

# Energy poll shows public disconnect on energy issues

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(Phys.org) —The latest energy poll conducted by The University of Texas at Austin shows Americans to be less engaged on energy issues than they were six months or a year ago. Survey results also highlight consumer misperceptions about where the United States gets its energy in the midst of a transformative period of domestic energy production and unparalleled technological changes.

The survey of consumer perspectives on energy, conducted Sept. 5–23, shows mixed views on the recent surge in domestic [natural gas](#) production, largely made possible by the widespread use of hydraulic fracturing in tandem with horizontal drilling. Among the 40 percent of Americans who say they are familiar with the technology, only 38 percent support hydraulic fracturing, down from 45 percent six months ago.

That said, an increasing majority of consumers (57 percent, up from 53 percent last fall) see domestic natural gas production as beneficial in lowering carbon emissions. Additionally, more than 4 out of 5 (82 percent) want the federal government to focus on developing natural gas, second only to renewable technologies (89 percent).

"What we're seeing is the real disconnect between energy and the American public," UT Energy Poll Director Sheril Kirshenbaum said. "In some instances, ideology may influence attitudes, but there's unquestionably a lack of understanding across a broad swath of [energy issues](#) that affect each of us."

Seventy percent of those surveyed expressed concern about the portion of their household budget spent on energy, down from 77 percent six months ago. Yet, nearly 3 out of 4 (72 percent) also expect the portion of their household budget spent on energy to increase within the next year.

Americans fare poorly when it comes to general energy literacy. Fifty-eight percent think that the nation's largest foreign supplier of oil is Saudi Arabia, while just 13 percent chose the correct answer, Canada. Thirty-one percent say they are knowledgeable about how energy is produced, delivered and used, but less than half (46 percent) of this group correctly chose Canada as our largest foreign supplier of oil. Responses also varied widely by gender, with 44 percent of men and 20 percent of women describing themselves as knowledgeable about energy.

Other findings from the UT Energy Poll include:

- Among those familiar with [hydraulic fracturing](#), 48 percent of those age 55 and older support its use, while just 31 percent of those younger than 55 say they do. Yet, 29 percent of older Americans think that the U.S. government should permit exports of natural gas to other countries, while 37 percent of younger Americans agree.
- Just 14 percent have read, seen, or heard about energy issues daily, down from 21 percent one year ago. Consumers are also less likely to seek information about reducing their own energy use, or follow local, national, and global [energy](#) issues than in September 2012.
- Women are more likely than men to say they do not know whether [climate change](#) is occurring (14 percent) but more likely (42 percent) to believe their personal actions have an effect on the environment.
- The percentage of Americans who say climate change is occurring held steady at 72 percent, up one point from March.

This includes 87 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of Republicans.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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