

# Data shows increasing political polarization on climate change

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A new article discusses increasing partisan polarization of American attitudes towards climate change. "The Political Divide on Climate Change: Partisan Polarization Widens in The U.S." by Riley E. Dunlap, Aaron M. McCright, and Jerrod H. Yarosh appeared in Volume 58, Issue 5 of Environment.

The article details the escalation of partisan polarization, particularly towards environmental protection and climate change, over the past few decades in America. After documenting the growing partisan gap in support for environmental legislation in the U.S. Congress, it presents data from The Gallup Organization that shows an increasing gap between self-identified Republicans' and Democrats' attitudes towards human-caused climate change. While Democrats have increasingly accepted the reality and seriousness of climate change over the past two decades, Republicans have become more skeptical.

Tim O'Riordan, Executive Editor of Environment, stressed the importance of this paper in the current political climate. "Environment Magazine is pleased to publish an updated and detailed paper, led by the distinguished sociologist Riley Dunlap, on the increasing partisan polarization of American attitudes to climate change, its causes, and consequences. As the Obama Presidency comes to an end, with a departing President finally placing great emphasis on US leadership over addressing climate change, the current Presidential campaign takes on considerable significance as to the views and lobby backing of the two contending party nominees. Dunlap's piece therefore carries added

importance for the world as a whole. A Clinton led Administration has vowed to continue the Obama stance, whilst a Trump led Administration claims to disentangle all of the Obama commitments. In the wake of the promising global accord signed in Paris last December, the Dunlap analysis reveals the deep and persistent party schisms over interpreting and coping with climate change. The authors show that this is a reflection of fundamental divisions in contemporary American society. Addressing climate change, also found in many other countries, reflects fundamental social and political beliefs that lie well beyond the scientific evidence. This article is a must read."

Riley E. Dunlap, lead author of the article, emphasized the implications of partisan polarization regarding climate change. "The difference between the two major parties on climate change is now so extreme, that voting for the right candidate in November is the single most important action most people will take on [climate change](#) this year."

**More information:** Riley E. Dunlap et al. The Political Divide on Climate Change: Partisan Polarization Widens in the U.S., *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/00139157.2016.1208995](#)

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