

A large green rectangular area is positioned in the top left corner of the page. A thin horizontal line extends from its right edge, and a thin vertical line extends from its bottom edge, meeting at a small yellow square. A large, thin, light-brown arc curves from the top right towards the bottom right, passing behind the title text.

# **The Effects of Energy Costs on U.S. Adults**

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November 2005



# The Effects of Energy Costs On U.S. Adults

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Survey conducted by  
International Communications Research

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our website, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). AARP Foundation is our affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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## Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather data on how rising energy costs may be affecting U.S. residents, including the 50+ population, for the *AARP Bulletin*. Results provide some insight into the ways Americans' lives have changed as a result of higher energy prices. In addition, the survey also gathers information on who the public thinks is responsible for rising energy costs.

Questions were included on an omnibus survey October 26-31, 2005. The omnibus survey, conducted by International Communications Research (ICR), is a bi-weekly national telephone survey of U.S. households. ICR conducted a stratified, random-digit-dialing sample of telephone households. The survey included demographic and lifestyle questions, as well as questions about the effects of high energy prices and other topics.

The survey was conducted with 1,000 respondents age 18 and older (500 respondents ages 18-49 and 500 respondents ages 50+), and all responses were subsequently weighted to be nationally representative of the U.S. population 18+, balanced by key demographics. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%.

## Key Findings

- Almost two-thirds of American adults (63%) have limited the use of energy in their homes as a result of higher energy costs, primarily by raising or lowering their thermostats to save money (61%). Americans have also limited their driving or travel (58%).
- Sixteen percent of respondents have delayed payment of bills as a result of increased energy costs, with significantly more adults 18-49 delaying payments (21%) compared to adults 50+ (9%).
- Some Americans are also limiting or doing without food (15%), telecommunications (15%), medical services (11%), or prescription drugs (11%) because of higher energy costs.
- Respondents were read a list of nine entities and asked if each was “greatly, somewhat, or not at all” to blame for higher energy costs. Americans felt that oil companies were the group most responsible (89% greatly or somewhat to blame), followed by oil exporting countries (81%), and growing international demand (81%). Americans also attributed blame to Congress (79%), the Administration (78%), and Katrina and other hurricanes (78%).
- Slightly less than one-half of respondents own an RV, SUV, or truck (45%). These respondents attributed significantly more blame to five of the nine entities (oil companies, growing international demand, Congress, Katrina and hurricanes, and environmental regulations) compared to non-owners.

**Modifying Lifestyle Due to Energy Costs:  
U.S. Adults by Age**

<b>Have you modified your lifestyle in any way due to the rising energy costs, such as . . . ?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>18-49</b>
Limited use of energy in your home	63	60	65
Raised/lowered thermostat to save money	61	59	62
Limited driving and/or travel	58	58	57
Made home energy efficient	38	41	36
Installed ceiling fans*	37	42	33
Bought or drive a smaller, more energy efficient vehicle	29	30	28
Used a fireplace or wood burning stove	24	24	25
Used solar or alternative energy	10	10	10
Limited spending (groceries, clothing, entertainment, etc)	6	6	5

\* Significant difference between adults 18-49 and adults 50+.

**Effects of Energy Costs:  
U.S. Adults by Age**

<b>Have increased energy costs led to . . . . ?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>18-49</b>
A delay of payments on bills*	16	9	21
Applying for an energy assistance program	10	8	11

\* Significant difference between adults 18-49 and adults 50+.

**Additional Effects of Energy Costs:  
U.S. Adults by Age**

<b>Are the increased gasoline costs forcing you to limit or do without any other essential services or products such as . . . ?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>18-49</b>
Food	15	13	16
Telecommunications (cell phones, regular phones, electronic communication)*	15	11	18
Medical services	11	11	11
Prescription drugs	11	11	12

\* Significant difference between adults 18-49 and adults 50+.

**Who's to Blame for High Energy Costs?:  
U.S. Adults**

<b>Would you say each of the following is greatly to blame, somewhat to blame, or not at all to blame for the high energy costs?</b>	<b>Greatly to Blame</b>	<b>Somewhat to Blame</b>	<b>Not at all to Blame</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Oil companies	62	27	9	3
Congress	44	35	15	5
Oil exporting countries/Middle East	44	37	15	4
The Administration	44	34	17	5
Growing international demand	37	44	14	4
Katrina/hurricanes/natural disaster	35	43	21	1
Individuals who drive gas guzzlers	21	40	36	2
Environmental regulations	21	42	32	5
Auto companies	20	38	38	5

**Who's to Blame for High Energy Costs?:  
U.S. Adults by Age**

<b>Would you say each of the following is greatly to blame, somewhat to blame, or not at all to blame for the high energy costs? (Greatly/Somewhat to Blame)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>18-49</b>
Oil companies	89	86	90
Oil exporting countries/Middle East	81	79	82
Growing international demand	81	79	83
Congress	79	78	80
The Administration	78	75	79
Katrina/hurricanes/natural disaster	78	75	80
Environmental regulations	63	66	61
Individuals who drive gas guzzlers	62	62	62
Auto companies*	57	65	53

\* Significant difference between adults 18-49 and adults 50+.



**SUV Ownership:  
U.S. Adults by Age**

<b>Do you own an RV, SUV, or truck ?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>18-49</b>
Yes	45	41	47
No	55	58	52

**Who's to Blame for High Energy Costs?:  
U.S. Adults by SUV Ownership**

<b>Would you say each of the following is greatly to blame, somewhat to blame, or not at all to blame for the high energy costs? (Greatly/Somewhat to Blame)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>SUV owner</b>	<b>Non-SUV owner</b>
Oil companies*	89	93	86
Oil exporting countries/Middle East	81	82	80
Growing international demand*	81	85	78
Congress*	79	85	75
The Administration	78	80	76
Katrina/hurricanes/natural disaster*	78	81	75
Environmental regulations*	63	68	58
Individuals who drive gas guzzlers	62	59	62
Auto companies	57	59	56

\* Significant difference between SUV owners and non-owners.