

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

What the world thinks about climate change in 7 charts

BY **RICHARD WIKE** 10 COMMENTS

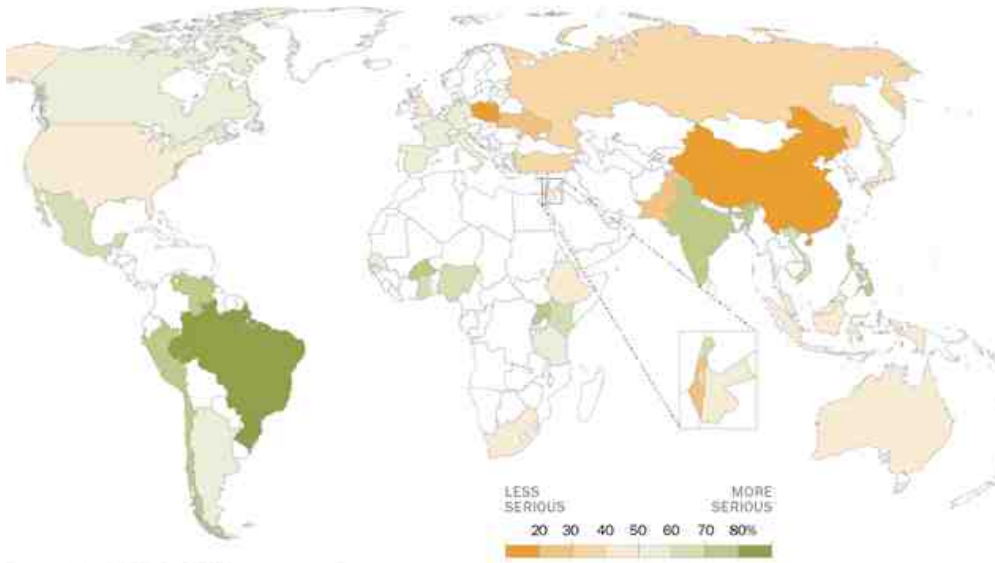
As world leaders prepare to negotiate a major climate change agreement later this month at the [United Nations' Paris 2015 conference](#), a new [Pew Research Center survey](#) finds that people around the world see the issue as a significant challenge and want their governments to take action. Here are seven key findings from the poll:

1

Majorities in all 40 nations polled say climate change is a serious problem, and a global median of 54% believe it is a *very serious problem*. Still, the intensity of concern varies substantially across regions and nations. Latin Americans and sub-Saharan Africans are particularly worried about climate change. Americans and Chinese, whose countries have the highest overall carbon dioxide emissions, are less concerned.

Latin America, Africa Most Concerned about Climate Change

Percent saying global climate change is a very serious problem



2

People in countries with high per-capita levels of carbon emissions are less intensely concerned about climate change. Among the nations we surveyed, the U.S. has the highest carbon emissions per capita, but it is among the least concerned about climate change and its potential impact. Others in this category are Australia, Canada and Russia. Publics in Africa, Latin America and Asia, many of which have very low emissions per capita, are frequently the most concerned about the negative effects of climate change.

High CO2 Emitters Are Less Intensely Concerned about Climate Change

High CO2 Emitters Are Less Intensely Concerned about Climate Change

Correlation: **-0.54**

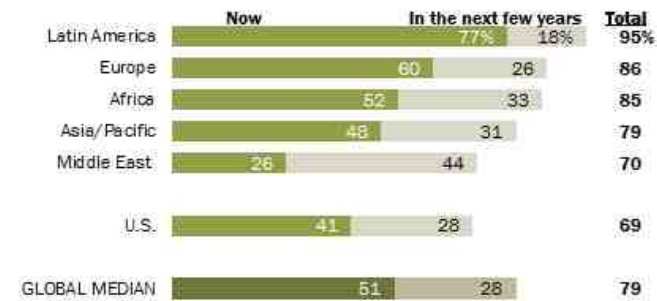
* Concern about global climate change is measured using a three-item index ranging from 3-12, with 12 representing the most concerned about climate change. Respondents were coded as 4 if they believe climate change is a very serious problem; if they think climate change is harming people now; and if they say they are very concerned that climate change will harm them personally at some point in their lifetime. The mean score for each country is used in this analysis. (See [Appendix](#) for more details.)

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey, Q32, Q41 & Q42. Data for CO2 emissions per capita from World Bank Data Bank, accessed August 5, 2015.

3

Immediacy of Climate Change Worries Latin Americans, Europeans Most

Global climate change is harming/will harm people around the world ...



Note: Data for "Not for many years," "Never" and volunteered category "Climate change does not exist" not shown. Russia and Ukraine not included in Europe median.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey, Q41.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Climate change is not seen as a distant threat. **A global median of 51% say climate change is already harming people around the world, while another 28% believe it will do so in the next few years.** This view is especially common in Latin America. For instance, fully 90% of Brazilians say climate change is harming people now. Europeans are also particularly likely to hold this opinion. However, only 41% of Americans believe people are being harmed by climate change today.

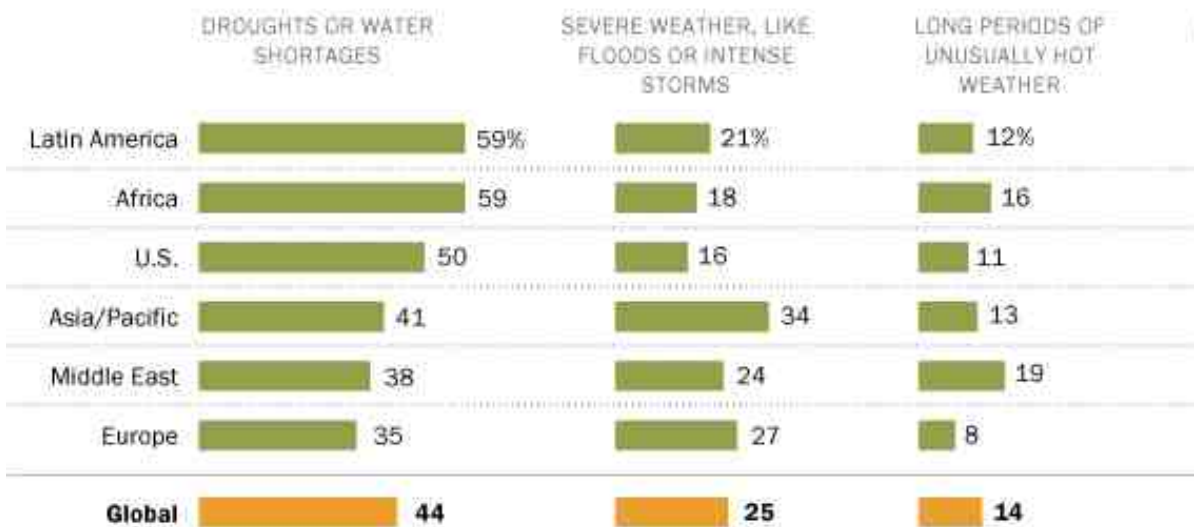
4

Drought tops the list of climate change concerns. We read respondents a list of four potential effects of global warming, and asked which one concerns them the most: droughts or water shortages; severe weather, such as floods or intense storms; long periods of unusually hot weather; or rising sea levels. In 31 nations, drought is a top worry. Fully half of Americans name drought as their chief climate change concern, and this is especially true in drought-plagued Western states compared with other regions of the country.



Threat of Drought Most Concerning across All Regions

Regional medians of most concerning effects of global climate change



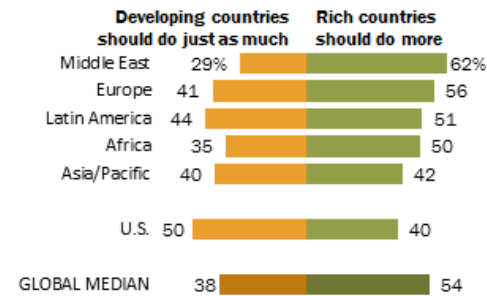
Note: Russia and Ukraine not included in Europe median.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey, Q43.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Say Rich Countries Should Bear More of Climate Change Cost

Should rich countries, such as the U.S., Japan and Germany, do more to address global climate change than developing countries because they have produced most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions so far, or should developing countries do just as much as rich countries because they will produce most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions in the future?



Note: Russia and Ukraine not included in Europe median.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey, Q44.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most people in the countries we surveyed say **rich nations should do more than developing nations to address climate change**. A median of 54% agree with the statement “Rich countries, such as the U.S., Japan and Germany, should do more than developing countries because they have produced most of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions so far.” A median of just 38% think “developing countries should do just as much as rich countries because they will produce most of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions in the future.” Notably, the U.S. is among a small group of countries in which half or more believe developing countries should do just as much – half of Americans hold this view, while only four-in-ten want rich countries to shoulder more of the costs.

6

Many Say Changes Needed to Lifestyle, Policy

Global medians on climate change solutions



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q33, Q40 & Q44.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

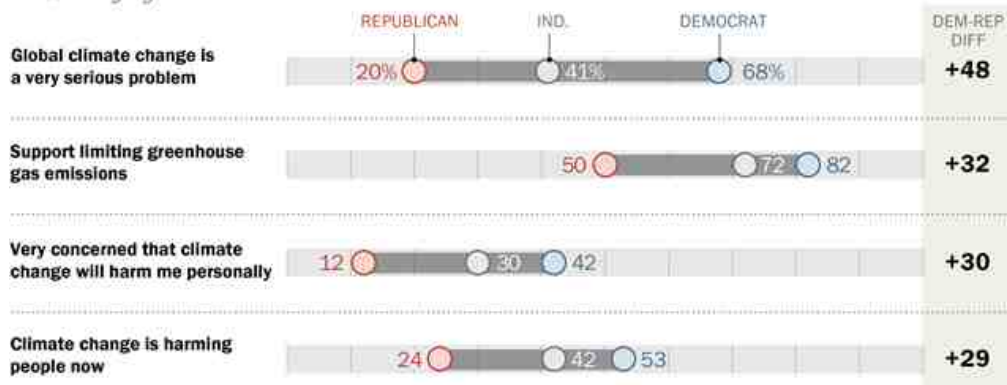
To deal with climate change, **most think changes in both policy and lifestyle will be necessary.** A median of 78% support the idea of their country joining a global agreement in Paris to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Two-thirds believe people will have to make major lifestyle changes to combat climate change, while just 22% say technology will solve the problem and major changes in how people live won't be needed. Even in the U.S., a country known for its technological advances, only 23% believe technology alone can solve climate change.

7

Americans' views about climate issues divide sharply along partisan lines. The polarization that characterizes U.S. public opinion on so many issues is especially stark on climate change. Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to consider it a very serious problem, believe its effects are being felt now, think it will harm them personally, and support U.S. participation in an international agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

U.S. Has Stark Partisan Differences on Climate Change

Percent saying ...

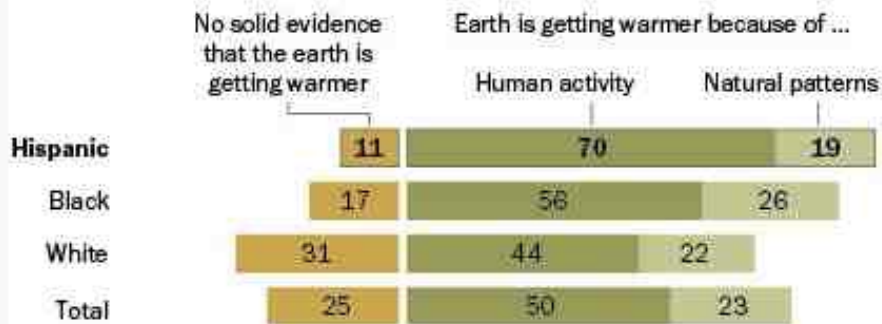


Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey, Q32, Q40, Q41 & Q42.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Hispanics More Likely than Whites to Say Humans Have Warmed the Planet

% of U.S. adults saying ...



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race. Those saying "don't know" are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Aug. 15-25, 2014

PEW RESEARCH CENTER