

Support in New Jersey for Offshore Wind Farms Drops, Hughes Center Poll Finds

For immediate release

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Galloway, N.J. — Support in New Jersey for building wind turbines off the coast has plummeted over the past four years, especially in shore towns, according to a Stockton University Poll released today.

More state residents support the wind farms than oppose them, with 50% in favor of New Jersey plans to build wind turbines at sea to generate electricity and 33% opposed. Sixteen percent were unsure. The results reflect a drop of 30 percentage points from the findings of a September 2019 Stockton Poll that asked an identical question. In 2019, 80% of adult New Jersey residents supported offshore wind farms.

Four years ago, 77% of residents living in areas that border the ocean or a bay supported offshore wind turbines. Only 33% of coastal area respondents favor such construction in the poll released today by the [William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy](#) at Stockton University. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.0 percentage points.

The main reasons for opposition to offshore turbines: potential harm to sea life and obstructed ocean views.

In July, the U.S. Interior Department approved the construction and operation of 98 wind turbines and up to three offshore substations in the Ocean Wind 1 project off the New Jersey coast.

“When the concept of wind farms moved from abstract policy considerations to preparing for actual construction, many residents said, ‘Not in my backyard, or at least not off my beach,’” said John Froomjian, director of the Hughes Center.

“That’s especially true along the coast, where wind farms have been the focus of protests and legislative election campaigns,” he said.

In the new poll of nearly 600 New Jersey adults, 72% still expressed concern about climate change, with 51% saying it is very important for the state to combat it and 21% saying it is somewhat important. Only 1 in 4 said it was not very important (9%) or not important at all (17%) for the state to make those efforts.

A majority of 52% said renewable energy sources such as wind will improve the climate, with 9% saying it would worsen conditions and 28% saying it would have no effect.

Pluralities — not a majority but the biggest group of respondents — also saw benefits in other areas of concern. This included improvements to local job opportunities (45%), lower home energy costs (39%) and improved reliability of electric power (35%).

However, 48% opposed giving tax breaks to companies building the wind turbines, with 39% in support and 12% unsure.

Asked to rate the impact of wind farms, 71% said turbines would affect ocean views a great deal (34%) or a little (37%), with 16% saying they would have no effect. Also, 68% said wind turbines would affect marine life a great deal (44%) or a little (24%).

Respondents also thought shore tourism would be affected at least somewhat: a great deal by 27% and a little by 28%, while 37% saw no impact on tourism.

“On every question, residents of shore communities were more negative about wind energy than people living elsewhere in New Jersey,” said Alyssa Maurice, Hughes Center research associate.

	2023		
	Statewide n=592	Coastal municipalities n=128	Non-coastal municipalities n=452
Very important that N.J. take action to combat climate change	51%	43%	52%
Support wind turbines off the N.J. coast	50%	40%	53%
Relying more on renewable energy sources would improve:			
The climate	52%	40%	54%
Local job opportunities	45%	41%	46%
Energy costs	39%	30%	42%
The reliability of electricity	35%	28%	37%
Support for tax breaks to wind energy companies constructing wind farms	39%	25%	43%
Think wind turbines will impact the following a great deal:			
Ocean views	34%	45%	31%
Tourism to Jersey shore destinations	27%	30%	26%
Marine life	44%	62%	39%

Source: Stockton University Poll, William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy

Coastal municipalities were defined as municipalities where any part of it touches the ocean or the bay. Residents self-reported whether they live in a coastal municipality.

Maurice said an even stronger divide was found along partisan lines, with Democrats strongly supporting wind energy and seeing potential benefits and Republicans roundly opposing turbines as negative forces.

Poll respondents were evenly split when asked whether authority to approve wind farms should rest with state government or municipalities where offshore construction would take place, with 41% saying the state, 42% saying the municipalities and 15% unsure.

Audio podcast on wind energy available

To provide additional context on the issue of wind energy, the Hughes Center is releasing an audio interview conducted by Research Associate Maurice with Dr. Patrick Hossay, a longtime Stockton Environmental Studies professor and an expert in alternative energy sources.

In the [31-minute podcast](#), Hossay explains how wind turbines work, their potential impact on marine life and the economy and their safety record internationally. Listen to the audio interview [here](#).

Find full poll results [here](#).

NOTE TO MEDIA: The table and audio provided in this release may be used. Please credit the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, Stockton University.

Methodology

The poll of New Jersey adult residents was conducted by the Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy from September 16-26, 2023. Stockton University students texted cell phones with invitations to take the survey online and Opinion Services supplemented the dialing portion of the fieldwork, which consisted of cell and landline telephone calls. Overall, 92% of interviews were conducted on cell phones and 8% on landline phones. In terms of mode, 83% were reached via dialing and 17% were reached via text-to-web. A total of 592 New Jersey adult residents were interviewed. Both cell and landline samples consisted of random digit dialing (RDD) sample from MSG. Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2021 data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, education level, and sex. The poll's margin of error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets.

About the Hughes Center

The [William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy](#) at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and promotes the civic life of New Jersey through engagement, education and research. The center is named for the late William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton. The Hughes Center can be found on [YouTube](#), and can be followed on Facebook [@StocktonHughesCenter](#), X [@hughescenter](#) and Instagram [@stockton_hughes_center](#).

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Stockton University

Stockton University is [ranked](#) among the top public universities in the nation. Our more than 9,000 students can choose to live and learn on the 1,600-acre wooded main campus in the Pinelands National Reserve in South Jersey and at our coastal residential campus just steps from the beach and Boardwalk in Atlantic City. The university offers more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs. Learn more at stockton.edu.