

# Americans More Likely to Favor than Oppose Increased Offshore Drilling Despite Gulf Coast Disaster

*Six in Ten See Offshore Drilling as Necessary to Reduce Dependence on Foreign Oil*



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## **Americans More Likely to Favor than Oppose Increased Offshore Drilling Despite Gulf Coast Disaster**

### ***Six in Ten See Offshore Drilling as Necessary to Reduce Dependence on Foreign Oil***

**Washington, DC** – Even in light of the massive oil leak in the Gulf, Americans are more likely to favor (49%) than oppose (38%) allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling in U.S. waters, according to a new telephone poll of over 1,000 adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs. More than one in ten (12%) are unsure.

However, support has declined over the past few months; prior to the oil leak in the Gulf, nearly two thirds (63%) said that they were in favor of allowing more offshore drilling in U.S. waters, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in early February. In April of last year, Pew Research Center had found that support was even higher, at 68%.

Attitudes vary a great deal across party lines, however, with Republicans being more than twice as likely as Democrats to favor increased drilling (72% vs. 32%). Half of Independents (49%) support allowing more offshore drilling while 35% of them oppose it.

Across demographic groups, men are more likely to be supportive of expanding offshore drilling than are women (58% vs. 41%). Regionally, majorities of residents in the South (56%) and the Midwest (53%) back increased drilling while those in the Northeastern and Western regions are less likely to be supportive (41%, respectively).

Support for drilling may be tied to the desire for energy independence, as six in ten (60%) say that offshore drilling is necessary so that America can produce its own energy and not depend on other countries for oil. Conversely, just 35% feel that offshore drilling is a bad idea because of the risks to the environment.

- While Republicans (80%) are much more likely to say that drilling is needed for energy independence than are Democrats (48%), Democrats are quite split. When asked which comes closer to their point of view, they are equally as likely to say that offshore drilling is needed to decrease our dependence on other countries for oil as they are to say that it is a bad idea due to the environmental risks (48%, respectively).
- Those most likely to oppose drilling because of the environmental risks include adults under the age of 35 (47%), Hispanics (46%), and college graduates (42%). In contrast, those most likely to believe that drilling is needed as a domestic energy source include adults aged 35 and over (66%), residents of the South (67%), and married adults (65%).

Nationally, Americans are more likely to support increased drilling than they are promoting increased use of nuclear power (46% favor, 39% oppose). At the same time, there is more support for spending more on subway, rail and bus systems (63% favor, 24% oppose) and increasing federal funding for research on alternative energy sources, such as wind, solar and hydrogen technology (73% favor, 17% oppose).

- Increased funding for research on alternative energy sources enjoys majority support across party lines, though Democrats are more likely to favor it than are Republicans (78% vs. 68%).



- The partisan gap is wider when it comes to increased spending on mass transit, which is favored by nearly three quarters of Democrats (74%) but less than half of Republicans (47%).
- In contrast, Republicans tend to be more supportive of promoting the increased use of nuclear power than are Democrats (64% vs. 34%).

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted May 6-9, 2010. For the survey, a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of exactly 1,016 adults aged 18 and older across the United States was interviewed by Ipsos. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in the U.S. been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to U.S. Census figures. Respondents had the option to be interviewed in English or Spanish.*

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