

# 2012 NATIONAL LATINOS AND THE ENVIRONMENT SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Sierra Club, in conjunction with NCLR (National Council of La Raza), recently commissioned an extensive research project to gauge Latino voters' opinions on a range of environmental issues. Research findings are based on both focus groups and a national poll conducted by Project New America and Myers Research.<sup>1</sup> This project follows the Sierra Club's 2008 survey of Latino voters' attitudes toward the environment, the first-ever such national survey.

## FINDINGS

The results of the **2012 Latinos and the Environment Survey** show that Latino voters across the country strongly support clean energy, are very concerned about the public health effects of fossil fuel production and use, believe that global climate change is happening, and want to protect the nation's public lands.

### LATINOS SEE CONNECTION BETWEEN POLLUTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Although the economy and jobs are top concerns for Latino voters, the public-health effects of environmental pollution continue to cause worry in the Latino community. Pollution of our air and water resources is still the top environmental concern for Latino voters nationwide, with 61% saying it is among the top two environmental issues for them and their families. Since 2008, concern about air and water pollution and toxic waste sites has grown by 10 percentage points.

Today, 43% of Latino voters say they live or work near a toxic site, such as a refinery, a coal-fired power plant, an incinerator, an agricultural field, a major highway, or a factory. This represents a significant increase since 2008, when 34% reported living or working close to a toxic site. This proximity to sources of air and water pollution certainly has its effects on the Latino community; Latinos are 30 percent more likely to suffer from asthma, as compared to non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>2</sup> In this survey, nearly half (47%) of respondents report that they, or someone in their immediate family, suffers from asthma, and 2-in-5 (41%) say they, or an immediate family member, has dealt with cancer.

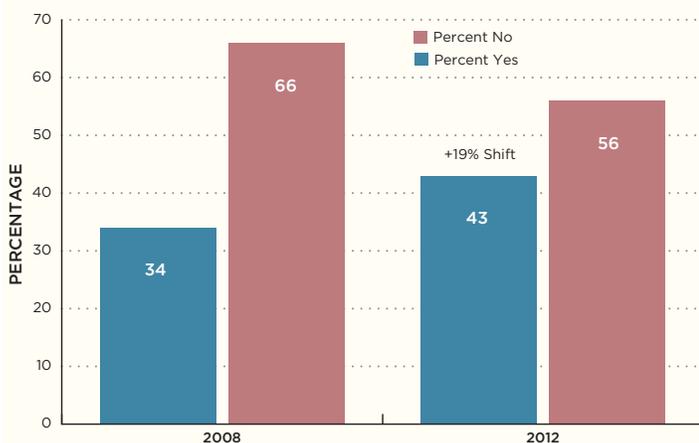
### LATINOS FAVOR PERSONAL AND GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN CLEAN ENERGY

The Latino population clearly favors clean energy over dirty fossil fuels, and 83% agree that "coal plants and oil refineries are a thing of the past. We need to look toward the future and use more energy from clean sources."

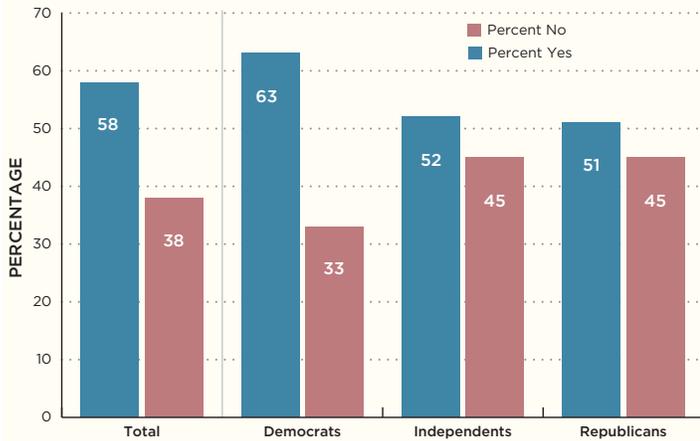
Nearly 9-in-10 (87%) Latino voters, with all wages and benefits equal, would rather work in the clean energy industry than at a fossil fuel company or oil refinery.

Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the Latino electorate supports the United States' continued investment in clean energy sources rather than fossil fuels. Of those polled, 86% prefer that the government invest in clean, renewable energy like solar and wind, while just 11% of Latinos prefer investments in fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.

Significant Jump from 2008 in Awareness of Proximity to Toxic Sites



**Significant Majority of Hispanic Voters Willing to Pay More Each Month on Electric Bill to Have Home's Electricity Come from Clean Sources – Majority of Republicans say “Yes”**

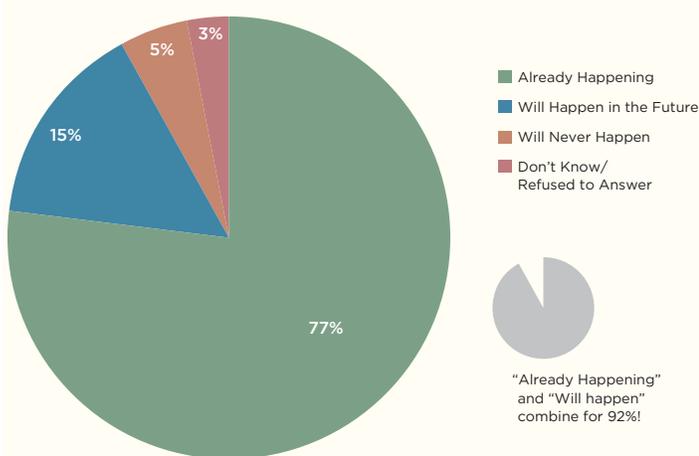


The majority of Latinos (58%) are willing to pay more on their monthly electricity bills in order to receive their electricity from clean energy sources.

**GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE IS A REALITY FOR LATINOS**

More than three-fourths (77%) of Latino voters believe that global climate change is already happening, while another 15% say it will happen in the future. This level of belief is impressive when compared to the general public's belief. About half (52%) of all Americans say that the effects of global warming have already begun, according to a Gallup poll conducted in March.<sup>3</sup>

**Nine-in-ten Hispanic Voters Believe Global Climate Change is Already Happening or Will Happen in the Future**



**PROTECTING OUR WILDERNESS AND PUBLIC LANDS IS A “MORAL RESPONSIBILITY”**

More than 9-in-10 (92%) Latino voters agree that they “have a moral responsibility to take care of God’s creations on this earth - the wilderness and forests, the oceans, lakes and rivers.”

More than 9-in-10 Latino voters (94%) say outdoor activities such as fishing, picnics, camping, and visiting national parks and monuments are important to them and their families. Therefore, it doesn't come as a surprise that Latino voters express strong support for the protection of public lands. Nearly 7-in-10 (69%) Latino voters say they would support the president designating more public land as national monuments.

**LATINOS STRONGLY SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTIONS**

More than 7-in-10 (72%) Latino voters agree that “environmental regulations protect our health and our families by lowering toxic levels of mercury, arsenic, carbon dioxide and other life-threatening pollution in our air and water.” An overwhelming majority (94%) of Latino voters also believe that they and their families can help curb toxic air and water pollution by conserving energy.

**For the complete survey please visit:**  
[www.sierraclub.org/ecocentro/survey](http://www.sierraclub.org/ecocentro/survey)

**Thanks to our partners:**



**ENDNOTES**

- 1 Project New America conducted four focus groups among registered Hispanic voters. Two focus groups were held in Houston on May 15, 2012. Another two groups were held in Los Angeles on May 16, 2012. In each city, one focus group was conducted in English and another in Spanish. With guidance from Project New America, Myers Research conducted a national bilingual phone poll of 1,131 registered Hispanic voters from June 14-26, 2012. The margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level is +/-3.1 percentage points.
- 2 Source: Center for Disease Control 2012. Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults: 2010. Table 4 [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_10/sr10\\_252.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_252.pdf)
- 3 Gallup poll, March 8-12, 2012 (Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153608/global-warming-views-steady-despite-warm-winter.aspx>). Please note that Gallup used the term “global warming.”