

NEW POLL: 2 IN 5 WOULD CONSIDER PURCHASING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE AS THEIR NEXT CAR, BUT THEY REMAIN PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE FOR MANY AMERICANS.

People are more motivated by saving money on gas than reducing their personal impact on climate change and are less willing to pay a fee in their electric bills to combat climate change than they have been in recent years.

CHICAGO, April 11, 2023—Forty-one percent of Americans say they would be at least somewhat likely to purchase an electric vehicle (EV) the next time they are in the market for a new car. But the upfront cost of purchasing the vehicle outweighs the fuel and maintenance savings of owning one in the mind of many Americans, 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](#).

To help with the cost of purchasing and owning an electric vehicle, 49% of adults support the government providing tax credits, cash rebates, or other financial incentives, like those that will soon be available via the Inflation Reduction Act. Another 46% support increasing federal funding for electric vehicle infrastructure such as charging stations, as happened under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Nearly 80% of the public cite the lack of charging options as a barrier to purchasing an EV. This is equally a concern for residents of cities, suburbs, or rural areas. Other policies designed to increase the number of electric vehicles on the road are less popular. Just 35% of Americans support stricter fuel efficiency standards to encourage EV sales and only 27% support requiring that all new car sales be electric or hybrid vehicles by 2035.

“While there is plenty of interest in purchasing an electric vehicle, the high upfront cost of owning one and concerns about the country’s charging infrastructure are barriers to more people driving them,” said Jennifer Benz, deputy director of The AP-NORC Center. “Policies that alleviate these concerns will be a key component of building support for an EV future.”

Having experienced historically high gas prices over the past year, 74% of Americans say saving money on gas is a major or minor reason they would consider purchasing an electric vehicle. Two-thirds say the same about reducing their personal impact on climate change. The economic landscape may have influenced other responses as well. EPIC and AP-NORC have been tracking Americans’ willingness to pay a fee to combat climate change since 2016. Today, just 38% of Americans say they would be willing to pay a monthly carbon fee of \$1, down 14 percentage points from 52% in 2021. Their support for the fee decreases as the impact on their energy bills grows. About 3 in 10 would be willing to pay \$10, \$20, or \$40 monthly, and about 1 in 5 would be willing to pay a monthly fee of \$75 or \$100.

“It’s striking that Americans’ willingness to pay even a \$1 monthly fee to combat climate change fell to below half of respondents—the lowest level since we began tracking this data. On the other hand, a consistent, sizeable minority remains willing to pay quite a bit, even \$100 or more per month. Our estimates suggest that those respondents help keep the overall average at around \$30 per ton of CO₂,” said Michael Greenstone, director of EPIC and the Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics at the University of Chicago. “Still, no matter how you look at it, American’s willingness to

pay for climate policy is far below what research projects climate change will cost society per ton of CO₂ emissions.”

The percent of Americans who say climate change is happening has remained steady in recent years, with 74% saying climate change is happening in the most recent survey. The percent who say climate change is mostly or entirely caused by humans, however, has declined. In 2018, 60% of those who said climate change is happening said it is caused entirely or mostly by human activities as opposed to natural changes in the environment. Today, this has dropped to 49%, with the decline coming from Democrats and independents. In 2018, 72% of Democrats and 61% of independents said climate change is a result of human activities. In 2023, this fell to 60% and 42%, respectively.

Experiencing an extreme weather event such as a hurricane, drought, flood, unusual heat, or wildfires has a significant impact on climate change attitudes. For example, those who have experienced an extreme weather event are more likely to believe that climate change is happening (83% vs. 64%), and to say its pace is accelerating (67% vs. 42%). One in 5 Americans would consider moving to avoid the effects of extreme weather. Those living in the West and South are more likely than those living in the Midwest and Northeast to consider a move.

Additional findings from the survey include:

- As the Inflation Reduction Act begins to make incentives available for renewable power, Americans remain mixed in their support for the power lines needed to deliver that electricity to consumers. Fifty-six percent of Americans support a proposal to build high-voltage power lines to transport renewable energy to places in need, but support dropped to 48% when told that the power lines would be built in their neighborhood.
- About half of Americans think climate policy is important. However, this view is largely partisan. Democrats rank climate change policy as the third most important issue out of six, behind the economy and healthcare and followed by energy policy. Republicans rank climate change as the least important policy issue to them—though, 3 in 10 still cite it as very or extremely important.
- Half of adults say scientists have a lot or a great deal of influence on their views about climate change. Thirty-four percent of Democrats say Democratic leaders have a lot or a great deal of influence on their views, and 19% of Republicans say the same about Republican leaders.
- Most Americans are taking actions to save money on their energy bills such as turning off lights, reducing heat and A/C use, and buying energy efficient appliances. Fewer are making more significant behavioral changes like using renewable energy or driving an electric car.

About the Survey

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, with funding from the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC). Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago, The Associated Press, and EPIC collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using both probability and non-probability sample sources. Interviews for this survey were conducted from January 31-February 15, 2023, with adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The probability sample source is the AmeriSpeak® Panel, NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The non-probability sample was provided by Dynata based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education.

The overall margin of sampling error for the combined sample is +/- 1.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured errors in this or any other survey.

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

About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

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. Online: www.ap.org
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

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 @APNORC

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