

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: November 2022

Re: Recent Survey Shows Strong Support for Revising EPA Lead and Copper Rule

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,000 respondents nationwide, with oversamples reaching 200 respondents in Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin, to better understand Americans' attitudes on access to safe drinking water and a potential revised EPA rule that would require water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes within the next ten years. The survey was conducted between October 10th and 17th, 2022.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- **Access to safe drinking water has broken through as a priority for Americans.** Outside of the economy and inflation, ensuring access to safe drinking water for all Americans is seen as the second highest ranking priority nationwide. It ties with reducing crime—which is a striking data point in today's political environment.
- **Majorities say lead pipes are a major problem and are worried about exposure to lead in their home tap water.** Seven in ten Americans nationwide say lead pipes in U.S. drinking water systems are either a crisis or a major problem – and a majority of Americans are worried about exposure to toxic chemicals, such as lead, in their home tap water.
- **There is overwhelming support (across gender, race, age, and political ideology) to update an EPA rule that would require water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes within the next ten years** – with nine in ten Americans supporting the proposal and a majority strongly supporting it. Support for updating the EPA's lead and copper rule is even stronger in states where lead pipes are particularly problematic – such as Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin.
- **Large majorities support equitable action to address lead in tap water.** More than nine in ten support provisions that require water utilities “to ensure no one's tap water has an unsafe level of lead,” and nearly the same amount agree that investments in water infrastructure should be “targeted to communities that have been underserved for far too long.”
- **Supporters of the proposal are poised to win a debate on the issue:** There is a clear sense of urgency among Americans to replace lead pipes. The data shows that the timing to replace lead pipes in the current rule falls short even in the face of opposition messaging that an updated plan will result in higher prices for consumers.
- **Policymakers who support updating the EPA rule to require water utilities to replace all their lead pipes in the next 10 years or less are viewed more favorably.** Large majorities across demographic groups, including independents and Republicans hold favorable opinions of policymakers who support updating the EPA lead and copper rule.

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR AMERICANS

Ensuring access to safe drinking water ranks only behind the economy on issues Americans want legislators to focus on – with more Americans saying safe drinking water should be a top priority than those who say the same of reducing crime. Over half of Americans (59%) believe that *ensuring access to safe drinking water for all Americans* should be one of the top priorities for the federal government, and 91% believe it is a high priority. Falling short of only to the economy and inflation, while ranking higher than crime and health care in issue prioritization, access to safe drinking water has clearly emerged as a top priority for Americans, including in Illinois (52% top priority), Missouri (59% top priority), and Wisconsin (60% top priority). Moreover, there is broad support across the political spectrum for ensuring access to safe drinking water – including among Republicans, 51% of whom believe it should be one of the top priorities of the federal government as well.

