

Despite polarized opinions, Democrats and Republicans perform same amount of 'green' actions

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Political party affiliation has little bearing on the number of “green” actions people take, a new study by Porter Novelli and George Mason University shows. According to the survey of more than 11,000 American adults and nearly 1,000 of their children, Democrats and Republicans differ only slightly when it comes to taking actions to protect the environment, despite great differences in their perceptions of danger related to global warming.

While Democrats were almost twice as likely as Republicans to believe that global warming is a serious problem and a threat to all life on the planet, on average they perform only about 15 percent more “green” actions than Republicans. For example, 65 percent of those surveyed who always vote Republican and 71 percent of those who always vote Democrat said they are actively reducing energy use in their homes.

Regardless of political persuasion, people who believed that climate change is a danger, and who believed that we can combat it, were engaging in more activities to protect the environment. According to the survey, adults who held these beliefs strongly engaged in 60 percent more environmental actions than adults who did not.

"These data tell us that in some important ways, climate change is not the partisan issue we see every day in the media," says Ed Maibach, director of the Center of Excellence in Climate Change Communication

Research at George Mason University and a member of the team that conducted the survey. “People across the political spectrum who see the serious risks and feel they can do something to stop climate change are more likely to be taking action today.”

While more than half of the adults surveyed agreed that “global warming is a very serious problem,” the survey showed surprising numbers of people who were undecided. One quarter to one third of adults were essentially undecided as to the dangers posed by global warming and our ability to combat it.

“We need to do a better job of giving these people useful information about global warming,” says Maibach.

Young People and Global Warming Concerns

In addition, young people’s beliefs about global warming tend to be similar to their parents’ beliefs, especially in families where the child reported having a close relationship with his or her parents. When children and their parents agreed that global warming poses a great danger and shared a strong sense of our ability to combat it, the family engaged in more environmental activities, as compared to families where parents and children disagreed.

The surveys – conducted as part of Porter Novelli’s ConsumerStyles and YouthStyles surveys -- were fielded in late spring and summer of 2007. Porter Novelli's Styles surveys are developed to provide a deeper level of insight into what motivates consumers to act, often digging below the surface to understand how attitudes, beliefs and social influences affect behaviors.

Source: George Mason University

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