

# Global Warming Seen as a Major Problem Around the World

## Less Concern in the U.S., China and Russia

December, 2, 2009

When world leaders convene in Copenhagen, Denmark, next week to discuss climate change, they will be addressing a concern that, as the [latest Pew Global Attitudes survey](#) finds, is widely shared throughout much of the world. The survey, conducted May 18 to June 16, also reveals that majorities in 23 of 25 countries agree that protecting the environment should be given priority, even at the cost of slower economic growth and job losses. And many are willing to make sacrifices, such as having to pay higher prices, to address global warming.

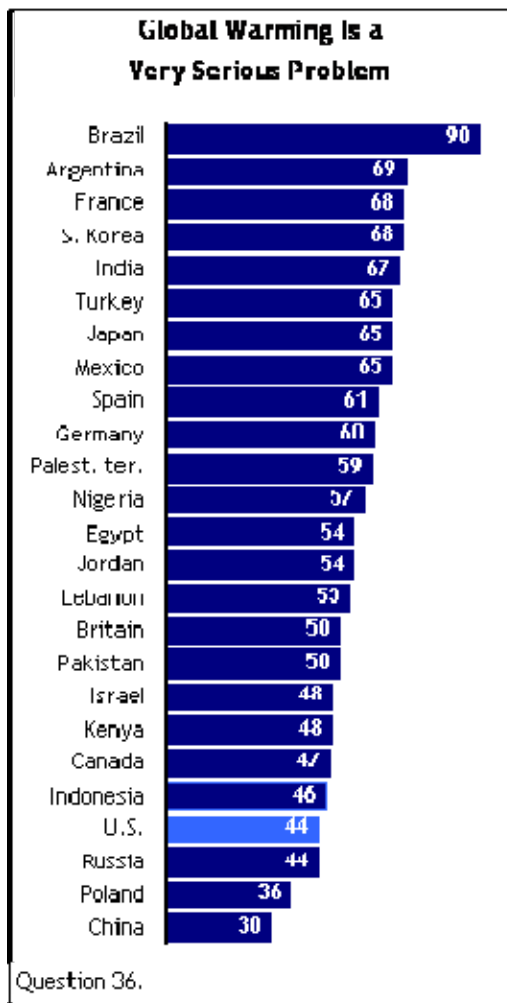
Concern about climate change is much less pervasive in the United States, China and Russia than among other leading nations. Just 44% in the U.S. and Russia, and even fewer in China (30%), consider global warming to be a very serious problem. By comparison, 68% in France, 65% in Japan, 61% in Spain and 60% in Germany say that is the case.

Americans' views of global warming divide along ideological lines -- liberals are more than twice as likely as conservatives to say global warming is a very serious problem (66% vs. 30%). Surveys from 2008 and 2009 suggest that an ideological divide is also evident in Britain, where 66% of those on the political left rate global warming as very serious, compared with 42% of those on the right. A smaller ideological split exists in Germany, France and Spain.

While there is agreement around the world that climate change is a serious problem, there is much less international consensus as to which country is most trusted to do the right thing on this issue. However, expectations for President Barack Obama's approach to climate change are high. Majorities or pluralities in 21 of the 25 countries surveyed believe Obama will "get the U.S. to take significant measures to control global climate change." Expectations are especially high in Western Europe.

*The following excerpt from "[Confidence in Obama Lifts U.S. Image Around the World; Most Muslim Publics Not So Easily Moved](#)," released July 23, 2009, analyzes how publics in the 25 countries surveyed view global warming and environmental issues more broadly.*

## Global Warming



Large majorities in every country surveyed believe that global warming is a serious problem, and majorities in 15 of the 25 countries say it is "very serious." By a wide margin, Brazilians are the most concerned about this issue -- nine-in-ten in Brazil say it is a very serious problem. Roughly two-thirds or more rate it as very serious in Argentina (69%), France (68%), South Korea (68%), India (67%), Turkey (65%), Japan (65%) and Mexico (65%).

Anxiety about global warming is less pervasive among Israelis (48%), Kenyans (48%), Canadians (47%) and Indonesians (44%). Moreover, concern about global warming is low among the publics of some big polluters -- including the U.S., Russia and China. Only about four-in-ten in the U.S. (44%) and Russia (44%) say that global warming is a very serious problem. The Chinese express the least concern -- only 30% say it is a very serious problem, up slightly from last year (24%).

