American Support for Climate Action

March 26, 2024 – Environmental Polling Consortium
Matthew Ballew, PhD – Research Specialist
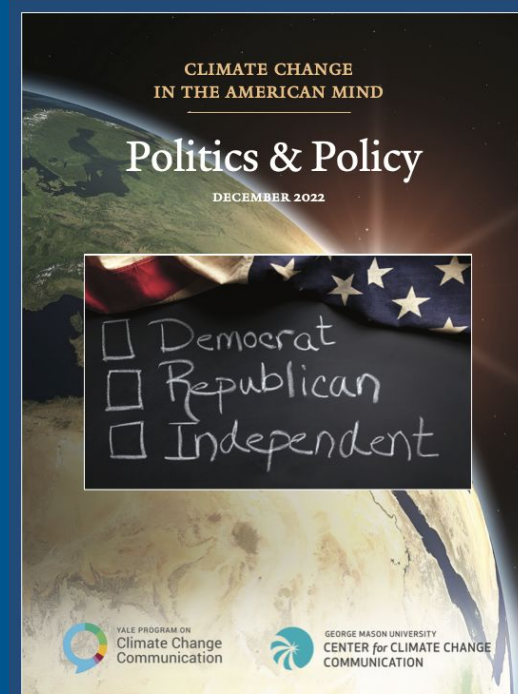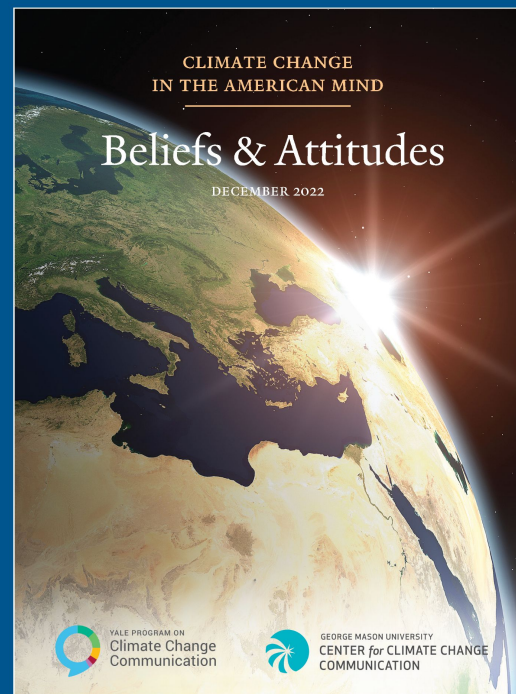
YALE PROGRAM ON
Climate Change
Communication

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

- Research: Conduct studies on climate opinion and behavior
- Partnerships: Help others use insights to build public and political will for climate action

Recent Toplines from Climate Change in the American Mind

Nationally representative survey of 1,033 U.S. adults (18+)
Avg. margin of error = +/- 3% points

Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Goddard, E., Carman, J., Ballew, M., Verner, M., Marlon, J., Lee, S., Myers, T., Goldberg, M., Badullovich, N., & Thier, K. (2023). Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs & Attitudes, Fall 2023. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
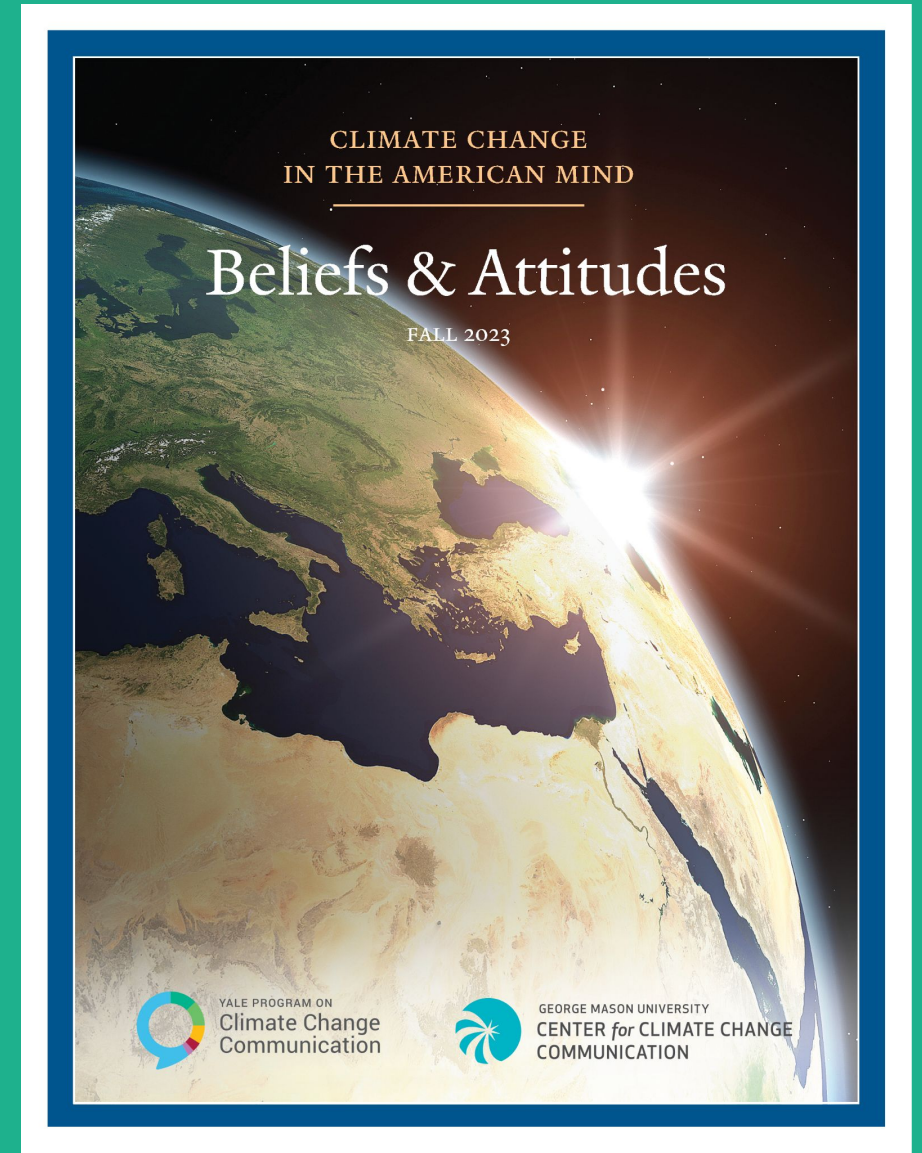
Global Warming's Six Americas

Alarmed   **Concerned**   **Cautious**   **Disengaged**   **Doubtful**   **Dismissive**

Fall 2023
n = 1,033

Highest Belief in Global Warming
Most Concerned
Most Motivated

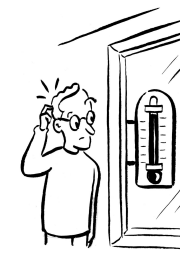Lowest Belief in Global Warming
Least Concerned
Least Motivated

Alarmed   Concerned   Cautious   Disengaged   Doubtful   Dismissive

Illustrations by
Michael Sloan

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
CENTER *for* CLIMATE CHANGE
COMMUNICATION

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Global Warming's Six Americas

Fall 2023
n = 1,033

Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive
28%	29%	15%	6%	11%	11%

Highest Belief in Global Warming
Most Concerned
Most Motivated

Lowest Belief in Global Warming
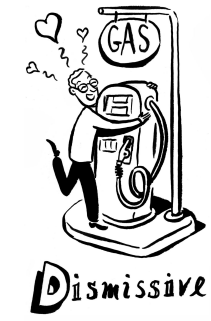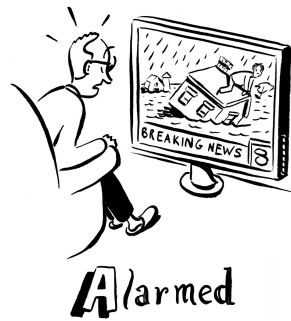Least Concerned
Least Motivated
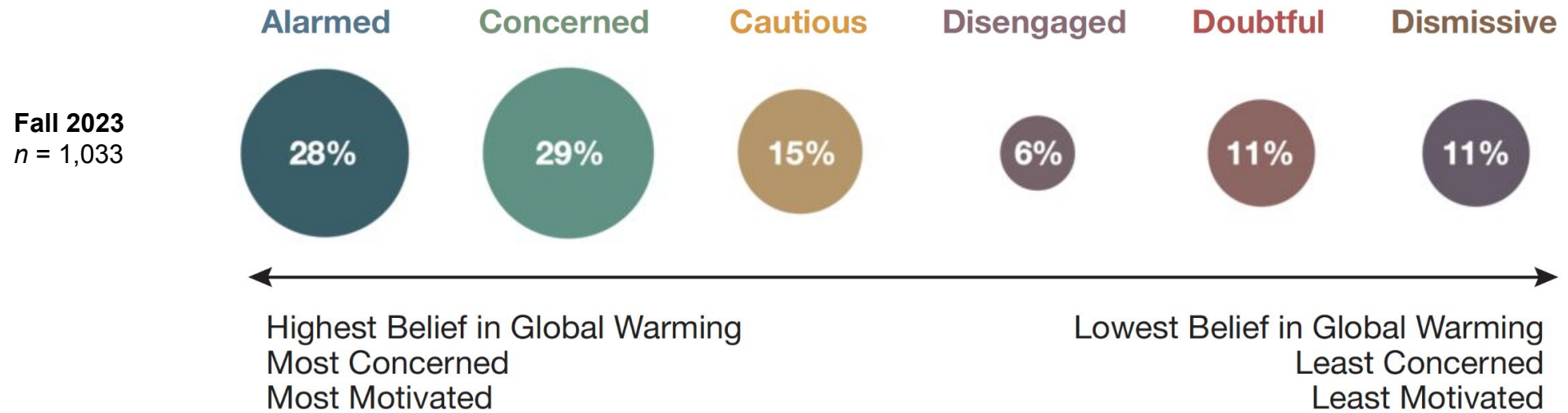
Global Warming's Six Americas Over the Last Decade

