

Adults in Five Largest European Countries and the U.S. Supportive of Renewable Energy, But Unwilling to Pay Much More for It

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 26, 2008 – As energy costs continue to soar, and an increased reliance on traditional oil and coal is questioned, alternate sources of energy are examined more closely. Many in the five largest countries in Europe and in the United States like the idea of renewable energy, but do not want to pay any more for renewable energy sources. A majority of adults who have some form of responsibility for paying household energy bills in Great Britain (54%) and Germany (50%), pluralities in Italy (44%), France (42%) and the U.S. (40%), as well as just over one-third of adults responsible for paying household energy bills in Spain (35%), all say they would be willing to pay nothing more for energy if it was from renewable sources.

These are some of the results of a **Financial Times/Harris Poll** conducted online by Harris Interactive® among a total of 6,448 adults aged 16 to 64 within France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and the United States, and adults aged 18 to 64 in Italy, between January 30 and February 8, 2008.

When this decision of paying more is translated into actual currency, it makes it even less likely that people will be willing to pay more. Using European Commission estimates that it would cost each household an extra €150, £110 or \$220 (depending on country) per month to cut greenhouse gasses and get more renewable energy, strong majorities of adults who have some form of responsibility for paying household energy bills in all six countries say they would be not at all likely to pay this extra amount.

Looking at taxes on cars, here majorities favor a higher tax on higher carbon emission cars. From a high of 78 percent of adults favoring this idea in Spain to a low of just over half (53%) of adults favoring it in the U.S., it is a winning idea. An even stronger idea is that of having a lower tax on lower carbon emission cars. At least three-quarters of adults in all six countries favor this idea. In fact, majorities of Italians (53%) and Spaniards (55%) strongly favor lower taxes on lower carbon emitting cars.

Building New Sources of Energy

Looking specifically to two sources of energy – nuclear and wind – majorities of adults in these six countries are in favor of one type and mixed on the other. When it comes to the number of wind farms in their country, strong majorities in all six countries (from 79% to 92%) are in favor of seeing a large increase. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, produces more mixed feelings. A majority of Italians (58%) are in favor of building new nuclear plants in their country. Two-thirds of Spaniards (68%) as well as 64 percent of Germans and just over half (55%) of adults in Great Britain, however, are all opposed to building new power plants in their respective countries. France and the U.S. are more closely divided. In France, 51 percent are opposed while in the U.S., 52 percent favor building new power plants.

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By Regina A. Corso, Director, *The Harris Poll*, Harris Interactive.

Government Subsidies

When it comes to actually having the government create a financial subsidy for the development of nuclear power, the feeling equals those of building new plants. Italians are most supportive, as three in five (62%) are in favor of such a subsidy. Majorities in Germany (66%), Spain (64%), Great Britain (58%) and the U.S. (54%) are all opposed to a subsidy for nuclear power development. Again, France is the most divided as 52 percent oppose this subsidy while 48 percent would be in favor of it. Bio-fuels, however, are a different story. Strong majorities in all six countries (from 65% in Germany to 90% in Italy) would favor a government subsidy for bio-fuels.

So What?

Support for bio-fuels and wind farms is strong across these six countries. But, what is also clear is that while people support renewable electricity, they are not willing to actually pay more for these alternative types of energy. Until people are forced to do so, or the price for renewable energy comes down considerably, people will not make the “green” choice. This is especially true as economies around the globe tighten. When it comes to food or solar power, food will win for the consumer each time.

