

Support for Energy in a Changing Climate: Wind and Solar Remain on Top, Nuclear Advances, Natural Gas Wanes

As Americans experience record-breaking heat waves, floods, and wild fires this August, solutions to climate change are advancing, and getting introduced in the U.S. Congress. But do Americans understand the connection between energy, pollution, and climate? Which energy sources do they support?

ecoAmerica's **American Climate Perspectives Survey** found year-over-year shifts in

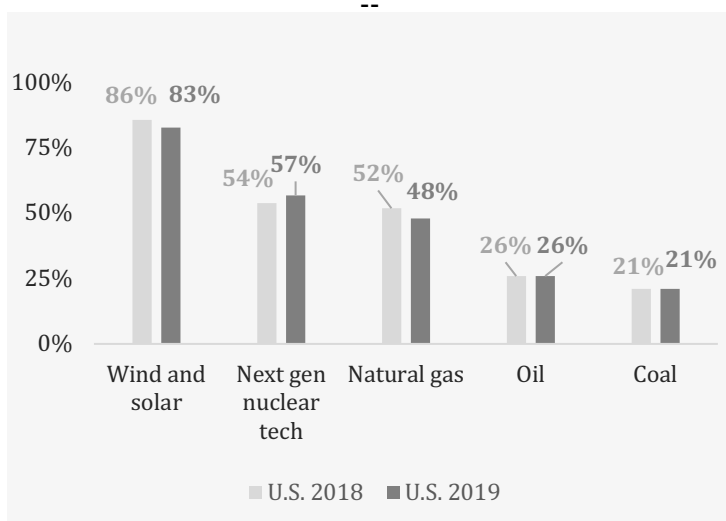
awareness and attitudes on key energy sources. The results show fairly accurate understanding and support for wind and solar energies, accurate understanding and low support for oil and coal energies, misconceptions of nuclear and natural gas energies, waning support for gas, and rising support for both existing nuclear energy and new nuclear technologies.

R&D: Support Highest for Wind and Solar, Grows for Next Gen Nuclear, Wanes for Gas

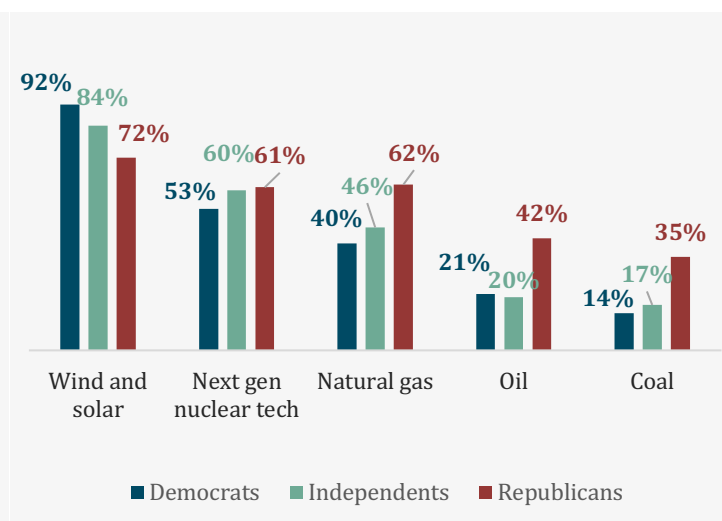
Americans across political affiliations support spending more on the research and development (R&D) of wind and solar energy. Support for R&D on oil and coal was lowest among the options. In fact, 72% and 65% of Americans overall want *less investment* in coal and oil, respectively. And, while support for coal and oil varies 26+ and 28+ points Republican - Democrat, it is the minority opinion in each party. The public is split on investment in natural gas and two in five oppose it. Nearly twice as many Democrats *oppose* R&D for gas (47%) as Republicans (24%), and many are not sure (13% of Dems, 14% of Reps). Support for R&D of "next generation nuclear technology," is now supported by 57% of Americans, with 61% of Republicans supporting, 60% of Independents and 53% of Democrats. Only 28% of Americans believe the U.S. should spend less on next generation nuclear, and another 15% are not sure.

