



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on April 29, 2011

Fear of Climate Change Falling Precipitously

The survey was conducted in 2010 among 1,000 adult citizens of 111 countries. Although the study finds that Americans and Europeans aren't preoccupied by the threat of climate change, respondents in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa reported fearing real and personal risks from the effects of global warming.

The discrepancy was attributed to the differences in worldview between those living in the so-called developed area of the world and those living in the poorer, "developing" areas.



The 42% of adults worldwide who see global warming as a threat to themselves and their families in 2010 hasn't budged in the last few years, but increases and declines evident in some regions reflect the divisions on climate change between the developed and developing world.

Majorities in developed countries that are key participants in the global climate debate continue to view global warming as a serious threat, but their concern is more subdued than it was in 2007-2008. In the U.S., a slim majority (53%) currently see it as a serious personal threat, down from 63% in previous years.

Not only do Westerners express a statistical disregard for the dangers of climate change, but the number of those who believe there is something to fear from the weather is declining. In France, for example, the poll numbers indicate that the percentage of respondents who consider global warming "a serious threat" has declined from 75 percent to 59 percent since 2007.

In the United Kingdom, home of the "Climategate" scandal, the percentage has fallen from 69 percent to 57 percent over the same period.

To what does the [Gallup](#) firm attribute this global decline in the fear of global warming?

World residents' declining concern about climate change may reflect increasing skepticism about global warming after Climategate and the lack of progress toward global climate policy. The drops also may reflect the poor economic times, during which Gallup research generally finds environmental issues become less important.

In contrast to those answering the poll in America and Europe, 73 percent of Latin Americans regard climate change as "a personal threat" to their lives. Gallup explained the astounding figures this way:

These relatively high figures among Latin Americans may be partly attributable to the bad rainy seasons and flooding that leaders in the region such as Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez have linked to global warming. Countries that were hit particularly hard by floods, such as Ecuador and Venezuela, saw residents' likelihood to view global warming as a threat surge in 2010.

The fear expressed by sub-Saharan Africans regarding the threat of global climate change is the same as it has been for millennia. Those living in this region have been at the mercy of vast weather



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variations since man settled there. Floods, droughts, wind storms, etc. have challenged mankind and forced him to adapt. In that sense, the attitudes of denizens of sub-Saharan Africa in the year 2011 is very similar to those their forefathers may have expressed in the year 11.

Curiously, although they may worry about potential violent changes in the weather, less than half the population of sub-Saharan Africa say they are even aware of the concept of “climate change.”

What are the implications of these findings? The Gallup organization reckons that the decline in concern about the threat of climate change among Americans and Europeans threatens the future of global agreements on programs designed to stem the rising tide.

The feuding between rich and poor nations at climate talks in Bangkok in April demonstrates the obstacles that remain before the world can agree on a climate policy. Gallup’s data show that fewer Americans and Europeans, whose nations are central players in these talks, feel threatened by global warming today than they did in recent years. However, majorities in many of these countries still see climate change as a serious threat, which means the issue remains personally important to them.

The shrinking plurality of those who consider global warming a serious threat is likely attributable to the revelations made in the wake of the recent Climategate scandal. It is difficult to peddle fear when the peddlers are outed as nothing more than old-fashioned snake-oil hucksters, albeit well-educated hucksters with several letters after their names.



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