



Yale School of Forestry
& Environmental Studies

The GfK Roper Yale Survey on Environmental Issues

**Fall, 2007: American Support for Local Action on
Global Warming**

October, 2007

About the GfK Roper Yale Survey on Environmental Issues

This study is the first of a series of quarterly collaborations between survey researchers at GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media and scholars at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Designed to give voice to the American people on vital issues of today, the survey will probe attitudes toward the environment and test the reception and viability of various proposed policies.

How the survey was conducted

Findings in this report are culled from two national telephone surveys of Americans, ages 18 and over, conducted from September 21-23 (n=1,004) and September 28-30, 2007 (n=1,005) as part of GfK Roper's weekly OMNITEL telephone omnibus service. The sample is drawn from random digit dialing (RDD) probability samples of all telephone households in the continental United States. Data were weighted to match national norms (derived from the Current Population Survey) on sex, age, region, and education. Topline findings are projectable at the 95% confidence level to the total adult continental U.S. population within an average +/- 3 percentage point margin of error.

American Support for Local Action on Global Warming

Recent national surveys demonstrate that Americans are increasingly convinced that global warming is occurring (in this survey, 68% are “completely” or “mostly convinced”) and favor a wide range of national and international policies to slow it.

We currently have almost no understanding, however, about public support for *action on global warming by cities and local governments*. Yet cities and local governments are critical players, as most of the greenhouse gases contributing to global warming come from urban areas. Building codes, zoning, transportation systems, and electricity production are all examples of critical choices made at the local level, with large consequences on greenhouse gas emissions. This survey is the first to measure public support for a variety of local climate change policies.

At the most general level, this survey found that three in four Americans (74%) want their own city or local government to do more to reduce the heat-trapping gases that cause global warming.

More specifically, there is broad public support for the following local policies:

- **Local regulations requiring any newly constructed home to be more energy efficient. These regulations would increase the initial cost of a new home by about \$7,500, but save about \$17,500 in utility bills over 30 years.**

This proposed policy garners the highest level of public support – three in four (74%) Americans “strongly” or “moderately” support such regulations. This policy, however, would have an immediate financial impact on relatively few Americans; i.e., only those in the market for a newly constructed home after the policy was enacted would be directly affected.

- **A city or local subsidy to encourage homeowners to install electricity-generating solar panels. This subsidy would cost the average household about \$5 a month in higher property taxes. Those homeowners that installed solar panels would save money on their utility bills.**

Seven in ten (72%) Americans support a subsidy to encourage installation of solar panels to *existing* homes. Perhaps surprisingly, Americans seem willing to pay more in property taxes to support such a local program. This policy likely garners a positive response in part because homeowners taking advantage of this program will recoup some of these costs in energy savings.

- **A city or local subsidy to encourage homeowners to replace old furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners, light bulbs, and insulation. This subsidy would cost the average household about \$5 a month in higher property taxes. Those homeowners that took advantage of the program would save money on their utility bills.**

This policy - a local subsidy for money-saving home improvements – also enjoys broad public support (71% of Americans).

There is also broad support among the American public for changes in local zoning rules as well as regulations on electric utility companies:

- **Local regulations requiring electric utilities to produce at least 20% of their electricity from wind, solar, or other renewable energy sources. It would cost the average household about \$8.50 a month.**

About seven in ten Americans (69%) support this measure, even though it would likely cost them, on average, \$8.50 per month in higher utility bills with no individual savings benefits down the road. In general, Americans have strongly supported renewable energy development for many years and appear willing to pay a “green” premium to support it.

- **Changing your city or town’s zoning rules to decrease suburban sprawl and concentrate new development near the center of your city or town. This could reduce the total number of miles driven by people in your town by 25 to 50%.**

Nearly seven in ten Americans (68%) support this measure to reduce suburban sprawl and redevelop urban centers. While this kind of policy should provide environmental benefits, many Americans may also support it as a way to reinvigorate urban centers and the sense of community.

- **Changing your city or town’s zoning rules to require that neighborhoods have a mix of housing, offices, industry, schools, and stores close together to encourage walking and decrease the need for a car.**

Nearly seven in ten Americans also support local policies to encourage mixed urban development. Again, while this kind of policy should provide environmental benefits, many Americans may also support this approach as a way to make cities more liveable, convenient, and as a means to build and maintain a sense of community.

Americans, however, are less likely to support the following policies:

- **A city or local fee added to your electric bill to encourage people to use less electricity. The fee would cost the average household about \$1.50 each month, and all revenues would fund local programs to address global warming.**

Nearly as many Americans oppose (45%) as support (53%) this policy, which is interesting given their overall support for higher utility bills (\$8.50, on average, per month) so long as the money funds a shift to renewable energy sources. These different findings suggest that, on the one hand, Americans are willing to pay more for electricity, especially if the added cost finances a specified, concrete shift toward clean energy. On the other hand, Americans are less likely to support a local fee on electricity intended to “encourage people to use less electricity,” perhaps because this phrase may evoke the spectre of sacrificed comfort and convenience, instead of an incentive to acquire more energy efficient appliances providing the same quality service while using less energy.

