

New survey on Americans' views on papal encyclical on climate change

26 August 2015

A new national survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and researchers at Yale University found that fewer than 1 in 3 Americans, and 40 percent of Catholics, are aware of Pope Francis's efforts to publicize global warming as a priority issue for the Catholic Church. While there is relatively low awareness of the papal encyclical, a majority of Americans say it is appropriate for the pope to take a public position on the issue of global warming. This is true even though very few Americans consider global warming as an issue of religion, social justice, or poverty. The nationwide poll was collected July 17 to 19, 2015, using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,030 adults.

"This survey indicates that the Pope's message on [global warming](#) has not broken through to a majority of Catholics or Americans," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "The survey found that few people consider the issue a religious or social justice one."

Some of the poll's key findings include:

- Few Americans, just 31 percent, have heard about Pope Francis's encyclical on global warming.
- Most Americans say they think it's appropriate for the pope to take a public stand on global warming despite few viewing it as a religious issue.
- Catholics mirror non-Catholic Americans in their attitudes about whether global warming is happening and their views about the appropriateness of the pope's recent encyclical.
- Over three-quarters of Americans say climate change is an environmental and scientific issue. Few consider it to be an issue relating to [social justice](#), poverty, or

religion.

"Even though the Pope's Encyclical is a major theological statement, fewer than 2 in 5 churchgoing Catholics heard about it from their priest in the month after it was released," said Anthony Leiserowitz, a faculty member of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. "But this may change when Pope Francis visits the United States in September to bring his message personally."

Provided by University of Chicago

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