



**Communicating with  
Global Warming's Six Americas:  
*Understanding & Reaching Diverse  
Audiences***

**“Gaining Support and Attracting Participation through  
Communication”**

***Environmental Protection Agency Webinar***

***Dec. 4, 2013***

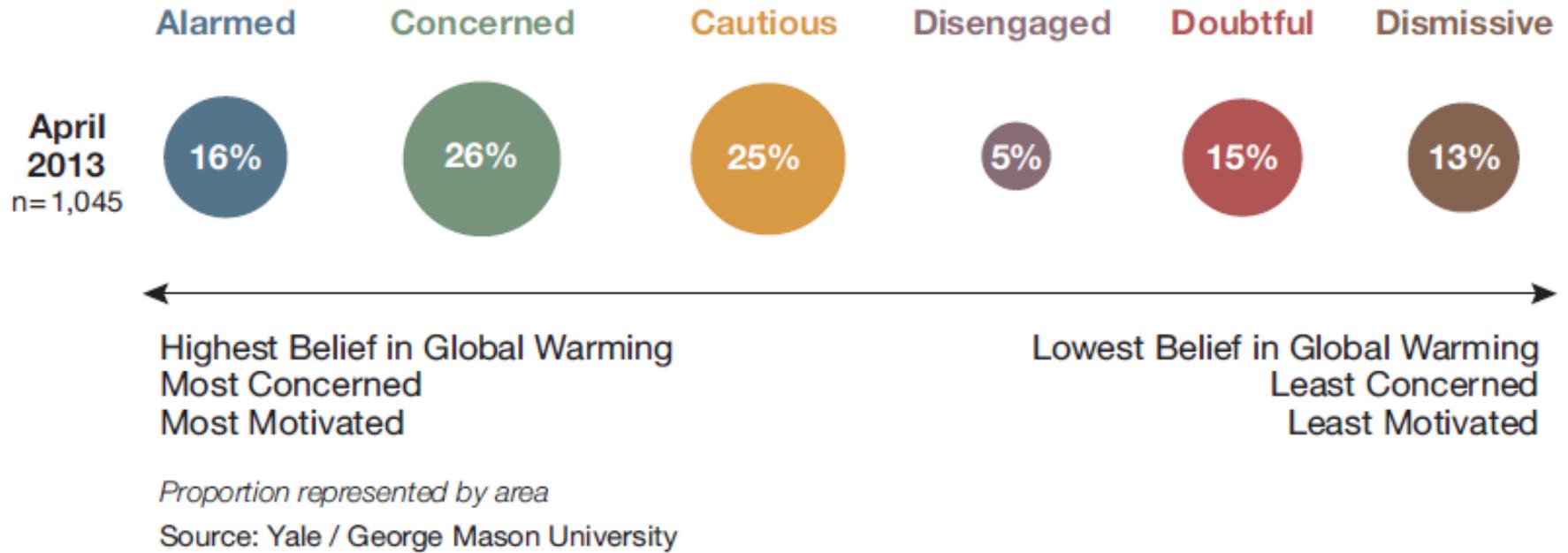
**Connie Roser-Renouf, PhD  
*Center for Climate Change Communication  
George Mason University***

# Effective Communication Begins with Understanding Your Audience

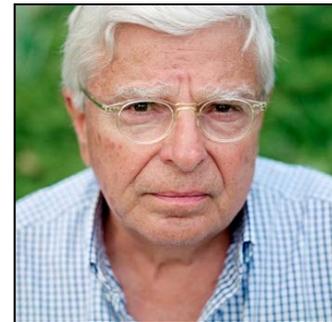
- Americans differ in their beliefs & concern about global warming.
- They fall into six groups, with unique beliefs, values, opinions and actions.
- Understanding the differences is vital to effective engagement.
- When we know what our audiences think & how they feel, we can speak to their concerns more directly.



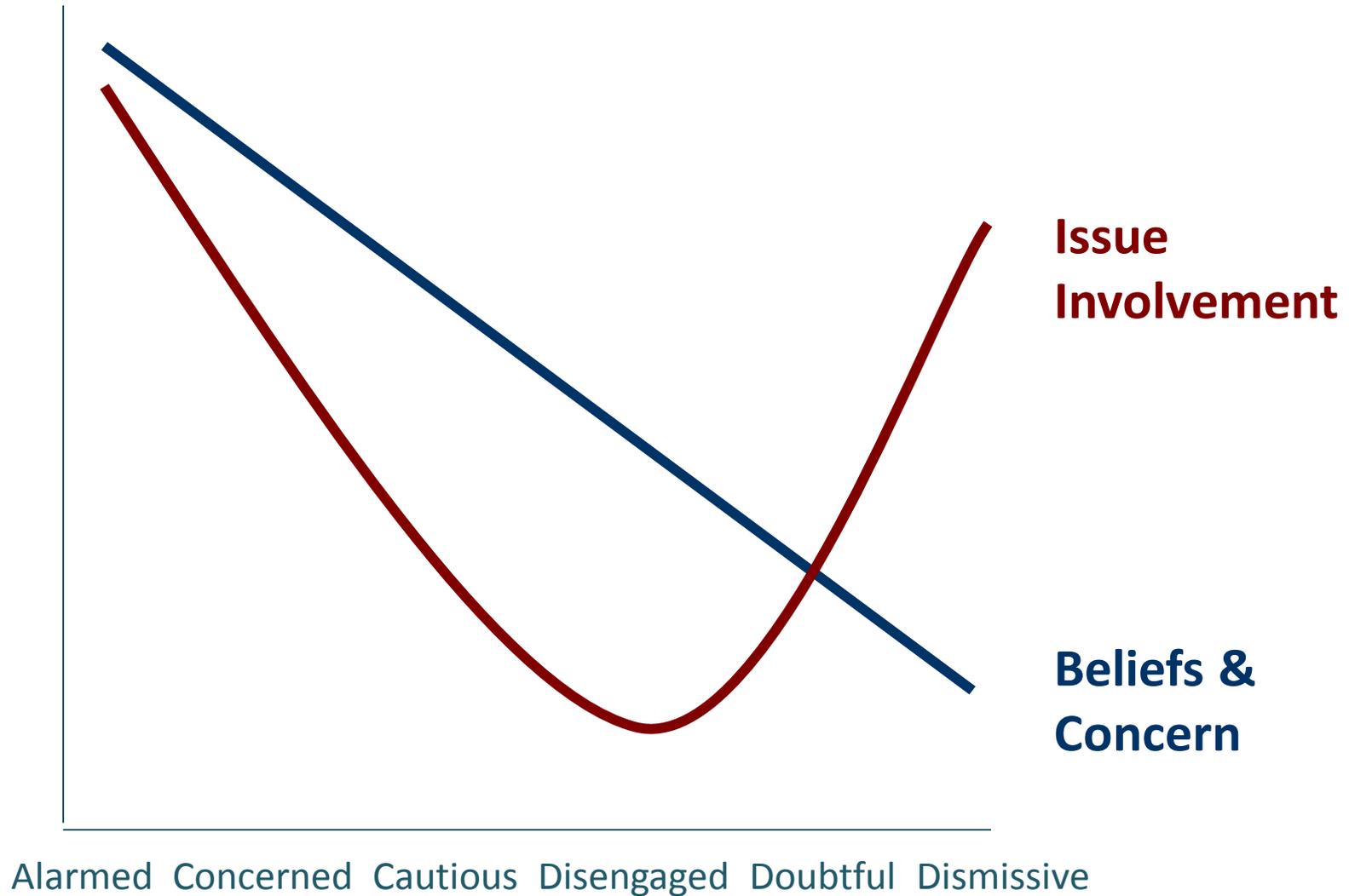
# Global Warming's "Six Americas"



