

The Racial Gap On Global Warming

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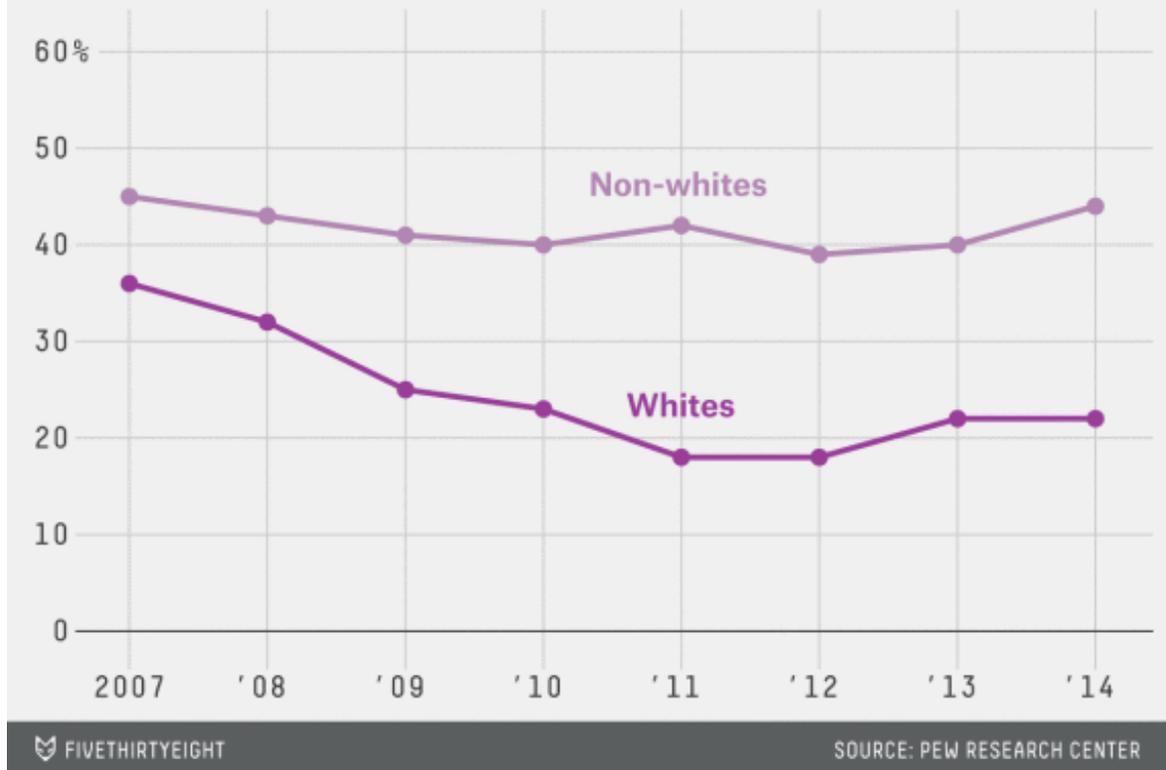


Before the [big climate march](#) in New York on Sunday, New York magazine's Tim Murphy [asked](#), "Can Sunday's climate march expand the movement beyond wonky white men?" After the march, Sally Kohn at The Daily Beast had an answer: [Yes](#).

But zoom out beyond the march's organizers and participants, and you'll see the portion of the American public in favor of action to combat climate change has long been diverse. Since 2007, Pew Research Center has asked people what areas, including global warming, should be [a top priority](#) for the president and Congress. Given the talk about the need for diversity in the global warming movement, you might expect that the people who say fighting global warming should a top priority would be overwhelmingly white. You'd be wrong.

The Racial Gap On Climate Change

Percentage of Americans who think global warming should be a “top priority” for the president and Congress



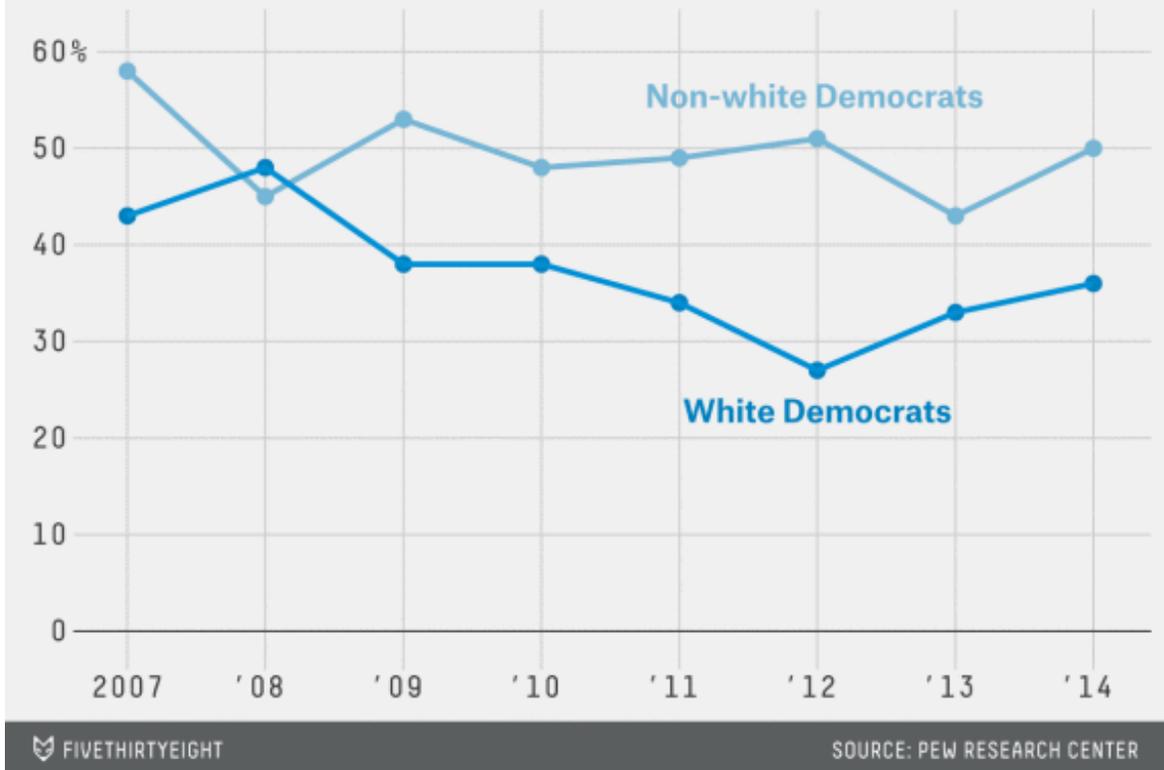
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Every time the question has been asked, a lower percentage of whites have said it should be a top priority than non-whites. In fact, the gap between whites and non-whites has widened. The share of non-whites viewing climate change as a top priority hasn't changed much; that same share of whites, meanwhile, has dropped more than 10 percentage points.

Is this just a partisan thing (i.e. Democrats are more in favor of the government developing a plan to combat global warming, and more minorities are Democrats)? This makes sense, but the racial gap exists even when controlling for political party.

Climate Change's Racial Gap Among Democrats

Percentage of Democrats who think global warming should be a "top priority" for the president and Congress



White Democrats have less of a desire for the government to immediately deal with global warming than non-white Democrats. Since 2007, an average of 50 percent of non-white Democrats think it should be a top priority compared to just 37 percent of white Democrats. Like with Americans overall, the difference between white and non-white Democrats is wider now than it was in 2007 and 2008.

The average percentage of white Democrats who prioritize fighting global warming is down from an average 46 percent in 2007 and 2008 to 35 percent since 2013. The average percentage of non-white Democrats is also down, but only from 52 percent to 47 percent in the same period. (Note: I'm using an average of two years because individual years have relatively small subsample sizes.) The percentage-point drop among white Democrats is more than twice that of non-white Democrats. As with Americans overall, it is whites who are more responsible for the widening racial gaps on global-warming priority among Democrats.

It seems clear from the polling that whites are more skeptical of the need for government intervention on global warming than non-whites. If the leaders of climate-change movement are overwhelmingly white, then they are not representative of the larger the slice of the public most sympathetic to their cause.