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N.J. Blames Energy Woes On Big Oil and Congress

Four of five New Jerseyans (79%) say the cost and availability of energy is a major problem for the country. That compares to just half (49%) who said so in FDU's 2001 poll. Ten years ago, gas prices were spiking to their highest levels since 1991 and 41% said the cost of energy was a minor problem. Now, as gas prices spike to [their highest level since 2008](#), just 17% say it's a minor problem.

"The one political topic everyone is reminded of several times a day is the price of gas," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. "There is no escaping it."

But according to the statewide poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, little else has changed in 10 years in terms of who gets blamed and what solutions might be effective.

U.S. oil companies get the most blame: 49% of residents assign them "a great deal" of the blame for national energy problems. In 2001, 44% of New Jerseyans said the same thing. Congress is second, with 40% of New Jerseyans giving the lawmakers "a great deal" of blame, while 10 years ago 34% blamed Congress a great deal.

They are much less likely to blame the incumbent president: just one in five (19%) say President Obama deserves a great deal of blame and, similarly, in 2001 just one in four (25%) said President Bush deserved a great deal of blame. Of course, a majority of Democrats (54%) are now willing to give former President Bush a great deal of blame for today's problems, while only 15% of Republican voters assign Bush a great deal of blame.

The only significant change in the blame game is that the public is less willing to cite environmental regulations: just 23% say regulations get a great deal of blame, compared to 32% who said so a decade ago. "I think environmentalists should consider that a sign of progress," said Woolley. "Fewer people see environmental rules as the problem."

At the same time, public support for solutions to our energy problems has changed little in 10 years, and there are significant disagreements associated with party affiliation. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to think that requiring car makers to increase fuel efficiency would be a very effective solution (62% compared to 50%). But Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats to say that constructing more nuclear power plants would be very effective (33% compared to 16%). Still, Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to say conservation would be very effective (57% compared to 34%). And while Republicans are more than twice as likely as Democrats to say that offshore drilling would be very effective (53%-21%), Democrats are twice as likely as Republicans to think that encouraging solar and wind power would be very effective (55%-28%). Finally, 70% of Republicans say that relaxing environmental rules would be somewhat or very effective, but only 40% of Democrats agree.

"Many experts who think about energy problems see those problems as technical ones," said Woolley. "But solutions to our energy problems are very political, beginning with people's perceptions of them," he said. "And that means nothing will be resolved anytime soon."

In his major energy speech in Iowa in May of 2001, President Bush said "We face a shortage of energy. It is real. It is not the imagination of anybody in my administration. It's a real problem." In Obama's major energy speech in March of this year he said "So here's the bottom line -- there are no quick fixes. And we will keep on being a victim to shifts in the oil market until we get serious about a long-term policy for secure, affordable energy."

So...conserve energy or increase supply? In 2001 Garden Staters split 51%-34% in favor of conservation. In 2011, they maintain that split, 56%-35%.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 637 adult residents statewide was conducted by telephone using both landlines and cell phones from May 16, 2011, through May 22, 2011, and has a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points.

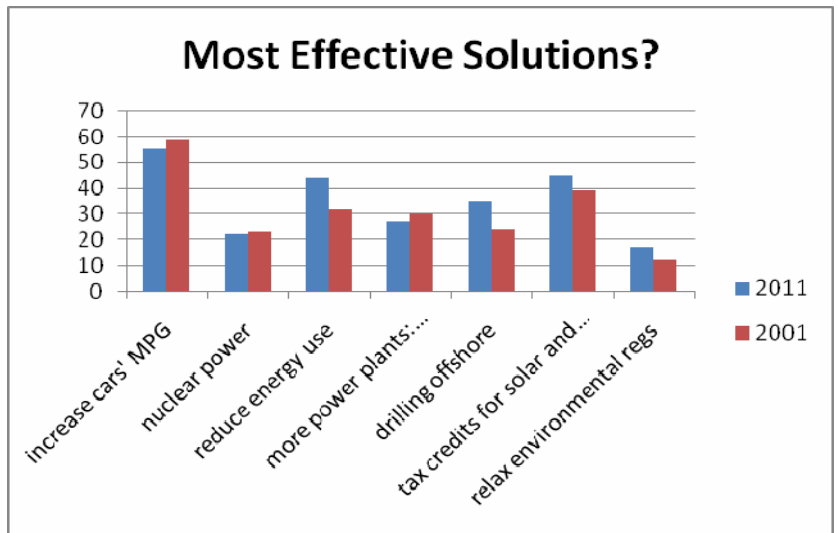
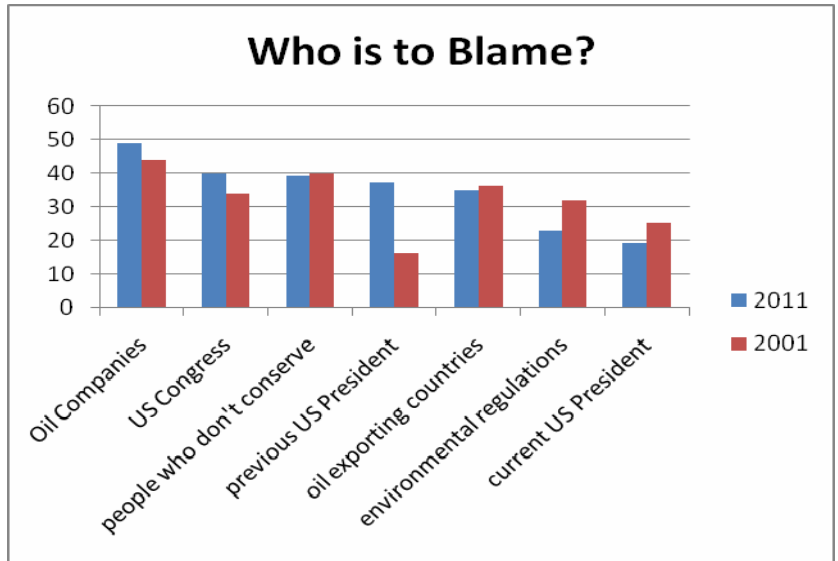
Methodology, questions, and tables also on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
For more information, please call 201.692.7032

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from May 16, 2011, through May 22, 2011, using a randomly selected sample of 637 registered voters statewide. The margin of error for a sample of 804 randomly selected respondents is +/- 4 percentage points. In 2001 the FDU poll was conducted by telephone from June 28 to July 9 with 500 randomly selected adults statewide, yielding a margin of error of +/- 4.5 points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

Now thinking about a national topic—energy and fuel—do you think the cost and availability of electricity, gasoline, natural gas, and other forms of energy in the United States, is a...READ ...?

	NJ 2011	Dem	Ind	Rep.	NJ 2001
Major problem	79%	78	82	76	49%
Minor problem	17%	20	14	18	41%
No problem	3%	2	3	4	8%
Not sure/ref.	1%	1	1	3	2%



Now when it comes to blame for U.S. energy problems... Would you say... ROTATE... deserve ...?					
	NJ 2011	Dem	Ind	Rep	NJ 2001
U.S. Oil Companies					
Great deal	49%	55	52	34	44%
Some	38%	38	36	42	41%
Not much	7%	4	6	15	6%
None	4%	1	4	7	3%
Unsure	2%	2	2	2	6%
Americans Who Don't Conserve Energy					
Great deal	31%	39	30	25	40%
Some	47%	42	52	49	47%
Not much	10%	6	10	14	6%
None	9%	11	7	10	7%
Unsure	2%	3	1	2	--
Foreign Nations That Export Oil					
Great deal	35%	33	36	34	36%
Some	42%	51	36	42	43%
Not much	10%	7	12	11	7%
None	10%	5	14	9	8%
Unsure	3%	4	2	3	5%
Congress					
Great deal	40%	31	47	39	34%
Some	48%	55	44	51	46%
Not much	5%	8	4	4	7%
None	2%	3	2	2	7%
Unsure	4%	4	4	4	5%
Environmental Regulations					
Great deal	23%	18	20	31	32%
Some	44%	46	44	41	41%
Not much	17%	15	20	14	11%
None	12%	17	11	9	12%
Unsure	5%	4	5	5	5%
The current (Obama) Administration (Bush)					
Great deal	19%	3	20	39	25%
Some	44%	42	47	42	32%
Not much	18%	22	19	12	17%
None	16%	31	12	2	18%
Unsure	4%	2	2	5	8%
Former (Bush) Administration (Clinton)					
Great deal	37%	54	36	15	16%
Some	43%	34	49	48	47%
Not much	10%	6	6	20	16%
None	7%	2	7	11	15%
Unsure	4%	3	2	5	6%

Based on what you may have heard or read, do you approve or disapprove of [the President's] plan to deal with the country's energy problems?					
	NJ 2011	Dem	Ind	Rep	NJ 2001
Approve	42%	68	38	17	19%
Disapprove	30%	6	30	65	25%
Not Aware of Plan	20%	20	22	14	54%
unsure/ref.	9%	6	10	4	2%

A number of solutions for the country's energy problems have been proposed. How effective would it be in dealing with our energy problems... if we READ/ROTATE...READ?

