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Special Earth Day Environmental Survey

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NY'ers are Divided on Energy Policy: 46% Say Restrict Fossil Fuel Usage Even if More Expensive, 43% Say Lower Energy Costs Even if Environment Affected
4 in 10 Say Climate Change is Harming People Now & 62% are Concerned Climate Change Will Harm Them Personally in Their Lifetime; 77% Agree State Policies Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Will Benefit Long-term Health of New Yorkers

67% Agree Transitioning to Renewable Energy Sources Will be an Economic Development Success for New York Companies, But, by 46-39% Worry Limiting Emissions Will Make it Harder for Businesses to be Successful

Loudonville, NY – By 46-43%, New York State residents are divided on whether the state should restrict fossil fuel usage and expand renewable energy even if it is more expensive, or if the state should continue to use fossil fuels and focus on lowering energy costs for residents. A plurality of New Yorkers (46%) believe that climate change is already harming people now, and nearly a quarter (24%) think climate change will harm people in the next few years. But, 62% say that they are either very or somewhat concerned that climate change will harm them personally at some point in their lifetime, and a larger share, 73%, are very or somewhat concerned that climate change will harm their children over the course of their lifetime according to a new survey of New Yorkers released today by the Siena College Research Institute.

Six in ten state residents agree that keeping energy costs affordable is more important right now than reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Two-thirds agree that the transition to renewable energy sources will be an economic development success, but a plurality, 46-39%, agree that policies that limit greenhouse gas emissions will make New York a more difficult place for businesses to be successful. Still, 77% agree that state policies that protect the environment like reducing greenhouse gases will benefit the long-term health of New Yorkers.

“Almost half of New Yorkers, 47%, are in favor of state actions aimed at reducing fossil fuel use even if those actions increase the price of energy,” said Travis Brodbeck, SCRI’s Associate Director of Data Management. “For a big issue like climate change, New Yorkers are stuck in between their wallets and their environmental concerns. A majority of New Yorkers have some anxiety about being harmed personally from climate change and the harm to future generations, but the appetite for controlling prices today moderates fears about the issue,” Brodbeck said.

Nearly three-quarters, 72% say that climate change is a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Eight in ten residents of New York State strongly or somewhat agree that New York should focus on both reducing energy costs and protecting the environment by using a combination of renewable energy and energy derived from fossil fuels. At least 80 percent of Democrats, Republicans, and independents strongly or somewhat agree with the dual goal of reducing energy costs and protecting the environment.

“Politics are part of the environmental debate. A majority of Democrats want the state to focus on protecting the environment even if it costs more while majorities of Republicans and independents advocate for lowering energy costs even if it slows the state reaching its environmental goals,” Brodbeck said. “Is there a compromise? Over 80% of voters from every party agree that the state should focus on BOTH – reducing costs and protecting the environment by using a combination of fossil fuels and renewable energy.”

Nearly 3 in 4 residents support New York State requiring all companies with an annual net income greater than one-million dollars to reduce packaging on their products. Six in ten support the state’s environmental goals to reach zero carbon emissions in the electricity sector by 2040 (66%) and increasing the state bottle deposit from \$0.05 to \$0.10 (61%). A plurality of residents, 48%, support banning fracking using carbon dioxide. New Yorkers are evenly divided, 43% in support and 44% in opposition to state policies that aim to reduce vehicle use like congestion pricing.

“When it comes to designing policies to protect the environment, 64% of New Yorkers feel that policy makers should wield both the carrot and the stick – using penalties and incentives to meet environmental goals,” Brodbeck said. “Three-quarters of residents want the state to work with private industry to reduce the use of fossil fuels in favor of renewable sources of energy.”

“And when making decisions on what to purchase, 3 in 10 consumers always choose the cheaper option regardless of environmental impact, a plurality (45%) choose the environmentally friendly option if the cost difference is small, and 2 in 10 consumers always choose the environmentally friendly option,” Brodbeck said.

This Siena College Poll was conducted March 17 – 24, 2025, among 618 New York State Residents. Of the 618 respondents, 305 were contacted through a dual frame (landline and cell phone) mode (49 completed via text to web) and 313 respondents were drawn from a proprietary online panel (Lucid). Telephone calls were conducted in English and respondent sampling was initiated by asking for the youngest person in the household. Telephone sampling was conducted via a stratified dual frame probability sample of landline and cell phone telephone numbers weighted to reflect known population patterns. The landline telephone sample was obtained from ASDE and the cell phone sample was obtained from Marketing Systems Group (MSG). Data from collection modes was statistically adjusted by age, party registration, region, race/ethnicity, and gender to ensure representativeness. It has an overall margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social, and cultural research primarily in NYS. SCRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information or comments, please call Travis Brodbeck at 518-782-6997. Survey cross-tabulations and buying plans can be found at www.siena.edu/scri/ccj.

Appendix

Environmental Risk Perceptions					
Question	Response	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
In your view, is climate change a very serious problem, somewhat serious problem, not too serious a problem or not a problem?	Very serious or somewhat serious	72%	82%	49%	69%
Do you think climate change is harming people now, will harm people in the next few years, will not harm people for many years, or will never harm people?	Harming people now	46%	55%	19%	41%
How concerned are you, if at all, that climate change will harm you personally at some point in your lifetime?	Very or somewhat concerned	62%	72%	40%	57%
How concerned are you, if at all, that climate change will harm your children, or other young children you know, or are related to, over the course of their lifetime?	Very or somewhat concerned	73%	80%	52%	76%

Attitudes to Environmental Policy				
Total Percent Who Said "Strongly agree" or "Somewhat agree"				
Question	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
New York should focus on BOTH reducing energy costs and protecting the environment by using a combination of fossil fuels and renewable energy...	81%	84%	81%	83%
State policies that protect the environment like reducing greenhouse gases will benefit the long-term health of New Yorkers.	77%	79%	62%	76%
Efforts to reduce greenhouse gases including cutting back the use of fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy sources will be an economic development success for New York companies.	67%	78%	47%	63%
Keeping energy costs affordable in New York is more important right now than reducing greenhouse gas emissions.	61%	54%	81%	60%
State policies that limit greenhouse gas emissions will make New York a more difficult place for businesses to be successful.	46%	45%	64%	46%

Support for Environmental Policy Proposals				
Total Percent Who Said "Support"				
Question	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
New York State requiring all companies with an annual net income greater than one-million dollars to reduce packaging on their products in order to reduce waste	73%	80%	60%	62%
New York State's environmental goals to reach zero carbon emissions in the electricity sector by 2040, and reduce greenhouse gases 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050	66%	71%	47%	71%
New York State increasing the bottle deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents	61%	63%	53%	56%
New York State banning the extraction of gas and oil using carbon dioxide, a process commonly known as fracking.	48%	56%	40%	44%
New York State implementing policies that aim to reduce vehicle use, such as congestion pricing or restricted driving zones	43%	51%	25%	37%