

When I was in Spain in 1993, an older man there complained to me about an unusual rain storm during the normally-dry summer. “It’s the fault of you Americans and radiation from your nuclear bomb,” he told me, half-teasingly. Little did he know that he was proving the thesis of a [new study](#) by NYU professors Megan Mullin and Patrick J. Egan. They found that people’s opinions on climate change tend to vary with local weather events.

The estimated effect of weather on beliefs about climate change is significant and consistent: a shift in local temperature from the 5th to 95th percentile (that is, from 4.3°F below normal to 14.7°F above normal) increases the probability that Americans believe there is solid evidence for global warming by about six percentage points.

In other words, if you want to see a gas tax any time soon, pray for a heat wave in the swing districts.