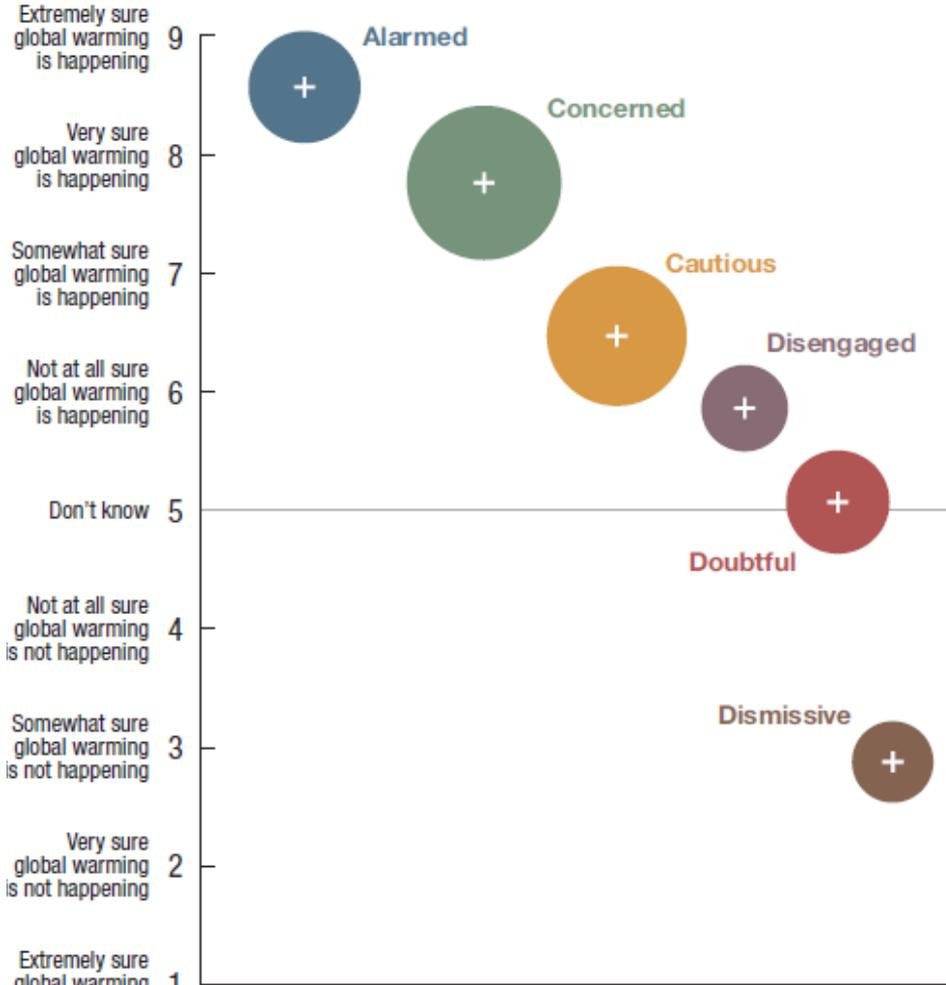
*The size of the bubbles shows the proportion of Americans that belonged to each group in Apr. 2013*



