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National Poll: One in Five Americans to Drive Less in Wake of BP Oil Spill

One in Eight Will Stop Buying BP Gas Altogether

KNOXVILLE, TN -- A national survey released today found that more than one in five Americans plan to drive less in the wake of the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, one in eight Americans plan to stop buying British Petroleum (BP) gas altogether.

The survey, which polled 1,312 consumers across the country, found 20.1 percent of Americans said they will reduce their gas consumption in response to the oil spill, while 13.2 percent said they would stop buying BP gas.

“For years our research has shown America is a see-it-to-believe-it nation. Before we make changes, we need to see things with our own eyes or have a personal connection to something. If Americans start seeing a lot of oil-covered pelicans or dying dolphins, these numbers will likely go even higher,” said Suzanne Shelton, president of Shelton Group, which conducted the study.

“One of our recent studies showed driving is one of the hardest things for Americans to give up for the environment. Our lives are built around our cars,” Shelton added. “It may take a major disaster for us to change our driving habits, and, unfortunately, this may be that major disaster.”

Among the survey’s other findings:

- The combined impact of the oil spill and the recent mine disaster in West Virginia has caused more than two in every five Americans, or 41.7 percent, to think about the “human and environmental costs” associated with their own energy consumption.
- About three in 10 Americans -- 28 percent -- said the spill has made them dislike BP, but their “opinion might improve if they can do more to clean up the mess and make amends.” One in five – 20.5 percent – said they now doubt BP’s “Beyond Petroleum” slogan and believe it is not really a green company.

The good news for BP: 37.5 percent said it had not affected their opinion of the company in any way. And 17.4 percent said it makes them “respect the company for taking responsibility for the accident and clean-up.”

- More than a third of Americans, or 35.5 percent, said the spill “was a terrible accident, but our country's need for domestic oil makes the possibility of such accidents an acceptable risk.” Twenty-one percent said, “It was a terrible accident waiting to happen, and offshore drilling in the Gulf should be halted.”

“The jury is still out for BP in terms of its ability to move forward and start rebuilding its reputation as an environmentally responsible company,” Shelton said. “There is immense risk that consumers’ anger toward BP will grow as the damage to the ocean and coastline grows.”

The study, conducted Monday and Tuesday, has a margin of error of 3.08 percent.

About Shelton Group

Shelton Group, founded in 1991 by Suzanne Shelton, is an advertising agency located in Knoxville, Tennessee, focused exclusively on motivating mainstream consumers to make sustainable choices. The agency conducts four proprietary consumer opinion studies annually – Eco Pulse, Energy Pulse®, Utility Pulse and Green Living Pulse.

Learn more at www.sheltongroupinc.com

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