

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN-LEANING INDEPENDENTS ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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OVERVIEW

This report contains topline results of a national survey of 726 adults who recently identified as a Republican or a Republican-leaning Independent.

The sample was drawn from 938 people who – during their participation in one of three nationally-representative *Climate Change in the American Mind* surveys conducted by Yale and George Mason University in the spring and fall of 2012 and the fall of 2011 – had previously identified themselves as being a Republican or a Republican-leaning Independent. Members of the sample were re-contacted in January 2013 and asked to participate in this survey; the completion rate was 77%.

To avoid selection bias, participants were not told that the survey would focus on climate change. To avoid the sensitizing effect of climate change questions on answers to questions about energy policies, the survey first assessed beliefs and opinions about energy-related issues before asking about climate change-related issues. For a more complete description of the study design, see the Methods section at the end of this document.

SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

A large majority of survey respondents consider themselves to be conservative (72%) or middle of the road (22%). Similarly, most consider themselves to be Republicans (68%), or Independents (20%). A small number of respondents indicated in the re-contact survey that they now have no party identification or are not interested in politics (5%), are Democrats (4%) or consider themselves to be members of an “other” party (2%). Of those who identify as Independents, approximately half (47%) voted in the Republican primary elections. A small minority of all respondents (17%) consider themselves part of the Tea Party movement.

Republicans Prefer Clean Energy¹ as America’s Energy Future

A large majority of respondents (77%) support using renewable energy in America much more or somewhat more than it is used today (51% and 26%, respectively). Among those who support expanded use of renewable energy, the most common preferred timing for taking such action is “immediately” (69%).

A slight majority of all respondents (52%) support using fossil fuels in American much less or somewhat less than it is used today (21% and 31%, respectively). Among those who support reduced use of fossil fuels, the most common preferred timing is “immediately” (52%). By a margin of almost 2 to 1 (64% vs. 35%), respondents say America should take action to reduce our fossil fuel use.

¹ “Clean energy” is the term respondents most preferred to describe renewable energy sources, and “fossil fuel energy” is the term most preferred for fossil fuel sources.

The Perceived Benefits of Clean Energy Outweigh the Costs

A majority of respondents believe that taking steps to reduce our use of fossil fuels will benefit the nation in a number of ways – for example, by helping free us from dependence on foreign oil (66%), saving resources for our children and grandchildren to use (57%), and providing a better life for our children and grandchildren (56%) – while none of the potential costs associated with taking action were seen as likely by a majority of respondents. Respondents selected more benefits of reducing fossil fuels than costs (51% of benefits were selected vs. 33% of costs were selected, on average).

Respondents were asked which potential benefit is most important to them personally. Freeing the U.S. from dependence on foreign oil was the top choice (48%), followed by saving resources for our children and grandchildren (14%), and providing a better life for our children and grandchildren (11%). When asked which cost was of greatest concern to them personally, the top choice was more government regulation (42%), followed by rising energy prices (31%), and costing jobs and harming our economy (15%).

A Majority Think Climate Change is Happening and Support an American Response to the Issue

A majority of respondents (52%) think climate change is happening, while 26% think it isn't, and 22% "don't know." When presented with one of two conservative arguments saying America should respond to climate change, a solid majority (62%) say America absolutely should (23%) or probably should (39%) take steps to address climate change.

Only 1/3 Agree with Republican Party Positions on Climate Change and 1/2 on Energy

Only a minority of respondents agree with the Republican Party's position on climate change (35%), while a slight majority of respondents agree with the Party's position on meeting America's energy needs (51%).

Elected Leaders are Perceived as Unresponsive to Respondents' Views about Climate Change

Few respondents (less than 20%) think people like themselves have influence over what elected officials think or do regarding climate change.

DETAILED SURVEY RESPONSES

We'd like to know which name you feel best describes oil, coal & natural gas.

	Total (n=726)²
Fossil fuel energy	39%
Reliable energy	29%
Conventional energy	24%
Dirty energy	7%
Other	1%

What name do you feel best describes solar, wind & geothermal energy?

	Total (n=726)
Clean energy	38%
Renewable energy	32%
Unreliable energy	17%
Advanced energy	10%
Other	2%

In the future, do you think the United States should use fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) less, more, or the same amount as we do today? [Respondents who answered “more” or “less” were then asked: **How soon do you think we should start [increasing/reducing] fossil fuel use in the United States?]**

	Total (n=726)
MORE (net)	22%
Much more than today	10%
Somewhat more than today	12%
- How soon? (% “immediately”) ³	74%
SAME amount as today	19%
LESS (net)	51%
Somewhat less than today	31%
Much less than today	21%
- How soon? (% “immediately”) ⁴	52%
Don't Know	8%

² Approximately 10 participants, on average, did not give responses to each of the various questions in the survey.

