Polling the American Public on Climate Change

October 2014

This fact sheet provides information on climate change polling in the United States over the last year from a variety of sources. Overall the studies show:

- Belief that climate change is happening and is caused by human actions is continuing to rise, but it still has not reached a level comparable to the 2007 peak.
- There is a large disparity among party lines when it comes to climate change, with a large majority of Democrats believing that human actions are changing the climate, while fewer Republicans hold the same belief.
- However, the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) proposed carbon dioxide regulations for power plants have widespread support, even across party lines.
- There is also support for somewhat higher electricity bills if it means decreasing carbon dioxide pollution.
**CLIMATE CHANGE SURVEYS 2013 to 2014**

**CBS News/New York Times**  
September 10-14, 2014  
Sample: 1,000 American adults  
- 54% of Americans said global warming is happening, and caused by human behavior; 31% said global warming is happening because of natural causes  
- 42% said global warming is an “imminent threat”  
- 61% of Democrats and 26% of Republicans said global warming is having impacts right now

**Pew Research/USA Today**  
August 20-24, 2014  
Sample: 1,501 American adults  
- 48% of those surveyed said climate change is a “major threat” to the United States; 30% said it was a “minor threat”  
- 68% of registered Democrats view climate change as one of the greatest threats to the United States, compared to 25% of Republicans

**Quinnipiac University**  
June 24-30, 2014  
Sample: 1,446 registered American voters  
- 58% of voters support federal government limitations on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants  
- 30% of voters do not support federal government limits on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants

**NBC News/Wall Street Journal**  
June 11-15, 2014  
Sample: 1,000 American adults  
- 67% of Americans support the carbon regulations proposed by President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
- 31% of Americans believe immediate action should be taken to combat climate change  
- 57% approve of a proposal that would curb greenhouse gas emissions from companies, even if it leads to higher energy bills

**Bloomberg National Poll**  
June 6-9, 2014  
Sample: 1,005 American adults  
- 46% of Americans said climate change is a major threat  
- 50% of Americans think climate action should be taken in the next 10 years  
- 51% said that a candidate's support for climate action would make them more likely to vote for them
Resources for the Future/Stanford University

- 73% of Americans believe the world’s temperature is increasing, and 33% believe that warming is caused by human action
- Nearly 90% of Americans favor government action to address climate change, and only 27% believe such action will harm the economy
- 49% of respondents said there should be laws requiring power plants to lower greenhouse gas emissions

ABC News/Washington Post

- 84% of Democrats and 49% of Republicans see climate change as a serious problem
- 70% of respondents support the EPA’s new proposed regulations to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants
- 63% of Americans would support carbon reductions even if it led to an increase in their energy costs

CBS

- 46% of respondents believe global climate change is a serious problem that is currently having an impact
- 49% believe that global warming is mostly caused by the human activity of burning fossil fuels
- 32% are very concerned about global warming, while 34% are somewhat concerned

Public Religion Research Institute/Brookings

- 23% of affiliated Democrats believe that enacting policies to address climate change should be the highest priority for President Obama and Congress
- 6% of Republicans think that climate policies should be the highest priority
- 18% of Americans as a whole say climate change should be the highest political priority

University of Michigan

- After this past winter, one third of respondents said they don’t believe in global warming
- 56% of Americans who don’t believe in evidence of global warming said that their own weather observations are a main factor
- 15% believe that milder winters have a ‘very large’ influence on their acceptance of global warming, while 24% say milder winters have a ‘somewhat’ large influence on their opinion
- 55% of Americans believe there is solid evidence for climate change, a 6% decline since fall 2013

Yale and Harvard Universities

- 75% of Democrats believe that global warming is caused by humans, while 58% of Republicans did not believe there was solid evidence that warming was occurring
- Very liberal or strong Democrats are much more likely to believe that global warming poses a very high risk to human health and safety, while strong Republicans are more likely to believe that it poses no risk at all

Yale and George Mason University

- 52% of Americans think global warming, if it is happening, is caused by humans
- 55% of Americans are “somewhat worried” about climate change; 15% are “very worried”
- 16% of Americans say thousands of people worldwide are dying annually from global warming
- 6% think humans can and will reduce global warming; 42% think humans could reduce global warming, but whether we will or not is unclear

The AP-GfK

- 33% of Americans are extremely or very confident that the temperature of the world is rising because of man-made heat trapping gases
- 15% are not at all confident that the temperature is rising because of the burning of greenhouse gases
Harris    March 12-17, 2014    Sample: 2,234 American adults
- 45% of Americans believe that climate change exists and that humans are mainly responsible for it
- 30% believe climate change is happening, but that it is not mainly related to human activity
- 13% do not believe that climate change exists
- 31% think the severity of the 2013/2014 winter is proof that climate change is not happening

