

# **American Catholics Worry about Global Warming and Support U.S. Action**

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This summer, Pope Francis, who leads 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide, will issue a papal encyclical on climate change. An encyclical is a letter that sets church doctrine on critical issues and is one of the most important forms of communication within the church. Early indications are that he will define climate change as a fundamentally moral and religious challenge for the world. Pope Francis will then separately address the General Assembly of the United Nations and a joint session of the U.S. Congress in September in the lead-up to this year's critical UN climate negotiations in Paris.

What do American Catholics and other Christians currently believe about global warming, how worried are they, and do they support policy action?

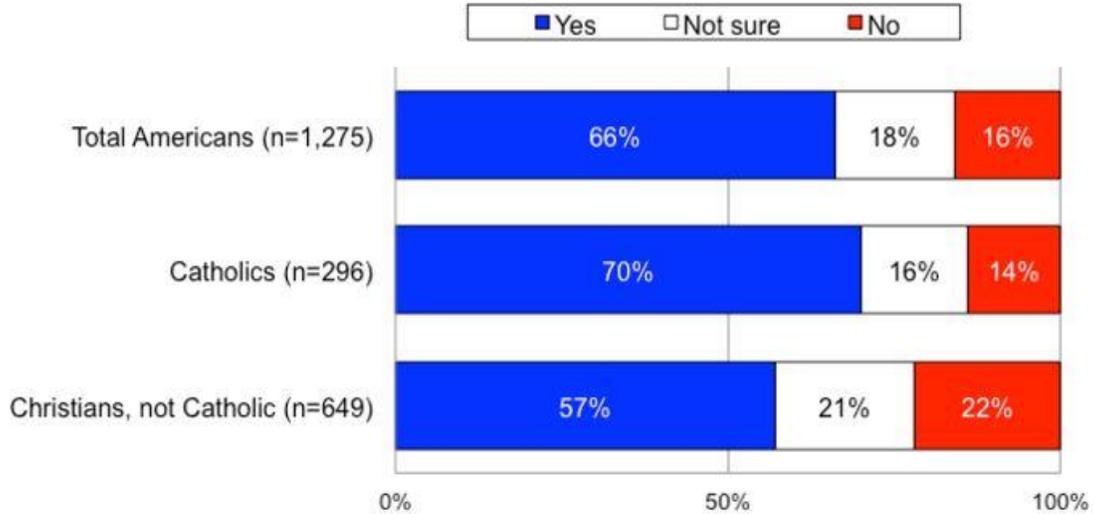
To answer these questions, we conducted a special analysis on our recent nationally representative survey conducted in the fall of 2014. Overall, we find that Catholics – 24% of all American adults – are more convinced that global warming is happening, are more worried, and are more supportive of policy action than other Christians.

## ***A Majority of Catholics Think Global Warming Is Happening***

We find that a solid majority of Catholics think global warming is happening (70%). By contrast, 57% of non-Catholic Christians think global warming is happening. Moreover, among those who think global warming is happening, Catholics are more likely than other Christians to think it is mostly human caused (48% versus 35%, respectively).

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## Catholics Are More Likely Than Other Christians to Think Global Warming Is Happening



What do you think: Do you think global warming is happening?

Base: Americans 18+. October, 2014.



