

Talking Climate in Rural Communities

Climate change affects rural and urban communities alike, but attitudes on the subject are polarized across the urban/rural divide. While rural voters voice concern about climate change, they are generally more reluctant to talk about it with their friends and neighbors. **Different strategies can be used to talk more effectively with rural voters about the climate crisis.**

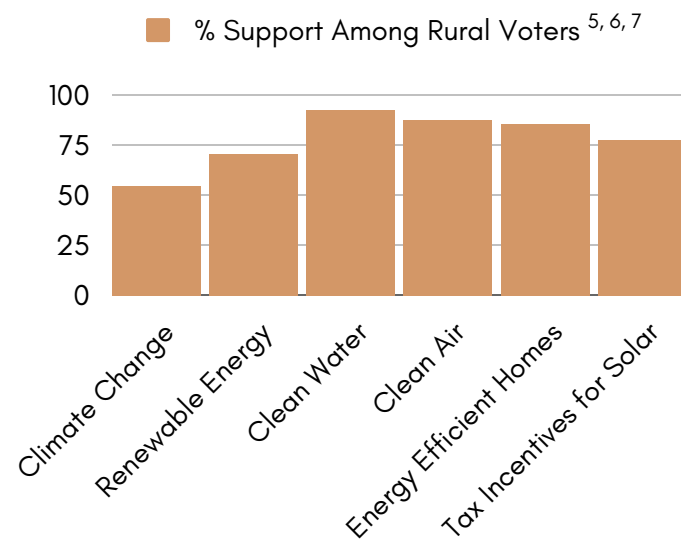
Don't Assume

- Rural communities aren't simply white, conservative, and middle-aged. One out of five rural Americans identify as Black, Latino, or Indigenous, and immigrants are responsible for much of the recent population growth in rural areas.¹ Most rural Americans are employed in the education, healthcare, and manufacturing sector, while farmers make up less than 10% of the rural workforce.² Rural Americans are also politically diverse, so be sure to ask questions of your audience – and listen – before assuming their beliefs.³

Language Matters

- Phrases like climate change, the climate crisis, and global warming have all become increasingly politicized. Partisanship remains the strongest predictor of climate attitudes – in both urban/suburban and rural communities – but rural Americans still value the protection of their air, water, and soil.⁴ By focusing on topics that resonate more with rural voters – like water quality or broadband access – and avoiding hyper-polarized words and phrases, candidates can engage in a conversation that would otherwise be shut down.

Lead with Solutions



- When policies aren't explicitly labeled as broad climate change packages, rural voters often support them.**⁸ Keep your messaging "solutions oriented" to foster a more productive dialogue, leaning into specific policies that can be used to cut energy use and bills, improve quality of life, and create new jobs and income opportunities.⁹ After all, there are now more clean energy jobs (including energy efficiency) than fossil fuel jobs in 42 out of the 50 states.¹⁰

Citations

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 3. <https://grist.org/opinion/how-to-get-rural-americans-involved-in-climate-crisis/>
 4. Id.
 5. <https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications/rural-attitudes-climate-change-lessons-national-and-midwest-polling-and-focus-groups>

6. Id.
 7. <https://www.thirdway.org/polling/poll-of-rural-voters-sentiment-on-climate-change>
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