

Introducing Global Warming's Six Americas:

A Guide to Americans' Global Warming Beliefs, Attitudes, Policy Preferences and Actions

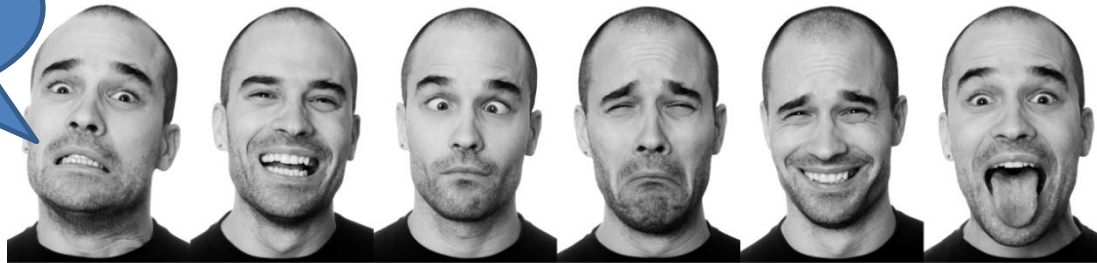


George Mason University
Center for Climate Change Communication

What should the U.S. be doing about global warming?

Some people say...

Much more!

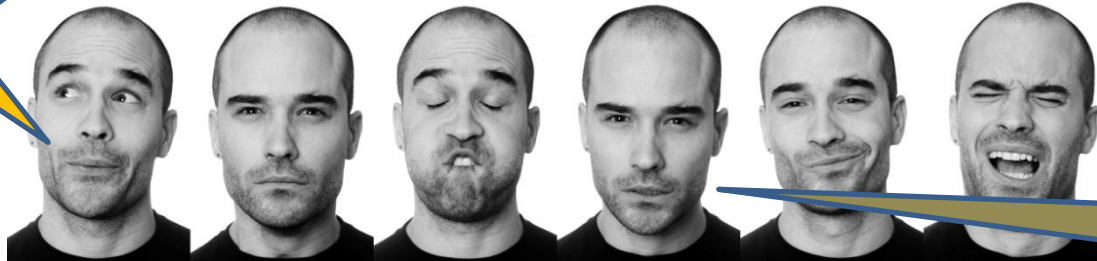


What's global warming?

A little?



Nothing at all!



Americans differ in their beliefs & concern about global warming.

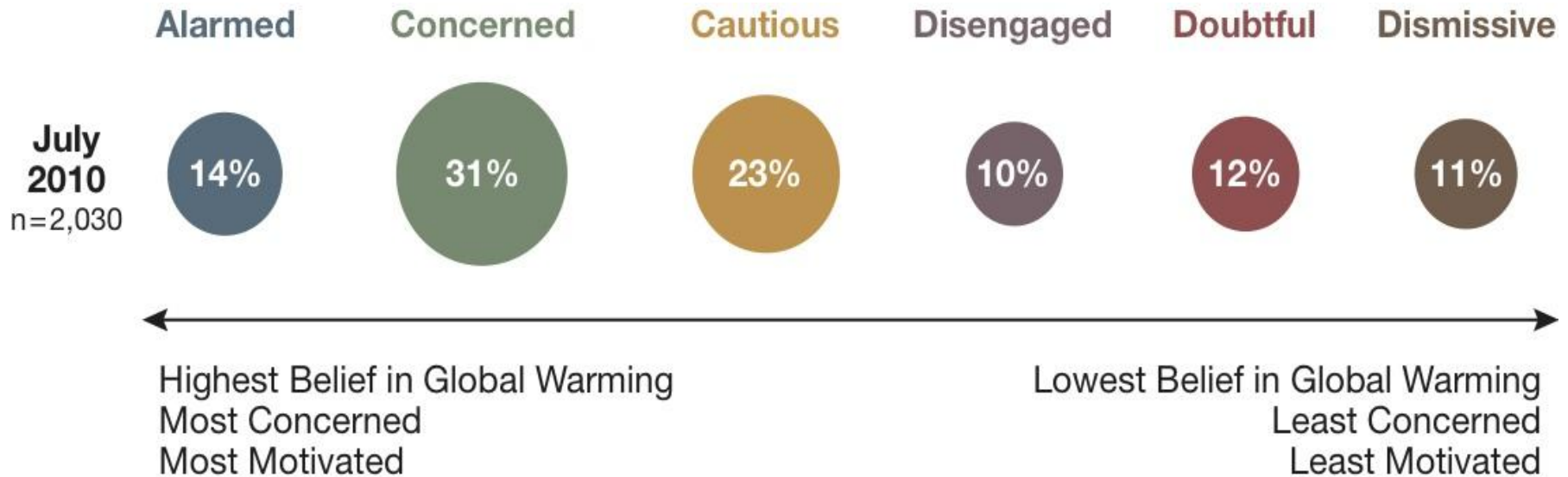


- They fall into six distinct groups.
- Each group has a unique set of beliefs, values, opinions and actions.
- Understanding the differences is vital to effective engagement.
- When we know what the groups think & how they feel, we can speak to their concerns more directly.

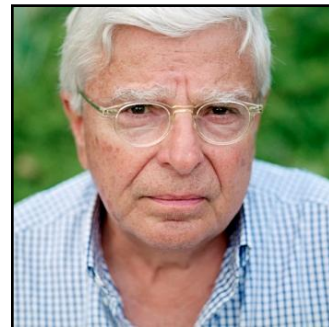


Global Warming's "Six Americas"

These groups have very different views of the issue...



The size of the bubbles shows the proportion of Americans that belonged to each group in the summer of 2010.



Global Warming's “Six Americas”

They *think* differently, but they don't *look* different...

- The groups don't differ much on the basis of sex, race, age or income – there are men and women of every age, race and income in each of the six groups.
- But they differ dramatically in their beliefs about the reality, causes and dangers of global warming.



Let's examine six members of these groups in turn...



Alarmed
Alice



Dismissive
Dan

Concerned
Claudia



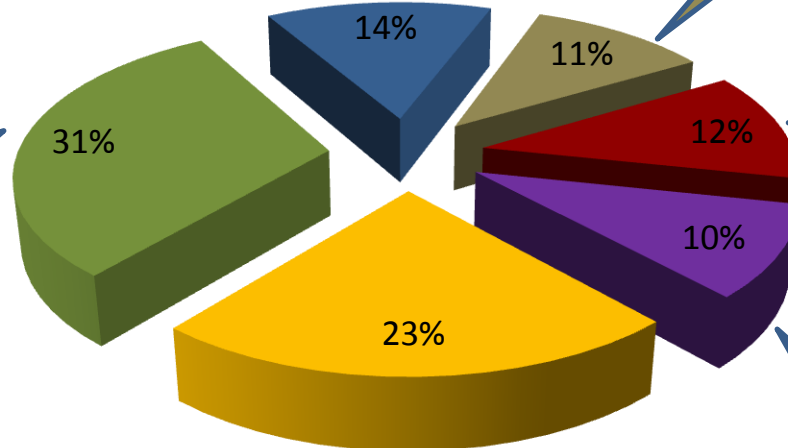
Doubtful
David



Disengaged
Diane



Cautious
Carl



Alarmed Alice



Alice is completely sure global warming is happening, human caused, and feels personally threatened by it. She believes that people around the world are already being harmed by it, or will be soon.

Alice is slightly more likely than average to be taking steps to reduce her energy use, but is far more likely than average to use her purchasing power - and her voice as a citizen - to advocate for change. Alice supports a wide range of policy responses to address global warming.

Concerned Claudia

Claudia is very sure global warming is happening, and believes it has human causes, but feels less personally threatened than Alice. She believes that global warming will begin to harm people around the world 10+ years from now.

