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**For The People & The Press**

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## A DEEPER PARTISAN DIVIDE OVER GLOBAL WARMING

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## A DEEPER PARTISAN DIVIDE OVER GLOBAL WARMING

The proportion of Americans who say that the earth is getting warmer has decreased modestly since January 2007, mostly because of a decline among Republicans. Republicans are increasingly skeptical that there is solid evidence that the earth has been warming over the past few decades: just 49% of Republicans say there is evidence that the earth's average temperature has been rising, down 13 points since January 2007.

Overall, 71% of Americans say there is solid evidence of higher global temperatures, compared with 77% at the beginning of last year. There is less of a consensus about the cause of global warming. Roughly half of Americans (47%) say the earth is warming because of human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels.

	June <u>2006</u>	July <u>2006</u>	Aug <u>2006</u>	Jan <u>2007</u>	April <u>2008</u>
Is there solid evidence the earth is warming?	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	70	79	77	77	71
Because of human activity	41	50	47	47	47
Because of environ. patterns	21	23	20	20	18
Don't know	8	6	10	10	6
No	20	17	17	16	21
Mixed/Don't know	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

But nearly as many people (45%) say that rising global temperatures are either mostly caused by natural environmental patterns (18%), say they do not know the cause of warming (6%), or say that no solid evidence of warming exists (21%).

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted April 23-27 among 1,502 adults, finds that the already substantial partisan divide over global warming has widened in the past year. Fully 84% of Democrats and 75% of independents say there is evidence that the earth's temperatures have been rising, compared with just 49% of Republicans.

<i>% saying there is solid evidence of global warming:</i>	Jan <u>2007</u>	April <u>2008</u>	<i>Change</i>	2008 <i>N</i>
Total	77	71	-6	1502
Republicans	62	49	-13	412
Democrats	86	84	-2	521
Independents	78	75	-3	462

Among Republicans, far more moderates and liberals than conservatives say there is evidence of global warming (69% vs. 43%). However, the proportion of both groups expressing this view has declined since January 2007.

## What Causes Global Warming

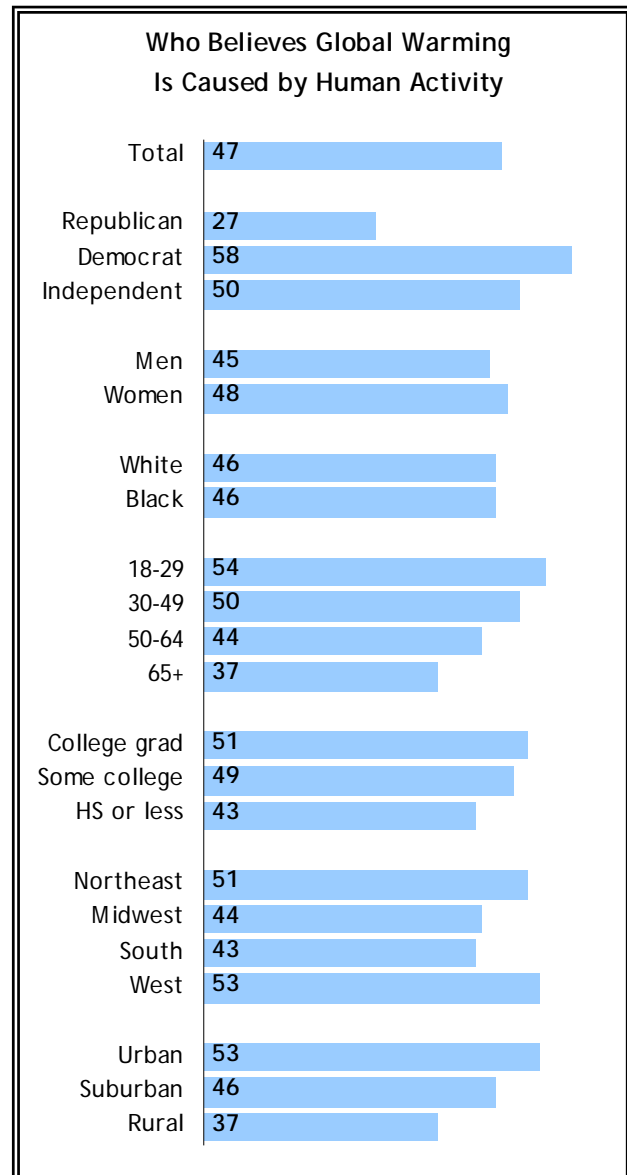
Currently, 47% of Americans say that the earth is getting warmer and that this is occurring because of human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels. Opinions about the primary cause of global warming have remained stable in recent years.

Nearly six-in-ten Democrats (58%) and half of independents (50%) say global warming is mostly caused by human activity; only about quarter of Republicans (27%) express this view.

