



O'NEILL
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ICMA

Energy Transition Survey

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

September 2019

Introduction

The United States is gradually transitioning from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable energy sources. Some refer to these shifts in energy sources as the “energy transition.” The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Indiana University’s O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs partnered to conduct the Energy Transition Survey to learn about challenges municipalities may be facing in regard to changing energy, economic, and environmental conditions.

This survey was conducted in April and May 2019. It was distributed via email to 3,131 ICMA member municipal chief administrative officers (CAOs), 476 of which responded for a 15.2% response rate and 4% margin of error.

Topics explored include the impact of changing energy conditions on communities, strategies on how to handle the transition, utilization of federal programs and funding, and motivations/barriers related to energy transition actions.

The survey results show the percentages that provided answers in response to each individual question. Not all local governments answered each question, so the percentages are not based on all survey respondents. The number reporting (n) is provided for each question.

Key Findings

- A majority of respondents ranked aging infrastructure and jobs/economic development among the most important issues facing their local governments today. Affordable housing was selected by a near majority. Local governments are more divided on the relative importance of other specific issues.
- Most respondents viewed the effects of the energy transition on their jurisdiction as either neutral (45%) or at least somewhat beneficial (43%). A minority (12%) of respondents felt the energy transition’s effects have been somewhat or very harmful to their jurisdiction.
- Nearly half (48%) of local governments with capital improvements plans report addressing the energy transition in these documents/strategies.
- Potential for cost savings, potential for local economic development, and concern for environmental sustainability are among the most significant motivations for responding local governments to address issues related to the energy transition.
- Lack of funding, lack of staff capacity, and lack of information on how to proceed are the most significant factors inhibiting efforts of responding local governments to address issues related to the energy transition.

Response Rates

Survey Population	Surveyed	Responded	Response Rate
Overall	3,131	476	15.2%
Population	Surveyed	Responded	Response Rate
100,000 and above	187	25	13.4%
10,000 – 99,999	1,620	223	13.8%
Under 10,000	1,324	228	17.2%
Region	Surveyed	Responded	Response Rate
Northeast	481	74	15.4%
Midwest	992	175	17.6%
South	954	130	13.6%
West	704	97	13.8%

Survey Results

From the list below, please pick the three most important problems facing your jurisdiction today. (n=473)	Percent of Respondents
Aging infrastructure	67.4%
Jobs and economic development	55.8%
Affordable housing	47.6%
Transportation	31.9%
Other	19.5%
Crime and safety	17.5%
Climate change	11.2%
Opioid abuse	11.0%
Education	9.7%
Poverty alleviation	9.1%
Healthcare	7.8%
Energy access and affordability	4.7%
Immigration	1.3%

Please rate the effects of the current energy transition on your jurisdiction on the following scale, which ranges from very harmful to very beneficial. (n=470)	Percent of Respondents
Very harmful	2.1%
Somewhat harmful	10.0%
Neither harmful nor beneficial	44.9%
Somewhat beneficial	27.7%
Very beneficial	15.3%

Does your local government currently address issues related to the energy transition in any of the following official documents/strategies?	Yes	No	We Don't Have One
Capital improvements plan (n=452)	44.9%	49.1%	6.0%
Comprehensive plan (n=449)	37.2%	51.9%	10.9%
Sustainability or green infrastructure plan (n=449)	29.0%	30.5%	40.5%
Hazard mitigation or resilience plan (n=451)	28.8%	55.2%	16.0%
Economic development plan (n=451)	27.3%	55.9%	16.9%
Energy plan (n=443)	22.1%	30.9%	47.0%

Does your government provide or support any of the following policies or programs?	Yes	No	Don't Know
Installation of solar equipment on individual residences (n=447)	29.1%	68.5%	2.5%
Weatherization for individual residences (n=446)	25.3%	71.7%	2.9%
Energy audits for individual residences (n=443)	21.4%	75.6%	2.9%
Energy bill assistance for individual residences (n=442)	20.8%	76.2%	2.9%
Community choice aggregation program in which local governments purchase renewable energy on behalf of residents (n=448)	18.5%	77.0%	4.5%
Purchase of energy efficient appliances for individual residences (n=447)	17.9%	79.2%	2.9%
Heating/air conditioning upgrades for individual residences (n=446)	16.4%	80.5%	3.1%
Financial assistance to businesses impacted by the energy transition (n=446)	7.8%	88.3%	3.8%
Financial assistance to workers impacted by the energy transition (n=446)	1.6%	94.8%	3.6%

To the best of your knowledge, are the following federal energy assistance programs offered for your residents?	Yes	No	Don't Know
The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) (n=448)	52.7%	16.5%	30.8%
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) (n=448)	50.7%	19.6%	29.7%
Community services block grants specifically to help residents pay energy bills (n=448)	20.5%	48.0%	31.5%

To what extent is your jurisdiction currently partnering (e.g., sharing information, attending meetings or workshops, developing policies and programs) with others on issues related to the current energy transition?	Yes	No	Don't Know
Businesses (n=441)	16.9%	27.3%	55.9%
Utilities (n=440)	16.0%	28.8%	55.2%
Other Local Governments (n=442)	10.9%	37.2%	51.9%
Nonprofit Organizations (n=439)	6.0%	44.9%	49.1%

To the best of your knowledge, does your local government (including the local K-12 system, if applicable, and/or any community or technical colleges under your direction) support or provide any job training opportunities that are specifically targeted to workers displaced by the current energy transition? (n=444)	Percent of Respondents
Yes	5.6%
No	55.9%
Don't Know	38.5%

How significant are the following factors in motivating efforts by your local government to address issues related to the energy transition (i.e., gradually shifting energy sources from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable energy sources)?	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Very Significant
Potential for cost savings (n=430)	15.3%	46.7%	37.9%
Potential for local economic development (n=428)	24.1%	46.0%	29.9%
Concern for environmental sustainability (n=427)	27.6%	46.8%	25.5%
Leadership of local government staff (n=427)	30.2%	45.9%	23.9%
State or federal policies (n=428)	32.2%	48.4%	19.4%
Leadership of local elected officials (n=427)	35.1%	40.3%	24.6%
Examples from other communities (n=424)	40.8%	50.7%	8.5%
Concern for vulnerable populations (n=427)	48.0%	42.6%	9.4%
Community pressure (n=428)	51.6%	34.6%	13.8%
Advocacy groups (n=426)	57.3%	33.1%	9.6%
Business/industry pressure (n=428)	57.7%	35.0%	7.2%

How significant are the following factors in inhibiting efforts by your local government to address issues related to the energy transition (i.e., gradually shifting energy sources from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable energy sources)?	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Very Significant
Lack of funding (n=415)	14.0%	31.6%	54.5%
Lack of staff capacity (n=418)	27.5%	41.1%	31.3%
Lack of information on how to proceed (n=417)	36.0%	46.8%	17.3%
Leadership of local elected officials (n=418)	48.3%	36.1%	15.6%
Challenges coordinating across agencies (n=419)	54.4%	37.7%	7.9%
Challenges coordinating with other jurisdictions (n=419)	59.4%	34.1%	6.4%
Restrictive state or federal policies (n=415)	59.5%	28.7%	11.8%
Community pressure (n=419)	71.8%	22.4%	5.7%
Business/industry pressure (n=418)	73.0%	21.1%	6.0%
Advocacy groups (n=418)	75.1%	21.1%	3.8%
Restrictive local policy (n=419)	82.3%	15.0%	2.6%