Claudia is average in terms of taking measures to reduce her energy consumption, but well above average in terms of using her purchasing power to advocate for change. Claudia supports aggressive government policies, but is currently unlikely to contact her elected officials to say so.



Cautious Carl



Carl is only somewhat sure that global warming is happening, and he is equally likely to see it as human caused or natural. He sees global warming as a distant threat – primarily a threat to other people – that won't begin to hurt people around the world for another 25 - 50 years.

Carl is taking average steps to reduce his energy consumption, but isn't involved in addressing global warming in other ways. He is, however, modestly supportive of a range of proposed policies.

Disengaged Diane

Diane thinks global warming may be happening, but she's not at all sure. She's given it very little thought, doesn't consider it personally important, and doesn't know much about it.

Diane has done relatively little to reduce her use of energy at home, but because she has lower than average income she is more likely than average not to rely on her own car.

Despite her low level of personal concern, Diane is more supportive than Carl of a national response to global warming.



Doubtful David



David says he doesn't know if real or not, but if it is, he's pretty sure it isn't human-caused. David isn't worried about it; he sees global warming as a very distant threat that won't harm people for at least another 100 years.

David isn't in favor of a national response to global warming per se, but he is modestly in favor of a range of energy-saving policy measures, and is improving energy-efficiency in his home.

Dismissive Dan

Dan does not believe that global warming is happening and believes that many scientists share his views. Dan doesn't support any form of government action against global warming, although he does support efforts to develop or promote renewable energy sources.

He is more likely than average to be making energy-efficient improvements to his home.

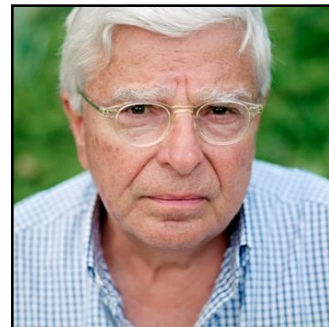


An Overview of the Differences Among Global Warming's “Six Americas”

A good way of understanding the differences among the six groups is to examine their *key beliefs* about global warming – the beliefs that lead people to support action to reduce global warming .

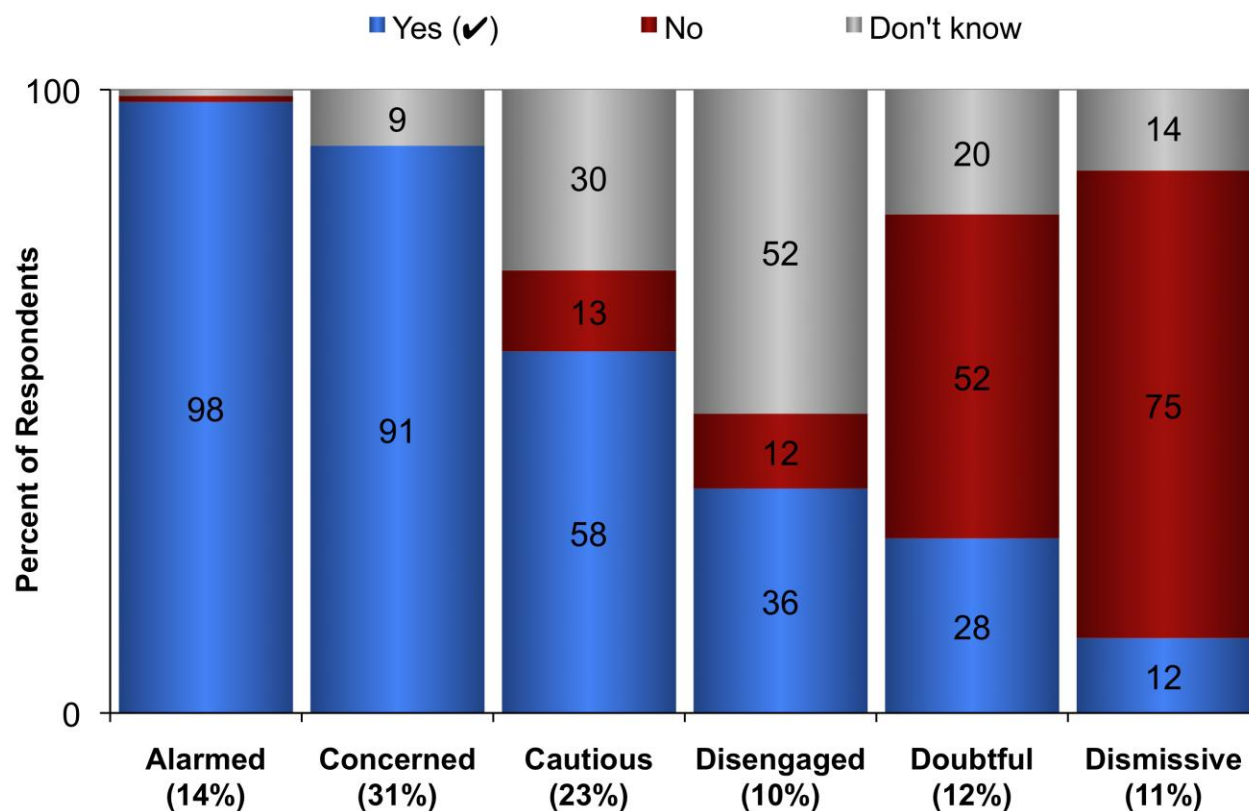
These beliefs are:

- *Global warming is real.*
- *It is or will be harmful to people.*
- *People are causing global warming.*
- *People can reduce global warming.*



The Alarmed and Concerned are convinced that global warming is real.

When asked if global warming is happening...

