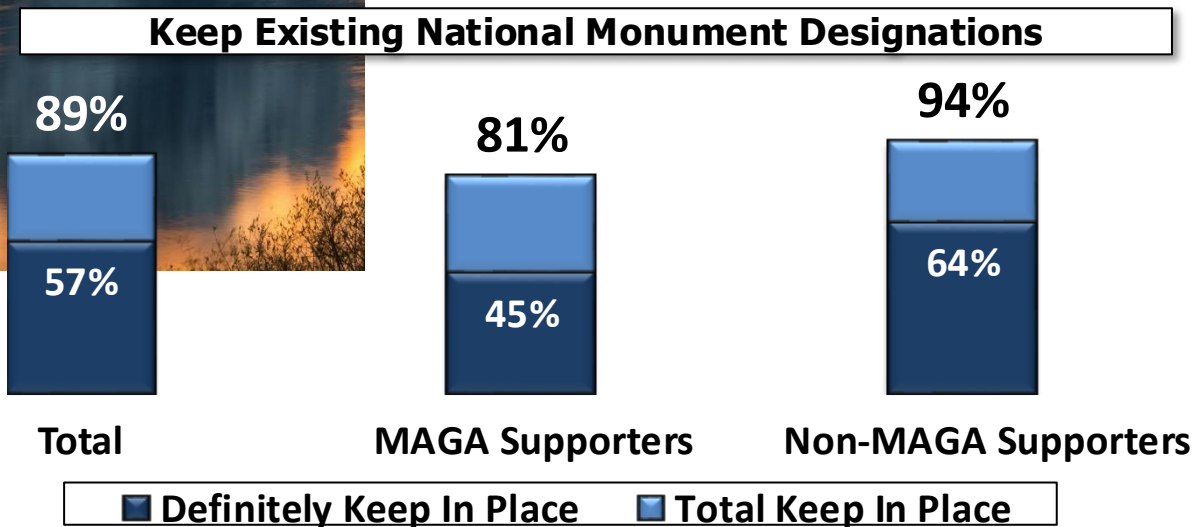


Conservation and Public Lands in the West



Westerners overwhelmingly want to protect their national public lands. There is no appetite for removing national monument designations or selling public lands. Voters consistently and strongly back ensuring Native American representation in decision making related to national public lands. This ubiquitous support is likely rooted in the fact that nearly nine-in-ten have visited national public lands in the last year, and many are concerned about the loss of natural areas in their state.

Western voters across the political spectrum support keeping national monument designations in place. Nearly nine-in-ten Western voters (89 percent) say national monument designations for some public lands protected over the last decade should be kept in place – not removed. In fact, three-in-five (57 percent) say they should “definitely” be kept in place. Strong majorities from all parties support keeping the existing designations in place, including four-in-five self-proclaimed MAGA supporters, as seen below.



Western voters reject selling public lands to address housing problems in their state. By more than a five-to-one margin, Westerners would rather address affordable housing shortages by building more housing within existing communities rather than selling some national public lands in order to address the need for more housing:

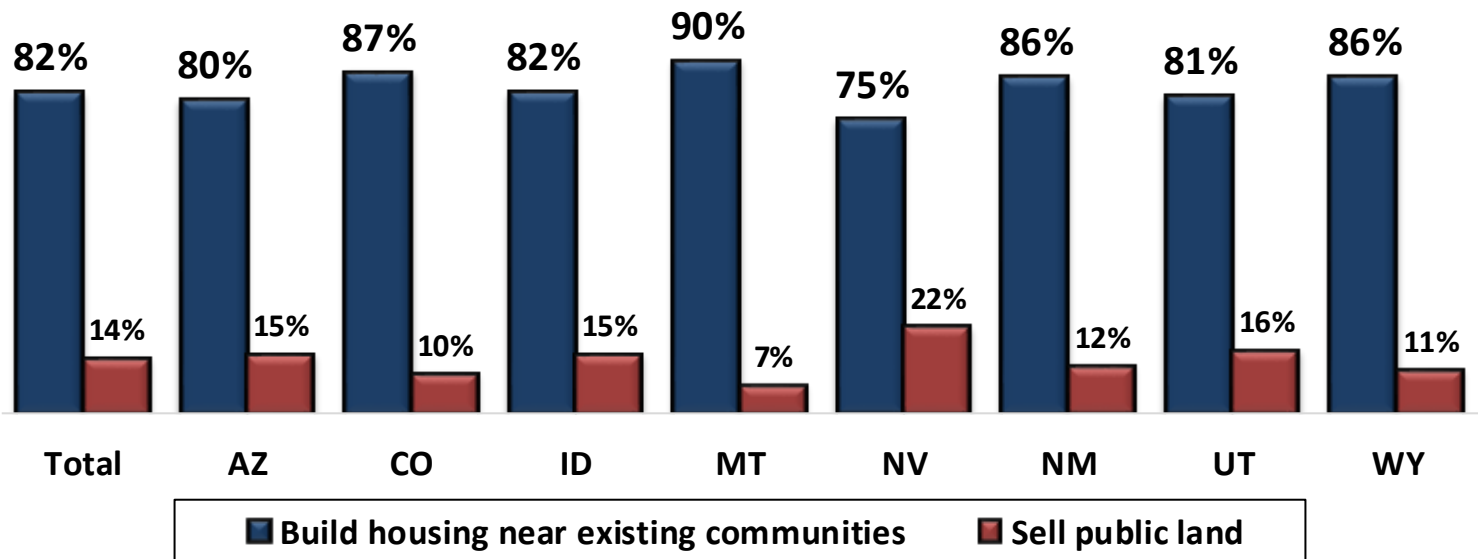
Building more housing within or close to existing communities near jobs, roads, and transit

82%

Selling some limited areas of national public lands to develop housing on natural areas

14%

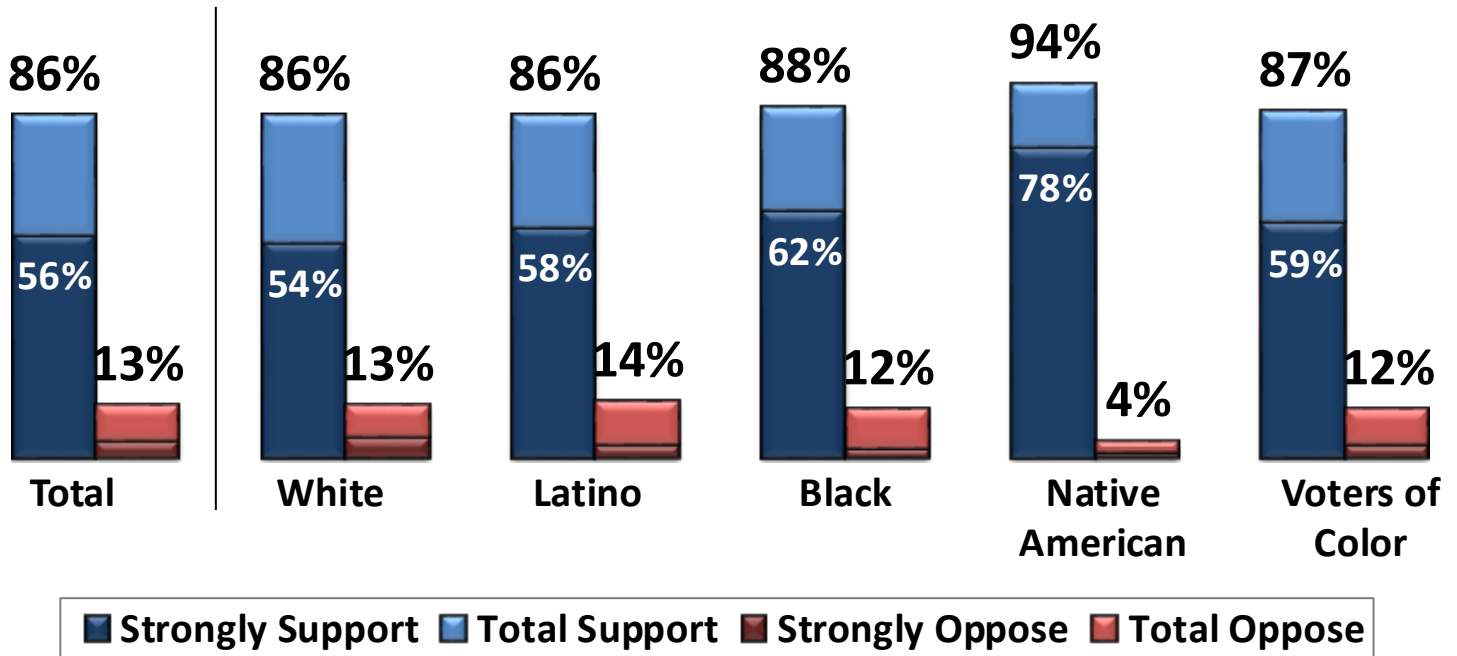
Voters in Montana are particularly wary of selling public land for housing development, with a mere seven percent saying this is the best approach, but voters in every single state prefer housing to be built within existing communities near jobs, roads, and transit.



