

TO: Environmental Defense Action Fund
FR: Morning Consult
DT: April 2021
RE: Results: Respondents' Opinions on Methane Leak Detection and Orphan Wells



Respondents think limiting methane's release into the atmosphere benefits public health, and over three quarters support policy that would require oil and gas companies to regularly check for and fix methane leaks. Additionally, three in five respondents support the Biden administration adopting policy that would cut 65% of methane emissions from the oil and gas sector.

Methane Leak Detection

OVER THREE IN FOUR RESPONDENTS (79%), INCLUDING BIPARTISAN MAJORITIES, SUPPORT POLICY THAT WOULD REQUIRE OIL AND GAS COMPANIES TO REGULARLY CHECK FOR AND FIX METHANE LEAKS.

- Half of respondents (51%) *strongly support* policy that would require oil and gas companies to regularly check for and fix these leaks. Strong bipartisan support exists for the issue as well. 84% of Democrats, 74% of Independents, and 81% of Republicans support policy requiring oil and gas companies to regularly check for and fix methane leaks.

THREE IN FIVE RESPONDENTS (58%) THINK LIMITING THE RELEASE OF METHANE INTO THE ATMOSPHERE BENEFITS PUBLIC HEALTH.

- Two thirds of Democrats (68% definitely + probably) think limiting the release of methane into the atmosphere benefits public health, and around half of Independents (52%) and Republicans (49%) think the same.
- Belief in limiting methane's impact on public health spans community type as well: 66% of urban respondents, 57% of suburban respondents, and 49% of rural respondents think limiting methane's release into the atmosphere benefits public health.

AFTER LEARNING THAT METHANE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ABOUT A QUARTER OF GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE, THREE IN FIVE RESPONDENTS (61%) SUPPORT THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ADOPTING POLICY TO CUT 65% OF METHANE EMISSIONS FROM THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR

Methodology: This poll was conducted between April 15-April 19, 2021 among a sample of 2200 Adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of Adults based on gender, educational attainment, age, race, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Orphan Wells

TWO THIRDS OF RESPONDENTS (68%) SUPPORT CONGRESS TAKING ACTION TO FUND THE CLEANUP, OR "PLUGGING," OF ORPHAN WELLS.

- Plugging orphan wells is an issue with bipartisan support: 79% of Democrats, 61% of Independents, and 61% of Republicans support Congress taking action to fund plugging orphan wells.

RESPONDENTS SUPPORT A VARIETY OF PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS THE DANGERS ORPHAN WELLS POSE.

Percentage of Respondents Who Support the Following Proposals to Address Orphan Wells

% Support (strongly + somewhat)	Requiring companies applying for future oil drilling permits to financially commit to "plugging" orphan well sites when they are no longer in use	Limiting the ability for companies to avoid "plugging" orphan wells through long-term idling or temporary abandonment	Notifying surrounding communities of potential hazards from orphan well leaks
Respondents	72%	57%	74%
Democrats	77%	66%	78%
Independents	68%	51%	70%
Republicans	69%	49%	72%
Biden 2020 Voters	78%	68%	80%
Trump 2020 Voters	69%	49%	72%
Conservatives	71%	49%	74%

NEARLY THREE QUARTERS OF RESPONDENTS SAY ORPHAN WELLS ARE CONCERNING FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- 72% of respondents say orphan wells are concerning for **the environment**.
- 72% of respondents say orphan wells are concerning for **communities near orphan wells**.
- 70% of respondents say orphan wells are concerning for **the U.S.**

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RESPONDENTS FOUND MESSAGES ABOUT THE HEALTH RISKS OF METHANE LEAKS, FUTURE CLEANUP COSTS, POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR LAID OFF WORKERS, AND PRIVATE LANDOWNER CONSIDERATIONS CONVINCING REASONS TO INCREASE ACTION AROUND PLUGGING ORPHAN WELLS.

Percentage of Respondents Who Say the Following are Convincing Reasons for Increasing Action Around the Cleanup, or “Plugging,” of Orphan Wells

% Total Convincing (very convincing + somewhat convincing)	Respondents
Methane leaks and associated pollution can pose serious health risks to the communities close by	71%
Addressing orphan wells now will prevent higher cleanup costs in the future	68%
From groundwater contamination to methane’s impact on global warming, plugging orphan wells is a simple but effective way to prevent further environmental harm	68%
Plugging orphan wells is the right thing to do to protect private landowners whose land energy companies sometimes drill on	67%
Plugging orphan wells can give good-paying jobs back to workers in the oil and gas industry who have been laid off	66%

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