



Research on AI Data Centers, Costs, & Pollution

Blue Rose Research | Climate Power

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Key Takeaways

Roughly two-thirds of respondents are familiar with the topic of data centers, though just 45% have heard about them being built in their own communities.

A slim majority generally oppose the construction of data centers near residential areas: 52% say they would not support data centers being built near areas where people live, while an additional 8% say they wouldn't oppose them in general but would not support a data center being built in their own community.

- Just 16% of respondents say they support the construction of data centers near residential areas, including their own.
- By a 23pp margin, they also believe that their neighbors would oppose the construction of a data center in their community.

'Utility costs' and 'excessive energy consumption' are top concerns when it comes to data centers.

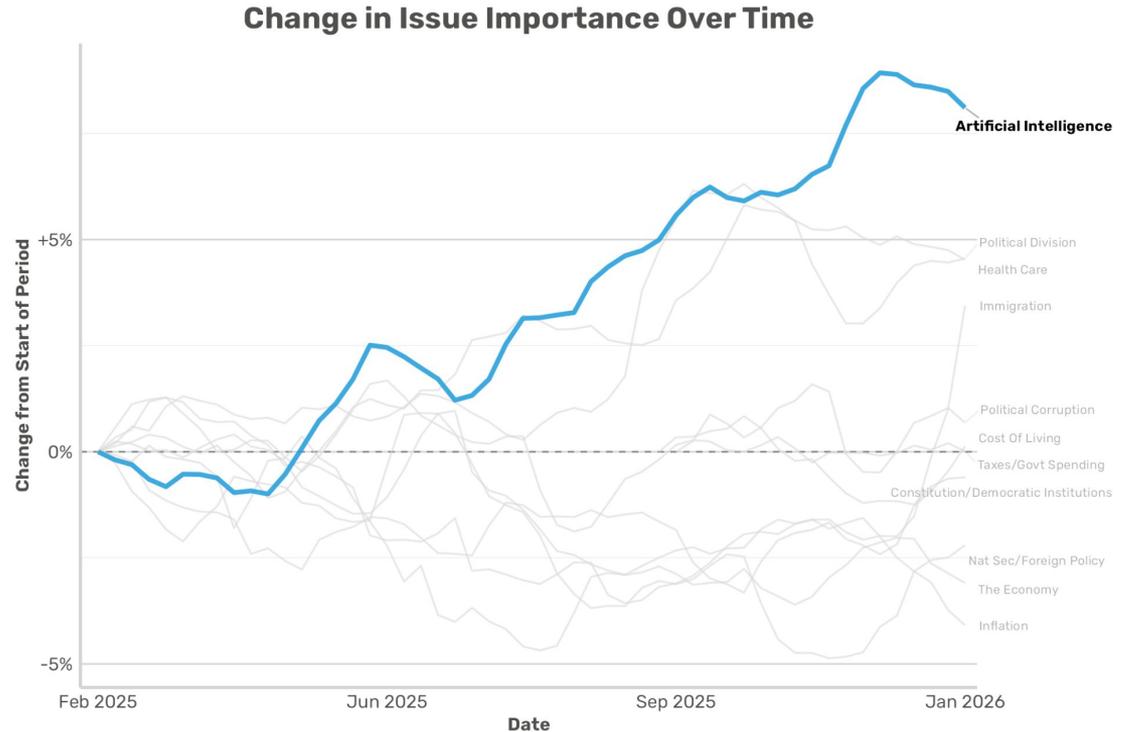
- These issues were selected as the bigger concern 64% of the time and 59% of the time, respectively, when respondents were shown random one-on-one matchups of data center concerns.
- Nearly six in ten say that as the rise of AI leads to more data centers, their energy bills will increase.

Americans support data centers if powered by clean energy but oppose them if powered by natural gas or coal.

- Asked whether they support the construction of data centers powered by fossil fuels, respondents opposed by -16pp.
- However, when asked about **data centers powered by clean energy, respondents supported their construction by +25pp.**

AI is rising in importance faster than any other issue

While still below average in importance (currently #30 of 40 issues), it is rising in importance faster than any other issue we have been tracking.



*Which of these issues do you believe is the most important facing America today?
(as measured as a maxdiff experiment)*

AI arrives at a moment when trust in institutions has collapsed

Nearly two thirds of Americans (64%) believe America is rigged for the elite, including more than two-thirds of swing voters.

Which comes closer to your view?

Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Things in America are rigged for the elite. Big corporations and the wealthy play by their own set of rules, and only they can get ahead.	64%	88%	67%	41%
Things in America are mostly fair for everyone. If you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead.	26%	6%	23%	47%
Not sure	10%	6%	11%	13%

Source: Blue Rose Research surveys via online web panels, N=6,260 December 8-9

This low-trust, populist context is supercharging fears about elites who gain to benefit from AI at the expense of everyday Americans

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“Decisions about how AI is developed and used should not be left alone to a small group of private tech companies.”

Just 27% trust tech companies a lot or some to develop AI to do the right thing.

By a +52 point margin, respondents overwhelmingly agree that decisions about AI should not be left to a small group of private tech companies

Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strongly agree	42%	46%	36%	39%	33%	34%	42%	50%
Somewhat agree	27%	26%	29%	30%	30%	31%	28%	24%
Somewhat disagree	8%	7%	10%	8%	11%	9%	8%	6%
Strongly disagree	9%	10%	11%	9%	11%	11%	9%	8%
Not sure	14%	11%	14%	15%	16%	16%	14%	12%
Total agree	69%	72%	65%	68%	63%	65%	70%	74%
Total disagree	17%	17%	21%	16%	21%	20%	17%	14%
Net	52%	55%	44%	52%	42%	45%	53%	60%

Source: Blue Rose Research surveys via online web panels, N=5,008 January 17-18

Most Americans are familiar with the topic of AI data centers in general, though a minority have heard of them being built in their own community

How much, if at all, have you heard about the construction of new data centers...