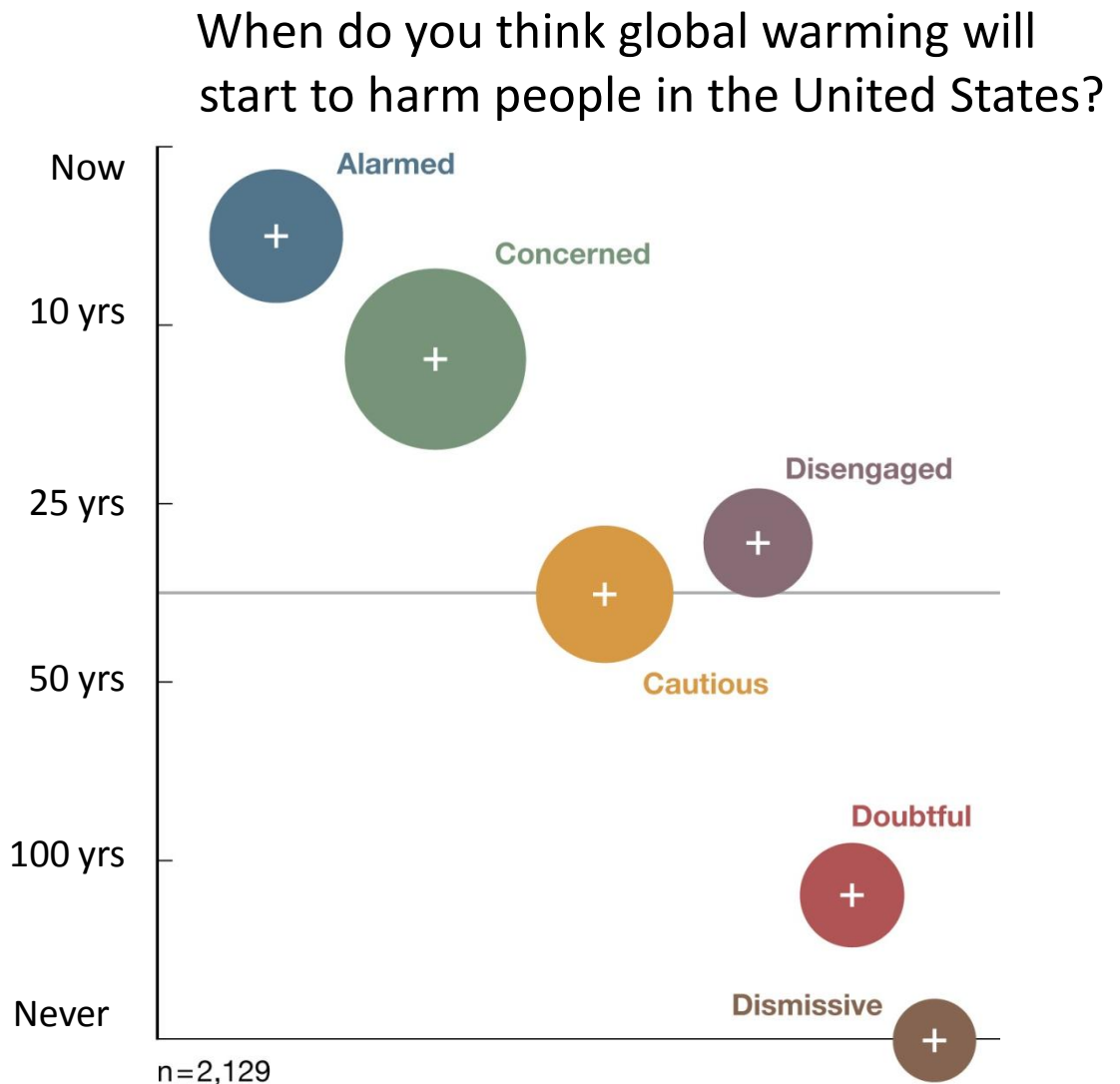


- Over 90% of the Alarmed and Concerned say “yes.”
- Half of the Disengaged say “don’t know.”
- Three-quarters of the Dismissive say “no.”

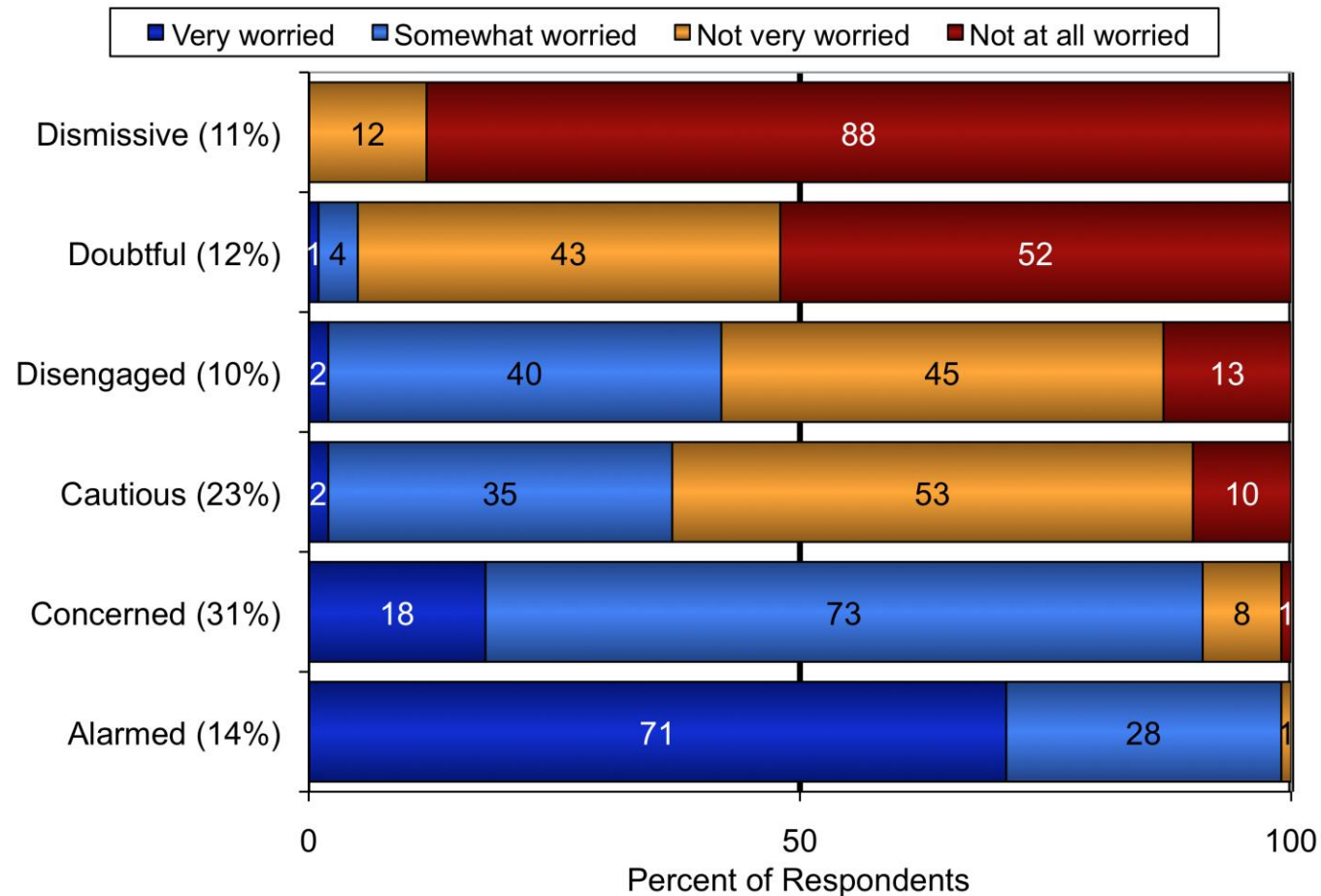
Both the Alarmed and Dismissive groups are very sure of their beliefs. The other groups are less certain.

Global warming is seen as a real and present danger by the Alarmed and Concerned.

- The Alarmed and Concerned believe global warming is either harming people now, or will within the next decade.
- The less concerned groups believe it will harm people far away in the future, in distant places, and/or other species (not humans), or not at all.



