

Current Energy Use Seen to Threaten Environment, Economy, Peace

July 12, 2006

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)



On the eve of the St. Petersburg G8 Summit focused on energy security, a 19-nation opinion poll conducted for the BBC World Service shows that large majorities around the world see grave threats from the way the world currently produces and uses energy.

A coal-fired power plant (Phillip J. Redman/U.S. Geological Survey)

- Across all countries polled, majorities express concern that current energy policies pose the triple threats of harming the Earth's environment and climate, destabilizing the global economy, and sparking conflict and wars.
- There is overwhelming support for alternate energy development as well as higher fuel efficiency standards in automobiles.
- In some countries there is concern that major energy suppliers, especially Iran and Venezuela, may withhold oil exports.

More detailed findings include:

- Fully eight in ten citizens (81%) across the 19 countries are concerned about the impact current energy policy is having on the Earth's environment and climate.
- This concern for environmental and climate impacts is closely followed by three in four citizens expressing concern that energy shortages and prices will destabilize the world economy (77%) and that competition for energy will lead to greater conflict and war between nations (73%).
- Strong majorities across the 19 countries want governments to actively address energy issues, especially through tax incentives to develop renewable energy supplies (80% favor) and higher fuel efficiency standards for automobiles (67% favor).
- There is relatively lukewarm support for more nuclear energy with just one-half favoring nuclear energy to reduce reliance on oil and coal.

The poll of 19,579 citizens across 19 countries was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on

Concerns About Energy

Average of 19 Countries

Very concerned Somewhat concerned

Energy production/use is harming environment/climate



Energy shortages/prices will destabilize the world economy



Competition for energy will lead to greater war/conflict



BBC, 7/06

International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. GlobeScan coordinated fieldwork between May and July 2006.

Program on International Policy Attitudes Director, Steven Kull, comments, "The poll shows an extraordinary level of agreement that the way the world is producing and using energy is not viable. People around the world will be

looking to the G-8 leaders to address this issue and show a readiness to support significant new steps."

GlobeScan President, Doug Miller, adds "People see the energy status quo as too risky. What's fascinating is that in the midst of historically high energy prices and geopolitical tensions, the number one energy concern in every industrialized country we surveyed is the impact on environment and climate."

Energy Concerns

The largest majorities worldwide express concern about the impact of energy policy on the environment. Robust majorities in all 19 countries, especially among respondents with higher education, express concern that "the way the world produces and uses energy is causing environmental problems, including climate change." Overall, an average of 81 percent expresses concern about this, with 47 percent saying they are very concerned. The highest levels of concern are found in Australia (94%, 69% very), Great Britain (93%, 66% very), Canada (91%, 62% very), and Italy (91%, 60% very). Least concerned are the Poles (57%, 17% very). Also relatively unconcerned are the Indians (61%, 41% very) and Russians (66%, 20% very).

With oil prices hitting record levels in recent weeks, majorities of 60 percent or more in 18 of the 19 countries polled say they fear "that energy shortages and prices will destabilize the world economy." On average, 77 percent express concern about this, including 39 percent who say they are very concerned. Concern about the effect of rising prices on the world economy rises with respondents' level of education.

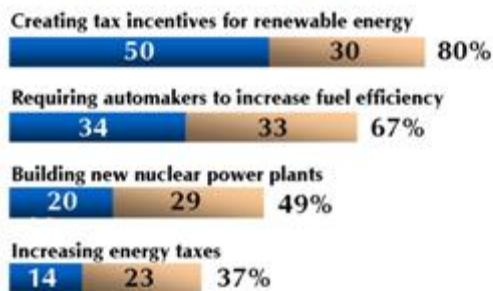
The countries with the highest level of concern are the Philippines (95% concerned, 60% very) and South Korea (93% concerned, 43% very). The least concerned is Russia, where 48 percent are concerned and 41 percent are not. Russia is an oil and gas producer, which has benefited from higher prices. But another important producing country, Canada, is among those most concerned: 85 percent of Canadians say they are concerned and 45 percent say they are very concerned.