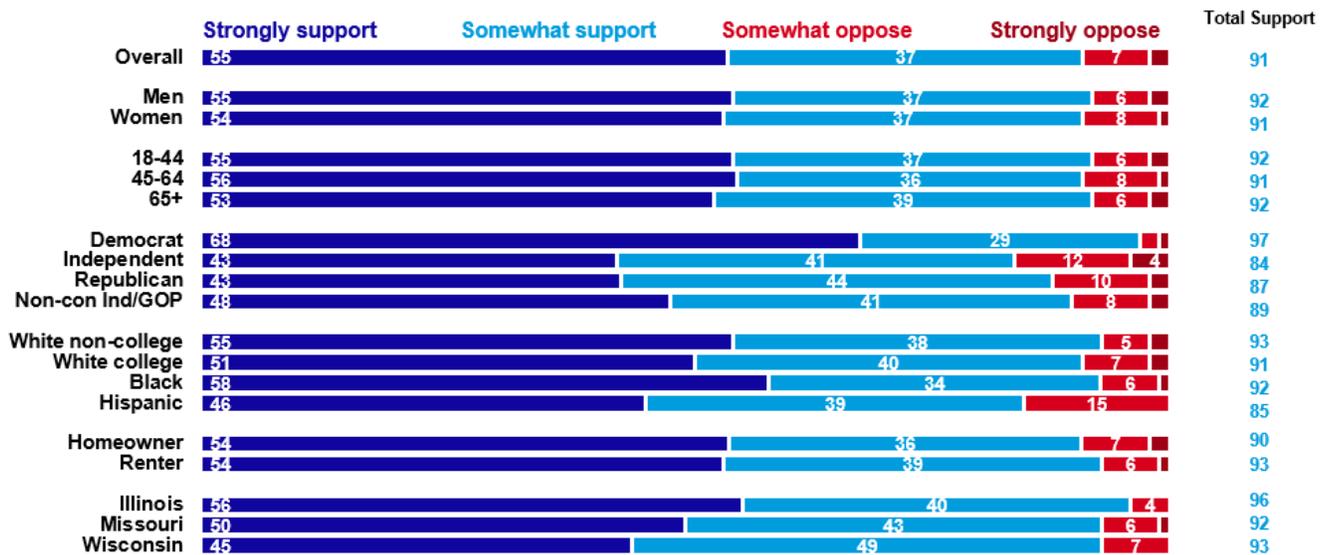
Americans are worried about exposure to lead in their home tap water and seven in ten view lead pipes in nationwide drinking systems as a crisis or major problem. A majority of Americans (56%) are worried about exposure to toxic chemicals, such as lead, in their home tap water. Those especially concerned include younger individuals (70% worried), Hispanic Americans (72% worried), and Black Americans (70% worried). Over half (51%) of all Americans also think that lead pipes in their state’s drinking water systems are a crisis or a major problem, and an even larger majority (70%) say that lead pipes in U.S. drinking water systems are a crisis or major problem.

THERE IS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR AN UPDATED EPA LEAD AND COPPER RULE

Americans overwhelmingly support requiring water utilities to replace all lead pipes in the next ten years. Nine in ten Americans support updating the EPA rule so that it would require water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes within the next ten years, and a majority strongly support it (91% overall support, 55% strongly support).

Support for an updated EPA rule requiring full lead pipe replacement in 10 years is universal across demographic groups, partisan groups, and key states. Support is strong across gender, age, race, and political ideology, with majorities of Democrats (97% support), independents (84% support), and Republicans (87% support) supporting an updated EPA lead and copper rule. The same is true in key states such as Illinois (96% support, 56% strong support), Missouri (92% support, 50% strong support), and Wisconsin (93% support, 45% strong support).

Do you support or oppose updating a rule from the Environmental Protection Agency that would require water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes within the next 10 years?



