

Inaugural survey of American attitudes about the environment released

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The Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research today released the first set of findings from its inaugural environment poll. The poll surveys a nationally representative sample of American adults and provides a portrait of what the public thinks and feels about environmental issues, and what actions they are taking as consumers.

Findings from the first report indicate that most Americans say the United States ought to take a leadership role in combating global warming, and twice as many Americans think the country should participate in international treaty negotiations aimed at addressing its effects as oppose it. However, Americans tend to place a low priority on addressing global warming when compared with other environmental concerns. And few Americans believe that protecting the environment needs to come at a cost of lost economic growth.

"Public understanding of [environmental issues](#)—from global warming to water pollution to the loss of biodiversity—is more important than ever, as many Americans work to create a more sustainable future," said Anthony Leiserowitz, PhD, a research scientist and faculty member at The Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. "Policies are being considered at the national, state, and local levels, and Americans are increasingly adopting environmentally friendly lifestyles. This new poll will help inform these vital decisions."

Here are some of the key findings from the Yale - AP-NORC Center

poll:

- Fifty-six percent of Americans believe [global warming](#) is happening, and 20 percent believe it is not happening. Almost a quarter, 23 percent, are unsure.
- About twice as many Americans favor U.S. participation in international climate negotiations as oppose it.
- A majority of Americans say environmental protections will improve economic growth and provide new jobs in the long run.
- Americans are mixed on whether construction of the Keystone XL pipeline should proceed. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to support it. A quarter of Americans are confident it will be a safe way to transport heavy oil.

"We are delighted to work with our colleagues at Yale to explore Americans' opinions on the environment," said Trevor Thompson, NORC vice president and director of the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. "Public opinion about the environment is complex and often misunderstood. With this partnership, we hope to bring a scientifically rigorous approach to inform journalists, policymakers, and the public about what the American people really believe about environmental issues and how those beliefs translate into policy preferences and consumer choices."

The Yale - AP-NORC partnership was established in 2014 to conduct rigorous and innovative research on the American public's perspectives on enduring and current environmental issues. This survey is the most comprehensive and deepest examination of American beliefs, attitudes, policy preferences, and behavior around environmental issues. This issue brief is the first in a set of reports based on data from the 2014 poll. The partners intend to conduct an annual poll.

"We are excited to work with the AP-NORC Center, which combines

the resources of a great research institution and the tremendous reach of The Associated Press," said Geoff Feinberg, a research director at The Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. "Together we will employ best-practice research methods to provide the public and policymakers a comprehensive and objective picture of American environmental attitudes and behavior."

Provided by University of Chicago

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