

MAY 13, 2026

Americans Oppose AI Data Centers in Their Area

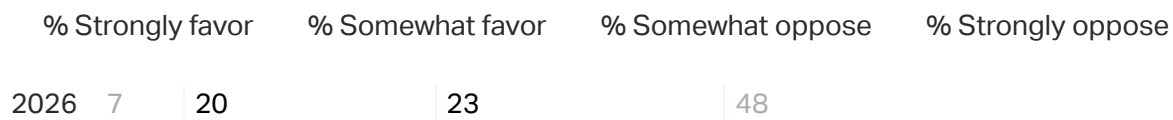


BY **JEFFREY M. JONES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Seven in 10 Americans oppose constructing data centers for artificial intelligence in their local area, including nearly half, 48%, who are strongly opposed. Barely a quarter favor these projects, with 7% strongly in favor.

Seven in 10 Americans Oppose Local Construction of AI Data Centers

Overall, would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the construction of a data center in your area to support artificial intelligence, or AI, technology in the U.S.?



March 2-18, 2026
"No opinion" percentage not shown

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GALLUP

These results, from a March 2-18 Gallup survey, represent the first time Gallup has asked about data center construction, a topic that has met fierce opposition from local residents in many parts of the country. These data centers house computing equipment that helps power AI technology used by businesses, universities and other institutions. The centers cover large areas of land, require extensive amounts of electricity to operate and need substantial water to cool the equipment, raising concerns about their impact on the environment and local electric bills.

The data center question parallels the wording Gallup uses to ask about [local nuclear power plant construction](#). In the same March survey, 53% of Americans say they oppose building a nuclear energy plant in their area, far less than the 71% opposed to data center construction. Since Gallup first asked the nuclear power plant question in 2001, the high point in opposition has been 63%.

Opposition Tied to Environmental, Quality-of-Life Concerns

The March survey asked people to rate their level of concern about the [environmental impact of AI data centers](#). Forty-six percent say they worry a great deal and 24% a fair amount, largely mirroring the degrees of opposition to data center construction.

To gain a deeper understanding of people's reasons for favoring or opposing data center construction in their area, Gallup asked an open-ended question on an April web survey using the Gallup Panel. Americans who favor the building of a data center in their

area mostly cite the potential economic benefits. Opponents of data centers have more varied reasons for their position, but they focus mostly on environmental concerns.

Half of opponents mention data centers' excessive use of resources, including 18% each mentioning their use of water and energy. Sixteen percent mention a related environmental concern of pollution, including noise pollution and air and water pollution.

About one in five opponents are concerned with the impact on local quality of life, including increased population, increased traffic and preferring that the land be used for other purposes. A similar share mention potentially negative economic consequences, including higher utility bills, cost-of-living increases, and the cost of building the data centers (which could involve the use of taxpayer funds).

Most of the remaining opposition stems from general or specific concerns about artificial intelligence.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of those in favor of building data centers in their area cite the economic benefits, including 55% who mention increased job opportunities specifically. Others mention increased tax revenue (13%), housing and infrastructure development, and general economic benefits.

Smaller shares of data center proponents mention the potential benefits of AI to technology or themselves, personally.

Majority of Democrats Strongly Oppose Data Centers

Majorities of all major demographic groups, including all party groups, say they would oppose having a data center built where they live. However, Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to be *strongly* opposed, 56% vs. 39%, with independents between the two at 48%.

Women (55%) are also more likely than men (43%) to register strong opposition to data center construction.

There are no meaningful differences in total opposition by age, race, education, income or urbanicity. Opposition is slightly lower among those living in the West (63%) and East (68%) than in the Midwest (76%) and South (75%).

Environmental concerns are a bigger source of differences in opposition to data center construction. Seventy-eight percent of U.S. adults who worry about the quality of the environment oppose data center construction, compared with 52% who are not worried.

That is a far bigger gap in opposition to data centers than is seen among those who are worried (73%) versus not worried (65%) about the availability and affordability of energy.

Implications

For AI usage to expand in the U.S., data centers that can handle the necessary computing power will have to be built. Such centers have already been built in some areas, usually funded by the large technology companies seeking to offer AI services. But most Americans appear to be adopting a “not in my backyard” attitude to building additional data centers, and that attitude is especially intense, given that nearly half strongly oppose that construction.

Overcoming this opposition stands as a major hurdle in the expansion of AI computing. The intensity of opposition means that proposed data centers are likely to spur grassroots activism from local residents as well as legal challenges. It also indicates that AI infrastructure could become an important campaign issue in local and state elections this year, and politicians who favor data centers in their area are likely taking a politically risky stance.

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