THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
For The People & The Press

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GLOBAL WARMING: A DIVIDE ON CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS
Public Views Unchanged by Unusual Weather

President Bush's mention in his State of the Union Message of the "serious challenge of global climate change" was directed at an American public many of whom remain lukewarm about the importance of the issue. The unusual weather affecting the nation this winter may have reinforced the widely held view that the phenomenon of rising temperatures is real (77% of Americans believe that), but the public continues to be deeply divided over both its cause and what to do about it. But there is considerably less agreement over its cause, with about half (47%) saying that human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, is mostly to blame for the earth getting warmer.

Stable Views of Global Warming

Solid evidence that the earth is warming?	June 2006 %	July 2006 %	Aug 2006 %	Jan 2007 %
Yes, solid evidence	70	79	77	77
Due to human activity	41	50	47	47
Due to natural patterns	21	23	20	20
No, no solid evidence	20	17	17	16
Mixed/Don't know	10	4	6	7
	100	100	100	100

Moreover, there are indications that most Americans do not regard global warming as a top-tier issue. In Pew's annual list of policy priorities for the president and Congress, global warming ranked fourth-lowest of 23 items tested, with only about four-in-ten (38%) rating it a top priority. A survey last year by the Pew Global Attitudes Project showed that the public's relatively low level of concern about global warming sets the U.S. apart from other countries. That survey found that only 19% of Americans who had heard of global warming expressed a great deal of personal concern about the issue. Among the 15 countries surveyed, only the Chinese expressed a comparably low level of concern (20%). (See: America's Image Slips, But Allies Share U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas)

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Jan. 10-15 among 1,708 Americans, finds a majority (55%) saying that global warming is a problem that requires immediate government action. But the percentage of

Americans expressing this view has declined a bit since August, when 61% felt global warming was a problem that required an immediate government response.

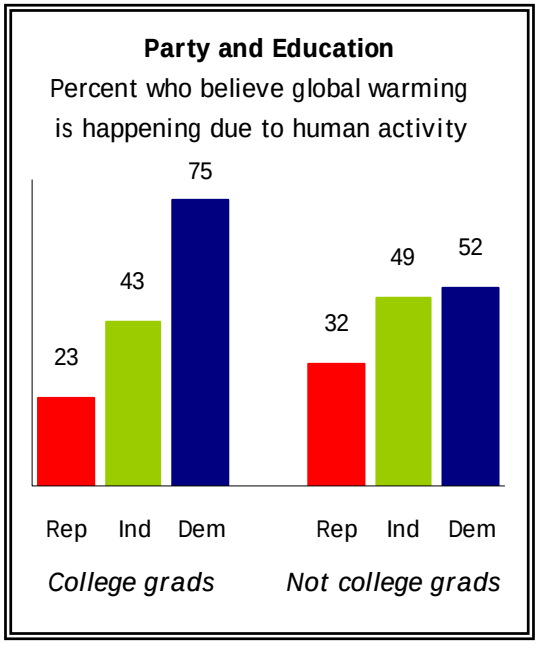
The survey finds deep differences between Republicans and Democrats -- and within both political parties -- over virtually every issue related to global warming. These disagreements extend even to the question of whether the earth is getting warmer. Just 54% of conservative Republicans say there is solid evidence that average temperatures have been getting warmer over the past few decades; by contrast, more than three-quarters of both moderate and liberal Republicans and independents (78% each), and even higher percentages of Democrats, believe the earth has been getting warmer.

