

The Dismissive

(7% of American Adults)

Beliefs & Issue Involvement

The Dismissive are distinguished by their certainty that global warming is not occurring. They have thought about the issue a good deal and consider themselves well-informed. They are quite certain that even if it is occurring, it is not caused by human activities. They believe scientists are in disagreement on the issue, and quite a few believe that there is a consensus among scientists that global warming is not occurring. They believe that no one is in danger of being harmed and anticipate that there will be no impacts on people or the environment.

Certainty

The Dismissive are the only segment in which a majority believe that global warming is not occurring: 71 percent say it is not happening and 34 percent of these are extremely sure; another 24 percent say they're very sure. By contrast, only 17 percent believe global warming is occurring, with only 1 percent extremely sure, and another 13 percent say they don't know. They are highly convinced of their beliefs: only 3 percent say that they could easily change their minds.

Involvement

A majority of the Dismissive say they have thought about global warming: 34 percent say they've thought about it "a lot," and another 28 percent say they've thought about it "some." Only 14 percent say they haven't thought about it at all. Global warming is not an important issue to them, however: 92 percent say it's "not too important" or "not at all important" personally. None are worried about it, and only 3 percent say that they have personally experienced global warming.

Perceived Knowledge & Beliefs

The vast majority of the Dismissive believe they are well informed on the causes, consequences, and ways to reduce global warming: 40 percent or more say they are "very well informed," and as many or more say they are "well informed" on the three topics (42 % to 48%). Their average assessment of their own knowledge is matched only by the Alarmed, and is significantly higher than any of the other four groups. When asked to assume that global warming is occurring, two-thirds say they believe it to be caused by natural changes in the environment; another 28 percent (not accepting the assumption) say it is caused by neither natural changes nor human activities because it isn't happening. Two-thirds believe scientists disagree a great deal about the issue (67%), while 22 percent believe that most scientists think global warming is not occurring. Only 8 percent say that most scientists think it is taking place.

Over half of the Dismissive believe that the Earth's climate is random and unpredictable (52%). Another 30 percent believe that the Earth's climate is stable, while 12 percent say that the climate has thresholds or tipping points, which, if crossed, can lead to dangerous effects. None believe that the Earth's climate system is fragile.

Risk Perceptions

The Dismissive do not perceive global warming as a threat to themselves or to anyone else. Ninety-nine percent say it will never hurt people in the United States, and 97 percent say it will never hurt other people around the world.

Eighty-six percent say that no one is being injured, made ill, or dying today because of global warming and 81 percent say no one will be hurt 50 years from now either. The remainder say they don't know. Ninety percent or more say global warming will harm them, other people, and future generations "not at all" (90% to 97%). They perceive the greatest risk to people in developing countries, and to plant and animal species, although the proportions are still very small: 3 percent say people in developing nations will be harmed "a moderate amount," and another 3 percent say they will be harmed "only a little." Plants and animals will be harmed "only a little," according to 10%; another 1 percent say they will be harmed "a moderate amount."

The vast majority of the Dismissive (77% to 85%) believe that global warming will have no impact on the frequency or severity of hurricanes, heat waves, floods, droughts, forest fires, famines, disease epidemics, poverty, or refugees. Very large majorities also believe that global warming will not cause expanding deserts, the abandonment of coastal cities due to sea level rise, or melting ice caps and glaciers.

Outcomes Expected from National Action to Reduce Global Warming

Two-thirds of the Dismissive expect only negative outcomes if the nation takes action to reduce global warming (65%); another 17 percent foresee neither negative nor positive outcomes; 11 percent perceive both; and 7 percent expect only positive outcomes.

More than half the Dismissive are concerned that action to reduce global warming will lead to more government regulation (70%), rising energy prices (59%), interference with the free market (56%), and lost jobs and harm to the economy (53%). Forty-two percent also believe action will harm poor people and undermine American sovereignty (40%). The Dismissive averaged 3.2 concerns about action, compared to the population average of 1.2. Their top concern, selected by 48 percent, is that action to reduce warming will lead to more government regulation.

Conversely, the Dismissive anticipate very few positive outcomes: only 12 percent believe that action to reduce warming will help to reduce our reliance on foreign oil.

Beliefs about Potential Outcomes and the Effectiveness of Actions

Over half of the Dismissive do not believe humans can reduce global warming, even if it is happening (54%). The rest say that global warming isn't happening (45%). Nearly all the Dismissive (98%) say that their energy-saving actions do not reduce global warming at all, although 17 percent believe that if most people in the developed nations engaged in these same actions, it would reduce global warming "a little" (14%) or "some" (3%). Over half agree with the assertion that the actions of a single individual won't make any difference in global warming (57%).

They are almost evenly split on the importance of new technologies: 48 percent agree that technology can solve global warming, without individuals changing their behavior, and 52 percent disagree.

Policy and National Response Preferences

The Dismissive say global warming should be a low priority for the government and that government, corporations and citizens should not be taking action to reduce it. They strongly favor increased drilling for oil and the building of nuclear power plants, while opposing most policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Issue Priorities for the President and Congress

The Dismissive rated global warming last among 11 national issues for the President and Congress; none said it should be a very high or high priority, and only 19 percent said it should be a medium priority. The vast majority (89%) said it should be a low priority. Like the Doubtful, few of the Dismissive believed any environmental issue merits high priority: A third believed water pollution should be a very high (12%) or high (22%) priority, and 29 percent believed toxic waste should be a priority. All other environmental issues were rated as high priorities by less than 20 percent of this segment.

Support for a National Response

Over a third of the Dismissive say that the U.S. should not reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (36%). Another third say the U.S. should reduce its emissions, regardless of what other countries do – perhaps a reflection of the belief that U.S. action should not depend on the actions of other nations. Two-thirds say that the United States should make no effort to reduce global warming (68%), while a quarter say the U.S. should make only a small effort (26%).

The Dismissive hold very strong opinions on climate and energy policies. They support expansion of offshore drilling (96%; 84% strongly support) and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (89%; 77% strongly support); and two-thirds support building more nuclear power plants (88%; 66% strongly support). Very large majorities oppose increasing gasoline taxes by 25 cents (90%; 77% strongly oppose); signing an international treaty to reduce carbon emissions (87%; 68% strongly oppose); creating a national carbon market (85%; 64% strongly oppose); establishing a special fund to make buildings more energy efficient (85%; 61% strongly oppose); or providing government subsidies to make home energy-efficiency improvements (74%; 54% strongly oppose).

Almost three-quarters oppose regulating CO₂ as a pollutant (73%; 44% strongly oppose); and close to two-thirds oppose requiring utilities to generate 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources (62%; 44% strongly oppose). They are more supportive, however, of requiring automakers to increase fuel efficiency, with 45 percent supporting it and 55 percent opposing this policy. Finally, the two policies a majority support are funding research into renewable energy sources (supported by 72%), and providing tax rebates for people who buy efficient vehicles or solar panels (supported by 58%).

Expectations of Elected Officials, Corporations, and Citizens

Themselves

More than half of the Dismissive say that corporations, citizens, and all levels of government should be doing less to address global warming. None believe that government should be doing more.

Personal Actions and Intentions

The Dismissive have not engaged in any political activities aimed at reducing global warming, and they report low rates of consumer activism. They are, however, more socially active in discussing global warming and giving advice on the topic than most other groups. They have made many energy efficiency improvements to their homes, with the exception of installing compact fluorescent lights, and they are likely to conserve energy at home as well. Few, however, conserve energy in their transportation choices.

Political Activism

None of the Dismissive have ever contacted government officials to urge them to take action on global warming; none have attended community meetings or rallies on the issue; and none have volunteered with or donated money to organizations working to reduce warming. None of them intend to engage in these activities more frequently in the future. They say they don't take these three actions because they do not believe in global warming (roughly 75%), do not think it's important to act in these ways (29 to 38%), do not see themselves as activists (7 to 20%); or that it wouldn't make any difference if they did (8 to 13%).

Consumer Activism

Very few of the Dismissive have made purchase decisions based on the climate policies of companies: 9 percent have rewarded companies taking steps to reduce global warming by buying their products up to several times, while 3 percent have punished companies that oppose steps to reduce warming by not buying their products one or more times. These rates are unlikely to grow, as only 1 percent say they intend to engage in consumer activism more frequently in the coming year.

Energy Efficiency Improvements

The Dismissive have made many energy efficiency improvements to their homes, the single exception being the installation of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Three-quarters have caulked and weather-stripped their homes (75%); close to two-thirds have insulated their attics (65%) and installed an efficient water heater (62%). Half or more have purchased an efficient air conditioner (54%) or furnace (50%). They are the segment most likely to own a vehicle that averages 30 miles per gallon or more (28% vs. 21% nationally). Their adoption of CFLs, however, is the lowest of the segments (33% vs. 46% nationally), and over 50 percent say they will not be making this improvement in the coming year: 39 percent say they don't intend to, while 14 percent say they would like to but probably won't.

Like the other groups, the Dismissive cite cost and not needing new units as significant barriers to making efficiency improvements. They are also more likely than other segments to say that insulating, caulking, and weather-stripping take too much effort and they are too busy to do these things. Almost half say they don't like CFLs (47%) and 27

percent say they are too expensive.

Energy Conservation

The Dismissive report slightly less than average rates of performing home energy conservation actions. Although a majority say they turn off unneeded lights all the time (57%), this is lower than the national average (63%). In line with national averages, a third (34%) indicate they raise their thermostats in summer or limit their use of air conditioning, while 35 percent say they lower their thermostats in winter all the time. The primary barrier to both actions is a preference for a more an audience segmentation analysis 71 comfortable temperature in the house, although a higher-than-average proportion also say that someone else in the house would object to lowering the temperature in winter (16% vs. 9% nationally).

Like the Doubtful, the Dismissive report below average rates of conserving energy in their transportation choices: only 3 percent always walk or bike instead of driving, and 2 percent always use public transportation or car pools. They cite a number of barriers to biking and walking more often: 58 percent say the distances they travel are too far; 28 percent say the weather makes it too uncomfortable; 22 percent say it would take too much time; and 19 percent say they don't because they drive a fuel-efficient vehicle. The barriers most likely to prevent them from using public transportation and car pools are not having the option (43%); lack of availability (39%); inconvenience (32%); feeling it's unnecessary because they drive a fuel-efficient vehicle (23%); and preferring to commute alone (20%).

For the Dismissive, saving money and energy are the primary reasons for conserving energy, both at home and on the road. None cite reducing global warming as a motivation. Biking and walking are valued for their health benefits by a higher than average proportion (88%).

Interpersonal Communication and Social Influence

While the Dismissive are less likely to discuss global warming than the Alarmed or Concerned, they are more likely to do so than the other three segments. Most of their friends share their views on the subject, and although three-quarters say they don't like to talk about the subject, they are more likely than average to give information to others (rather than receive information); to have people come to them for advice; and to believe that others consider them a good source of advice on the issue.

Demographics, Social Characteristics, and Values

The Dismissive are mostly conservative Republicans and typically male. They are politically active and hold traditional religious beliefs. They strongly endorse individualistic values, opposing any form of government intervention, and are very unlikely to be environmentalists.

Demographics

Almost two-thirds of the Dismissive are men (63%), the largest gender split among the six segments. Their ages closely mirror national averages. The Dismissive tend to be well-educated – 35 percent have a college degree, and another 33 percent have some

college – and they tend to have higher incomes – 52 percent earn over \$60K annually, compared to 40 percent nationally. They are predominantly non-Hispanic Whites (87%), are married (67%) and living in homes they own (or are buying) (85%).

Civic Engagement

The Dismissive have the highest proportion of registered voters of the six segments: 95 percent are registered, compared to 85 percent overall. Their levels of civic engagement almost match the Alarmed: 1.3 types of activity (from a list of 11), compared to 0.8 nationally, and 1.4 by the Alarmed. The types of action they are most likely to have taken are: contacting a politician (31%), attending public meetings on town or school affairs (19%); attending political rallies, speeches, or protests (16%); serving on a committee of a local organization (15%); writing a letter to the editor, or calling in on a radio or TV show (15%); and serving as an officer of a local club or organization (12%).

Political Affiliation and Ideology

Almost two-thirds of the Dismissive are Republicans (64%); 19 percent are Independents; and only 3 percent are Democrats. Three-quarters are conservatives, and 20 percent are moderates.

Values and General Attitudes

The Dismissive hold the strongest individualistic values of the six groups: 88 percent believe that people should be allowed to make as much money as they can, even if it means some makes millions while others live in poverty. They strongly oppose government intervention: 87 percent say that government regulation of business usually does more harm than good; 86 percent believe government interferes too much in people's lives and that government tries to do too many things for too many people; and 85 percent feel that we'd be better off if government spent less time trying to "fix everyone's problems."

Conversely, the Dismissive strongly disagree with egalitarian values: they don't believe wealth should be divided more equally, that government should meet everyone's basic needs, or that discrimination against minorities is a serious problem. Seventy percent oppose government programs to get rid of poverty.

In areas where religion and science conflict, the Dismissive hold traditional religious beliefs more strongly than any other segment: Less than a quarter (23%) believe in human evolution, compared to 47 percent nationally. Almost two-thirds believe the world was created in six days (62%), compared to 54 percent nationally. Regarding the overall value of science, however, 81 percent disagree with the statement, "Overall, modern science does more harm than good."

The Dismissive are unlikely to express materialistic values, with larger than average proportions disagreeing that people can be judged by the things they own or that it's important to have a well-furnished home. They are also unlikely to follow fashion trends or to prefer socially accepted brands.

Environmental Beliefs and Concern

As might be expected, few of the Dismissive express high environmental concern. Two-thirds say they do not consider themselves environmentalists (66%), compared to 43 percent nationally. Ninety percent believe that economic growth is more important than protecting the environment, even if it causes environmental problems. Their concern about the impacts of global warming on other species, on humans, and on themselves ranks near the bottom of the scales: On 7-point scales where 7 indicates “extremely concerned” and 1 indicates “not at all concerned,” the Dismissive average from 1.5 to 1.7. This places them far below national averages on these 12 questions, which range from 4.0 to 5.0.

Religious Affiliation and Participation

The Dismissive report by far the highest rate of religious attendance: over half attend services weekly or more often. Over half describe themselves as “born again” or Evangelical (55%). They are most likely to be Protestant (26%) or Baptist (26%), and are less likely than the overall population to be Catholic (10% vs. 22% nationally).

Media Use and Information Seeking

The Dismissive have a specialized media diet, with higher than average preference for sources that reflect their political point of view. While they are large consumers of political news, they do not trust most sources of information on global warming, including the mainstream news media, and they are more likely than average to turn to conservative news commentators and the Internet.

Information Seeking and Attention

The Dismissive feel the least need for more information on global warming of any of the segments: Almost three-quarters say they “do not need any more information” (73%), and another 14 percent say they only “need a little more information.” Over half say they pay no attention to information on global warming (59%), and another quarter say they pay “a little” attention (26%). Less than 10 percent have looked for information on global warming in the past month (9%), compared to 38 percent nationally. They are also unlikely to seek information on conserving energy and do not pay much attention to the information they encounter.

Trust in Information Sources

The Dismissive strongly distrust most sources of information on global warming. Their most trusted sources of information are their family and friends (67% – 14% strongly trusted). Another 14 percent, however, strongly distrust their own family and friends as sources of information. Their second most trusted source – scientists (52%) – is strongly trusted by a mere 8%, while twice as many (16%) say they strongly distrust them. Finally, the Dismissive distrust Al Gore (96% – 89% strongly distrust); Barack Obama (97% – 84% strongly distrust); the mainstream news media (97% – 84% strongly distrust); environmental groups (96% – 84% strongly distrust); and corporations (87% – 52% strongly distrust).

Media Exposure

The Dismissive are the most frequent readers of online newspapers (4.5 days per week), but the least frequent readers of printed newspapers (3.1 days). They are also the most

frequent radio listeners (12.2 hours per week) and Internet users (10.8 hours a week). They watch significantly less television than most Americans, however, averaging 19.0 hours per week, compared to 26.0 hours nationally.

Media Attention

The Dismissive rely on the Internet and television equally as their primary source of news (37% for each), and another 21 percent rely on radio. While the majority say they prefer unbiased news (59%) to news with a political slant, far more of the Dismissive say they favor news that reflects their political point of view (41%) than average (25% nationally). They also report the highest preference for reading or hearing the news, as opposed to seeing pictures and video showing what happened: 59 percent prefer reading or hearing the news, as opposed to 47 percent nationally.

The Dismissive pay higher than average attention to political news. Forty percent say they follow national politics "very closely," compared to only 21 percent nationally. They also follow state and local politics, world affairs, and business and financial issues more closely than average.

They also rely on a highly specialized media diet that deviates from population averages on almost every program and genre measured: They are less likely than average to watch national nightly news on (or use the websites of) CBS, ABC, or NBC, or to watch or listen to CNN, local TV news, NPR, daytime talk shows, soap operas, prime-time dramas, sitcoms, or any content with a perceived liberal bias (Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Keith Olbermann, or MSNBC). Conversely, they are much more likely than average to watch Fox News, Hannity & Colmes, or Bill O'Reilly, and to listen to Rush Limbaugh.