

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Dave Metz and Emma White  
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DATE: October 6, 2014

RE: Findings of a Statewide Survey on Fracking

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A recent statewide survey of New Yorkers finds that **nearly eight in ten support the current moratorium on fracking in New York state, amid widespread concern over the safety of the practice.**<sup>1</sup> Over six in ten have heard at least a little about fracking, of whom 56 percent oppose it; and when presented with a neutral description of fracking, opposition among the electorate as a whole stands at 56% as well. A much larger group (79%) favors continuing the current moratorium, and support for the moratorium changes little after hearing messages on both sides.

Key specific findings of the research include the following:

- **Almost two-thirds of New Yorkers have some familiarity with fracking.** Sixty-five percent of New Yorkers have heard a great deal (33%) or a little (32%) about *hydraulic fracturing, the process sometimes involved in natural gas extraction commonly known as “fracking.”* By a 56 percent to 37% margin, those with some existing awareness of fracking say that they oppose the practice.
- **After being presented with basic information about fracking, a majority opposes it.** The survey respondents were presented with the following information:

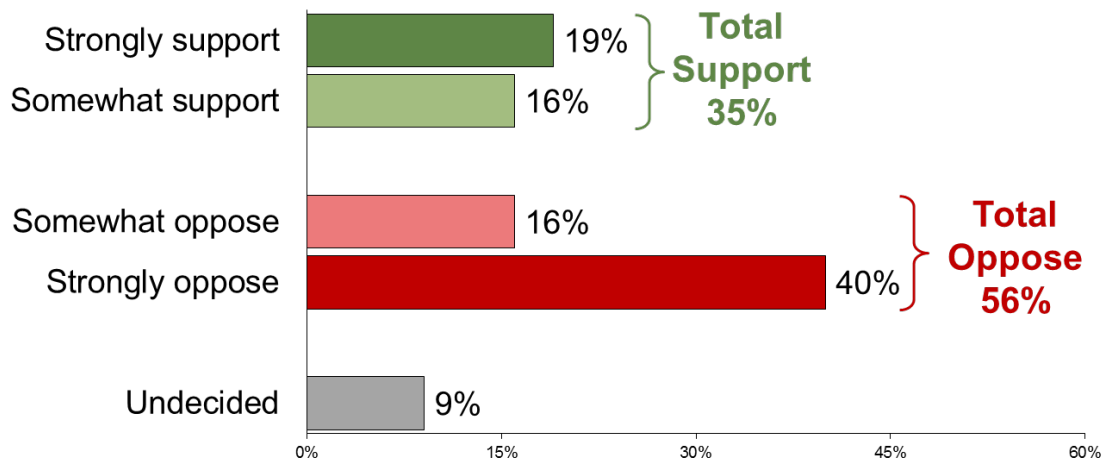
*Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a method of oil and natural gas extraction that involves forcing hundreds of thousands of gallons of water into each well, mixed with sand and chemicals, under high pressure deep into the earth. Fracking breaks up underground rock formations to allow the extraction of oil and natural gas that might be otherwise hard to reach.*

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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) conducted a statewide survey of 802 registered New York voters from September 18-22, 2014. In addition, 200 additional interviews were conducted in key western counties: Allegany, Broome, Chemung, Dutchess, Orange, Steuben, Tioga, Ulster. All results have been weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of voters in each state. Interviews were conducted via landline and wireless telephones from phone numbers randomly selected from a list of registered voters. The margin of sampling error for the full study is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups will be higher. Due to rounding, some percentages may not sum to 100%.

After hearing this, 56 percent of New Yorkers oppose the use of fracking to extract natural gas in New York while support stands at only 35 percent, as shown in **Figure 1**.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Support for Fracking After Context**

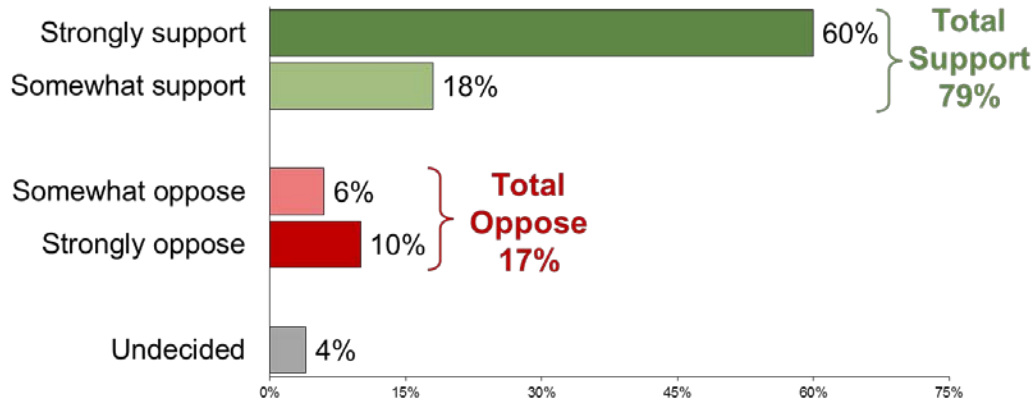


The breakdown by key demographic subgroups reveals some important distinctions:

- A solid majority of Democrats (63%) opposes fracking, along with 53 percent of independents, while Republicans are divided (48% favor, 46% oppose). The division among Republicans breaks along gender lines, with 58% of Republican women opposing fracking while 60% of Republican men support it.
- Opposition is consistent across regions of the state, but the target counties are somewhat more narrowly divided (44% favor, 48% oppose).
- Whites oppose fracking (58% to 35%), and African Americans oppose it slightly more strongly (63% to 28%), but Latinos are evenly divided (45% favor and 45% oppose).
- **Support for the current moratorium on fracking is broad and bipartisan.** 79 percent of New Yorkers support the fracking moratorium after hearing that *there is a moratorium, or a temporary halt, to fracking in New York state, meaning that no fracking can occur until scientific studies of its safety are conducted, and until the Department of Environmental Conservation creates rules to ensure fracking can be conducted safely*, while only 17 percent oppose the moratorium, as shown in **Figure 2**. The moratorium receives bipartisan buy-in, as more than seven in ten Republicans (73%), Democrats (84%) and independents (74%) support the moratorium. Among Republican women, 81 percent support the moratorium, along with 65 percent of Republican men. Additionally, support tops three in four among whites (77%), African Americans (85%) and Latinos (86%), and in all regions of the state. Six in ten (60%) residents of the key potential fracking counties support the moratorium.

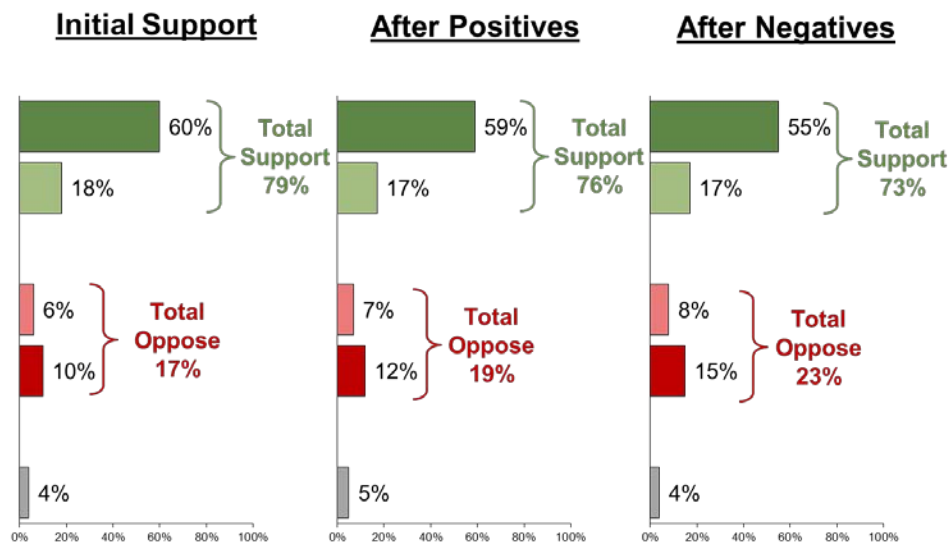
**FIGURE 2:**

## Support for Moratorium after Context



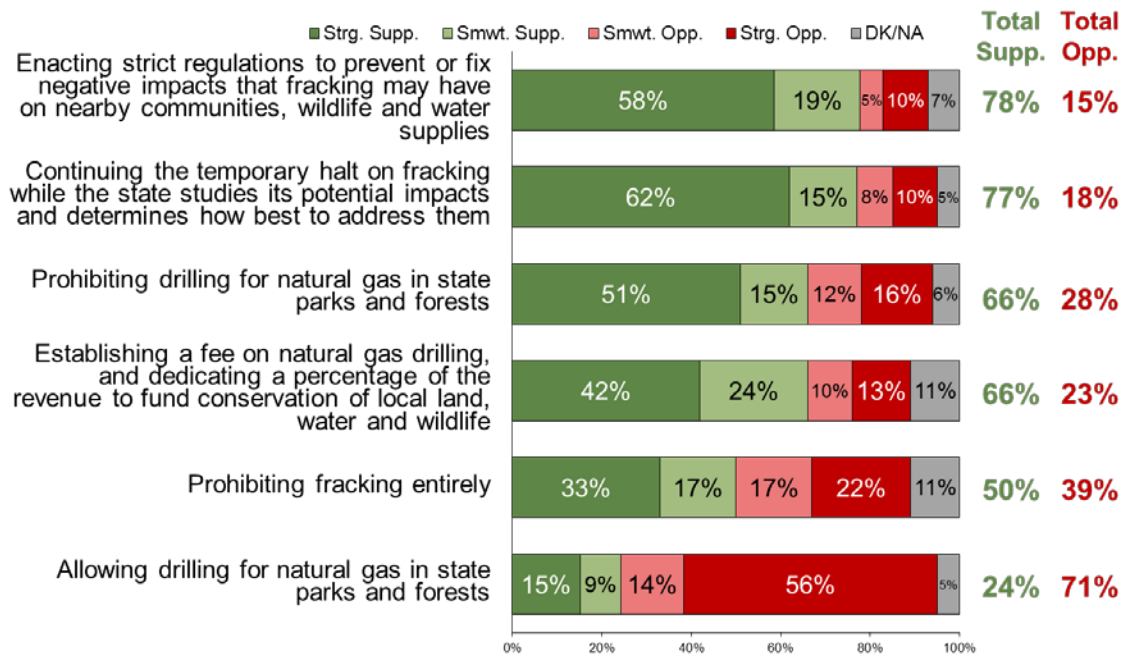
- **Enthusiasm for a moratorium remains strong after messaging on both sides.** After a series of pro and con messages, 73 percent of New Yorkers support the moratorium, while 23 percent oppose it, as shown in **Figure 3** below.

**FIGURE 3:**  
Support for Moratorium after Messaging



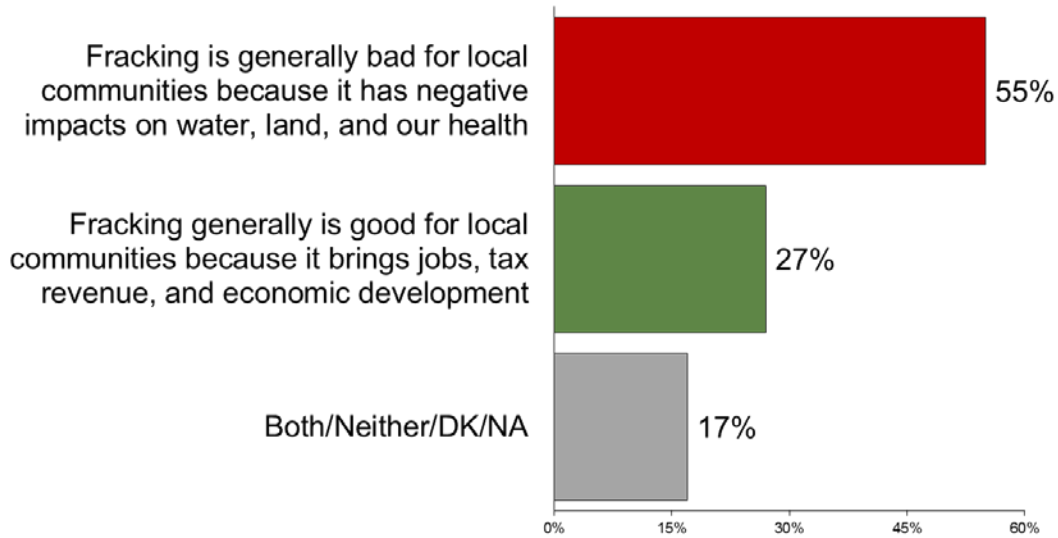
- **Three quarters would also support “strict” regulation of fracking.** Survey respondents were asked about a series of policy solutions, all of which (except *allowing* drilling in state parks and forests) receive more support than opposition, as shown in **Figure 4** below. Of particular note, 78 percent support *enacting strict regulations to prevent or fix negative impacts that fracking may have on nearby communities, wildlife and water supplies*.

**FIGURE 4:**  
**Support for Various Policy Proposals**



- New Yorkers express doubts about the safety of fracking, and a majority believes it will have a net negative impact on local communities.** One factor underlying skepticism about fracking is that only 35 percent are “very” or “somewhat confident” that fracking can be done safely. Looking into beliefs about the consequences of fracking a little more deeply, as **Figure 5** illustrates, when forced to choose between two positions on fracking’s impact, New Yorkers say the environmental and health harms outweigh any economic benefits. A majority (55%) sides with the view that *fracking is generally bad for local communities because it has negative impacts on water, land, and our health*, while only 27 percent choose the statement that *fracking is generally good for local communities because it brings jobs, tax revenue, and economic development*. In part, this may be because New Yorkers do not think fracking is likely to cause sustained economic gains. Again choosing between two perspectives, 60 percent say *jobs created by fracking are likely to be temporary; they will last as long as drilling is taking place, and then go away*, while only 26 percent say *jobs created by fracking are likely to be permanent; drilling will lead to economic revitalization that will create long-term jobs in communities*.

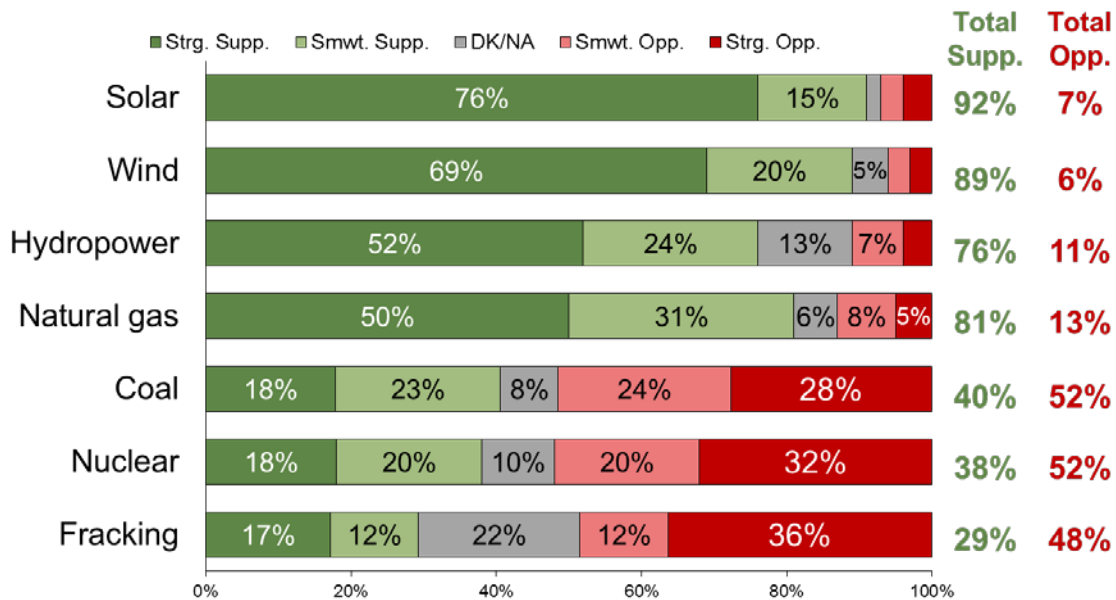
**FIGURE 5:**  
**Impact of Fracking on Local Communities**



- **More broadly, New Yorkers strongly prefer expanded use of renewable energy to fracking or more use of fossil fuels.** As Figure 6 on the next page illustrates, respondents are enthusiastic about expanding New York’s use of solar, wind, and hydropower, but not nuclear or coal. 92 percent support increasing the use of solar to meet their state’s future energy needs, along with strong support for increased use of wind (89%) and hydropower (76%). In contrast, majorities of New Yorkers oppose the increased use of coal (40% support, 52% oppose) and nuclear power (48% support, 52% oppose).

In addition, while 81 percent support increasing the use of natural gas, attitudes toward fracking, when introduced without any explanation or context, are quite negative (29% support, 48% oppose). This dynamic is not uncommon; our research often shows that while the public supports the use of natural gas in principle, they may not initially recognize that fracking (which they oppose) is necessary to acquire those natural gas supplies. In addition, we also often see that public support for natural gas is broad, but not as strong as support for renewables. That pattern is evident here in New York, where “strong support” for natural gas is much lower than support for wind or solar power.

**FIGURE 6:**  
**Support for Expanding the Use of Various Power Sources**



In addition, when asked to choose directly between natural gas and renewables New Yorkers clearly favor renewables. Asked to choose between two statements, 61 percent choose the perspective that *we should place a higher priority on developing clean, renewable energy sources to protect water quality, natural areas, and wildlife habitat* while just 25 percent say *we should place a higher priority on developing new supplies of natural gas to create jobs and reduce energy costs*.

Overall, the survey results show serious concerns about fracking among the public and clear majority support for continuing the moratorium until strong regulations are put in place. Support for the moratorium crosses party, regional, and ethnic lines and remains strong after pro and con messaging.