

Public Opinion on Water Fluoridation

What Americans Think and How to Reach Them

In July 2025, CareQuest Institute for Oral Health partnered with Marketing for Change to conduct updated message testing on fluoride. The research demonstrated a clear opportunity to strengthen public and policymaker support for water fluoridation at a time when more people are forming opinions about the issue. The findings can help capitalize on the fact that most Americans trust health care professionals, and clear, science-based messages can shift opinions, especially among those who have yet to form strong views.

A More Engaged, Yet Movable Audience

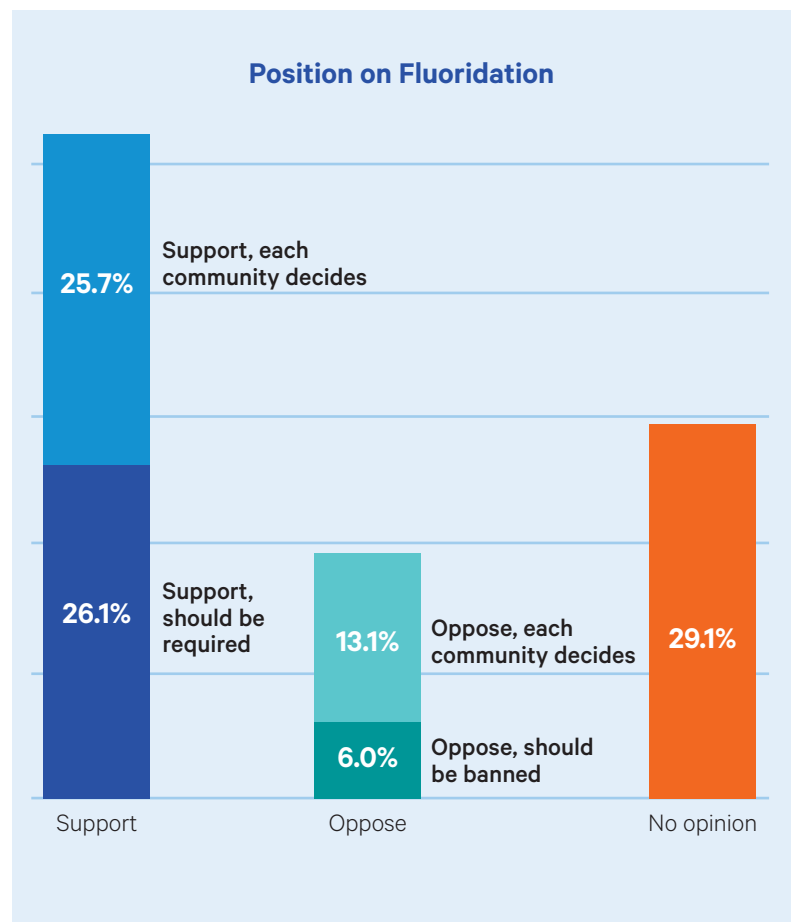
Compared to surveys in January 2025 and August 2016, more Americans are paying attention to whether their water is fluoridated and are aware of the public debate. Support for fluoridation has risen since 2016, yet opinions remain soft — 29% have no opinion, and many others hold only weak positions — though positions may strengthen as this issue continues to get more mainstream attention. This creates a significant opening to move undecideds and weak opponents toward active support, while motivating passive supporters to become vocal advocates.

The Shape of Support and Opposition

Today, 52% of Americans support water fluoridation, and 14% would actively defend it. Nineteen percent oppose fluoridation, with 15% saying they would actively work to remove it. While opposition is smaller, it tends to be more active and vocal. Political affiliation plays a role: Harris voters are more likely to support fluoridation and trust a wide range of messengers; Trump voters are less trusting overall but nearly half still support fluoridation, and only 9% favor bans.

Trusted Voices

Health professionals remain the most influential messengers. Nearly 80% of Americans trust their own doctor or pediatrician on fluoride, followed closely by their dentists, most family doctors and pediatricians, water quality experts, and scientists. Even among Trump voters and fluoride opponents, trust in personal health care providers remains high. This trust creates a powerful pathway for delivering accurate information.



Messages That Move People

Exposure to clear, fact-based statements increases both support and willingness to take action.

The strongest tested talking points include:

- **Over 7,000 studies confirm fluoridation is safe and effective.**
- **Fluoridated water reduces tooth decay by 25% in children and adults by strengthening enamel and root structure.**
- **Every major US health organization, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Mayo Clinic, supports fluoridation.**
- **Dentists and pediatricians recommend both topical fluoride and fluoridated drinking water for maximum benefit.**
- **Communities like Calgary reinstated fluoridation after cavity rates spiked when it was removed.**

Visuals were also shown to amplify impact. Images of severe dental decay or tooth loss provoke strong emotional reactions, even among opponents, particularly when thinking about children. These visuals were tested in context with significant background on the issue, and they may not be as effective if used solely for shock value.

Most Americans — 4 out of 5 — believe government has a role in protecting oral health. With only 6% supporting fluoride bans, there is little public appetite for policy efforts to remove it. With the right messengers, emotionally resonant visuals, and a balanced narrative combining science, health benefits, and economic impact, there is a clear opportunity to expand and solidify support for water fluoridation across political and demographic lines.

