

World Publics Say Oil Needs to Be Replaced as Energy Source

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Most Think Price Will Go Much Higher

Americans Think Their Government Is Acting as if Oil Will Not Run Out

[Full report \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire/methodology\(PDF\)](#)



A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll finds that majorities in 15 of 16 nations surveyed around the world think that oil is running out and governments should make a major effort to find new sources of energy. Most think that future oil prices will be much higher.

Offshore oil platform located in the Gulf of Mexico (Photo: Chad Teer)

Only 22 percent on average believe that "enough new oil will be found so that it can remain a primary source of energy for the foreseeable future." Only in Nigeria does a majority (53%) endorse the view that governments can rely on oil in the long term.

Instead, an average of 70 percent takes the position that governments should assume that "oil is running out and it is necessary to make a major effort to replace oil as a primary source of energy." The largest majorities endorsing this view are found in South Korea (97%), France (91%), Mexico (83%) and China (80%). The smallest are in Russia (53%) and India (54%), while in Nigeria only a minority (45%) holds this view.

"The widespread consensus that oil needs to be replaced as an energy source may be prompted by concerns about the effect of oil on climate change as well as the belief that oil will run out," said Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org.

The poll of 14,896 respondents was conducted between January 10 and February 29, 2008 by WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

Interviews were conducted in 16 nations including most of the largest nations --China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia--as well as Mexico, Iran, Britain, France, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Egypt, Turkey, the Palestinian Territories and South Korea. The nations included represent 58 percent of the world population. Margins of error range from +/-3 to 4 percent.

A majority in the United States (57%), the world's biggest consumer of oil, believes their government is acting on the assumption that oil can remain a primary source of energy. This is also true in Nigeria (63%). However, while most Americans believe their government's assumptions are incorrect, most Nigerians think it is correct.

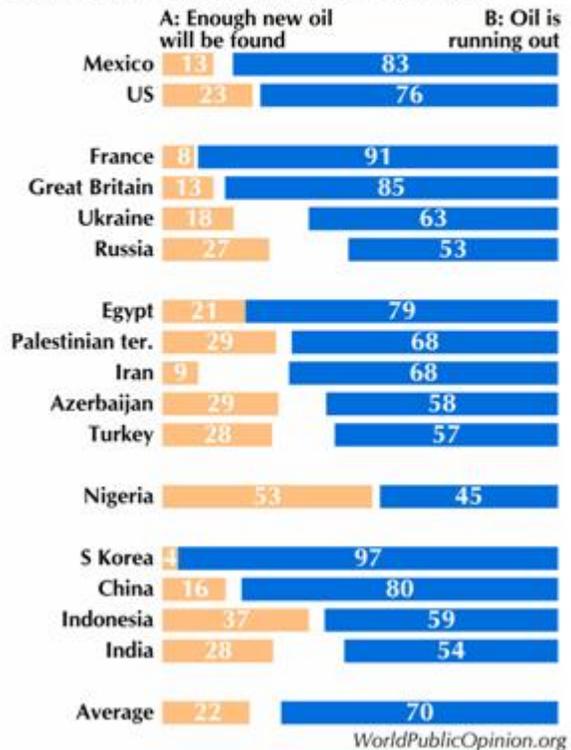
In 12 of the 16 nations, the dominant view among those polled is that their governments assume oil is running out and needs to be replaced. This is especially true in South Korea (79%), China (70%), and Egypt (67%). In Iran, which is developing a controversial nuclear energy program, 63 percent say that oil must be replaced while only 12 percent--the lowest percentage among the countries polled--say their government assumes enough oil can be found.

Publics in two other countries express doubts that their governments are making plans to develop alternative sources of energy. Azerbaijanis say their government assumes enough oil will be found by a margin of 50 percent to 31 percent. Russians are divided: 37 percent think their government assumes there will be enough oil and 34 percent do not. In both countries, modest majorities among those who think their government is counting on oil also believe that this is a mistake.

Interestingly in four of the five countries that are net oil exporters the perception that their government is planning for oil running out is below the average of 53 percent. These include Azerbaijan (31%), Nigeria (32%), Russia (34%),

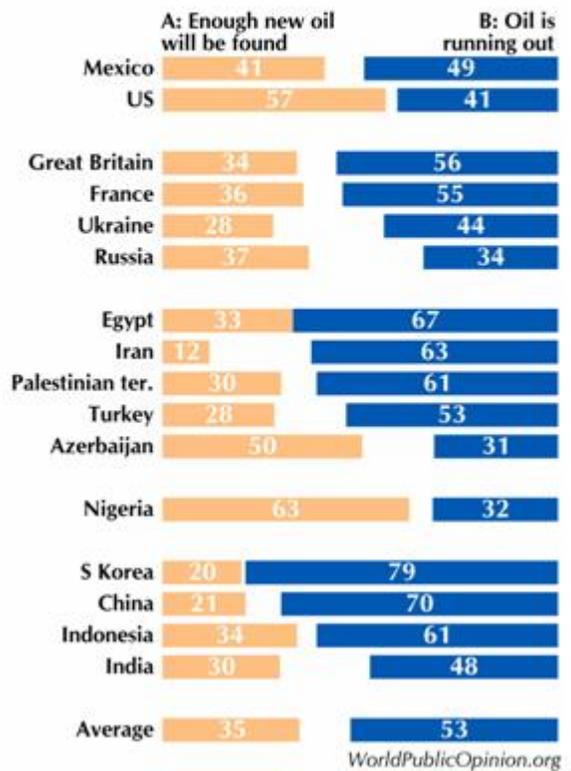
Oil and the Future

Do you think that governments should make long term plans based on the assumption that:
 A: "Enough new oil will be found so that it can remain a primary source of energy for the foreseeable future" or
 B: "Oil is running out and it is necessary to make a major effort to replace oil as a primary source of energy"?



Oil and Government Planning

Which assumption do you think the [Survey country] government is acting on now?



and Mexico (49%). The exception is Iran which is well above the average, with 63 percent believing that that their government is planning for oil running out.

There is a strong consensus around the world that the cost of oil will be higher in ten years. On average four out of five (79%) say that oil prices will be higher, including 55 percent who say they will be much higher.

Although oil prices recently retreated somewhat from their latest spike, this has not reassured world publics, according to Kull.

"People around the world seem to assume that these higher prices are not only here to stay but will even go higher," the director of WorldPublicOpinion.org said.

Publics differ only about whether oil prices will be much higher or only somewhat higher. The most pessimistic are Indonesia (74%) France (81%) and Egypt (67%). The lowest percentages saying oil prices will be much higher are found in China (29%), Russia (35%), and Nigeria (42%).

To read more about opinion in the individual countries surveyed, click [here](#) to view the full report (PDF).