Two-thirds of respondents have heard at least a little about the construction of AI data centers in the US. Fewer than in one four are unfamiliar with this issue.

However, just 45% have heard about data centers being built *in their communities*.

	Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
In the US?	A lot	11%	14%	9%	11%
	Some	26%	28%	24%	27%
	A little	29%	29%	26%	31%
	Nothing at all	23%	19%	29%	21%
	Not sure	10%	9%	13%	9%
In your community?	A lot	9%	10%	9%	10%
	Some	16%	16%	15%	16%
	A little	20%	20%	20%	20%
	Nothing at all	43%	42%	43%	44%
	Not sure	11%	11%	13%	10%

A majority oppose building AI data centers near their homes, and expect their neighbors would too

A 52% majority say they oppose the construction of data centers near areas where people live.

An additional 8% say they support the general construction of data centers near communities, but would not support construction in their own communities.

Just 16% say they support construction of data centers near communities, including their own.

Which of the following comes closest to your view regarding AI data centers being built close to where people live?

Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
I support the construction of AI data centers close to where people live, including near my own community.	16%	14%	15%	20%
I support the construction of AI data centers close to where people live, but not near my own community.	8%	7%	7%	8%
I do not support the construction of AI data centers close to where people live.	52%	58%	50%	50%
Not sure	24%	20%	28%	23%

Regardless of your own personal opinion, how much do you think your community and your neighbors would support building data centers near where you live?

Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Support	27%	25%	26%	30%
Oppose	50%	55%	49%	48%
Net support	-23%	-31%	-24%	-18%

Increased utility costs are decisively the top concern when it comes to the impact of data centers

Which of the following do you find most concerning about the construction of AI data centers near communities where people live?

% Picked as most concerning

	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Their energy consumption drives up utility costs for families living nearby	64%	62%	64%	67%
Tech companies will pressure local governments to give up public lands or farmlands to be used for the construction of data centers	60%	56%	59%	63%
Their energy consumption can overload the electrical grid and lead to power outages	59%	56%	58%	62%
They do not provide long-term jobs to offset the workers eliminated by AI	58%	56%	58%	60%
They are often approved without meaningful input from local residents	58%	54%	57%	61%
The public may end up subsidizing the private companies that build the data centers through higher taxes or fees	56%	54%	55%	58%
Data centers can raise long-term costs for maintaining roads, water, and power systems	53%	51%	54%	55%
They benefit large tech companies more than the surrounding community	53%	53%	52%	53%
They take up large amounts of land that could be used for housing or other community needs	52%	51%	53%	51%
They can increase air pollution if powered by fossil fuels, affecting the health of families living nearby	51%	53%	52%	49%
Local governments may have to reallocate resources in order to pay for new infrastructure to support data centers	51%	48%	50%	53%

Concerns about rising utility costs are top of mind for respondents across the board, but especially among conservatives, who picked this concern in 67% matchups compared to 62% of liberals.

Americans overwhelmingly believe AI will increase energy bills, and data centers intensify that concern

A 53% majority agree that greater AI adoption will drive up their energy bills, while just 12% disagree.

When asked about data centers in particular, respondents are even more likely to say that energy costs will increase, with 59% saying their bills will rise compared to just 12% who disagree.

To what extent do you believe the following statement about Artificial Intelligence (AI) is true, if at all?

	Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
More AI adoption will certainly increase my electric and energy bills.	Definitely true	22%	30%	20%	20%
	Mostly true	31%	31%	31%	32%
	Mostly false	9%	8%	9%	11%
	Definitely false	3%	3%	3%	3%
	Not sure	34%	29%	38%	34%
	Net True	+41%	+47%	+41%	+36%
More AI adoption means more data centers, which will increase my electric and energy bills.	Definitely true	25%	31%	23%	23%
	Mostly true	34%	35%	34%	34%
	Mostly false	10%	7%	9%	12%
	Definitely false	2%	3%	2%	2%
	Not sure	29%	25%	32%	28%
	Net True	+47%	+53%	+44%	+40%

How data centers are powered makes a difference—Americans support those powered by clean energy and oppose those powered by fossil fuels

The way in which data centers are powered makes a huge difference: respondents **support** the construction of clean energy data centers by a 25pp margin and **oppose** the construction of fossil fuel-powered data centers by a 16pp margin.

A majority say they would support the construction of clean-powered data centers.

While conservatives are net supportive of fossil fuel-powered data centers, they are still more supportive of clean-powered ones.

If an AI data center were built near your community and powered primarily by [energy source], would you support or oppose it?

	Response	Overall	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Clean energy sources like wind or solar	Support	53%	56%	52%	50%
	Oppose	28%	26%	25%	31%
	Net	25%	30%	27%	19%
Fossil fuels like coal or natural gas	Support	31%	20%	28%	42%
	Oppose	47%	62%	46%	36%
	Net	-16%	-43%	-19%	6%

Methodology

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Issue Polling

Blue Rose Research collected 5,428 responses via online surveys nationally between January 30 and February 3, 2026. Responses are weighted to the 2024 electorate.

Maxdiff Polling

Blue Rose Research collected 3,034 responses via online surveys nationally between January 30 and February 1, 2026. Respondents are presented with several randomized matchups of 2 statements and are asked to select one based on the following question: *“Which of the following do you find most concerning about the construction of AI data centers near communities where people live?”*

Each value represents how often each statement was selected by respondents paired with any other statement in the test. Higher values mean that people chose that statement more than the others, and lower means people chose it less than others. Responses are weighted to the 2024 electorate.