TABLE 1
PAYING MORE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

“How much of an increase would you be willing to pay at the most for energy if it were from renewable sources?”
Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults who have some form of responsibility for paying household energy bills

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	884	934	807	848	968	787
Nothing more	54	42	44	35	50	40
5% more	18	25	25	25	22	17
10% more	12	16	15	14	14	17
15% more	2	4	7	4	4	7
20% more	2	2	4	3	2	4
30% more	1	*	*	1	1	2
40% more	1	*	*	1	1	1
Not sure	10	10	5	17	5	11
AVERAGE	3.9%	4.7%	5.1%	5.3%	4.4%	6.1%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 2
LIKELIHOOD OF PAYING MORE EACH MONTH FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

“The European Commission estimates it would cost each household an extra [€150, £110, \$220] on a monthly basis on gas and electricity bills to cut green house emissions and get more renewable energy. Given the choice, how likely would you be to pay this extra [€150, £110, \$220] per month?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults who have some form of responsibility for paying household energy bills

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	884	934	807	848	968	787
Completely likely	2	1	3	3	3	2
Very likely	2	3	6	4	3	4
Fairly likely	11	10	14	10	9	8
Somewhat likely	13	17	20	21	21	16
Not at all likely	72	69	57	62	65	71

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 3
HIGHER TAXES ON HIGHER CARBON EMISSION CARS

“How much do you favor or oppose a higher tax on higher carbon emission cars?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	65	67	71	78	57	53
Strongly favor	31	31	32	46	20	21
Favor more than oppose	34	37	39	32	37	32
OPPOSE (NET)	35	33	29	22	43	47
Oppose more than favor	23	19	18	14	24	27
Strongly oppose	12	14	11	8	19	20

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 4
LOWER TAXES ON LOWER CARBON EMISSION CARS

“How much do you favor or oppose a lower tax on lower carbon emission cars?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	86	79	91	90	89	78
Strongly favor	39	34	53	55	44	37
Favor more than oppose	46	44	38	35	45	41
OPPOSE (NET)	14	21	9	10	11	22
Oppose more than favor	11	13	7	5	7	14
Strongly oppose	4	8	3	5	5	8

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 5
BUILDING NEW NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

“How much do you favor or oppose building new nuclear power plants in [the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S.]?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	45	49	58	32	36	52
Strongly favor	13	15	29	12	12	20
Favor more than oppose	32	34	30	20	25	32
OPPOSE (NET)	55	51	42	68	64	48
Oppose more than favor	35	31	21	28	29	31
Strongly oppose	20	20	21	40	35	17

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 6
INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WIND FARMS

“How much do you favor or oppose a large increase in the number of wind farms in [the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S.]?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	87	89	91	90	79	92
Strongly favor	48	49	64	55	34	61
Favor more than oppose	39	40	27	35	45	31
OPPOSE (NET)	13	11	9	10	21	8
Oppose more than favor	9	8	8	7	14	7
Strongly oppose	4	3	2	3	7	1

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 7
GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES FOR BIO-FUELS

“How much do you favor or oppose a financial subsidy by the government of [the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S.] for bio-fuels?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	77	84	90	85	65	71
Strongly favor	23	39	54	38	23	22
Favor more than oppose	55	45	36	47	42	49
OPPOSE (NET)	23	16	10	15	35	29
Oppose more than favor	16	10	8	10	21	21
Strongly oppose	7	6	2	5	14	8

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 8
GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES FOR NUCLEAR POWER

“How much do you favor or oppose a financial subsidy by the government of [the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S.] for the development of nuclear power?”

Base: All EU adults in five countries and US adults

	Great Britain	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	United States
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unweighted base	1087	1076	1045	1109	1111	1020
FAVOR (NET)	42	48	62	36	34	46
Strongly favor	10	11	30	13	7	12
Favor more than oppose	33	37	32	23	27	35
OPPOSE (NET)	58	52	38	64	66	54
Oppose more than favor	38	33	20	35	32	37
Strongly oppose	20	19	17	30	34	17

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Methodology

This **FT/Harris Poll** was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a total of 6,448 adults (aged 16-64) within France (1,076), Germany (1,111), Great Britain (1,087), Spain (1,109) and the United States (1,020) and adults (aged 18-64) in Italy (1,045) between 30 January and 8 February 2008. Figures for age, sex, education, region and Internet usage were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult populations of the respective countries. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls and of the British Polling Council.

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