- **Apartments generally use less energy per person than single-family homes. To increase your town’s overall energy efficiency, would you support or oppose changing your town’s zoning rules to promote the construction of more apartment buildings instead of single-family homes?**

Over half of Americans (57%) would oppose this policy despite their support for other zoning law changes. It is possible that many Americans equate apartments with lower-income housing or otherwise prefer not to have apartment developments move into their neighborhoods. Likewise, owning a single-family home has long been part of the American Dream.

- **A 10-cent city or local fee added to each gallon of gasoline you buy, to encourage people to use less gasoline. If you bought 10 gallons of gas, it would cost you an extra \$1.00. All revenues would fund local programs to address global warming.**

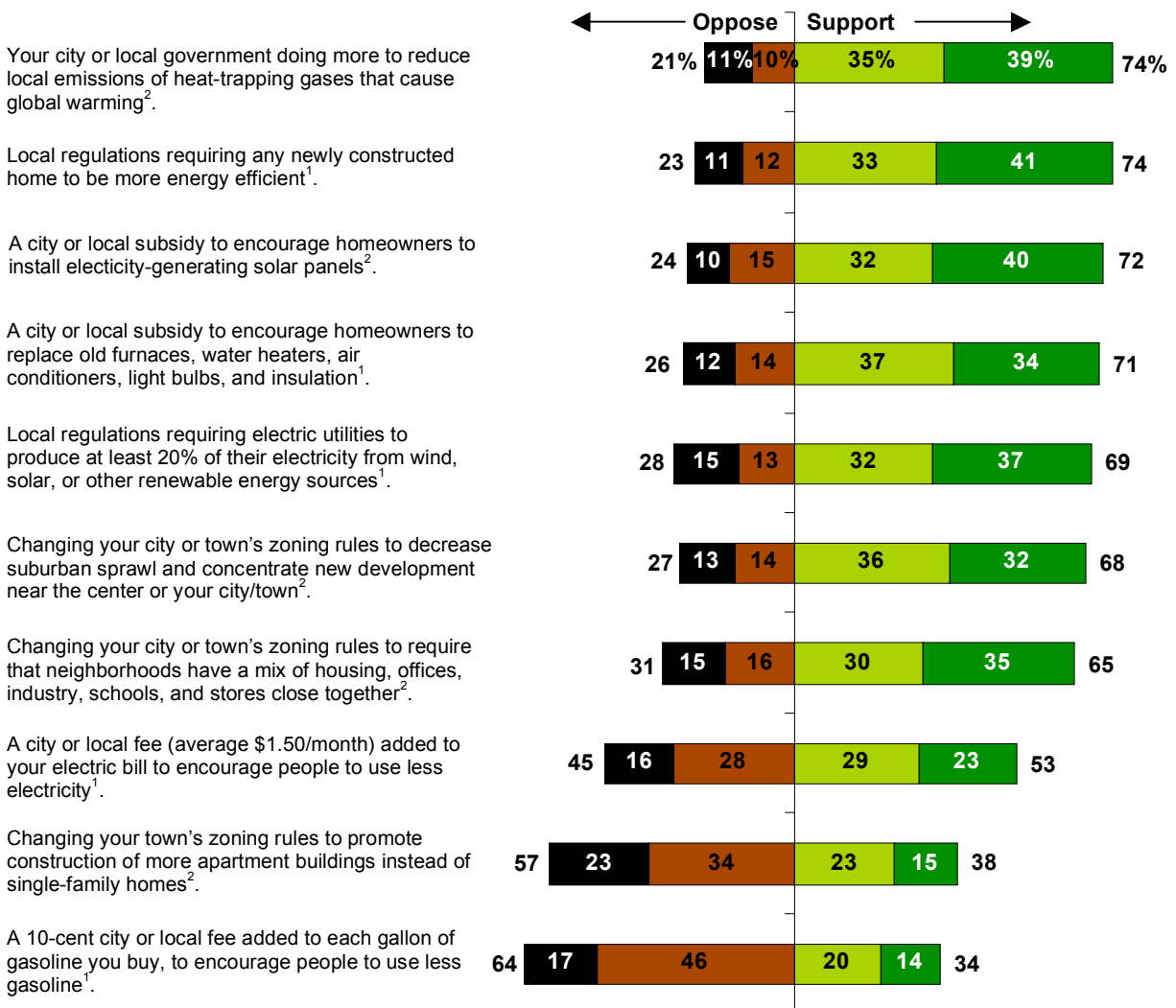
Americans by a two-to-one margin oppose this policy (64% versus 34% who support it), likely due, in part, to the fact that gas prices are already high. Likewise, the phrase “encourage people to use less gasoline” may be interpreted as asking people to drive less, which many may be reluctant to do.