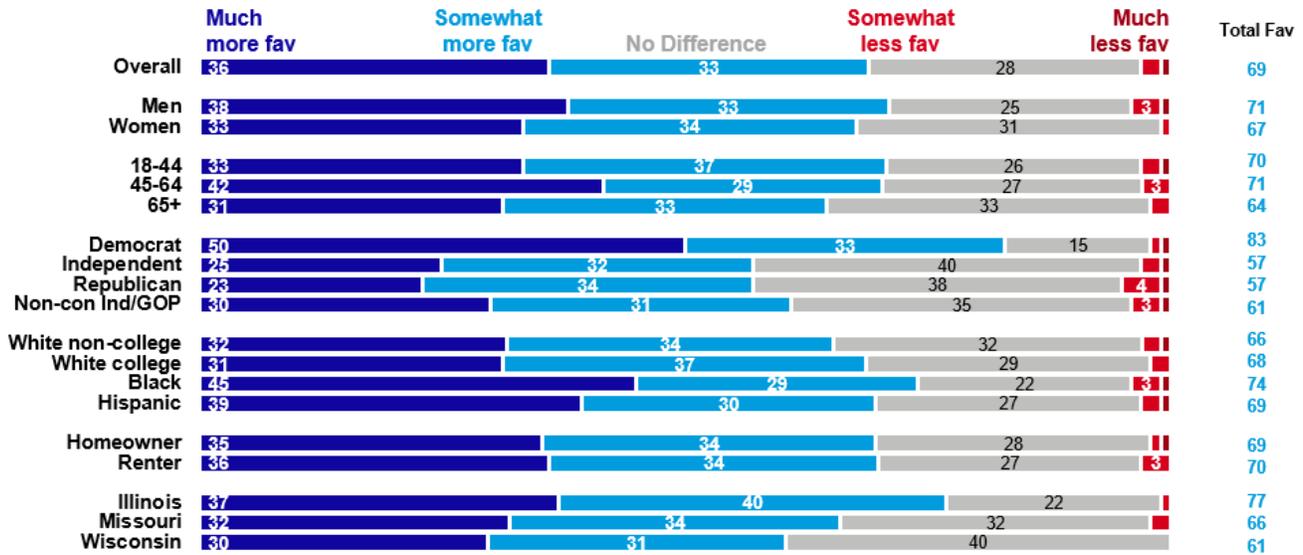
After a brief background description* of lead pipes and the proposed EPA rule, support remains extremely high while driving up the intensity of support. Overall support remains virtually unchanged (from its high position) after the informed description, indicating that support is well-established already, though intensity of support increased in Missouri (57% strongly support up from 50%), Wisconsin (50% strongly support up from 45%), and among Republicans (46% strongly support up from 43%).

*[Informed Message] “Three decades ago, Congress banned the installment of lead water pipes, but allowed existing lead pipes to remain in use. Today, as many as 12 million lead pipes still carry drinking water to millions of homes every day. The EPA – which is responsible for ensuring safe drinking water across the country – currently has a rule that allows most lead pipes to remain in use, and gives the most lead-contaminated water utilities more than 30 years to replace their lead pipes. However, there is a proposal to update the current lead rule that would require all lead pipes to be replaced by water utilities in the next 10 years.”

POLICYMAKERS WHO SUPPORT UPDATING THE EPA RULE ARE VIEWED POSITIVELY

Nearly seven in ten Americans would have a more favorable opinion of a policymaker who supports updating the EPA lead and copper rule. These opinions are not only broad, but strong – with over a third of Americans (36%) saying they would have a *much* more favorable opinion of policymakers who supported an EPA rule that requires water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes in the next ten years or less. Furthermore, favorability towards these policymakers is high even among traditionally unfriendly groups, such as Republicans (57% favorable, 23% much more favorable) – again demonstrating that this is not a partisan issue and one that broad majorities of Americans support.

Would you have a more or less favorable opinion towards a policymaker who supports an EPA rule that requires water utilities to replace all of their lead pipes in the next 10 years or less?



A WIDE RANGE OF POTENTIAL PROVISIONS IN AN UPDATED EPA RULE ARE POPULAR

All of the potential provisions in a revised EPA rule that we tested showed near universal support – including provisions that require water utilities to replace lead pipes at a rate of at least 10% per year (91% support, 56% strong support), that water utilities should help schools and daycare centers install water filters to remove lead in their drinking water (90% support, 64% strong support), and that water utilities should be required to fully replace all lead pipes on public and private property (88% support, 58% strong support).

Potential EPA Rule Provisions			
	Strongly Support	Total Support	Total Oppose
Water utilities should be required to rigorously monitor lead levels in areas that are at high-risk for lead exposure.	71	95	5
Water utilities should be required to ensure that no one's tap water has an unsafe level of lead.	71	94	6
Water utilities should be required to treat their water in ways that will reduce the amount of lead contamination in water.	68	94	6
Water utilities should institute water sampling protocols that fully capture lead levels in tap water and should be banned from using methods that minimize detections of lead.	66	94	6
Water utilities should be required to identify and disclose all lead pipes that are currently in use.	68	93	7
Water utilities should be required to replace lead pipes at a rate of at least 10% per year.	56	91	9
Water utilities should help schools and daycare centers install water filters to remove lead in their drinking water.	64	90	10
Water utilities should be required to fully replace all lead pipes on public and private property.	58	88	12
Water utilities should fund the full cost of replacing all lead pipes.	54	84	16