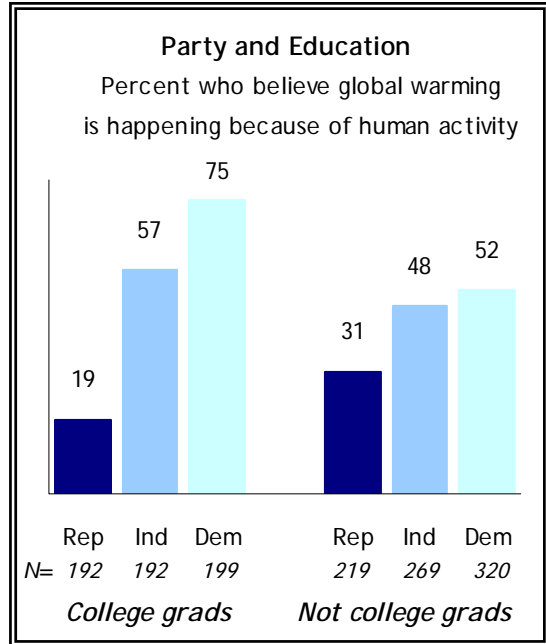
There also are age differences in opinions about the cause of global warming. More than half of people under age 30 (54%) believe that the earth is warming mostly because of human activity compared with only 37% of those ages 65 and older.

In addition, college graduates are more likely than those with a high school education or less to say that human activity is causing global warming (51% college graduate vs. 43% high school or less).

Comparable proportions of Democrats who are college graduates (88%) and those with less education (82%) say that there is solid evidence that the earth is getting warmer. Among Democrats, higher education is associated with the belief that global warming is mostly caused by human activity. Fully 75% of Democrats with college degrees say that the earth is warming and that this is caused by human activity. Just 52% of Democrats with less education express this view.



Among Republicans, similar percentages of college graduates and those with less education say there is solid evidence of global warming (46% and 51%, respectively). Yet for Republicans, unlike Democrats, higher education is associated with greater skepticism that human activity is causing global warming. Only 19% of Republican college graduates say that there is solid evidence that the earth is warming and it is caused by human activity, while 31% of Republicans with less education say the same.



### Reducing the Effects of Global Warming

Despite the huge partisan differences over whether the earth is warming, majorities of those in both parties who say there is evidence of global warming believe that it is possible to reduce the effects of higher global temperatures.

Overall, 74% of those who say there is solid evidence of global warming say it is possible to reduce its effects, up from 67% in June 2006. Among those who believe there is solid evidence that the earth is getting warmer, there is little difference in those who think that it is possible to reduce the effects among Republicans (69%), Democrats (74%), and independents (77%).

**Possible to Reduce The Effects of Global Warming?\***

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Yes, possible	74	69	74	77
Major sacrifices	47	38	49	49
Technology can solve	23	26	21	23
Don't know	4	5	4	5
No, not possible	19	24	20	17
Don't know	7	7	6	6
	100	100	100	100
Number of respondents	1041	197	440	334

\* Based on those who believe there is solid evidence that the earth is getting warmer.

About half of the public (47%) says that people will have to make major sacrifices to reduce the effects of global warming. Only about half as many (23%) says that technology can solve global warming without requiring major sacrifices. More Democrats and independents (49% each) than Republicans (38%) say that major sacrifices will be needed to reduce global warming.

An overwhelming majority of those who believe that global warming is caused by human activity (82%) say it is possible to reduce its effects, and 54% say that major sacrifices are needed. By comparison, 57% of those who say global warming is caused by natural patterns in

the earth's environment believe it is possible to reduce its effects, and just 32% say people will have to make major sacrifices to accomplish this goal.

### A Serious Problem

Most Americans believe that global warming is a serious problem. Fully 73% say it is a very or somewhat serious problem, while 24% say it is not too serious (13%) or not a problem (11%), which is largely unchanged from recent years.

Nearly six-in-ten Democrats (57%) and 46% of independents say that global warming is a very serious problem; this compares with just 22% of Republicans. As many Republicans say that global warming is not a problem (23%) as say it is a very serious problem (22%). And just 18% of conservative Republicans say that global warming is a very serious problem, compared with 27% who say it is not a problem. By contrast, 35% of moderate and liberal Republicans say it is a very serious problem while 11% say it is not a problem.

	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Very serious	44	22	57	46
Somewhat serious	29	29	28	29
Not too serious	13	24	7	12
Not a problem	11	23	5	9
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100
Number of respondents	1502	412	521	462

People's evaluations of the seriousness of global warming are strongly linked to views about whether human activity is the cause of higher temperatures. About seven-in-ten (69%) of those who believe that human activity is the cause of warming say that this is a very serious problem, compared with 33% of those who say warming is caused by natural patterns, and 7% who do not believe the earth is warming.

