

Poll Findings About Data Centers

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Awareness & Impressions

Most Americans have been hearing about data centers, but few are well-informed about the topic.

- Around two-thirds of Americans (66%) report hearing at least “a little” about the construction of data centers in the U.S., though only around one in ten (11%) say that they’ve heard “a lot” about data center construction. [[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026]
- ◆ Less than half of Americans (45%) say that they’ve heard anything about data center construction in their own community, including just 9% who report hearing “a lot” about it.

By their own acknowledgement, Americans have very malleable feelings about data centers.

- When asked how firm they feel in their stances about data centers, only around one in five Americans (19%) say that they have settled views that will not change in response to new information. An additional 39% say that they don’t expect to change their views but might in response to new information, while 30% say that their view could “easily” change with new information. [[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026]

Americans lean in favor of data center expansion at the national level, but aren’t enthusiastic about it.

- Half of Americans say that they support building more data centers in the U.S. (50% support / 18% oppose), though only 16% “strongly” support the idea and around one-third (32%) don’t have an opinion either way. [[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026]
- Voters have mixed attitudes about whether building more data centers would be a good thing for the country (23%) or a bad thing (18%). Roughly one-third (34%) believe it will bring equal amounts of good and bad impacts, and an additional one-quarter (25%) acknowledge that they aren’t sure. [[Navigator](#), Dec. 2025]

Americans have mixed feelings about data centers being built in residential areas, including their own.

- Slightly more than half of Americans (52%) say that they do *not* support the construction of AI data centers “close to where people live.” [[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026]
- Voters are roughly equally likely to say that data centers are a good thing (22%) and a bad thing (25%) for the communities where they’re located. An additional 31% believe that the impacts are mixed for local communities. [[Navigator](#), Dec. 2025]
- Americans are nine points more likely to say that they would support (37%) than oppose (28%) a plan to build a data center within three miles of where they live, while 36% don’t have an opinion either way. [[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026]

Data centers are emerging as one of the perceived factors behind rising utility costs, but aren't seen as a primary driver.

- Most Americans (61%) say that increasing demand from AI and computer data centers is at least “somewhat” to blame for rising electricity bills and home energy costs. [[LCV + Climate Power](#), Jan. 2026]
- ◆ For comparison, increasing demand from data centers ranks on par with rising prices for natural gas (62%) as a source of blame for utility costs but ranks lower than “utility companies overcharging customers to increase their profits” (75%) or “state regulators that let utility companies charge customers high prices” (79%).
- ◆ Stating that data centers are increasing demand makes a big difference. In a split-sample test, Americans are 17 points more likely to blame “increasing demand from AI and computer data centers” (62%) for rising costs than they are to blame “AI and computer data centers” (44%) in the abstract.

Concerns & Policy Preferences

Increased utility costs consistently rate as the public's biggest concern about data centers.

- When asked to choose from a list of possible concerns about data centers, voters rated the notion that data centers “will use up too much energy and raise utility costs for local residents” as by far their top concern. [[Navigator](#), Dec. 2025]
- Higher electricity costs also ranked as the top concern when Americans were asked to choose the main drawbacks of building a data center in their local area, followed by concerns that the data center would increase the risk of electricity blackouts for households and that it would cost taxpayers money. [[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026]
- After reading that data centers “require a large amount of electricity to operate,” large majorities of voters say that they are “extremely” or “very” concerned about the impacts of new data centers on the prices that Americans pay for energy (72%) and on the reliability of the electric grid (66%). [[Embold Research](#), Aug. 2025]
- In a MaxDiff exercise that tested randomized pairs of statements about data centers head-to-head, Americans were most likely to choose a statement that data centers’ “energy consumption drives up utility costs for families living nearby” as the most concerning. [[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026]
- ◆ The next most concerning statements included that “tech companies will pressure local governments to give up public lands or farmlands to be used for the construction of data centers,” that “their energy consumption can overload the electrical grid and lead to power outages,” that “they do not provide long-term jobs to offset the workers eliminated by AI,” and that “they are often approved without meaningful input from local residents.”

Voters strongly and overwhelmingly support requirements for data centers to pay for their own energy.

- By a 74-point margin, voters support a proposed policy to “require data centers to pay for the electricity and infrastructure they say they need, instead of regular customers” (80% support / 7% oppose). [[Utility Action Alliance](#), Jan. 2026]
- ◆ Nearly three in five voters (58%) “strongly” support this proposal.
- ◆ This proposed requirement is popular across the political spectrum, with wide margins of support among Democrats (+80), independent voters (+70), and Republicans (+68).