Similarly, Westerners are unsupportive of expanding access to public lands available to private companies for commercial logging, with three-in-five (60 percent) saying they are opposed and more than a third (34 percent) strongly opposed.



Western voters are consistent in wanting Native American tribes to have greater input into how national public lands that contain sacred sites are managed. Over the last four years, voters have remained consistent in their support for ensuring representation of Native Americans in making decisions about national public lands that contain sites sacred to or culturally important to their tribe. This year, 86 percent voice support, and more than half (56 percent) are strongly supportive. Unsurprisingly, support is strongest among Native Americans (94 percent support; 78 percent strongly support), although majorities of all racial and ethnic subgroups also express support, as shown below.



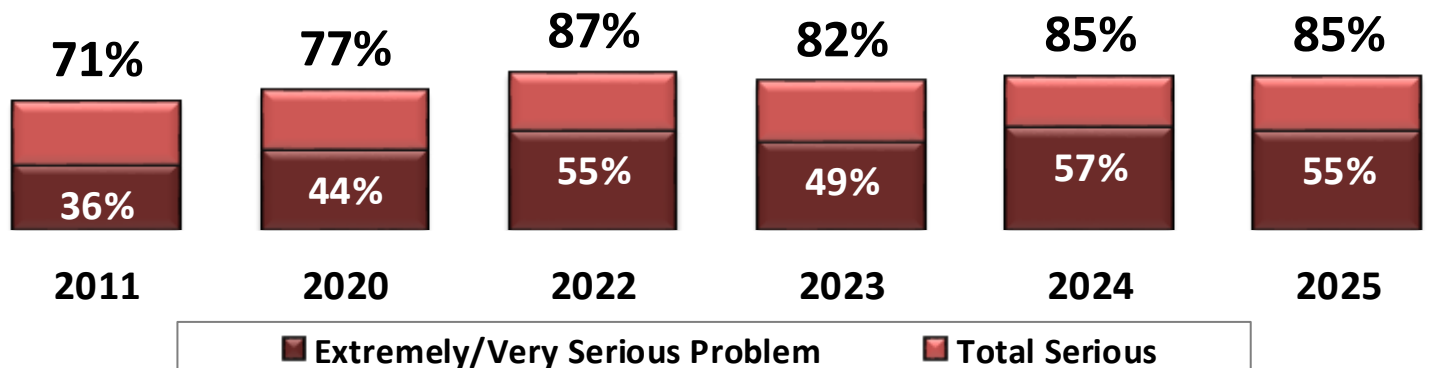
Support for policies to protect national public lands is rooted in the fact that Westerners love and enjoy the natural beauty of their states. Voters were asked to identify what they liked most about living in the Western United States, and the most frequently mentioned response was something about the natural beauty, scenery or mountains (30 percent volunteered this type of response).

Westerners are experiencing nature first-hand - nearly nine-in-ten (87 percent) say that they have visited national public lands in the last year. Voters in Wyoming and Montana have visited national public lands the most, with three-in-ten (30 percent and 29 percent, respectively) saying they have visited more than 20 times in the last year. Large shares of Westerners living in rural areas (27 percent), Native Americans (22 percent), and sportsmen (19 percent) also say they have visited national public lands more than 20 times in the last year.

