



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### Energy Issues The August 2004 Survey

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the ninth survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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## KNOWLEDGE AND FAMILIARITY

### Energy Saving Programs for Congregations

- ✓ Most panelists are *not familiar* with either the Energy Star Congregation program of the Environmental Protection Agency (86% of members, 80% of pastors so report) or the Electric Steward Congregation program of the PC(USA) (94%; 87%).
- ✓ Only 2% of pastors indicate that their congregation is an Energy Star Congregation, and only 1% that their congregation is an Electric Steward Congregation.

### Energy Facts

- ✓ No panelist responded correctly to all of eight true-false questions on energy issues. Among members, 22% got five or more correct; 7%, six or more correct; and 1%, seven correct. The corresponding percentages for pastors are 34%, 15%, and 3%.
- ✓ Correct response totals are highest for “less than a quarter of all petroleum consumed in the United States is imported”: 72% of members and 80% in the other Panel groups correctly judged this statement as *false*. (The true imported amount is around 60%.)
- ✓ The lowest percentage of correct responses is for “the United States, with 5% of the world’s population, annually consumes more than 40% of the petroleum consumed worldwide.” Only 4% of members and 2% in the other groups correctly responded *false*. (The true U.S. figure is around 25% of worldwide consumption.)

### Figure 1. Responses to Energy Fact Questions

Compared to 20 years ago, the overall energy efficiency of U.S. motor vehicles has improved (False)

The burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of recent global climate change (True)

On average, food in the U.S. travels more than 1,200 miles to get from the farmer to the consumer (True)

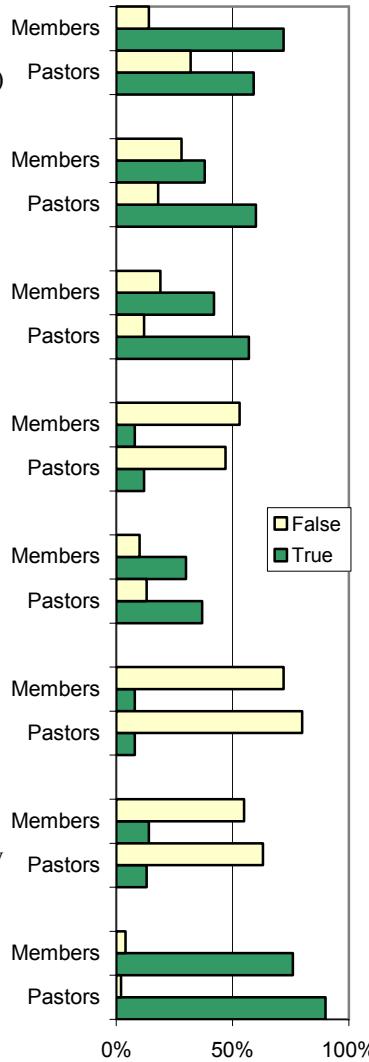
The United States government’s long-term plan for dealing with nuclear waste is to ship the waste into outer space (False)

Only a little over one-third of the energy used in a conventional oil or coal-fired power plant is converted into electricity (True)

Less than a quarter of all petroleum consumed in the U.S. is imported (False)

Of renewable resources used by electric utilities (such as hydroelectric, solar, wind), wind currently generates the most power (False)

The U.S., with 5% of the world’s population, annually accounts for more than 40% of worldwide petroleum consumption (False)



## OPINIONS ON ENERGY ISSUES

### **Energy Use and Environmental Issues**

- ✓ Majorities in every Panel group believe that “energy production and consumption in the U.S.” contributes either to a *great extent* or to *some extent* to:
  - Acid rain (elders, 77%; specialized clergy, 94%)
  - Water pollution (74%; 91%)
  - Habitat destruction (67%; 82%)
  - Global climate change (64%; 86%)
  - Mercury pollution (57%; 81%)
  - Loss of plant and animal species (56%; 78%)
- ✓ Majorities of ministers (pastors, 57%; specialized clergy, 67%) but fewer laity (members, 36%; elders, 41%) believe that “energy production and consumption in the U.S.” contribute either to a *great extent* or to *some extent* to the “rise in ocean levels.”

### **Energy Use and Social/Economic/Political Issues**

- ✓ Majorities believe that “energy production and consumption in the U.S.” contribute either to a *great extent* or to *some extent* to
  - rising gasoline, fuel oil, and natural gas prices (elders, 77%; specialized clergy, 87%)
  - unequal distribution of wealth across the world (59%; 83%)
- ✓ Majorities of ministers (pastors, 63%; specialized clergy, 71%) but fewer laity (members, 41%; elders, 48%) believe “energy production and consumption in the U.S.” contribute either to a *great extent* or to *some extent* to the “level of U.S. military spending.”