Americans clearly prefer for potential data centers in their communities to be powered with clean energy rather than fossil fuels.

- Americans say that they would support an AI data center being built in their community by a 25-point margin if it were powered primarily by clean energy sources like wind and solar (53% support / 28% oppose). However, they would *oppose* the construction of a new data center by a 16-point margin if it were powered primarily by fossil fuels like coal or natural gas (31% support / 47% oppose). [[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026]
- ◆ Utilizing clean energy rather than fossil fuels increases support for a hypothetical local data center across the political spectrum, including by a 36-point margin among liberals (from 20% to 56%), by a 24-point margin among moderates (from 28% to 52%), and by an eight-point margin among conservatives (from 42% to 50%).

Americans are unsure about data centers’ impacts on the planet and water supply.

- Americans are split on whether it’s true or false that data centers are “bad for the planet” (32% true / 35% false / 34% don’t know), and are similarly divided on whether data centers “deplete the water supply” (34% true / 37% false / 29% don’t know). [[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026]

Political Dimensions

Republican voters tend to be more supportive of data centers than Democratic voters are, but the issue isn't particularly polarized as of yet.

- Trump voters say that they would support a new data center in their area by a 19-point margin (45% support / 26% oppose), while Harris voters are more split (36% support / 33% oppose). [\[POLITICO\]](#), Jan. 2026]
- Republican voters are 14 points more likely to say that building data centers will be a good thing for the country than a bad thing (27% good thing / 13% bad thing), while Democratic voters are evenly divided (22% good / 22% bad). [\[Navigator\]](#), Dec. 2025]

Americans believe that the Republican Party is more eager to expand data centers than the Democratic Party.

- Americans are 25 points more likely to choose the Republican Party (38%) than the Democratic Party (13%) as the party “most eager to build data centers around the U.S.” [\[POLITICO\]](#), Jan. 2026]
- Americans are also much more likely to choose the Republican Party as the party that is “closest with big technology companies” (42% Republican Party / 17% Democratic Party) and “most enthusiastic about artificial intelligence” (36% Republican Party / 15% Democratic Party). [\[POLITICO\]](#), Jan. 2026]

Data center accountability can be a powerful theme both for positive messaging and negative messaging about energy policy.

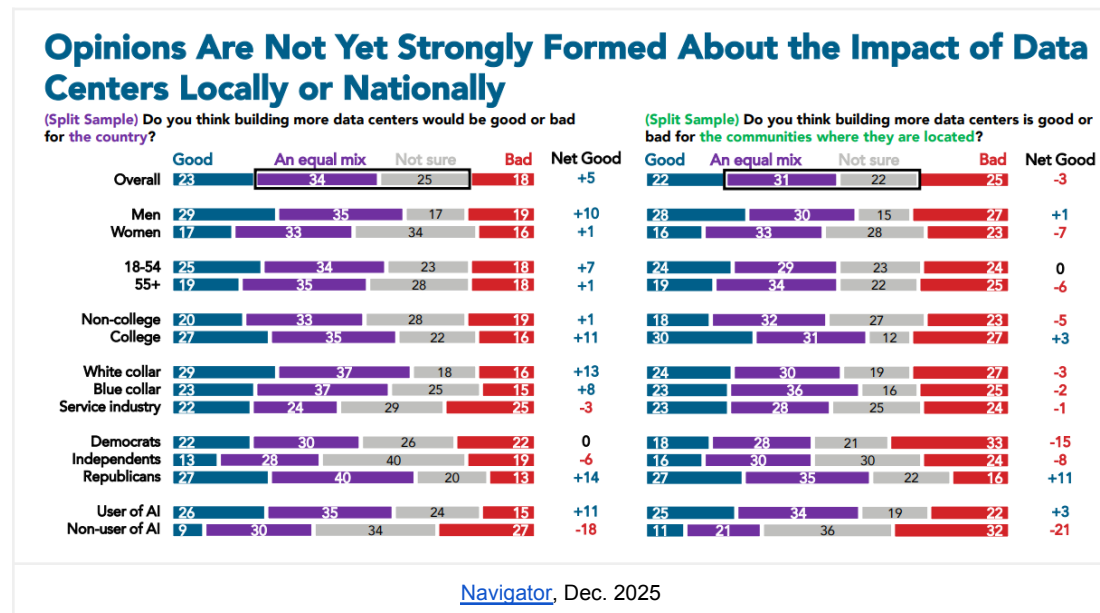
- In a test of seven positive messages about a potential new energy agenda, the following message about data center accountability ranked as the second-most convincing with only a message about utility company accountability outperforming it: [\[Utility Action Alliance\]](#), Jan. 2026]
 - ◆ *“Data centers can be a good thing, bringing jobs and investment. But that progress shouldn’t require families who are already struggling with rising costs to pay higher electricity bills. We can be both pro-data center and pro-accountability. That means making sure that data centers pay their fair share for the power and infrastructure they say they need so that families and small businesses are not paying higher electricity bills.”*
- In a test of eight negative messages about the “MAGA” energy agenda, voters in battleground states rated the following message about data centers as more concerning than any other message: [\[EDE Action\]](#), Jan. 2026]
 - ◆ *“A single data center can use as much electricity as the city of Pittsburgh and tech companies are building hundreds across America, driving up energy demand - and most utility companies are raising rates on regular consumers to pay for the energy they need. Yet, Trump and Republicans*