Gallup    March 6-9, 2014    Sample: 1,048 American adults
- 65% of Americans support setting stricter emissions and pollution standards on industry and businesses
- 63% support setting mandatory carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas (GHG) limits
- However, both of these numbers have gone down significantly since 2007, when 84% supported stricter emissions and pollution standards on industry and 79% supported mandatory CO2 and GHG limits

Gallup    March 6-9, 2014    Sample: 1,048 American adults
- 39% of Americans are “Concerned Believers,” meaning they believe global warming is happening, and is caused by humans
- 36% of Americans are “Mixed Middle,” signifying they hold a combination of views
- 25% of Americans are “Cool Skeptics,” which means they are not worried much about global warming

Gallup    March 6-9, 2014    Sample: 513 American adults
- 24% of those polled said they worry about climate change a great deal, while 31% worry about the quality of the environment
- 36% of Democrats worry about the issue of climate change a great deal, while 10% of Republicans worry about it a great deal

Pew Research Center    January 15-19, 2014    Sample: 1,504 American adults
- 29% of Americans viewed climate change as a "top priority" for President Obama and Congress this year, ranking 19th out of 20 issues tested
- 42% of Democrats view “dealing with global warming” as a “top priority”
- 49% of Americans view protecting the environment as a “top priority,” ranking 12th out of 20

Yale and George Mason Universities    Nov. 23–Dec. 9, 2013    Sample: 830 American adults
- 37% of Americans (almost four in ten) think global warming should be a high priority for the President and Congress, and 71% say it should be a medium priority
- 60% of Americans said the United States should reduce greenhouse gas emissions, regardless of other countries’ actions
- 83% of Americans say the U.S. should act on global warming, even if there are economic costs

Yale and George Mason Universities    Nov. 23–Dec. 9, 2013    Sample: 830 American adults
- 38% of those surveyed believe they will be personally harmed by climate change, 65% believe future generations will be harmed, and 65% believe plant and animal species will be harmed
- 63% of Americans believe climate change is happening, while 23% of Americans don’t believe it is
- The percentage of Americans who were previously ‘unsure’ about climate change has dropped from 20% in Spring 2013, to 14% in Fall 2013
- 42% of Americans felt ‘hopeful’ when thinking about climate change, while 42% said they felt helpless, 42% felt disgusted and 40% felt sad

USA Today    Nov. 20 – Dec. 5, 2013    Sample: 801 American adults
- Three in five Americans see global warming as a serious problem, with two in three Americans believing it will have lasting negative effects on future generations
- 71% of Americans say they can see the physical effects of global warming
- 28% of Americans believe that global warming made the damage from Superstorm Sandy ‘much worse,’ although 41% of Americans believe global warming did not impact Sandy
- 55% of Americans support regulations on power plant greenhouse gas emissions
National Resources Defense Council  
Nov. 25- Dec. 4, 2013  
Sample: 850 Latino Americans

- Nine in ten Latinos want the government to take action on climate change
- 68% of Republican Latinos say it is important (and 46% say very or extremely important) for the U.S. government to take action on climate change
- 86% of Latinos support limiting carbon dioxide emissions from power plants

Pew Research Center  
October 9-13, 2013  
Sample 1,504 American adults

- Two thirds (67%) of the American public say there is “solid evidence” of climate change
- 44% of Americans say there is both “solid evidence” for climate change and it is caused by human activity; 18% believe climate change is naturally occurring
- 66% of Democrats, 24% of Republicans, and 43% of Independents say climate change is happening, and is caused by human activity

Huffington Post/YouGov  
June 19-20, 2013  
Sample: 1,000 American adults

- 33% of Americans approve of how the president is handling the issue of climate change, while 40% disapprove of the president’s handling of climate change
- 63% of Democrats approve of Obama’s work on climate change, along with 27% of independents and 6% of Republicans
- 47% of Americans said they approve of new climate change policies, while 32% oppose them.

Yale and George Mason Universities  
April 8–15, 2013  
Sample: 1,045 American adults

- Two thirds (63%) of Americans surveyed said they believe climate change is happening – a 7% drop since Fall 2012
- 51% of those surveyed are ‘somewhat worried’ or ‘very worried’ about climate change, also a 7 percent drop from Fall 2012
- Four out of ten Americans are worried about climate change affecting their community (45%), their family (44%), or themselves (42%)

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The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 by a bipartisan Congressional caucus dedicated to finding innovative environmental and energy solutions. EESI works to protect the climate and ensure a healthy, secure, and sustainable future for America through policymaker education, coalition building, and policy development in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture, forestry, transportation, buildings, and urban planning.