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Global Warming Concern Steady Despite Some Partisan Shifts

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Story Highlights

- Partisan gaps across global-warming measures slightly wider than in 2017
- Democrats view global warming seriously; Republicans view it skeptically
- 69% of Republicans, 4% Democrats say global warming is exaggerated

This story is part of a [special series on Americans' views of the environment, global warming and energy](#).

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans' concerns about global warming are not much different from the [record-high](#) levels they were at a year ago. However, the views of some partisans have shifted, creating larger gaps than what Gallup saw last year across all questions about global warming.

Partisan Divisions in Americans' Views of Global Warming

	2017	2018
	%	%
Think the seriousness of global warming is generally exaggerated		
Republican	66	69
Independent	32	34
Democrat	10	4
Say most scientists believe global warming is occurring		
Republican	53	42
Independent	71	65

	2017	2018
	%	%
Democrat	86	86
Believe effects of global warming have already begun		
Republican	41	34
Independent	67	60
Democrat	73	82
Believe global warming is caused by human activities		
Republican	40	35
Independent	70	62
Democrat	87	89
Worry a great deal/fair amount about global warming		
Republican	36	33
Independent	67	62
Democrat	90	91
Think global warming will pose a serious threat in their lifetime		
Republican	14	18
Independent	45	45
Democrat	58	67

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Gallup's annual survey about the environment, conducted March 1-8, found that Americans' opinions about global warming, like many other issues, have increasingly become politically polarized.

President Donald Trump, who has called global warming a "hoax," may have contributed to this widening divide by reversing a number of government actions to address the issue. These included the announcement that the U.S. will withdraw from the 2015 Paris climate accord, the removal of climate change from the list of top U.S. national security threats and the elimination of the terms "global warming" and "climate change" from U.S. government websites and lexicons.

In general, Democrats view global warming seriously, while Republicans view it skeptically:

- Ninety-one percent of Democrats and 33% of Republicans say they worry a great deal or fair amount about global warming, but 67% of Republicans worry only a little or not at all.
- While 82% of Democrats think global warming has already begun to happen, only 34% of Republicans agree. Rather, 57% of Republicans think it will not happen in their lifetime (25%) or will "never happen" (32%).

- About seven in 10 Republicans (69%) think the seriousness of global warming is exaggerated in the news, 15% think it is generally correct and 15% say it is generally underestimated. Democrats, however, are much more likely to think the seriousness of global warming is underestimated (64%) or correct (32%), and just 4% say it is exaggerated.
- Eighty-six percent of Democrats versus 42% of Republicans think most scientists believe global warming is occurring. The percentage of Republicans who say most scientists believe this is down 11 percentage points since last year.
- Almost nine in 10 Democrats say increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due to human activities more than natural changes in the environment. Just 35% of Republicans agree, while 63% attribute the temperature increases to natural environmental causes.
- Four in five Republicans do not think global warming will pose a serious threat to them in their lifetime; two-thirds of Democrats think it will.



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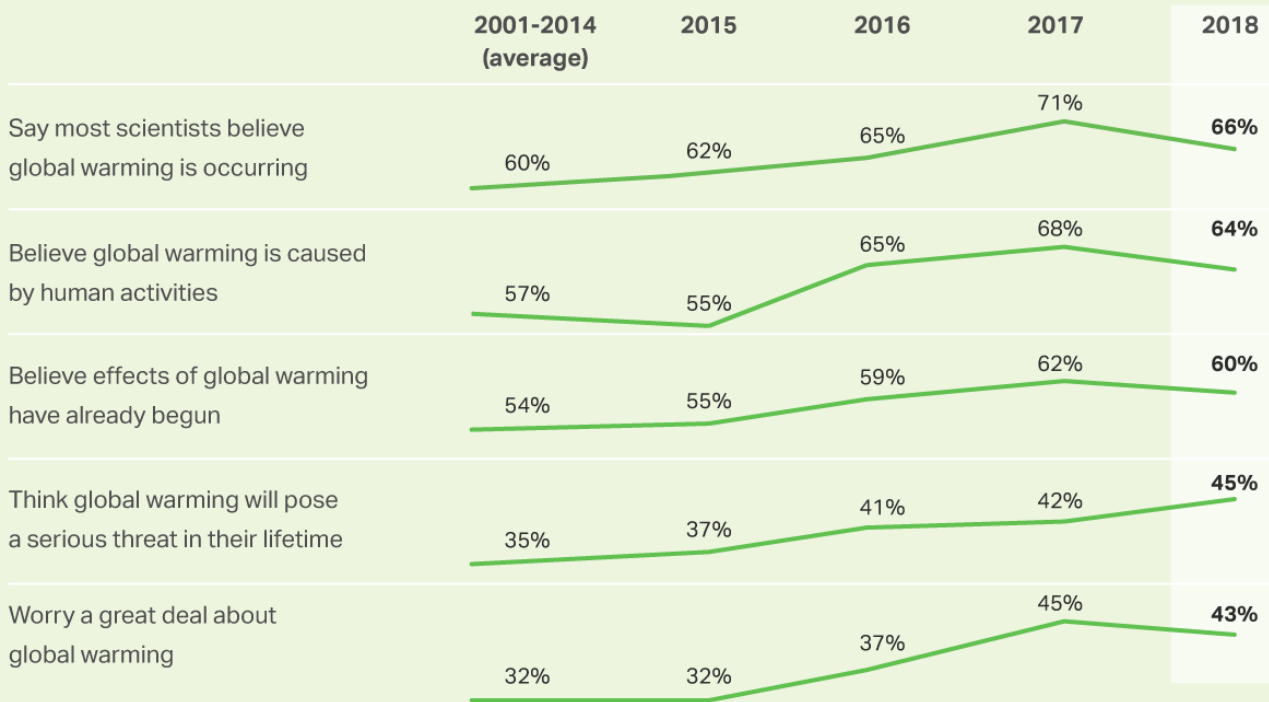
Broad Agreement Among Americans on Some Aspects of Global Warming

Majorities of Americans overall say most scientists think global warming is occurring (66%), it is caused by human activities (64%) and its effects have begun (60%). Yet, the net effect of increased political polarization over the past year is that opinions on each of these measures have edged down slightly.

At the same time, the 45% who think global warming will pose a serious threat in their lifetime is the highest percentage recorded for this measure since Gallup first asked the question in 1997. This is the only issue that saw increased concern among both major party groups.

The 43% of Americans who say they worry a great deal about global warming or climate change is similar to last year's record-high 45% and is still up significantly from 32% in 2015.

Summary of Americans' Views on Global Warming



All polls conducted in March

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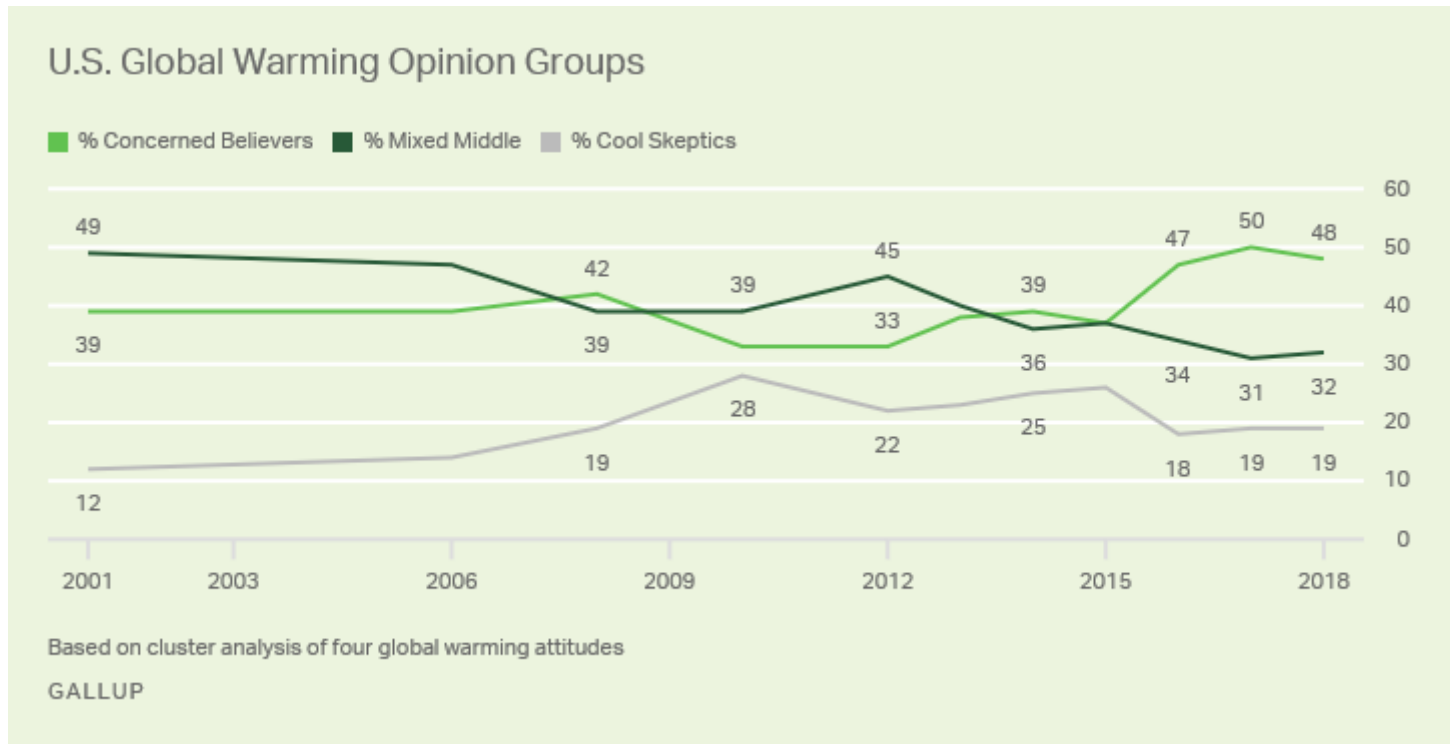
Roughly Half of Americans Continue to Take Global Warming Seriously

A Gallup analysis that takes into account four of the global warming questions finds large segments of Americans holding highly consistent views that are either supportive or dismissive of global warming. The remainder have mixed views, generally acknowledging global warming on some questions but expressing doubts or less concern about it on others.

- The supportive group, "Concerned Believers," uniformly worries a great deal about global warming and thinks human activity causes it. Seven in 10 Concerned Believers also expect global warming to pose a serious threat in their lifetime. None believes that news reports of global warming exaggerate the problem -- they think reports either underestimate it or are correct.
- By contrast, the dismissive group, or "Cool Skeptics," worries little to not at all about global warming. Its members uniformly believe that news reports about global warming exaggerate the problem and doubt global warming will pose a serious threat in their lifetime. They also ascribe warming to natural environmental changes rather than human activities.

- The "Mixed Middle" expresses some combination of views across the four items. The slight majority, 53%, thinks news of global warming is correct or even underestimated. At the same time, the majority, 55%, worries only a little or not at all about global warming, and 64% doubt that it will pose a serious threat in their lifetime. The Mixed Middle is split on whether global warming is caused by human activity (48%) or natural changes in the environment (42%).

The size of these groups was stable over the past year, with 48% of U.S. adults categorized as Concerned Believers, similar to 50% in 2017. Nearly one in three remain in the Mixed Middle -- 32% this year vs. 31% a year ago -- while the percentage of Cool Skeptics is unchanged, at 19%.



Democrats More Unified Than Republicans on Global Warming

About eight in 10 Democrats fall into the Concerned Believers camp, while Republicans are less unified: Gallup classifies 45% as Cool Skeptics and 38% as the Mixed Middle. Notably, far more Republicans fall into the Democratic-oriented category of Concerned Believers than Democrats fall into the Republican-leaning Cool Skeptics -- 17% vs. 1%, respectively.

Beyond political party, there are gender, age and educational differences in these global warming categories. Women, younger Americans and college graduates are more likely than their counterparts to be Concerned Believers. These party and demographic differences are generally in line with previous years.

	Concerned Believers	Mixed Middle	Cool Skeptics
	%	%	%
U.S. adults	48	32	19
Party ID			
Democrats	81	18	1
Independents	44	38	18
Republicans	17	38	45
Gender			
Women	54	33	13
Men	42	32	26
Education			
College graduate	59	23	18
Not college graduate	44	37	20
Age			
18 to 34	58	32	11
35 to 54	50	30	20
55 and older	40	35	24

Based on cluster analysis of four Gallup global warming questions: concern about global warming, perception of whether seriousness is exaggerated in the news, whether global warming is caused by human activities and whether it will pose a serious threat in own lifetime

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Bottom Line

The higher level of concern Americans have exhibited about global warming since 2016, particularly in terms of worrying about the issue and believing it is caused by human activity, is largely intact this year.

One reason for this stability is that Americans' views on the issue are becoming increasingly partisan and therefore entrenched. With Trump reversing many of his predecessors' policies aimed at curbing global warming, Democrats are feeling a greater sense of urgency about the issue, while Republicans have either remained as skeptical as they had been in the past or have become more so.

SURVEY METHODS

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted March 1-8, 2018, with a random sample of 1,041 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods.

[View survey methodology, complete question responses and trends.](#)

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