Proposal	All 2011	Dem	Ind	Rep	men	women	All 2001
Require car makers to increase fuel efficiency							
Very effective	55%	62	56	50	57	54	59%
Somewhat effective	33%	32	31	32	29	36	33%
Not very effective	8%	1	9	14	8	7	3%
Not at all	4%	5	4	4	5	4	5%
Encourage construction of nuclear power plants							
Very effective	22%	16	22	33	32	13	23%
Somewhat effective	37%	34	39	38	34	40	34%
Not very effective	15%	20	14	11	14	17	19%
Not at all	26%	30	25	19	21	30	23%
Encourage consumers to reduce their energy use and buy energy efficient cars and appliances							
Very effective	44%	57	42	34	43	46	32%
Somewhat effective	39%	32	40	45	36	42	40%
Not very effective	11%	5	13	14	15	7	18%
Not at all	6%	5	6	7	7	6	11%
Encourage construction power plants that use coal, oil, or natural gas							
Very effective	27%	30	20	34	28	26	30%
Somewhat effective	43%	36	46	47	43	42	44%
Not very effective	14%	17	16	6	14	14	16%
Not at all	16%	16	17	12	15	18	11%
Encourage drilling for oil and gas in offshore coastal areas							
Very effective	35%	21	35	53	38	31	24%
Somewhat effective	34%	39	35	27	32	37	41%
Not very effective	14%	18	15	8	14	14	16%
Not at all	17%	22	15	12	16	19	19%
Give tax credits to consumers and businesses that use solar and wind							
Very effective	45%	55	48	28	45	46	39%
Somewhat effective	39%	29	40	50	40	38	45%
Not very effective	9%	10	7	13	10	8	11%
Not at all	7%	6	5	9	5	8	5%
Relax some environmental laws and regulations							
Very effective	17%	12	15	29	22	13	12%
Somewhat effective	31%	28	30	41	30	32	38%
Not very effective	19%	19	22	14	21	18	19%
Not at all	32%	41	33	16	27	38	31%

Question: If you had to choose only one option for dealing with the country's energy problems, which would you choose...READ, ROTATE?

	NJ 2011	Dem	Ind	Rep	men	Women	NJ 2001
Increase energy supplies by building more power plants	35%	33	32	46	40	31	34%
Decrease energy demand by requiring more energy conservation by consumers	56%	59	60	44	51	61	51%
Both	5%	5	5	5	6	4	10%
Don't Know/refused	4%	3	3	5	3	4	5%

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1-US2 released 5.26.11

US3-US4c released 5.31.11

NJ1-NJ6 released 5.24.11

NJE1. Now thinking about a national topic—energy and fuel—do you think the cost and availability of electricity, gasoline, natural gas, and other forms of energy in the United States, is a...READ ...?

crisis

major problem,

a minor problem

or no problem at all

DK (vol)

NJE2. Now when it comes to blame for U.S. energy problems...

Would you say...READ/ROTATE...deserve...READ...?

a great deal of blame

some

not much

or no blame

DK (vol)

a. U.S. Oil Companies

b. Americans who don't conserve energy

c. foreign countries that export oil

d. Congress

e. environmental laws and Regulations

f. the former Bush Administration

g. the Obama Administration

NJE3. Based on what you may have heard or read, do you approve or disapprove of President Obama's plan to deal with the country's energy problems?

Approve

Disapprove

Not aware of plan (vol.)

DK/mixed (vol.)

NJE4. A number of solutions for the country's energy problems have been proposed. How effective would it be in dealing with our energy problems... if we READ/ROTATE...READ?

a. Require car makers to increase fuel efficiency

b. Encourage construction of nuclear power plants

c. Encourage consumers to reduce their energy use and buy energy efficient cars and appliances

d. Encourage construction of power plants that use coal, oil, or natural gas

e. Encourage drilling for oil and natural gas in offshore coastal areas

f. Give tax credits to consumers and businesses that use solar and wind power

g. Relax some environmental laws and regulations

very effective,

somewhat

not very

or not at all effective?

DK (vol)

NJE5. If you had to choose only one option for dealing with the country's energy problems, which would you choose... or...READ/ROTATE?

increase energy supplies by building more power plants

decrease demand by requiring more energy conservation by consumers and business.

both (vol)

DK (vol)

Sample Characteristics (%)

Gender

Male	51
Female	49

Age

18-29	17
30-44	28
45-59	28
60+	25
Ref.	2

In addition to being American, would you say you are...?

White	67
Black	15
Hispanic or Latino	9
Asian	6
Other/ref.	3

Public Employee Household?

Yes	21
No	77
not sure/ref.	1

Party ID

Dem	31
Lean Dem	17
ind. + unsure + ref.	19
Lean Rep	11
Rep	21

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