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Those Aware of Fracking Favor Its Use

As Gas Prices Pinch, Support for Oil and Gas Production Grows

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Those Aware of Fracking Favor Its Use As Gas Prices Pinch, Support for Oil and Gas Production Grows

At a time of rising gas prices, the public's energy priorities have changed. More Americans continue to view the development of alternative energy sources as a higher priority than the increased production of oil, coal and natural gas, but the gap has narrowed considerably over the past year.

Moreover, support for allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling in U.S. waters, which plummeted during the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill, has recovered to pre-spill levels. Nearly two-thirds (65%) favor allowing increased offshore drilling, up from 57% a year ago and 44% in June 2010, during the Gulf spill.

Growing Number Sees Production of Oil, Coal and Gas as More Important Energy Priority

	March 2011	March 2012	Change
<i>More important energy priority ...</i>	%	%	
Developing alternative sources, such as wind, solar and hydrogen	63	52	-11
Expanding exploration and production of oil, coal & natural gas	29	39	+10
Both/Don't know	8	9	
	100	100	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted March 7-11, 2012 among 1,503 adults, finds that 52% say the more important priority for addressing the nation's energy supply is to develop alternative sources, such as wind, solar and hydrogen technology, while 39% see expanding the exploration and production of oil, coal and natural gas as the greater priority.

A year ago, the public viewed the development of alternative energy sources as the more important priority by a much wider margin (63% to 29%). Since then, support for expanding production of oil and other traditional sources has increased among most demographic and political groups and the shift among Republicans has been particularly pronounced.

In March 2011, Republicans were evenly divided over how to address the energy supply: 47% said the more important priority was to develop alternative sources, while 44% said it was to expand exploration and production of oil, coal and natural gas. In the current survey, just a third of Republicans (33%) view development of alternatives as more important, while 59% say the more important priority is to expand exploration and production of oil and other traditional energy sources.

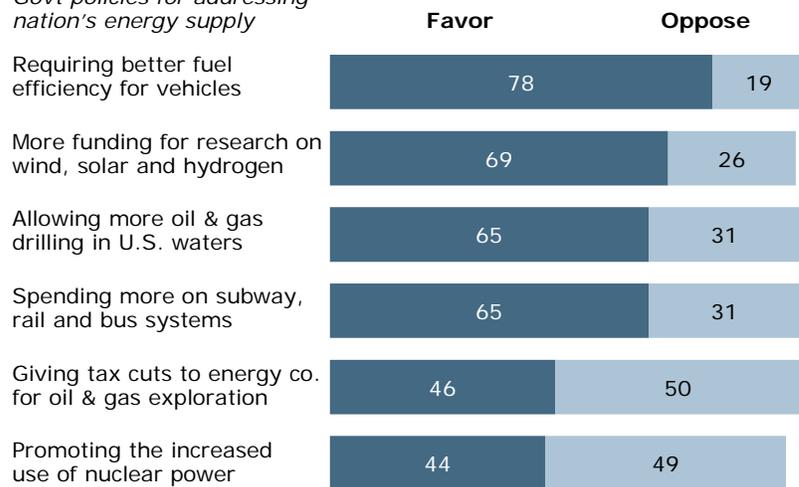
As in past Pew Research Center surveys, there continues to be broad public support for an array of policies aimed at addressing the nation's energy supply: 78% favor requiring better fuel efficiency for cars, trucks and SUVs; 69% favor more federal funding for research on wind, solar and hydrogen technology; and 65% favor spending more on subway, rail and bus systems.

But while support for each of these policies has been steady or down modestly in recent years, support for allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling in U.S. waters has increased. Currently, more than twice as many favor than oppose increased offshore drilling (65% vs. 31%). In June 2010, only 44% favored more offshore drilling while 52% were opposed. The balance of opinion today is almost identical to what it was in February 2010, two months before the Gulf oil disaster (63% favor, 31% oppose).

Nonetheless, Americans are far more divided over whether the government should give tax cuts to energy companies to do more exploration for oil and gas; 46% favor this while 50% are opposed. Opinion about tax cuts for energy companies is about where it was in 2008.

