

Majority of Arizonans Concerned About Global Warming, Poll Shows

By Stephanie Doster, Institute of the Environment

Findings from a survey of 803 adult Arizona residents provide valuable insight into Arizonans' views on climate change and how those views vary depending on age, gender, ethnicity, and political affiliation. Overall, Arizonans are interested and engaged in the issue of climate change, and their views on global warming are generally in step with the rest of the nation.

NEWS RELEASE

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TUCSON, Arizona — A large majority of Arizona residents believes the world's temperature has been rising and that global warming will be a serious problem for the nation if nothing is done to curb it, according to a survey conducted by the University of Arizona's Institute of the Environment and Stanford University.

The survey also found that more than 70 percent of Arizonans support government action to reduce global warming, and a majority of state residents believes people are at least partly to blame for the planet's warmer temperatures.

"The survey findings show that the people of Arizona are aware of and interested in climate change and that they understand there are policy decisions that can be made to address it," said Jonathan Overpeck, co-director of the Institute of the Environment and a co-author of the survey.

According to the poll, more than half of Arizonans believe global warming has caused more droughts and storms around the world, and more forest fires and heatwaves in the state.

The survey of 803 adult Arizona residents was conducted by telephone in November and December 2014 by the independent polling company Abt SRBI to better understand Arizonans' views on climate change and how those views vary depending on age, gender, ethnicity and political affiliation. The goal, the researchers said, is to use the information to better tailor UA research and outreach to the concerns and needs of Arizona residents.

"There have been quite a few national surveys on climate change, but their samples have been too general to provide detailed results on attitudes within Arizona," said Diana Liverman, who also co-directs the Institute of the Environment and co-wrote the survey with Jon Krosnick, professor of communication, political science and psychology at Stanford University and an expert on such surveys.

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“We were able to ask questions specifically relevant to Arizona to examine responses from different groups within the state, and we provided the option to respond in English or Spanish,” Liverman said.

The survey shows that Arizonans’ views on global warming generally are not substantially different from those of the rest of the nation, although state residents are more concerned than the American public that the impact of climate change will hurt them personally.

“As a scientist and extension specialist who is asked to give many talks to Arizonans on the topic of climate, I have wondered what they know and think about the issues,” said Gregg Garfin, deputy director for science translation and outreach at the institute. “This survey shows the majority of Arizonans seem to be concerned about climate change, which is pretty much in line with the majority of U.S. residents.”

Most Arizona residents believe action by the state to reduce global warming will help the state economy or have no effect, and 23 percent believe it will hurt it. An overwhelming majority of Arizonans favor the federal government giving companies tax breaks to produce more electricity from renewable sources such as water, wind and solar power.

“The University of Arizona has done a great service by using the science of survey research to give state residents an opportunity to express their beliefs about what has been happening to the Earth and what they want government to do and not do on this issue,” Krosnick said.

There are some significant differences in views among different populations in Arizona. Compared to other ethnic groups, Hispanics are more concerned about the impact of global warming, and they more heavily favor policies such as cap and trade and government action to limit emissions. More women than men support government action to prepare for the effects of global warming, and 97 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 35) support government laws or tax incentives to reduce power-plant emissions.

More agreement was found across political parties than might be expected. Democrats and independents (82 percent and 76 percent) are more likely than Republicans (59 percent) to believe the Earth’s temperature has been going up over the last century.

In addition, 91 percent of Democrats, 75 percent of independents and 59 percent of Republicans believe the federal government should limit greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. businesses, and they express similar views about whether the Arizona government should limit greenhouse gas emissions from state businesses.

For more information, go to environment.arizona.edu/climate-survey.



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