Global Warming a Polarizing Issue

	Total	Cons Rep	Mod/Lib Rep	Ind	Cons/Mod Dem	Lib Dem
Believe that…	%	%	%	%	%	%
Earth is getting warmer	77	54	78	78	83	92
Due to human activity	47	20	46	47	54	71
How serious a problem is global warming?						
Very serious	45	18	35	46	52	73
Somewhat serious	32	33	39	35	31	20
Not too serious	12	29	15	9	10	5
Not a problem	8	17	10	8	4	2
DK/refused	3	3	1	2	3	*
	100	100	100	100	100	100
*Global warming requires immediate govt. action?**						
Yes	55	22	51	58	61	81
No	31	54	37	29	29	14
Not a problem^	11	20	12	10	7	1
DK/refused	3	4	*	3	3	4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Asked of those who said global warming is a problem.
^Includes those who answered don't know on whether global warming is a problem

The political divisions are still greater over the issue of whether global warming is a problem that requires immediate government action. About half of moderate and liberal Republicans (51%) express this view, compared with just 22% of conservative Republicans. The differences among Democrats are somewhat smaller; 81% of liberal Democrats, and 61% of moderate and conservative Democrats, say global warming is a problem that requires immediate government action.



Education and Party

There also are striking educational differences in partisans' views of global warming. Among Republicans, higher education is linked to greater skepticism about global warming -- fully 43% of Republicans with a college degree say that there is no

evidence of global warming, compared with 24% of Republicans with less education.

But among Democrats, the pattern is the reverse. Fully 75% of Democrats with college degrees say that there is solid evidence of global warming and that it is caused by human activities. This is far higher than among Democrats with less education among whom 52% say the same. Independents, regardless of education levels, fall in between these partisan extremes.

Global Warming Not a High Priority

Roughly twice as many Democrats as Republicans say that dealing with global warming should be a top priority for the president and Congress this year (48% vs. 23%). However, the issue is a relatively low priority for members of both parties, as well as for independents.

The issue of dealing with global warming rates near the bottom of the priorities list for both Democrats and independents, and is the lowest priority for Republicans. Notably, there is much greater support, across the political spectrum, for the broader goal of protecting the environment. Two-thirds of Democrats (67%) view protecting the environment as a top priority, and it ranks near the middle of their policy priorities list. Many more independents and Republicans also rate protecting the environment an important priority than say the same about dealing with global warming.

Global Warming Lags as a Policy Priority

Percent rating each as a 'top priority'

Republicans		Democrats		Independents	
Terrorism	93	Health care costs	77	Terrorism	77
Education	65	Economy	77	Education	66
Economy	65	Terrorism	74	Health care costs	66
Illegal immigration	63	Education	74	Medicare	61
Social Security	62	Social Security	72	Economy	60
Health care costs	58	Minimum wage	71	Social Security	60
Stronger military	56	Medicare	70	Job situation	60
Crime	56	Health insurance	70	**Environment**	**59**
Morality	54	Crime	69	Energy	58
Medicare	53	**Environment**	**67**	Crime	57
Tax Cuts	49	Poverty	67	Budget deficit	53
Poverty	48	Job situation	67	Health insurance	52
Energy	45	Energy	64	Minimum wage	50
Health insurance	44	Budget deficit	57	Illegal immigration	49
Budget deficit	42	Tax cuts	54	Poverty	46
Environment	**41**	Illegal immigration	48	Stronger military	45
Job situation	39	**Global warming**	**48**	Morality	42
Int'l Trade	33	Morality	45	Tax cuts	41
Minimum wage	28	Govt. ethics*	44	**Global warming**	**40**
Govt. ethics*	28	Stronger military	42	Govt. ethics*	35
Global warming	**23**	Int'l Trade	35	Int'l Trade	31

* Reducing the influence of lobbyists and special interests in Washington

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,708 adults, 18 years of age or older, from January 10-15, 2007. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on January 11-15, 2007 (N=1,384), the sampling error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of six projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center’s research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
JANUARY 2007 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
FINAL TOPLINE
January 10-15, 2007
N=1708

QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 17 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

Q.18 I'd like to ask you some questions about priorities for President Bush and Congress this year. As I read from a list, tell me if you think the item that I read should be a top priority, important but lower priority, not too important or should it not be done? (First,) should **(INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM DIFFERENCES)** be a top priority, important but lower priority, not too important, or should it not be done? (What about **(INSERT ITEM)**?)

