

# Study finds local temperature influences belief in global warming

May 27 2011

---

A study by Columbia Business School Professor Eric Johnson, co-director of the Center for Decision Sciences at Columbia Business School, Ye Li, a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Decision Sciences, and Lisa Zaval, a Columbia graduate student in psychology, found that those who thought the current day was warmer than usual were more likely to believe in and feel concern about global warming than those who thought the day was unusually cold. The study, recently featured in *Psychological Science*, explains why public belief in global warming can fluctuate, since people can base their thinking off of the day's temperature. The researchers behind this study are also affiliated with Columbia University's Center for Research on Environmental Decisions, CRED.

The team surveyed about 1,200 people in the United States and Australia in three different studies in order to determine their opinions about [global warming](#) and whether the temperature on the day of the study was warmer or cooler than usual. Respondents who thought that day was warmer than usual were more concerned about global warming than respondents who thought that day was colder than usual.

"Global warming is so complex, it appears some people are ready to be persuaded by whether their own day is warmer or cooler than usual, rather than think about whether the entire world is becoming warmer or cooler," said lead author Ye Li. "It is striking that society has spent so much money, time and effort educating people about this issue, yet people are still so easily influenced."

The study also revealed that respondents were fairly good at knowing if it was unusually hot or cold--perceptions correlated with reality three quarters of the time. While politics, gender and age all had the predicted influences – for instance, on the researchers' 1-to-4 scale of belief in global warming, Democrats were 1.5 points higher than Republicans – after controlling for the other factors, the researchers found that perceived temperatures still had nearly two-thirds the power as political belief, and six times the power as gender.

These results join a growing body of work that shows how irrelevant environmental information, such as the current weather, can affect judgments and opinions on climate change.

Provided by Columbia Business School

Citation: Study finds local temperature influences belief in global warming (2011, May 27)  
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2011-05-local-temperature-belief-global.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.