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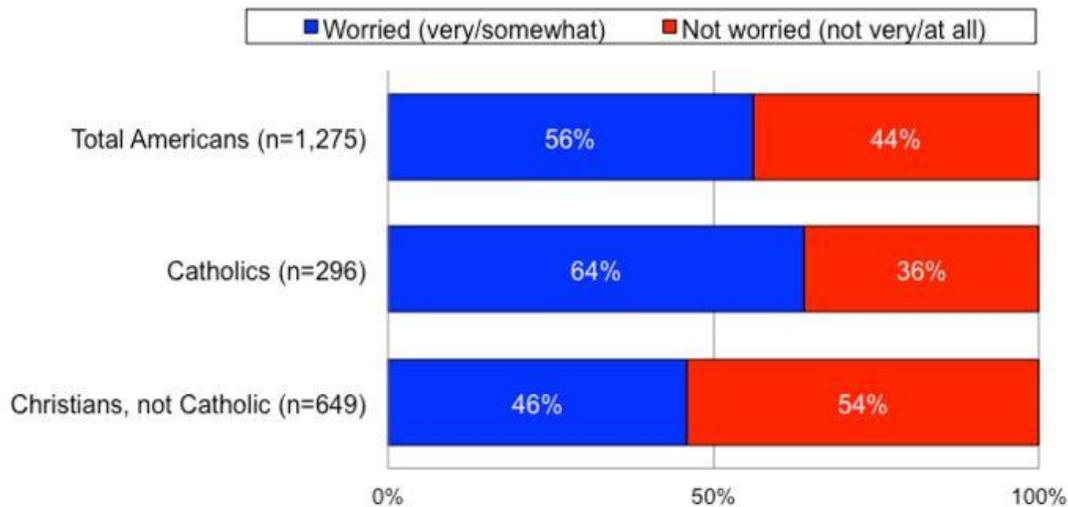
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### *A Majority of Catholics Are Worried About Global Warming*

Catholics in the U.S. are also much more worried about global warming than other Christians. A majority of Catholics (64%) say they are very or somewhat worried about global warming – 18 percentage points higher than all other Christians (46%).

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## Majority of Catholics Are Worried About Global Warming; Fewer Than Half of Other Christians Are Worried



How worried are you about global warming?

Base: Americans 18+. October, 2014.



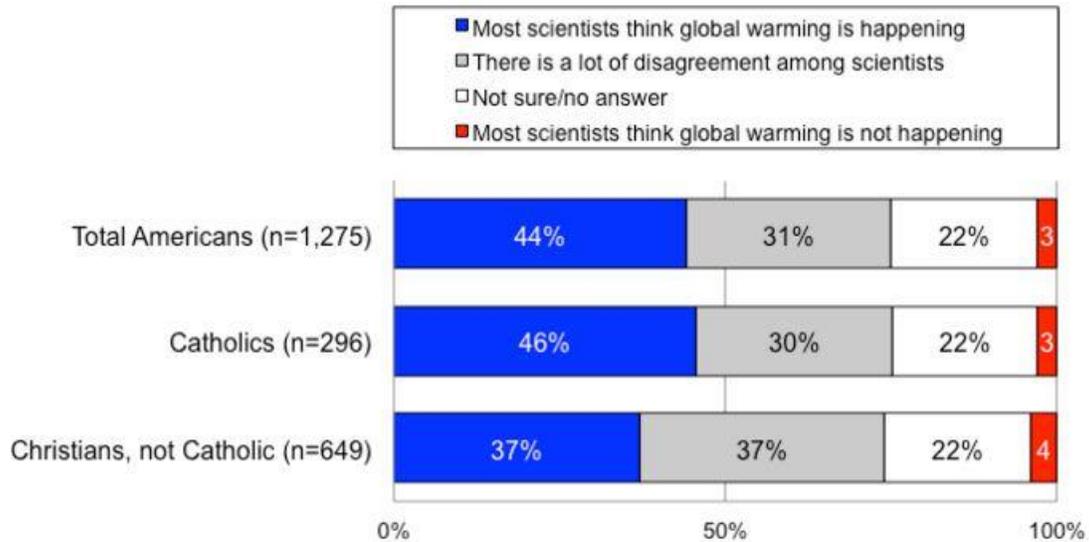
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In another key measure, nearly half of Catholics (46%) understand that most scientists think global warming is happening, compared to only 37% of other Christians. Our research has found that understanding the scientific consensus is a “gateway belief” that influences other key beliefs about climate change.

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## Catholics More Likely Than Other Christians to Understand Most Scientists Think Global Warming Is Happening



Which comes closest to your own view?