want to give data centers, and the tech billionaires who own them, free rein to use as much of our electricity as they want with no accountability, even though that will cause electricity prices to skyrocket for families and small businesses.”

Voters have ended up with mixed-to-negative views of data centers after campaigns where they’ve been an issue.

- Voters who participated in the November 2025 gubernatorial elections in New Jersey (21% favorable / 27% unfavorable) and Virginia (30% favorable / 39% unfavorable) were both more likely to have unfavorable than favorable opinions about data centers at the time of the elections. [[Upswing Research](#), Nov. 2025]

Charts



How much, if at all, have you heard about the construction of new data centers...

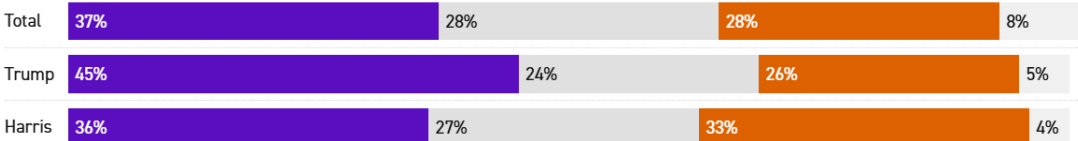
	Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
In the US?	A lot	11%	14%	9%	11%
	Some	26%	28%	24%	27%
	A little	29%	29%	26%	31%
	Nothing at all	23%	19%	29%	21%
	Not sure	10%	9%	13%	9%
In your community?	A lot	9%	10%	9%	10%
	Some	16%	16%	15%	16%
	A little	20%	20%	20%	20%
	Nothing at all	43%	42%	43%	44%
	Not sure	11%	11%	13%	10%

[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026

More than a quarter of voters might be persuadable on local data center development

Percentage of people, split by their 2024 vote, and if they would support or oppose a plan to build a data center within three miles of where they live

Support Neither support nor oppose Oppose Don't know



[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026

Americans worry data centers will raise energy costs

The top five **drawbacks** respondents selected for building data centers in the USA

It will mean higher electricity costs for households

29%

It increases the risk of electricity blackouts for households

24%

It will cost the taxpayer money

23%

It will remove jobs as AI improves

21%

It damages the environment

20%

[POLITICO](#), Jan. 2026

If an AI data center were built near your community and powered primarily by [energy source], would you support or oppose it?

	Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Clean energy sources like wind or solar	Support	53%	56%	52%	50%
	Oppose	28%	26%	25%	31%
	Net	25%	30%	27%	19%
Fossil fuels like coal or natural gas	Support	31%	20%	28%	42%
	Oppose	47%	62%	46%	36%
	Net	-16%	-43%	-19%	6%

[Climate Power](#), Feb. 2026

Additional Resources

[*Research on AI Data Centers, Costs, & Pollution*](#)

Climate Power, Feb. 2026

[*The POLITICO Poll: Voters Know What the Next Big Issue Is. They Don't Know How They Feel About It.*](#)

POLITICO, Jan. 2026

[*Combined UAA and EDF Action Research: A Unified Energy Agenda and Message*](#)

EDF Action + Utility Action Alliance, Jan. 2026

[*Utility Bills, Clean Energy, and Electoral Opportunity in 2026*](#)

LCV + Climate Power, Jan. 2026

[*Views of AI and Data Centers*](#)

Navigator, Dec. 2025

[*NJ/VA Post-Election Survey*](#)

Upswing Research, Nov. 2025

[*Most Voters Are Unaware of the Construction of Data Centers in Their State and the Environmental Impacts They Cause*](#)

WE ACT + Data for Progress, July 2025