Climate Change: Identifying Publics to Enhance Understanding and Engagement

ICA-RUS International Workshop Tokyo

December 5th, 2013

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George Mason University
Center for Climate Change Communication

My main points:

- In any nation, there are likely multiple climate change publics (or audiences); identifying those publics is the first step in planning effective public engagement methods.

- Audience segmentation data can help focus your public education and engagement efforts in three ways:

    1. Identifying the best audience(s) for a strategy you wish to implement

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    1. Identifying messages/experiences that will have value across many (or all) audiences.

Climate Change in the American Mind:

- Nationally representative surveys of adults

- Conducted twice annually

- Started in 2008

- N = 1,000 per survey

- Used to track key indicators of public opinion
  - beliefs
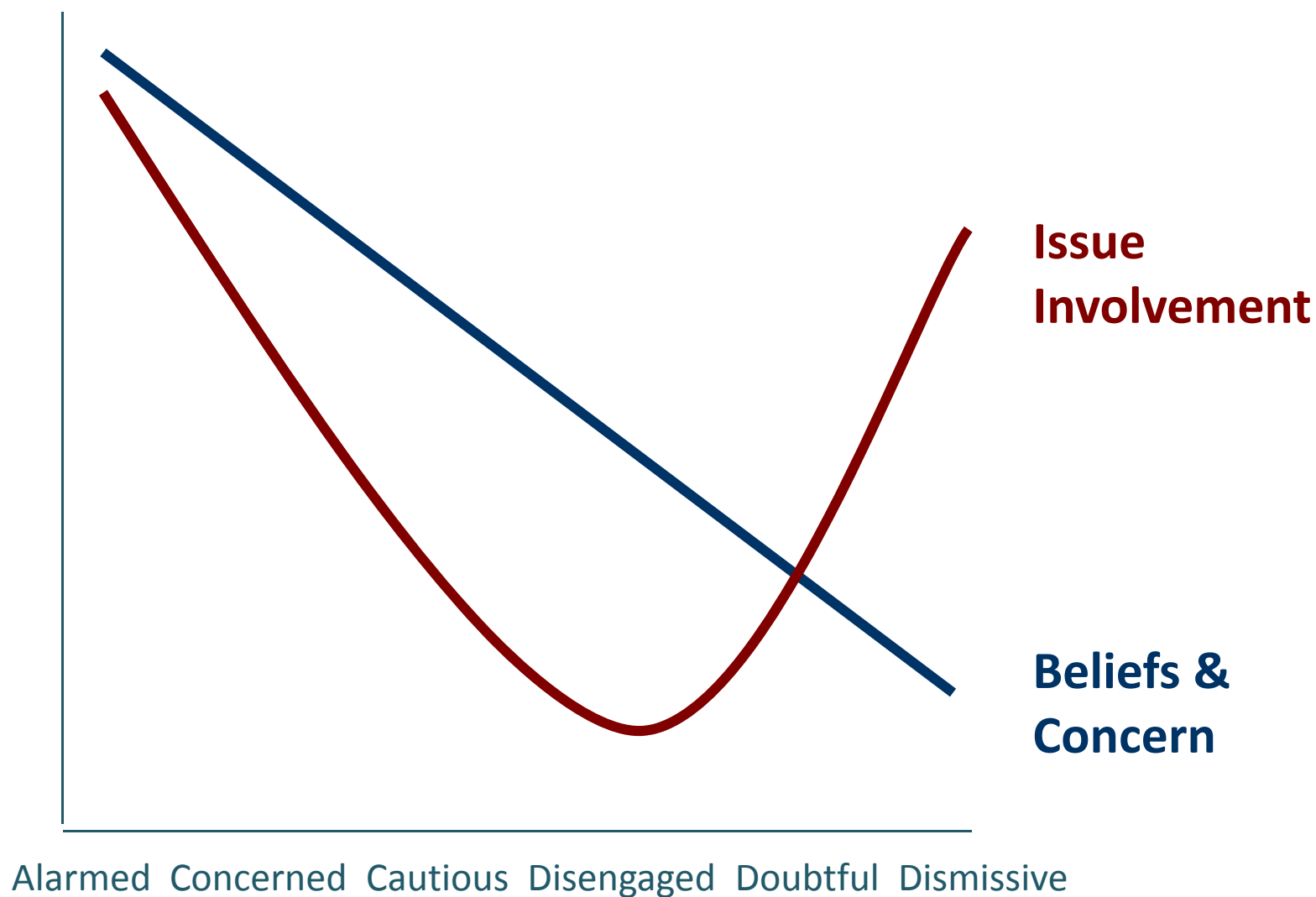 - behaviors
  - policy support
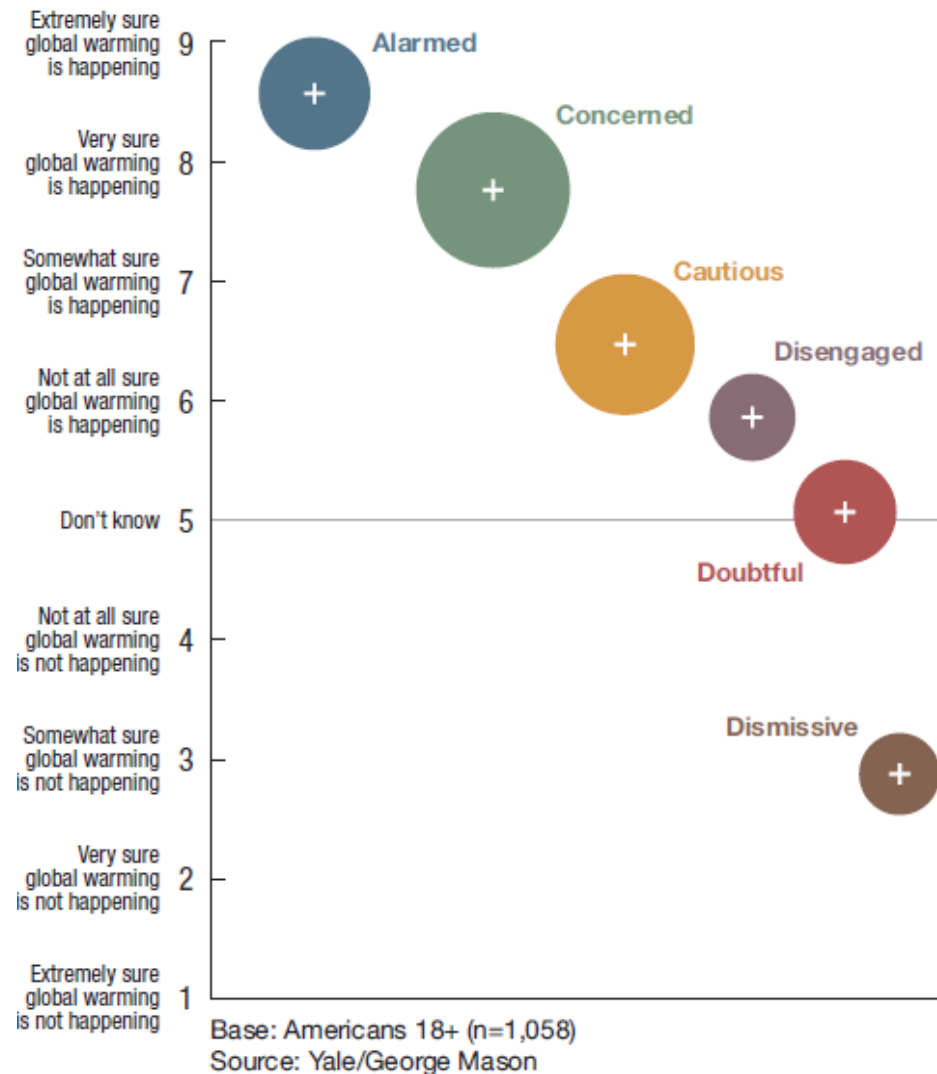
Global Warming's "Six Americas"