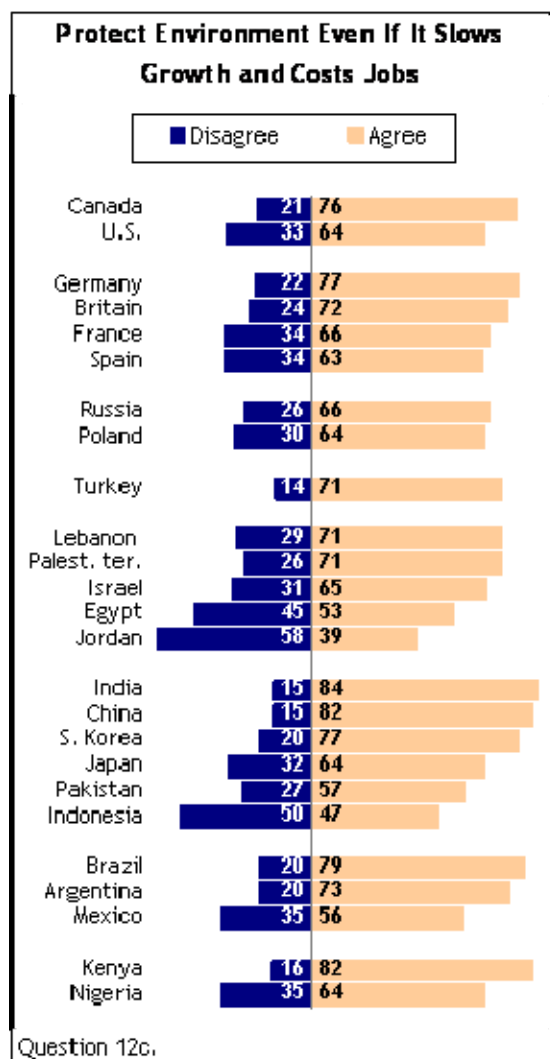
Concern about changes in the global climate has increased in many countries since 2008 -- including the three Middle Eastern countries of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. The share of Egyptians who believe that global warming is a very serious problem has increased 16 percentage points, from 38% in 2008 to 54% in 2009. In Lebanon and Jordan, where roughly four-in-ten said this issue was a very serious problem last year (43% in Lebanon, 41% in Jordan), majorities now

rate it as very serious (53% in Lebanon, 54% in Jordan). And today in Nigeria a majority (57%) rate this environmental problem as very serious, compared with 45% last year.

While anxieties about global warming remain mostly widespread, some publics are less worried than they were in 2008 -- especially in Turkey, Poland and Japan. The decline was steep in Turkey, where the percentage rating global warming as a very serious problem dropped by 17 points, from 82% last year to a still substantial 65% this year. Today in Poland about one-third (36%) express strong concern about shifts in the global climate, compared with a small majority one year ago (51%). The Japanese have steadily become less worried about this issue since the question was first asked two years ago (78% in 2007, 73% in 2008, 65% in 2009).

In the U.S., where 44% say global warming is a very serious problem, more than six-in-ten Democrats (63%) express concern over this issue, compared with fewer than one-in-five (17%) Republicans. Among independents, 43% say this is a very serious problem.

### Prioritizing the Environment



Not only are respondents in many countries expressing concern over the issue of global warming, but beliefs are widespread that sacrifices may need to be made to protect the environment. Majorities in 23 of 25 countries agree with the statement "Protecting the environment should be given priority, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs."

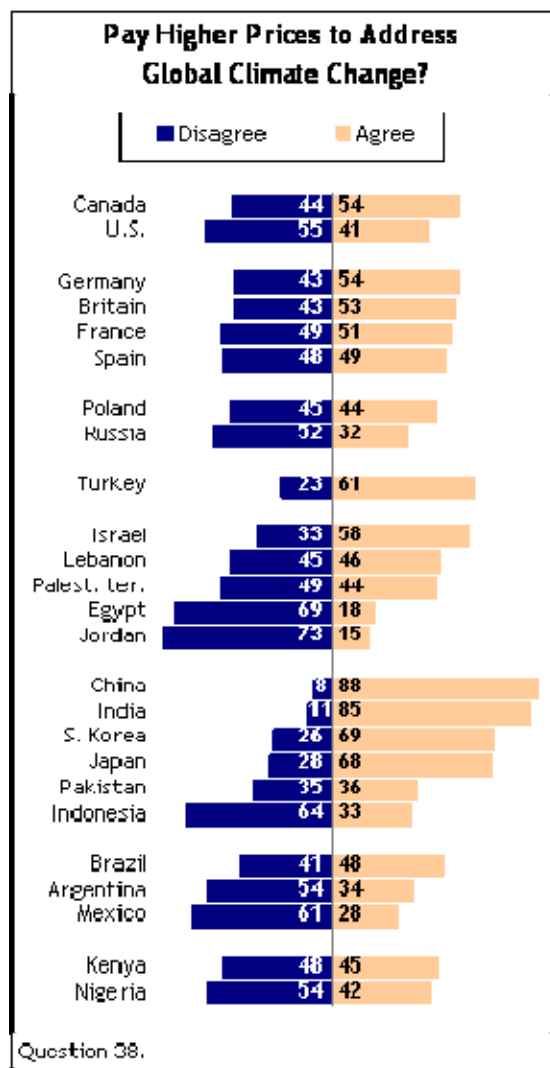
However, in several countries public opinion is not as decisive. Indonesian public opinion is split -- 47% agree with prioritizing the environment over economic growth and 50% disagree. A slim majority of Egyptians (53%) support protecting the environment at the cost of economic expansion, but nearly as many disagree (45%).