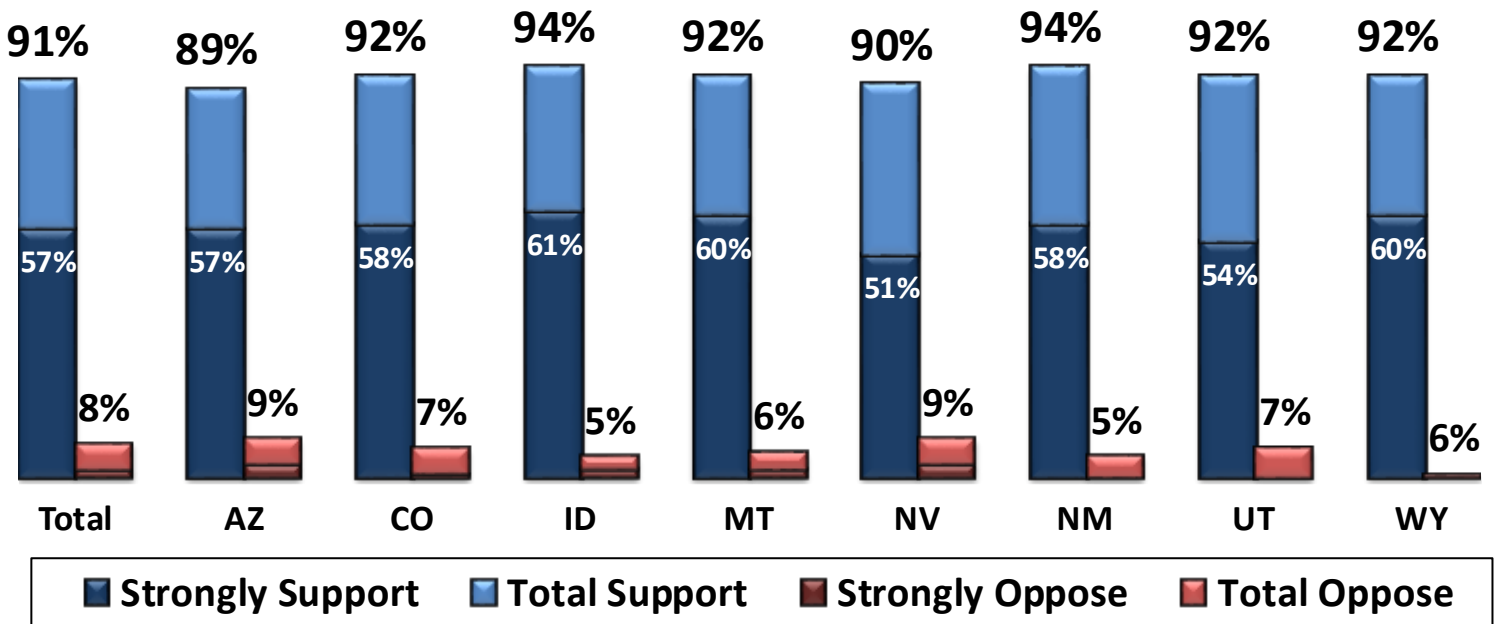
When asked why they visited national public lands, Westerners mention a desire to enjoy nature and fresh air more than anything else. As one Montana resident said:

“Camping under the stars and waking up to the sounds of nature is an experience like no other.”

Westerners continue to express concern about the loss of natural areas in their state. Overall, more than four-in-five Westerners (83 percent) are now expressing concern about the loss of natural areas, characterizing it as a serious problem. Among the five states asked about this issue in 2011 (Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming), those saying loss of natural areas is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem has steadily increased. 55 percent of Westerners in these five states today say it is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem, up 19 points from 2011.



There is overwhelming support for one key conservation tool - the use of land conservation easements. More than nine-in-ten voters (91 percent) support allowing private landowners the ability to conserve their lands as working farms, ranches, natural areas and wildlife habitat in their state through voluntary land conservation easements without government interference. Conservation easements without government interference is particularly appealing to Republican voters, with 94 percent expressing support compared to 91 percent of independents and 87 percent of Democrats. States with higher concentrations of Republican voters, including Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, show the highest intensity of support.



Westerners also offer near unanimous support for preserving their experience in national public lands through “dark skies” proposals. Almost nine-in-ten (89 percent) voters in this region back “managing public lands to ensure there are more outdoor places free of light pollution to see the stars at night.” Every single state supports this “dark skies” proposal by 80% or more, and there is deep agreement across party lines with 83% of Republicans favoring it alongside 91% of independents and 95% of Democrats.