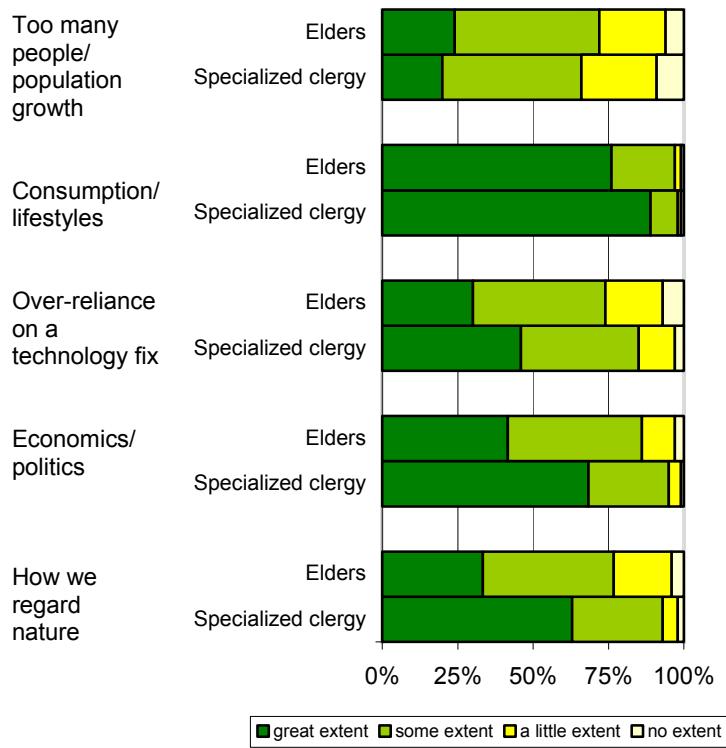
### **Factors Affecting Energy-Related Problems**

- ✓ Of five broad factors, the one large majorities in every group believe contributes to a *great extent* to “energy-related problems in the U.S.” is “consumption/lifestyles” (elders, 75%; specialized clergy, 88%).
- ✓ The next highest *great extent* responses are found for “economics/politics” (elders, 41%; specialized clergy, 66%) and “how we regard nature” (32%; 62%).

### **Nuclear Power**

- ✓ Half or more, ranging from 74% of elders to 50% of specialized clergy, believe nuclear energy should play a *very important* or *somewhat important* role in “meeting future U.S. energy needs.”

**Figure 2. Contributors to Energy Problems**



extent to which panelists believe each factor contributes to energy problems

### **Energy, Justice, and Faith**

- ✓ Majorities *strongly agree* or *agree* with the statement, “I consider the way I use energy as part of the way I practice stewardship” (members, 51%; pastors, 90%). Similar percentages *strongly agree* or *agree* that “energy conservation reflects values of the Christian/Reformed faith, such as simplicity and frugality” (52%; 94%).
- ✓ Four in ten laity (members, 43%) and majorities of ministers (pastors, 76%) *strongly agree/agree* that “it’s unjust that Americans consume a much higher percentage of world energy than our share of world population.” Similar numbers *strongly agree/agree* that “poorer communities receive a disproportionate share of the burdens of energy production and consumption, such as pollution” (40%; 70%).
- ✓ Around six in ten members (60%), elders (65%), and pastors (60%) *strongly agree* or *agree* that “in God’s eyes, human beings are superior to other species.” Specialized clergy are more evenly split, with 45% responding *strongly agree/agree*, and 39% *strongly disagree/disagree*.

## GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PRACTICES

### Rating U.S. Government Efforts

- ✓ Less than one in five panelists *strongly agree* or *agree* that “the U.S. government’s leadership and policies concerning energy are effective” (members, 16%; pastors, 13%).
- ✓ Of eleven “possible solutions to energy-related needs and problems in the United States,” half or more in every Panel group want the government to put *very great* or *great emphasis* on these five:
  - Promoting greater energy conservation (elders, 70%; specialized clergy, 88%)
  - Subsidizing development and use of renewable energies (70%; 87%)
  - Requiring motor vehicle manufacturers to increase fuel economy of vehicles (68%; 88%)
  - Requiring periodic motor vehicle inspections to keep emissions within legal limits (57%; 76%)
  - Pursuing incremental technological improvements, such as increasing the efficiency of generators and reducing energy lost during electricity transmission (60%; 69%)
- ✓ Other “possible solutions” that majorities of ministers and more than 40% of laity singled out for *very great* or *great emphasis* are:
  - Funding research and development to achieve a major technological breakthrough, such as cold fusion or hydrogen fuel cells (elders, 60%; specialized clergy, 66%)
  - Encouraging community design to make people less dependent on automobile (57%; 74%)
  - Subsidizing use/development of public transportation (48%; 70%)
- ✓ Less than half in every group want *very great* or *great emphasis* on these “possible solutions”:
  - Using market-based solutions (trading emissions) to mitigate pollution caused by companies (elders, 33%; specialized clergy, 33%)
  - Imposing higher energy taxes (20%; 34%)
  - Slowing population growth (19%; 26%)

### Kyoto Protocol

- ✓ Large minorities of members (44%) and elders (47%) and large majorities of pastors (69%) and specialized clergy (79%) want the United States to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, a treaty “to get countries to lower emissions that contribute to global climate change.” Most others respond *no opinion*; only 21%, 21%, 15%, and 5%, respectively, do not want the treaty ratified.

