**Global Warming’s Six Americas A study by Anthony Leiserowitz**

The burning of fossil fuels is embedded in almost everything we do in modern societies. It’s in the clothes that we wear, it’s in the food that we eat, it’s in how we get around from one place to another. Everything that we do is permeated by the burning of these fossil fuels which are then releasing greenhouse gasses notably carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and that is thereby warming up the planet. And our challenge as researchers is to try to understand “how do mass publics understand this threat?”

Do they understand the causes?

Do they understand the causes? Do they understand the impacts?

And how willing are they to get engaged personally?

Anthony Leiserowitz is director of the Yale project on climate change. In a recent study “Global Warming Six Americas” he found that the public’s perception of climate change falls into six distinct categories. /…/

Who are the different publics within the American public? The American public does not speak with a single voice on this issue. There are in fact six really distinct Americas within America. Those groups each respond to this issue in very different ways for very different reasons. /../

**Alarmed: 18% Concerned: 33% Cautious: 19%**

**Disengaged: 12% Doubtful: 11% Dismissive: 7% Alarmed: 18%**

**The Alarmed: 18%**

People who are absolutely convinced that climate change is happening, it’s human caused, it’s a very serious threat, it’s happening now. They are already taking action in their own lives to try to reduce their own carbon footprint. And they’re really hungry to know “what’s the next thing I can do?” /…/ This is an “issue public”. That is the part of the public that is the most mobilised and the most engaged with this issue. /…/

**The Concerned: 33%**

That group believes climate change is happening, that it’s human caused. They think it’s a serious problem but they still see it as a distant problem. So they’re there, they’re concerned about it but they haven’t become personally involved with the issue.

**The Cautious: 19%**

They’re not really sure: is it happening? Is it not? Is it human caused? Is it natural? So they’re not very focused on the issue yet.

**The Disengaged: 12%**

This is a group that has heard of the issue, they are familiar with the term climate change and global warming, but they don’t know anything about it. They don’t know anything about the causes, they don’t know anything about the impacts. They certainly don’t know anything about the potential solutions.

**The Doubtful: 11%**

They’re not really sure that climate change is happening or not, but they say if it is happening it’s naturally caused. It’s not a problem, it’s not gonna impact people ever. They just don’t see as much of a risk at all.

**The Dismissive: 7%**

Not only is it that they believe climate change isn’t happening but they think it’s a hoax, or that is a conspiracy. It’s a very small group of the public. On the other hand it’s a very motivated part of the public.

Despite these fundamental differences Americans say they support investments in alternative energy.

We also find energy policies, in particular energy-related policies, that everybody agrees with: alarmed and the dismissive. They all like the idea of investing more resources into the research for renewable energy. They all support a government subsidy for those people who buy more fuel-efficient cars or install solar panels on their roofs. It doesn’t matter whether you are an alarmed or a dismissive on climate change. Everybody supports that policy. And what that suggests is that there are ways to talk about this issue in particular because it is ultimately an energy issue /…/ in which everybody can see that there’s real value.

/…/

The climate system doesn’t care whether you are a republican or a Democrat, or a liberal or a conservative. Droughts don’t differentiate by your political party. A sea level rise doesn’t care whether you are a Republican or a Democrat. A hurricane won’t make any distinctions based on your conservative or liberal ideology. But in the end we have to care. We have to start acting now to resolve this issue because otherwise the impacts will affect all of us.

…