Moreover, Americans believe the federal government should intervene on this issue and ensure all existing lead pipes are replaced. In fact, nearly nine in ten Americans agree that *the federal government, along with water utilities and states, should replace all existing lead pipes* (89% agree, 60% strongly agree). With nearly the same share (86%) agreeing that *investments in water infrastructure should be targeted to communities that have been underserved for far too long* (86% agree, 54% strongly agree). Perhaps most striking (given the importance of economic issues today) is the broad agreement that *even if water costs customers somewhat more, it's important for water utilities to get rid of lead pipes and to reduce lead levels in tap water* (86% agree, 50% strongly agree). This too is true in Illinois (52% strongly agree), Missouri (45% strongly agree) and Wisconsin (42% strongly agree) where we see large shares of respondents in strong agreement with that statement.

SUPPORTERS OF AN UPDATED EPA RULE ARE POISED TO WIN A DEBATE ON THE ISSUES

Opposition to an updated rule fails to turn back opinions, even when potential pitfalls of the new rule are introduced.

- **Americans are willing to pay more, if necessary, for safe drinking water**, with strong majorities agreeing that access to safe drinking water is a basic human right and the EPA has the responsibility to put American lives and health ahead of the costs to water utilities (79% agree overall – including 86% of Democrats, 83% of independents, and 71% of Republicans) and few agreeing that forcing water utilities to replace all lead pipes is unnecessary and will cause many utilities to go bankrupt or raise prices on consumers (21% agree overall).
- **Requiring lead pipe replacement on private property is not a vulnerability**, as a majority agreed that water replacement plans should pay for 100% of the cost to replace the lead pipes providing water to homes, no matter if the pipes are under public or private property (80% agree overall – including 86% of Democrats, 81% of independents, and 72% of Republicans), whereas few agreed that water utilities should not be required to remove the part of a lead service line that is under private property (20% agree overall).
- **Timing to replace lead pipes under the current rule is not adequate**, with a majority of Americans agreeing that 30 years of continued lead pipe use falls short, and we need a better plan that will solve this issue sooner (68% agree overall – including 77% of Democrats, 63% of independents, and 60% of Republicans), compared to few who think that we already have a rule in place that will replace lead pipes and put the U.S. on a path to safe water for all (32% agree overall).
- **Water utilities should bear the financial responsibility to replace lead pipes**, with a majority of Americans agreeing that it was the water utilities who installed or approved of these lead pipes years ago, and it should be their responsibility to pay for replacing them (73% agree overall – including 79% of Democrats, 71% of independents, and 67% of Republicans) vs. few agreeing that forcing water utilities to replace all lead pipes, regardless of location or levels of lead exposure is unnecessary (27% agree overall).
- **Environmental justice is important**, as a majority agree safe drinking water should not be determined by socioeconomic status or where you live (68% agree overall), and generally do not side with opponents' statements claiming this rule would be a radical transfer of wealth to liberal ideologues and would hurt American consumers in the name of phony environmental justice (32% agree overall). Here we see Americans move towards their partisan corner a bit more, but still a majority of Republicans (54%) agree that safe drinking water should not be determined by socioeconomic status or where you live – as do Democrats (81%) and independents (69%) as well.

All of which demonstrates that access to safe drinking water is a priority for Americans, that support for updating the EPA's lead and copper rule to require water utilities to replace all lead pipes in the next ten years or less has broad support, that supporters of the proposal are poised to win the debate on all the key issues, and policymakers who join the effort will earn favoritism across demographic groups.

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 1,000 respondents nationwide between October 10th – October 17th, 2022. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 3.1% for this survey. Interviews were conducted online. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the populations of respondents are properly represented.