100%

15% — Alarmed +13 pts — 28% — **+13**

24% — Concerned +5 pts — 29% — **+5**

50%

26% — Cautious -11 pts — 15%

6% — Disengaged ~0 pts — 6%

15% — Doubtful -4 pts — 11%

12% — Dismissive -1 pt — 11%

0%

2013   2023
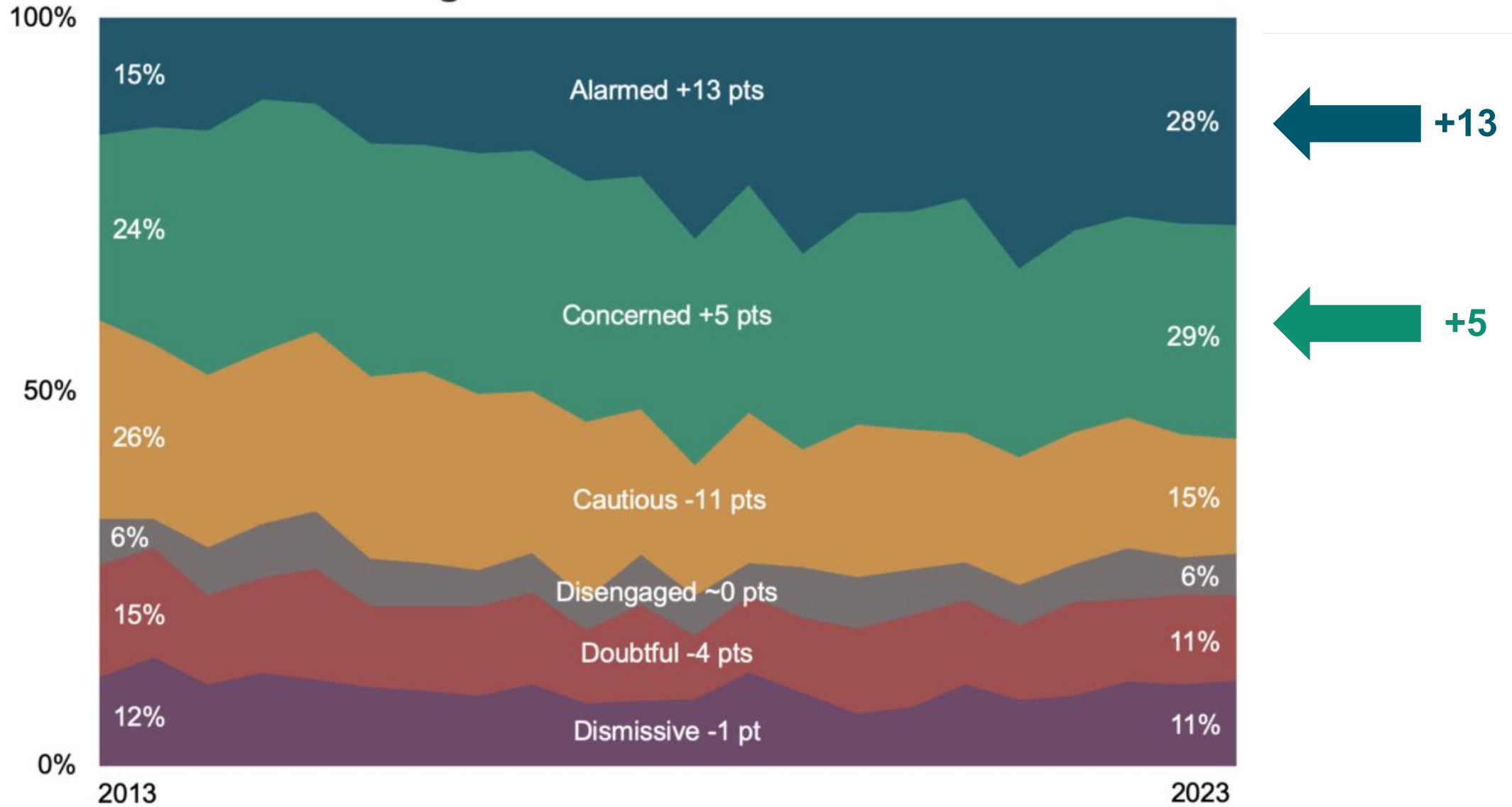
Base: 25,368 U.S. adults. Data include 22 waves of national surveys spanning April 2013 – October 2023.

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

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Most Americans (72%) think global warming is happening

● Think global warming is happening
● Think global warming is NOT happening
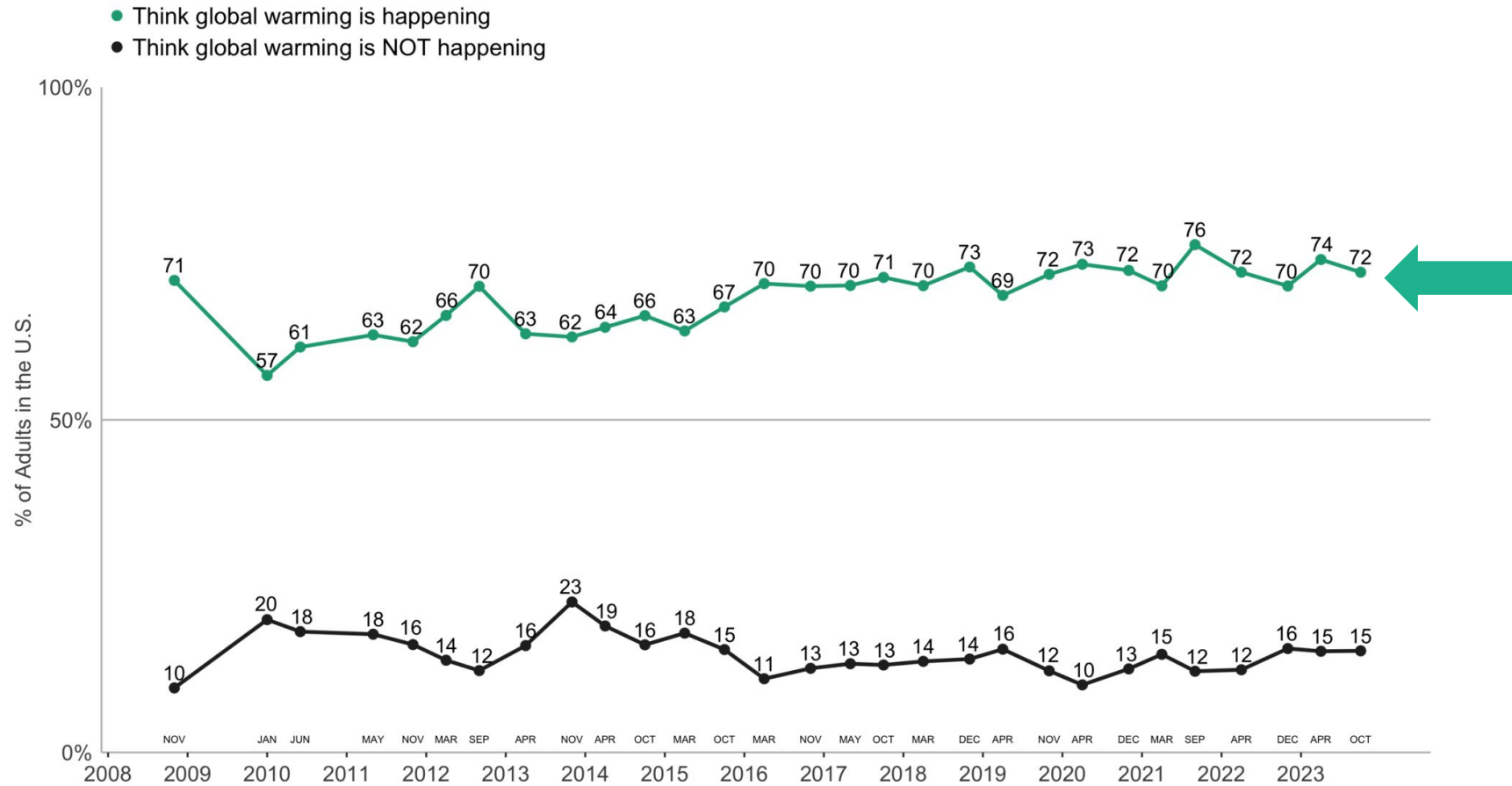
Do you think global warming is happening?

Fall 2023

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A majority of Americans (58%) think global warming is mostly human-caused

- ● Think global warming is caused mostly by human activities
- ● Think global warming is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment

Assuming global warming is happening, do you think it is . . .

Fall 2023

About half of Americans (53%) understand that most scientists think global warming is happening

● Most scientists think global warming is happening
● There is a lot of disagreement among scientists
● Most scientists think global warming is NOT happening
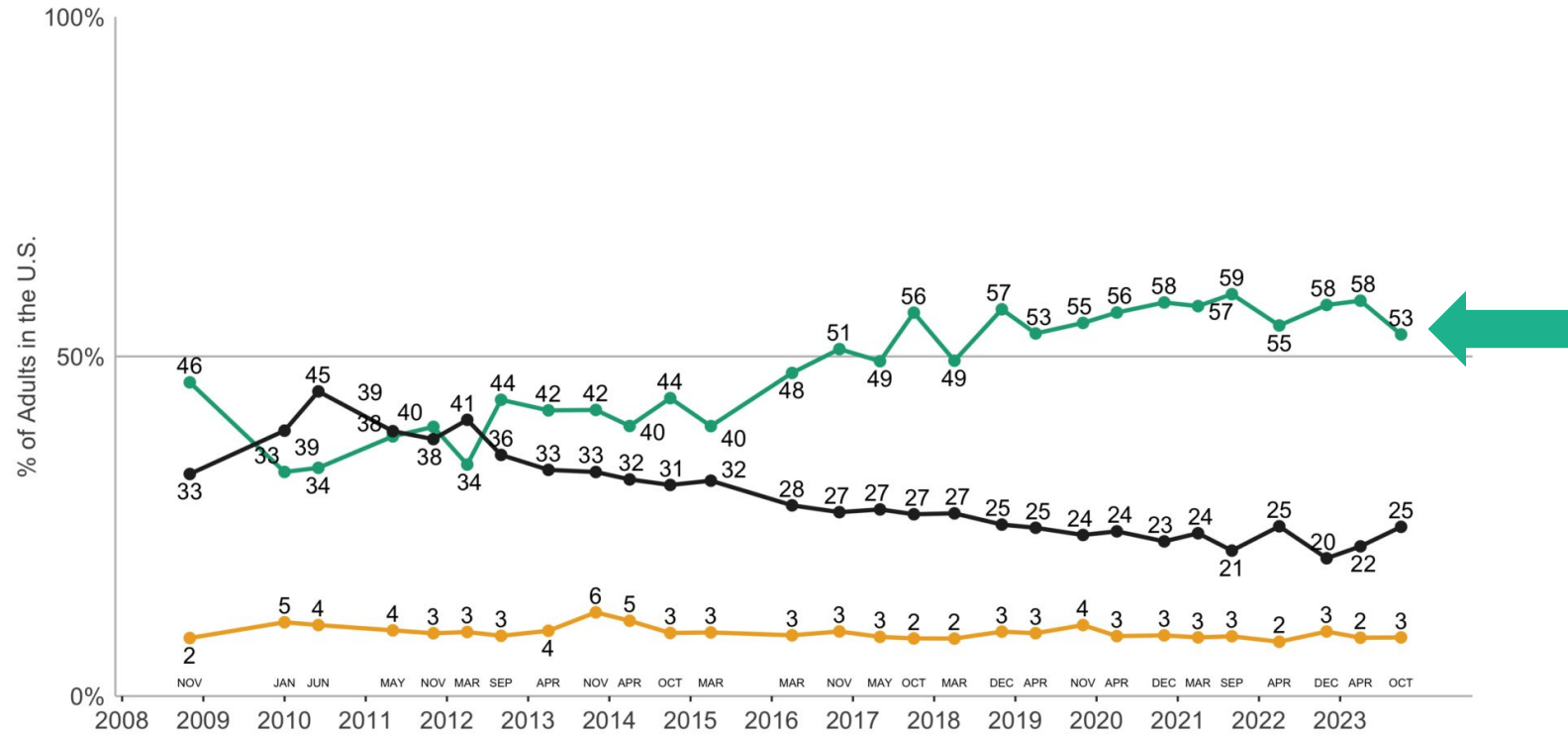
What comes closest to your own view?

Fall 2023

When asked to choose one question for a global warming expert, Americans most want to know about *causes* and *solutions*

Causes & Solutions

About half of Americans

Question	Percentage
How do you know that global warming is caused mostly by human activities, not natural changes in the environment?	16
What can the nations of the world do to reduce global warming?	14
Is there still time to reduce global warming, or is it too late?	13
What can the United States do to reduce global warming?	9
Is global warming really happening?	7
How do you know that global warming is happening?	7
Is global warming a hoax?	7
What harm will global warming cause?	6
Item not presented	6
What can I do to reduce global warming?	6
When will global warming begin to harm people?	4
What causes global warming?	3
How much would it cost the United States to reduce global warming?	3
No response	
Will global warming harm people?	

If you could ask the expert on global warming
ONLY ONE QUESTION, which question would you ask?

