



The Harris Poll[®] #77, October 13, 2005

Three-Quarters of U.S. Adults Agree Environmental Standards Cannot Be Too High and Continuing Improvements Must Be Made Regardless of Cost

Nearly half of adults think there is too little government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection

Three in four U.S. adults (74%) agree that "protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost." In addition, a plurality of adults (47%) agree that "there is too little government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection." These attitudes are significantly more pro-environment than in 2000, the last time Harris Interactive examined these issues.

These are some of the results of a Harris Poll of 1,217 U.S. adults surveyed by telephone by Harris Interactive[®] between August 9 and 16, 2005. It is important to note that this survey was conducted prior to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, events which have placed some additional focus on environmental issues.

Major findings of the survey include:

- While the proportion of adults who agree that it is important to protect and improve the environment regardless of cost has increased over the last five years (66% in 2000 vs. 74% now), a significant proportion of the public currently disagrees with this statement (25%).
 - This year, Democrats (85%) are more likely to agree with this statement than Independents (75%) or Republicans (60%).
 - Liberals (82%) and moderates (77%) are more likely to agree with this statement than conservatives (69%).
- Just fewer than half of U.S. adults (47%) think the amount of government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection is too little, while one-third (32%) says it is about the right amount and one-fifth (19%) believes it is too much. The percentage of adults believing the amount of regulation and involvement is too little has increased since 2000 when 39 percent of adults felt this way.
 - Currently, Democrats (61%) are more likely to believe there is too little government oversight with respect to environmental protection than Independents (55%) or Republicans (23%).
 - At the same time, a higher percentage of liberals (67%) than moderates (56%) or conservatives (27%) feels there is too little government regulation and involvement.
- According to U.S. adults, water pollution and air pollution are the top environmental priorities for the nation. When asked to rate the priority of seven environmental issues on a scale of one to 10 where one means "a low priority" and 10 means "a high priority," about half (52%) of adults rate water pollution a "9" or "10" while 48 percent rate air pollution this high of a priority.

- The second tier of priorities includes global warming, ozone depletion, and depletion of forest lands (each rated a "9" or "10" by 41% of adults).
- Recycling more material (39% rate it "9" or "10") and insisting that other nations adhere to our level of environmental standards (26% rate it a "9" or "10") trail as high priorities.
- Just one of eight groups examined is credited with doing more than their share to help reduce environmental problems.
 - A plurality of adults (42%) believe environmental groups are doing more than their share to help reduce environmental problems. On the other side of the coin, 71 percent believe large corporations are doing less than their share.
 - The general public does not escape its own wrath as 63 percent of adults say the general public does less than its share. Majorities also feel local businesses (50%), the president (53%), and Congress (57%) are doing less than their share.
 - Conversely, the public has mixed views on the role of state or local government. Forty-six percent say they are doing less than their share, 43 percent believe their efforts are about right, and 10 percent believe they are doing more than their share. The media also receives mixed reviews (44% less than, 37% about right, and 18% more than their share).
- A majority of all U.S. adults (58%) describe themselves as sympathetic to environmental concerns, while 12 percent say they are active environmentalists, four percent are unsympathetic, and 24 percent consider themselves neutral. These figures are relatively unchanged in the surveys dating back to 1995 (53% sympathetic, 11% environmentalist, 5% unsympathetic, and 29% neutral).

TABLE 1**IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT**

"Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental Improvements must be made regardless of cost. And is that strongly or somewhat agree or disagree?"

Base: All Adults

	All Adults (n=1,217)	Party ID			Political Philosophy		
		Republican (n=252)	Democrat (n=323)	Independent (n=210)	Conservative (n=315)	Moderate (n=350)	Liberal (n=177)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree (NET)	74	60	85	75	69	77	82
Strongly Agree	40	23	56	43	33	45	52
Somewhat Agree	34	37	29	31	37	31	30
Disagree (NET)	24	39	15	23	30	22	17
Somewhat Disagree	16	24	12	13	20	15	12

Strongly Disagree	9	15	3	10	10	7	5
Not sure	1	1	-	3	1	1	2

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

TABLE 2

IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT – TREND

"Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental Improvements must be made regardless of cost. And is that strongly or somewhat agree or disagree?"

Percent saying strongly or somewhat agree

Base: All Adults

	All Adults
	%
2005	74
2000	66
1999	64
1998	63
1997	76
1996	73
1995	72
1994	71
1993	58
1992	80
1991	69
1990	75
1989	80
1986	66
1983	58
1981	45

TABLE 3

AMOUNT OF REGULATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

"Do you think there is too much, too little, or about the right amount of government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection?"

Base: All Adults

	All Adults (n=1,217)	Party ID			Political Philosophy		
		Republican (n=252)	Democrat (n=323)	Independent (n=210)	Conservative (n=315)	Moderate (n=350)	Liberal (n=177)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Too much	19	29	15	17	30	14	12
Too little	47	23	61	55	27	56	67
About the right amount	32	45	23	23	40	27	19
Not sure	2	4	1	5	2	3	2

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

TABLE 4

REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS – TREND

"Do you think there is too much, too little, or about the right amount of government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection?"

Base: All Adults

		Too Much	Too Little	About the Right Amount	Not Sure
2005	%	19	47	32	2
2000	%	22	39	33	5
1999	%	29	42	28	1
1998	%	29	41	29	2
1997	%	21	49	28	1
1996	%	24	41	30	5
1993	%	20	52	24	3
1991	%	11	63	23	3

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

TABLE 5

PRIORITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

"Now, I am going to read a list of environmental problems. For each problem, please tell me HOW HIGH OF A PRIORITY you feel that problem is, using a scale of 1 to 10, where "1" means the problem is a low priority and "10" means the problem is a high priority."

Percent giving a rating of 9 or 10

Base: All Adults

	%
Water pollution	52
Air Pollution	48
Global warming	41
Ozone depletion	41
Depletion of forest lands	41
Recycling more material	39
Insisting that other nations adhere to our level of environmental standards	26

TABLE 6**REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**

"For each of the following, please tell me if you feel they've done more than their share, just about right, or less than their share to help reduce environmental problems."

Base: All Adults

		Less Than Their Share	About Right	More Than Their Share	Not Sure
Environmental groups	%	16	39	42	2
The media	%	44	37	18	1
State or local government	%	46	43	10	2
General public	%	63	26	10	1
Local businesses	%	50	38	9	3
The President	%	53	36	8	3
The Congress	%	57	31	8	3
Large corporations	%	71	21	6	1

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

TABLE 7**IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT**

"Do you think of yourself as an active environmentalist, sympathetic to environmental concerns, neutral, or unsympathetic to environmental concerns?"

Base: All Adults

	Environmentalist	Sympathetic	Neutral	Unsympathetic	Not Sure

2005	%	12	58	24	4	1
1999	%	10	56	30	4	1
1998	%	12	57	27	3	*
1997	%	11	57	27	4	--
1996	%	9	61	24	4	1
1995	%	11	53	29	5	2

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

* Less than 0.5%

Methodology

The Harris Poll[®] was conducted by telephone within the United States between August 9 and 16, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 1,217 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, number of adults, number of voice/telephone lines in the household, region and size of place were weighted where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population.

In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the various sub-groups listed above is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors.

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

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