558 registered voters in Florida from June 7-11, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.6% at the 95% confidence level.*
- *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.*
- *519 registered voters in Iowa from July 17-22, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.6% at the 95% percent confidence level. (Sample size was too small to provide partisan breakouts.)*
- *2,208 registered voters nationwide from August 20-22, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.1% at the 95% confidence level.*
- *1,660 registered voters in Texas from August 20-25, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.4% at the 95% confidence level.*
- *1,112 registered voters in Ohio from October 1-7, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.9% at the 95% confidence level.*
- *789 registered voters in Georgia from November 4-10, 2019. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3.6% at the 95% confidence level. (Sample size was too small to provide partisan breakouts.)*

For more information and toplines, *please visit climatenexus.org/polling or contact us at polling@climatenexus.org. Note that not all questions were asked in every state. Due to weighting and rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100%.*

Climate Nexus Polling, Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Kotcher, J. & Rosenthal, S. (2019). Climate Action Is Smart Politics in Six Swing States. Climate Nexus Polling, Yale University, and George Mason University. Washington, DC: Climate Nexus Polling.

About Us
Climate Nexus is a nonprofit strategic communications organization founded in 2011 to change the conversation on climate change and clean energy. Working with and through a diverse network of partners to shape media coverage and reach wider audiences on climate-related issues, Nexus conducts public opinion research, media outreach, message development, and movement coordination efforts across the larger climate and clean energy community.

The George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication develops and applies social science insights to help society make informed decisions that will stabilize the earth's life-sustaining climate, and prevent further harm from climate change.

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication conducts scientific studies on public climate change knowledge, attitudes, policy support, and behavior, and the psychological, cultural and political factors that drive them. We apply this research by developing communication strategies to more effectively engage key publics in climate change science and solutions.