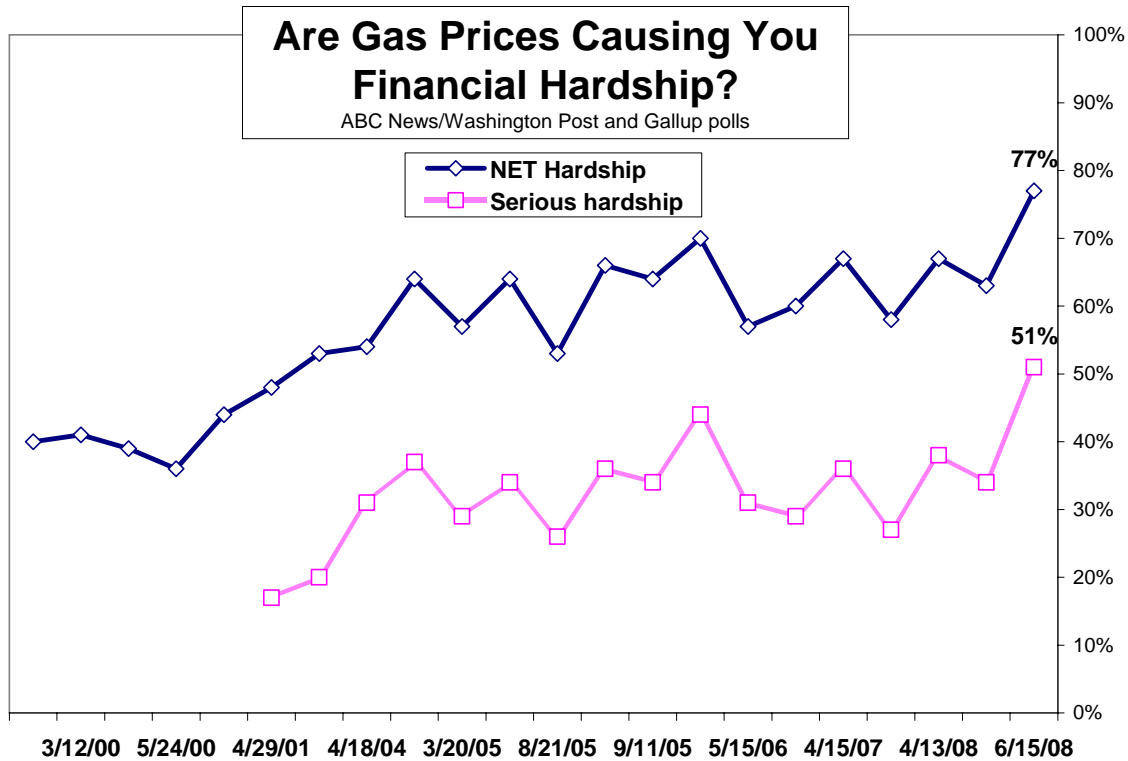


Record-High Pain at the Pump Leads More Motorists to Park it

For drivers across the country, the tipping point is past: A record number of Americans say soaring gasoline prices are causing them serious financial hardship, and 55 percent have cut back on their driving as a result, up sharply in the past month.

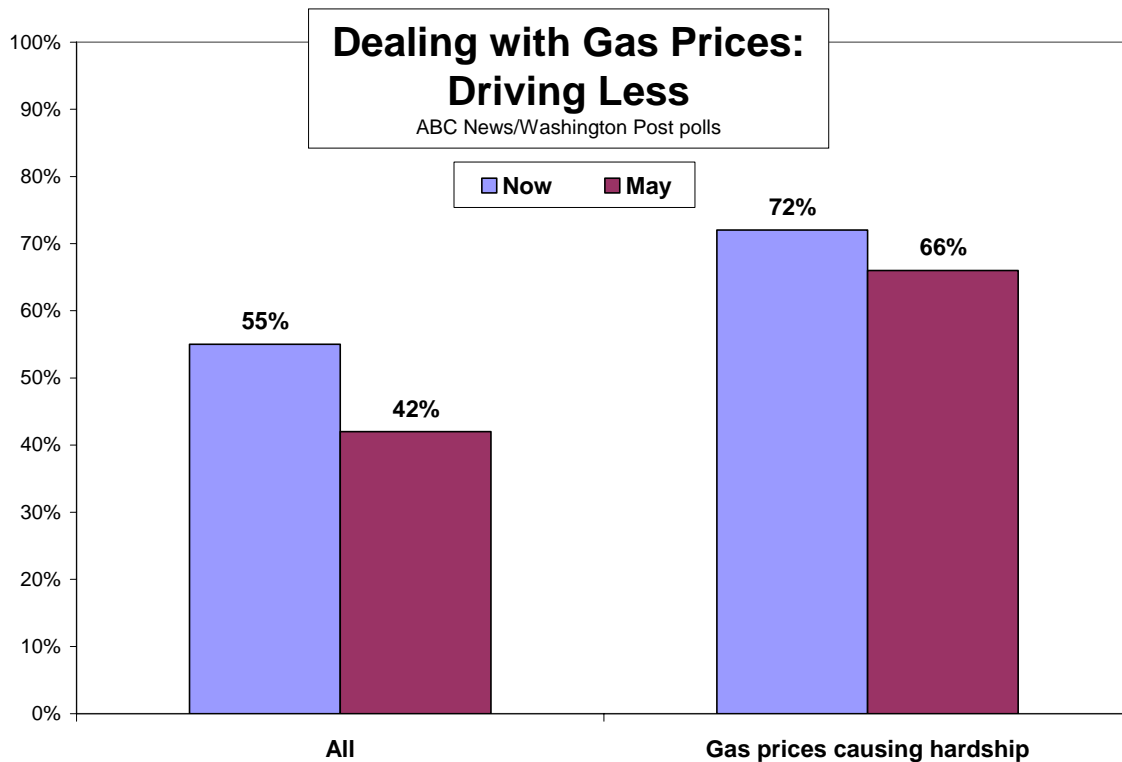
Seventy-seven percent in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll call gas prices a financial hardship, and 51 percent say it's a "serious" hardship – up respectively by 14 and 17 points from a month ago to their highest in polls dating to 2000.