| Alarmed | Concerned | Cautious | Disengaged | Doubtful | Dismissive |

April 2013 n=1,045

16%   26%   25%   5%   15%   13%

Highest Belief in Global Warming
Most Concerned
Most Motivated

Lowest Belief in Global Warming
Least Concerned
Least Motivated

Proportion represented by area
Source: Yale / George Mason University
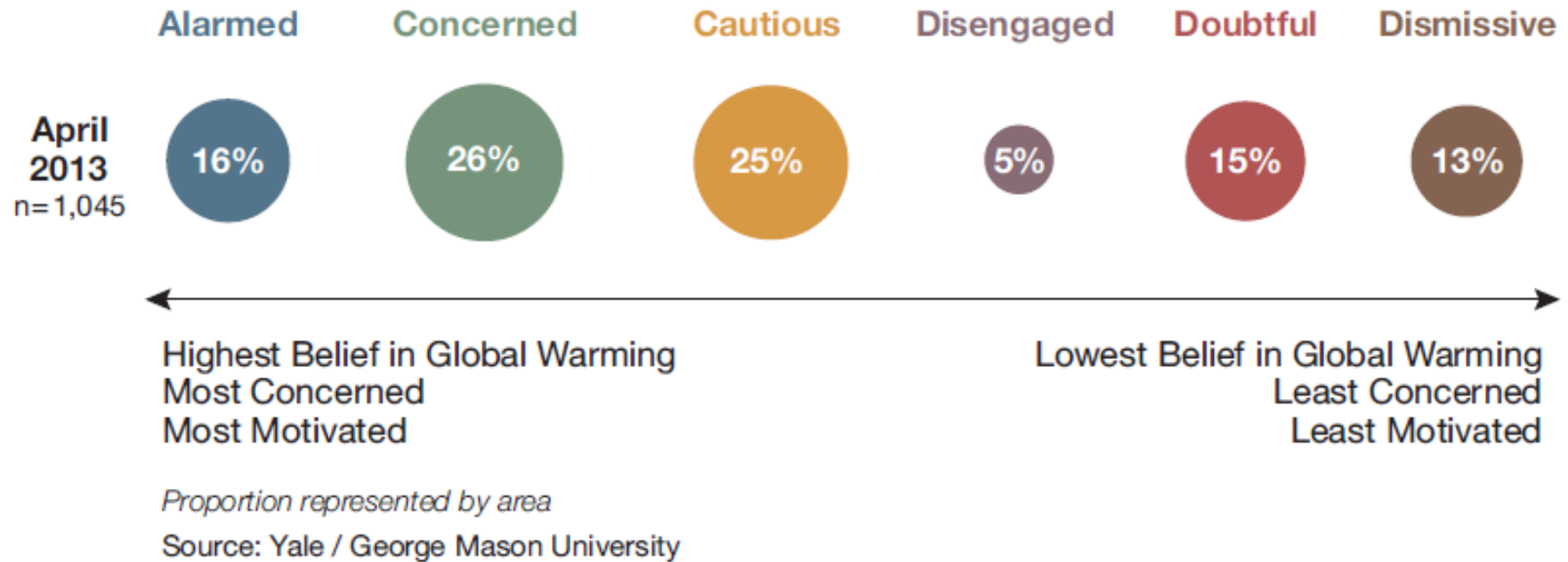
The size of the bubbles shows the proportion of Americans that belonged to each group in Apr. 2013

Primary Differences between the Six Groups

Issue Involvement

Beliefs & Concern

Alarmed Concerned Cautious Disengaged Doubtful Dismissive

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Do you think that global warming is happening? How sure are you?

Extremely sure global warming is happening — 9

Very sure global warming is happening — 8

Somewhat sure global warming is happening — 7

Not at all sure global warming is happening — 6

Don't know — 5

Not at all sure global warming is not happening — 4

Somewhat sure global warming is not happening — 3

Very sure global warming is not happening — 2

Extremely sure global warming is not happening — 1

Alarmed

Concerned

Cautious

Disengaged

Doubtful

Dismissive

Base: Americans 18+ (n=1,058)
Source: Yale/George Mason

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Yale/George Mason, Sept. 2012; N=1,058

How much had you thought about global warming before today?
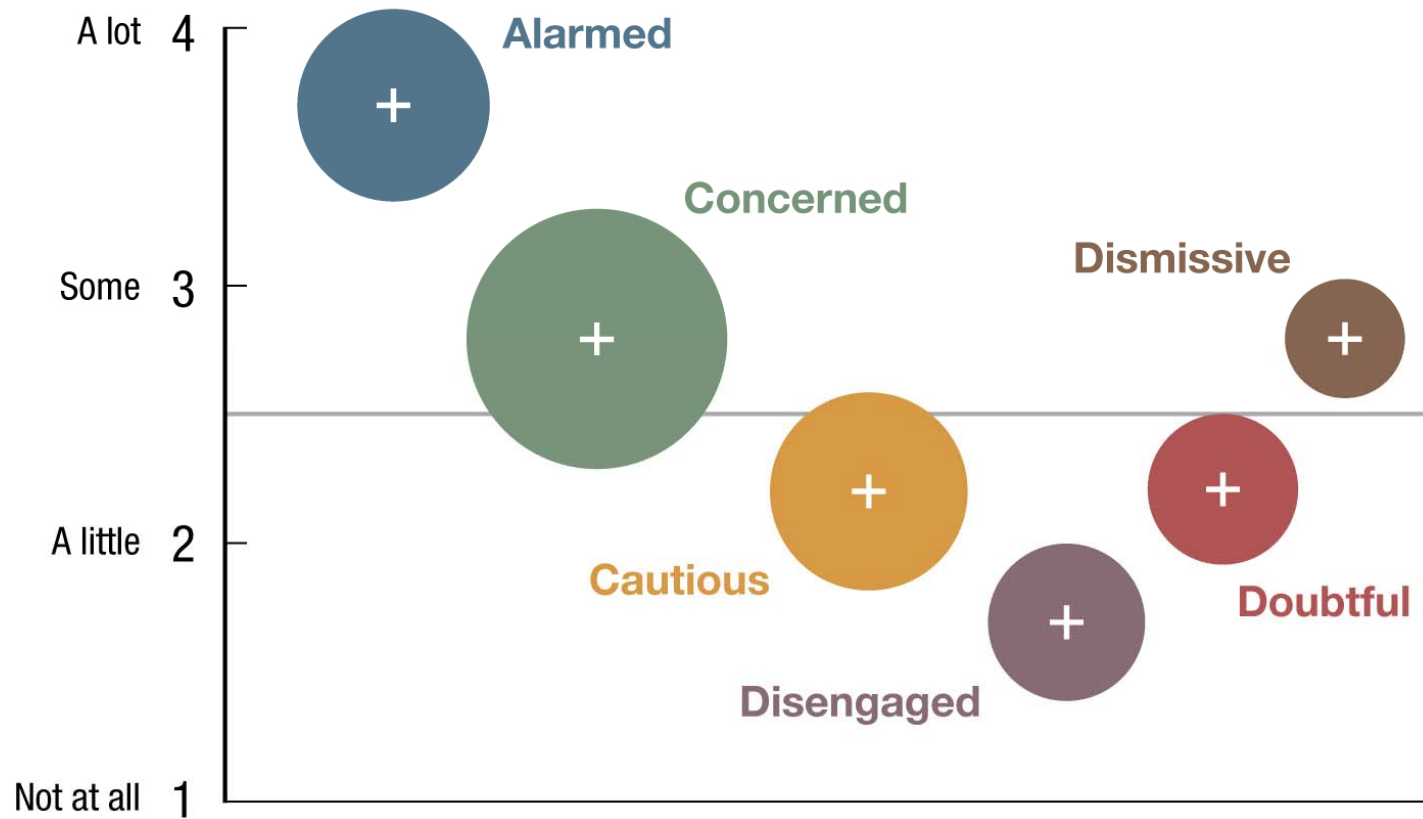
n=2,129

Source: Leiserowitz, Maibach & Roser-Renouf (Yale, 2009)

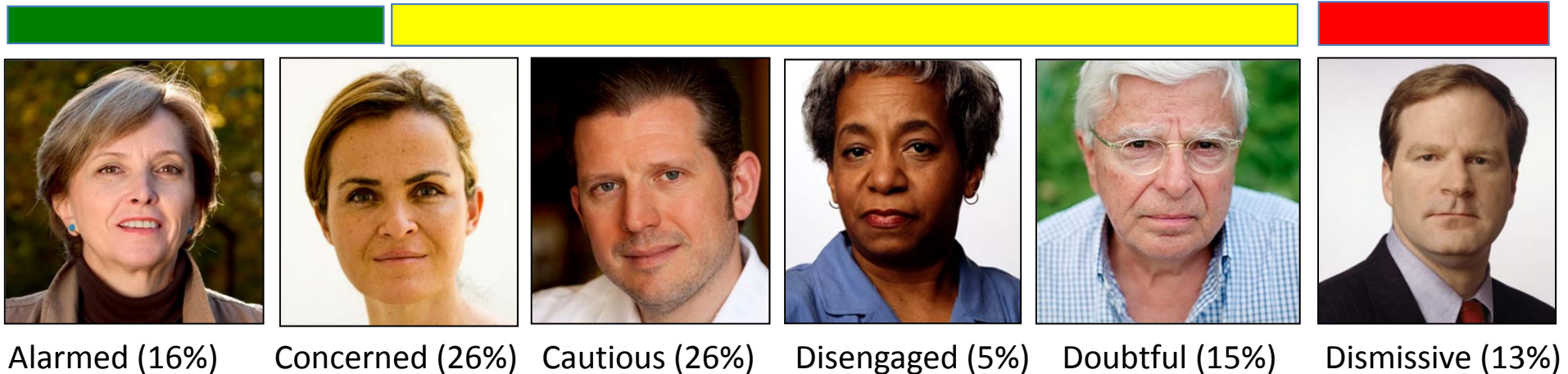Yale/George Mason
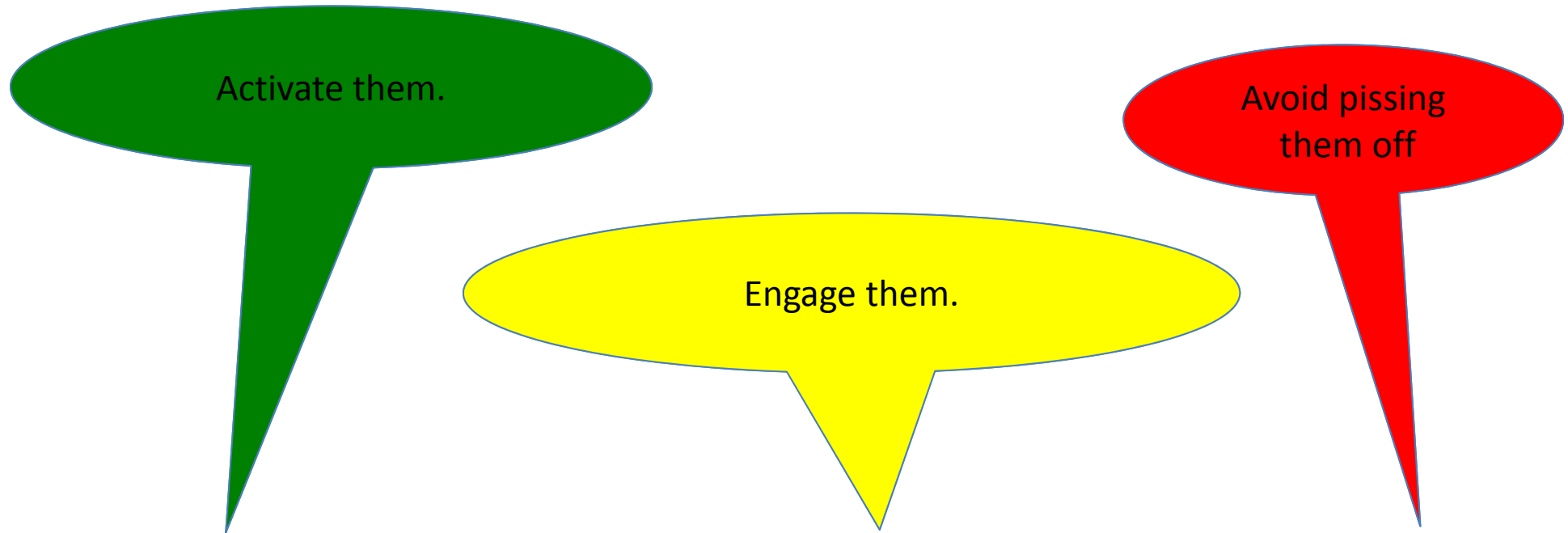
Primary Differences among the Six Groups

- *Less willing to process information*
- *Weak belief that GW is occurring*

- *Likely to engage in counter-arguing*

Issue Involvement

- *Willing to process information*
- *Predisposed to accept information*

Beliefs & Concern

42%   **30%**   **28%**

Alarmed   Concerned   Cautious   Disengaged   Doubtful   Dismissive

Yale/George Mason

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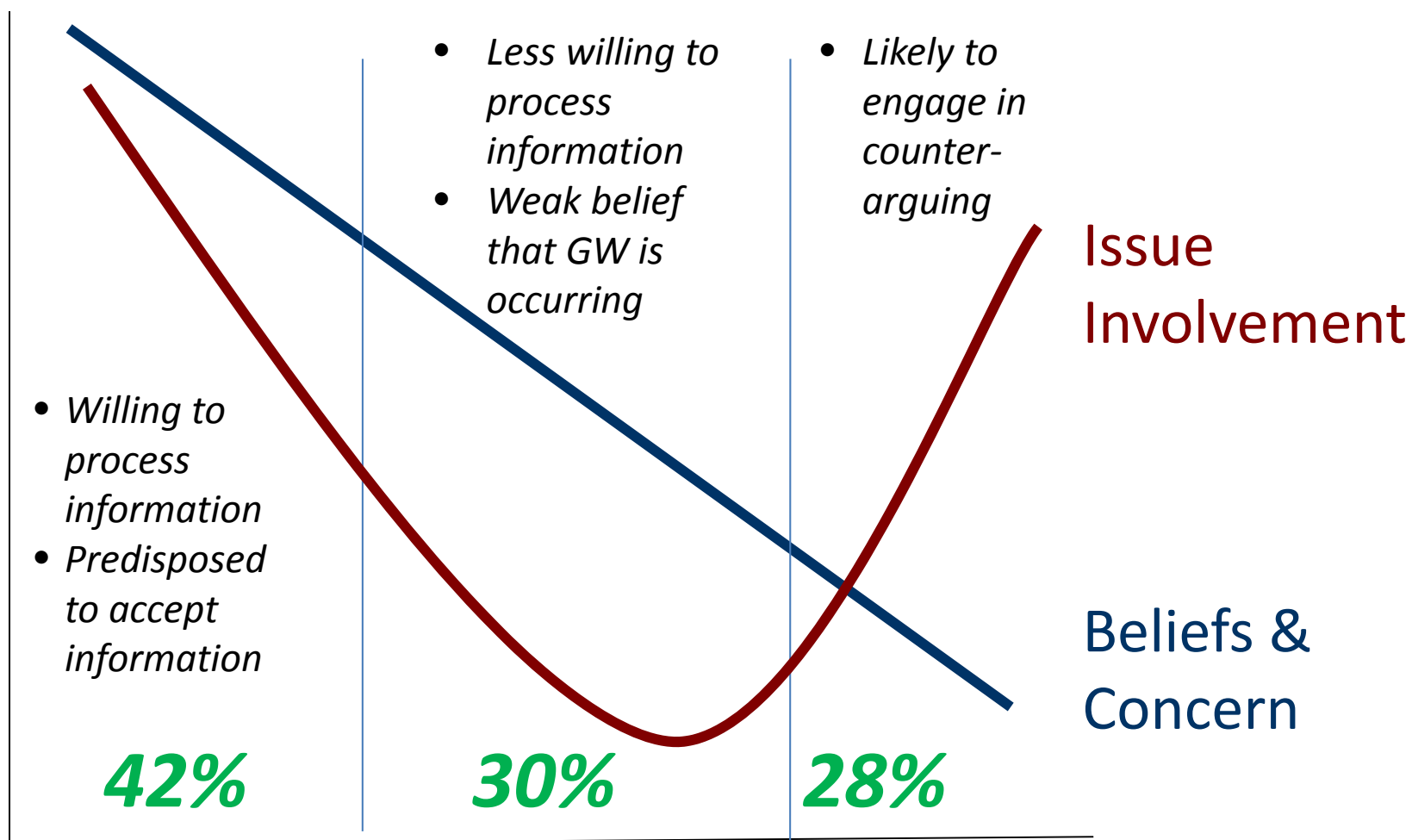
Potential objectives for each audience

Activate them.

Engage them.

Avoid pissing them off
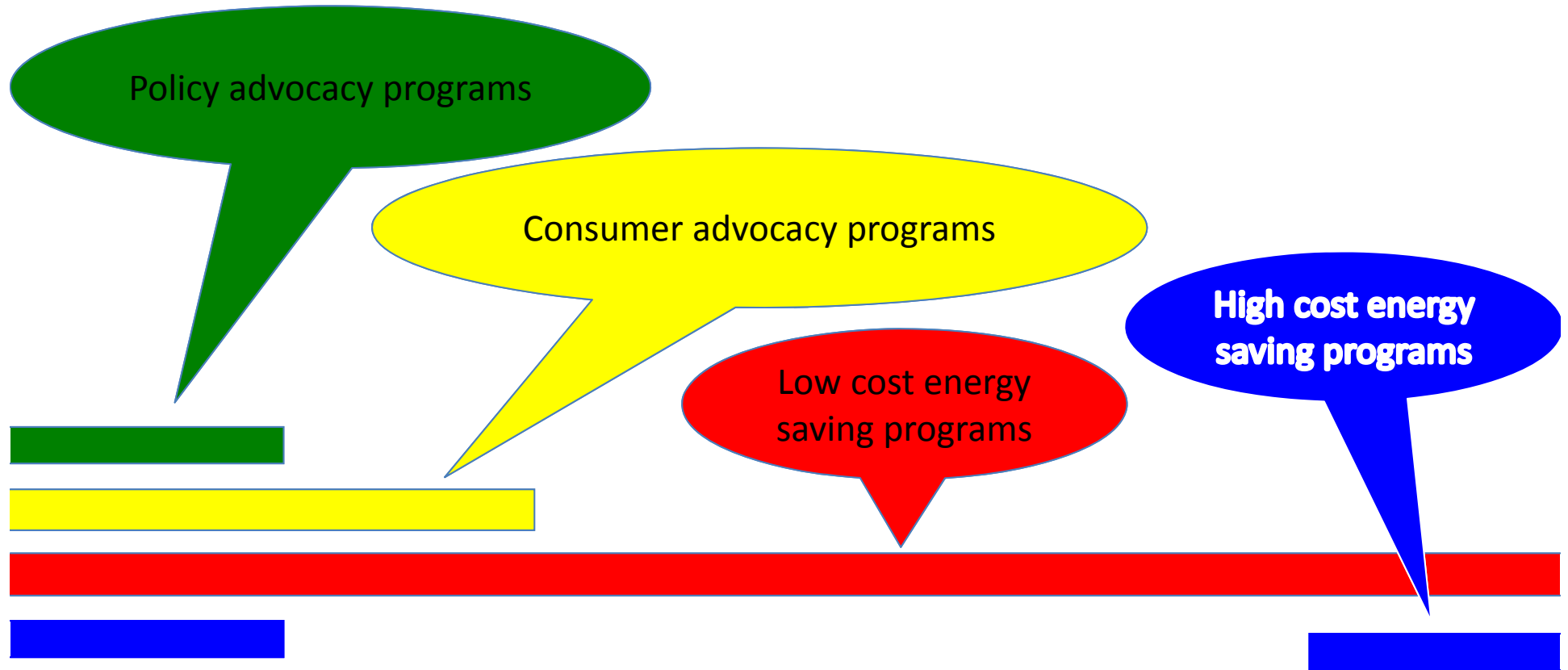
Alarmed (16%) Concerned (26%) Cautious (26%) Disengaged (5%) Doubtful (15%) Dismissive (13%)
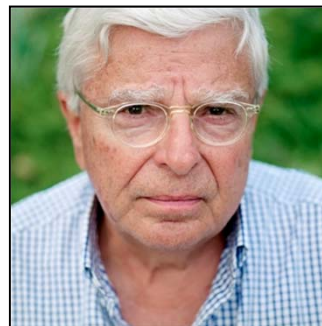
My main points:

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Our survey data suggest that heightening the engagement of segments in the middle of the Six Americas continuum is the best approach.

The question is: How best to engage them?
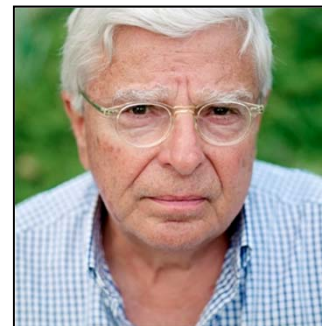

Engage them.

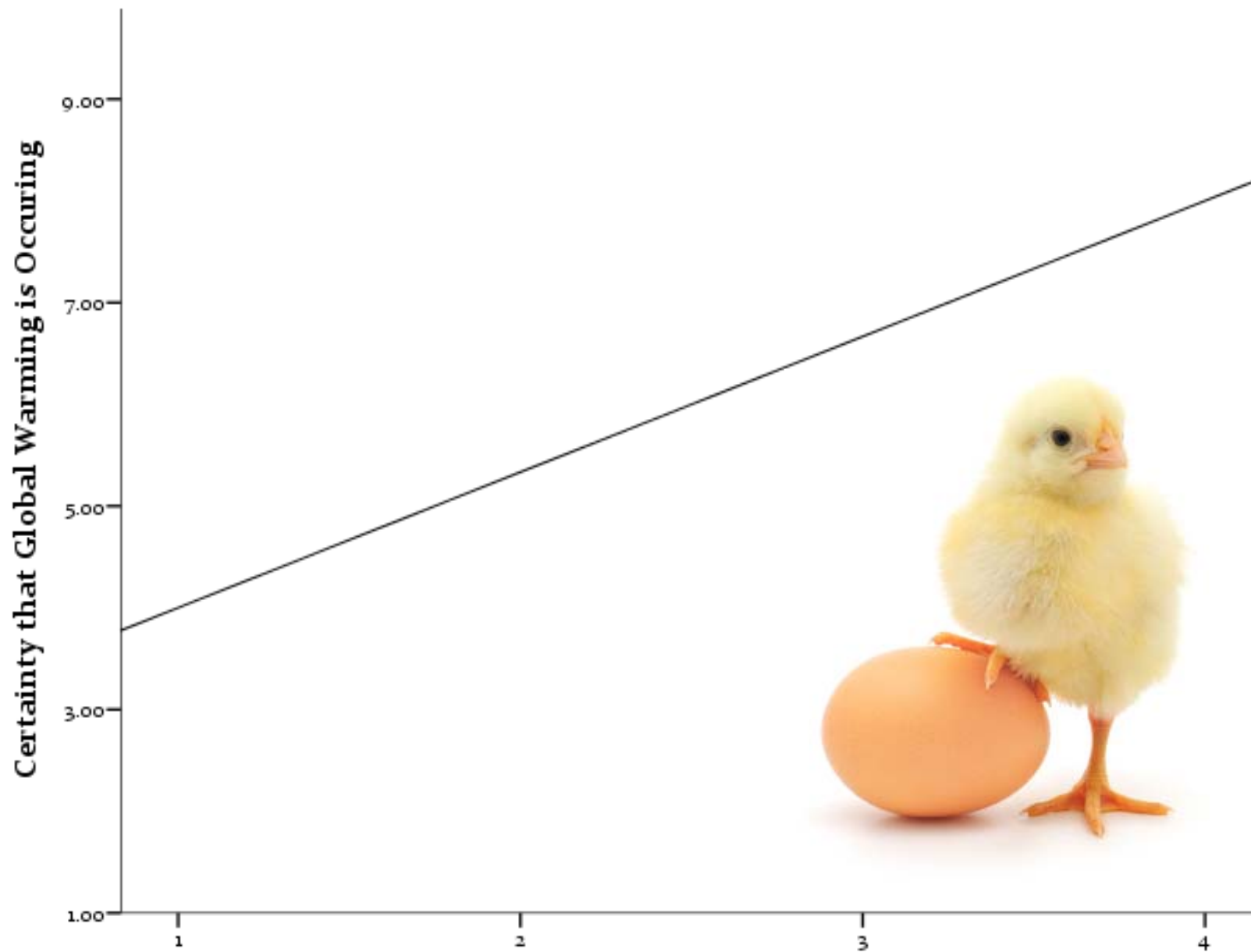Alarmed (16%) Concerned (26%) Cautious (26%) Disengaged (5%) Doubtful (15%) Dismissive (13%)

Certainty that Global Warming is Occuring

I have personally experienced the effects of global warming.

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Yale/George Mason, Oct 2008/Jun 2011; n=1,043

Personal Experience or Belief in the Reality of Global Warming: Which Comes First?

Teresa A. Myers[1a], Edward W. Maibach[1], Connie Roser-Renouf[1], Karen Akerlof[1], Anthony A. Leiserowitz[3]

Motivated Reasoning

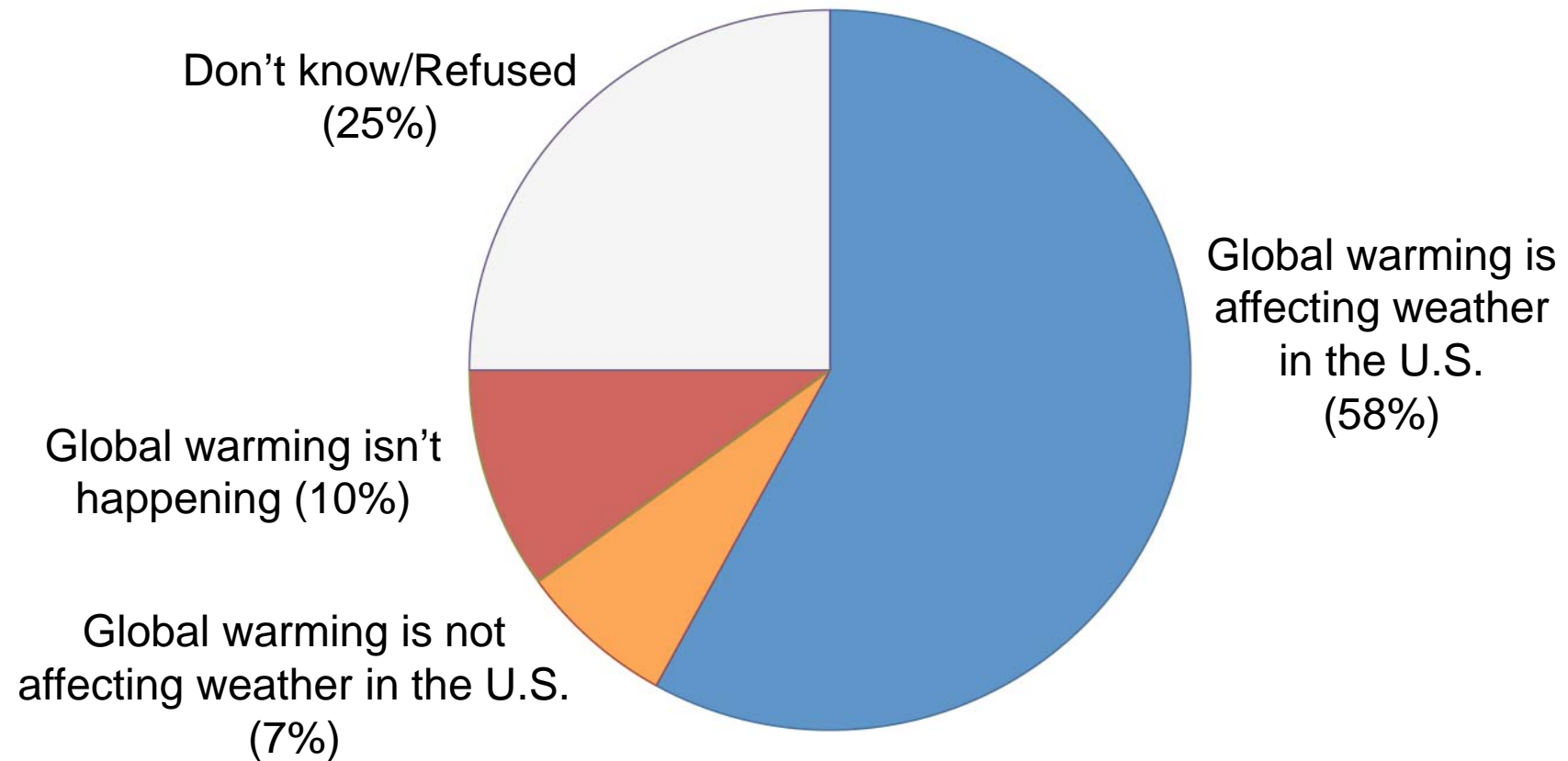-------------Experiential Learning-----------

Motivated Reasoning
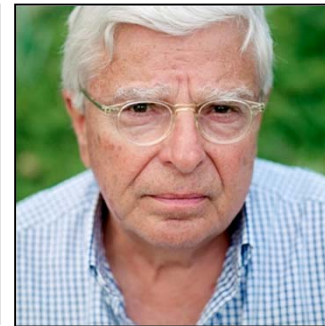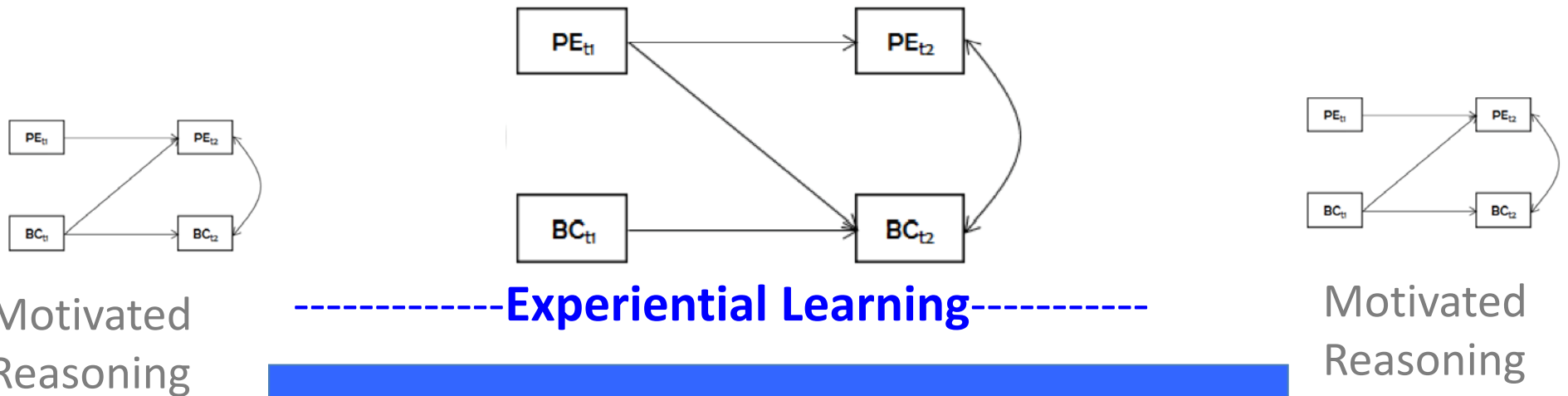
A growing majority of Americans say weather in the United States has been "worse" over the past several years
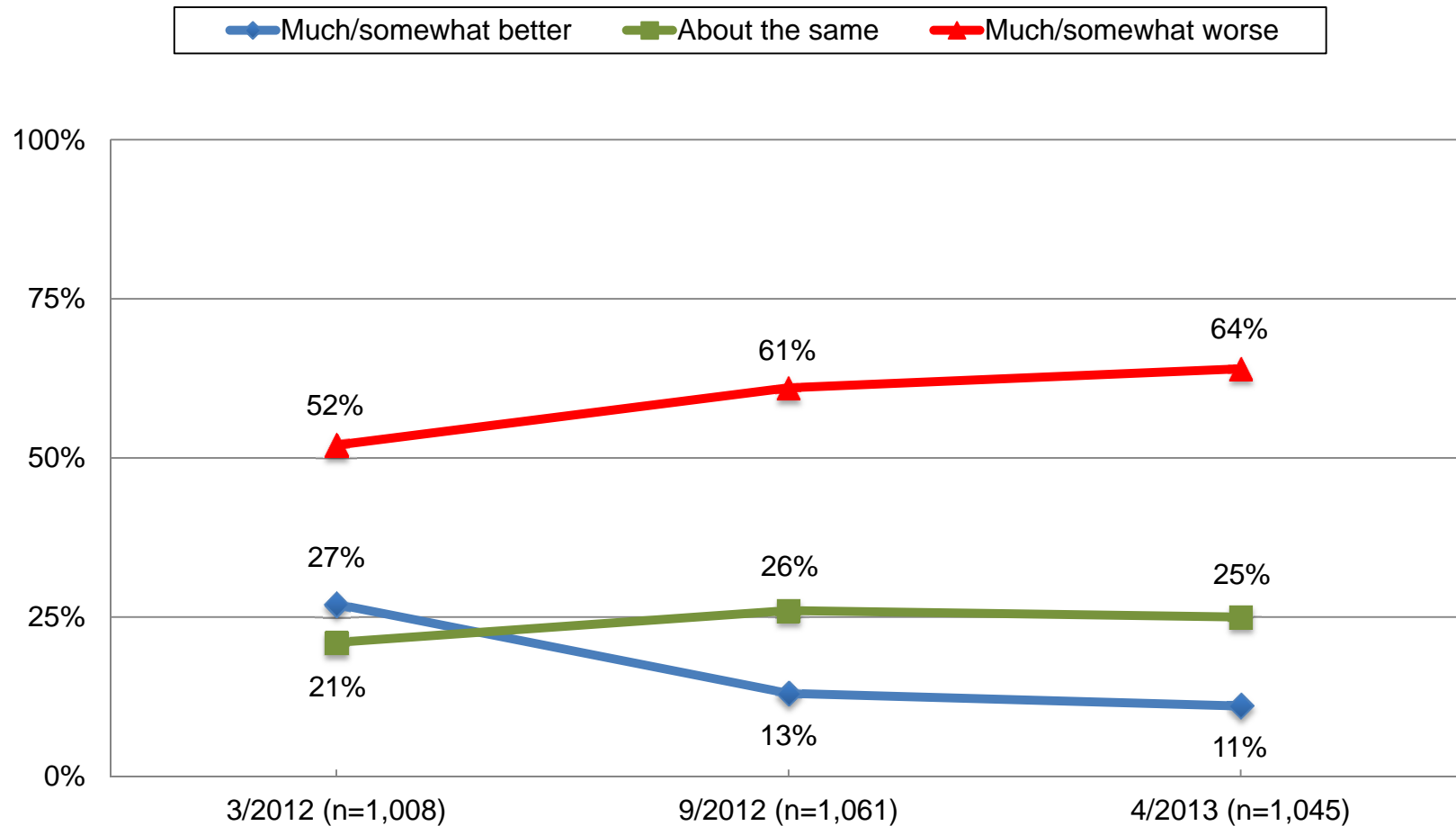
In your opinion, over the past several years, has the weather in the U.S. been...

Base: Americans 18+.

A Majority of Americans Say Global Warming Is Affecting Weather in the United States

Don't know/Refused (25%)

Global warming isn't happening (10%)

Global warming is not affecting weather in the U.S. (7%)

Global warming is affecting weather in the U.S. (58%)

Which statement below best reflects your view?

Base: Americans 18+ (n=526, split sample)

YALE PROJECT ON CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATION
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THINKING,
FAST AND SLOW

DANIEL

KAHNEMAN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS
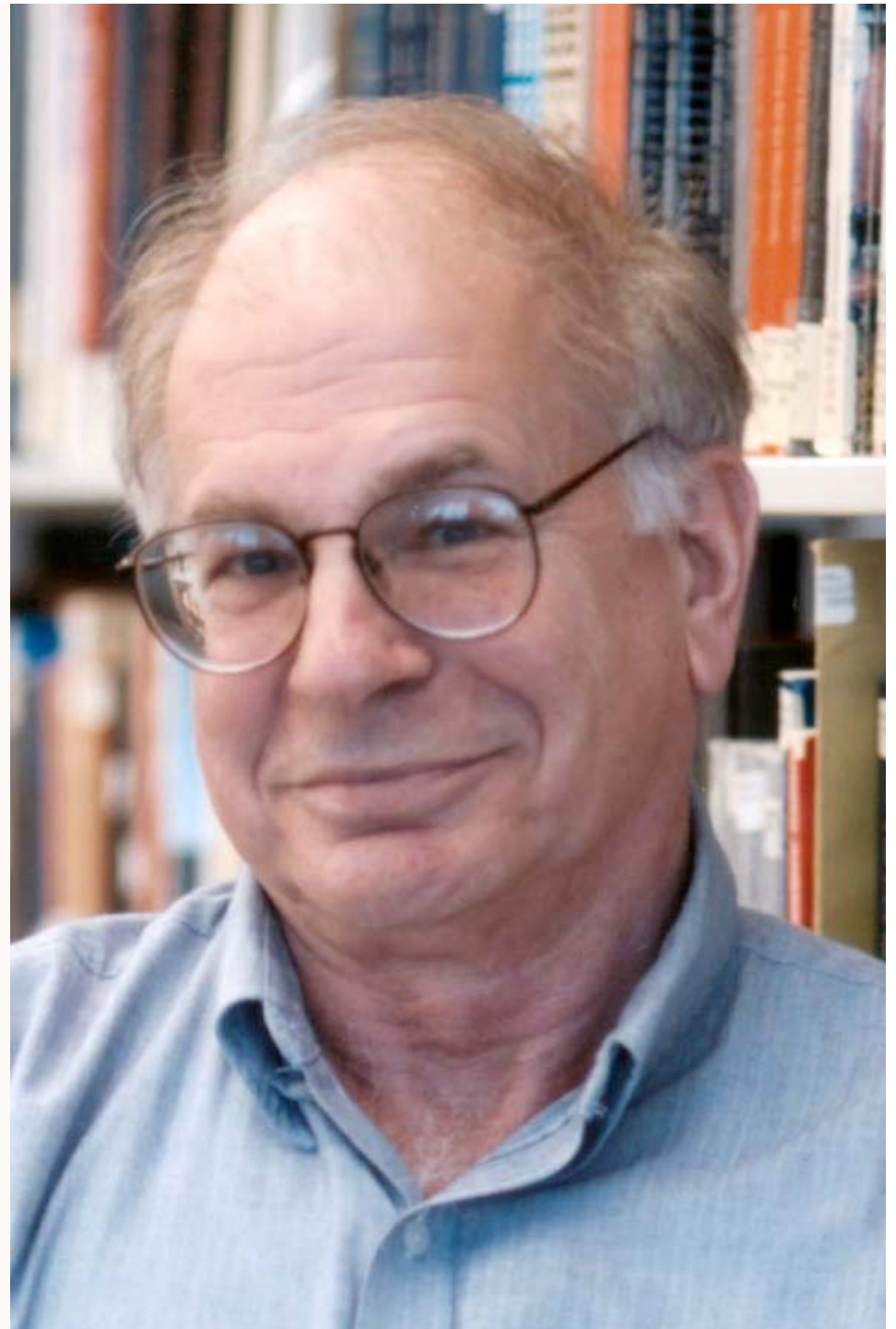
Our brains process risk information in two ways

Thinking Fast

System 1: The experiential system

**"Experiencing is believing."
Effortless.**

Thinking Slow

System 2: The analytic system

Based on logic, evidence, and mental effort

numbers
words
logic
} pallid
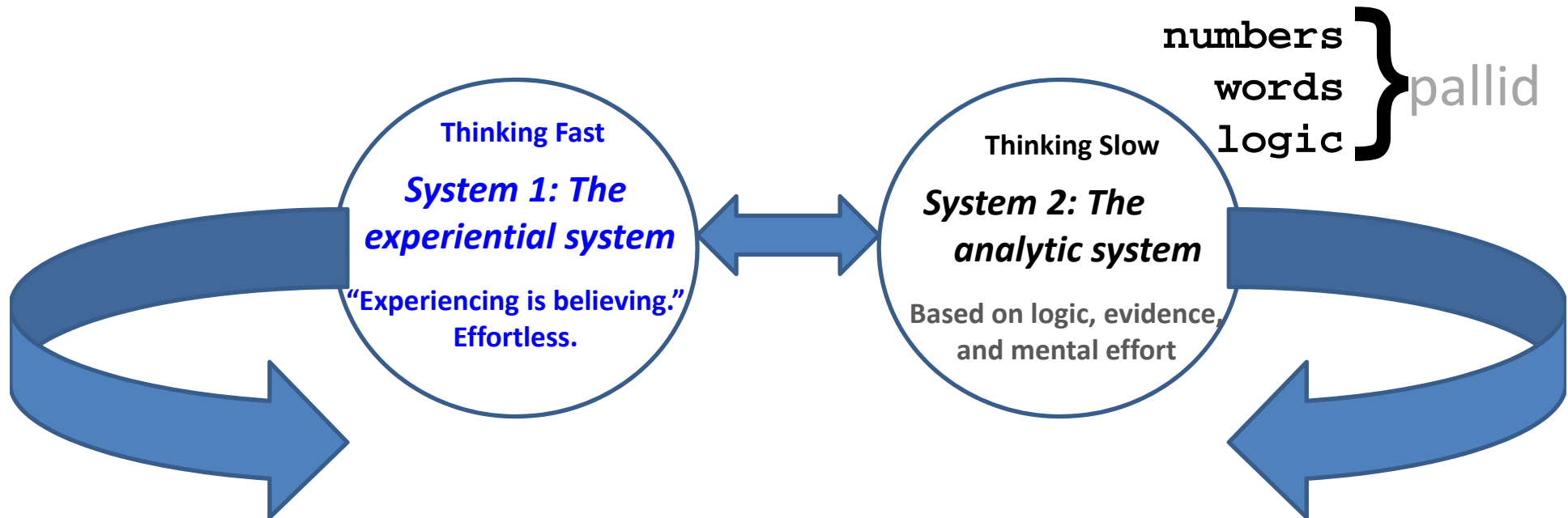
vivid
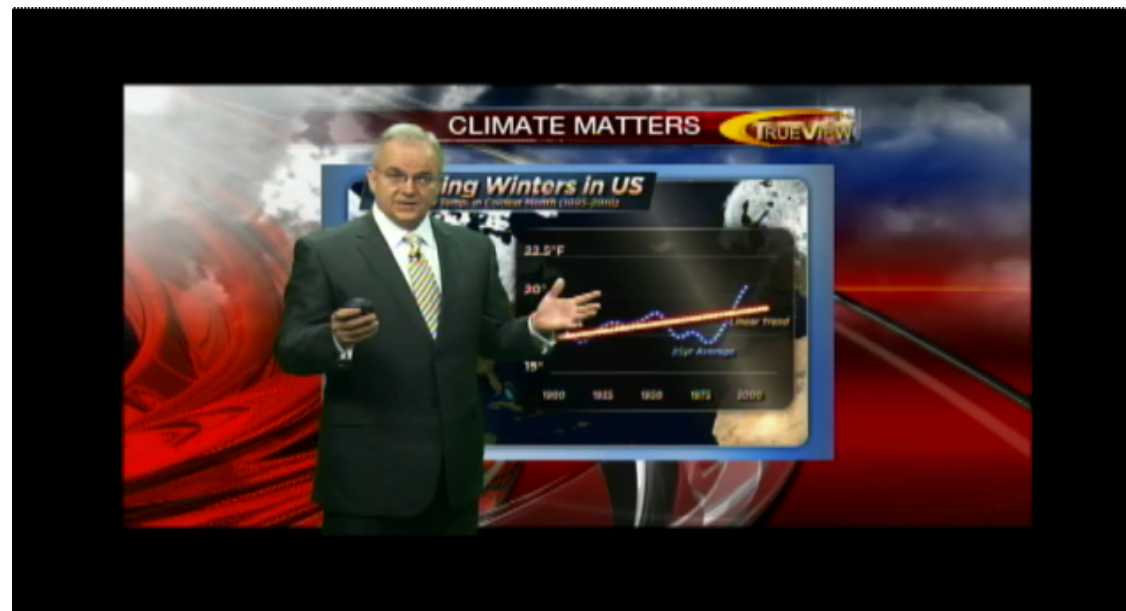
Jim Gandy, Senior Meteorologist, WLTX, Columbia, SC

Climate Change Education through TV Weathercasts: Results of a Field Experiment

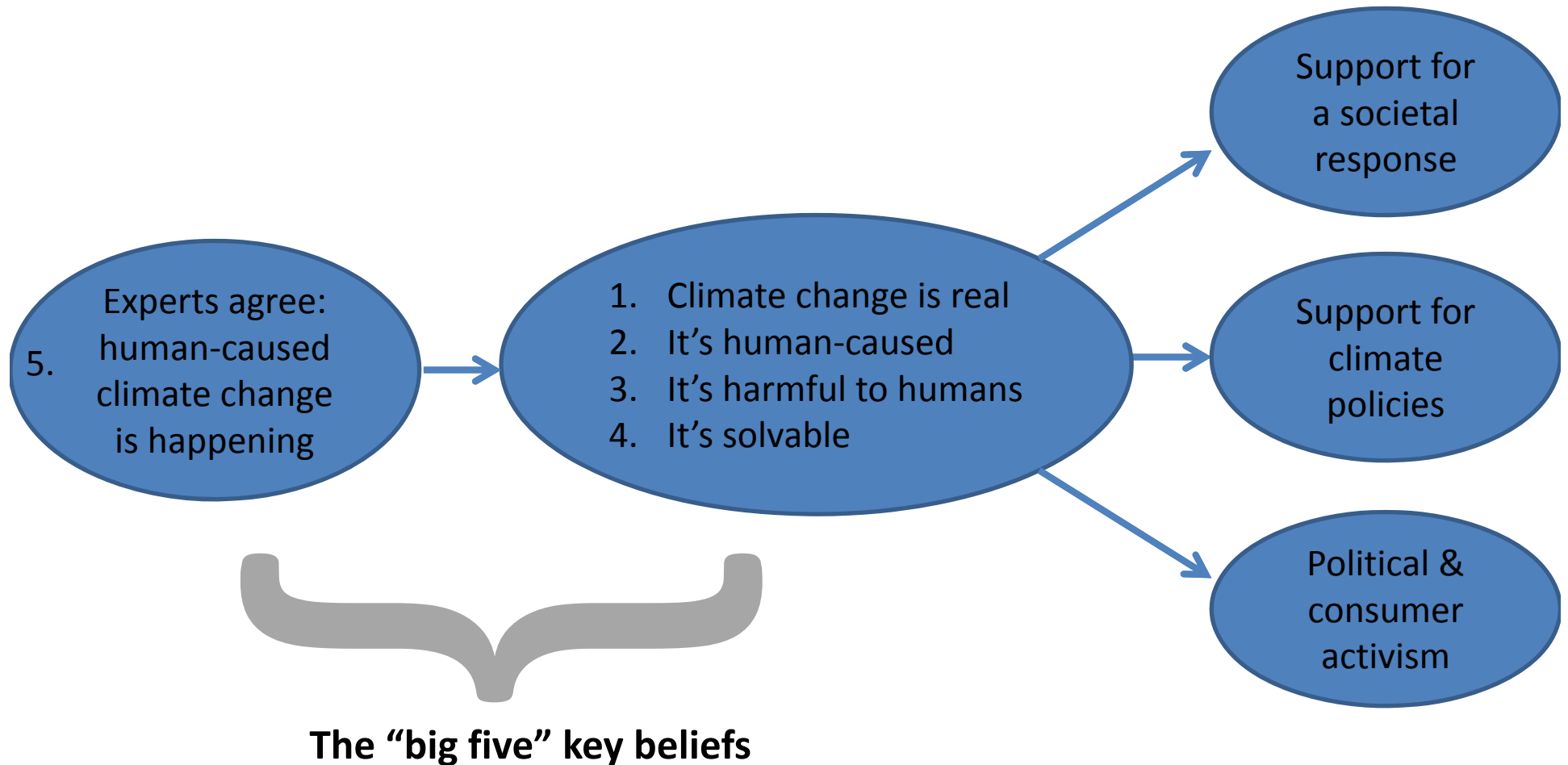Note: Article was published as an "early release" – this is not the real journal cover.

"The results of this field experiment suggest that when TV weathercasters educate their viewers about climate change, viewers gain a more science-based understanding of the issue."

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Five indicators of public opinion/engagement predict a range of supportive attitudes and actions

Support for a societal response

5. Experts agree: human-caused climate change is happening

1. Climate change is real
2. It's human-caused
3. It's harmful to humans
4. It's solvable

Support for climate policies

Political & consumer activism

The "big five" key beliefs

Sources: Ding *et al.*, 2012; Lewandowsky *et al.*, 2012; Roser-Renouf *et al.*, 2011; Krosnick *et al.*, 2006
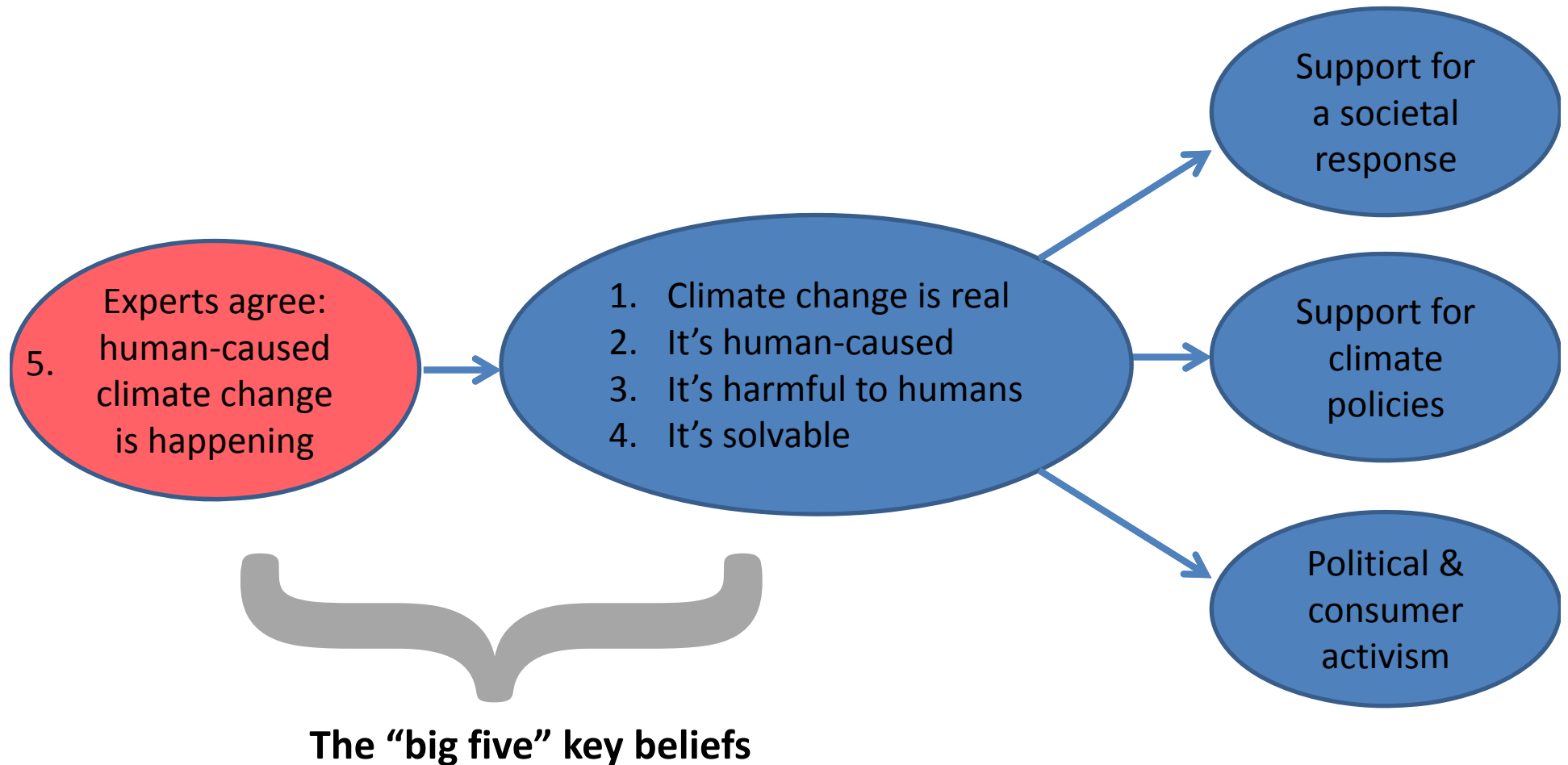
An Overarching Strategy:

Simple clear messages, repeated often, by a variety of trusted sources

- It's real

- It's us (i.e., our actions are causing it)

- It's harmful (to people)

- Scientists agree

- There's hope (i.e., our actions can make a difference in limiting it, and protecting people, other species, and ecosystems on which we depend)
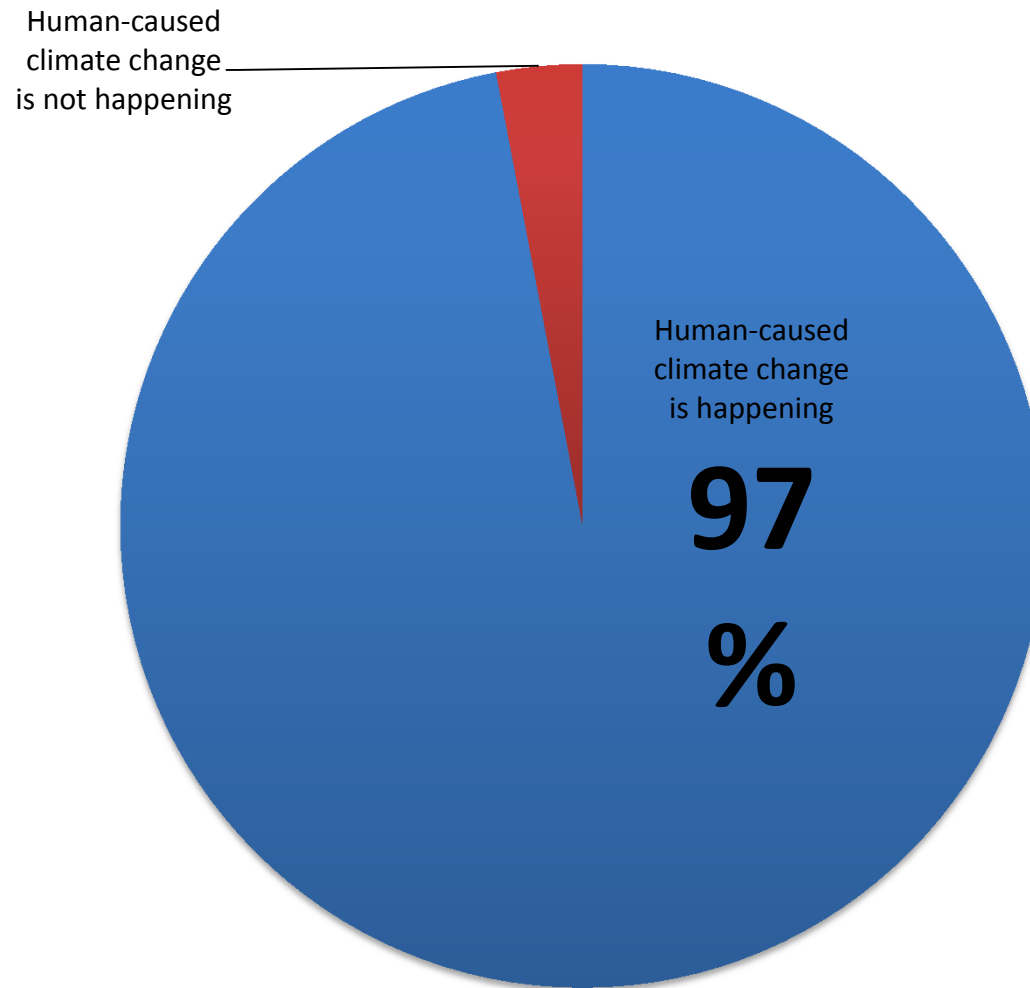
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5 Key Messages expressed in 10 words

- It's real

- It's us

- It's harmful

- Scientists agree

- There's hope

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Understanding the scientific consensus about human-caused climate change is key influence on public opinion

Experts agree: human-caused climate change is happening

5.

1. Climate change is real
2. It's human-caused
3. It's harmful to humans
4. It's solvable

Support for a societal response

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The "big five" key beliefs

Sources: Ding *et al.,* 2012; Roser-Renouf *et al.,* 2011

Scientific Agreement on Climate Change

Above: Proportion of peer-reviewed research papers that stated a position on the reality of human-caused climate change and said that it is happening and human-caused (Cook et al., 2013)
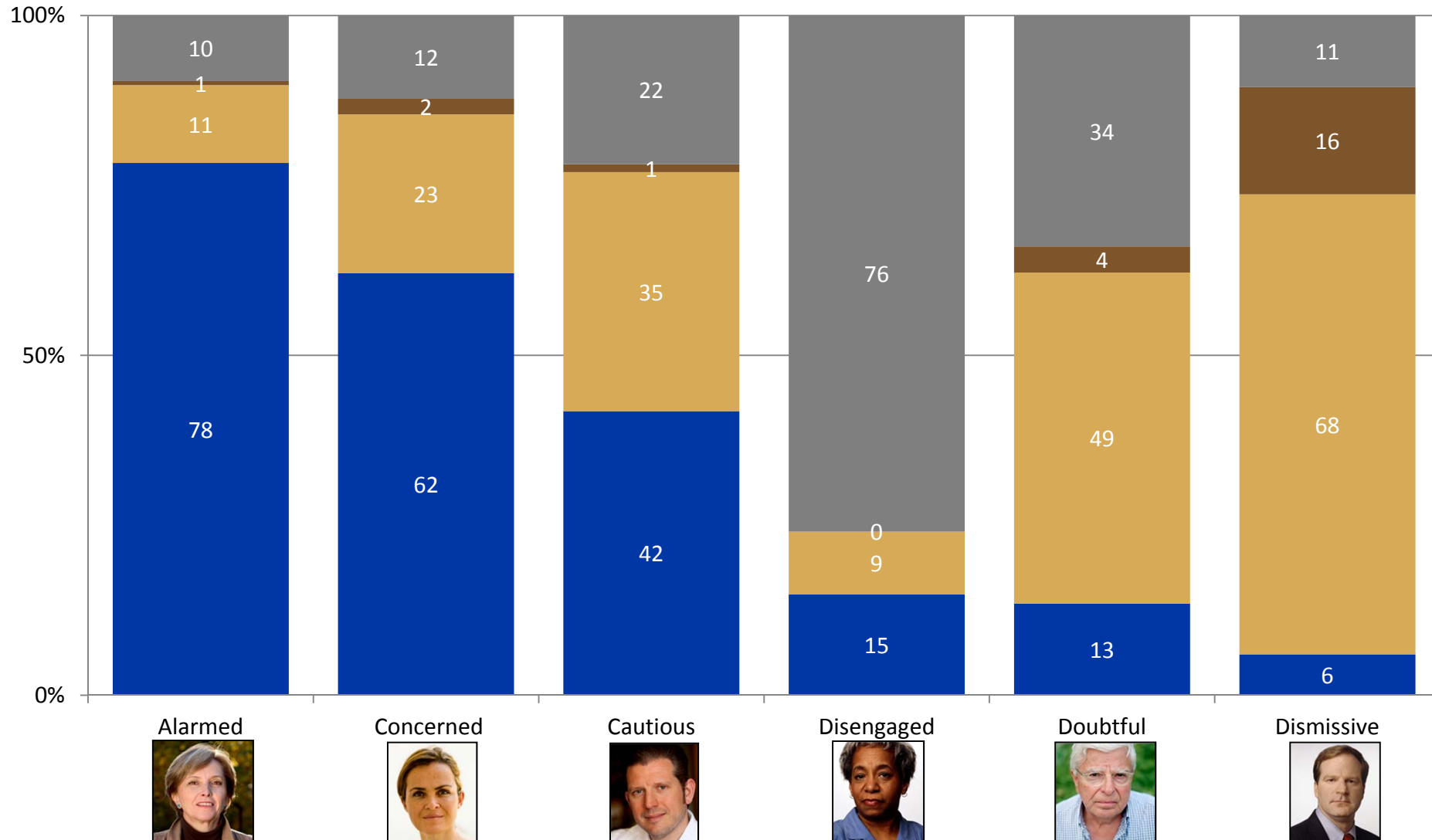
Beliefs about the Scientific Consensus

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- ■ Most scientists think global warming is happening
- ■ Most scientists think global warming is not happening
- ■ There is a lot of disagreement
- ■ Don't know enough to say

	Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive
Don't know enough to say	10	12	22	76	34	11
Most scientists think GW is not happening	1	2	1		4	16
There is a lot of disagreement	11	23	35	0	49	68
Most scientists think GW is happening	78	62	42	9 / 15	13	6

According to a recent report released by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society, several recent peer-reviewed surveys of climate scientists have shown that, based on the evidence, more than 97% of climate scientists are convinced that human caused climate change is occurring.
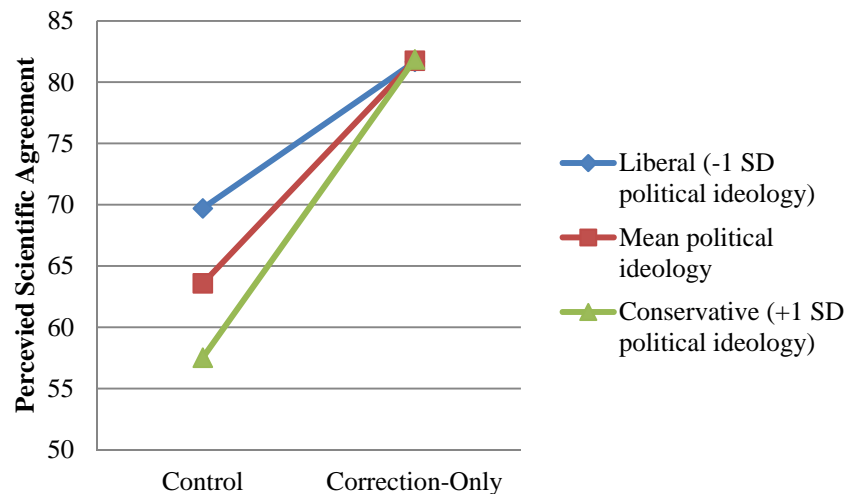
We thought you might want to know.

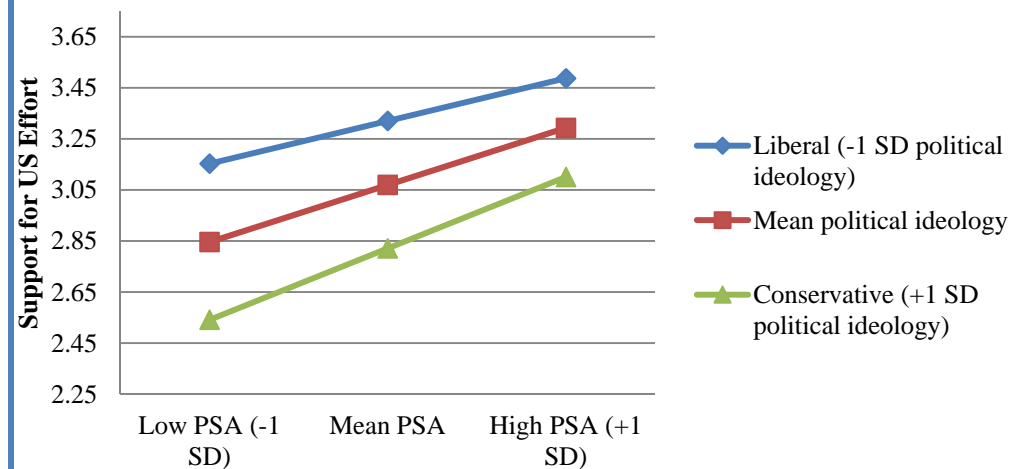*American Association for the Advancement of Science*

AAAS

ADVANCING SCIENCE, SERVING SOCIETY

Figure 1. Effect of political ideology across message conditions. Note: Perceived Scientific Agreement ranged from 0 to 100.

Figure 2. Effect of political ideology across levels of perceived scientific agreement (PSA). Note: Support for U.S. Effort ranged from 1 to 4.

5 Key Messages:

- It's real
- It's us
- It's harmful
- Scientists agree
  - "Based on the evidence, more than 97% of climate scientists are now convinced that human-caused climate change is happening."
- There's hope

Summary:

- In any nation, there are likely multiple climate change publics (or audiences); identifying those publics is the first step in planning effective public engagement methods.

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Welcome

Introduction

Climate change is the result of human actions and choices. Limiting climate change – and protecting people and ecosystems to the degree possible from unavoidable changes in the climate – will require significant public engagement in the issue so that difficult decisions can be made by members of the public and policy makers. Our center was created to conduct unbiased social science research that will facilitate such public engagement.

More About Us

We use social science research methods – experiments, surveys, in-depth interviews and other methods – to find ways of effectively engaging the public and policy makers in the problem, and in considering and enacting solutions. Social science research has played important roles in many social change campaigns over the past several decades, including reducing smoking and littering, and increasing seat belt use and recycling.

Our Mission

Our mission is to conduct unbiased public engagement research - and to help government agencies, non-profit organizations, and companies apply the results of this research - so that collectively, we can stabilize our planet's life sustaining climate.

Latest Reports

The Climate Change in the American Mind Series - Fall 2012

The Climate Change in the American Mind Series, Spring 2012

American Meteorological Society Member Survey on Global Warming: Preliminary Findings, February 2012

The Climate Change in the American Mind Series, November 2011

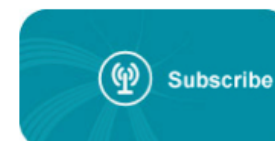A National Survey of Television Meteorologists About Climate Change Education, June 2011

Donate
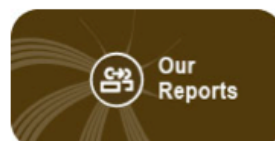
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