

NEW POLL: NEARLY HALF OF AMERICANS ARE MORE CONVINCED THAN THEY WERE FIVE YEARS AGO THAT CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING, WITH EXTREME WEATHER DRIVING THEIR VIEWS

Nearly half also support a carbon tax, with that support higher when told the tax would fund environmental restoration, renewable energy research, and development and other programs.

CHICAGO, Jan. 22, 2018 — Forty-eight percent of Americans find the science on climate change to be more persuasive than it was five years ago, with three-quarters of them crediting recent extreme weather events for changing their views, according to a November 2018 survey of Americans age 18 and older from the [Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago \(EPIC\)](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

Seven in 10 Americans now say that climate change is happening. Party affiliation is associated with this view: 86 percent of Democrats say climate change is happening, and the comparable figure for Republicans and independents is 52 percent and 70 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, 44 percent support a carbon tax, while 29 percent of those surveyed oppose one. Twenty-five percent say they neither support nor oppose it.

When told some ways the funds might be used, support is higher. Two-thirds support a carbon tax if the funds are used for environmental restoration. If respondents are told that the revenues will be rebated to households, support is only modestly higher, at 49 percent.

“It is striking that 67 percent of respondents support a carbon tax when the funds would be used to restore the environment, compared to 49 percent when the funds are rebated to households,” said Michael Greenstone, the Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics, the College, and the Harris School, and director of EPIC. “These findings appear to run counter to the conventional wisdom about the most politically appealing version of a carbon tax and to recent efforts by the federal government to step back from environmental protection.”

The survey results also suggest that the amount that people are willing to pay monthly varies. Fifty-seven percent are willing to pay at least \$1 per month. The share declines with the monthly cost: 23 percent would pay at least \$40 monthly, and 16 percent would pay at least \$100 each month. However, the fact that 43 percent are unwilling to pay anything underscores the polarization about climate change. Party identification and acceptance of climate change are the main correlates of whether people are willing to pay, with Democrats being consistently more inclined to pay a fee.

The survey highlighted one specific policy currently being debated: vehicle fuel efficiency standards. Last summer, the Trump administration proposed a freeze on fuel efficiency standards, rolling back an Obama administration rule that requires automakers to nearly double the fuel economy of passenger vehicles to an average of about 54 miles per gallon by 2025.

Half of those surveyed were told the proposed freeze could mean that greenhouse gas emissions would not be reduced. In those cases, only 21 percent support the freeze. The other half of those surveyed were told the proposed freeze could lead to reduced prices for cars. In response, 49 percent support the freeze.

“The results of the survey demonstrate that most Americans consider climate change a reality and acknowledge that human activity is at least somewhat responsible,” said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. “The survey reveals that nearly half of Americans say they’re more convinced now about climate change than they were five years ago, and many would pay additional fees or taxes to help combat the problem.”

About the Survey

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from EPIC. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak Omnibus®. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. Interviews for this survey were conducted between November 14 and 19, 2018, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,202 completed the survey by web or phone, depending on respondent preference. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

About the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago

The Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) is confronting the global energy challenge by working to ensure that energy markets provide access to reliable, affordable energy, while limiting environmental and social damages. We do this using a unique interdisciplinary approach that translates robust, data-driven research into real-world impacts through strategic outreach and training for the next generation of global energy leaders. epic.uchicago.edu@UChiEnergy

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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