In all 19 countries, a majority says they are concerned that "competition for energy will lead to greater conflict and war between nations." On average 73 percent say they are concerned, including 36 percent who are very concerned. Here too, concern rises with education. In only five countries does concern fall below seven in ten: Poland (52%), Russia (56%), India (59%), Mexico (60%) and Israel (62%). Filipinos (88%, 50% very),

Support for Different Measures

Average of 19 Countries

Strongly favor Somewhat favor



and South Koreans (90%, 34% very) are again among the most concerned followed by the British (83%, 46% very).

Support for Government Intervention

In countries around the world, there is strong support, rising with education and income, for governments to play a more active role in addressing the problem of energy. Some

approaches, however, are considerably more popular than others. There is overwhelming support for “creating tax incentives to encourage the development and use of alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind.” On average 80 percent favor this approach, 50 percent strongly. The Italians (95% favor, 75% strongly) are especially enthusiastic, followed by the Australians (93% favor, 74% strongly), Canadians (91% favor, 66% strongly), and the French (91% favor, 63% strongly). Chileans (62% favor, 31% strongly) are mildly supportive as are Egyptians (66% favor, 32% strongly).

Also quite popular are government-imposed standards to “require automakers to increase fuel efficiency, even if this means the price of cars would go up.” Support for this policy rises sharply with education and modestly with income. Overall, an average of 67 percent favors such standards, 34 percent strongly. The most enthusiastic are the Australians (88% favor, 59% strongly), Italians (86% favor, 47% strongly), Ukrainians (81% favor, 38% strongly) and Germans (80% favor, 38% strongly). Respondents were least favorable in Egypt, where a slight majority (51%) opposes it (47% favor); the Philippines, where views are divided (49% favor, 50% oppose); and Poland, where just a plurality favors it (48% favor, 34% oppose).

Americans (77%) are among the most supportive of fuel efficiency standards and the most likely to favor the idea strongly (50%).

The policy that received the lowest levels of support was “increasing energy taxes to encourage conservation.” This idea was endorsed by majorities in only four countries. On average, just 37 percent favor it (14% strongly), while 59 percent oppose it (34% strongly). Support rises modestly with income and education.

Among the four countries favoring higher energy taxes is an emerging economic power whose energy needs have been rising steeply: India (51%). The others are Australia (69%), Great Britain (62%), and Kenya (60%). Opposition is especially strong in Poland (87%), Brazil (87%), Ukraine (86%), and Russia (84%).

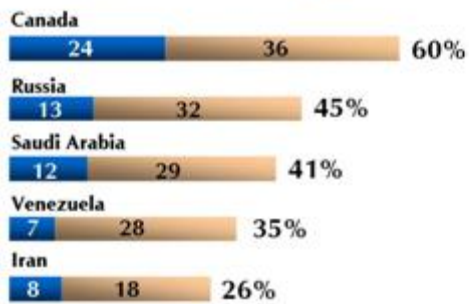
Lukewarm Support for Nuclear Energy

There is lukewarm support for more nuclear energy in the context of reducing reliance on fossil fuels. In 12 countries there is more support than opposition for the idea of “building new nuclear power plants, to reduce reliance on oil and coal.” On average, 49 percent are in favor (20% strongly) of more nuclear plants and 43 percent are opposed (23% strongly). Support increases slightly with income, but not education.

Trust in Energy Suppliers

Average of 19 Countries

■ A lot of trust ■ Some trust



BBC, 7/06

Once again some of the highest support for this approach comes from India (66%), though support is also quite high in Egypt (69%), Kenya (65%) and South Korea (65%). The strongest opposition is found in Ukraine (67%), which in 1986 suffered the world's worst nuclear reactor disaster in Chernobyl. There is also strong opposition in Germany (63%), which has a large anti-nuclear movement, Russia (60%) and France (57%).

Trust in Energy Suppliers

Citizens around the world express concern that major energy suppliers, especially Iran, may withhold energy. Respondents were presented a list of energy exporting countries and asked, "how much do you trust them to follow through on their commitments to deliver energy to other countries?"

Iran is the least trusted. In 17 of the 19 countries, a majority or plurality say they have "not much trust" or "no trust at all" that Iran would follow through on its commitments. On average 62 percent express not much (29%) or no trust (33%), while only 26 percent express some (18%) or a lot of trust (8%). Trust of Iran drops sharply with education.

Only in Egypt and India do majorities say they trust Iran as an energy supplier (73% and 52%, respectively). Germans (86%) are especially skeptical of Iran, followed by Americans (84%), Brazilians (83%), Italians (80%) and Israelis (80%).

Venezuela is the other country widely considered untrustworthy, though the margin is modest in most cases. On average, 43 percent say they do not trust Venezuela, including 17 percent with no trust at all, while 35 percent say they have trust (7% a lot of trust). Trust of Latin America's largest oil exporter increases with education.

Overall five countries lean in favor of trusting Venezuela, 11 lean against, and three are divided. The countries with the largest percentage expressing trust for Venezuela are Australia (55%) and Mexico (52%). The United States is next with nearly one-half of Americans (49%) saying they have at least some trust in Venezuela. Despite President Hugh Chavez's war of words with the Bush administration, less than one-half of Americans (42%) say they have not much or no trust in Venezuela as an oil supplier. The only other countries where pluralities say they trust Venezuela are Canada (48%), and Poland (35%). Most Brazilians (77%) and Egyptians (54%) lack trust as do pluralities in Germany (49%), the Philippines (49%), Italy (47%), South Korea (43%), Israel (42%), Ukraine (42%), Russia (38%) and India (37%).

On average, respondents lean against trusting Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter (42% express trust, 46% do not). However, views vary widely between countries. Five countries endorse Saudi trustworthiness: Egypt (82%), the Philippines (63%), Australia (58%), Kenya (55%) and India (48%). Seven countries do not, including, Brazil (81%) and, not surprisingly, Israel (61%). Some of the least confident

are major Saudi customers, such as Italy (57%), France (56%), and South Korea (55%). Also skeptical is Saudi Arabia's close ally, the United States (57%).

World opinion is evenly divided on whether to trust Russia to follow through on its energy commitments, despite Moscow's decision earlier this year to cut off the natural gas delivered via pipeline to Ukraine. On average, 45 percent say they trust Russia and 45 percent say they do not. In nine countries, the most common response is that they have a lot or some trust in Russia. Among the most confident are Australians (62%), Indians (61%), and Egyptians (61%). Interestingly, most Ukrainians (59%) also say they trust their much larger neighbor as an energy supplier, despite the Ukrainian government's ongoing dispute over prices with Gazprom, Russia's state-controlled gas monopoly.

A majority of Americans (54%) also express confidence in Russia, as do a slim majority of Canadians (52%). Majorities in six countries do not trust Russia, especially Brazil (76%), South Korea (67%), and Poland (61%), a major Russian customer.

The only country that passes the trust test with flying colors is Canada. In 17 of the 19 countries, majorities or pluralities express confidence that Canada will deliver on its commitments. On average 60 percent say they trust Canada, while just 25 percent do not. Canada's largest customers are overwhelmingly confident: 90 percent of Americans trust their northern neighbor, as do 85 percent of Germans, and 79 percent of the British. The sole exceptions are Brazil, where 67 percent say they do not trust Canada as an energy supplier (vs. 22% who do) and Egypt, where 54 percent trust Canada (vs. 38%). But only a plurality of Ukrainians (far fewer than express trust for Russia) say they trust Canada (37% vs. 33%). Russians are also somewhat skeptical (37% vs. 31%) as are Indians (41% vs. 29%) and South Koreans (44% vs. 30%).

In total 19,579 citizens in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Ukraine and the United States were interviewed between 26 May and 2 July 2006. Polling was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In 4 of the 19 countries, the sample was limited to major urban areas. The margin of error per country ranges from +/-2.5 to 4 percent. For more details, please see the [Methodology section](#).