# Primary Differences between the Six Groups

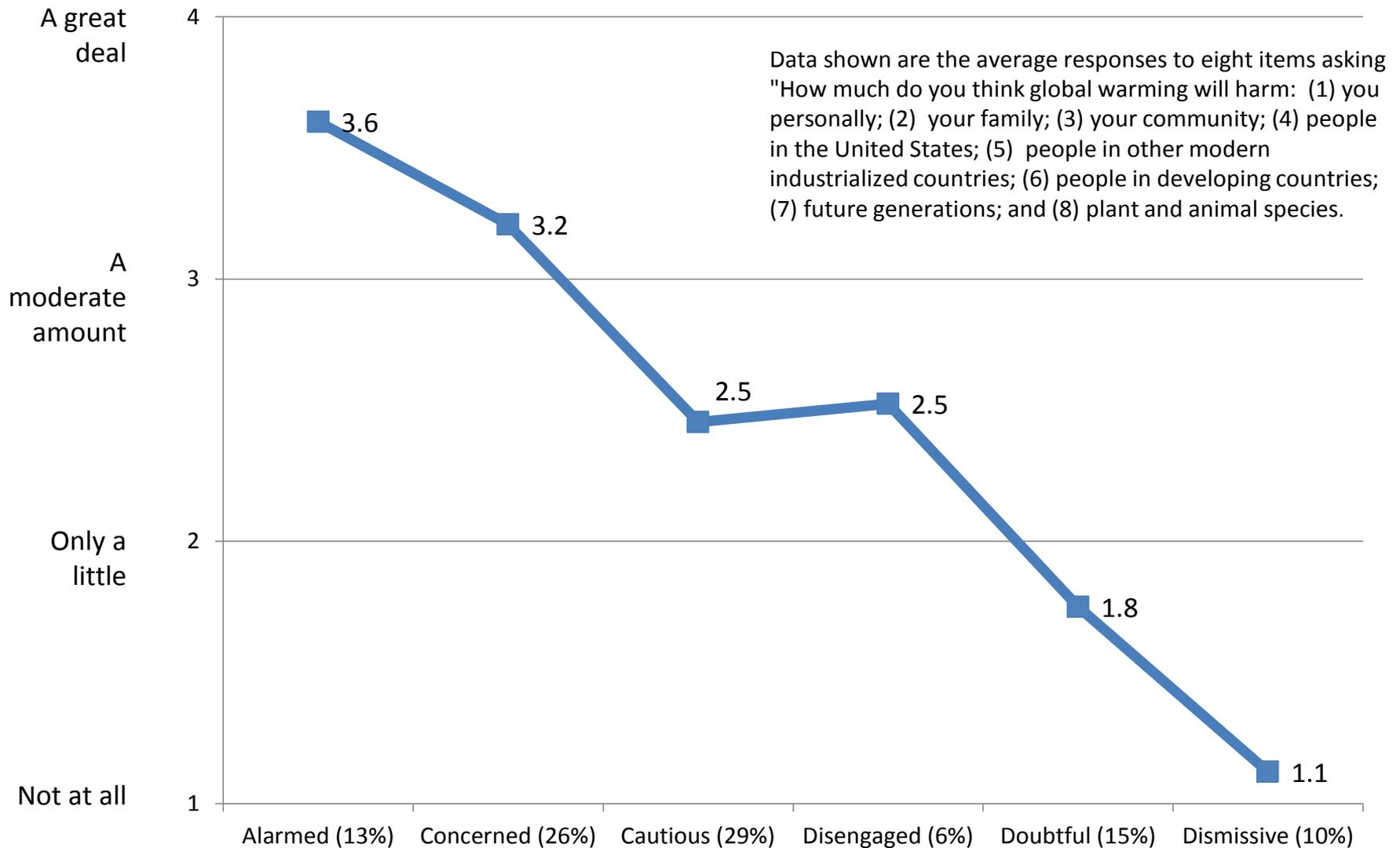


# Do you think that global warming is happening? How sure are you?

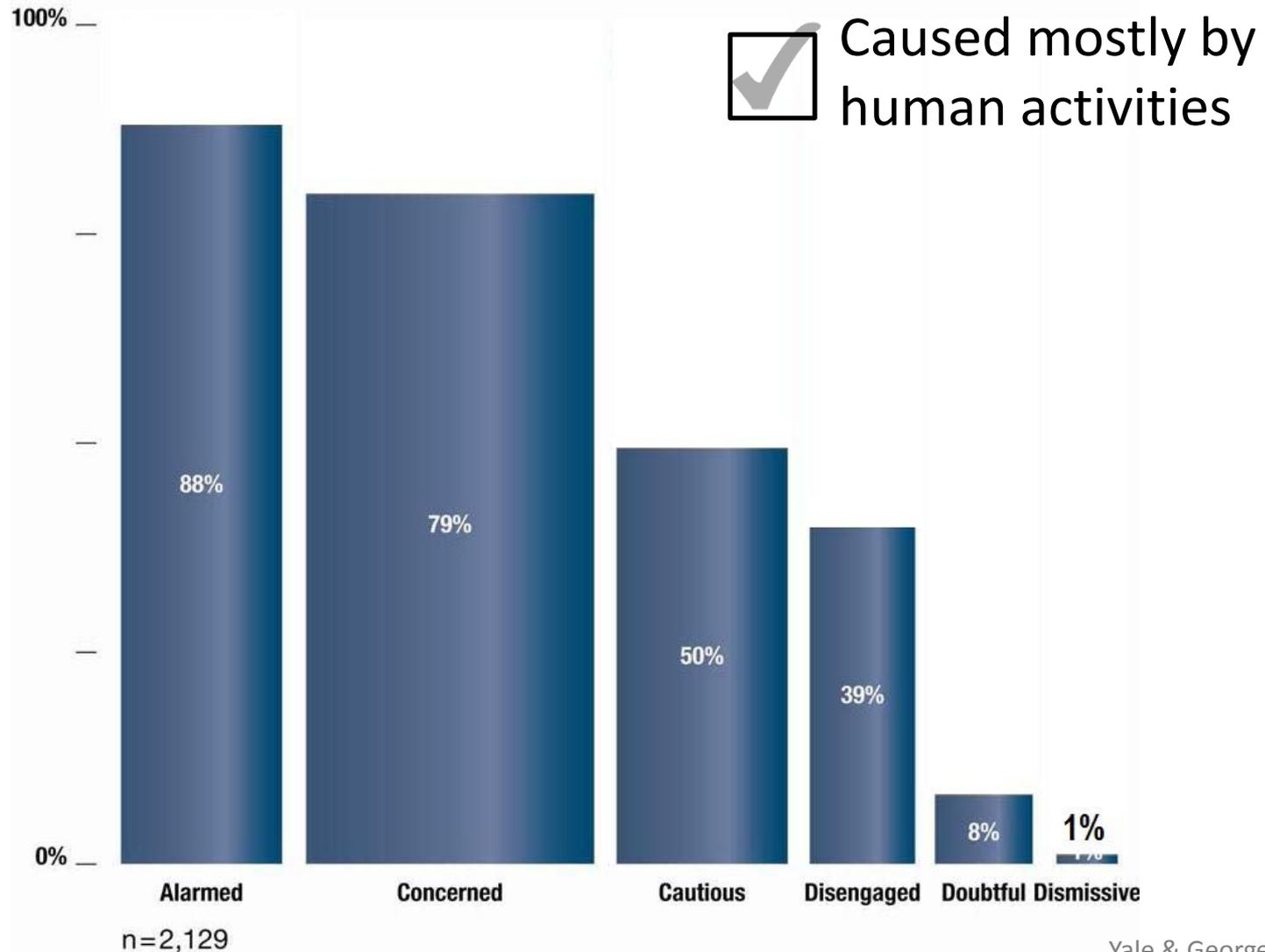


Base: Americans 18+ (n=1,058)  
Source: Yale/George Mason

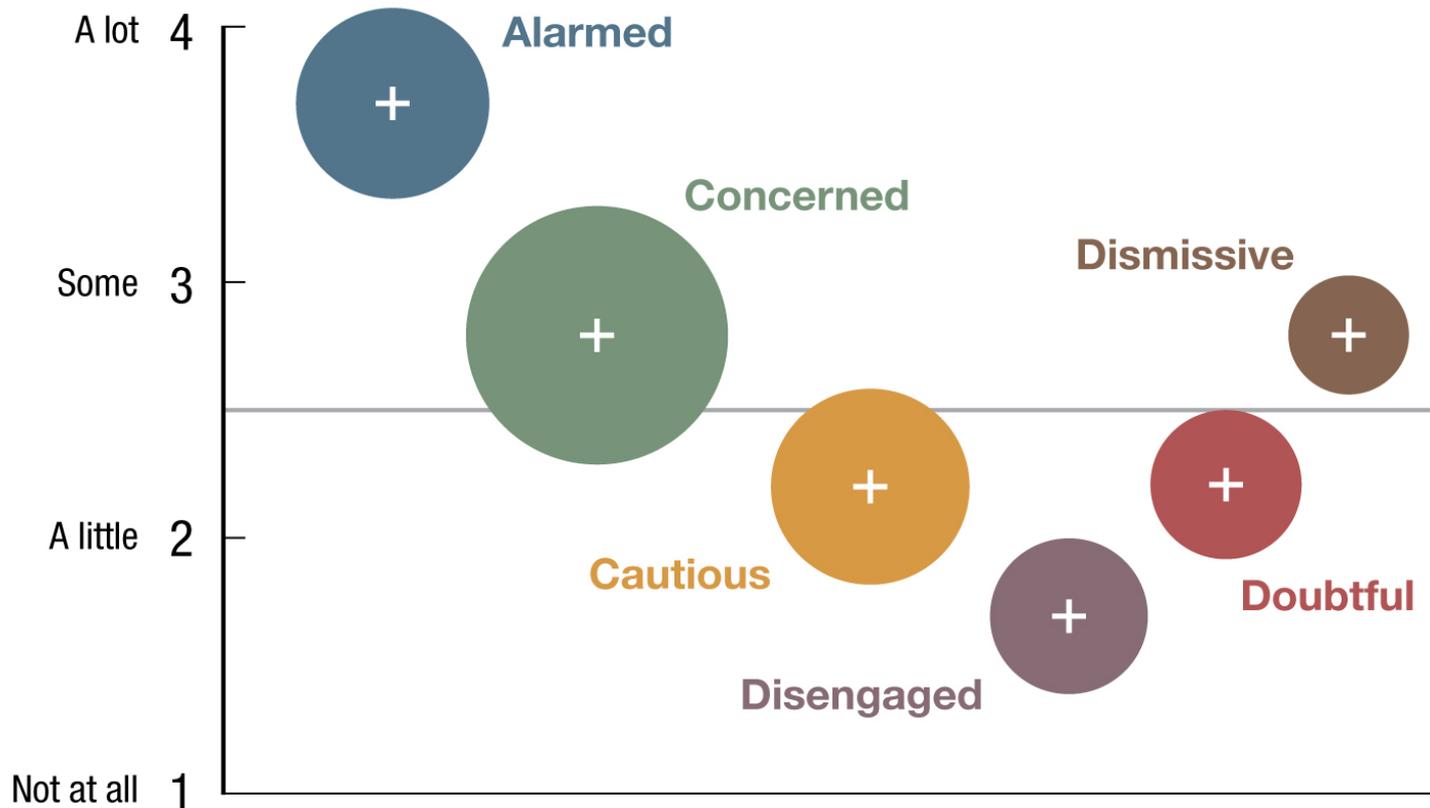
# Perceived Harm of Global Warming, April 2012



# Assuming that global warming is happening, do you think it is ...



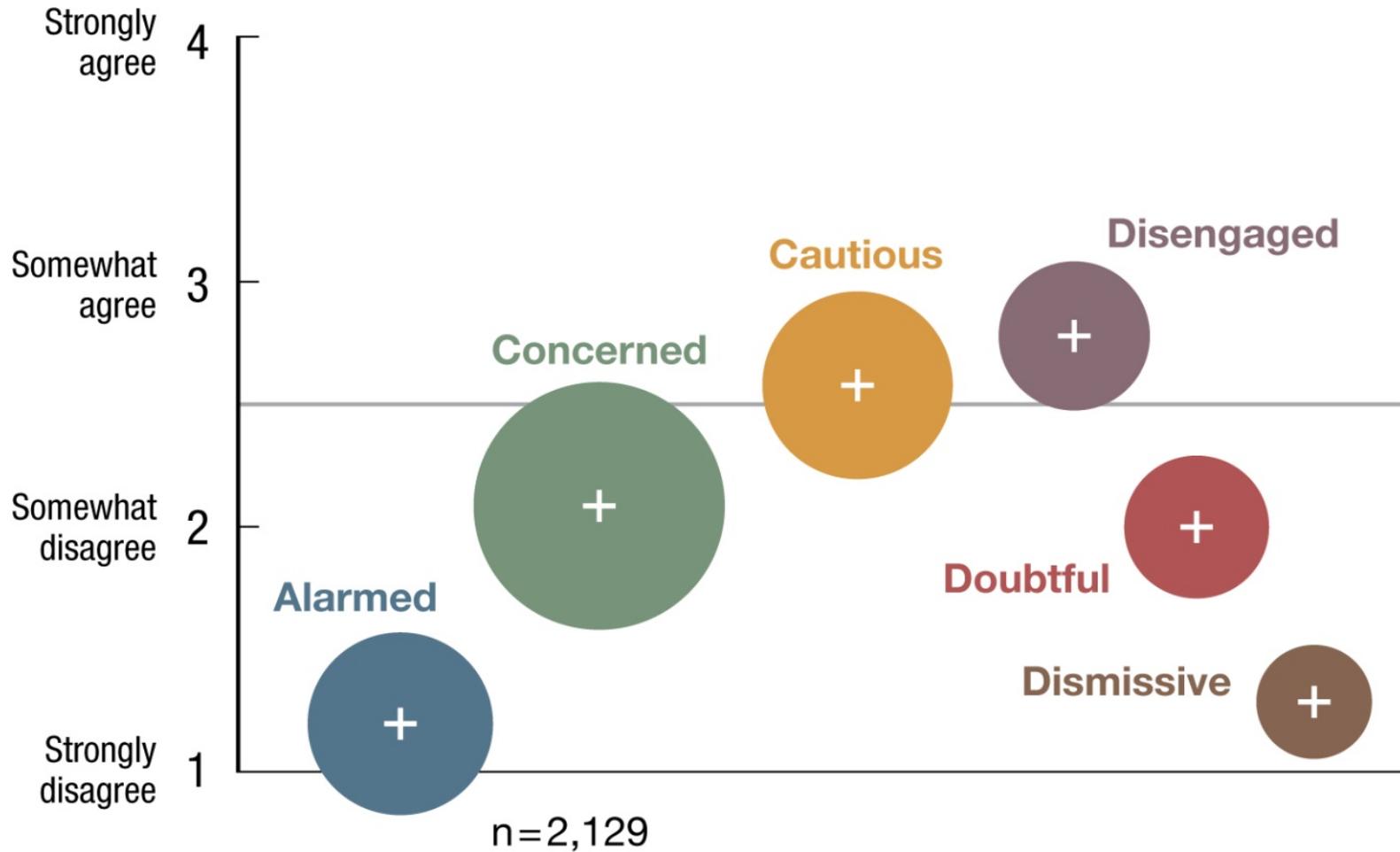
# How much had you thought about global warming before today?