	SUMMARY TABLE*	Top priority	Important but lower priority	Not too important	Should not be done	DK/Ref
i.F1	Defending the country from future terrorist attacks	80	16	2	1	1=100
l.F2	Improving the educational system	69	25	4	1	1=100
f.F1	Reducing health care costs	68	24	4	3	1=100
s.F2	Strengthening the nation's economy	68	25	4	2	1=100
m.F2	Taking steps to make the Social Security system financially sound	64	28	5	2	1=100
n.F2	Taking steps to make the Medicare system financially sound	63	31	3	1	2=100
c.F1	Reducing crime	62	31	5	1	1=100
e.F1	Protecting the environment	57	32	9	1	1=100
a.F1	Improving the job situation	57	30	10	1	2=100
t.F2	Dealing with the nation's energy problem	57	35	6	1	1=100
q.F2	Providing health insurance to the uninsured	56	31	7	4	2=100
k.F1	Dealing with the issue of illegal immigration	55	29	11	3	2=100
o.F2	Dealing with the problems of poor and needy people	55	36	6	2	1=100
g.F1	Increasing the minimum wage	53	29	12	4	2=100
b.F1	Reducing the budget deficit	53	33	7	2	4=100
u.F2	Making it tougher for illegal immigrants to enter U.S.	51	31	10	6	2=100
d.F1	Reducing federal income taxes for the middle class	48	35	10	4	3=100
p.F2	Dealing with the moral breakdown in the country	47	30	12	8	3=100
r.F2	Strengthening the U.S. military	46	35	10	5	4=100
w.F2	Dealing with global warming	38	34	16	8	4=100
h.F1	Making recent federal income tax cuts permanent	36	32	12	12	8=100
v.F2	Reducing the influence of lobbyists and special interest groups in Washington	35	30	23	4	8=100
j.F1	Dealing with global trade issues	34	46	12	2	6=100

* For complete trends on Q.18a-w see the January 22, 2007 report, "Broad Support for Political Compromise in Washington."

QUESTIONS 19 THROUGH 26 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

On a different subject…

Q.27 From what you've read and heard, is there solid evidence that the average temperature on earth has been getting
warmer over the past few decades, or not?

IF "YES" (1 IN Q.27) ASK:

Q.28 Do you believe that the earth is getting warmer **[READ AND ROTATE]**?

		Aug 2006	July 2006	June 2006
77	Yes	77	79	70
47	Mostly because of human activity such as burning fossil fuels, OR	47	50	41
20	Mostly because of natural patterns in the earth's environment	20	23	21
10	Don't know/Refused	10	6	8
16	No	17	17	20
1	Mixed/some evidence **(VOL)**	1	1	1
6	Don't know/Refused **(VOL)**	5	3	9
100		100	100	100

ASK ALL:

Q.29 In your view, is global warming a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a problem?

		July 2006	June 2006
45	Very serious	43	41
32	Somewhat serious	36	33
12	Not too serious	11	13
8	Not a problem	9	11
3	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**	1	2
100		100	100

IF SEE GLOBAL WARMING AS PROBLEM (Q.29=1,2,3), ASK:

Q.30 Do you think global warming is a problem that requires immediate government action, or don't you think it requires immediate government action?

	BASED ON TOTAL:	July 2006
55	Yes, it is a problem that requires immediate government action	61
31	No, don't think global warming requires immediate government action	26
3	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**	3
11	(Global warming not a problem/DK) **[4 and 9 in Q.29]**	10
100		100

Q.30a Should people like yourself be doing more to help reduce global warming, or is there not much that individuals like yourself can do?

BASED ON TOTAL:

60	Should be doing more
26	Not much individuals can do
3	Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**
11	(Global warming not a problem/DK) **[4 and 9 in Q.29]**
100	

QUESTIONS 31 THROUGH 51 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED