A new report, Climate Change in the American Mind, was just released by the Yale Project on Climate Change and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. This report summarizes and synthesizes original polling research on our opinions, attitudes, and knowledge about climate change. (Statistician Nate Silver has an interesting post at Fivethirtyeight.com about some of the report's findings; h/t to Jon Wiener for this link.) Whatever their limitations, polling data such as these are of some real value as a rough measure of what we believe. And it turns out we believe that our friends, our family, and our tv meteorologists (native Angeleno readers who grew up in the 70s or 80s may remember the beloved and authoritative Dr. George Fischbeck, an academic at heart, from KABC channel 7) are good sources of information about climate change.

These findings (at pages 42-43) strike me as noteworthy:

> Overall, the study found that 82 percent of Americans trusted scientists (Fig. 39), followed by family and friends (77%), environmental organizations (66%) and television weather reporters (66%) as a source of information about global warming. About half of Americans trusted religious leaders (48%) or the mainstream news media (47%). Only 19 percent of Americans, however, trusted corporations as a source of information, while 33 percent strongly distrusted them. Al Gore was trusted by 58 percent of Americans, leading both Barack Obama (51%) and John McCain (38%). Following President Obama's election, however, it is likely that trust in him as a source of information about global warming has grown.

Scientists' #1 position is a good start (though, of course, many scientists are wary of — and have been criticized for — wading into a heavily politicized policy debate, and this makes it harder for some of those with the most credibility to get heard). Given that the most prominent environmental organizations have generally provided responsible, useful information about climate change that is based on the broad scientific consensus that the climate is changing and that humans are the primary cause, trust in them is probably a good thing if one believes, as I do, that it's important to educate people about that consensus.

As for the other two in the top positions: It's hard to beat family and friends, or television weather reporters, as trusted sources of information, especially if they are

experts on climate science or policy. Right?