Public Continues to Support Broad Range of Energy Policies

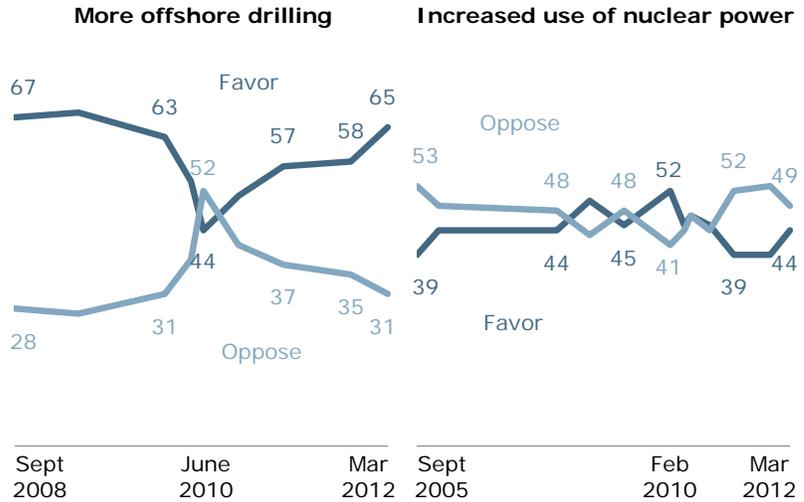
Govt policies for addressing nation's energy supply



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q43.

Support for promoting the increased use of nuclear power, which slipped after last year's Japan nuclear disaster, has recovered modestly. Currently, 44% favor the increased use of nuclear power while 49% are opposed. Last March, 39% favored greater use of nuclear power and 53% were opposed.

More Support for Offshore Drilling, Increased Use of Nuclear Power



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q43a,c.

The survey also finds there is limited awareness of the energy drilling method known as fracking, which is used to extract natural gas from underground rock formations: Just 26% say they have heard a lot about fracking, while 37% have heard a little and 37% have heard nothing at all.

Among those who have heard about fracking, there is more support than opposition. About half (52%) favor fracking, while 35% are opposed to the process. As with opinions about many other energy policies there is a wide partisan gap in views of fracking: 73% of Republicans who have heard of fracking favor it, compared with 54% of independents and just 33% of Democrats.

Support for Fracking among Those Aware of Process

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
<i>Heard about fracking?</i>	%	%	%	%
A lot/little	63	69	60	63
Nothing/Don't know	37	31	40	37
	100	100	100	100
<i>If heard about ...</i>				
Favor	52	73	33	54
Oppose	35	15	52	35
Don't know	13	12	15	11
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q44-Q45. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Republicans Back More Drilling; Democrats Favor Alternatives

There continue to be large partisan differences in views of various energy policies. Fully 89% of Republicans favor allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling while only half of Democrats agree. A majority of independents (64%) support increased drilling off the U.S. coast.

Republicans also are more likely than Democrats to favor giving tax cuts to energy companies for oil and gas exploration and promoting the increased use of nuclear power.

By contrast, Democrats and independents are far more likely than Republicans to favor increased federal funding for alternative energy research, spending more on mass transit and requiring better fuel efficiency for vehicles. About eight-in-ten Democrats (81%) and 70% of independents support increased funding for alternative energy, compared with 52% of Republicans.

Partisan Gaps over Energy Policies

	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D gap
<i>% in favor ...</i>	%	%	%	
Allowing more oil & gas drilling in U.S. waters	89	50	64	+39
Giving tax cuts for oil & gas exploration	61	38	42	+23
Promoting the increased use of nuclear power	54	37	45	+17
Requiring better fuel efficiency for vehicles	67	88	77	-21
Spending more on mass transit	52	74	67	-22
More federal funding for alt energy research	52	81	70	-29

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q43.

The partisan differences in opinions about federal funding for alternative energy research and other policies are not new; [last November](#), 83% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents and just 53% of Republicans and GOP leaners favored increased federal funding on research into alternative energy technology. But as recently as April 2009, there were virtually no partisan differences in views of federal funding for research into alternative energy.

Priorities for U.S. Energy Policy

Over the past year, there has been an increase in the percentage of Republicans, particularly conservative Republicans, who view the expansion of exploration and production of oil, coal and natural gas as a more important priority for addressing the nation's energy supply than the development of alternative energy sources.

Conservative Republicans now prioritize traditional energy sources over alternative sources by a 65% to 26% margin; a year ago they were divided (47% oil, coal, natural gas vs. 43% alternative energy).

But increasing numbers in other groups – including Westerners and older Americans – also prioritize the development of energy from traditional sources.

Among those living in the West, 53% say it is more important to develop alternative energy while 39% prioritize traditional sources. Last year, the margin was 73% to 19%.