## Global Warming Lags as a Policy Priority

Although most Americans say that global warming is a very or somewhat serious problem, it ranked at the bottom of the public's list of policy priorities for the president and Congress this year. In January 2008, only 35% of Americans said it should be a top priority for the president and Congress this year, down slightly from a year earlier (38%).

The issue of global warming rates as a relatively low priority for both Democrats and independents, and is by far the lowest-rated priority for Republicans among 21 issues. More than three times as many Democrats (47%) and independents (38%) than Republicans (12%) rated global warming as top priority. This issue has dropped in importance among Republicans since 2007 when 23% rated global warming as a top priority. Ratings among Democrats and independents have remained relatively stable over this period. (["An Even More Partisan Agenda for 2008,"](#) Jan. 24.)

Global Warming a Low Policy Priority					
<i>Percent rating each as a "top priority" (Jan. 2008)</i>					
<u>Republicans</u>		<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Independents</u>	
Terrorism	86	Health care costs	81	Economy	74
Economy	76	Economy	76	Health care costs	68
Social Security	60	Job situation	76	Education	66
Illegal immigration	64	Terrorism	74	Terrorism	65
Stronger military	62	Education	72	Job situation	61
Education	54	Social Security	70	Energy	61
Energy	53	Environment	67	Social Security	60
Health care costs	53	Medicare	66	Medicare	60
Budget deficit	52	Insuring the uninsured	65	Insuring the uninsured	57
Morality	51	Budget deficit	64	Budget deficit	57
Crime	49	Crime	62	Environment	56
Medicare	47	Problems of poor	62	Illegal immigration	51
Middle class taxes	46	Energy	59	Problems of poor	51
Tax cuts	44	Middle class taxes	50	Crime	50
Job situation	43	<b>Global warming</b>	<b>47</b>	Middle class taxes	44
Government ethics*	42	Morality	44	Government ethics*	42
Environment	39	Illegal immigration	43	Morality	39
Global trade	37	Tax cuts	37	<b>Global warming</b>	<b>38</b>
Problems of poor	34	Global trade	37	Global trade	38
Insuring the uninsured	27	Military	37	Military	34
<b>Global warming</b>	<b>12</b>	Government ethics*	36	Tax cuts	31

\* Reducing the influence of lobbyists and special interests in Washington

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Abt SRBI, Inc. among a nationwide sample of 1,502 adults, 18 years of age or older, from April 23-27, 2008. The error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence based on the full sample is plus or minus 3 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 eight 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**  
**APRIL 2008 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**April 23-27, 2008**  
**N=1502**

**QUESTIONS 1-20 AND QUESTIONS 22-25 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**QUESTION 21 AND QUESTIONS 27-28 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**NO QUESTION 26**

**ASK ALL:**

On a different subject...

Q.29 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.29) ASK:**

Q.30 Do you believe that the earth is getting warmer **[READ AND ROTATE]**?

		<u>Jan</u> <u>2007</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>July</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>June</u> <u>2006</u>
71	Yes	77	77	79	70
	Mostly because of human activity				
	47 such as burning fossil fuels, OR	47	47	50	41
	Mostly because of natural patterns in the				
	18 earth's environment	20	20	23	21
	6 Don't know/Refused	10	10	6	8
21	No	16	17	17	20
3	Mixed/some evidence (VOL.)	1	1	1	1
<u>5</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>
100		100	100	100	100

**ASK ALL:**

Q.31 In your view, is global warming a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a problem?

		<u>Jan</u> <u>2007</u>	<u>July</u> <u>2006</u>	<u>June</u> <u>2006</u>
44	Very serious	45	43	41
29	Somewhat serious	32	36	33
13	Not too serious	12	11	13
11	Not a problem	8	9	11
<u>3</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
100		100	100	100



**ASK ALL:**

Q.32 Do you think it is possible to reduce the effects of global warming, or not?

**IF "POSSIBLE" (1 IN Q.32) ASK:**

Q.33 To reduce the effects of global warming will we have to make major sacrifices, or can technology solve the problem without requiring major sacrifices?

**BASED ON SOLID EVIDENCE OF EARTH GETTING WARMER IN Q.29 [N=1041]:**

		June <u>2006</u>
74	Yes, possible	67
	47 Have to make major sacrifices	39
	23 Technology can solve the problem without major sacrifices	23
	4 Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )	5
19	No, not possible	22
<u>7</u>	Don't know/Refused ( <b>VOL.</b> )	<u>11</u>
100		100

**NO QUESTIONS 34 AND 35**

**QUESTIONS 36-47 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**