



JOINT CENTER
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National Survey Shows Majority of African Americans Want Action to Minimize the Impacts of Climate Change

WASHINGTON – A majority of African Americans believe climate change is a growing problem that both government and individuals should take action now to mitigate the potential impacts, according to the results of a national poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a research and policy institution in Washington, DC.

The survey of 750 African American adults found that more than half of respondents identified the issue as a “major problem,” with 58 percent giving that response when it was described as “global warming” and 52 percent reacting that way when the term “climate change” was used. Only about ten percent in each group said global warming or climate change is not a problem.

A large majority of respondents said that government and individuals can do things to reduce global warming. About a third believe federal and state government can do a lot to mitigate the problem, while some three-quarters believe government can at least do something. A majority of African Americans express support for the cap-and-trade legislation passed earlier this year by the U.S. House of Representatives, and a large majority said they would be even more supportive with strong provisions for green jobs and incentives to buy more energy efficient cars and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The poll was the second that the Joint Center has conducted to determine African American views on climate change. The previous survey, released in July 2008, also found a majority of African Americans defining climate change as a problem that government must address.

A key finding in this year’s survey is that 26 percent of African Americans think they – and others like them – can do a lot to reduce global warming, and an additional 44 percent believe they can take at least some measures to combat the problem. The survey results indicate that a majority of them recycle and purchase energy saving appliances and light bulbs, while nearly half of them purchased products in the last year that were better for the environment even though the products were more costly than similar non-environmentally friendly items.

“While African Americans are underrepresented in the public debates on climate change and environmental issues generally, they are as aware of these issues as other groups in American society, and committed to action – both personal and governmental – to deal with the problems associated with climate change,” said Ralph B. Everett, President and CEO of the Joint Center.

Like all Americans, there are limits to what African Americans will buy into on public policy choices for the environment. The survey found that about half of black households having two or more cars, and while they are willing to pay more for energy in some circumstances, they oppose higher gasoline taxes. Similarly, while about two in five African Americans support building more nuclear power plants, fewer than one in four would support building a nuclear power plant in their own community.

Other key findings in the survey include:

- Majorities of respondents thought climate change is already causing – or will soon cause – worsening public health (59 percent), economic instability (61 percent), increasing flooding, fires, and droughts (60 percent), and energy dependence (64 percent). Even larger majorities thought these would be problems for future generations if climate change is not stopped.
- A majority of African Americans (59 percent) believe environmental conditions will be worse for future generations, while only one-in-six believe environmental conditions will be better.
- With regard to their electric bills, a solid majority of African Americans (61 percent) are willing to pay an additional \$10 per month to fight global warming, while 30 percent were willing to pay an additional \$25 per month and 16 percent were willing to pay an additional \$50 per month.
- While opposition to gas tax increases is strong, a solid majority of African Americans (63 percent) believe that people they know would be willing to change their driving habits or drive less to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Findings from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' National Survey Results, *African Americans on Climate Change and Conservation* are from a random digit dialing telephone survey of 750 African American adults conducted between July 20, 2009 and July 30, 2008. The survey has a margin of error of + or - 3.6 percentage points. The full survey can be downloaded at www.jointcenter.org/climate

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is one of the nation's leading research and public policy institutions and the only one whose work focuses primarily on issues of particular concern to African Americans and other people of color. The Joint Center will mark its 40th Anniversary of service in 2010. To learn more, please visit www.jointcenter.org.

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