



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY &
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

SPEAKING OUT ON GLOBAL WARMING: PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

One month after release of the papal encyclical on climate change, a new poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and researchers at Yale University finds that fewer than 1 in 3 Americans, and 40 percent of Catholics, are aware of Pope Francis's efforts to emphasize global warming as a priority issue for the Catholic Church.

Among those Americans who have attended religious services in the month after the encyclical's release, just 22 percent report hearing about it from their service leader. Catholics who attended services are three times as likely as other Christians to have heard about the encyclical at a religious service (37 percent vs. 12 percent).

Despite relatively low awareness of the papal encyclical, a majority of Americans say it is appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue of global warming. This is true even though very few Americans currently consider global warming a religious, social justice, or poverty issue.



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The nationwide poll was conducted July 17 to 19, 2015, using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,030 adults.

Three Things You Should Know

From The Yale-AP-NORC Center's Poll on the Papal Encyclical on Global Warming

Among American Adults

- 1) Few Americans, just 31 percent, have heard about Pope Francis's encyclical on global warming.
- 2) Most Americans say they think it's appropriate for the pope to take a public stand on global warming despite few viewing it as a religious issue.
- 3) Catholics mirror non-Catholic Americans in their attitudes about whether global warming is happening and their views about the appropriateness of the pope's recent encyclical.

DESPITE FAVORABLE VIEWS TOWARD POPE FRANCIS, ESPECIALLY AMONG CATHOLICS, FEW AMERICANS HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE PAPAL ENCYCLICAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

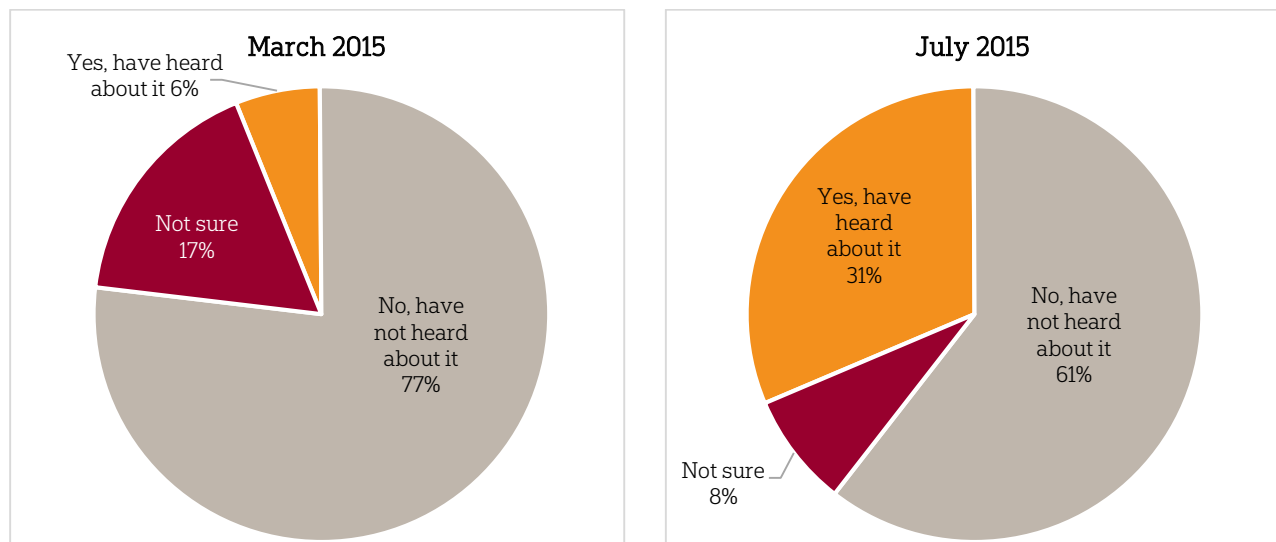
While nearly half of all adults (49 percent) say they do not have an opinion of Pope Francis, those who do tend to view him in a positive way. Of those who say they have an opinion of Pope Francis, 77 percent say their opinion is somewhat or very favorable, and just 23 percent say their opinion is somewhat or very unfavorable (39 percent and 12 percent overall, respectively).

Among religious and non-religious Americans alike, Pope Francis is quite popular. Similar levels of religious and non-religious Americans express a favorable opinion of the pope (77 percent vs. 78 percent). Catholics express near-unanimous levels of favorability—among those who say they have an opinion, 92 percent say it's favorable. Among those who identify with non-Christian denominations, 85 percent of those who have an opinion of Pope Francis say it's somewhat or very favorable. Sixty-three percent of non-Catholic Christians with an opinion of the pope say it's somewhat or very favorable. Among those who are not religious and who have formed an opinion on the pope, 78 percent say they view him somewhat or very favorably.

In addition, when they have an opinion, Democrats (84 percent) are more likely than Republicans (72 percent) or independents (65 percent) to express a favorable opinion of the pope.

Even so, few adults say they have heard about the pope's recent encyclical, which said that addressing global warming is a high priority for the Catholic Church. Nearly twice as many Americans say they were not aware of the papal encyclical as say they were aware (60 percent vs. 31 percent). The number of Americans who are aware of the encyclical has increased significantly since March,¹ when just 6 percent said they were aware that the pope was planning to release an encyclical focused on global warming.

Most Americans had not heard about the papal encyclical on global warming prior to its release, and few have heard about it since.



Questions: This upcoming summer, Pope Francis is expected to release an encyclical (a letter sent to all Catholic Bishops worldwide) which will say that addressing global warming is a high priority for the Catholic Church. Before you read about it in this question, were you aware of this upcoming papal encyclical about global warming? Pope Francis recently released an encyclical (which is a letter sent to all Catholic Bishops worldwide) which said that addressing global warming is a high priority for the Catholic Church. Before you read about it in this question, were you aware of this papal encyclical about global warming?

¹ Findings are from a nationally representative survey of 1,263 adults age 18 and over conducted by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. Data were collected February 27 to March 10, 2015, using GfK's KnowledgePanel®. The full study methodology can be found in the About the Study section at the end of this report.

Prior to its release, Catholics were more likely than the rest of the population to have reported hearing of the papal encyclical (10 percent vs. 4 percent), yet today, Catholics are no more likely than the rest of the population to say they have heard of the encyclical. Religious adults are no more likely than adults without a religious preference to have heard of the encyclical. Nor are those who believe climate change is happening any more likely than those who do not to have heard of the encyclical on climate change.

Adults with a college degree are more likely than those without to say they were aware of the encyclical.

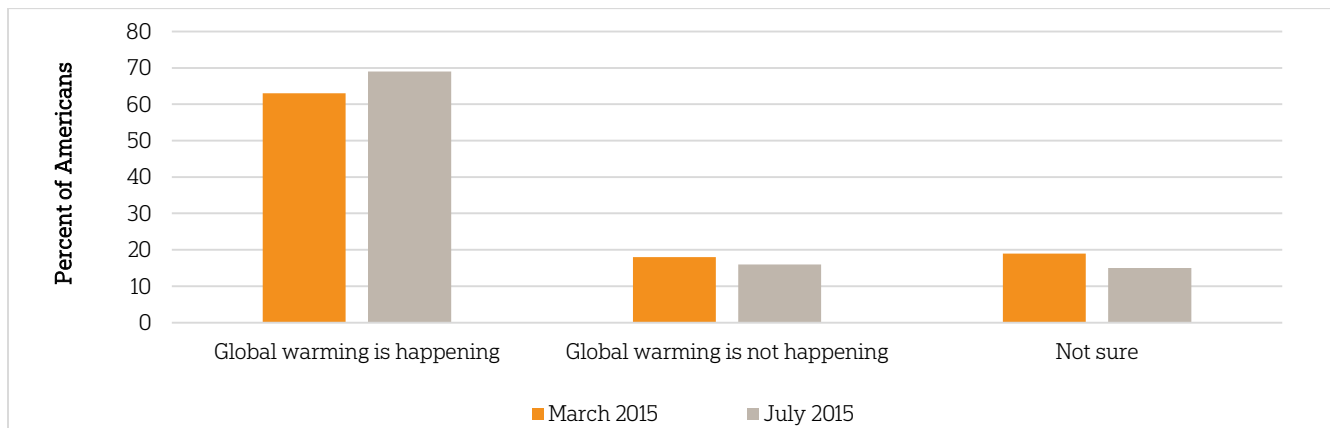
The papal encyclical on global warming has not been widely disseminated through religious services, as just 22 percent of those who had attended religious services² in the past month report having heard it discussed by the service leader or another speaker. Christians are more likely than non-Christians to have heard about the encyclical at a religious service (23 percent vs. 5 percent), and among Christians, Catholics are three times as likely as other Christians to have heard about the encyclical at a religious service (37 percent vs. 12 percent).

NEARLY 7 IN 10 AMERICANS SAY CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING, UP SLIGHTLY SINCE MARCH.

Although awareness of the papal encyclical is not yet widespread, in the immediate period after its release, there have been shifts in attitudes toward global warming among Americans. Sixty-nine percent of adults say global warming is happening, 16 percent say it is not happening, and 15 percent remain unsure. The percent of Americans who believe global warming is occurring is up slightly since March, when 63 percent said global warming is happening.

The increase in belief that global warming is happening relative to the 63 percent who said the same in March was similar among those who report hearing about the encyclical (72 percent, a 9 percentage point increase) and those who hadn't heard of the encyclical (69 percent, a 6 percentage point increase).

Since March, there has been a subtle shift in the number of Americans who believe that global warming is happening.



Question: Do you think that global warming is happening, or do you think global warming is not happening?³

Religious Americans are more likely than non-religious Americans to say they do not believe global warming is happening (19 percent vs. 9 percent). Catholics in particular, however, are no more or less likely than other Americans to say they believe in global warming. These trends have remained stable since March.

² This question was asked of the 31 percent of respondents who said they have heard of the encyclical (n=322). Of those 31 percent who say they have heard of the encyclical, 49 percent say they had attended religious services in the past month.

³ The March 2015 poll provided a definition of global warming to respondents which read, "Global warming refers to the idea that the world's average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that the world's climate may change as a result."

More than 8 in 10 Democrats say global warming is happening, compared with half of Republicans and 65 percent of independents. These percentages have remained stable since March.

Even as most Americans believe global warming is happening, few express a great deal of worry about its effects. Twenty-six percent say they are extremely or very worried about global warming, 37 percent say they are moderately worried, and 34 percent say they are not too or not at all worried.

Among those who say global warming is happening, just over half (52 percent) say it's caused entirely or mostly by human activities, 8 percent say it's caused entirely or mostly by natural changes in the environment, and 38 percent say it's caused about equally by human activities and natural changes in the environment.

Whites (55 percent) are more likely than African Americans (46 percent) and Hispanics (41 percent) to say global warming is caused by human activities. Democrats (61 percent) are more likely than Republicans (39 percent) and independents (41 percent) to say global warming is a result of human activities. The most common response among Republicans (46 percent) and independents (48 percent) who say global warming is happening is that it's a combination of human activities and natural environmental changes.

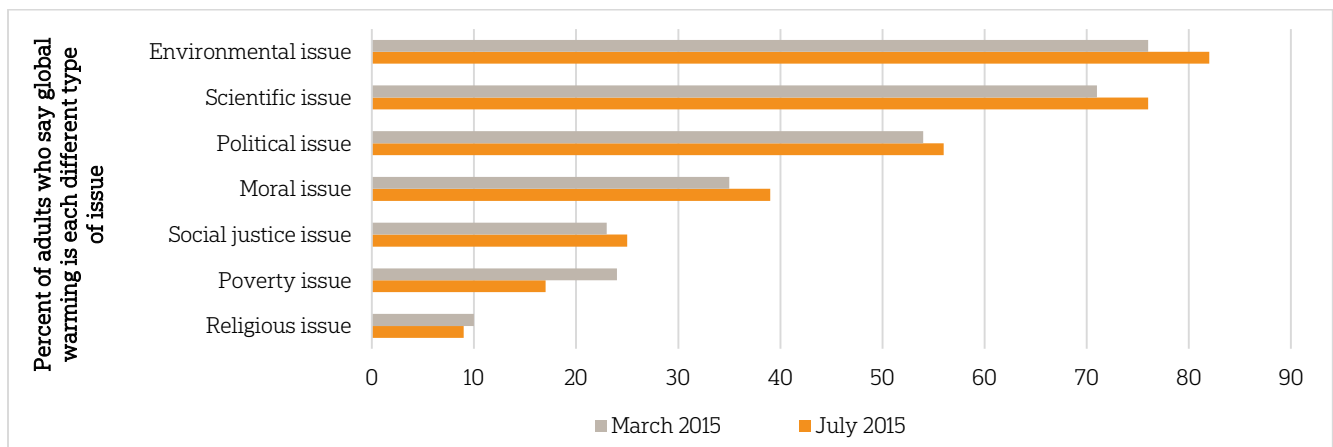
OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF AMERICANS SAY CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC ISSUE. FEW CONSIDER IT TO BE AN ISSUE RELATING TO SOCIAL JUSTICE, POVERTY, OR RELIGION.

Since March, there have been few significant shifts in the way Americans view the issue of global warming. Eighty-two percent of Americans today say it is an environmental issue, up from 76 percent in March. The percentage of Americans who see global warming as an issue related to poverty has declined from 24 percent in March to 17 percent today.

Views of global warming as a scientific or political issue have not shifted since the papal encyclical was released. Roughly three-quarters (76 percent) of Americans say global warming is a scientific issue, and 56 percent see global warming as a political issue.

Nor have views of global warming as a moral, social justice, or religious issue shifted, and few Americans see global warming as these types of issues. Thirty-nine percent of Americans say global warming is a moral issue. Just 25 percent of Americans say global warming is a social justice issue, and fewer than 1 in 10 (9 percent) see it as an issue related to religion.

A majority of Americans characterize global warming as an environmental, scientific, and political issue.



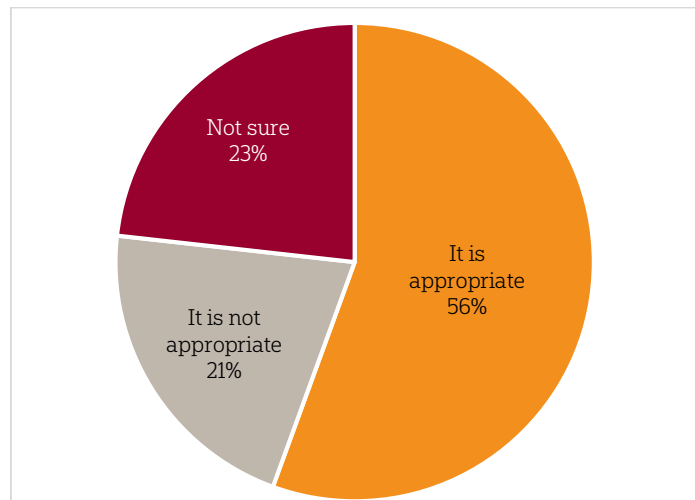
Question: In your opinion, do you think global warming is (a/an)...

Those who say global warming is happening are more likely than those who say it is not happening to see global warming as an environmental, scientific, moral, social justice, and poverty issue. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to see global warming as an environmental, scientific, moral, social justice, and poverty issue. Catholics do not differ from other Americans in their perceptions of global warming as any of these types of issues.

DESPITE FEW AMERICANS VIEWING GLOBAL WARMING AS A RELIGIOUS, POVERTY, OR SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE, A MAJORITY SAY IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE POPE TO TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION ON THE ISSUE OF GLOBAL WARMING.

While Americans largely do not see global warming as an issue related to faith, Americans do think that the pope can use his platform to address global warming. Fifty-five percent of Americans say it is appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue of global climate change, 21 percent say it is not appropriate, and 23 percent say they are unsure.

Over half of all adults say it's appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue of global warming.



Question: Do you think it's appropriate or not appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue of global warming?

Attitudes about the appropriateness of the pope's public message are tied to attitudes about whether global warming is happening and its cause. Those who say global warming is happening are nearly six times as likely as those who say it is not happening to believe it's appropriate for the pope to take a public position on it (71 percent vs. 12 percent). And among those who say global warming is happening, those who believe it is caused by human activities are more likely to say it is appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue than those who believe it is caused by natural changes in the environment (80 percent vs. 45 percent).

Those with a more favorable view of the pope (72 percent) are more likely than those with a less favorable view (43 percent) and those with no defined opinion of the pope (45 percent) to say it is appropriate for him to take a public position on the issue of global warming. Democrats (69 percent) are more likely than Republicans (42 percent) and independents (46 percent) to say the pope's actions are appropriate. Catholics are no more likely than non-Catholics to see this as appropriate.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with input and funding from Yale University. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak®, which is a probability-based panel

designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of an omnibus that included questions about several other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households are sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame, and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Interviews for this survey were conducted July 17 to 19, 2015, with adults age 18 and over from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak®, and 1,030 completed the survey—894 via the web and 136 via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 28.6 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 29 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 99 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 8.2 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data has been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and household phone status. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over, were used for all analyses.

Findings cited from March 2015 come from a nationally representative survey conducted by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences and George Mason University. The nationally representative survey of 1,263 American adults, age 18 and older, was conducted February 27 to March 10, 2015, using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The average margin of sampling error is +/- 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The research was funded by the 11th Hour Project, the Energy Foundation, the Grantham Foundation, and the V.K. Rasmussen Foundation.

All analyses were conducted using STATA (version 14), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling. A comprehensive listing of all study questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org.

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- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

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