In the next few years, should the United States be spending more or less on research and development of each of the following resources? 1,097 national respondents, % "A lot more" and "More"

-----Year-Over-Year Shifts-----



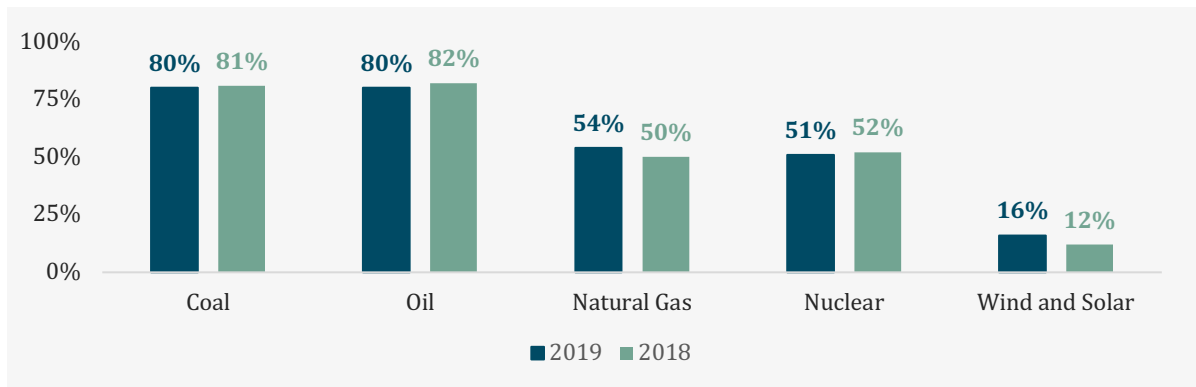
-----By Political Party-----



Perceptions Vary on Energy Source Contribution to Climate Change

Most Americans understand that coal and gas are the biggest contributors to unhealthy air pollution and climate change. And, most correctly identify wind and solar as clean, non-polluting energy sources. Awareness on the energy-pollution-climate change connection among other fuels is more mixed, however, and indicate opportunities for education. Half of Americans understand that natural gas contributes to climate change, for instance. And, half of Americans falsely believe that nuclear energy contributes to climate change.

How much does each of these energy sources contribute to unhealthy air pollution and climate change? 1,097 national respondents, % "A lot, Some" and "A Lot More, More"

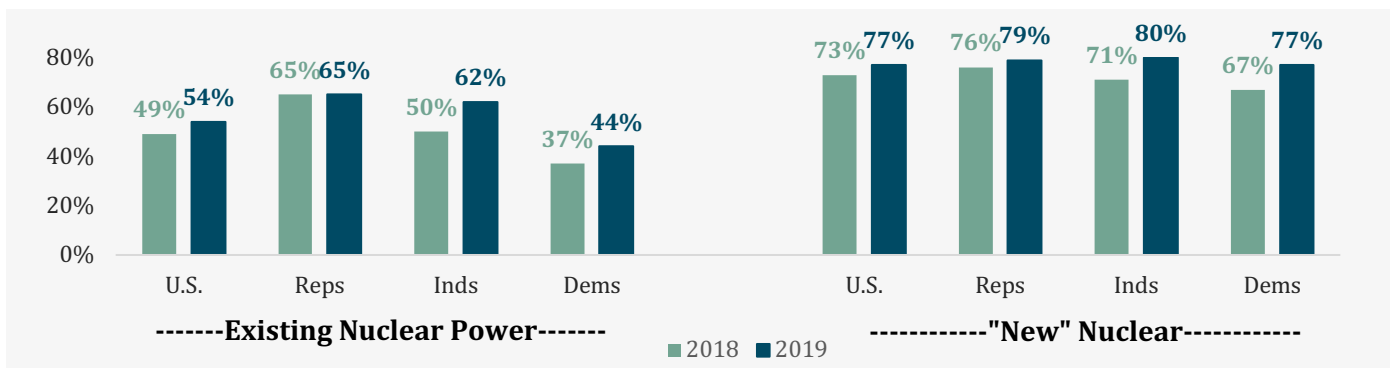


Increasing Support for Nuclear Power and "New" Nuclear Technology

There has been a notable 5-point uptick in the number of Americans who support existing nuclear power. Support is driven by Republicans (65%), and a swell of endorsement from Independents from 50% to 62% this year. Although less than half of Democrats support existing nuclear, their support for this energy is up 7-points from 2018. When presented with descriptions of the innovations proposed with "new" nuclear technology, support elevated to 77% overall, with equal marks between Republicans, Independents and Democrats and the largest gains coming from Democrats.

America's traditional nuclear power plants produce around 20% of our electricity. Which is closest to your opinion? And, assuming claims [about "new" nuclear] are true, would you support moving to better nuclear technology?

