



Scientific  
Consensus  
ON  
Global  
Warming

RESULTS OF AN  
INTERNATIONAL SURVEY  
OF CLIMATE SCIENTISTS

By Joseph L. Bast and James M. Taylor

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Second Edition (revised)

The Heartland Institute  
Chicago, Illinois

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## **Introduction**

Global warming is one of the most controversial topics of debate today. Is Earth's temperature rising? If it is, how rapid is the increase and will it benefit or harm humanity and nature? Are human greenhouse gas emissions to blame, or is the increase a natural return to temperatures that prevailed during the planet's previous warm periods?

The issue has gotten tremendous attention by the mainstream media, perhaps because it makes for exciting headlines and "specials" for television, but also because the stakes are very high. If a major warming is occurring and it is due to human activities, then public policies may be justified to tax or regulate a wide range of activities and encourage or subsidize others. Because carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) – the most important man-made greenhouse gas – is emitted whenever fossil fuels are burned, programs to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> levels necessarily affect energy prices, and with them much of the U.S. and global economies.

### **An International Survey of Scientists**

This booklet summarizes the results of international surveys of climate scientists conducted in 1996 and 2003 by two German environmental scientists, Dennis Bray and Hans von Storch. Bray is a research scientist at the GKSS Institute of Coastal Research in Geesthacht, Germany. Von Storch is a climatology professor at the University of Hamburg and director of the Institute of Coastal Research.

More than 530 climate scientists from 27 different countries provided numerical answers each time the survey was conducted. All responses were anonymous. The same questions were asked each time the survey was conducted, plus an additional 32 questions were asked in 2003. The 2003 survey was conducted online. Notice of the

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survey was posted in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* and on the Climlist server (Climlist is a moderated international electronic mail distribution list for climatologists and those working in closely related fields). Notices also were sent to institutional lists in Germany, Denmark, and the U.K. The survey was password protected to ensure that scientists in climate-related fields were the only ones with access to it.

The surveys presented dozens of assertions regarding climate change and asked respondents to give a numerical score, on a scale of 1 to 7, indicating the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with each assertion. The entire results of both surveys can be found online at a site created and maintained by Bray and von Storch.<sup>1</sup>

The average responses to every question in both the 1996 and 2003 surveys are reported in the appendix of this booklet. This is all valuable and accurate data, of course, but it can be difficult for a layperson to interpret. What does it mean, for example, to say the average response to a question is 3.39?

To make the survey results more transparent, we singled out 17 questions from the 2003 survey and present the answers here in a simplified and less academic style. For each question, we combined the percentages of those respondents who gave numeric scores of 1, 2, or 3 and called this “agree.”

We combined those who gave numeric scores of 5, 6, or 7 and called this “disagree.” Those who answered with the numeric score of 4 we called “uncertain.” Using these numbers, we then illustrate the answers to each question with a simple pie chart. Tables containing the underlying data for the 17 pie charts appear in Appendix 1. The mean average scores for all 99 questions appear in Appendix 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Bray, Dennis and von Storch, Hans, *Survey of Climate Scientists 1996, 2003*, <http://w3g.gkss.de/staff/bray/BrayGKSSsite/BrayGKSS/surveyframe.html>. This revised edition incorporates corrections made by the authors to the averages reported for questions 18 to 22 in the 2003 survey, as reported in the second appendix. The Web site was updated by the authors since the previous edition of this report was written.

## What the 2003 Survey Found

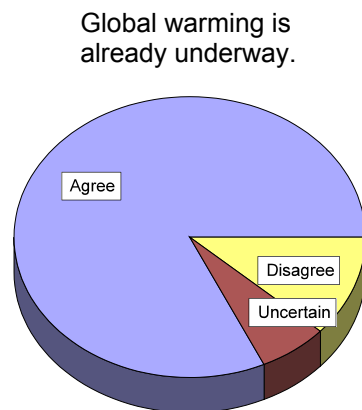
The 2003 survey results show climate scientists at laboratories, universities, and offices around the world nearly all agree that global warming is already underway and the media influences the public's perception of climate change. However, there was no consensus regarding the causes of the modern warming period, how reliable predictions of future temperatures can be, and whether future global warming would be harmful or beneficial. Assertions that "the debate is over" are certainly not supported by the survey results.