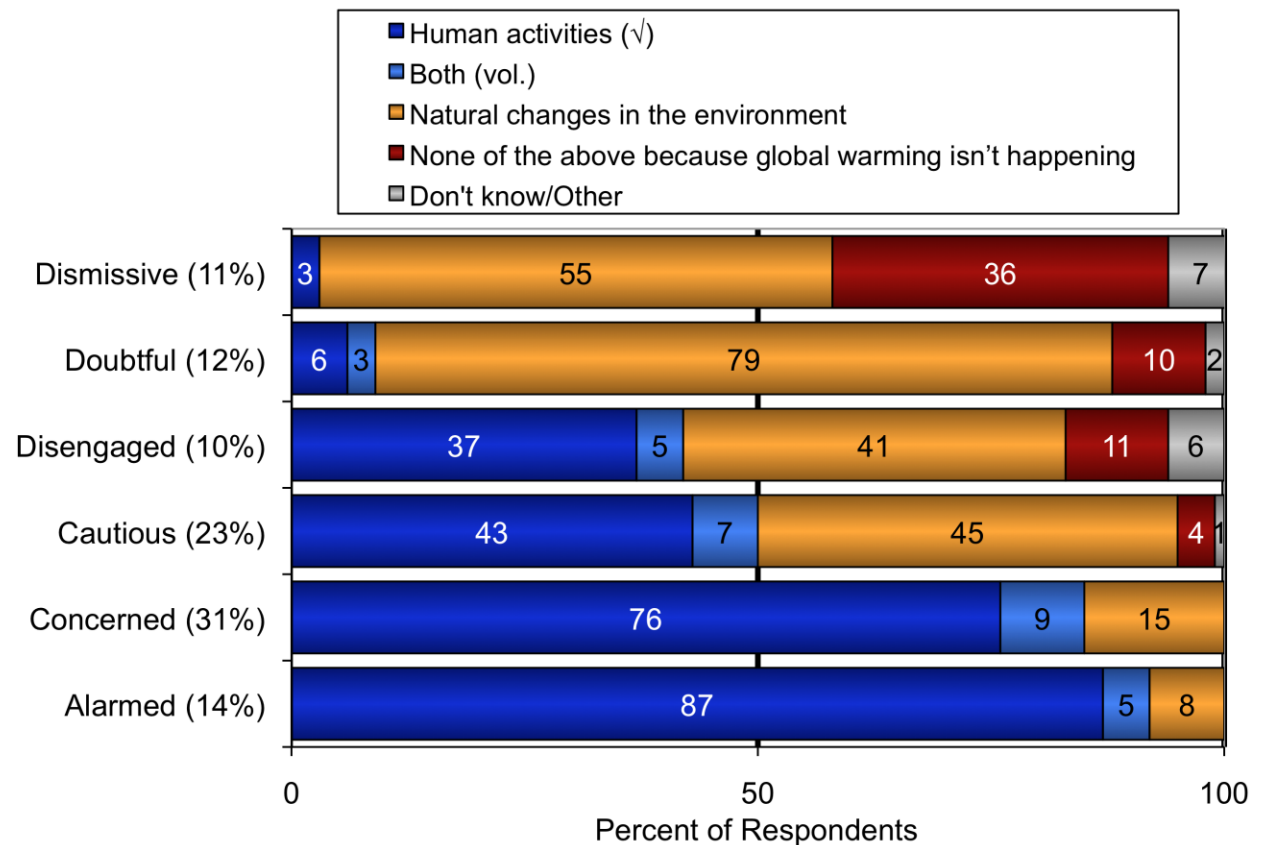
Once people understand the dangers of global warming, they worry about it.



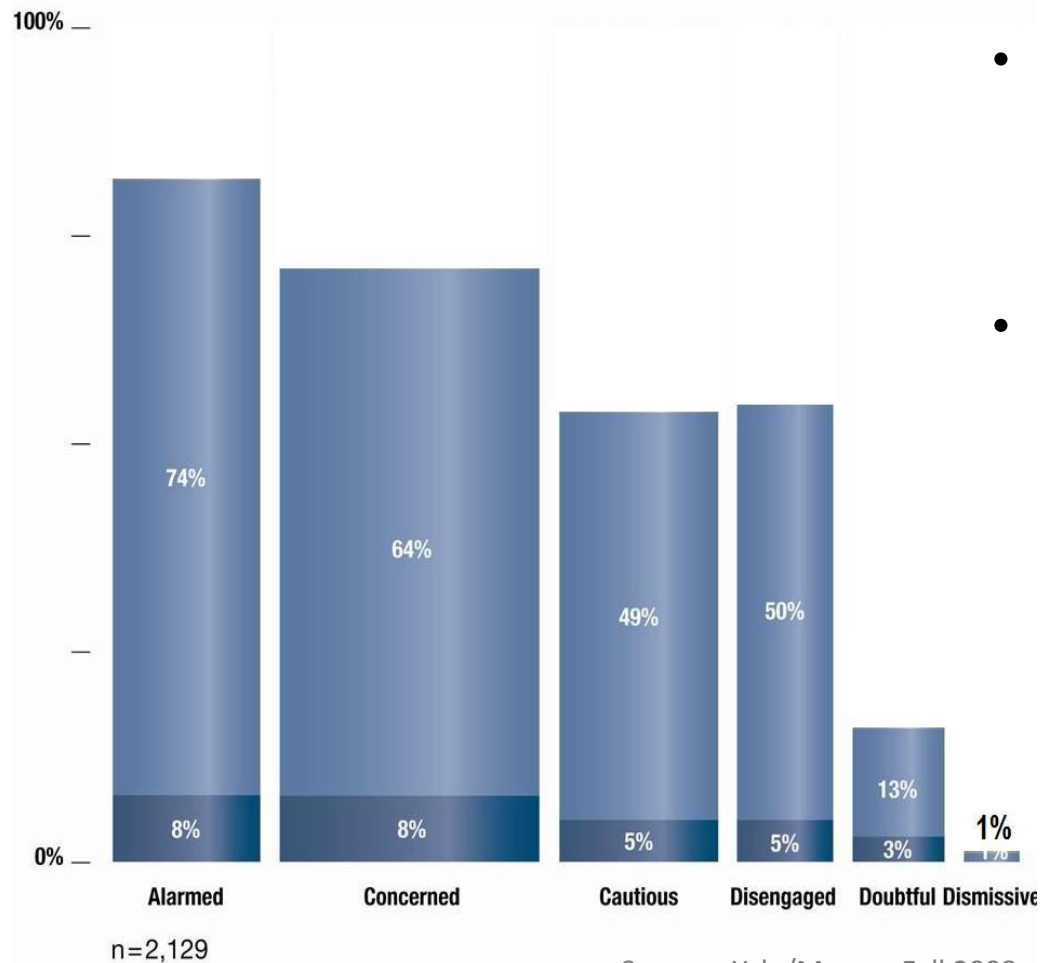
- More than 9 out of 10 Alarmed & Concerned are worried.
- Less than half of the Cautious & Disengaged are worried.
- Almost all the Doubtful & Dismissives say they are not worried.

When asked, “What’s causing it?” the Alarmed and Concerned are much more likely to believe that human activities are responsible.

- Overall, about half of Americans believe that humans are causing global warming.
- Almost 90% of the Alarmed believe that human actions cause global warming.
- Only 3% of the Dismissives believe this.
- Over three-quarters of the Doubtful believe that if it’s happening, it’s natural.



Most Americans aren't confident that we will successfully reduce global warming, but the Alarmed and Concerned believe that *it's possible*.



- Only about 6% of Americans are confident that we will succeed in reducing global warming.
- Almost three-quarters of the Alarmed & two-thirds of the Concerned believe we *might* succeed.
- Close to half of the Cautious & Disengaged believe we might succeed.

Humans could reduce global warming, but it's unclear if we will

Humans can reduce global warming, and we will

These key beliefs are directly related to the questions the groups have about global warming.

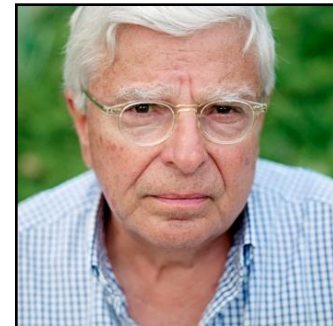
- The Alarmed and Concerned want to know what can be done to reduce global warming.
- The Cautious and Disengaged want to know whether global warming is dangerous.
- The Doubtful and Dismissive are unconvinced that climate change is happening.

“If you could ask an expert on global warming one question, which question would you ask?”

What can the US do to reduce global warming?

What harm will global warming cause?

How do you know that global warming is occurring?