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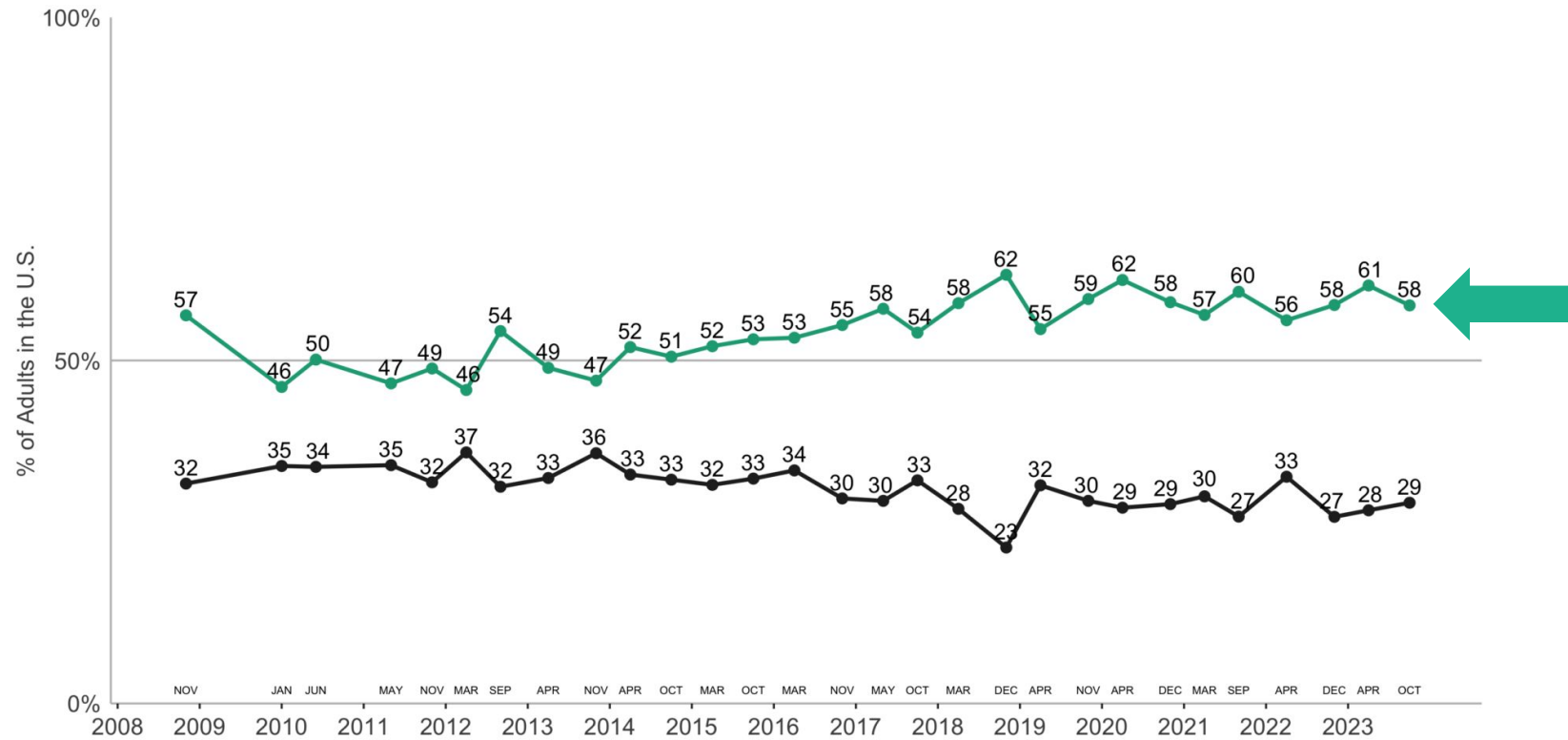# A majority of Americans (65%) are worried about global warming
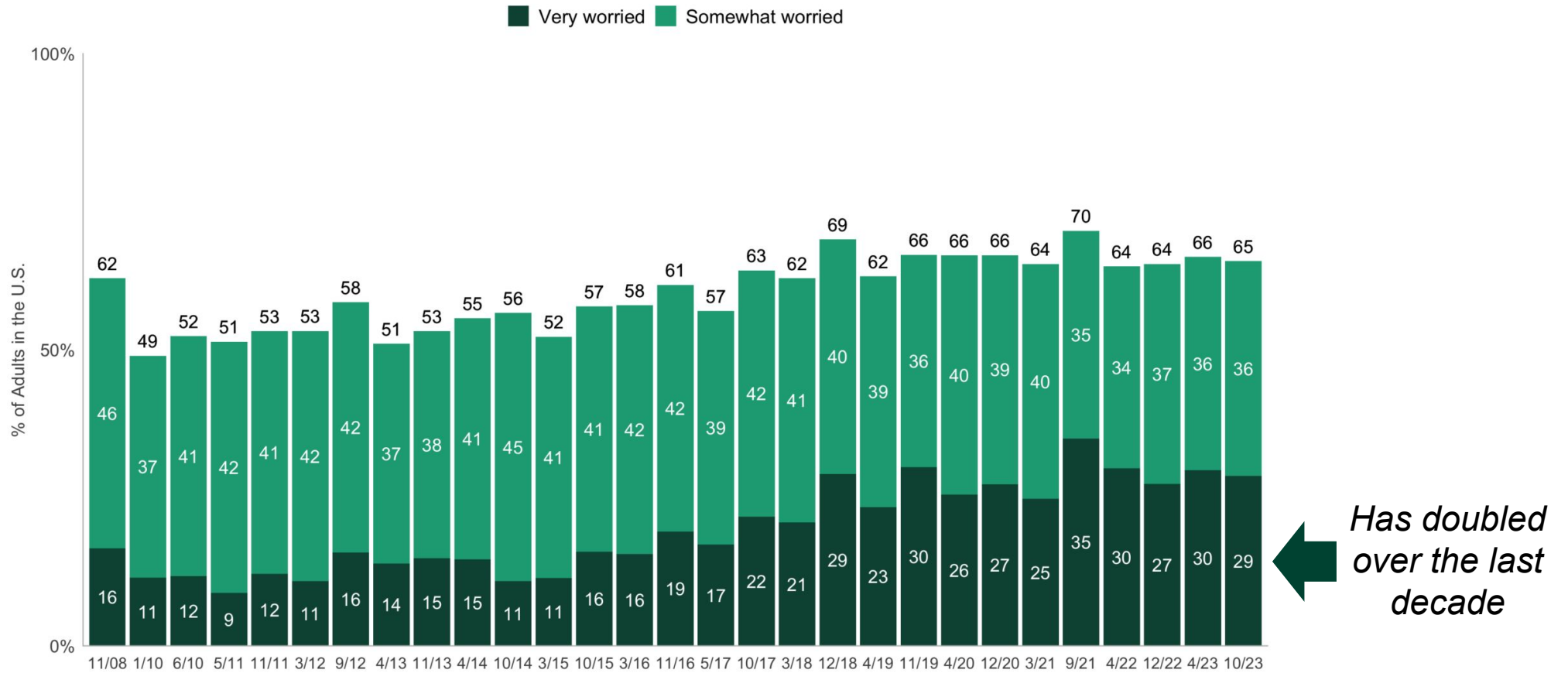
How worried are you about global warming?

Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

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About 1 in 10 Americans are experiencing psychological distress because of global warming
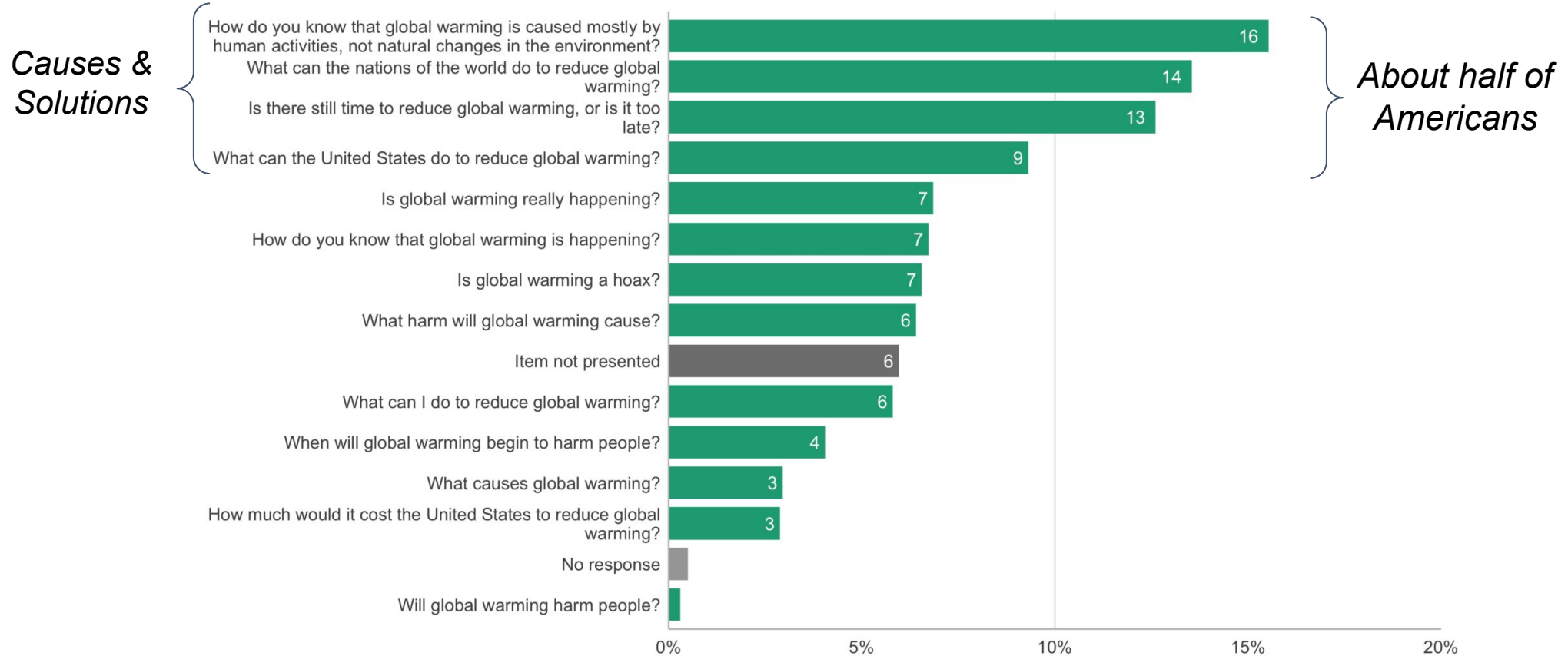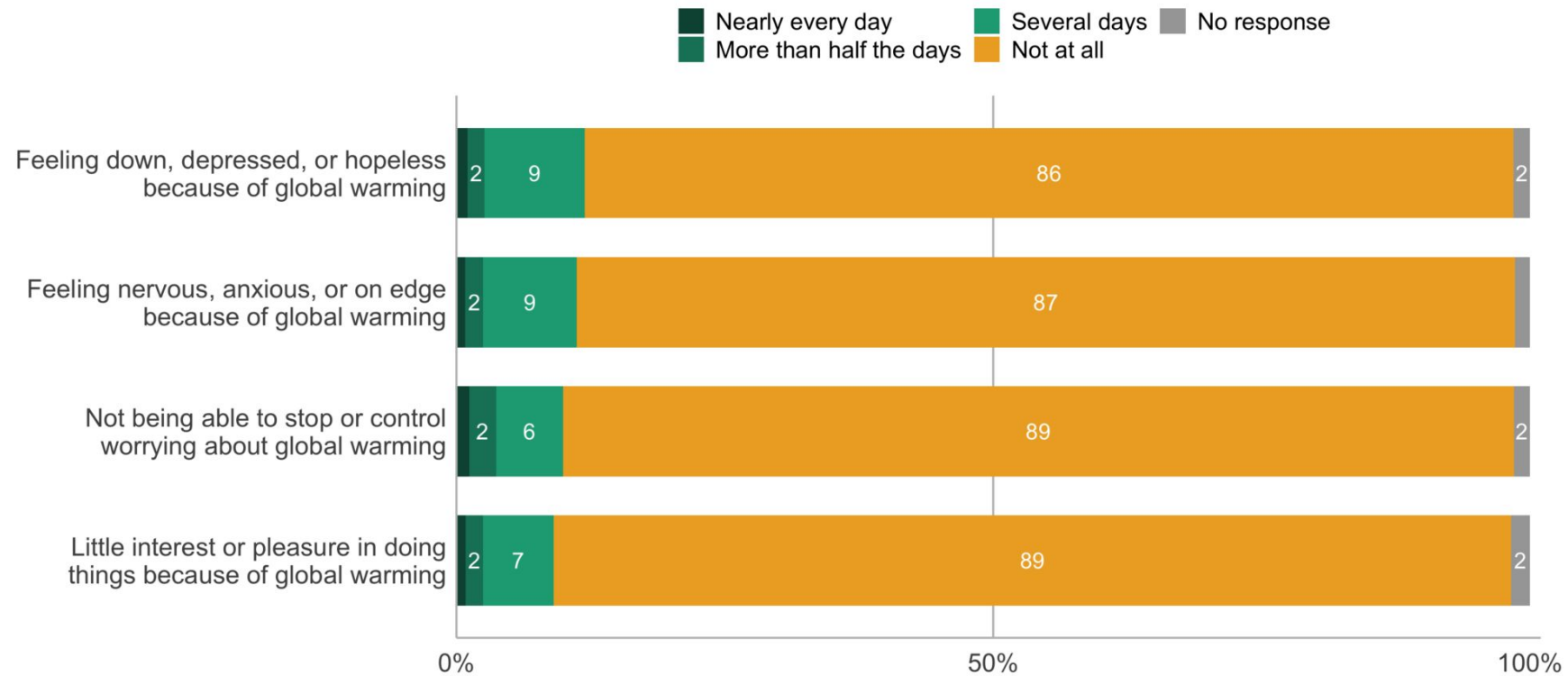

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

Many Americans (43%) say they have personally experienced the effects of global warming
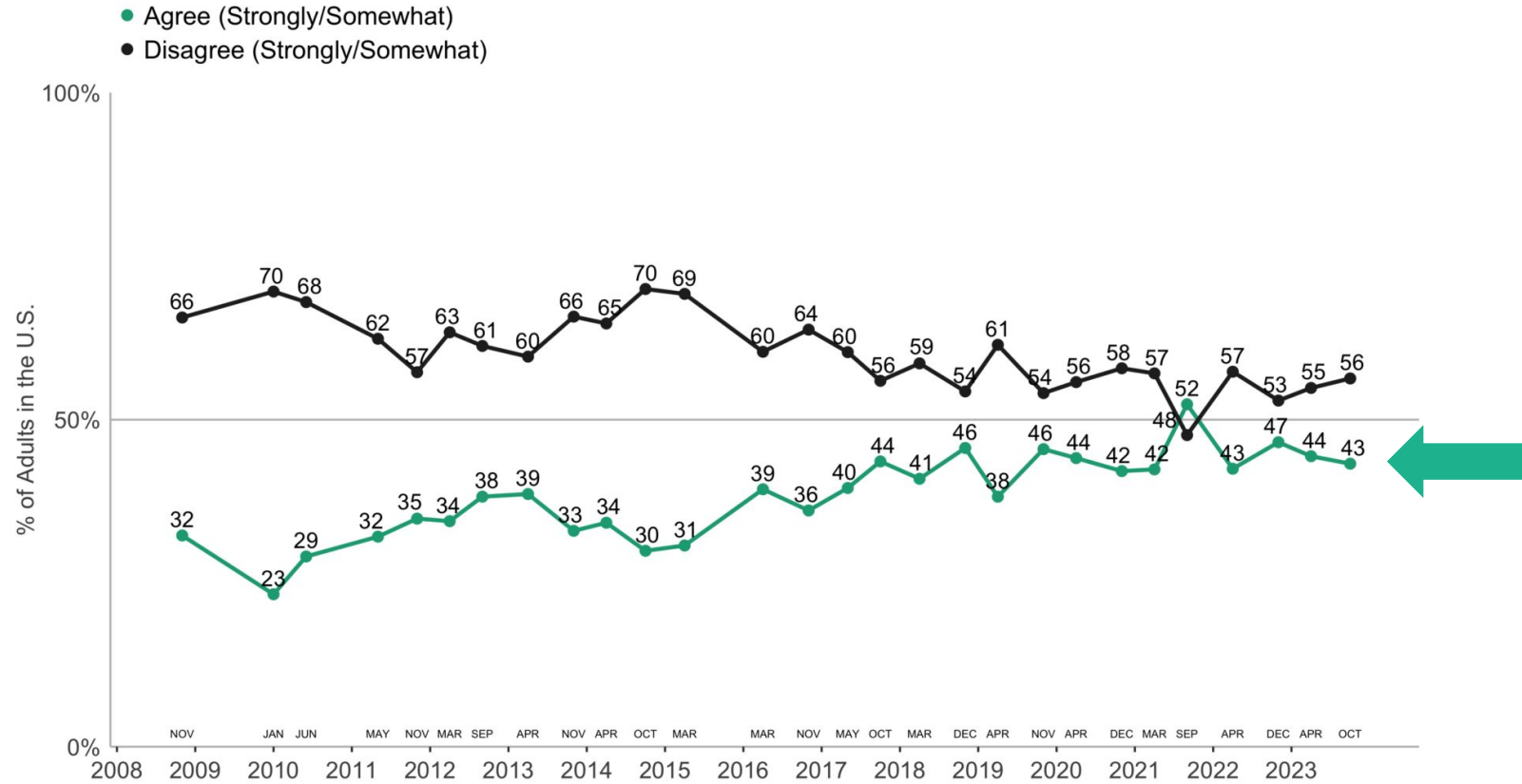
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I have personally experienced the effects of global warming.

Fall 2023

Many Americans think global warming will harm them, but more think *others* will be harmed

■ A great deal ■ A moderate amount

% of Adults in the U.S.

	A great deal	A moderate amount	Total
You personally	16	29	45
Your family	18	31	49
People in your community	19	31	50
People in the United States	30	29	59
People in developing countries	45	21	66
The world's poor	49	18	67
Future generations of people	55	15	70
Plant and animal species	54	17	71
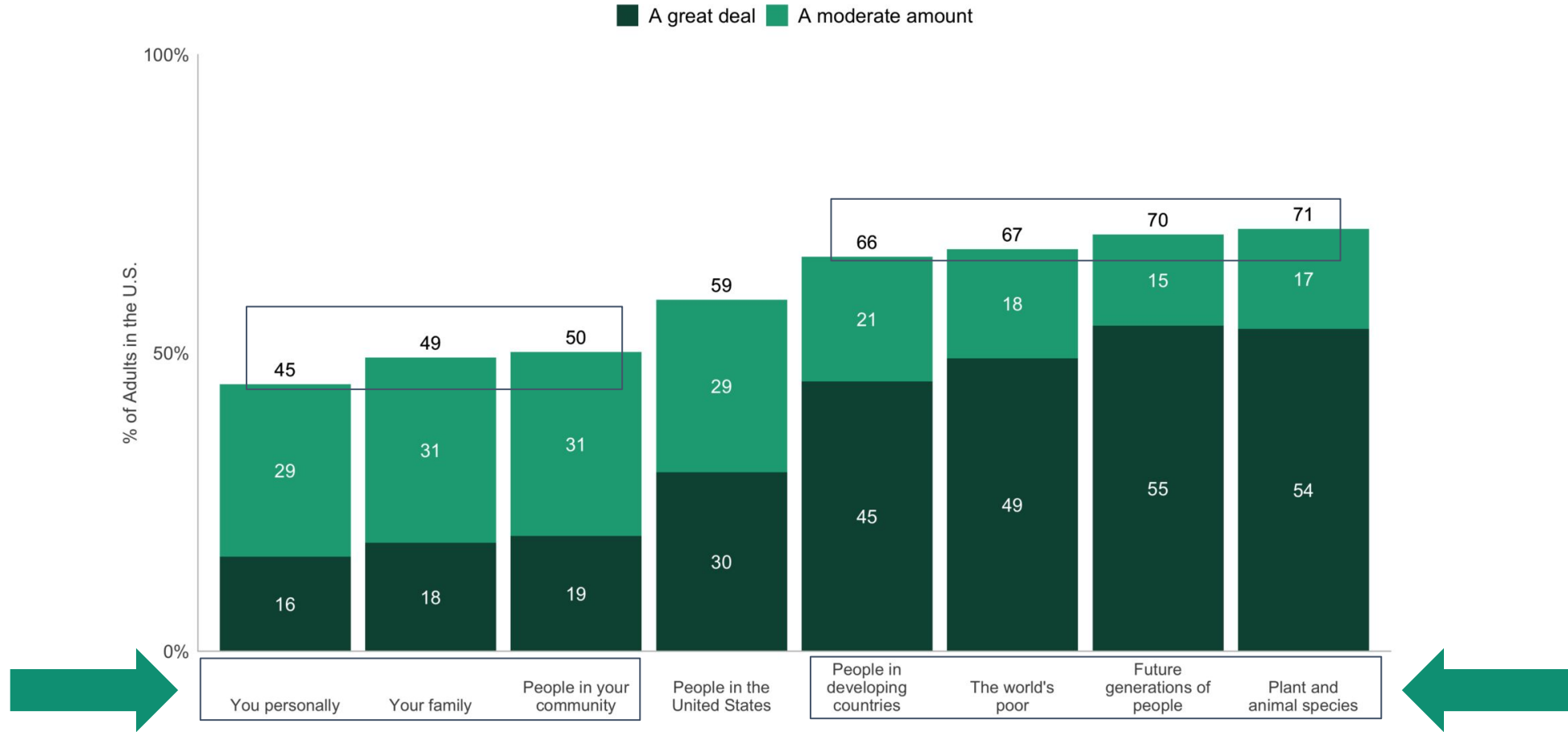
How much do you think global warming will harm . . .?

Fall 2023

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A majority of Americans (61%) think global warming is affecting the weather in the U.S. at least "a little"

Only 33% say "a lot"

Legend:
- Affecting the weather a lot
- Affecting the weather some
- Affecting the weather a little/Don't know how much
- Not affecting the weather
- Not happening
- Don't know/No response

Bar values: 33 | 22 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 23

0% — 50% — 100%
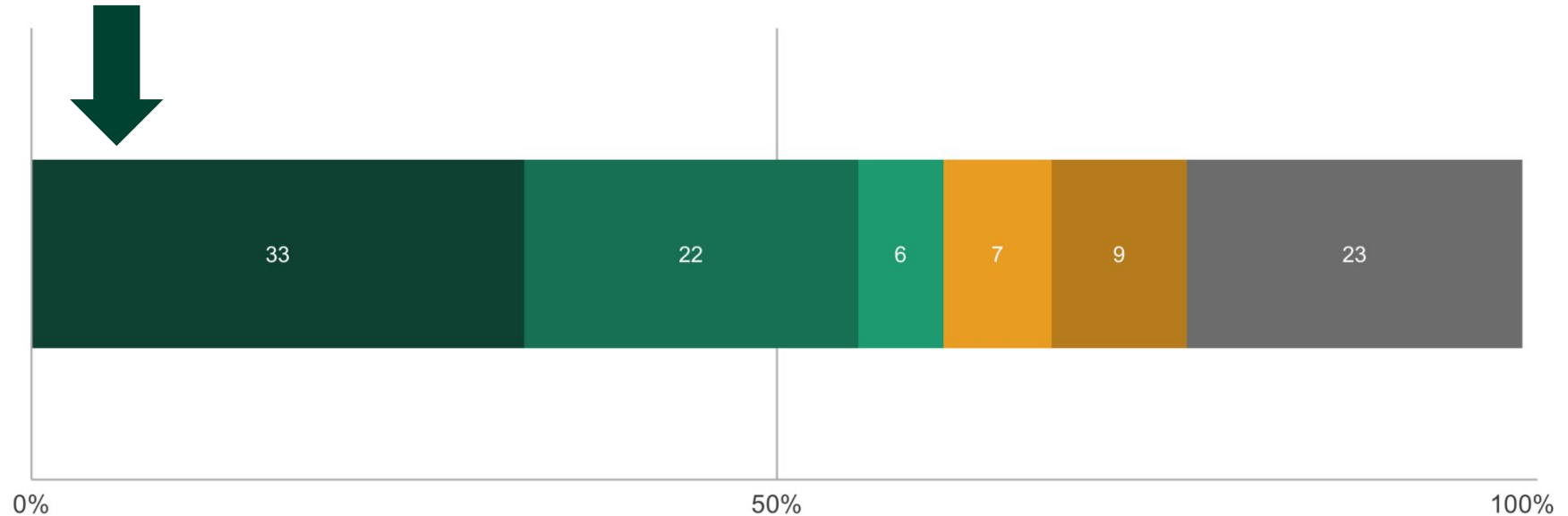
Which statement best reflects your view? (a) Global warming is affecting weather in the United States; (b) Global warming is not affecting weather in the United States; (c) Global warming isn't happening; (d) dont know; (e) Prefer not to answer. [If (a) selected] How much do you think global warming is affecting weather in the United States?