Base: Americans 18+. October, 2014.



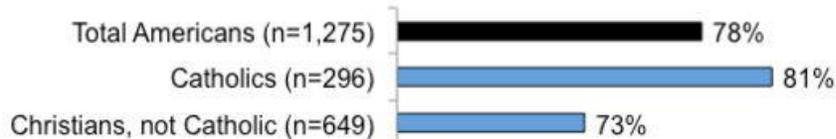
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### *Catholics Support Policies to Reduce Global Warming*

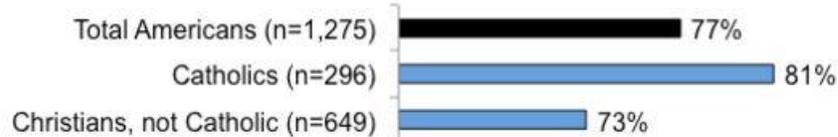
Catholics express higher support for climate change policies than other Christians. Catholics expressed the highest levels of support for funding more research into renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power (81%) and providing tax rebates for people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels (81%). Other Christians expressed lower levels of support for these two policies (73% for each).

## Catholics Are More Likely Than Other Christians to Support Funding Renewable Energy Research and Tax Rebates for People Who Purchase Energy-Efficient Vehicles or Solar Panels

Fund more research into renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power (% support strongly/somewhat)



Provide tax rebates for people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels (% support strongly/somewhat)



How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

Base: Americans 18+. October, 2014.



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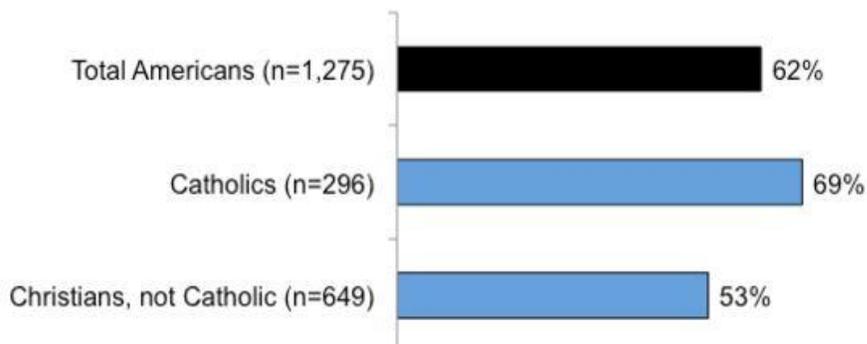
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The largest difference in policy support between Catholics and other Christians was on the proposal to require electric utilities to produce at least 20% of their electricity from wind, solar, or other renewable energy sources, even if it costs the average household an extra \$100 a year. Nearly seven in ten Catholics (69%) support such a policy, compared to five in ten non-Catholic Christians (53%) – a 16 percentage point difference.

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## Catholics Are More Likely Than Other Christians to Support Requiring Electric Utilities to Produce at Least 20% of Their Electricity From Wind, Solar, or Other Renewable Energy Sources, Even if It Costs the Average Household an Extra \$100 a Year

% support (strongly or somewhat):



How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

Base: Americans 18+. October, 2014.



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*This Climate Note was written by Zena Grecni.*

### ***Survey Method***

These findings are from a nationally-representative survey conducted by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

- Interview dates: October 17-28, 2014.
- Interviews: 1,275 Adults (18+).
- Average margin of error of the total sample: +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level
- For tabulation purposes, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given chart may total slightly higher or lower than 100%.

- The Non-Catholic Christians category includes individuals who self-identified as Baptist, Protestant (e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc.), Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, Mormon, or Other Christian.

The survey instrument was designed by Anthony Leiserowitz, Geoff Feinberg, Seth Rosenthal, and Jennifer Marlon of Yale University, and Edward Maibach and Connie Roser-Renouf of George Mason University.

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