### More Production or Conservation?

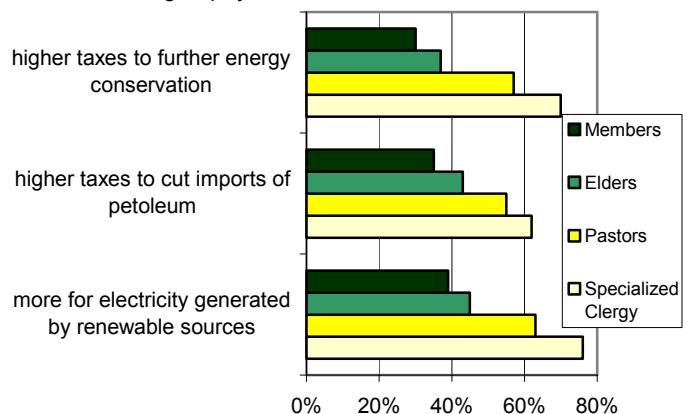
- ✓ When asked whether *encouraging more energy production* or *encouraging more energy conservation* is “the better way to meet U.S. energy needs in the *near future*,” around two-thirds or more choose *conservation* (members, 65%; elders, 68%; pastors, 76%; specialized clergy, 80%), while only a quarter or less choose *production* (24%; 24%; 16%; 10%).

### Willingness to Pay More

- ✓ Around a third of laity (members, 30%; elders, 37%) and majorities of ministers (pastors, 57%; specialized clergy, 70%) are willing “to pay higher taxes to further energy conservation efforts.” Of these, the median percentage increase they would be willing to pay is 5% for members, elders, and pastors, and 10% for specialized clergy.
- ✓ Similar percentages (members, 35%; elders, 43%; pastors, 55%; and specialized clergy, 62%) are willing “to pay higher taxes to help cut U.S. consumption of petroleum from other countries.” Of these, the median percentage increase they would be willing to pay is 5% for members, elders, and pastors, and 10% for specialized clergy.
- ✓ Slightly higher percentages (members, 39%; elders, 45%; pastors, 63%; and specialized clergy, 76%) are willing “to pay more at home for electricity generated by renewable sources such as wind, solar, or geothermal.” Of these, the median percentage increase they would be willing to pay is 10% for members, elders, and pastors, and 15% for specialized clergy.

**Figure 3. Willingness to Pay Higher Taxes or Higher Prices to Change Energy Practices**

Percent willing to pay:



## PERSONAL ENERGY-RELATED BEHAVIORS

### Transportation

- ✓ Large majorities of employed panelists (members, 84%; pastors, 82%) *drive alone to work most days* rather than *carpool, walk, bike, or take public transportation.*
- ✓ More than four in ten panelists (members, 47%; pastors, 49%) report having done something “in the last year to decrease your use of motor vehicles,” including:
  - Combining multiple trips into a single trip (22%; 19%)
  - Driving less (22%; 15%)
  - Buying a more fuel-efficient vehicle (15%; 22%)

### Home

- ✓ At home, more panelists:
  - Use a *clothes dryer* (members, 87%) than *air dry* (8%)
  - Use *incandescent* (58%) than *fluorescent* (26%) *bulbs*
  - *Sleep in an unheated bed* (82%) than *use an electric blanket or mattress pad* (16%)
- ✓ Majorities have “made an effort to decrease your household energy use during the past year,” most frequently involving low-cost actions:
  - Turning off lights (18% of all members so report)
  - Raising/lowering thermostat seasonally (10%)

- ✓ In addition, in the previous year 5% of all members installed energy-efficient windows, and 3% added insulation to their homes.

### Food

- ✓ In food preparation and cooking, more panelists:
  - *Buy mostly whole-food ingredients* (members, 73%) than *buy mostly ready-made foods* (23%)
  - *Buy frozen, canned, and other individually wrapped items* (64%) than *try to avoid packaged foods* (30%)
  - *Buy produce at any time of year* (81%) than *buy produce only when it's in season locally* (18%)
  - *Try as much as possible to buy food grown locally or regionally* (56%) than *don't pay much attention to where food is grown* (43%)

### Other Steps

- ✓ More than eight in ten panelists (members, 84%; pastors, 87%) report that in the previous year they “recycled items like newspapers, cans, bottles, etc.” *on a regular basis.*
- ✓ Around one in ten laity and one in six ministers report in the prior year writing “letters to politicians expressing opinions on energy issues” *on a regular basis* (members, 1%; pastors, 2%) or *from time to time* (9%; 13%).

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	746	1,069	1,231
Number returned.....	381	557	724‡
Response rate.....	51%	52%	58%

‡Of the 724 returned surveys, 465 came from pastors and 259 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in August 2004, and returns were accepted through October 2004. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of the August 2004 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for free on the Web ([www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index](http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index)) or for \$10 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 65100-04284). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**For more information on energy issues in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),** contact Bill Somplatsky-Jarman (888-728-7228 ext. 5809; [bsomplat@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:bsomplat@ctr.pcusa.org)).

### **LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**

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