### 1. Is global warming occurring?

Eighty-two percent of climate scientists agreed with the statement, "We can say for certain that global warming is a process already underway." Approximately one-third (31.9 percent) said they "strongly agree" with the statement and only 2.6 percent said they "strongly disagree."

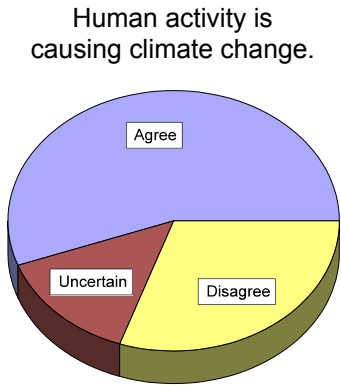
Whether or not some warming has occurred was a matter of controversy during the 1980s and 1990s when satellite data and temperatures taken from instruments suspended from weather balloons showed little or no warming in the past 50 years.

More recently, however, re-analysis of the satellite data shows an upward trend, though still less than land-based temperature stations and much less than the amount predicted by computer models. Most climate scientists believe Earth has warmed slightly (about 0.8° Celsius, or about 1° Fahrenheit) during the past century.



## 2. Are humans causing climate change?

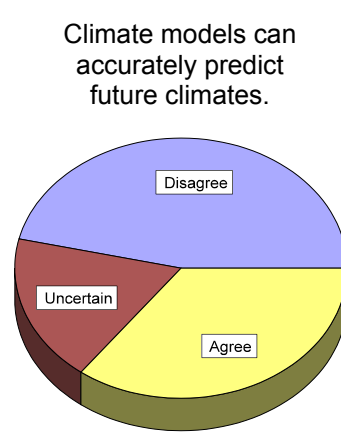
The question most people are most keen to ask climate scientists is probably “do you agree or disagree that climate change is mostly the result of anthropogenic (man-made) causes?” Slightly more than half (55.8 percent) of climate scientists surveyed agreed, 14.2 percent were unsure, and 30 percent disagreed. Interestingly, more scientists “strongly disagree” than “strongly agree” that climate change is mostly the result of anthropogenic causes.



The survey clearly shows that the debate over *why* the climate is changing is still underway, with nearly half of climate scientists disagreeing with what is often claimed to be the

“consensus” view. Note that the question asked was not whether or not human activities have *any* effect on climate, but whether climate change is “mostly the result” of human activity.

## 3. Can science predict future climate?



Before scientists can predict future climate they must decipher the complex code of the global climate. Billions of dollars have been spent creating global circulation models that run on super-computers and generate different scenarios based on data entered and assumptions incorporated into their codes..

When climate scientists were asked if “climate models can accurately predict climate conditions in the future,” only a third (35.1 percent) agreed, while 18.3 percent were uncertain and nearly half (46.6 percent) disagreed. The survey

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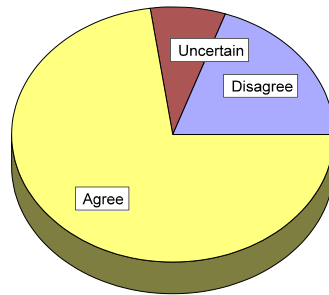
suggests that a key tool relied on by those who believe in man-made global warming is considered to be inaccurate by nearly half of the world's climate scientists.

### 4. Is the IPCC a reliable guide to scientific consensus?

Probably the most commonly cited evidence that a “consensus” of scientists believe it is possible to predict future climates are the reports of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is controversial because its widely circulated “summaries for policymakers” are written and edited by government officials, not by scientists.

The survey shows roughly three of four climate scientists (72.7 percent) believe “the IPCC reports accurately reflect the consensus of thought within the scientific community.” However, nearly one in five (19.8 percent) disagree. Only 24.4 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” with the statement.

The IPCC reflects the scientific consensus.



### 5. Can we predict what the climate will do ten years from now? 100 years from now?

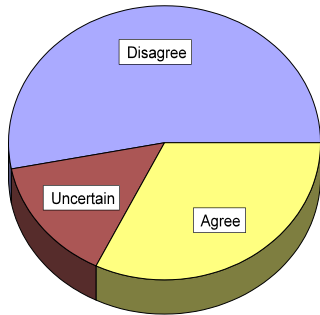
The survey asked scientists to indicate “the degree [to which] you think the current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climate variability of time scales” of 10 years, 100 years, and greater than 100 years.

Only one-third (32.1 percent) of scientists reported having confidence in our ability to make predictions of time scales of 10 years, while more than half (53.3 percent) reported little or no confidence. When asked about time scales of 100 years, slightly more than a quarter (27.4 percent) of scientists reported being confident while 55.6 percent had little or no confidence.

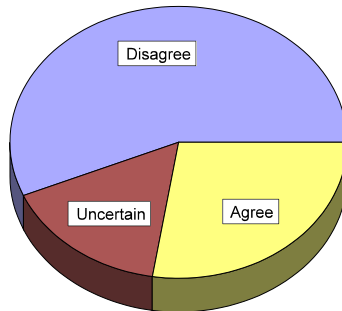


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We can predict climate variability on time scales of 10 years.



We can predict climate variability on time scales of 100 years



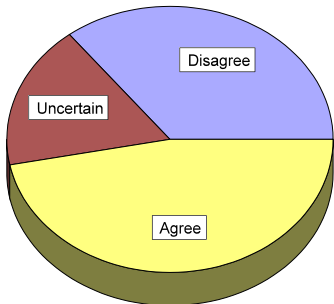
Apparently, few climate scientists believe we can accurately predict what the climate will be like in as little as 10 years, or as far off as 100 years.

### 6. Why do computer models fail?

One reason so few scientists trust computer models is because the data fed into them is often incomplete, contaminated, and not subject to peer review. Even scientists who

Climate models accurately verify climate conditions.

rely on computer models and endorse their output admit to “tweaking” the models to produce results in line with their expectations. The survey confirmed these views are widely held by climate scientists.



Asked to respond to the statement, “Climate models accurately verify the climatic conditions for which they are calibrated,” barely half (46.8 percent) of scientists agreed, 17.6 percent were uncertain, and more than a third (35.6 percent) disagreed. Four times as many

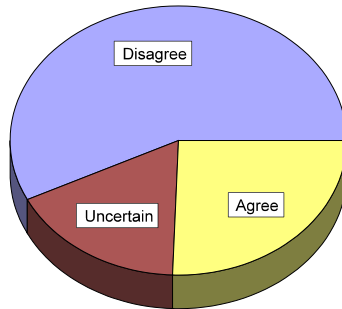
scientists “strongly disagreed” with the statement as “strongly agreed” with it.

### 7. How well do climate models deal with precipitation?

Precipitation plays a major role in climates. It is a cause of temperature change by reducing the amount of moisture in the atmosphere, and it affects vegetation and consequently the extent of groundcover, which shades and cools the ground. It can also be a consequence of climate change: Two of the most-often described hazards caused by global warming – storms and flooding – are alleged to be driven by changes in precipitation.

Scientists were asked, “How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with precipitation?” More than half (57.5 percent) said models are “inadequate” while only a quarter (25.4 percent) expressed any confidence in the models. The remaining 17.1 percent were undecided.

Climate models adequately deal with precipitation.

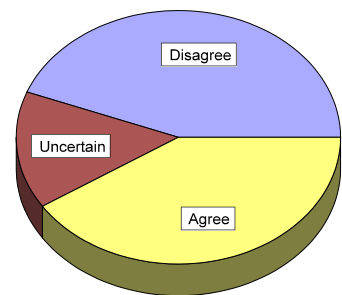


### 8. How well do climate models deal with water vapor?

Water vapor is by far the largest greenhouse gas, accounting for about 60 percent of the natural greenhouse effect. (CO<sub>2</sub> accounts for about 20 percent.) Some climate scientists say water vapor will amplify the warming effects of rising CO<sub>2</sub> and cause more violent weather.

