

Women more likely than men to accept global warming

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Women tend to believe the scientific consensus on global warming more than men, according to a study by a Michigan State University researcher.

The findings, published in the September issue of the journal *Population and Environment*, challenge common perceptions that men are more scientifically literate, said [sociologist](#) Aaron M. McCright.

"Men still claim they have a better understanding of global warming than women, even though women's beliefs align much more closely with the scientific consensus," said McCright, an associate professor with appointments in MSU's Department of Sociology, Lyman Briggs College and [Environmental Science](#) and Policy Program.

The study is one of the first to focus in-depth on how the genders think about climate change. The findings also reinforce past research that suggests women lack confidence in their science comprehension.

"Here is yet another study finding that women underestimate their [scientific knowledge](#) - a troubling pattern that inhibits many young women from pursuing scientific careers," McCright said.

Understanding how the genders think about the environment is important on several fronts, said McCright, who calls climate change "the most expansive [environmental problem](#) facing humanity."

"Does this mean women are more likely to buy energy-efficient appliances and hybrid vehicles than men?" he said. "Do they vote for different political candidates? Do they talk to their children differently about global warming?"

McCright analyzed eight years of data from Gallup's annual environment poll that asked fairly basic questions about climate change knowledge and concern. He said the gender divide on concern about climate change was not explained by the roles that men and women perform such as whether they were homemakers, parents or employed full time.

Instead, he said the gender divide likely is explained by "gender socialization." According to this theory, boys in the United States learn that [masculinity](#) emphasizes detachment, control and mastery. A feminine identity, on the other hand, stresses attachment, empathy and care - traits that may make it easier to feel concern about the potential dire consequences of [global warming](#), McCright said.

"[Women](#) and men think about climate change differently," he said. "And when scientists or policymakers are communicating about climate change with the general public, they should consider this rather than treating the public as one big monolithic audience."

Provided by Michigan State University

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