n=2,129

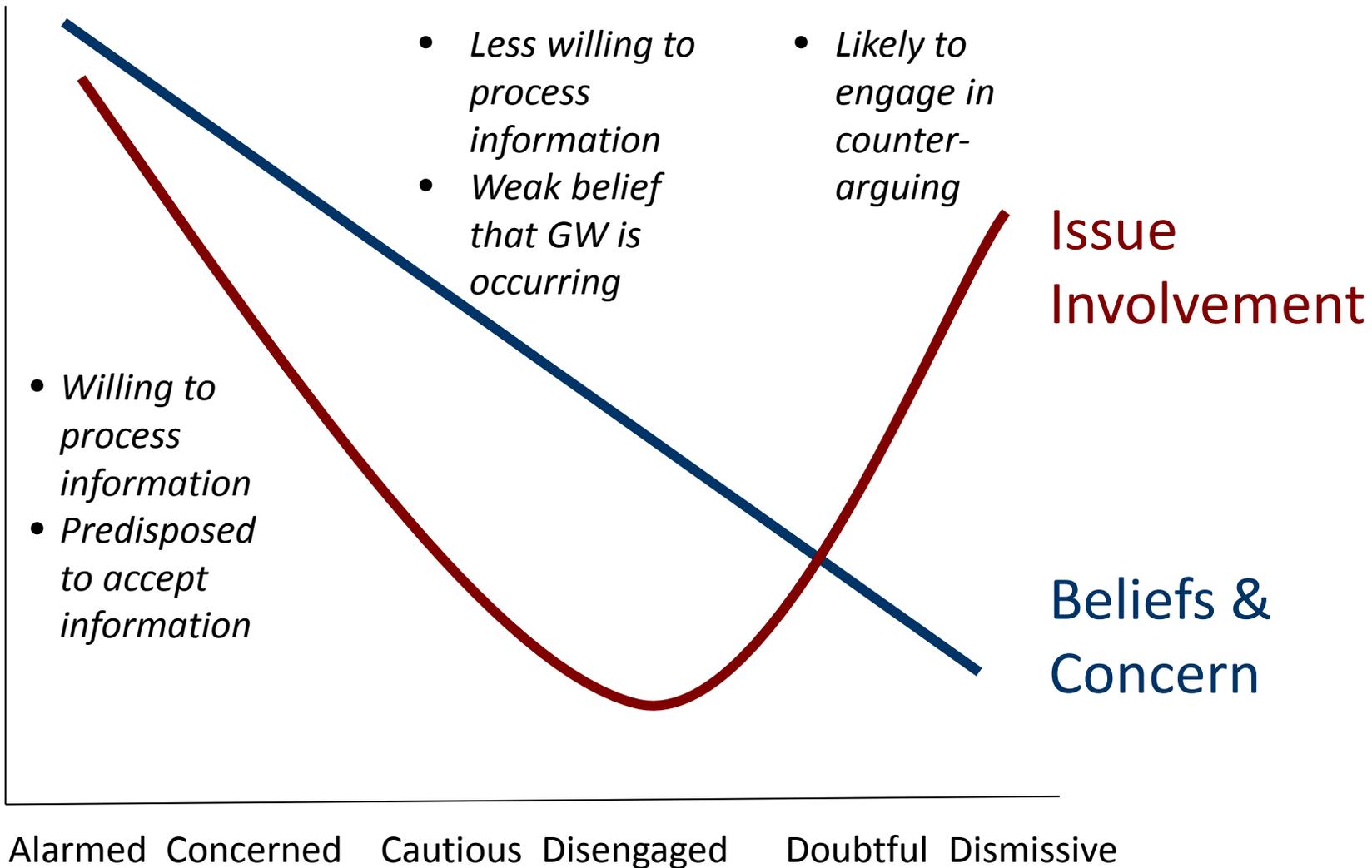
Source: Leiserowitz, Maibach & Roser-Renouf (Yale, 2009)

# *“I could easily change my mind about global warming.”*

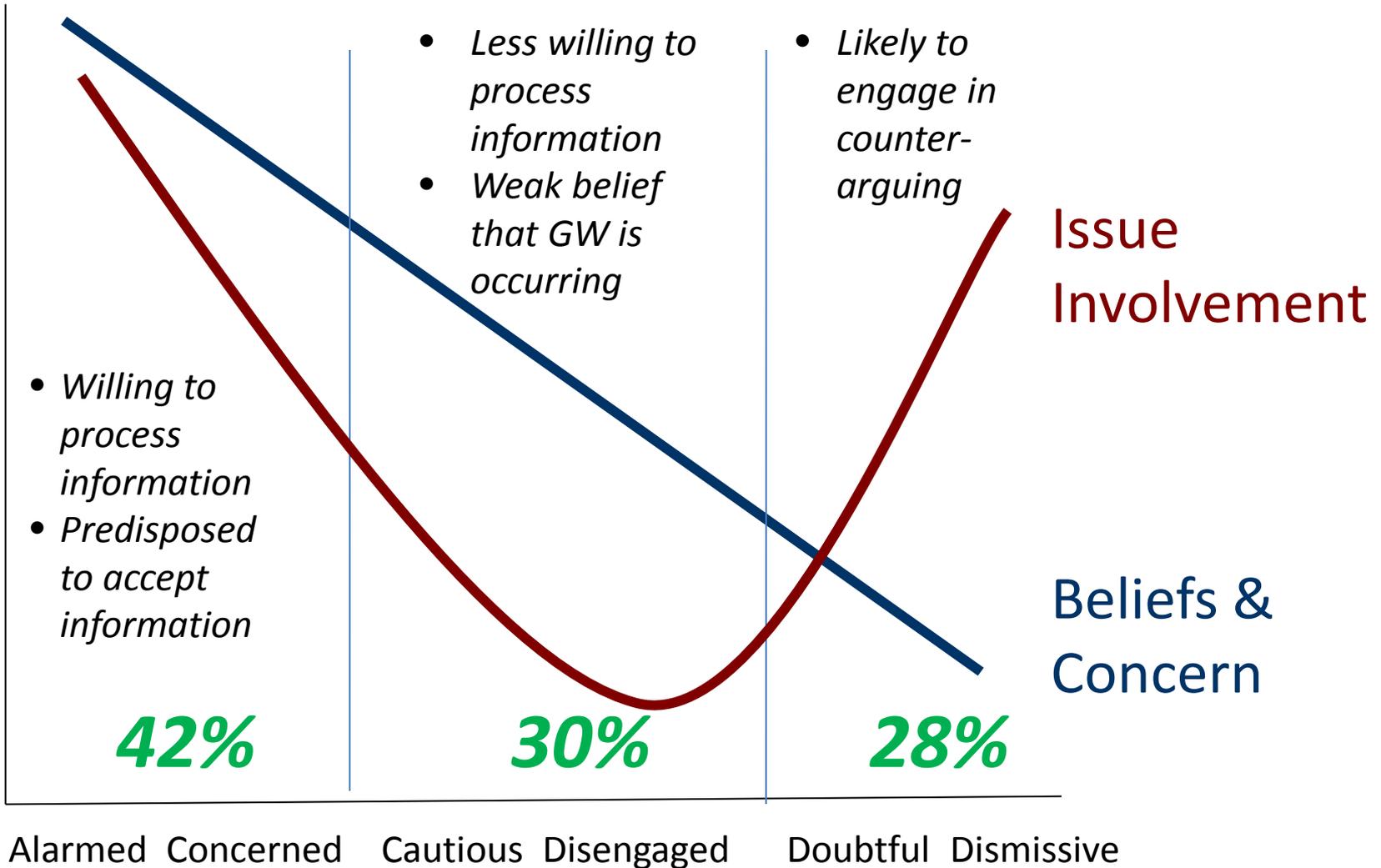


Source: Leiserowitz, Maibach & Roser-Renouf (Yale, 2009)

# Primary Differences among the Six Groups



# Primary Differences among the Six Groups

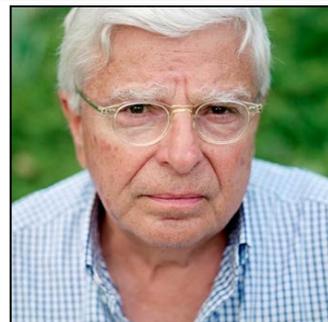


# Potential objectives for each audience

Activate them

Engage them

Avoid annoying them



Alarmed (16%)

Concerned (26%)

Cautious (26%)

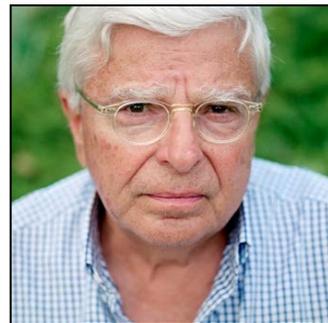
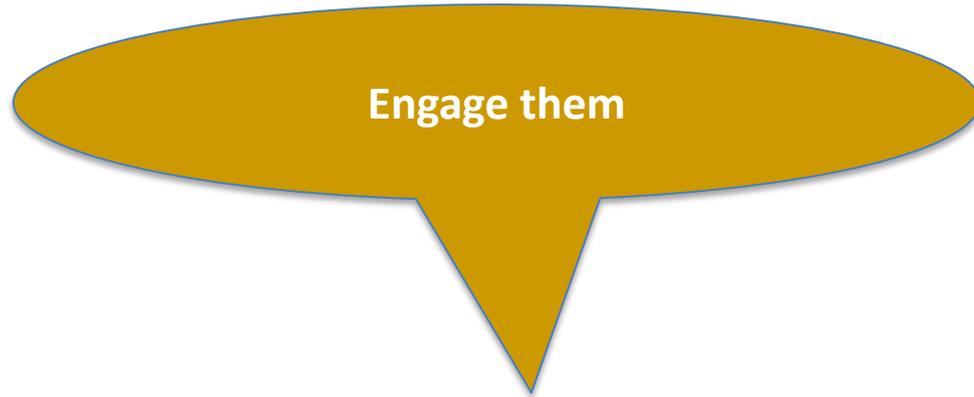
Disengaged (5%)

Doubtful (15%)

Dismissive (13%)

Our survey data suggest that heightening the engagement of segments in the middle of the Six Americas continuum is the best approach.

The question is: How best to engage them?



Alarmed (16%)

Concerned (26%)

Cautious (26%)

Disengaged (5%)

Doubtful (15%)

Dismissive (13%)

## **An Overarching Strategy:**

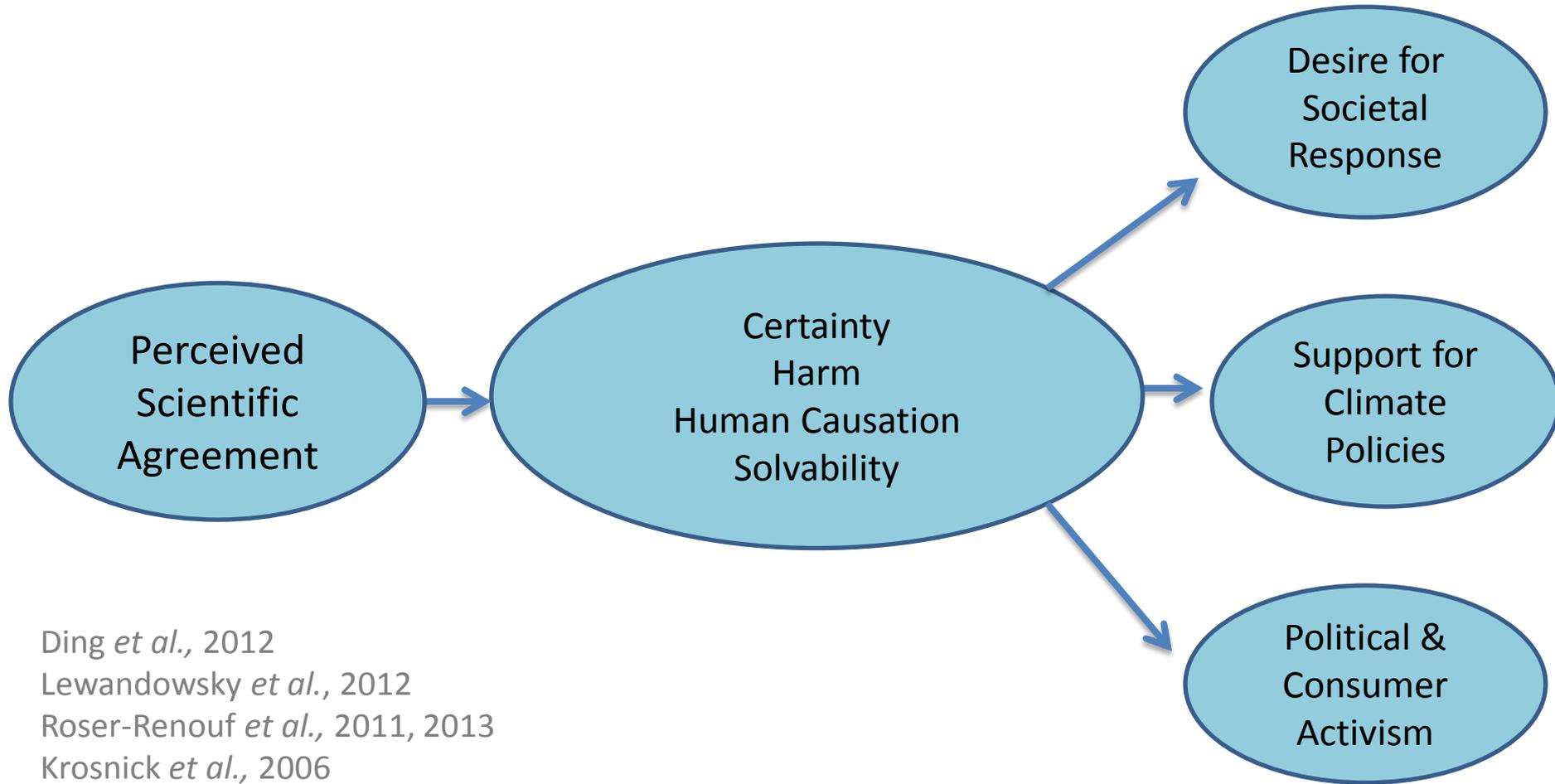
*Simple messages repeated often by a variety of trusted sources*

## An Overarching Strategy:

*Simple messages repeated often by a variety of trusted sources*

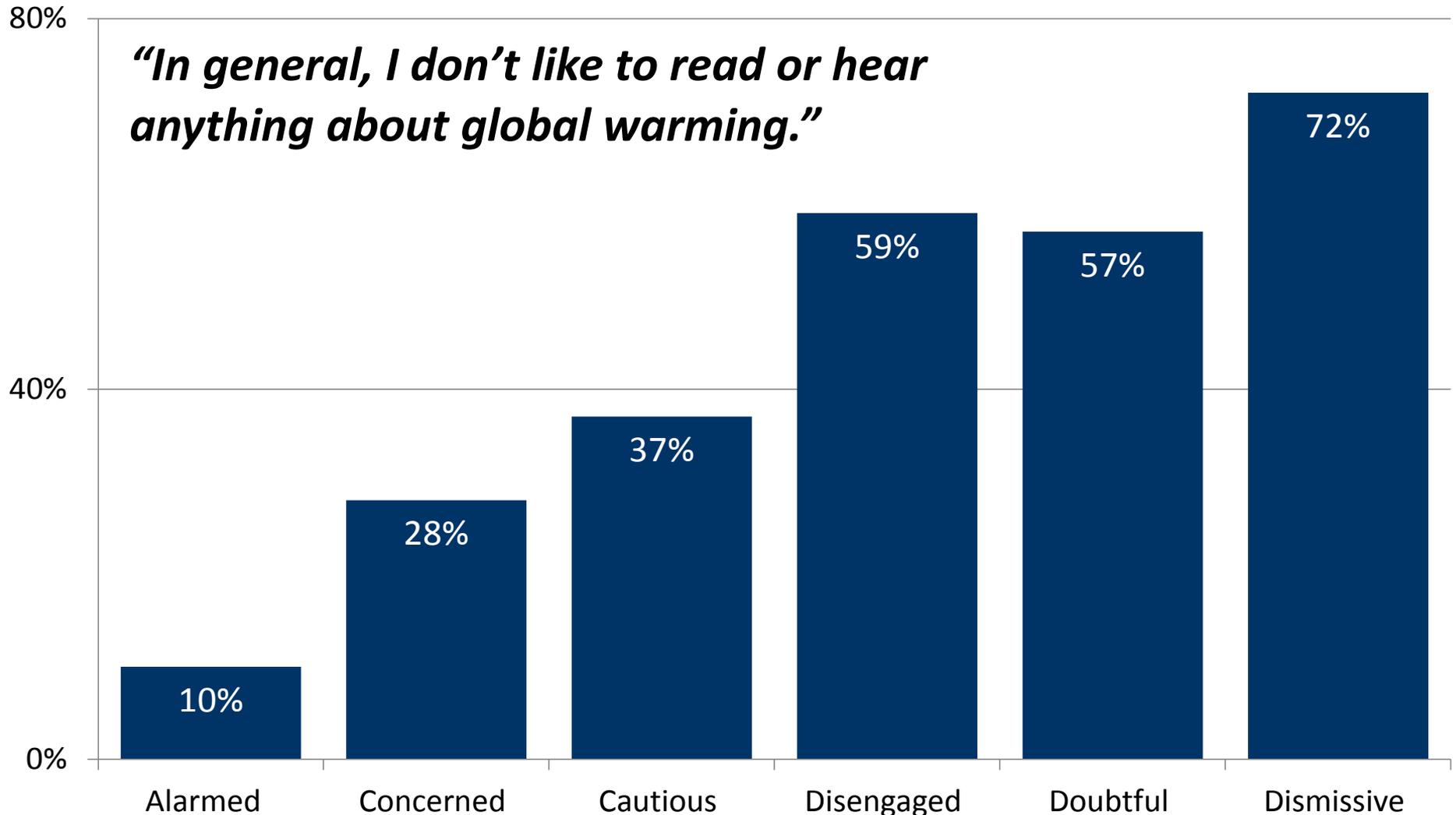
- It's real
- It's harmful
- Our actions are causing it
- Scientists agree
- Our actions can reduce the threat

# Perceptions of the Scientific Agreement Influence People's Key Beliefs about Climate Change, Which Influence Mitigation Support & Action

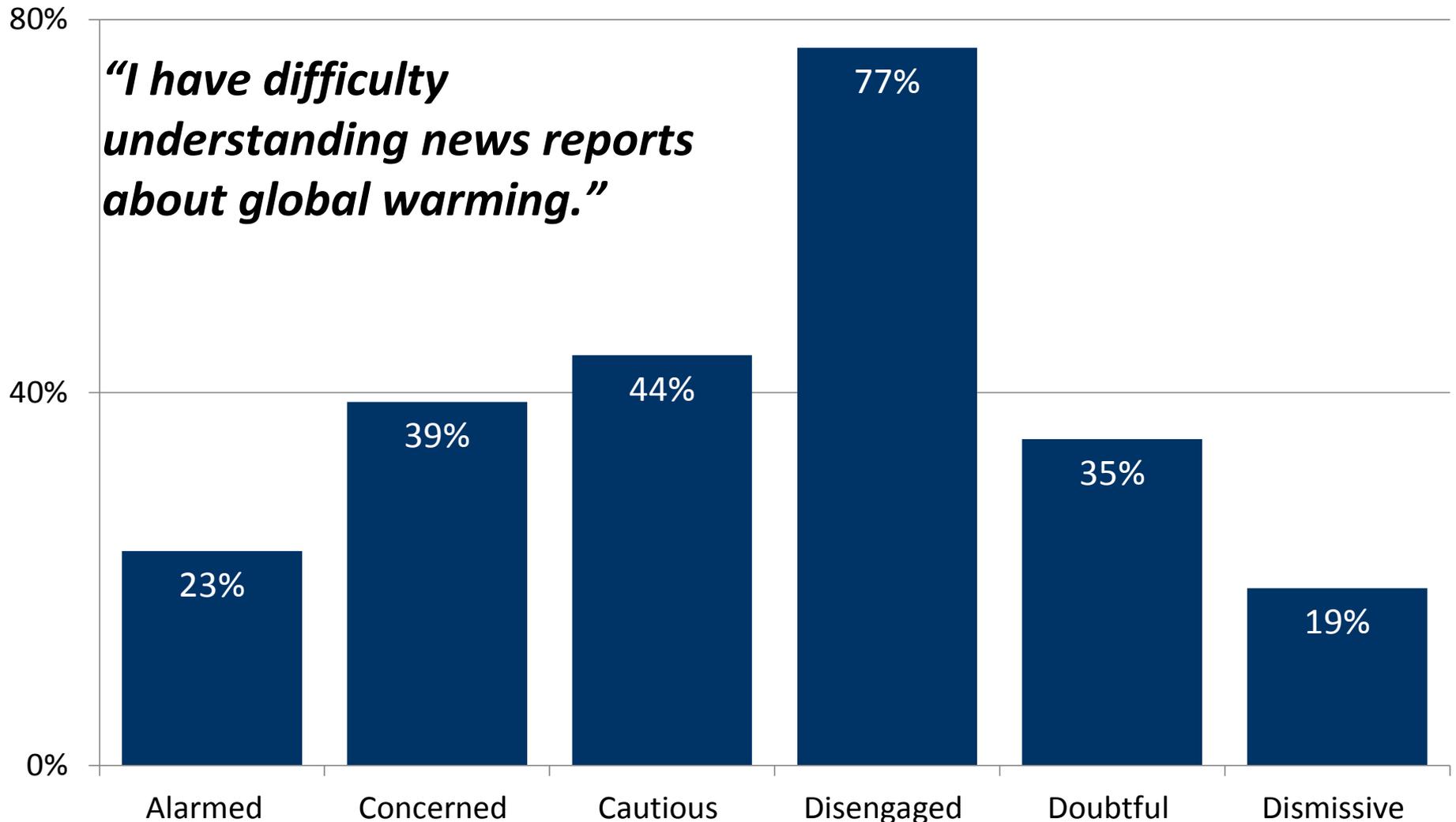


# Barrier #1: Low Interest

*“In general, I don’t like to read or hear anything about global warming.”*

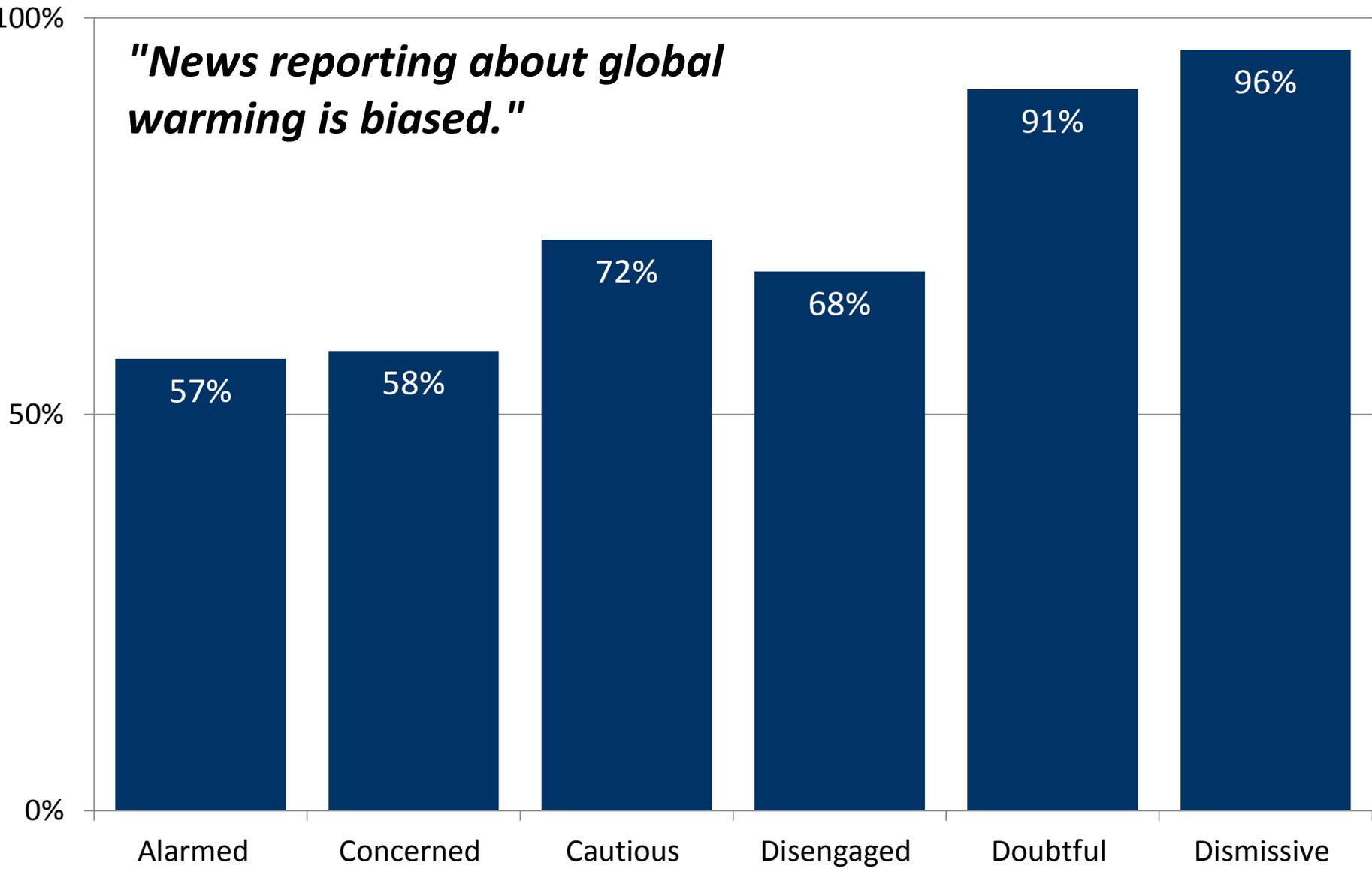


## Barrier #2: Low Ability



# Barrier #3: Low Trust

*"News reporting about global warming is biased."*



# #1. Provide People with Answers to Their Questions:

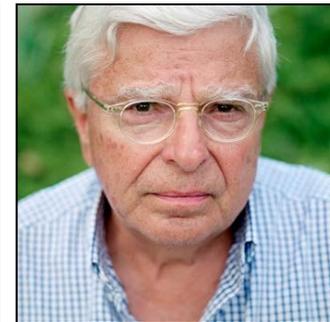
*Message content should be determined by the needs & interests of your audience, not simply by what you are most eager to say*

*“If you could ask an expert on global warming one question, which question would you ask?”*

What can we do to reduce global warming?

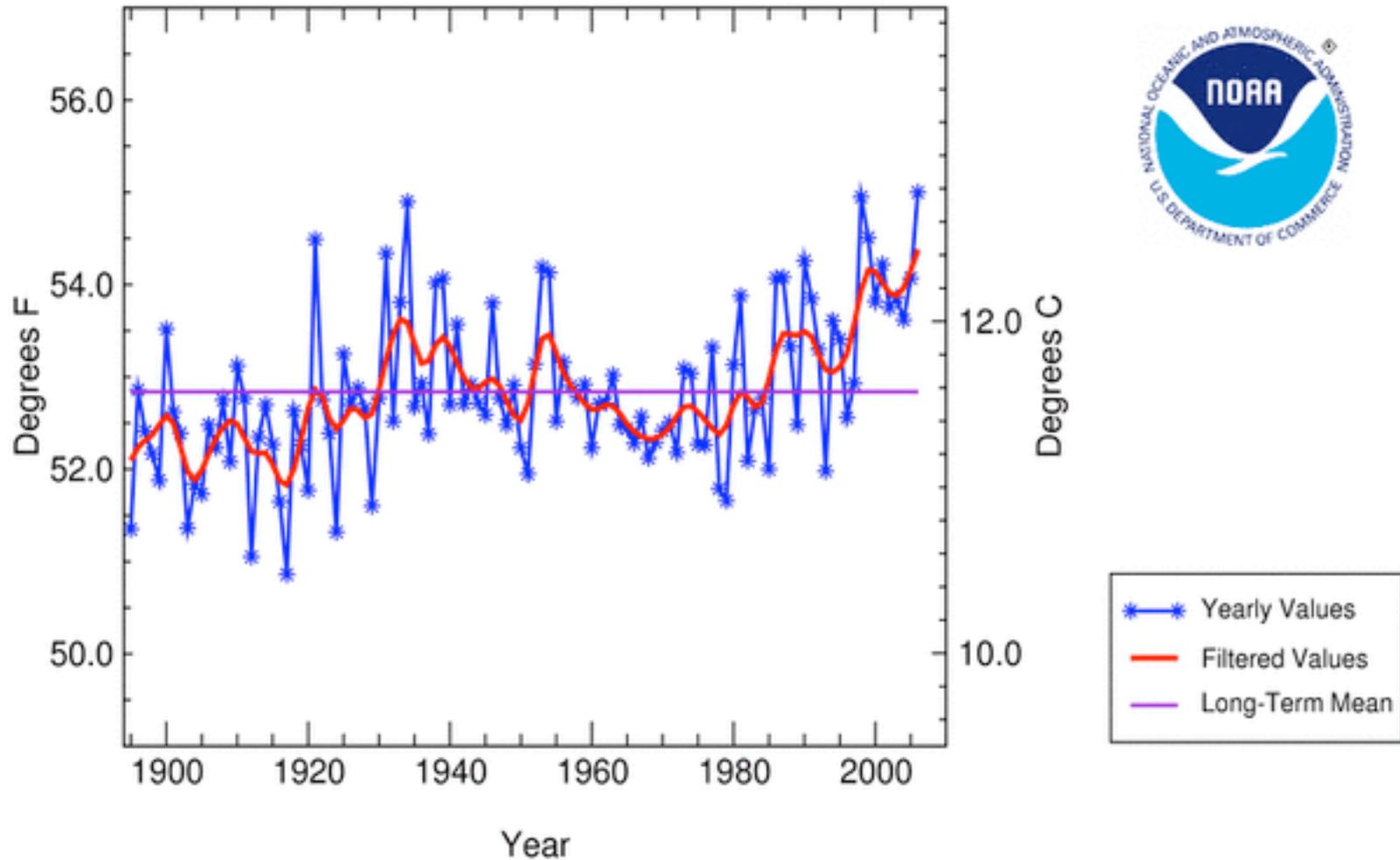
What harm will global warming cause?

How do you know that global warming is occurring?



# Effortful Processing

National (Contiguous U.S.) Temperature  
1895 - 2006



# Automatic Processing



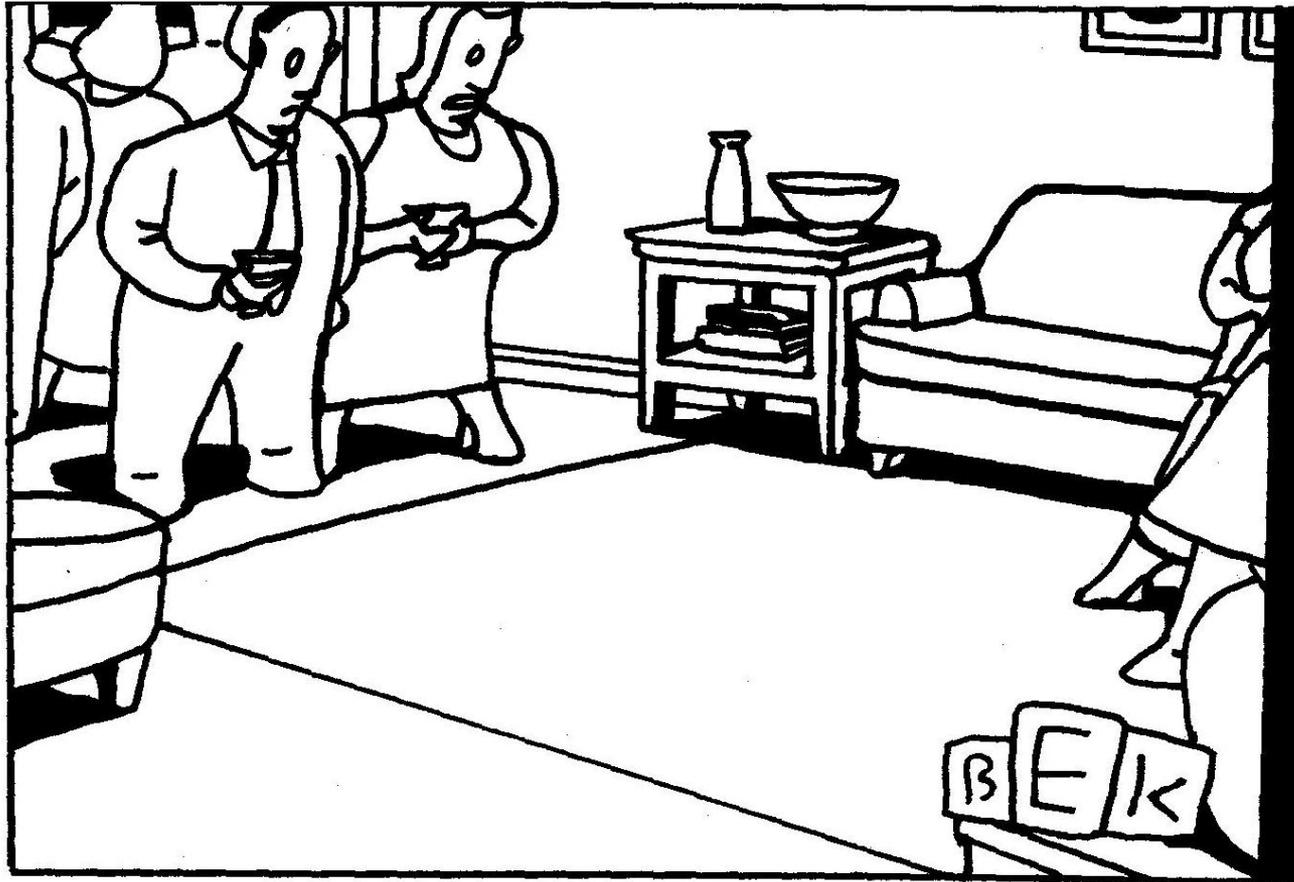
## #2. Use Visual Imagery, Rather than Numbers & Statistics



# #3. Use narratives with characters they can identify with to build emotional involvement with the issue.



**#4. Build positive new social norms:  
Suggest that environmentally friendly beliefs and behaviors are prevalent, admired and trendy.**



*“Oh God, here they come—act green.”*

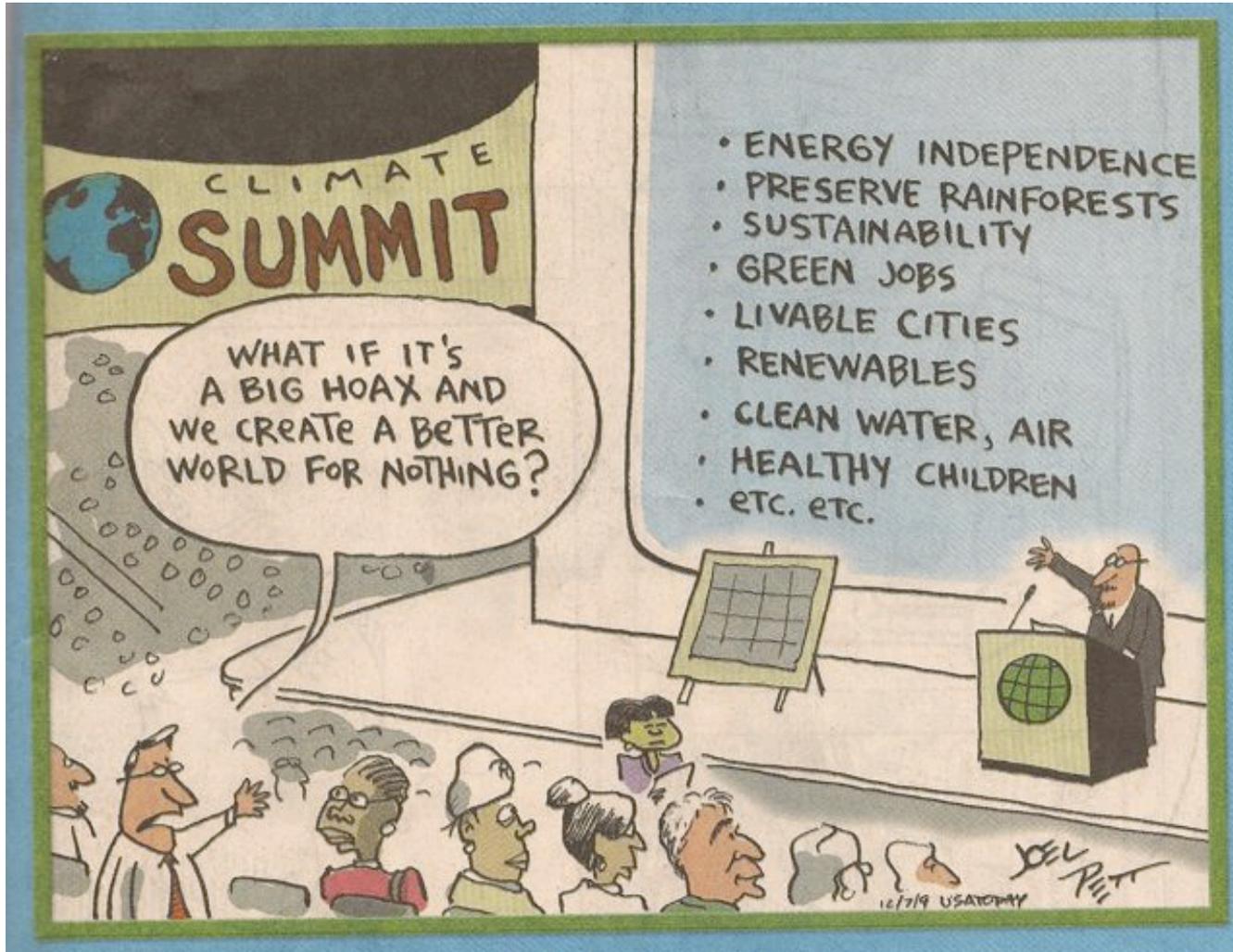
## #5. Move the Conversation from Debates about Whether Climate Change Is Occurring to Risk Management

**Fact:** 97% of the world's most qualified experts agree -- climate change is real and human-caused.

**Question:** If 97% of the world's most qualified pediatricians agreed that your child was seriously ill, would you ignore their warning?

**Conclusion:** The only responsible option is to take seriously the reality of climate change.

## #6. Emphasize the co-benefits for people's health, our communities and the economy.



# Communication Strategy Summary

## For Audiences with Low Issue Involvement

1. Provide people with answers to their questions.
2. Use visual imagery, rather than numbers & statistics.
3. Use narratives with characters they can identify with to build emotional involvement with the issue.
4. Build positive new social norms: Suggest that environmentally friendly beliefs and behaviors are prevalent, admired and trendy.
5. Move the conversation from debates about whether climate change is occurring to risk management.
6. Emphasize the co-benefits for people's health, our communities and the economy.

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## Welcome

### Introduction

Climate change is the result of human actions and choices. Limiting climate change – and protecting people and ecosystems to the degree possible from unavoidable changes in the climate – will require significant public engagement in the issue so that difficult decisions can be made by members of the public and policy makers. Our center was created to conduct unbiased social science research that will facilitate such public engagement.

### More About Us

We use social science research methods – experiments, surveys, in-depth interviews and other methods – to find ways of effectively engaging the public and policy makers in the problem, and in considering and enacting solutions. Social science research has played important roles in many social change campaigns over the past several decades, including reducing smoking and littering, and increasing seat belt use and recycling.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to conduct unbiased public engagement research - and to help government agencies, non-profit organizations, and companies apply the results of this research - so that collectively, we can stabilize our planet's life sustaining climate.

### Latest Reports

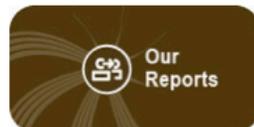
The Climate Change in the American Mind Series - Fall 2012

The Climate Change in the American Mind Series, Spring 2012

American Meteorological Society Member Survey on Global Warming: Preliminary Findings, February 2012

The Climate Change in the American Mind Series, November 2011

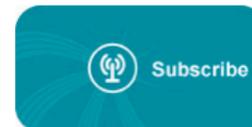
A National Survey of Television Meteorologists About Climate Change Education, June 2011



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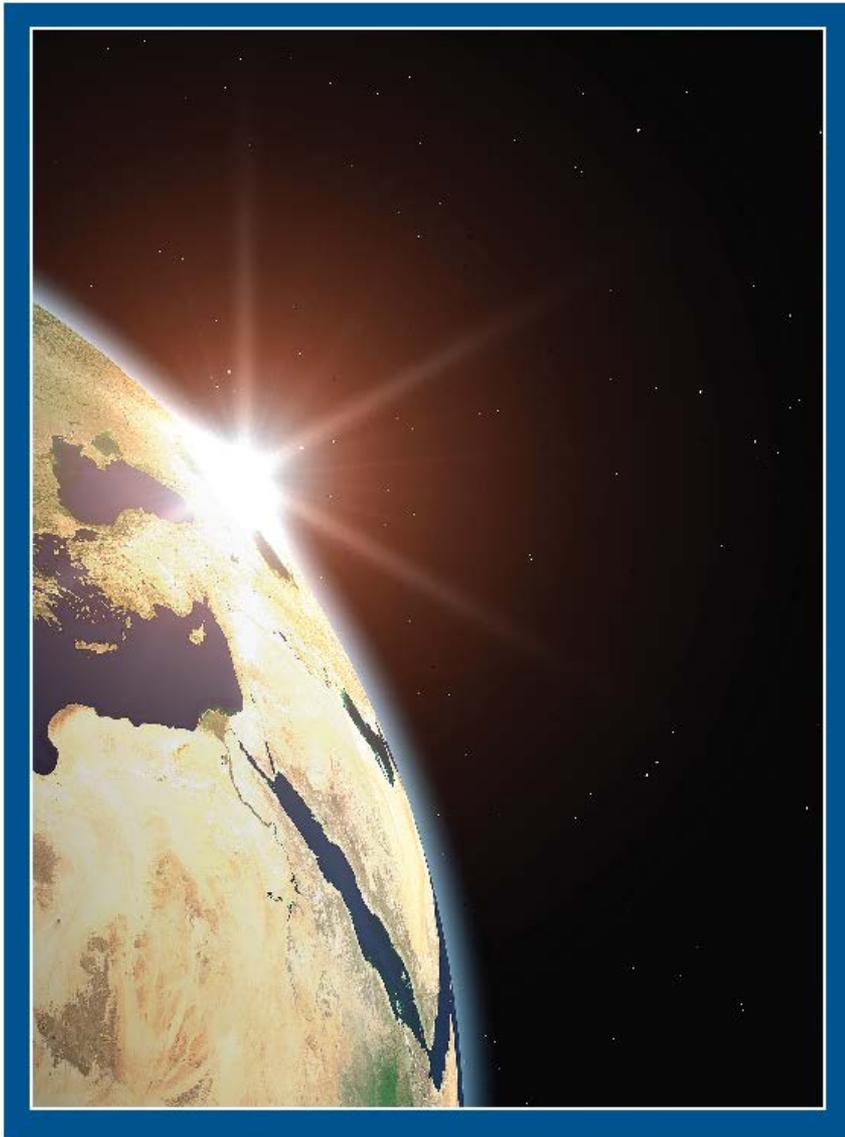


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<http://climatechange.gmu.edu>

<http://research.yale.edu/environment/climate>