

Americans support national clean-energy standard: study

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The average U.S. citizen is willing to pay 13 percent more for electricity in support of a national clean-energy standard (NCES), according to Yale and Harvard researchers in *Nature Climate Change*.

Americans, on average, are willing to pay \$162 per year in higher electricity bills to support a national standard requiring that 80 percent of the energy be "clean," or not derived from [fossil fuels](#). Support was lower for a national standard among nonwhites, older individuals and Republicans.

In addition, the results suggest that the Obama Administration's proposal for a national standard that would expand the definition of clean energy to include natural gas and would require 80 percent clean energy by 2035 could pass both chambers of Congress if it increased average [electricity rates](#) by no more than 5 percent.

Matthew Kotchen, a co-author of the study and associate professor of environmental economics and policy at Yale, said many observers believe that a national clean-energy standard as the only politically feasible alternative to a national energy-climate policy given the diminished prospect for passage of a national cap-and-trade program to control greenhouse-gas emissions and the relatively weak provisions of the EPA's proposed [carbon pollution](#) standard.

"Our aim in this research was to investigate how politically feasible an NCES really is from both an economics and political science

perspective," he said.

The authors conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,010 U.S. citizens between April 23 and May 12. Respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose an NCES, with the goal of 80 percent clean energy by 2035.

Respondents received randomized descriptions of the proposed NCES with one of three definitions for clean energy—renewables only, renewables and natural gas, and renewables and nuclear—and, likewise, differing estimates of how much the NCES would increase annual household [electricity bills](#).

The researchers also used their survey results to simulate congressional voting behavior on an NCES assuming that each member of Congress voted consistently with the preferences of the median voter in their district. The simulation suggests that Senate passage of an NCES would require an average household cost below \$59 per year, while House passage would require costs below \$48 per year.

[Clean energy](#) has become an increasingly important priority in the United States. In 2010 and 2011, Congressional Republicans and Democrats, along with the Obama Administration, proposed mandating clean-power generation for electricity.

More information: "Willingness to Pay and Political Support for a U.S. National Clean Energy Standard," *Nature Climate Change*.

Provided by Yale University

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