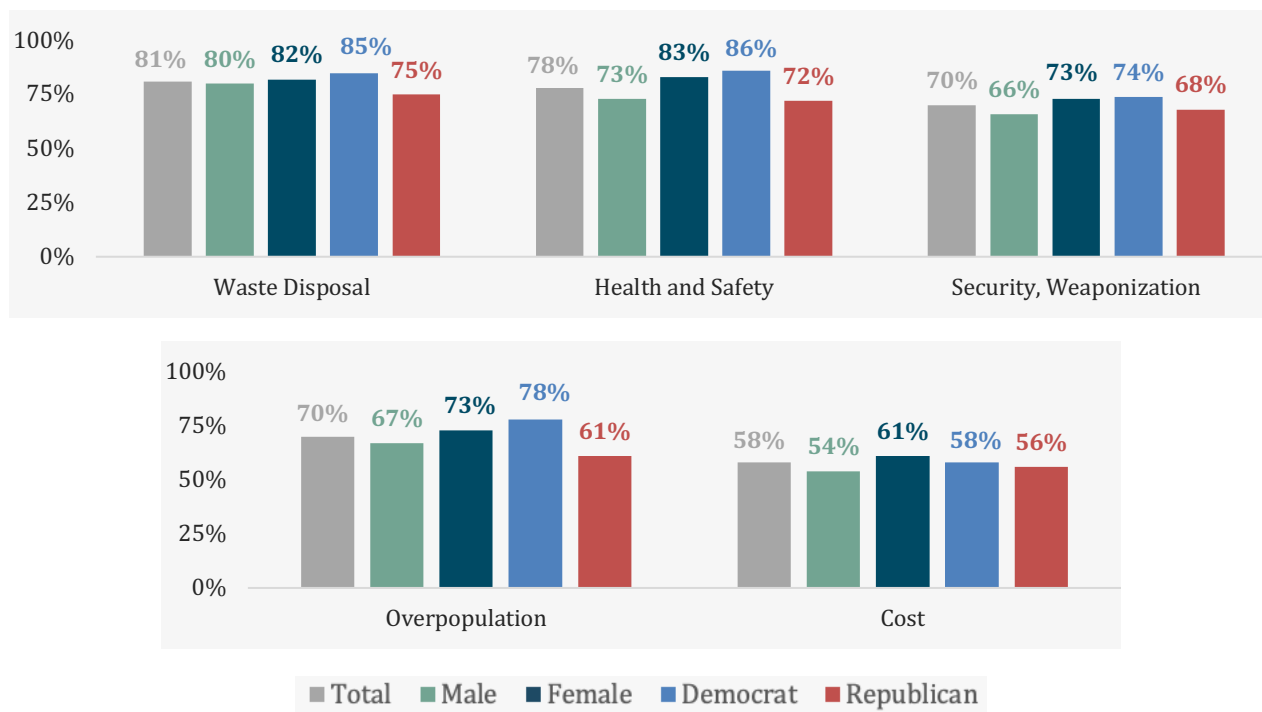
1,097 national respondents in 2019, 1,247 national respondents in 2018, % "Strongly support" and "Somewhat support"



Significant Concerns About Nuclear Waste, Safety and Weaponization

Despite support for nuclear power and “new” nuclear technology, Americans remain in consensus in their concerns about nuclear waste disposal, health and safety, and weaponization. Politically, Democrats are more concerned about health and safety than Republicans, but a majority in both parties remain concerned. Women are the most concerned about nuclear energy, with 83% reporting they are equally concerned about health and safety and waste disposal (vs. 72% and 75% of men, respectively). Despite evidence to the contrary, cost is likewise a concern, with nearly three in five agreeing and little variance in concern between political affiliation. Three quarters also express concern that nuclear energy will lead to overpopulation, overdevelopment, leading to natural habitat loss, however Democrats believe this far more than Republicans, and women more than men.

People have concerns about upgrading nuclear energy. Which of the following makes you concerned? 1,097 national respondents in 2019, %Total “A Lot, Some”



Methodology

ecoAmerica designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online June 19th, 2019 and June 19th and 26th, 2018 using Survey Monkey. The survey yielded a total of 1097 adult responses in 2019 and 1247 adult responses in 2018. The sample was drawn from an online panel and the respondents were screened to ensure that they were over the age of 18.

The margin of error for the sample is +/-3% in 2019 and 2018. In interpreting the survey results, it is important to note that all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error. Thus, the results of a survey may differ from the results that would be obtained if the entire population was interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of the responses to a particular question. For example, if 50% of the respondents in a sample of 802 respondents answered, “Yes” to a particular question, we can be 95% confident that the true percentage would fall within 3 points, or range from 47% to 53%.

Suggested Citation

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