Level of Support for Selected City and Local Environmental Policies (See text for complete item wording)

Base: Americans age 18+.

"As you may know, many scientists have said that global warming is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels in our cars, homes, and electric power plants. Some people say that CITIES and LOCAL governments should act to reduce global warming. Please tell me whether you would strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. First..."

■ Strongly oppose
 ■ Moderately oppose
 ■ Moderately support
 ■ Strongly support



¹Asked in September 21-23 survey; ²Asked in September 28-30 survey.

Appendix 1: Sample Demography – September 21-23

	<u>% Weighted</u>	<u>N (Unweighted)</u>
	100	1,004
Sex		
Male	48	477
Female	52	527
Age		
18-24	13	52
25-34	18	105
35-49	26	250
50-64	24	319
65+	16	239
Household income		
<\$20,000	16	133
\$20,000 - \$29,999	12	114
\$30,000 - \$39,999	7	70
\$40,000 - \$49,999	9	84
\$50,000+	42	446
\$75,000+	24	260
Region		
Northeast	19	190
Midwest	22	295
South	36	321
West	22	198

Appendix 1: Sample Demography – September 28-30

	<u>% (Weighted)</u>	<u>N (Unweighted)</u>
	100	1,005
Sex		
Male	48	477
Female	52	528
Age		
18-24	13	55
25-34	18	110
35-49	26	224
50-64	24	330
65+	16	244
Household income		
<\$20,000	17	139
\$20,000 - \$29,999	17	142
\$30,000 - \$39,999	8	77
\$40,000 - \$49,999	11	110
\$50,000+	35	386
\$75,000+	21	246
Region		
Northeast	19	175
Midwest	22	323
South	36	308
West	22	199

Appendix 3: Survey Instrument

Week 1

1. How convinced are you that global warming is happening? Would you say you are completely convinced, mostly convinced, not so convinced, or not at all convinced?

Completely convinced	1
Mostly convinced	2
Not so convinced	3
Not at all convinced	4
Don't know	X
Refused	Y

2. As you may know, many scientists have said that global warming is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels in our cars, homes, and electric power plants. Some people say that CITIES and LOCAL governments should act to reduce global warming. Please tell me whether you would strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. First... [READ EACH ITEM.]

[RANDOMIZE]	Strong support	Mod. support	Mod. oppose	Strong. oppose	Not sure	REF
A city or local fee added to your electric bill to encourage people to use less electricity. The fee would cost the average household about \$1.50 each month, and all revenues would fund local programs to address global warming.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
A 10-cent city or local fee added to each gallon of gasoline you buy, to encourage people to use less gasoline. If you bought 10 gallons of gas, it would cost you an extra \$1.00. All revenues would fund local programs to address global warming.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
Local regulations requiring electric utilities to produce at least 20% of their electricity from wind, solar, or other renewable energy sources. It would cost the average household about \$8.50 a month.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
Local regulations requiring any newly constructed home to be more energy efficient. These regulations would increase the initial cost of a new home by about \$7,500, but save about \$17,000 in utility bills over 30 years.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
A city or local subsidy to encourage homeowners to replace old furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners, light bulbs, and insulation. This subsidy would cost the average household about \$5 a month in higher property taxes. Those homeowners that took advantage of the program would save money on their utility bills.	4	3	2	1	X	Y

Week 2

1. How convinced are you that global warming is happening? Would you say you are completely convinced, mostly convinced, not so convinced, or not at all convinced?

Completely convinced	1
Mostly convinced	2
Not so convinced	3
Not at all convinced	4
Don't know	X
Refused	Y

2. As you may know, many scientists have said that global warming is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels in our cars, homes, and electric power plants. Some people say that CITIES and LOCAL governments should act to reduce global warming. Please tell me whether you would strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. First... [READ EACH ITEM.]

[RANDOMIZE]	Strong. support	Mod. support	Mod. oppose	Strong. oppose	Not sure	REF
Apartments generally use less energy per person than single-family homes. To increase your town's overall energy efficiency, would you support or oppose changing your town's zoning rules to promote the construction of more apartment buildings instead of single-family homes?	4	3	2	1	X	Y
Changing your city or town's zoning rules to require that neighborhoods have a mix of housing, offices, industry, schools, and stores close together to encourage walking and decrease the need for a car.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
Changing your city or town's zoning rules to decrease suburban sprawl and concentrate new development near the center of your city or town. This could reduce the total number of miles driven by people in your town by 25 to 50%.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
A city or local subsidy to encourage homeowners to install electricity generating solar panels. This subsidy would cost the average household about \$5 a month in higher property taxes. Those homeowners that installed solar panels would save money on their utility bills.	4	3	2	1	X	Y
Your city or local government doing more to reduce local emissions of the heat-trapping gases that cause global warming?	4	3	2	1	X	Y