

Public misperception about scientific agreement on global warming undermines climate policy support

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People who believe there is a lot of disagreement among scientists about global warming tend to be less certain that global warming is happening and less supportive of climate policy, researchers at George Mason, San Diego State, and Yale Universities report in a new study published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

A recent survey of [climate scientists](#) conducted by researchers at the University of Illinois found near unanimous agreement among climate scientists that human-caused [global warming](#) is happening.

This new George Mason University study, however, using results from a [national survey](#) of the American public, finds that many Americans believe that most climate scientists actually disagree about the subject.

In the national survey conducted in June 2010, two-thirds of respondents said they either believed there is a lot of disagreement among scientists about whether or not global warming is happening (45 percent), that most scientists think it is not happening (5 percent), or that they did not know enough to say (16 percent.) These respondents were less likely to support [climate change policies](#) and to view climate change as a lower priority.

By contrast, survey respondents who correctly understood that there is widespread agreement about global warming among scientists were

themselves more certain that it is happening, and were more supportive of climate policies.

"Misunderstanding the extent of scientific agreement about climate change is important because it undermines people's certainty that climate change is happening, which in turn reduces their conviction that America should find ways to deal with the problem," says Edward Maibach, director of the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University.

Maibach argues that a campaign should be mounted to correct this [misperception](#). "It is no accident that so many Americans misunderstand the widespread scientific agreement about human-caused climate change. A well-financed disinformation campaign deliberately created a myth about there being lack of agreement. The climate science community should take all reasonable measures to put this myth to rest."

Provided by George Mason University

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