Jordanians are the least likely to say that environmental concerns should take precedence over economic growth (39% agree, 58% disagree). This represents a 14-point decrease since 2007, when a majority in Jordan (53%) agreed.

In three nations that have enjoyed strong economic growth in recent years -- India, China and Brazil -- agreement on this issue is nearly universal. Roughly eight-in-ten in India (84%), China (82%) and Brazil (79%) agree with prioritizing the environment over rapid economic expansion.

Agreement on this issue has decreased in several countries. The change has been most dramatic in Spain, where the proportion of respondents who agree with this statement declined by 17 percentage points, from 80% in 2007 to 63% in 2009.

## Pay More to Address Climate Change?



While solid majorities in most countries say the environment should be a priority, even at the expense of economic growth, there is less of a consensus regarding whether people should pay higher prices to deal with climate change. Majorities or pluralities in 14 of the 25 nations agree with the statement "People should be willing to pay higher prices in order to address global climate change." In 11 nations however, majorities or pluralities disagree over combating changes in the global climate by paying higher prices.

Agreement on this issue is widespread in many of the Asian nations surveyed. Nearly all in China (88%) and India (85%) and more than two-thirds in South Korea (69%) and Japan (68%) believe that people should be willing to pay higher prices to protect the environment. Only about one-third in Pakistan (36%) agree -- though nearly as many are unable to offer an opinion (29%). On the other hand, a majority of Indonesians disagree with this statement (64%).

In Western Europe, slim majorities in Germany (54%), Britain (53%) and France (51%) support raising prices to address climate change. Opinions are almost equally split among the Spanish (49% agree vs. 48% disagree).

In the U.S., roughly four-in-ten (41%) agree that people should pay higher prices to support the environment, but more (55%) disagree. However, among Canadians more agree than disagree with this statement (54% vs. 44%).

Among the publics surveyed, Jordanians and Egyptians are the most likely to disagree with tackling global climate change through increased prices (73% in Jordan, 69% in Egypt). Disagreement is also common among a solid majority in Mexico (61%), and to a lesser extent majorities in Argentina (54%), Nigeria (54%) and Russia (52%).

### **Most Trusted to Deal With Global Warming**

When asked which country among India, Germany, China, Brazil, Japan, the U.S. and Russia they trust the most to do the right thing in dealing with the problem of global warming, majorities or pluralities in six of 25 countries name the U.S. Americans are the most likely to do so (57%), followed by Nigerians (55%), Kenyans (48%), Israelis (45%), Indonesians (37%) and Canadians (31%).

Germany stands out as the most trusted country among the publics in Western Europe. Majorities of the French (62%) and pluralities of the British (34%) and the Spanish (31%) identify Germany. And not unlike the Americans, a majority of Germans credit their own country (77%) as the most trusted to handle the issue of global warming. Germany is also favored by a small plurality in Lebanon (23%).

Who Is Most Trusted to Do the Right Thing in Dealing With Global Warming?									
	U.S.	Germany	Japan	China	Brazil	India	Russia	(Vol) Other/ none	DK
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
U.S.	57	12	8	3	3	1	2	2	11
Canada	31	27	10	4	3	2	2	4	18
Britain	23	34	7	4	3	2	2	7	18
France	18	62	5	3	4	3	2	3	2
Germany	8	77	2	2	1	1	1	1	6
Spain	26	31	6	5	3	4	3	8	14
Poland	22	21	9	2	4	1	0	2	38
Russia	6	9	11	5	2	1	29	1	36
Turkey	14	3	9	3	0	2	1	8	60
Egypt	11	15	12	6	19	4	3	24	8
Jordan	11	14	25	9	9	3	2	20	8
Lebanon	17	23	14	10	6	7	6	4	13
Palest. ter.	18	14	15	12	3	5	8	2	23
Israel	45	15	6	6	1	1	1	4	20
China	15	4	4	57	1	2	1	1	16
India	16	3	4	5	1	55	1	1	15
Indonesia	37	5	18	9	1	1	1	1	26
Japan	8	32	38	2	3	1	0	1	14
Pakistan	4	3	3	45	0	3	0	3	38
S. Korea	17	21	23	1	2	5	0	2	30
Argentina	16	10	9	10	4	2	3	6	41
Brazil	17	5	6	6	45	3	1	1	16
Mexico	30	9	4	11	2	2	3	3	37
Kenya	48	7	6	9	1	4	1	1	22
Nigeria	55	5	4	15	1	3	1	2	14
Question 37.									

Publics in India and Brazil believe their own country can be trusted to do the right thing in dealing with this environmental issue. A majority of Indians (55%) identify India and 45% of Brazilians name Brazil as the country that can most be trusted to address global warming. In no other countries do majorities or pluralities cite India or Brazil as the most trusted.

A majority of Chinese (57%) are not alone in their belief that China is the most trusted country to deal with changes in the global climate -- more than four-in-ten (45%) Pakistanis name China as well. Similarly, in addition to a plurality of the Japanese (38%), a quarter of Jordanians (25%) identify Japan as the most trusted country when it comes to combating global warming