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A majority of Americans are worried about harm from environmental problems in their local area

Legend: Very worried | Moderately worried | A little worried | Not at all worried | No response

	Very worried	Moderately worried	A little worried	Not at all worried
Electricity power outages	11	24	39	26
Air pollution	14	24	35	26
Extreme heat	18	23	29	29
Water pollution	13	21	34	32
Droughts	11	18	34	36
Agricultural pests and diseases	7	18	39	36
Flooding	7	16	35	42
Water shortages	11	16	29	43
Tornados	8	17	30	44
Wildfires	9	15	28	48
Hurricanes	7	11	20	61
Rising sea levels	6	12	20	61
Reduced snow pack	7	10	20	62

How worried are you that the following might harm your local area?

Fall 2023

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Most Americans (65%) "rarely" or "never" discuss global warming with family and friends
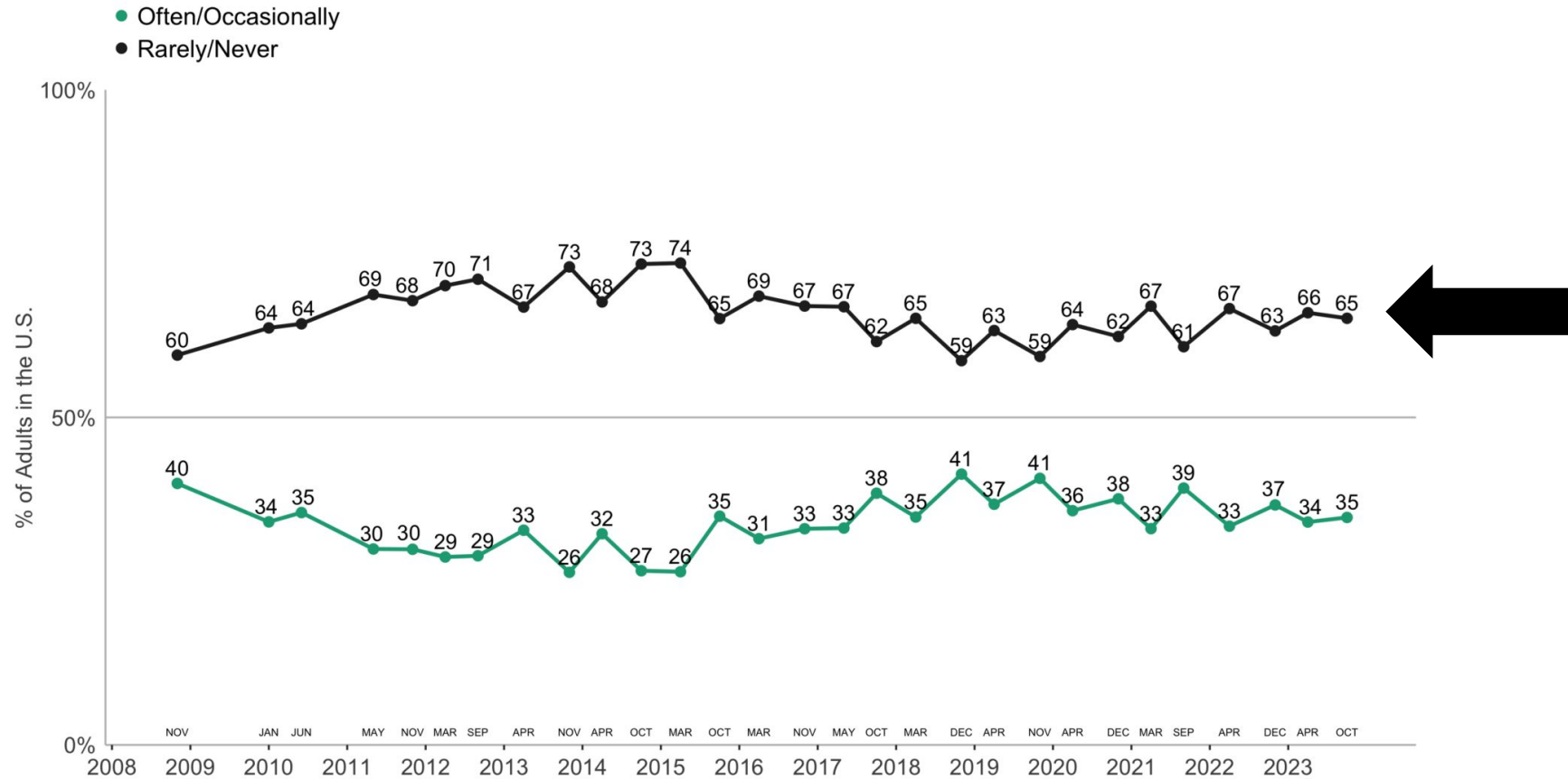
How often do you discuss global warming with your family and friends?

Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

Americans' Views on Climate Justice & Climate Policy

Nationally representative survey of 1,033 U.S. adults (18+) 906 of whom are registered to vote. Climate justice report: 1,011 U.S. adults (861 registered voters)
Avg. margin of error = +/- 3% points

Carman, J., Ballew, M., Lu, D., Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Goddard, E., Low, J., Marlon, J., Verner, M., Lee, S., Myers, T., Goldberg, M., Badullovich, N., Mason, T., Aguilar, A., Ongelungel, S. M., Sahlin, K., Sanchez, C., Burga, I., Magaña, M., Amer, S., Williams, R.T., Burgess, M., McRae, G., Fekede, M., Salgado, M., Larson, A., Barendregt-Ludwig, K., Gelobter, M., & Torres, G. (2023). Climate Change in the American Mind: Climate Justice, Spring 2023. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Goddard, E., Carman, J., Verner, M., Ballew, M., Marlon, J., Lee, S., Myers, T., Goldberg, M., Badullovich, N., Thier, K. (2023). Climate Change in the American Mind: Politics & Policy, Fall 2023. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

About one in three Americans (34%) say they have heard or read at least "a little" about climate justice

- % "a lot", "some", or "only a little" -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Respondents

Heard about climate justice   27 28 32 34   56

0%   50%   100%

How much, if anything, have you heard or read about climate justice? Have you heard…
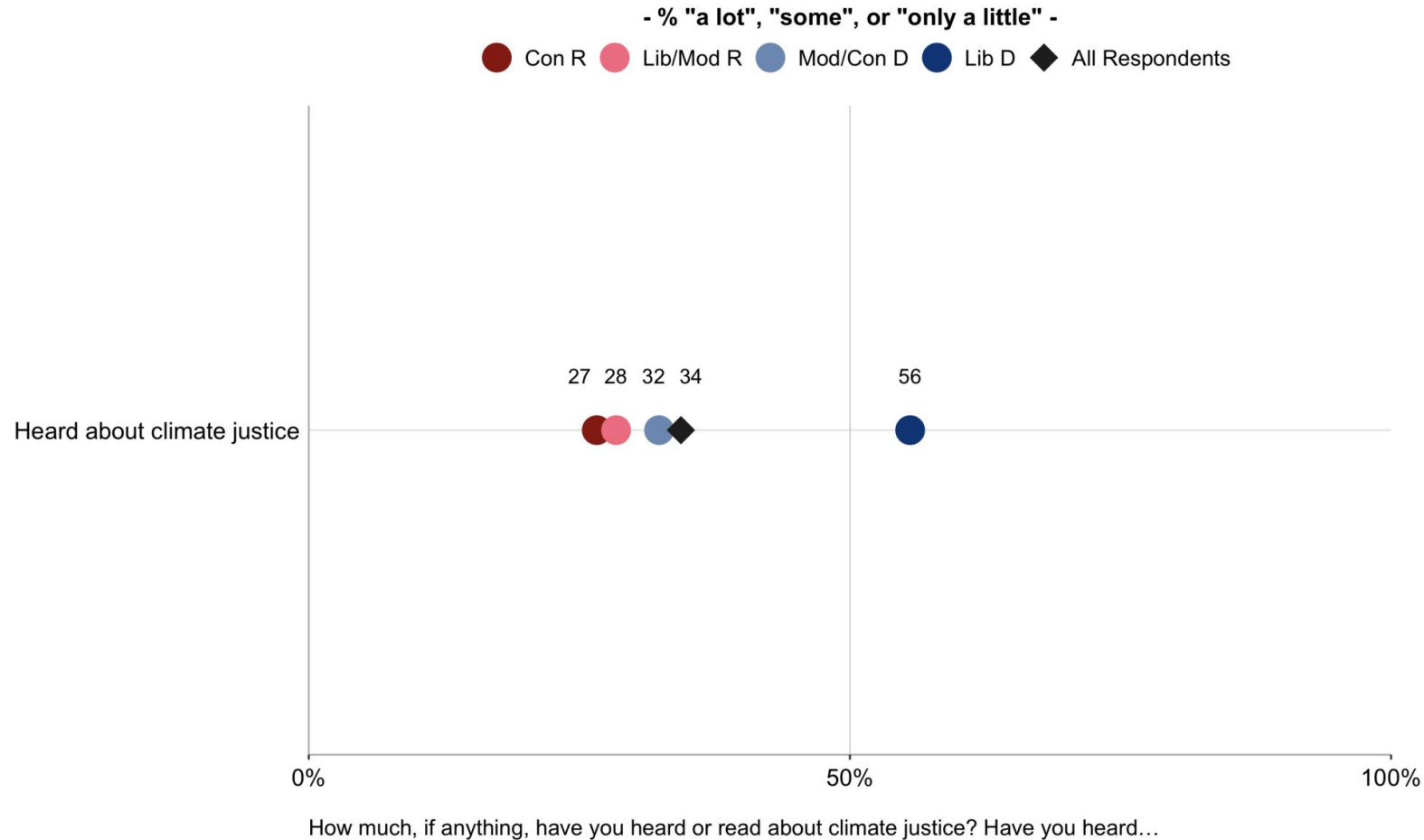
Americans 18+, Spring 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

About half of Americans (53%) say they support the goals of climate justice after learning about them

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" support -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Respondents

19 — ● Con R
31 — ● Lib/Mod R
53 — ◆ All Respondents
65 — ● Mod/Con D
91 — ● Lib D

0%   50%   100%
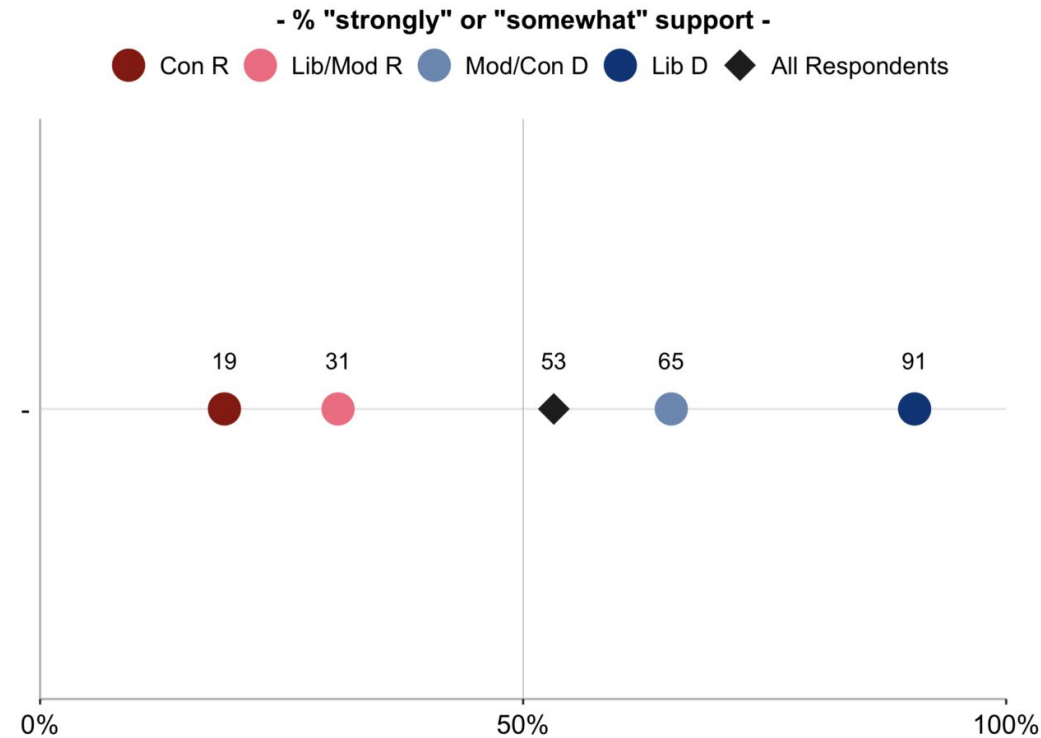
Climate justice refers to the idea that global warming affects everyone, but certain communities are harmed more than others, especially low-income communities and communities of color. The goals of climate justice are to reduce these unequal harms, include these communities in decision-making, and ensure they receive a fair share of the benefits of climate action (such as good jobs, cleaner air and water, better health, etc.). How much do you support or oppose the goals of climate justice?

Americans 18+, Spring 2023

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Across many demographic groups, a majority support the goals of climate justice after learning about them

Know a lot/some about climate justice | Support climate justice goals

Group	Know a lot/some about climate justice	Support climate justice goals
Black, non-Hispanic/Latino (n = 86)*	12%	70%
Hispanic/Latino (n = 133)	20%	66%
Bachelor's degree or higher (n = 418)	30%	61%
Urban (n = 221)	24%	61%
Female (n = 516)	14%	59%
Gen Z/Millennial (n = 310)	21%	58%
Less than $50,000 (n = 244)	12%	56%
Suburban (n = 533)	17%	56%
$100,000 or more (n = 444)	22%	54%
All U.S. Respondents (n = 1011)	18%	53%
Baby Boomer/Silent/Greatest (n = 428)	17%	50%
Gen X (n = 273)	14%	50%
$50,000-$99,999 (n = 323)	17%	49%
Some college (n = 266)	13%	49%
High school or less (n = 327)	10%	49%
Male (n = 495)	22%	47%
White, non-Hispanic/Latino (n = 710)	17%	44%
Rural (n = 251)	13%	39%

[Left] How much, if anything, have you heard or read about climate justice? Have you heard... % "A lot" or "Some"
[Right] How much do you support or oppose the goals of climate justice? ... % "Strongly support" or "Somewhat support"

April 2023. Base: 1,011 U.S. adults.
* Denotes groups with small sample sizes so results should be interpreted with caution

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication • Created with Datawrapper

A large majority of registered voters support policies that promote climate justice goals

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" support -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Reg Voters

Policy	Con R	Lib/Mod R	All Reg Voters	Mod/Con D	Lib D
Create more parks and green spaces in low-income communities and communities of color	59	75	81	89	95
Strengthen enforcement of industrial pollution limits in low-income communities and communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by air and water pollution	47	66	77	86	97
Provide federal funding to make residential buildings in low-income communities more energy efficient	47	68	76	84	95
Develop a national program to train people from low-income communities and communities of color for new jobs in the renewable energy industry (such as wind and solar)	42	72	75	86	98
Develop a national program to train people who work in the fossil fuel industry for new jobs in the renewable energy industry (such as wind and solar)	42	70	75	84	96
Increase federal funding to low-income communities and communities of color who are disproportionately harmed by air and water pollution	36	58	70	83	95
Transition the U.S. economy (including electric utilities, transportation, buildings, and industry) from fossil fuels to 100% clean energy by 2050	30	58	69	84	93

0%   50%   100%

How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

Registered U.S. voters, Spring 2023

Bipartisan support for green spaces

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22

Most registered voters (57%) would prefer to vote for a candidate who supports action on global warming

Supporters > Opposers
Ratio more than 3:1

■ A candidate who supports action on global warming   ■ A candidate who opposes action on global warming
■ Doesn't matter either way   ■ No response

	Supports	Doesn't matter	Opposes / No response
All Reg Voters	57	26	16
Lib D	95	5	
Mod/Con D	86	12	3
Lib/Mod R	46	40	14
Con R	13	43	44

0%   50%   100%
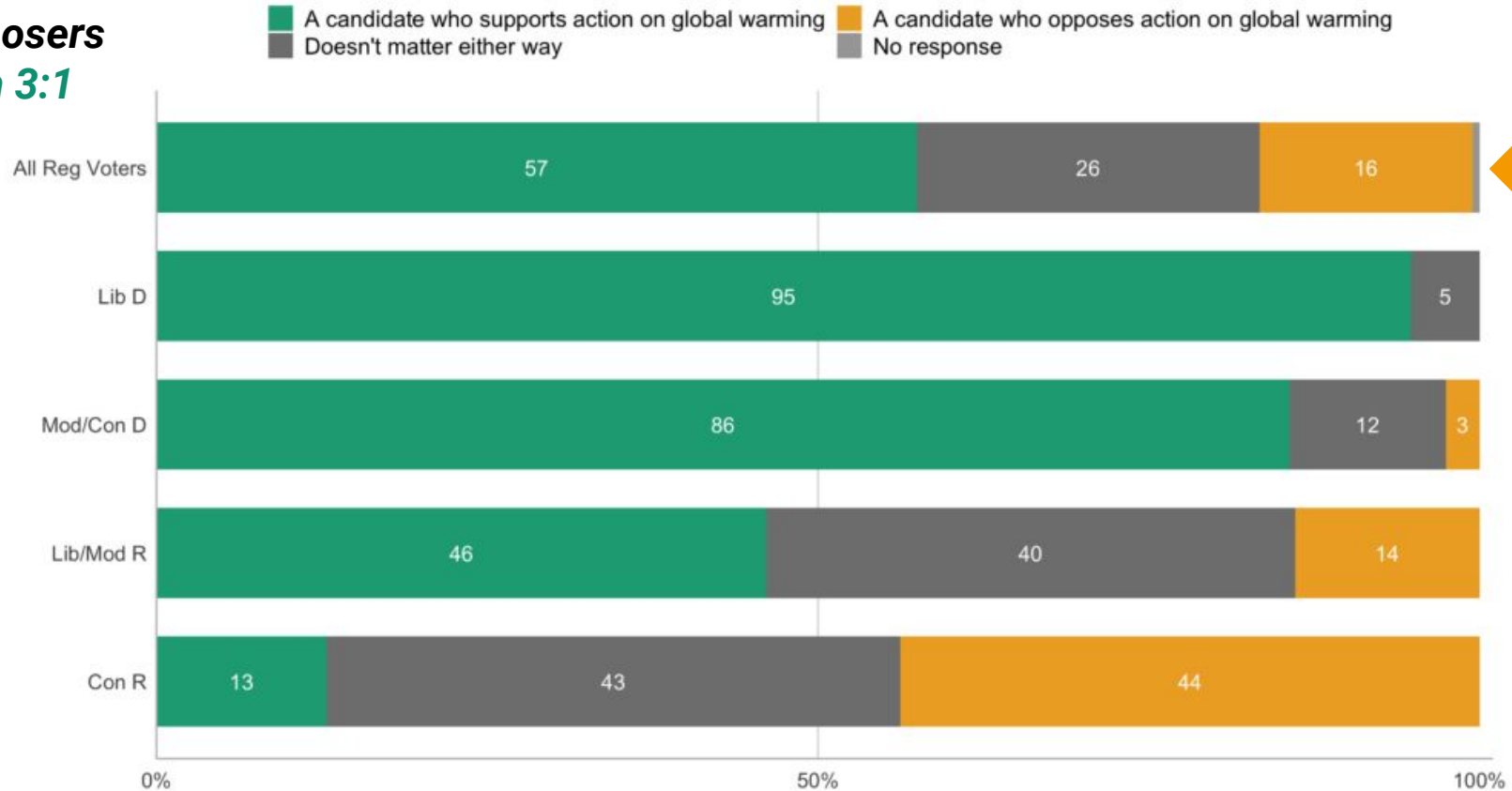
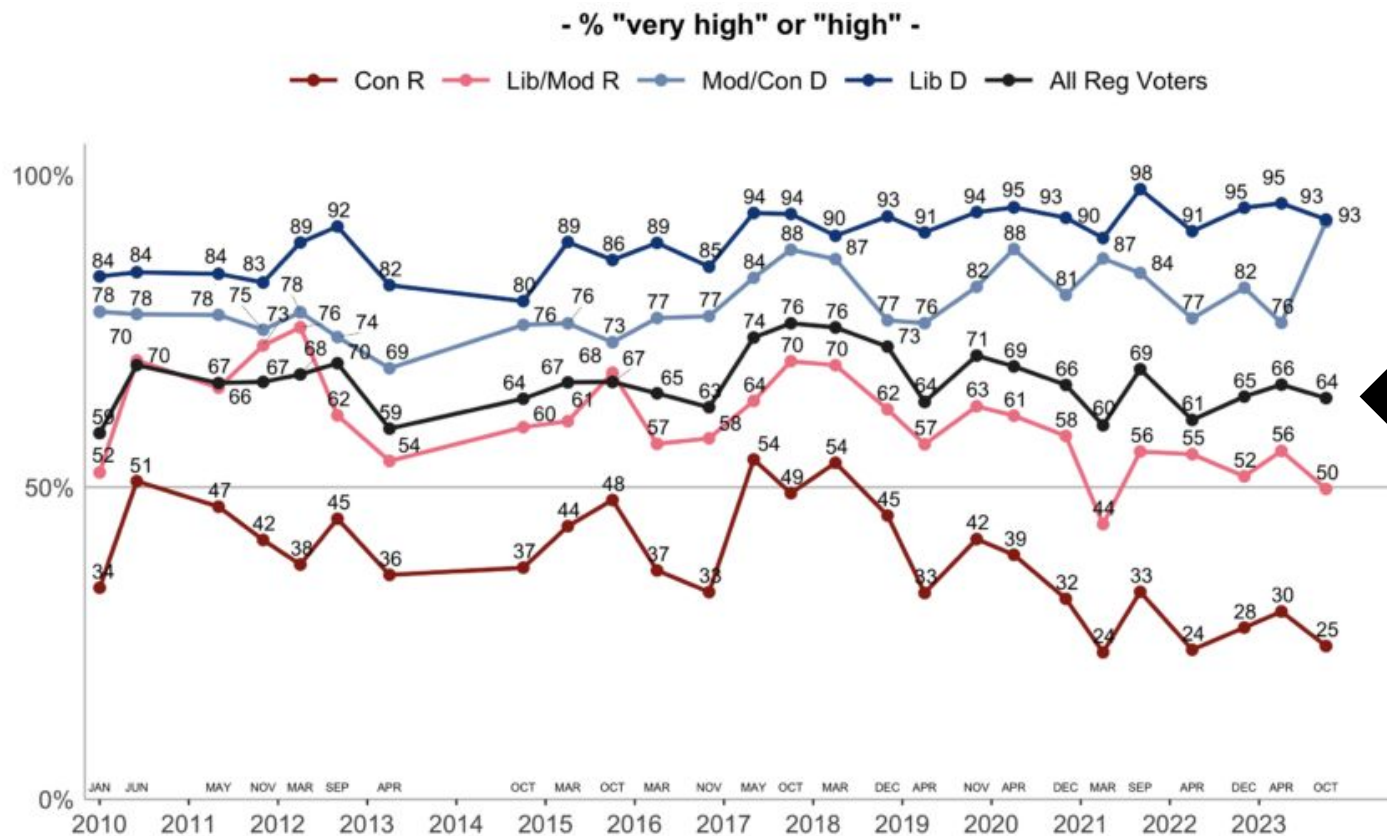If given a choice, would you prefer to vote for a candidate for public office who [supports action on global warming] or one who [opposes action on global warming]?

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication; George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

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23

- % "very high" or "high" -

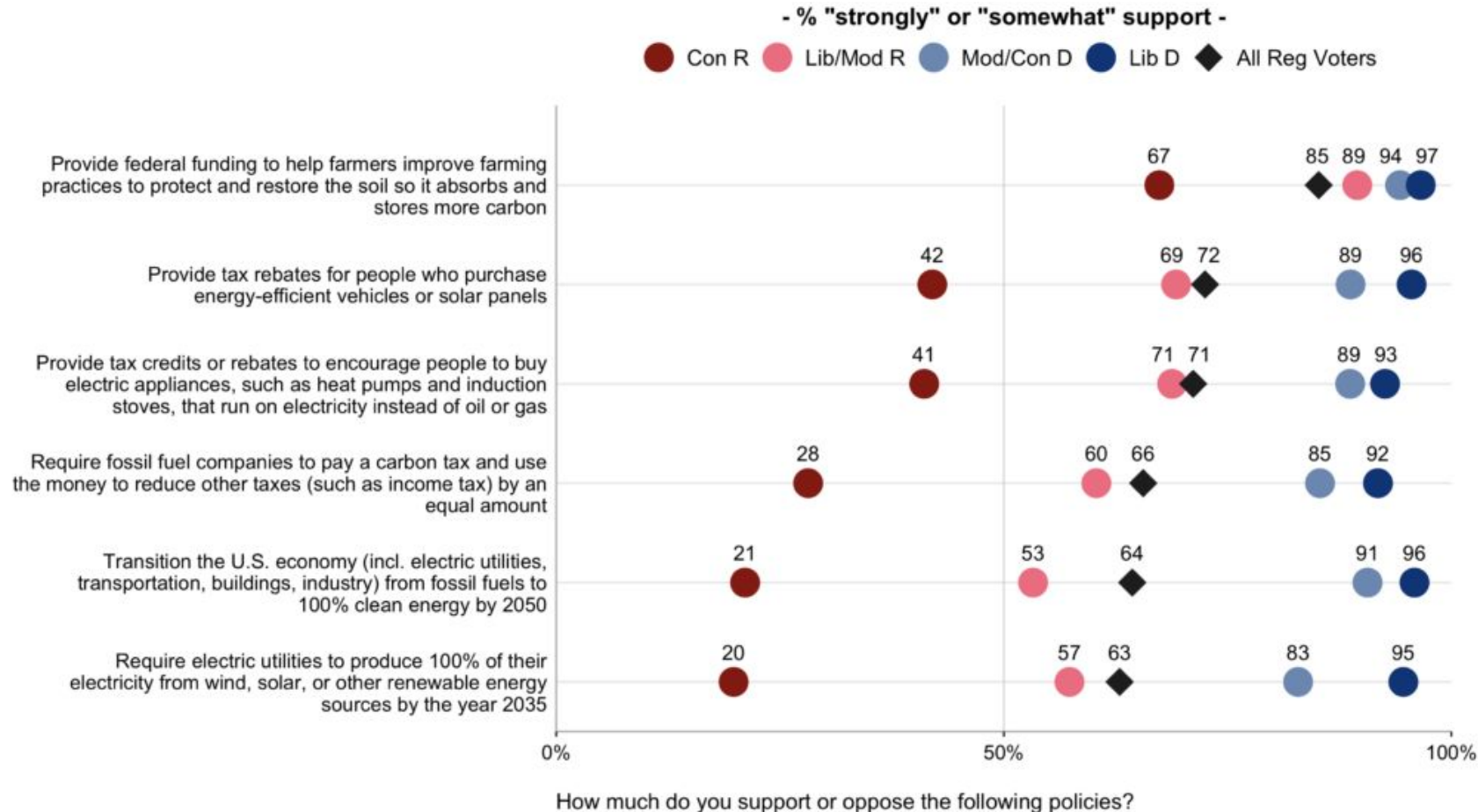Con R — Lib/Mod R — Mod/Con D — Lib D — All Reg Voters

Do you think the following should be a low, medium, high, or very high priority for the president and Congress? [Developing sources of clean energy]

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

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Communication

Most registered voters, including many Republicans, support climate-friendly energy policies

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" support -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Reg Voters

Policy	Con R	Lib/Mod R	Mod/Con D	Lib D	All Reg Voters
Provide federal funding to help farmers improve farming practices to protect and restore the soil so it absorbs and stores more carbon	67	89	94	97	85
Provide tax rebates for people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels	42	69	89	96	72
Provide tax credits or rebates to encourage people to buy electric appliances, such as heat pumps and induction stoves, that run on electricity instead of oil or gas	41	71	89	93	71
Require fossil fuel companies to pay a carbon tax and use the money to reduce other taxes (such as income tax) by an equal amount	28	60	85	92	66
Transition the U.S. economy (incl. electric utilities, transportation, buildings, industry) from fossil fuels to 100% clean energy by 2050	21	53	91	96	64
Require electric utilities to produce 100% of their electricity from wind, solar, or other renewable energy sources by the year 2035	20	57	83	95	63

How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

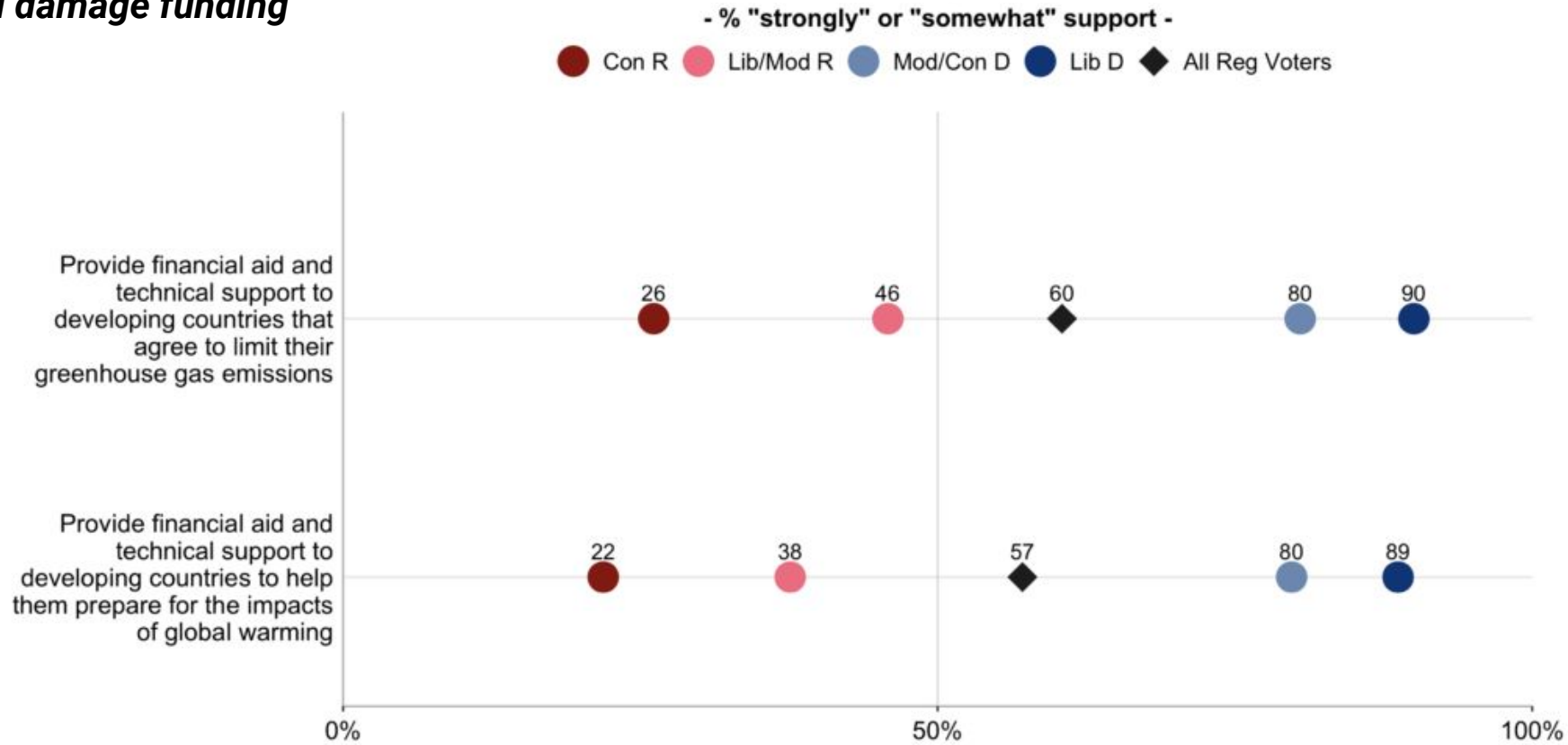Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

Bipartisan support for funding farmers

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

YALE PROGRAM ON
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Communication

25

A majority of registered voters support the U.S. providing aid to developing countries for climate change mitigation and adaptation

i.e., loss and damage funding

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" support -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Reg Voters

Mitigation — Provide financial aid and technical support to developing countries that agree to limit their greenhouse gas emissions: 26, 46, 60, 80, 90

Adaptation — Provide financial aid and technical support to developing countries to help them prepare for the impacts of global warming: 22, 38, 57, 80, 89
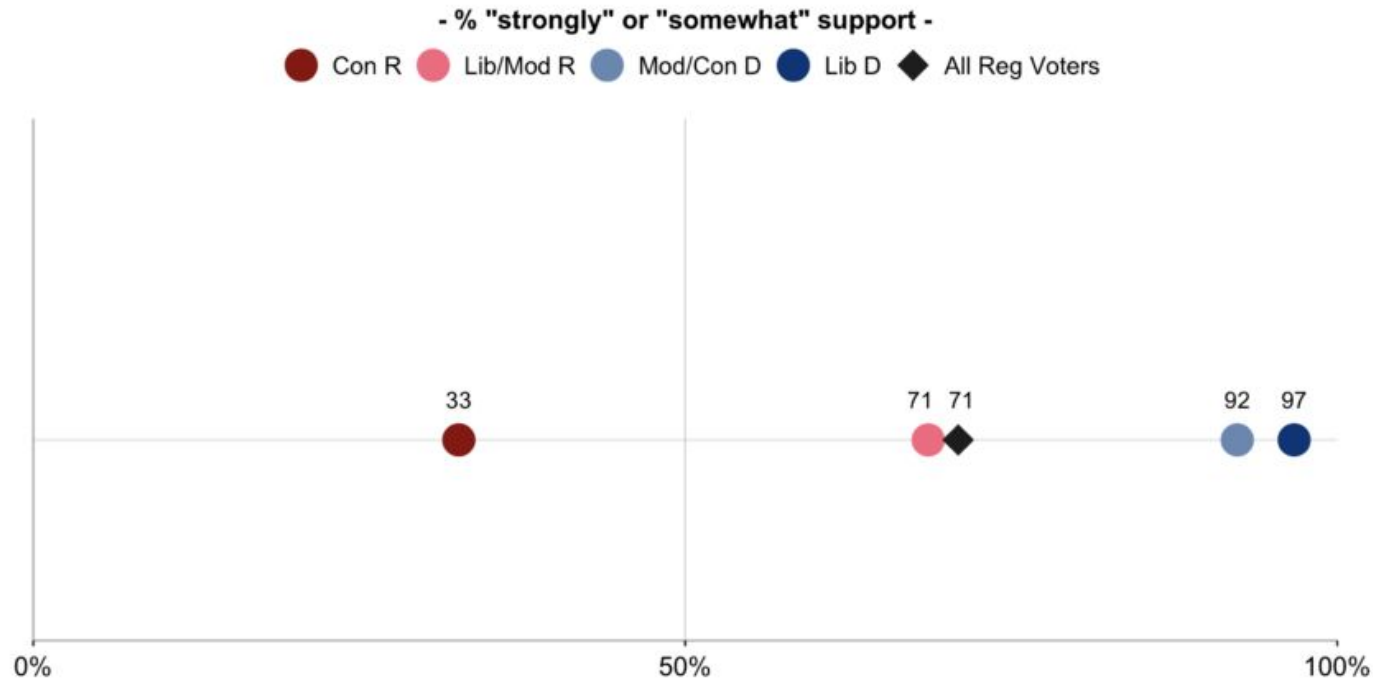
0%   50%   100%

How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication; George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

YALE PROGRAM ON Climate Change Communication

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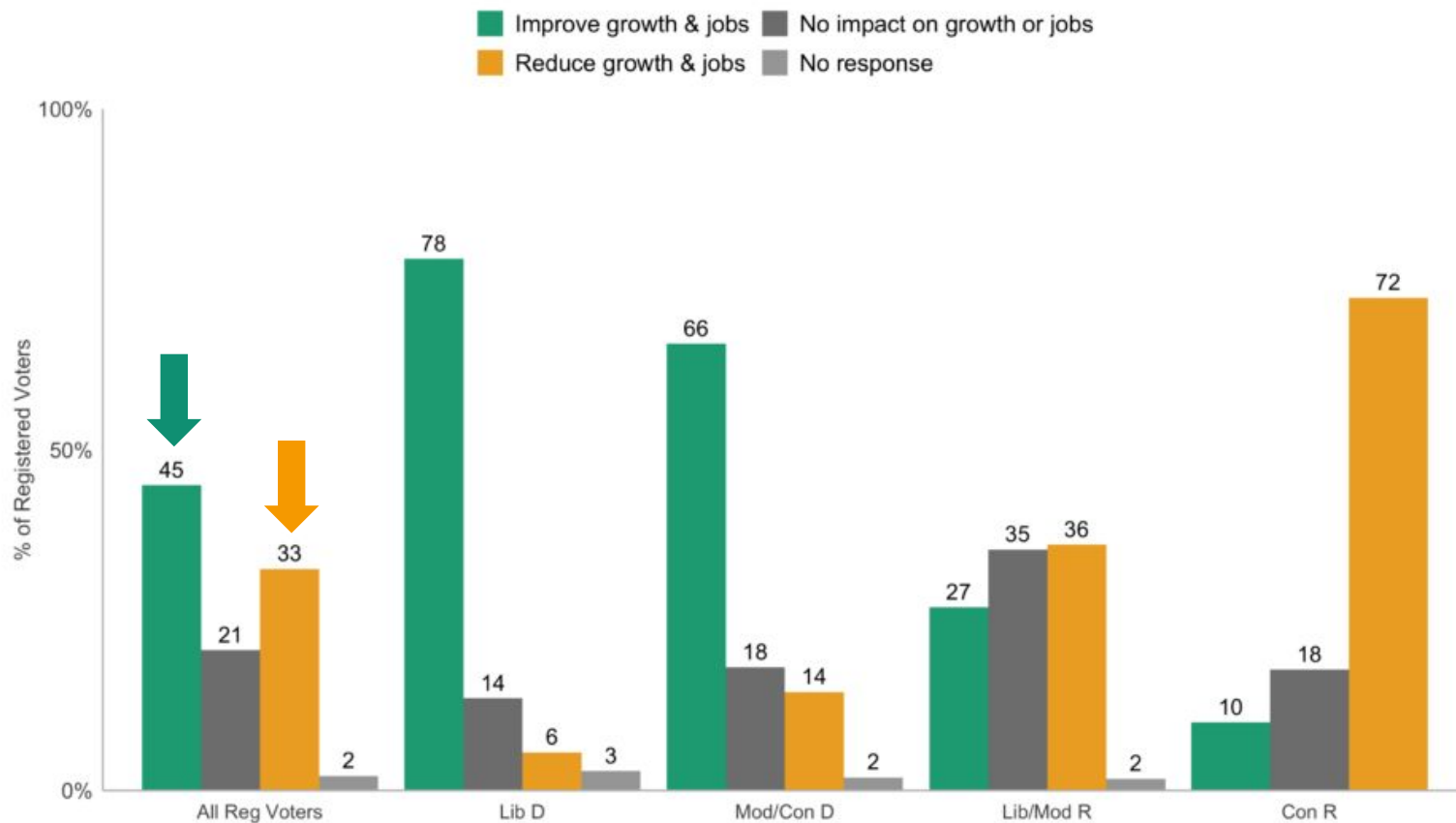# A majority of registered voters (71%) support the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 after learning about it

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" support -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Reg Voters

33   71 71   92 97

0%   50%   100%

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) aims to curb inflation by reducing the federal deficit, lowering prescription drug prices and the cost of health insurance, modernizing the Internal Revenue Service, and investing in U.S. clean energy production. The law authorizes $391 billion for developing clean energy and addressing global warming, including tax incentives and rebates to help consumers and businesses buy energy-efficient appliances, solar panels, electric vehicles, etc. The IRA also includes support for clean energy jobs and investments in communities that are most harmed by air and water pollution. It is the largest investment the U.S. government has ever made to reduce global warming, and is projected to help the U.S. reduce its carbon pollution 40% by 2030. The law will be paid for by closing tax loopholes. How much do you support or oppose this law?

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

But only 36% have heard "a lot" (12%) or "some" (24%) about it

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Many registered voters (45%) think policies that promote clean energy will improve economic growth and create jobs

Legend: Improve growth & jobs | No impact on growth or jobs | Reduce growth & jobs | No response

	All Reg Voters	Lib D	Mod/Con D	Lib/Mod R	Con R
Improve growth & jobs	45	78	66	27	10
No impact on growth or jobs	21	14	18	35	18
Reduce growth & jobs	33	6	14	36	72
No response	2	3	2	2	

Please indicate which one of these statements comes closest to your own views – even if it is not exactly right: Overall, government policies intended to transition away from fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) and toward clean energy (solar, wind) will…

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

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Communication

About one third of Americans (31%) prefer a home in which *all* major appliances are powered by electricity

If you had the choice, which of the following would you prefer to live in (assuming costs and other features are the same)?

■ A home in which all major appliances (stove, heating system, water heater, etc.) are powered by electricity
■ A home in which most major appliances (heating system, water heater, etc.) are powered by electricity, but which has a gas stove for cooking   ■ A home in which most or all major appliances (stove, heating system, water heater, etc.) are powered by natural gas, propane, or oil   ■ No preference   ■ Don't know   ■ Refused

60%

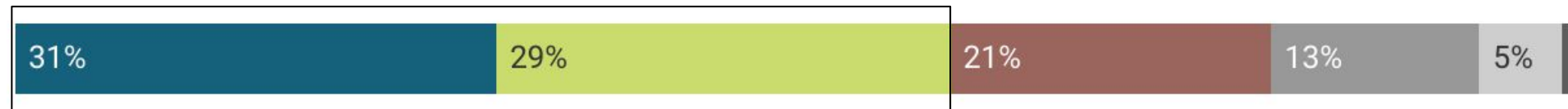| 31% | 29% | 21% | 13% | 5% |

Chart: Based on Climate Change in the American Mind nationally representative survey (n=1,011) conducted from April 11 – May 1, 2023. • Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication & George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication • Created with Datawrapper

Marlon, J., Mildenberger, M., Burns, C., Lazarovic, S., Ballew, M., Rosenthal, S., Maibach, E., Kotcher, J., & Leiserowitz, A. (2023). How many Americans want an electric home? Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

Few registered voters (18%) trust fossil fuel companies to act in the public's best interest

- % "strongly" or "somewhat" trust -

● Con R ● Lib/Mod R ● Mod/Con D ● Lib D ◆ All Reg Voters

Renewable energy companies (solar, wind, geothermal): 17, 23, 35, 47, 54

Fossil fuel companies (coal, oil, natural gas): 5, 14, 18, 24, 32

Large banks (such as JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America): 14, 15, 16, 19, 21

Pharmaceutical companies: 11, 12, 12, 13, 14

Social media companies (such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube): 4, 5, 6, 7, 7
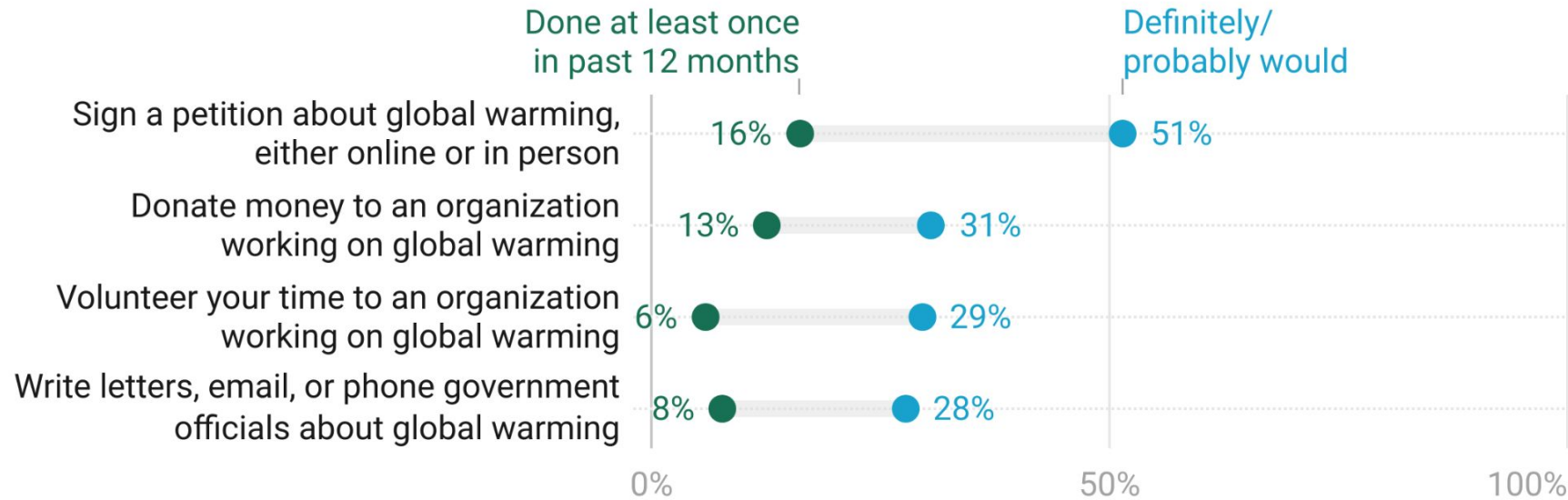
Tobacco companies: 1, 1, 2, 2, 2

How much do you trust or distrust the following to act in the public's best interest?

Registered U.S. Voters, Fall 2023

1. Build public will.
2. Build political will.

Many Americans are willing to engage in climate action, but fewer have done so

Done at least once in past 12 months | Definitely/ probably would

Sign a petition about global warming, either online or in person — 16% ... 51%

Donate money to an organization working on global warming — 13% ... 31%

Volunteer your time to an organization working on global warming — 6% ... 29%

Write letters, email, or phone government officials about global warming — 8% ... 28%

0% ... 50% ... 100%

Over the past 12 months, how many times have you done the following?

How likely would you be to do each of the following things if a person you like and respect asked you to?

March 2021, September 2021, April 2022, December 2022, April 2023, October 2023. Base: 6,190 U.S. adults.

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication;
George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication • Created with Datawrapper

Ballew, M., Carman, J., Verner, M., Rosenthal, S., Maibach, E., Kotcher, J., & Leiserowitz, A. (2024). The attitude-behavior gap on climate action: How can it be bridged? Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

How do we build willpower and grow a powerful movement?

Organize

Educate and Engage

Alarmed   Concerned

Concerned   Cautious

Disengaged   Doubtful

Know who you're speaking with

YALE PROGRAM ON
Climate Change
Communication

Building a powerful, diverse movement

- Repeat simple messages often and use trusted messengers

- Spread stories and connect the dots

- Connect to people's values and identities

- Break the spiral of silence: Provide guidance on how to discuss climate

- Leverage social norms and experiences

- Overcome barriers to action: Make it easy, ask people to get involved, and provide options

- Communicate the benefits of action

- Inspire action through hope and feelings of efficacy

One simple message:
Five facts, ten words

It's real.
It's us.
It's bad.
Scientists agree.
There's hope!

Keep in touch.

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