

Politics, not severe weather, drive global-warming views

December 1 2014



A study led by Michigan State University sociologist Sandra Marquart-Pyatt suggests people's perceptions of global warming are influenced most by politics -- not by actual changes in climate. Credit: Michigan State University

Scientists have presented the most comprehensive evidence to date that climate extremes such as droughts and record temperatures are failing to change people's minds about global warming.

Instead, political orientation is the most influential factor in shaping perceptions about climate change, both in the short-term and long-term, said Sandra Marquart-Pyatt, a Michigan State University sociologist and lead investigator on the study.

"The idea that shifting [climate patterns](#) are influencing perceptions in the United States - we didn't find that," said Marquart-Pyatt, associate professor of sociology. "Our results show that politics has the most important effect on perceptions of climate change."

The researchers ran more than 100 computer models integrating just over a decade of Gallup survey responses on climate-change perceptions with 50 years of regional climate data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The 12-page study, which appears in the journal *Global Environmental Change*, includes a 42-page appendix of data from analyses producing about 800 parameters to support the findings.

Some previous studies suggested temperature patterns do, in fact, influence perceptions about [global warming](#), but none measured [climatic conditions](#) as comprehensively as the current investigation. Past research often considers a two-day window or a particular community and a single measure of temperature, not an expansive sweep of multiple climate measures as the authors of this study do.

The study analyzed climatic storm-severity measures used by NOAA - temperature, drought, precipitation and wind velocity - from all 50 states in combination with the 11 years of public opinion data. "This gives us the pulse of the nation," said Marquart-Pyatt.

While advocates of global warming reduction efforts hope that experience with a changing climate will eventually convince the public of the reality and seriousness of the problem, the current findings do not

bode well for that scenario.

Given this expansive treatment of the issue, there is "little grounds for optimism," the study says, "that public concern about [climate change](#) will be driven by future climatic conditions."

Provided by Michigan State University

Citation: Politics, not severe weather, drive global-warming views (2014, December 1) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-12-politics-severe-weather-global-warming-views.html>

<p>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.</p>
--