Increasing Numbers of Conservatives, Westerners, Men Prioritize Traditional Energy

Priority for nation's energy supply ...	March 2011		March 2012		Change in oil, coal & gas
	Alter-native sources	Oil, coal & gas	Alter-native sources	Oil, coal & gas	
	%	%	%	%	
Total	63	29	52	39	+10
Men	63	29	49	42	+13
Women	62	29	54	37	+8
18-29	71	25	64	31	+6
30-49	68	25	58	35	+10
50-64	60	29	45	45	+16
65+	46	42	35	49	+7
College grad+	69	23	59	33	+10
Some college	65	25	51	40	+15
HS or less	58	34	47	43	+9
Northeast	64	26	54	36	+10
Midwest	63	31	53	35	+4
South	56	35	48	44	+9
West	73	19	53	39	+20
Conserv Rep	43	47	26	65	+18
Mod/Lib Rep	57	37	46	47	+10
Independent	65	25	55	35	+10
Cons/Mod Dem	68	28	57	34	+6
Liberal Dem	83	14	74	21	+7

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q76.

In the current survey, men 50 and older say it is more important to expand exploration from traditional energy sources, by 51% to 37%. A year ago, older men prioritized the development of alternative energy sources by a comparable margin (54% to 35%).

Awareness and Views about Fracking

A majority of the public (63%) has heard a lot (26%) or a little (37%) about fracking, a drilling method used to extract natural gas from underground rock formations. Men, older people and college graduates are far more likely than their counterparts to have heard at least a little about fracking.

Among those who have heard at least a little about fracking, 52% favor it while 35% are opposed and 13% offer no opinion.

Men who have heard about fracking favor the practice by about two-to-one (61% vs. 29%). Women are evenly split (40% favor; 41% are opposed). Although young people are less likely to have heard about fracking, those who have are just as likely as older people to favor it.

But there is a wide education difference in views about fracking. College graduates are about evenly split – 45% favor fracking while 43% are opposed. A majority of those with some college (56%) or a high school education or less (56%) support fracking.

There is little regional variation in the shares who have heard about fracking, although those in the Northeast are more likely to have heard a lot (36% have heard a lot, compared with 23% in the rest

Gender Gap in Support for Fracking

	Heard about	Among those who have heard				N
		Favor	Oppose	DK		
		%	%	%	%	
Total	63	52	35	13=100	1038	
Men	71	61	29	9=100	583	
Women	55	40	41	18=100	455	
18-29	47	59	30	10=100	118	
30-49	65	49	39	12=100	274	
50-64	68	51	36	13=100	353	
65+	73	54	27	19=100	282	
College grad+	80	45	43	12=100	482	
Some college	64	56	30	13=100	303	
HS or less	51	56	29	15=100	252	
Northeast	67	50	40	10=100	179	
Midwest	66	50	32	18=100	264	
South	59	53	34	12=100	353	
West	64	55	32	14=100	242	
Conserv Rep	73	75	10	14=100	214	
Mod/Lib Rep	61	67	27	7=100	89	
Independent	63	54	35	11=100	350	
Cons/Mod Dem	54	39	43	18=100	190	
Liberal Dem	76	26	64	10=100	147	
<i>Among those who have...</i>						
Heard a lot	--	51	43	6=100	471	
Heard a little	--	53	29	18=100	567	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 7-11, 2012. Q44-Q45. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Sample sizes are for those who have heard a lot or a little about the issue.

of the country). Among those who have heard at least a little, there is virtually no regional difference in opinion about fracking; about half favor this across all regions. Republicans who have heard at least a little about fracking are far more likely than Democrats to favor the process (73% vs. 33%), and there is little difference in opinion among Republicans. But among Democrats who are aware of fracking, there is a wide ideological gap. Conservative and moderate Democrats are split about evenly – 39% favor fracking while 43% are opposed. By contrast, liberal Democrats oppose fracking by a 64% to 26% margin.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 7-11, 2012, among a national sample of 1,503 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (900 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 603 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 310 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,503	3.0 percentage points
Republicans	412	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	518	5.0 percentage points
Independents	507	5.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
MARCH 2012 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
March 7-11, 2012
N=1503

QUESTIONS 1-42 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

Next,

ASK ALL:

Q.43 As I read some possible government policies to address America's energy supply, tell me whether you would favor or oppose each. First, would you favor or oppose the government **[INSERT FIRST ITEM, RANDOMIZE]**? Would you favor or oppose the government **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]**?

		(VOL.)		
		<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling in U.S. waters			
	Mar 7-11, 2012	65	31	4
	Nov 3-6, 2011	58	35	7
	Mar 17-20, 2011	57	37	6
	Oct 13-18, 2010	51	41	7
	Jun 16-20, 2010	44	52	4
	May 6-9, 2010	54	38	8
	Feb 3-9, 2010	63	31	6
	Apr 14-21, 2009	68	27	5
	September, 2008	67	28	5
b.	Increasing federal funding for research on wind, solar and hydrogen technology			
	Mar 7-11, 2012	69	26	5
	Nov 3-6, 2011	68	26	6
	Mar 17-20, 2011	74	21	5
	Oct 13-18, 2010	74	21	6
	Jun 16-20, 2010	75	21	3
	May 6-9, 2010	73	22	5
	Feb 3-9, 2010	78	17	5
	Apr 14-21, 2009	82	15	3
	September, 2008	82	14	4
	Late February, 2008	81	14	5
	February, 2006	82	14	4
c.	Promoting the increased use of nuclear power			
	Mar 7-11, 2012	44	49	7
	Nov 3-6, 2011	39	53	8
	Mar 17-20, 2011	39	52	8
	Oct 13-18, 2010	45	44	11
	Jun 16-20, 2010	47	47	6
	May 6-9, 2010	45	44	11
	Feb 3-9, 2010	52	41	7
	Apr 14-21, 2009	45	48	7
	September, 2008	50	43	7
	Late February, 2008	44	48	8
	February, 2006	44	49	7
	Mid-September, 2005	39	53	8
d.	Giving tax cuts to energy companies to do more exploration for oil and gas			
	Mar 7-11, 2012	46	50	4
	Late February, 2008 ¹	42	53	5
	February, 2006	44	52	4

¹ In late February and earlier the question asked only about oil exploration.

Q.43 CONTINUED...

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>(VOL.)</u> <u>DK/Ref</u>
Mid-September, 2005	52	44	4
e. Requiring better fuel efficiency for cars, trucks and SUVs			
Mar 7-11, 2012	78	19	3
Oct 13-18, 2010	79	17	4
September, 2008	88	10	2
February, 2008	90	8	2
February, 2006	86	12	2
Mid-September, 2005	86	12	2
f. Spending more on subway, rail and bus systems			
Mar 7-11, 2012	65	31	4
Mar 27-20, 2011	61	34	6
Oct 13-18, 2010	63	29	8
Jun 16-20, 2010	64	31	5
May 6-9, 2010	65	28	7
Feb 3-9, 2010	70	25	4
Apr 14-21, 2009	70	25	5
Late-February, 2008	72	23	5
February, 2006	68	26	6
Mid-September, 2005	68	27	5

ASK ALL:

Q.44 How much, if anything, have you heard about a drilling method called fracking that is used to extract natural gas from underground rock formations? Have you heard **[READ]**

Mar 7-11

2012

26	A lot
37	A little
37	Nothing at all
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (Q.44=1,2):

Q.45 From what you've read and heard, do you favor or oppose fracking?

BASED ON TOTAL:	BASED ON HEARD	
Mar 7-11	A LOT/LITTLE:	
<u>2012</u>	Mar 7-11	
<u>2012</u>	<u>2012</u>	
33	52	Favor
22	35	Oppose
8	13	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
37	--	<i>Heard nothing/DK/Ref</i>
N 1503	1038	

NO QUESTIONS 46-54, 57, 62-63

QUESTIONS 55-56, 64-75 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

QUESTIONS 58-61 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.76 Right now, which ONE of the following do you think should be the more important priority for addressing America's energy supply? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]?**

Mar 7-11 <u>2012</u>		Feb 22-Mar 1 <u>2011</u>
52	Developing alternative sources, such as wind, solar and hydrogen technology	63
39	Expanding exploration and production of oil, coal and natural gas	29
5	Both should be given equal priority (VOL.)	6
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) <u>No preference</u>	(VOL.) <u>Other party</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	<i>Lean</i> <u>Rep</u>	<i>Lean</i> <u>Dem</u>
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
Jan 11-16, 2012	22	31	42	3	*	2	17	16
Jan 4-8, 2012	26	31	35	4	*	4	14	14
Dec 7-11, 2011	23	33	38	3	*	2	12	17
Nov 9-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	1	2	16	15
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	23	33	38	2	1	3	18	16
Aug 17-21, 2011	24	30	40	3	*	3	17	18
Jul 20-24, 2011	24	32	38	4	*	2	16	14
Jun 15-19, 2011	26	34	32	4	*	4	13	13
May 25-30, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	15	17
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	25	32	37	3	*	3	17	16
Mar 8-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	17	15
Yearly Totals								
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--