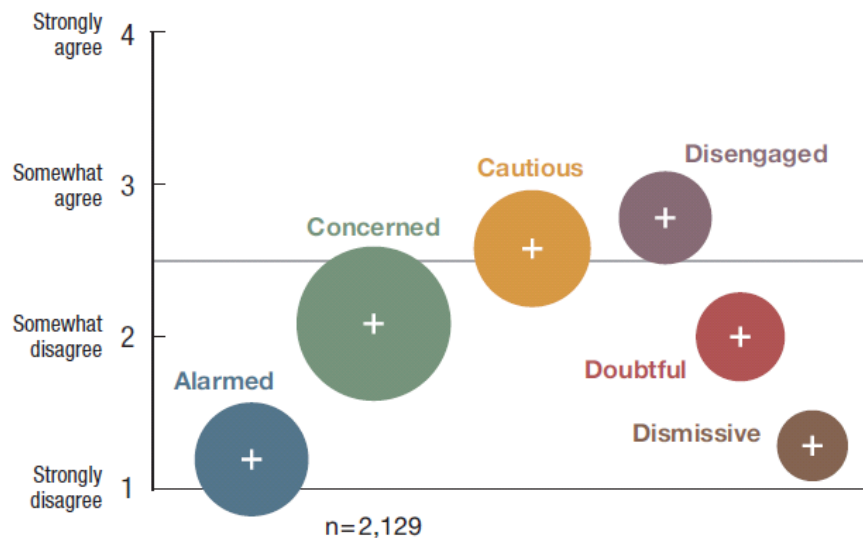


There are other important differences between the groups.

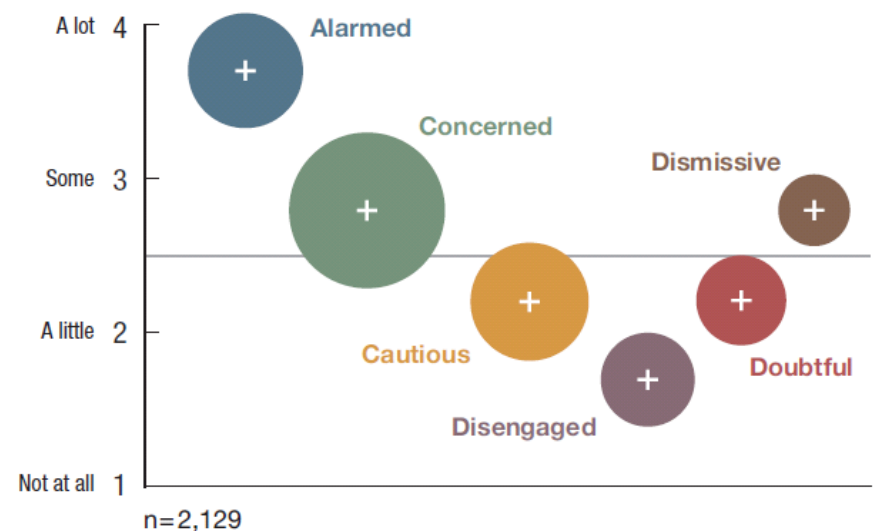
The Cautious and Disengaged don't think about global warming much and aren't very certain of their opinions.

People at both ends of the spectrum have largely made up their minds, but people in the middle could still change their minds.

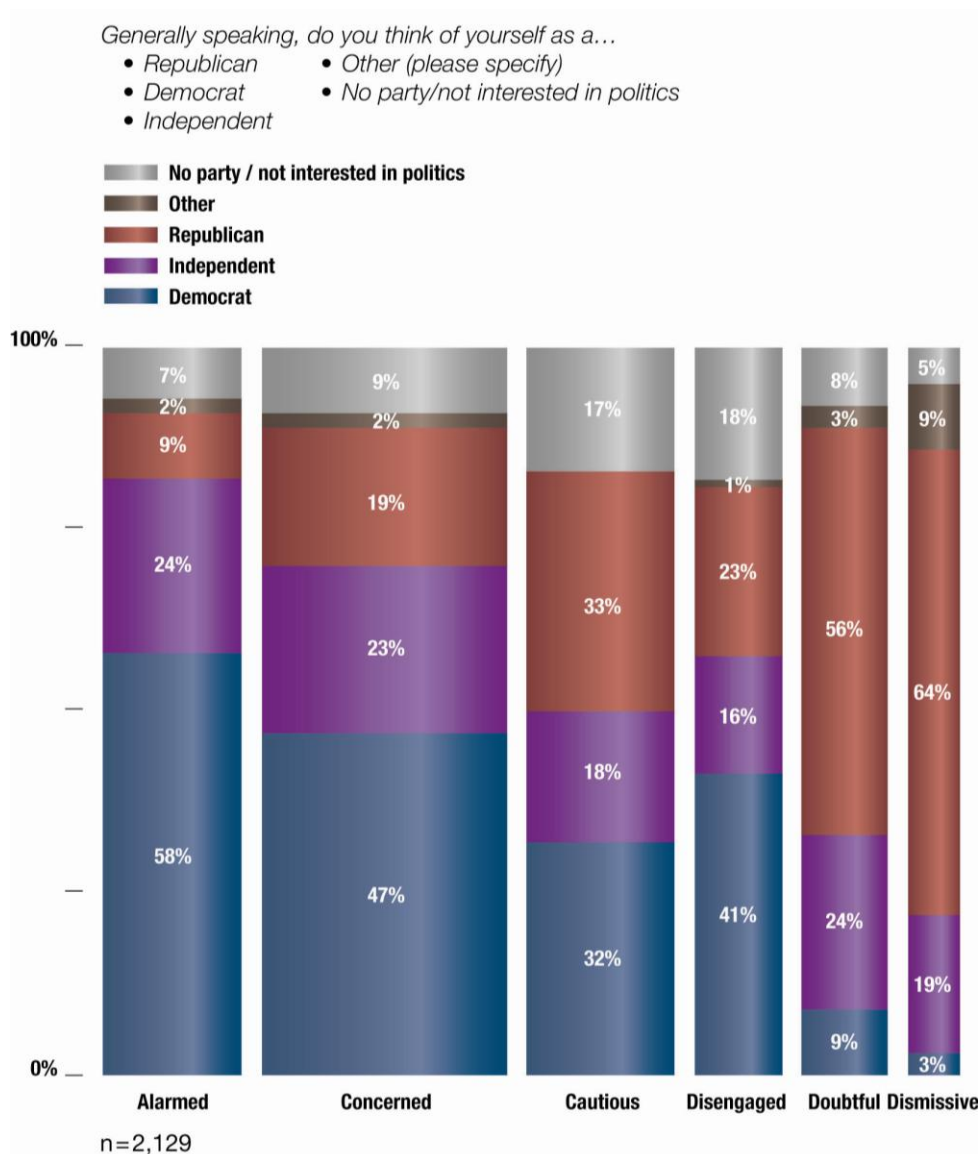
"I could easily change my mind about global warming"



How much had you thought about global warming before today?



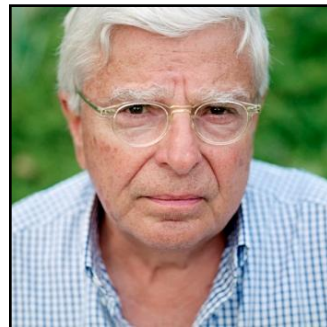
Political ideology, values and religious beliefs are all related to beliefs about global warming.



- Liberal Democrats tend to be more concerned, while conservative Republicans tend to be less concerned.
- Evangelical and conservative Christians are less likely to be concerned.
- The Alarmed and Concerned tend to value equality & minority rights, while the Doubtful and Dismissive worry that action to respond to global warming will mean more government in society.

