

Researching topic #20 -- SOCIETAL RESPONSES – PUBLIC OPINION

[last revised 3/14/2021]

This prompt offers two kinds of help:

- A brief overview of the kinds of questions you might wish to explore as you study how climate change is likely to affect the food supply;
- A suggested strategy for how to search the literature as you prepare to write your paper.

OVERVIEW – SOCIETAL RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE – PUBLIC OPINION

What do Americans believe about climate change? More specifically, do they think:

It is real?

It is serious?

It will personally affect them in their lifetime?

It is caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO₂?

Since many polls have been done, one can find data for public opinion:

In the aggregate – for all Americans

Disarticulated by:

Political identification

Democratic/Independent/Republican

Liberal/conservative

Age

Income

Education

Race/ethnicity

Gender

Religion

And since polling on climate change has been done for years, one can find, for all Americans and possibly for several of the disarticulated demographic categories, how opinion has waxed and waned over the past several decades, say from about 1989 to 2018.

What are those patterns and how does the literature explain differences among various demographic categories and how does the literature explain changes over time?

SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR SEARCHING THE LITERATURE

I recommend the following sequence for searching the literature:

- 1 Start with a search of the most recent **reports from top scientific bodies and government agencies**;
- 2 Search **academic articles** using Google Scholar (scholar.google.com);
- 3 Do a **more general search** using Google or another search engine;
- 4 Search the **best newspapers** and **reputable climate websites**.
(NOTE that I do not suggest using Wikipedia.)

1 Search the most recent **reports from top scientific bodies and government agencies**

(NOTE: There are many excellent reports one can consult. You will find a lot of repetition, so you do not need to consult every source. Here I start with a handful of the most recent reports, followed by a more complete list.)

These publications should, in most cases, supply you with all you need:

IPCC's most recent full set of reports:

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

EPA: https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-society_.html

U.S. Global Change Research Program:

<https://science2017.globalchange.gov/> (the science)

<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/> (the impacts)

American Meteorological Society:

www.ametsoc.net/sotc2017/StateoftheClimate2017_lowres.pdf

A more complete list of best scientific and governmental sources:

International

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)
World Meteorological Organization

Agencies of the U.S. federal government

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
U.S. Global Change Research Program

Scientific bodies – U.S.

National Academic of Sciences
Climate Change at the National Academies (climatechange@nas.edu)
National Science Foundation

Other professional bodies – American Meteorological Society

2 Search **academic articles** using Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)

(NOTE: Narrow and focus your search by using several phrases in quotes – such as “climate change”. For example, if you are searching for how climate change will increase the frequency of extreme weather events, don’t just enter “climate change,” search, instead for” “climate change” AND “extreme weather events”)

Search terms to use (you may certainly choose others):

“climate change” AND x, where x can be:

Public opinion AND religion
 Public opinion AND age
 Public opinion AND political party
 Public opinion AND income
 Public opinion AND race
 Public opinion AND ethnicity
 Public opinion AND education
 Public opinion AND gender
 Public opinion AND Gallup poll

(NOTE: For some citations you find on Google Scholar, you can directly download the PDF. For other citations, you may be able to find and download PDFs if your University library offers on line access to academic journals.)

3 Do a **more general search** using Google or another search engine

Use the same search terms to do a general search on Google or another search engine. This will bring up information more recent than you find on scholar.google.com (it takes several years for research to be published in academic journals).

4 Search the **best newspapers** and **reputable climate websites**

New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian

On line sources

Climate Central
 GRIST
 Society of Environmental Journalists
 The Daily Climate
 Climate Nexus
 InsideClimate News
 DeSmogBlog
 Skepticalscience.com
 Yale 350

(NOTE about on line sources: You will run into a lot of denialist disinformation on the internet, on websites, on blogs, on youtube. FYI, skepticalscience.com has a comprehensive list of denialist talking points (and refutations of those talking points). See, for example: <https://www.skepticalscience.com/argument.php>)

In addition:

Major sociological scholars who have written on climate and public opinion are: Riley Dunlap, Aaron McCright, Robert Brulle, Lawrence Hamilton. Another key scholar is Anthony Leiserowitz, Yale University. Look for their papers on scholar.google.com.

New useful links, March 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/climate/americans-global-warming-poll.html>

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/22012019/climate-change-survey-impact-now-americans-extreme-weather-george-mason-yale>

<https://www.newsweek.com/44-percent-americans-worry-great-deal-global-warming-poll-1375422>

https://grist.org/article/climate-crisis-more-politically-polarizing-than-abortion-for-u-s-voters-study-finds/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily

<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/441344-climate-change-is-the-top-issue-for-registered-democratic-voters>

<https://www.axios.com/climate-change-democrats-worries-pew-research-e98d2044-b462-4f37-9d40-978cb08d7e3e.html>

<https://www.newsweek.com/young-republicans-worry-environment-climate-change-poll-donald-trump-gop-1456770>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/02/20/climate/climate-change-polls.html>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/>

https://grist.org/climate/biden-trump-voters-swing-state-climate-anxiety/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily

<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/public-backs-climate-change-action-across-globe-massive-u-n-n1255811>