³ Percent responses are of those who answered “much more” or “somewhat more than today.”

⁴ Percent responses are of those who answered “much less” or “somewhat less than today.”

In the future, do you think the United States should use renewable energy sources (solar, wind & geothermal) less, more, or the same amount as we do today?

[Respondents who answered “more” or “less” were asked: **How soon do you think we should start [increasing/reducing] renewable use in the United States?**]

	Total (n=726)
MORE (net)	77%
Much more than today	51%
Somewhat more than today	26%
- How soon? (% “immediately”)	69%
SAME amount as today	8%
LESS (net)	9%
Somewhat less than today	5%
Much less than today	4%
- How soon? (% “immediately”)	63%
Don’t Know	6%

If our nation takes steps to reduce our use of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas), it will...

	Total (n=726)
BENEFITS	
(Average number of benefits selected)	4.1 / 9
Help free us from dependence on foreign oil	66%
Save resources for our children & grandchildren to use	57%
Provide a better life for our children & grandchildren	56%
Improve people’s health	46%
Protect God’s creation	43%
Create jobs and a stronger economy	41%
Save many plants & animal species from extinction	37%
Limit climate change	30%
Improve our national security	30%
COSTS	
(Average number of costs selected)	2.0 / 6
Lead to more government regulation	50%
Cause energy prices to rise	48%
Cost jobs and harm our economy	33%
Interfere with the free market	26%
Harm poor people more than it helps them	22%
Undermine American sovereignty	16%

Which of these outcomes associated with reducing fossil fuel use is most important to you personally?

	Total (n=538)⁵
Help free us from dependence on foreign oil	48%
Save resources of our children & grandchildren to use	14%
Provide a better life for our children & grandchildren	11%
Protect God's creation	8%
Limit climate change	4%
Create jobs and a stronger economy	5%
Improve people's health	4%
Improve our national security	3%
Save plants and animal species from extinction	3%

Which of these outcomes associated with reducing fossil fuel use is of most concern to you (i.e., worries you the most)?

	Total (n=477)⁶
Lead to more government regulation	42%
Cause energy prices to rise	31%
Cost jobs and harm our economy	15%
Interfere with the free market	4%
Undermine American sovereignty	4%
Harm poor people more than it helps them	4%

In light of the outcomes of reducing U.S. fossil fuel use:

	Total (n=726)
We SHOULD take action to reduce our fossil fuel use	64%
We SHOULD NOT take action to reduce our fossil fuel use	35%

⁵ Participants were asked this question only if they selected one or more benefits in the prior question.

⁶ Participants were asked this question only if they selected one or more costs in the prior question.

Climate change refers to the idea that the world’s average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that other aspects of the world’s climate may change as a result.

What do you think? Do you think that climate change is happening? [Respondents who answered “yes” were asked: How sure are you that climate change is happening? Respondents who answered “no” were asked: How sure are you that climate change is not happening?]

	Total (n=726)
Yes (net)	52%
Extremely sure	9%
Very sure	12%
Somewhat sure	27%
Not at all sure	3%
No (net)	26%
Extremely sure	5%
Very sure	8%
Somewhat sure	10%
Not at all sure	3%
Don’t Know	22%

Some conservatives argue that despite any uncertainties associated with climate change, America should take action to address the issue because ...

[Half the respondents read Version A] **Carbon pollution is fouling our air and our water, and harming our health. We should take steps to maintain the purity of our air and water. As Benjamin Franklin said, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Which best describes your feelings about this? America...**

	Total (n=344)
Should take steps to address climate change (net)	64%
America absolutely <i>should</i> take steps to address climate change	25%
America probably <i>should</i> take steps to address climate change	39%
Should not take steps to address climate change (net)	21%
Absolutely <i>should not</i> take steps to address climate change	9%
Probably <i>should not</i> take steps to address climate change	13%
Don’t know	13%

[The other half of the respondents read Version B] **Our free-enterprise economy only works properly when individuals and companies are held accountable for harm that their actions cause to unconsenting people or the country as a whole. Companies that release heat-trapping pollution into the air should be accountable for those costs. Which best describes your feelings about this? America...**

	Total (n=372)
Should take steps to address climate change (net)	60%
Absolutely <i>should</i> take steps to address climate change	22%
Probably <i>should</i> take steps to address climate change	38%
Should <u>not</u> take steps to address climate change (net)	25%
Absolutely <i>should not</i> take steps to address climate change	10%
Probably <i>should not</i> take steps to address climate change	15%
Don't know	15%

Please rate your agreement with the following statements:

[Using “strongly agree,” “moderately agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” moderately disagree,” “strongly disagree,” or “Don’t know”]

	Total (n=726)		
	% Agree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree nor Disagree
I don't think elected officials care much about what people like me think about climate change.	62%	15%	22%
People like me don't have any say in what the government does about climate change.	56%	19%	23%
Elected officials pay a lot of attention to the views of people like me when deciding what to do about climate change.	8%	64%	25%
If I were to write an elected official about my position on climate change, it might influence their thinking on the issue.	12%	60%	25%

To what extent do you agree with the Republican Party’s position on the issue of ...?

	Total* (n=726)				
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meeting America’s energy needs	16%	35%	24%	6%	2%
Climate change	9%	25%	34%	6%	4%
Taxes	23%	34%	19%	8%	6%
The deficit	29%	31%	16%	5%	5%

* Rows don’t add to 100% because “Don’t know” and “Prefer not to say” are not shown.

In general, do you think of yourself as...

	Total (n=726)
Conservative (net)	72%
Somewhat conservative	45%
Very conservative	27%
Moderate, middle of the road	22%
Liberal (net)	5%
Very liberal	1%
Somewhat liberal	4%

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as...

	Total (n=726)
Republican (net)	68%
A strong Republican	34%
Not a very strong Republican	34%
Independent	20%
Democrat	4%
Other	2%
No party/not interested in politics	5%

[Asked of Independents only]

In 2012, did you vote...

	Total (n=147)
In the Republican primary elections	47%
In the Democratic primary elections	6%
Neither	45%

Do you consider yourself to be part of the Tea Party movement, or not?

	Total (n=726)
Yes	17%
No	63%
Don't know	19%

What is your gender?

	Total (n=726)
Female	48%
Male	52%

What is your age?

	Total (n=726)
18-24	12%
25-34	15%
35-44	16%
45-54	18%
55-64	20%
65-74	13%
75+	6%

What is your marital status?

	Total (n=726)
Married	60%
Widowed	5%
Divorced	11%
Separated	2%
Never married	18%
Living with partner	6%

What is the highest level of education you have received?

	Total (n=726)
Less than high school	7%
High school	32%
Some college	31%
Bachelor's degree or higher	30%

What is your current employment status?

	Total (n=726)
Working – as a paid employee	54%
Working – self employed	5%
Not working – temporary layoff	2%
Not working – looking for work	5%
Not working – retired	21%
Not working – disabled	6%
Not working - other	8%

What state do you reside in? (categorized by region)

	Total (n=726)
Northeast	17%
Midwest	24%
South	40%
West	20%

METHODS

The sample for this survey was drawn from adult members (ages 18 and older) of a nationally representative panel (KnowledgePanel) which is recruited and maintained by the survey research firm GfK. Respondents who identified themselves as Republican or Republican-leaning Independents in one of the *Climate Change in the American Mind* (CCAM) surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012 were re-contacted in January 2013 for the current survey. Respondents were not told that the CCAM and current surveys are related or conducted by the same researchers. Between January 12th and January 27th, a total of 938 people were re-contacted for the current survey and 726 responded, for a completion rate of 77.4%, and an average margin of sampling error of +/- 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. To ensure the sample matches key national demographics such as gender, race, age, region, and education, data were weighted using demographic distributions from the most recent Current Population Survey (CPS).⁷

Details on the prior surveys are described here:

Leiserowitz, Anthony, Edward Maibach, Connie Roser-Renouf, Nicholas Smith & Jay Hmielowski. (2011). *Climate change in the American mind: Public support for climate & energy policies in November 2011*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. <http://environment.yale.edu/climate/files/PolicySupportNovember2011.pdf>

Leiserowitz, Anthony, Edward Maibach & Connie Roser-Renouf & Jay Hmielowski. (2012). *Climate change in the American mind: Public support for climate & energy policies in March 2012*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. <http://environment.yale.edu/climate/files/Policy-Support-March-2012.pdf>

Leiserowitz, Anthony, Edward Maibach, Connie Roser-Renouf, Geoff Feinberg, & Peter Howe. (2012). *Climate change in the American mind: Public support for climate & energy policies in September 2012*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. <http://environment.yale.edu/climate/publications/Policy-Support-September-2012>

⁷ Weighting variables were: gender (male/female); age (18-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60+); race/Hispanic ethnicity (White/non-Hispanic, Black/non-Hispanic, other/non-Hispanic, 2+ races/non-Hispanic, Hispanic); education (less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor and beyond); census region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West); metropolitan area (yes, no); and internet access (yes, no). Benchmark distributions for internet access among the U.S. population of adults were obtained from panel recruitment data since this measure is not collected as part of the CPS.