

## **NEW POLL: IN RESPONSE TO THE INCREASING THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, MOST AMERICANS SUPPORT POLICIES TO CONFRONT IT**

*More than half support, and only 16 percent oppose, a clean electricity standard that would decrease the share of electricity coming from traditional sources. More Americans support than oppose requiring all new vehicles to be electric.*

**CHICAGO, October 26, 2021**—As nearly six in ten Americans believe the pace of climate change is increasing, most support policies to confront it and are willing to pay more in their energy bills to combat it, according to a new survey from the [Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago \(EPIC\)](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

When asked about their support for a nationwide fee on carbon emissions, the data indicate that Americans on average are willing to pay \$40 a month for the fee, up from \$27 a month when asked a [similar question in 2018](#). For context, this is roughly equal to a carbon price of \$30 per ton—double the \$15 per ton carbon price [being debated](#) in the Senate and more than the projected cost of [previously proposed policies](#) that would have cost the average household about \$15 per month.

Looking at the range of responses, about half of Americans are willing to pay something to combat climate change. Given options that ranged from as low as \$1 to as high as \$100, support for a carbon fee was strongest for lower dollar amounts and declined as the proposed impact on energy bills increased. Still, 31% of Americans would support the fee even if it meant paying \$100 more for their energy every month. That is more than double the share who said so in the 2018 survey. When told how these carbon fees would be used, Americans' willingness to pay varied modestly.

“The survey illustrates that Americans are willing to spend their own money to fight climate,” said [Michael Greenstone](#), director of EPIC and the Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics at the University of Chicago. “There is meaningful support for carbon pricing among Americans, yet to date we remain the only holdout among the G-7 countries. As Congress grapples with these issues once again, there is a golden opportunity for leaders to be responsive both to the needs of the planet and the views of the American people.”

The poll also asked respondents to consider a broad suite of clean energy policies, many being debated by Congress and the Administration. More than half of Americans support, and only 16 percent oppose, a clean electricity standard that would increase the share of energy coming from clean electricity sources and decrease reliance on traditional sources like coal and natural gas. Democrats overwhelmingly support the measure, while more Republicans support than oppose it.

When it comes to addressing transportation emissions, the largest source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, around half would support a variety of policies polled to transition to electric vehicles. Americans are more likely to support tax incentives or cash rebates to encourage consumers to buy more electric vehicles over government rules. Notably, however, more Americans support than oppose requiring all new vehicles to be electric.

“Climate change is becoming a more pressing issue for many Americans,” said [Jennifer Benz](#), deputy director of The AP-NORC Center. “More Americans consider climate change personally important to them compared to three years ago, and three-quarters of the public report taking personal actions to try and combat it like buying energy-efficient appliances or changing behaviors like driving less.”

The majority’s support of new policies comes as half of Americans are more convinced by the science that climate change is happening than they were five years ago, including about a third of Republicans and two-thirds of Democrats. And while the economy and health care remain the most pressing issues for Americans, 59% say climate change is very or extremely important to them. That share is up from 49% who said the same in 2018 (35% of Republicans, up from 22%, and 80% of Democrats, up from 71%).

Additional findings from the survey include:

- Fifty-three percent of Americans support a modest fee to clean up local power plants that generate harmful pollution when told the pollution is damaging the health of people who live nearby. Similarly, 60% of Americans are willing to pay the monthly fee when told the nearby community is low income, and 51% are willing to pay the monthly fee when told it is a minority community.
- About half of Americans support power lines being built near their homes to carry renewable energy from areas where it is plentiful to areas where demand is high. Support ticks up by the same amount, 52%, when told the action would help confront climate change as when told households would receive a \$60 monthly rebate.
- Less than half, 46%, support providing funding to poorer countries to develop their economies using clean energy sources. Twenty-one percent oppose the measure.
- About half of Americans express support for a modest fee to help towns that have lost their main source of jobs due to federal environmental policies, profitability, or to climate change. Seventy-six percent of Americans have taken at least one action to reduce their emissions or otherwise address climate change, including 60% who have purchased energy-efficient appliances, 44% who have reduced the amount that they drive, and nearly a quarter who have chosen to get their electricity from renewable sources.
- When it comes to influencing views on climate change, Americans say scientists and recent extreme weather events have the greatest influence on their views. Few report being influenced by religious leaders or political leaders from either party.

### **About the Survey**

This nationwide poll was conducted by The AP-NORC Center and the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) from September 8-24, 2021, using TrueNorth<sup>®</sup>, which combines a sample from AmeriSpeak, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago, with a non-probability panel sample. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 5,468 adults representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error is +/- 1.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

### **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](mailto:epic.uchicago.edu@UChiEnergy)

### **About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research**

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

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. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more. Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).

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