

The [Center for Climate Change Communication](#) at George Mason University is out with its latest poll today, on [“Politics and Global Warming: Democrats, Republicans, Independents and the Tea Party.”](#) The poll examines the difference in views among members of those four groups on a variety of climate- and energy-related topics.

First thing to note is the breakout of the Tea Party as a category separate from the others, consisting of all respondents who self-identified that way (regardless of party registration). This drew some of the most conservative voices disproportionately from the traditional Republican camp and therefore serves to moderate the overall results for the Repubs. (Percentage breakdown for poll respondents was: 39% Dem, 25% Indep, 24% Repub, 12% Tea Party.) The Center cites these as some of the poll’s main findings on attitudes toward global warming:

- Majorities of Democrats (78%), Independents (71%) and Republicans (53%) believe that global warming is happening. By contrast, only 34 percent of Tea Party members believe global warming is happening, while 53 percent say it is not happening.
- While 62 percent of Democrats say that global warming is caused mostly by human activities, most Tea Party members say it is either naturally caused (50%) or isn’t happening at all (21%).
- A majority of Democrats (55%) say that most scientists think global warming is happening, while majorities of Republicans (56%) and Tea Party members (69%) say that there is a lot of disagreement among scientists about whether or not global warming is happening.
- A large majority of Democrats (72%) worry about global warming, compared to 53 percent of Independents, 38 percent of Republicans, and 24 percent of Tea Party members. Over half (51%) of Tea Party members say they are not at all worried about global warming.
- Nearly half of Democrats (45%) say that global warming is already harming people in the United States, while 33 percent of Republicans and 51 percent of Tea Party members say it will never harm people in the United States.
- Tea Party members are much more likely to say that they are “very well informed” about global warming than the other groups. Likewise, they are also much more likely to say they “do not need any more information” about global warming to make up their mind.

There’s a lot to mine here, but one of the most interesting findings is that people trying to

educate voters about climate change science are doing a terrible job *even among those who agree that climate change is happening*. While 78% and 71% of Dems and Independents, respectively, believe that global warming is happening, only 55% of Dems and some lesser number of Independents say that *most scientists* say global warming is happening. Others instead endorse the statement that “[t]here is a lot of disagreement among scientists about whether or not global warming is happening.”

In other words, there is a disturbing disconnect between the degree to which Dems and Independents themselves think climate change is happening, and their own characterization of most scientists’ views on the matter. It’s an important science literacy gap, one that suggests the need to prioritize supporting and reaffirming the foundation for the climate change understandings of even our strongest supporters.