How Americans Think About Climate Change, in Six Maps


1 of 3

2017-03-21, 3:30 PM
Americans want to restrict carbon emissions from coal power plants. This drive to act may be the opposite.

NATIONAL AVERAGE:

STATE AVERAGE:

TALLAHASSEE

50%

50%

MARCH 21, 2017

How Americans Think About Climate Change, in Six Maps

By TATIANA SCHLOSSBERG

WASHINGTON — Global warming will harm people in the United States, according to a study of public opinion that was released by Yale researchers this week. But the map shows that the level of concern about climate change, and who feels it personally, varies widely across the country.

The study provides a more detailed view of public opinion on global warming, compared with previous surveys. It is based on an analysis of surveys conducted in 2016 and 2017 by Yale’s Program on Global Understanding and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The analysis included 1,253 adults from all 50 states.

Americans overwhelmingly believe that global warming is happening, but they differ about how to act and what they think will happen to them personally. New data gives the most detailed view yet of how Americans think about climate change.

Some states are more worried about climate change than others, and residents are split on how much to worry about it. Florida’s highest concentrations of Latinos can be found in the south and west, which may also partly explain the difference in climate views. Roberto Suro, a professor of public policy and law at the University of Southern California, warned that committed activists — like the Tea Party — are unlikely to change direction soon.

The state’s highest concentrations of Latinos can be found in the south and west, which may also partly explain the difference in climate views. Roberto Suro, a professor of public policy and law at the University of Southern California, warned that committed activists — like the Tea Party — are unlikely to change direction soon.

Part of this is the problem of risk perception. Most people think that climate change is happening, and a majority believe it will harm them. But only a minority say they are very worried about it, and not highly motivated to act. In Florida, the effects of climate change, including sunny-day flooding, are being felt across the state. But the state shows a distinct north-south split in the level of concern over global warming.

By the White House and Congress may do the opposite. Somewhere in the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions.

For example, in Texas, residents expect global warming to harm them more than residents in other states. But many Republicans in Congress (and some Democrats) agree with President Trump, who this week may move to restrict carbon dioxide emissions from coal power plants. But many Republicans in Congress (and some Democrats) agree with President Trump, who this week may move to restrict carbon dioxide emissions from coal power plants. But many Republicans in Congress (and some Democrats) agree with President Trump, who this week may move to restrict carbon dioxide emissions from coal power plants.
noting that young people have embraced climate science to a greater extent than their elders.

Everybody talks about the weather. But climate? Only in some places.

Counties where adults discuss global warming at least occasionally

Just 33 percent of Americans surveyed said they discuss global warming at least occasionally with friends and family – and 31 percent said they never do. But there are distinct regional patterns.

In the American West, much of which has been affected by drought and wildfires, residents are more likely to talk about climate change. New England states, and not just the liberals of Massachusetts and Vermont, talk more about climate, as well, along with coastal South Carolina, which lies in the path of many hurricanes.

But aside from Southeast Florida, which has put so much effort into making discussion of climate change a priority, much of the rest of the Atlantic Coast is less likely to engage in climate discussions, despite recent increases in tidal flooding.

County and district-level opinion data are estimates based on survey responses from more than 18,000 American adults (age 25 and older) collected between 2008 and 2016.

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication