



CLIMATE CHANGE: AMERICANS' VIEWS IN 2014

March 12, 2014

Climate Change Not a Top Worry in U.S.

U.S. concerns with the quality of the environment dropped in 2014

by Rebecca Riffkin

This article is the first in a series that will analyze Gallup's latest March update on Americans' views on [climate change](#) and examine how these views have changed over time. The series will explore public opinion on the severity and importance of climate change, its causes and effects, the extent of Americans' understanding of the issue, and much more.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Twenty-eight U.S. senators held an all-night "talkathon" Monday to call attention to climate change, an issue that only 24% of Americans say they worry about a great deal. This puts climate change, along with the quality of the environment, near the bottom of a list of 15 issues Americans rated in Gallup's March 6-9 survey. The economy, federal spending, and healthcare dominate Americans' worries.

Americans' Level of Worry About National Problems -- 2014 Rank Order

Next, I'm going to read a list of problems facing the country. For each one, please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all? First, how much do you personally worry about ... [RANDOM ORDER]?

	Great deal	Fair amount	A little/ not at all
	%	%	%
The economy	59	29	11
Federal spending and the budget deficit	58	22	20
The availability and affordability of healthcare	57	20	23
Unemployment	49	28	23
The size and power of the federal government	48	20	31
The Social Security system	46	29	24
Hunger and homelessness	43	33	23
Crime and violence	39	31	29
The possibility of future terrorist attacks in the U.S.	39	24	37
The availability and affordability of energy	37	30	33
Drug use	34	29	37
Illegal immigration	33	24	42
The quality of the environment	31	35	34
Climate change	24	25	51
Race relations	17	26	56

Question asked of a half sample
March 6-9, 2014

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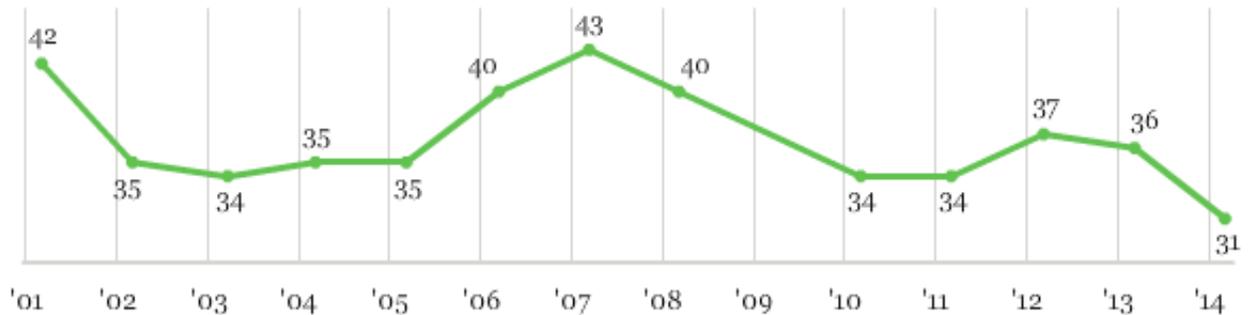
This was the first year Gallup included "climate change" in the list of worries tested in the annual March Environment survey. Americans are less worried only about race relations than they are about climate change. The majority of Americans say they worry about these two issues "only a little" or "not at all"; more than half of Americans worry about the other 13 issues at least "a fair amount."

Thirty-one percent of Americans indicate that they worry "a great deal" about the quality of the environment this year, marking the lowest level of worry about the environment more broadly since Gallup began measuring this in 2001. Americans were most concerned about the environment in 2007, when 43% worried a great deal.

Americans' Worry About the Environment Over Time

Next, I'm going to read a list of problems facing the country. For each one, please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all? How much do you personally worry about the quality of the environment?

■ % Worry a great deal



NOTE: March 2014 data asked of a half sample

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Worries Differ Greatly Between Political Parties

Americans from the two major political parties express different levels of worry about a number of the issues tested, including climate change and the environment. Among Democrats and Democratic leaners, 45% say they worry a great deal about the quality of the environment. This percentage drops to 16% among Republicans and Republican leaners.

Gallup finds a 26-percentage-point difference in worry about climate change, with Democrats again more likely than Republicans to worry a great deal. Democrats, conversely, are much less worried than Republicans about the size and power of the federal government, and about federal spending and the budget deficit.

Americans' Concern About U.S. Issues -- by Party Leaning[^]

% Worry a great deal

	Republicans/ Republican leaners	Democrats/ Democratic leaners	Difference, Republicans minus Democrats
	%	%	Pct. pts.
The size and power of the federal government	67	29	+38
Federal spending and the budget deficit	74	44	+30
Illegal immigration	43	26	+17
The economy	67	54	+13
The possibility of future terrorist attacks in the U.S.	43	35	+8
The Social Security system	49	43	+6
The availability and affordability of healthcare	57	57	0
Unemployment	50	52	-2
Crime and violence	38	42	-4
Drug use	31	37	-6
The availability and affordability of energy	32	40	-8
Race relations	12	23	-11
Hunger and homelessness	33	53	-20
Climate change	10	36	-26
The quality of the environment	16	45	-29

[^] Ranked by "Difference"

March 6-9, 2014

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Republicans over the last few years have been more worried than Democrats about [the economy and governance issues](#), while Democrats have been comparatively more worried with social issues such as race relations and homelessness. Although more Democrats than Republicans worry about the environment, climate change, and race relations, these are not major worries for most Democrats. The affordability and availability of healthcare and unemployment are two economic issues that Republicans and Democrats worry about equally.

Implications

Climate change and the quality of the environment rank near the bottom of a list of concerns for Americans, who are instead far more worried about more basic economic issues such as the economy, federal spending, and the affordability of healthcare. Concerns about the environment typically rank low among all Americans, but the current level of worry is even lower than in the past.

It is unclear whether or to what extent the senators' actions Monday will raise Americans' concern about climate change or the environment. But unless Americans' concern increases, the likelihood of the public's support for significant legislative action on environmental matters is small.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted March 6-9, 2014, on the Gallup Daily tracking survey, with a random sample of 513 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 ± 6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 50% cellphone respondents and 50% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability, nonresponse, and double coverage of landline and cell users in the two sampling frames. They are also weighted to match the national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, population density, and phone status (cellphone only/landline only/both, and cellphone mostly). Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. population. Phone status targets are based on the most recent National Health Interview Survey. Population density targets are based on the most recent U.S. census. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

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