

## Americans and Infrastructure 2022

### Survey Reveals Americans' Willingness to Pay More Taxes and Tolls for Infrastructure Improvements that Help the Environment—and Their Significant Support for Private Sector Management of Infrastructure Projects

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The U.S. is moving deeper into a period of political uncertainty, marked by profound questions about policy and funding. When it comes to infrastructure, the Biden administration has already taken several steps in the last year to address our nation's significant [infrastructure deficit](#)—nearly \$2.59 trillion over the next decade—with the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that allocates \$1.2 trillion in federal infrastructure spending across the country, and the Inflation Reduction Act that invests in clean energy technologies and funding mechanisms for it.

As policymakers, the federal government, states and municipalities set out to continue modernizing our inadequate infrastructure that arguably lags behind that of most developed nations, there are a number of themes that merit exploration. They include whether Americans think the private sector should be more involved in managing infrastructure and infrastructure projects; whether citizens are willing to help pay for infrastructure projects with positive environmental effects; and what impact on society people believe infrastructure improvements should have.

Accordingly, we conducted a survey of 1,000 U.S. adults in August 2022. The survey was fielded using the Qualtrics Insights Platform, and the panel was sourced from Lucid.

Among the results were two significant takeaways:

1. Americans are open to more private sector management of infrastructure. Federal, state and local governments would meet with little resistance and much support—and potentially upgrade infrastructure quality—if they were to make public-private partnerships a bigger part of the infrastructure equation.
2. A significant portion of the U.S. population cares deeply about the environment, enough to potentially pay more to improve it, and also stands behind efforts on the part of policymakers to fix the nation's crumbling infrastructure, as long as it's done in a way that benefits both society and the planet.

Below are more details on these major findings:

#### Private sector involvement

**Across most types of infrastructure, more Americans—across demographics—support private sector involvement in public infrastructure than are opposed to it. And in many cases, the preference for private sector involvement is pronounced.**

- When it comes to water systems, 41% of Americans said private sector management should be allowed (only 33% said it shouldn't, and 26% were unsure); for public transit, a greater portion (44%) support private sector management (only 28% said no); and 41% are in favor of private sector management of airports (with only 29% saying no).

- The outlier is toll roads, for which 34% of Americans support private sector management and 36% oppose it.

**Notably, support for private management of infrastructure is generally equally strong across income groups and Democrats and Republicans.**

- That said, it is somewhat stronger among higher income people (incomes over \$100,000) when it comes to private management of airports and of public transportation. 50% are probably or solidly in favor for each.

**Millennials are particularly open to private sector management of infrastructure.**

- 49% of Millennials are in favor of it for public transit (versus 38% and 42% respectively for Gen X and Baby Boomers); 48% are in favor of it for water systems (versus 39% and 37%, respectively for Gen X and Baby Boomers); 47% are in favor of it for airports (versus 38% for both Gen X and Baby Boomers).
- When it comes to private management of toll roads, 38% of Millennials support it, compared with 30% of Gen X and 31% of Baby Boomers.

**Interestingly and importantly, Black and African Americans favor private company management of U.S. infrastructure to a significantly greater degree than the rest of the adult population.**

- 53% of respondents who identify as Black or African Americans are open to private operation of public transit, versus only 44% of the survey sample as a whole; 51% support private management of water systems, versus 41% of the overall sample; 50% for airports, versus 41% overall, and 45% for toll roads, versus 34% overall.

**Not only are Americans supportive of private companies' managing infrastructure, but they also think private companies will do a better job.**

- Overall, 44% of Americans reported they believe the private sector could do a better job than government in managing tolls roads, public transit, water systems and airports.
- 32% think they'd do an equal job, and only 25% think private companies would do a worse job.
- Republicans (54%), non-white Americans (at 51%, versus 42% for white Americans), people with household incomes over \$100,000 (50%) and Millennials (50%) are most likely to believe private companies would outperform government at managing infrastructure.

**Nearly half of Americans reported that the United Kingdom's system of privatization—where water systems and airports are privately run and regulated by the government—could work in their state or local community.**

- 49% of Americans reported privatization could work in their state or local community.
- Only 13% said the system wouldn't work in their locale.

## **Environmental impact**

**The vast majority of Americans indicate they'd be willing to help pay for infrastructure improvements—better transit, roads, water, for instance—if those projects were guaranteed to have a positive environmental and climate impact.**

- More specifically, 45% of Americans reported they would be willing to spend more on tolls and sales taxes for environmentally positive infrastructure improvements; 29% weren't sure, and only 26% said they would not be willing to pay more.
- 94% of Americans believe that it is important for new infrastructure projects to be climate friendly—increasing further among non-white Americans (98%) and Democrats (99%).

**Millennials are more willing than other generational groups to pay for infrastructure improvements that benefit the climate.**

- 51% of Millennials said they'd pay more, and only 18% said they wouldn't.
- 47% of Gen Xers said they'd pay more, and only 36% of Baby Boomers said they'd pay more.

**Further, Black and African Americans are markedly more committed to infrastructure projects with climate and environmental benefits than white Americans are.**

- 57% of respondents who identify as Black or African Americans reported that they'd be willing to pay more (with only 16% not willing), compared with 43% of white respondents who are willing (and 28% who are not).

**Willingness to pay more for infrastructure improvements that benefit the climate differs among political parties and community type.**

- Notably, 59% of Democrats said they are willing to pay more for infrastructure improvements that benefit the climate (13% not willing), versus 35% of Republicans (38% not willing).
- Support for the notion is somewhat greater among suburban (47% willing) and urban (49% willing) residents than rural residents (39%).

**Americans want infrastructure improvements to yield economic benefits.**

- Nearly half (49%) of Americans reported that they want infrastructure improvements to yield better jobs and education, and 47% reported that they wanted them to deliver economic benefits to under-served communities.

*For more information or for other findings from the survey, please contact [infrastructure@allisonpr.com](mailto:infrastructure@allisonpr.com).*