ARIZONANS’ ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

In March 2017 and in January 2020, the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust enlisted the independent Morrison Institute for Public Policy at ASU to survey a representative sample of registered Arizona voters to gauge attitudes toward and beliefs about the environment and environmental protection.

TOP POLICY PRIORITIES

Arizonans rank the environment among their top three priorities for the governor and legislature to address.

Which of the following do you believe should be the top priority for the governor and legislature?

The percentage of voters who said the environment should be Arizona’s top priority increased in all categories from 2017 to 2020:

- **64%** of Arizonans say, “Protecting the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of slowing economic growth.”
- **75%** of Arizonans say Arizona’s parks, preserves, forests and open spaces are very important to them.
Arizona voters are very or somewhat concerned about the following environmental issues:

- **91%** Pollution in rivers, lakes and reservoirs
  - 61% very concerned
  - 30% somewhat concerned

- **89%** Air quality in the state’s cities and large towns
  - 49% very concerned
  - 40% somewhat concerned

- **86%** Protection of the state’s wildlife
  - 51% very concerned
  - 35% somewhat concerned

- **84%** Vehicle emissions
  - 45% very concerned
  - 39% somewhat concerned

- **75%** Land-use policies
  - 32% very concerned
  - 43% somewhat concerned

- **73%** Greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants
  - 45% very concerned
  - 28% somewhat concerned

- **64%** Pollution from concentrated animal feeding operations
  - 27% very concerned
  - 37% somewhat concerned

**PERCEPTIONS SURROUNDING CLIMATE CHANGE**

- **77%** of Arizonans believe the earth’s average temperature is rising.

  Of those who believe the earth’s temperature is rising, **74%** say they believe climate change is primarily the result of human activity.

- **69%** of Arizonans believe climate change is one of the most serious problems facing the world today, up from 65% in 2017.
While 71% of voters believe Arizona is currently in a long- or short-term drought, 1 in 5 do not believe Arizona is experiencing a drought at all. 54% believe Arizona's drought is the result of climate change.

Water priorities in 2020
When asked to assume water supply for home use is the first priority, Arizonans said water for agriculture is second priority (42%) and sustaining flows for rivers and wildlife is third (40%). Other choices were water for:
- More development and new homes (9%)
- New industries in the state (5%)
- Landscaping, swimming pools and non-essential home uses (4%)

Does Arizona have enough water to cover all its needs for the next 50 years?
- 64% NO
- 19% YES
- 17% DON'T KNOW

ARIZONANS’ INTENSITY OF CONCERN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IS INCREASING
87% of voters in 2020 believe environmental issues facing Arizona, such as water and air quality, land and water use, and wildlife protection are serious or very serious and need to be addressed immediately. Up from 81% in 2017.

VOTERS’ VIEWS ABOUT GOVERNMENT AND POLICIES
How Arizonans rate the state government’s:
- Protection of the state’s wildlife: 7% EXCELLENT, 37% GOOD, 34% FAIR, 15% POOR, 7% DON’T KNOW
- Long-term plan to protect and preserve its water supply: 3% EXCELLENT, 26% GOOD, 35% FAIR, 19% POOR, 17% DON’T KNOW
- Plan to ensure a high level of water quality for residential use and consumption: 4% EXCELLENT, 33% GOOD, 36% FAIR, 12% POOR, 15% DON’T KNOW

Nearly 7 in 10 Arizona registered voters believe the governor and legislature should require more regulation to reduce greenhouse gases.
- 2020: 66%
- 2017: 60%

52% of voters feel Arizona should do more to develop alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind power.

51% strongly agree that the federal government needs to do more to combat climate change, up from 38% in 2017.

45% strongly agree the state government needs to do more to combat climate change, up from 33% in 2017.
SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND REPORT

For both the 2017 and 2020 surveys, a representative sample of 800 registered voters were polled. The sample was designed to match the political and demographic characteristics of Arizona according to the most recent voter data. The surveys were conducted by phone and were presented in English and Spanish. Each poll has a +/- 3 percentage point margin of error and the results were analyzed at a confidence level of 95%, meaning it is unlikely that the attitudes and opinions of Arizonans fall outside the polls’ margins of error.

To read the full survey reports, and for a digital version of this document, visit ninapulliamtrust.org/environmental-polls.

THE VERDE RIVER

What do voters in Arizona’s largest metropolitan area know about their state’s water resources?

The Verde River supplies drinking water to 14 rural communities along its banks and nearly 3 million people in Maricopa County. The river is a major source of central Arizona’s sustainability, including agriculture, economy, health and recreation, and supports hundreds of wildlife species.

Survey questions directed to only Maricopa County residents revealed knowledge gaps related to this major Arizona water source.

- **29%** are unaware the Verde River is a key component of the water supply for Phoenix and Maricopa County.
- **36%** don’t know water from the Verde River is used to support agriculture in the Verde Valley.
- **29%** don’t know the Verde River is commonly used for recreational purposes.

NINA MASON PULLIAM CHARITABLE TRUST

The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust seeks to help people in need, especially women, children and families; to protect animals and nature; and to enrich community life, primarily in metropolitan Phoenix and Indianapolis.

The Trust focuses its environmental efforts on protecting, restoring and maintaining critical waterways, open spaces and wildlife habitat, and increasing awareness of environmental issues in Arizona and Indiana, the states where we invest. In Arizona, the Trust focuses its waterway support on the Verde River.