The fallout: Consolidating trips. A month ago 42 percent of Americans said they'd cut back on their driving to deal with higher gas prices; today it's 55 percent, another dramatic increase. That may threaten businesses that rely on motorists for their turnover, from shopping malls to drive-thrus to drive-to vacation destinations.

Other figures back the trend: Last week the Department of Energy reported a drop in gasoline consumption of 1.3 percent from a year ago. Miles-driven was down early this spring for the first time since 1979. Mass transit ridership is up, as are sales of more fuel-

efficient cars. And consumer confidence, inversely linked to gas prices when they're on the rise, hit a record low last month in the 22-year-old ABC News Consumer Comfort Index.



While the financial hardship falls disproportionately on less well-off Americans, drivers across the board are cutting back. Still there are some differences in extent: Women, in particular, are changing their driving habits; 61 percent report driving less, compared with 48 percent of men. That reflects both the higher likelihood of men to be employed outside the home, and therefore to commute, as well as their higher average incomes. Less well-off adults are more apt to be driving less. So are Easterners and Southerners.

The reduction in driving is especially striking because this poll poses the question in an open-ended format – people who report hardship because of gasoline prices are asked what they're doing to deal with it – rather than more leading questions asking people if they're driving less because of high gas prices.

While driving less leads the way by a wide margin, there are other strategies as well. Eight percent say they've cut back on other expenses, and 6 percent – a small percentage, but millions of Americans – say they're buying smaller, more fuel-efficient cars.

PAIN – Again, though, the big differences are in the extent of the hardship caused by higher gas prices – a striking tale of the vulnerability of less well-off Americans. Among those with less than \$50,000 in household incomes – more than four in 10 adults – 68

percent report serious financial hardship. In better-off households that drops to 38 percent, a vast gap.

The gap is bigger still between the most and least well-off. Among people with household incomes under \$35,000 (nearly one in three adults), 76 percent report serious hardship, compared with 27 percent of people with incomes over \$100,000.

	Gas prices causing serious hardship
Income:	
Less than \$35,000	76%
Less than \$50,000	68
More than \$50,000	38
More than \$100,000	27
Men	47
Women	56
Under 30	64
65+	46

Serious hardship is 9 points higher among women (56 percent) than men; as noted, women have lower household incomes on average. And 64 percent of young adults, those under 30, report serious hardship; they, too, tend to have lower average incomes than other working-age adults, and they're among the most frequent drivers. Seniors, while also less well-off, also tend to spend less time in a car. That mitigates the financial burden – precisely why so many Americans are now keeping it parked.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone June 12-15, 2008, among a random national sample of 1,125 adults, including an oversample of African Americans (weighted to their correct share of the national population), for a total of 201 black respondents. The results from the full survey have a 3-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-14 Held for release.

15. Have recent price increases in gasoline caused any financial hardship for you or others in your household, or not? (IF YES) Has that been a serious hardship, or not serious?

----- Yes -----
NET Serious Not serious No No opinion

6/15/08	77	51	25	23	0
5/11/08	63	34	29	37	*
4/13/08	67	38	29	32	1
5/21/07	58	27	30	42	*
4/15/07	67	36	31	33	*
7/19/06	60	29	30	39	1
5/15/06	57	31	26	43	*
4/9/06	70	44	26	30	*
9/11/05	64	34	30	36	*
8/28/05	66	36	30	34	*
8/21/05	53	26	27	47	*
4/24/05	64	34	30	36	*
3/20/05	57	29	28	43	*
5/23/04	64	37	27	36	0
4/18/04	54	31	23	46	0
4/28/02	53	20	33	47	*
4/29/01	48	17	30	52	*
6/25/00*	44	NA	NA	56	*
5/24/00	36			64	*
4/2/00	39			61	*
3/12/00	41			59	*
2/15/00	40	"	"	60	*

*6/25/00 and previous by Gallup; slightly different wordings.

16. (IF GAS IS A HARDSHIP) What steps, if any, have you taken to deal with the higher price of gasoline? (ACCEPT UP TO 3 RESPONSES)

	Base: All Adults	
	6/15/08	5/11/08
Driving Less NET	55	42
Driving less	46	34
Carpooling/ride sharing	6	4
Taking mass transit	2	2
Telecommuting/working from home	*	*
Changing vacation plans	3	1
Cut back on other types of travel	4	1
Bought smaller/more fuel efficient car	6	5
Cut back on other expenses	8	4
Running up debt/credit card bills, etc.	*	*
Shopping around for cheaper gas	2	1
Other	8	6
None	4	6
No opinion	3	1

17-44 Held for release.

END