



TO: Interested Parties
 FROM: Andrew Baumann and Katie Drapcho, Global Strategy Group
 DATE: March 28, 2023
 RE: **North Carolina voters support North Carolina moving to clean energy and want state leaders to hold Duke Energy accountable**

North Carolina voters believe that moving to clean energy will benefit North Carolina's economy, families, and public health and want to see state policymakers encourage more clean energy use. Voters also agree that clean energy like wind and solar would create a more reliable electric grid and want to see state lawmakers hold Duke Energy accountable, especially when their performance suffers in situations like Winter Storm Elliott. Large shares of voters support capping carbon pollution from power plants and want to see policymakers push Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan that meets the goals of the new bipartisan energy law.

KEY FINDINGS:

- North Carolina voters strongly support actions to reduce pollution and move towards clean energy.** Voters agree that reducing pollution from power plants (81% agree/19% disagree) and using more clean energy like wind and solar (69% agree/30% disagree) would improve public health in North Carolina. Voters believe that using more clean energy like wind and solar would also create a reliable electric grid that is more resilient to storms like Winter Storm Elliott (68% agree/31% disagree). As we've seen in previous research, enthusiasm for clean energy is also driven in part by the fact that voters believe clean energy is good for the economy, both because more clean energy would create quality jobs and strengthen North Carolina's economy (70% agree/30% disagree) and would save North Carolina families money (68% agree/30% disagree). As a result, voters want state policymakers to encourage more clean energy use (74% agree/25% disagree) and want policymakers to prioritize clean energy investments like wind and solar over fossil fuel energy like coal and gas (67% agree/32% disagree).

| | NET AGREEMENT | | | | | |
|---|---------------|------------------|---------|------|------|-----|
| | Overall agree | Overall disagree | Overall | Dem. | Ind. | GOP |
| Reducing pollution from power plants would improve public health in North Carolina | 81% | 19% | +62 | +94 | +47 | +46 |
| North Carolina policymakers should do more to encourage us of clean energy like wind and solar | 74% | 25% | +49 | +71 | +41 | +33 |
| Using clean energy like wind and solar would create a more reliable electric grid that is more resilient to storms like Winter Storm Elliott. | 68% | 31% | +37 | +69 | +29 | +10 |

- Voters give Governor Cooper strong marks on his job as governor and handling of climate change.** Majorities of voters approve of Governor Cooper's performance as Governor (59% approve/38% disapprove) and his handling of climate change (56% approve/39% disapprove). The 2024 gubernatorial race is statistically tied, with Democrat Josh Stein receiving 42% support and Republican Mark Robinson receiving 44% of the vote.
- Duke Energy is viewed favorably by a slight majority of voters, but there is stronger demand to hold Duke accountable.** While a majority of North Carolina voters have a favorable opinion of Duke Energy (53% favorable/32% unfavorable; +21 net favorable), its favorability has slipped from a previous September 2022 survey (59% favorable/24% unfavorable; +35 net favorable). Larger shares of voters want to see policymakers do more to make sure Duke reduces pollution (80% agree/19% disagree) and hold Duke Energy accountable (70% agree/27% disagree). A majority of voters believe that Duke is not doing enough to increase its use of clean energy (59% agree/38% disagree) and over three quarters of voters (77% agree/22% disagree) believe that Duke should be held accountable when their performance suffers in situations like during Winter Storm Elliott. As a result, nearly three in four voters (74% support/25% oppose) and all partisan groups support capping carbon pollution from power plants and requiring utilities like Duke Energy to pay for the carbon they emit. A similar share of voters also supports limiting carbon emission from power plants by 70% by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050 (71% support/27% oppose).

| | NET SUPPORT | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|---------|------|------|-----|
| | Overall support | Overall oppose | Overall | Dem. | Ind. | GOP |
| Joining other states on the East Coast in an effort to combat climate change by capping carbon pollution from power plants and requiring utilities like Duke Energy to pay for the carbon pollution they emit | 74% | 25% | +49 | +74 | +43 | +28 |
| Placing a limit on carbon emissions from power plants in North Carolina that would decline over time, reaching a 70% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050 | 71% | 27% | +44 | +72 | +39 | +20 |

- Voters attitudes towards Duke dramatically worsen when they learn about Duke's failure to keep up with the demand for electricity during Winter Storm Elliott.** After voters learn that Duke Energy was unable to keep up with demand for electricity and had to cut power to 500,000 customers during Winter Storm Elliott, Duke's favorability drops by net 18 points (50% favorable/47% unfavorable) and a majority of voters disapprove of Duke's handling of the situation during Winter Storm Elliott (42% approve/54% disapprove). After learning this information, voters are significantly less likely to say they trust Duke to handle power outages and the reliability of the electric grid (-28 net shift) and are more likely to say Duke isn't doing enough to increase its use of clean energy (+15) and that policymakers should hold Duke Energy accountable (+13).

| DUKE ENERGY FAVORABILITY | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------|---------|------|------|-----|
| | Overall Fav | Overall Unfav | Overall | Dem. | Ind. | GOP |
| Initial Ask (before Winter Storm Elliott statement) | 53% | 32% | +21 | +25 | +19 | +20 |
| Informed Ask (after Winter Storm Elliott statement) | 50% | 47% | +3 | -13 | +6 | +17 |
| <i>Total Shift</i> | | | -18 | -38 | -13 | -3 |

- Voters want to see Governor Cooper and state leaders push Duke Energy to reduce pollution and transition to clean energy.** After voters hear a statement from Duke Energy claiming their plan includes an aggressive transition to clean energy that provides a path to meeting its targets and a statement from advocates that states Duke's plan will raise costs by building new fossil fuel plants, nearly eight in ten voters (77% agree/22% disagree) agree state policymakers should require Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan to invest in more clean energy and meet the targets of the state's new energy law. A majority of voters (56% more favorable/17% less favorable) say they'd be more favorable to Governor Cooper if he pushed Duke to submit a stronger plan that guarantees it meets the targets of the new energy law and nearly half of voters would be more favorable to the Governor if he blocked Duke Energy from constructing new fossil fuel plants (47% more favorable/30% less favorable). Registered Democrats are unanimous in their support for requiring Duke to submit a stronger plan (90% support/9% oppose), while large majorities of Independents (74% support) and Republicans (66%) also support lawmakers pushing Duke to submit a stronger plan.

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 registered voters in North Carolina between March 21 – 23, 2023. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 4.0%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

APPENDIX

Duke Energy/Winter Storm Elliott Statement

As you may know, according to regulators, during Winter Storm Elliott, clean energy sources like wind and solar met or even exceeded expectations while many coal and gas power plants failed. As a result, Duke Energy was unable to keep up with demand for electricity and it cut power to about 500,000 customers, even though they said before the storm that they had enough power reserves to avoid that kind of service cut.

Duke Targets Debate

As you may know, last year, North Carolina passed a bipartisan energy law that requires utility companies, including Duke Energy, to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Duke has submitted a plan to reduce emissions which they say includes an aggressive transition to clean energy that provides a path to achieve the emissions reduction targets in the new law.

But experts say Duke's plan risks significantly increased costs due to unnecessary investments in large new fossil fuel plants and unproven technologies rather than low-cost clean energy resources like wind and solar.

Knowing this, do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

North Carolina policymakers should require Duke Energy to submit a stronger plan that does more to invest in clean energy and makes sure that Duke meets the targets as required by the new energy law.