

Where Americans Stand on Nuclear Energy

Nuclear energy has been a big part of the United States energy portfolio for decades, currently comprising about [20% of our energy](#) nationally. In our drive toward a healthy and livable climate, nuclear energy has been put onto the discussion table — but it’s a controversial issue.

Where do Americans stand on nuclear energy? ecoAmerica’s July 2018 **American Climate Perspectives Survey** found that Americans have mixed attitudes on nuclear energy. There is mild support for existing nuclear power, and strong support for proposed “new” nuclear technology, but Americans have significant concern about nuclear safety, waste, and weaponization. Support for renewable energy sources, like wind and solar energy, still trumps all other energy sources.

Nuclear Power vs. “New” Nuclear Technology

Half of Americans support existing nuclear power (49% nationally). Support shifts considerably across political ideologies, however with 65% of Republicans and only 37% of Democrats supporting current nuclear energy. When presented with descriptions of the innovations proposed with “new” nuclear technology, support elevated to 73% overall, and a narrowed partisan gap (76% Republicans, 67% Democrats).

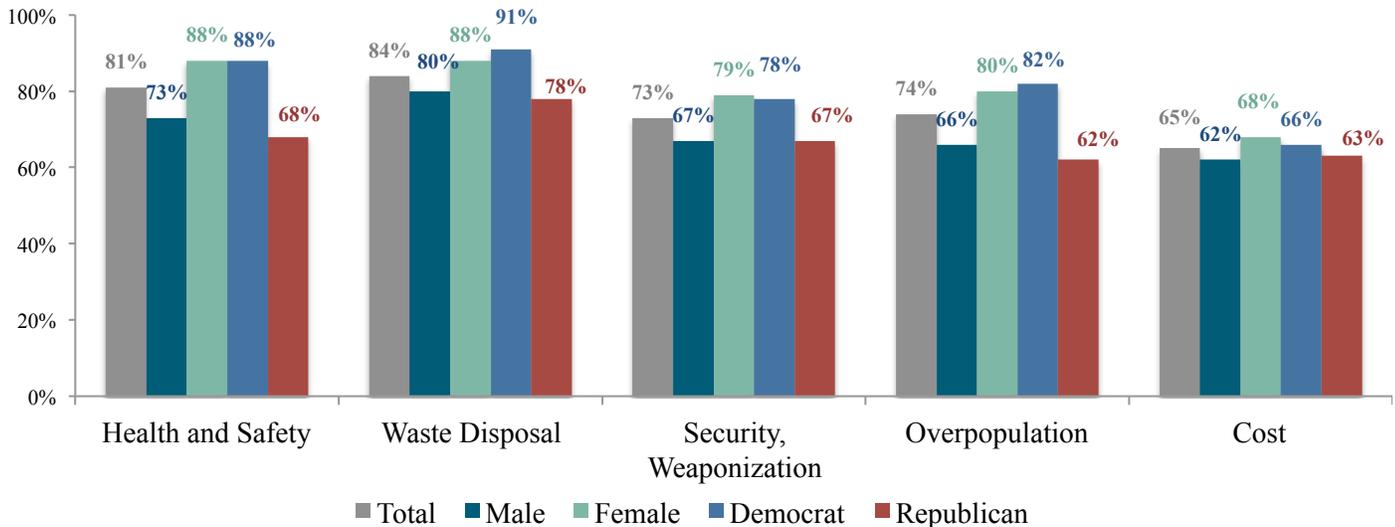
Support for nuclear energy: % Total “Strongly Support, Somewhat Support”

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Variance (Rep vs. Dem)</u>
Existing Nuclear Power	49%	65%	37%	27 points
“New” Nuclear	73%	76%	67%	9 points

A Suite of Concern

Despite support for nuclear power and “new” nuclear technology, significant concerns remain about health and safety (81%), weaponization (73%), and waste (84%). Politically, Democrats are more concerned about health and safety (88%) than Republicans (68%), but a majority in both parties remain concerned. Women are the most concerned about nuclear energy, with 88% reporting they are equally concerned about health and safety and waste disposal (vs. 73% and 80% of men, respectively). Despite evidence to the contrary, cost is likewise a concern (65%), with little variance in concern between gender or political affiliation. Many Americans also express concern that nuclear energy will lead to overpopulation, overdevelopment, leading to natural habitat loss (74%), however Democrats (82%) believe this far more than Republicans (62%), and women (80%) more than men (66%).

People have concerns about upgrading nuclear energy. Which of the following makes you concerned?
% Total "A Lot, Some"

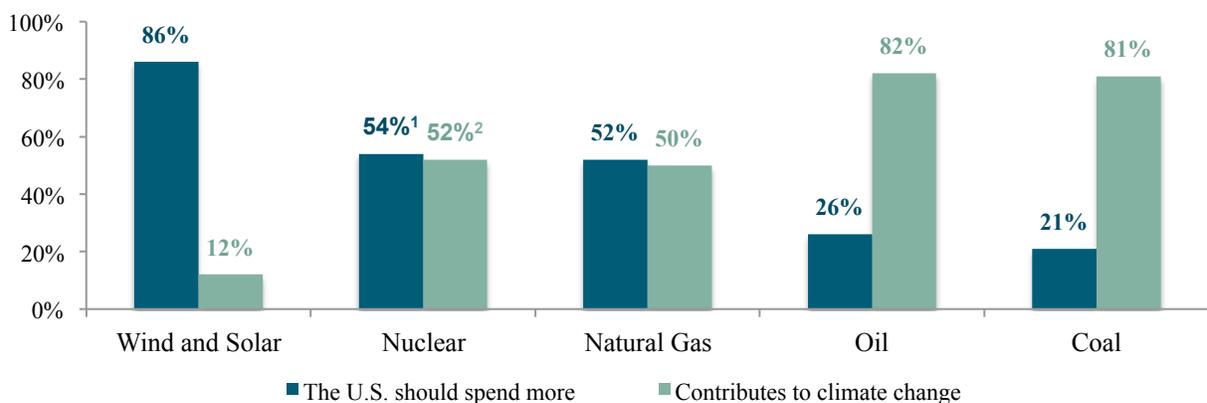


A Consensus of Support for Renewable Energy

By a wide margin, Americans support federal investment on the research and development of renewable energy, like wind or solar. They are split fairly evenly on both nuclear and natural gas, and there is little support for oil or coal energy R&D investment. Americans understand that fossil fuels pollute, while renewables don't, but they have inaccurate perspectives on nuclear — thinking it contributes significantly to climate change and unhealthy air pollution - and on natural gas energy, which they underestimate.

How much does each of these energy sources contribute to unhealthy air pollution and climate change? In the next few years, should the United States be spending more or less on research and development of each of the following resources?

% Total "A Lot, Some" and "A Lot More, More"



¹Nuclear: is used in "the U.S. should spend more..."

²Next generation nuclear" is used in "contributes to climate change".

So, do Americans support “new” nuclear?

Ultimately, American *concern* for nuclear energy outweighs *support* for either traditional or “new” nuclear generation technologies. The question on how nuclear energy should factor into climate solutions has mixed answers, with Republicans in support and Democrats not in support. What is clear, however, is that there is bipartisan consensus on the continued research and development on renewable sources, such as wind and solar energies.

Methodology

ecoAmerica designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online June 19th and 26th, 2018 using Survey Monkey. The survey yielded a total of 1247 adult responses. 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 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%.

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For more information contact Meighen Speiser, ecoAmerica Chief Engagement Officer at meighen@ecoAmerica.org

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