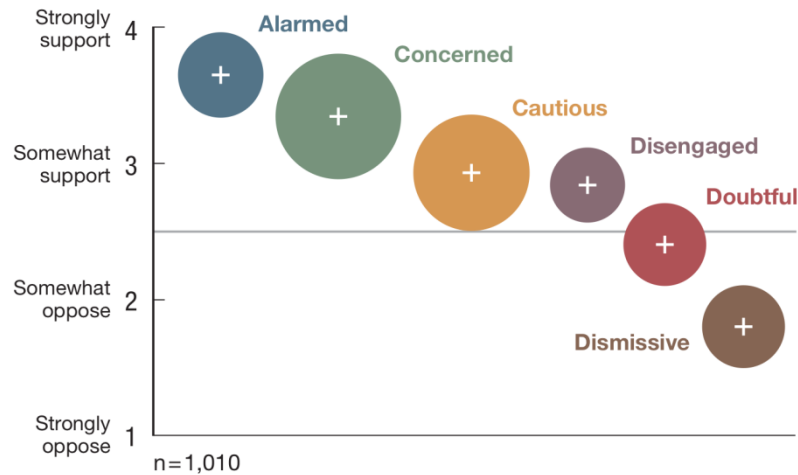
The Six Americas vary on their support for public policies to reduce climate change

- All groups support funding research on sources of renewable energy.
- All groups support rewarding consumers with rebates for purchasing fuel-efficient cars and solar panels.
- The Doubtful and Dismissive oppose government regulation of business as a method of reducing global warming.
- *(See the figures on the next page for the actual results.)*

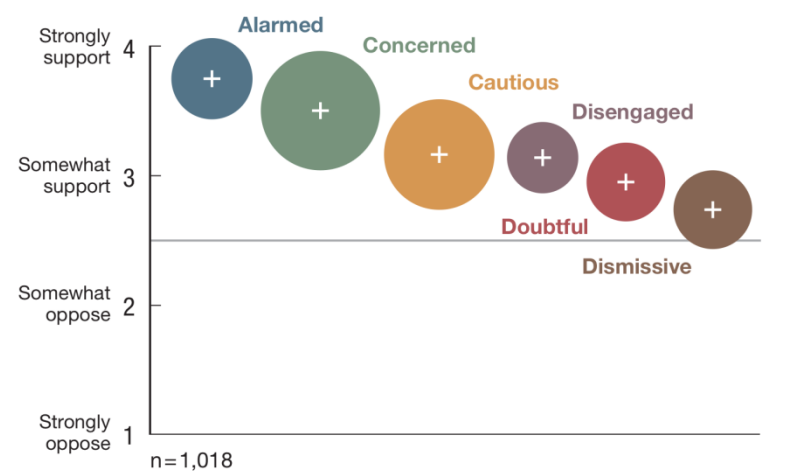


Policy support among the Six Americas

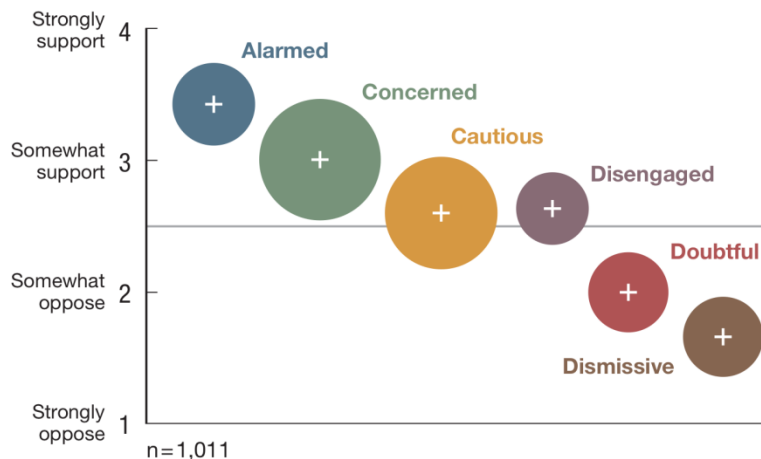
Regulate CO₂ as Pollutant



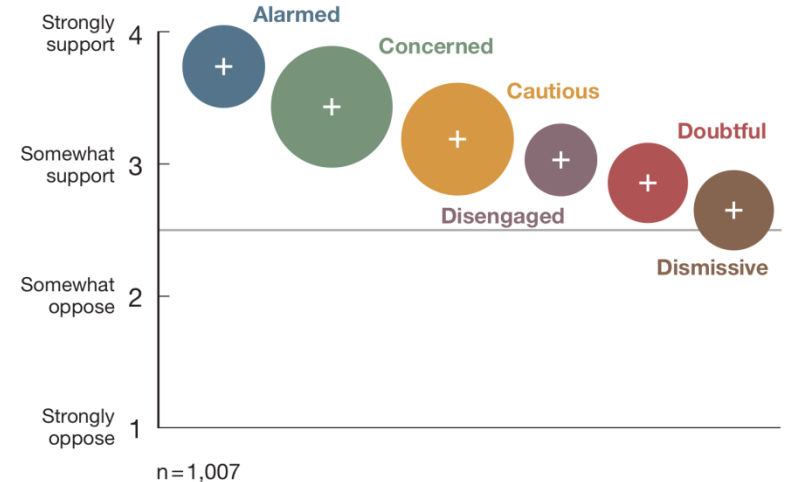
Fund Renewable Energy Research



Require 20% Renewal Energy from Electric Co's.

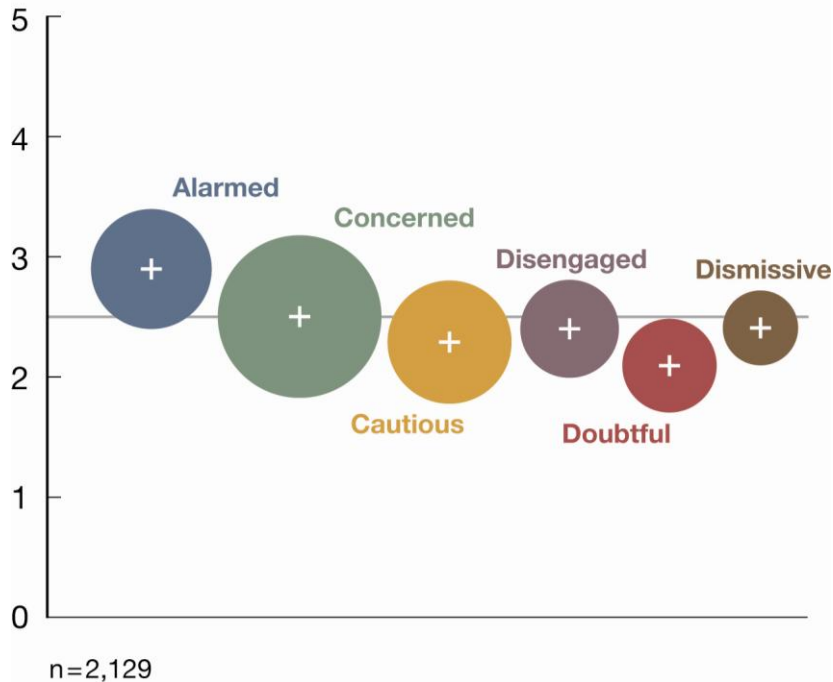


Provide Rebates on Efficient Cars & Solar Panels

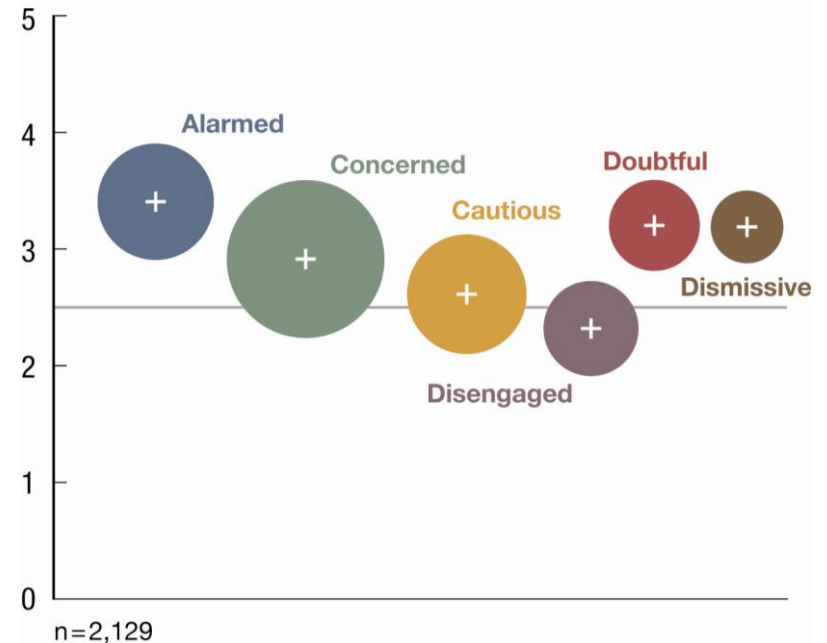


The groups don't differ much in their efforts to conserve energy.

Number of actions that respondent does "always" or "often" from the following list of five: turning off unneeded lights; raising the thermostat to 76 or higher or using less air conditioning in summer; lowering the thermostat to 68 or cooler in winter; walking or biking instead of driving; using public transportation or car pools.



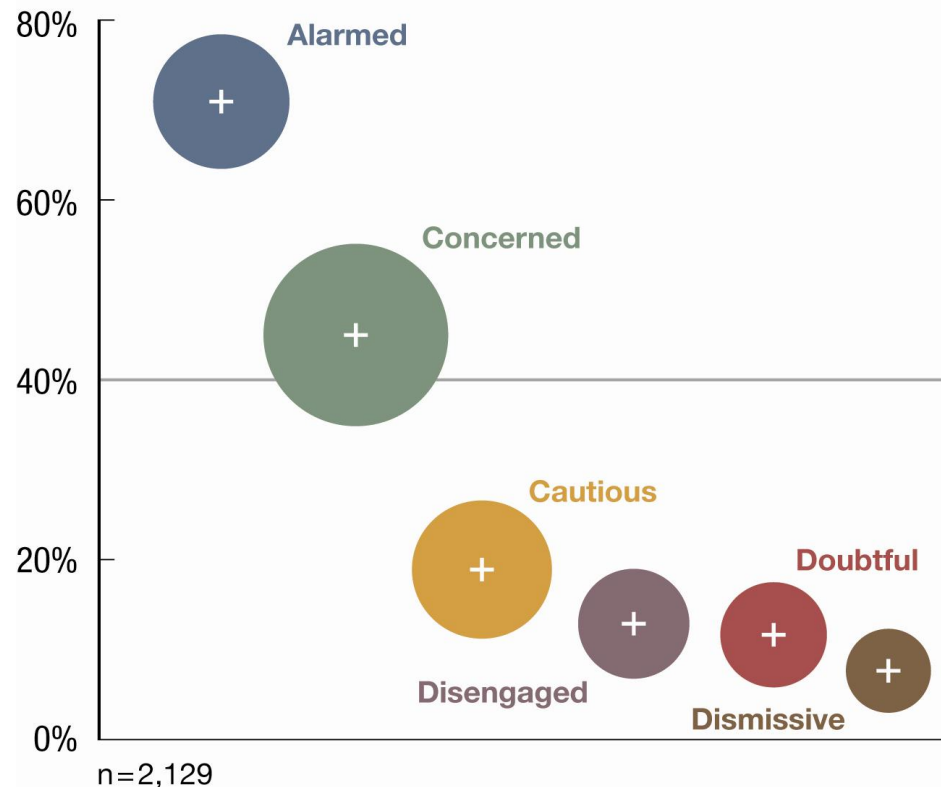
Number of improvements made from the following list of five: Insulating the attic; caulking and weather-stripping the home; installation of an energy-efficient water heater; installation of an energy-efficient furnace; installation of an energy-efficient air conditioner.



They're very different, however, in using their buying power to influence companies.

Over the past 12 months, how many times have you done these things?

- Rewarded companies that are taking steps to reduce global warming by buying their products.

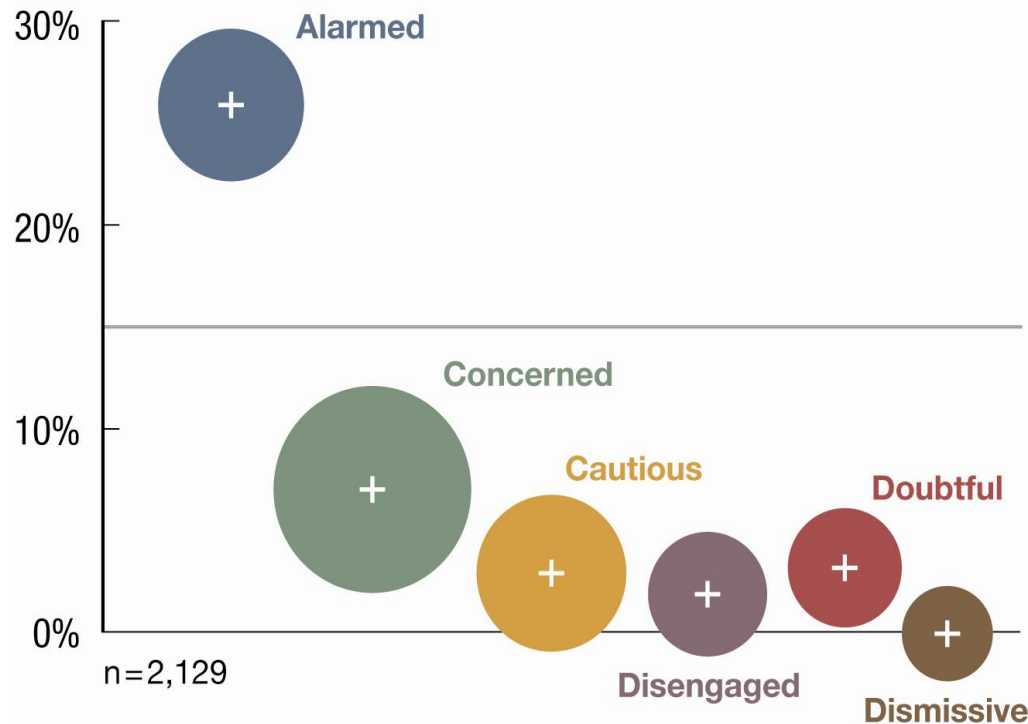


Note: Figure shows the proportion who have rewarded companies one or more times over the past 12 months.

The Alarmed are most likely to contact elected officials in support of reducing global warming, but only 1 in 4 have done so

Over the past 12 months, how many times have you done each of the following?

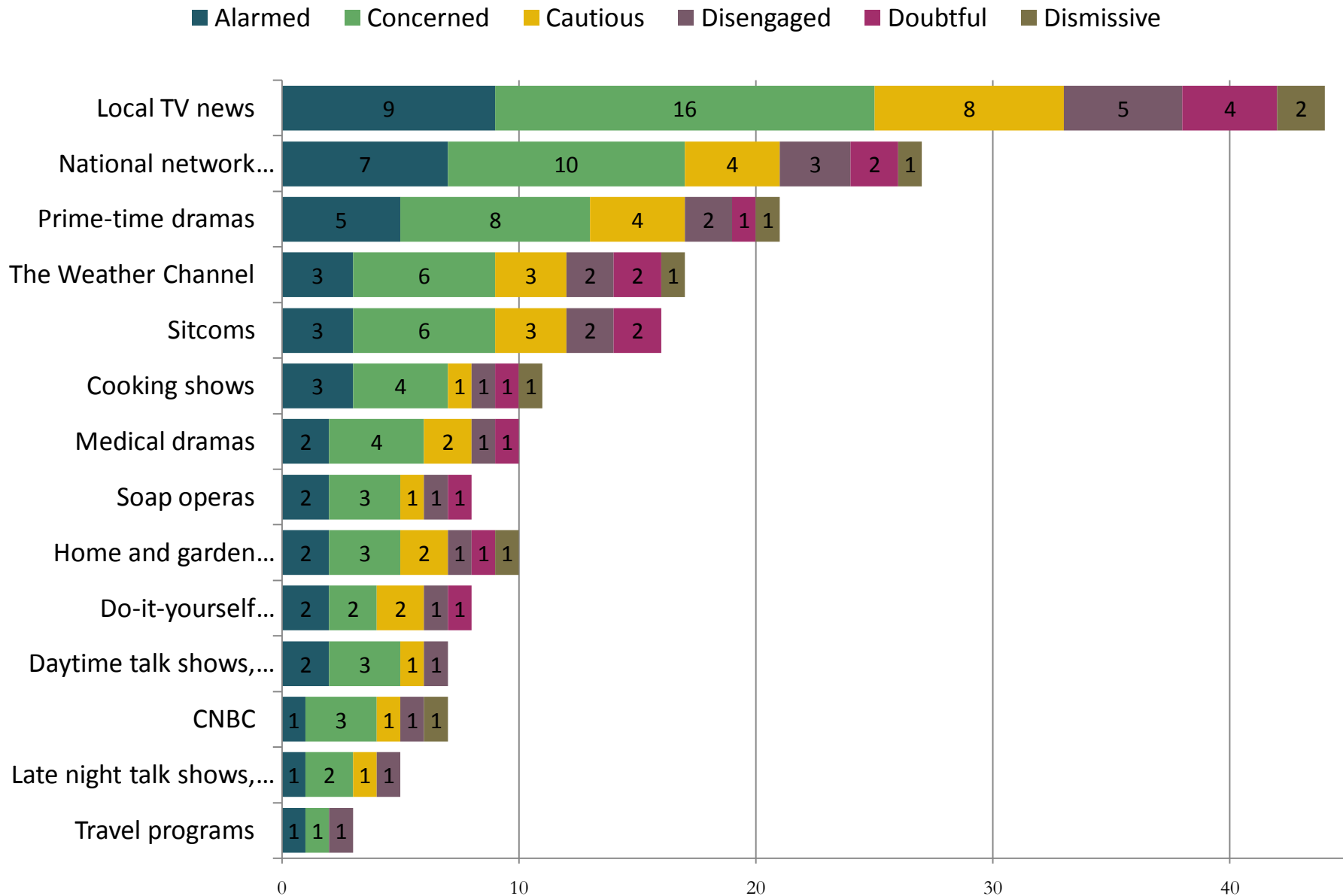
- Written letters, emailed, or phoned government officials to urge them to take action to reduce global warming?



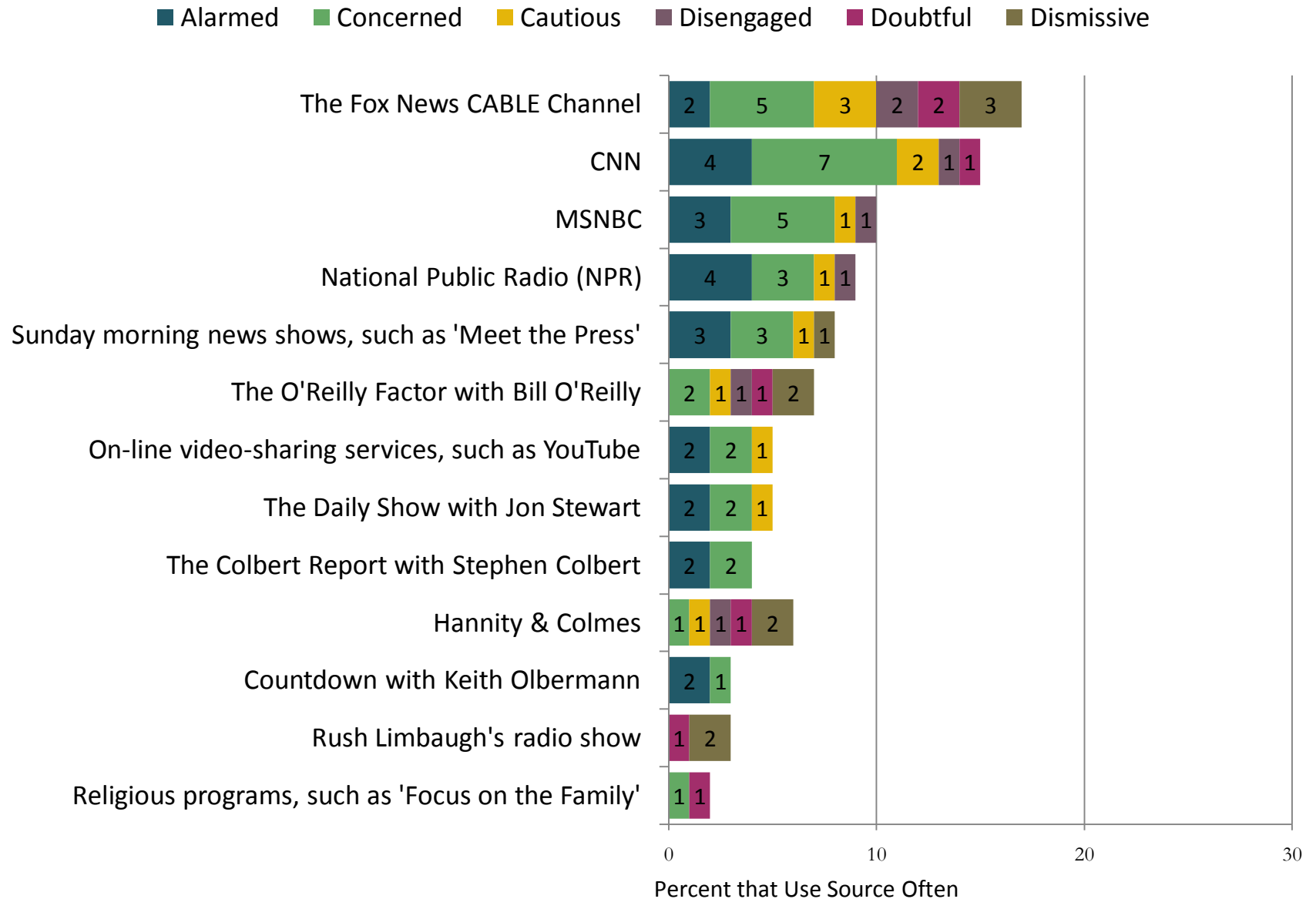
Note: Figure shows the proportion who have contacted officials one or more times over the past 12 months.

- Among the other five groups, advocacy to reduce global warming is rare.
- About 9% of the Dismissives have contacted officials to argue *against* action to reduce global warming. *(Data not shown.)*

Some media sources reach all Six Americas



Other channels reach more specialized audiences



Learn more about the Six Americas from these sources

- Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C. & Leiserowitz, A. (2009). *Global Warming's Six Americas 2009: An Audience Segmentation Analysis*. Report may be accessed at:
<http://www.climatechangecommunication.org/images/files/GlobalWarmingsSixAmericas2009c.pdf>
- Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., & Roser-Renouf, C. (2010, Jan.) *Global Warming's Six Americas, January 2010*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. Report may be accessed at:
<http://environment.yale.edu/uploads/SixAmericasJan2010.pdf>
- Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., & Roser-Renouf, C. & Smith, N. (2010, Jun.) *Global Warming's Six Americas, June 2010*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change. Report may be accessed at:
<http://environment.yale.edu/climate/files/SixAmericasJune2010.pdf>
- Leiserowitz, A. & Smith, N. (2010) *Knowledge of Climate Change Across Global Warming's Six Americas*. Yale University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. Report may be accessed at:
<http://environment.yale.edu/climate/news/knowledge-of-climate-change-across-global-warmings-six-americas/>