

Poll: Americans believe U.S. headed in wrong direction on energy

October 20 2011

A poll released today by The University of Texas at Austin found less than 14 percent of Americans think the country is headed in the right direction on energy. Of more than 3,400 consumers surveyed, 84 percent were worried about U.S. consumption of oil from foreign sources and 76 percent about a lack of progress in developing better ways to use energy efficiently and develop renewable sources.

While jobs overwhelmingly top the list of national concerns, the majority of Americans care about energy issues. For instance, the poll found 68 percent are concerned about the [energy efficiency](#) of their homes and 60 percent about global energy issues.

The inaugural University of Texas at Austin Energy Poll, developed by the McCombs School of Business' Energy Management and [Innovation Center](#), seeks to provide an objective, authoritative look at consumer attitudes and perspectives on key energy issues. It is designed to help inform national discussion, business planning and policy development. To be conducted biannually, the online poll rates leadership on energy issues, measures consumers' energy priorities, and tracks knowledge and [energy consumption](#) behaviors. The poll's design was a collaborative effort of academics and polling experts, nongovernmental organizations, large energy users and energy producers.

"With energy so critical to our quality of life and economic health, we saw a real need for an ongoing, comprehensive and independent look at consumer energy perspectives," said Bill Powers, president of The

University of Texas at Austin.

"This survey shows that the public craves leadership on energy issues. Through our analysis of the data, we hope to add an authoritative voice to public debate on energy issues. The Energy Poll fits well with our commitment as a world-class research university to change the world for the better," he said.

Future iterations of the poll also will provide a single-number "energy index" that tracks consumer opinions on energy issues over time and will explore topical energy issues.

Results indicate a lack of satisfaction with leadership for our energy future. Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the job that 26 different organizations, corporations, institutions and government bodies were doing to address energy issues. Respondents indicated greatest satisfaction with their own performance, followed by scientists and engineers, academic and research institutions, and renewable energy firms. The public overall was much less satisfied with how government and big business are addressing energy issues. Congress — with ratings of 8 percent satisfied, 71 percent dissatisfied — ranked dead last.

Energy prices are the most compelling and immediate issue for consumers. The majority of Americans see energy prices as high and likely to increase. For instance, 69 percent of middle-aged households with children expect energy costs to grow as a percentage of their household budget in the next year. And while only 24 percent of respondents consider themselves knowledgeable about energy, four out of five consumers are interested in learning more about how to reduce their energy use.

Energy is not viewed as simply a short-term issue. More believe that the

nation's energy situation will be worse in 25 years than believe it will be better, although younger and more Democratic voters are more optimistic about the future. More than half (57 percent) of Americans expect that they will make changes in their behavior and adopt new technologies to address these issues. Younger respondents, in particular, were more likely to say they expected to use energy-saving alternatives in the next five years, including smart meters, solar panels, and hybrid or electric vehicles.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in a tough economy, consumers were less concerned about energy's impact on the environment than on their wallets. But they ranked economic growth (37 percent) only slightly more important than preventing harm to the environment (33 percent), suggesting support for a balanced approach to energy policy.

The University of Texas at Austin [Energy](#) Poll reflects the views of 3,406 Americans collected during Sept. 14-25. The data were weighted using U.S. Census Bureau figures, as well as propensity scores, to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population.

More information: For more information, visit:
www.utenergypoll.utexas.edu

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

Citation: Poll: Americans believe U.S. headed in wrong direction on energy (2011, October 20) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-poll-americans-wrong-energy.html>

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