Scientists were asked, “How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with water vapour in the atmosphere?” The answer showed a scientific community almost evenly split between those who believe climate models are “inadequate” (44.4 percent) and those who believe the models are “adequate” (40.8 percent), while 14.8 were unsure.

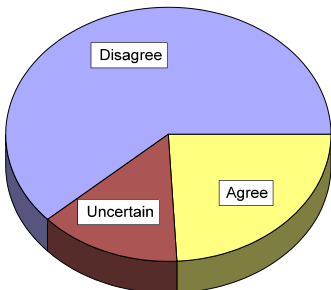
Climate models adequately deal with water vapor.



**9. How well do climate models deal with clouds?**

Even a small change in cloud cover can more than offset whatever warming effect might come from CO<sub>2</sub>. Scientist have long been skeptical of the ability of computer models to accurately reflect the role of clouds.

Climate models adequately deal with clouds.

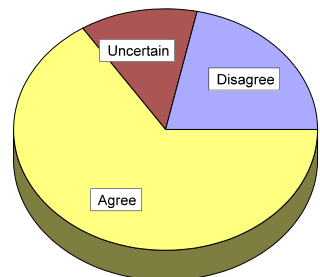


Asked, “How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with clouds?” nearly two-thirds (61.8 percent) of scientists said the models are “inadequate,” while only one fourth (24.1 percent) said the models are “adequate.” Nearly four times as many scientists scored the models as “very inadequate” (11.7 percent) as scored them “very adequate” (3.2 percent).

**10. How accurately do climate models deal with variation in solar radiation?**

A controversial issue in the global warming debate is how large a role solar variability plays in Earth’s climate. A growing number of scientists believe variation in solar radiation explains most or even all of the modern warming, just as it explains past warming and cooling periods. In recent decades, the sun has been relatively active, sending more solar radiation to Earth. This could explain why warming is also occurring on other planets in the solar system.

Climate models adequately deal with solar radiation.



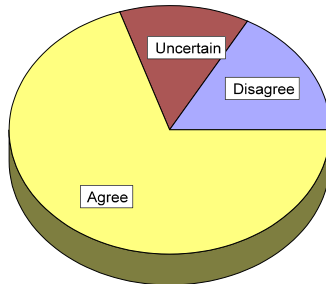
Climate scientists were asked, “How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with radiation?” Most scientists – 65.7 percent – believe the models are “adequate” or “very adequate.” About one in five – 21.7 percent – believe the models are “inadequate” or “very inadequate.”

### 11. Would climate change have beneficial effects?

Earth experienced warmer temperatures than today's during recorded history, and records indicate human civilization thrived during those times. Moderate global warming could produce such benefits as lower morbidity and mortality rates, more plentiful and less expensive food supplies, and lower heating bills.

When asked, "To what degree do you think that climate change might have some positive effects for some societies?" most scientists (69.9 percent) expressed some degree of support while only 17.0 percent gave it little or no support. Nearly nine times as many scientists had a "great degree" of confidence in benefits resulting from global warming as those who had "none at all."

Climate change might have beneficial effects for some societies.



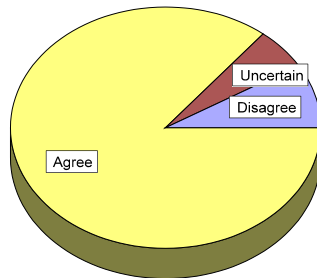
### 12. Would climate change have detrimental effects?

In a relatively rare show of near-consensus, 85.8 percent of scientists expressed agreement to some degree with the statement, "Climate change will have detrimental effects for some societies." Only 5.5 percent were uncertain and 8.6 percent disagreed.

Most experts, including skeptics, recognize that global warming could be accompanied by rising sea levels and heavier rains, though in both cases the amount of increase and when and where they might occur are hotly debated.

Any time the climate changes there are winners and losers, and the way this question is phrased solicits acknowledgment of that fact.

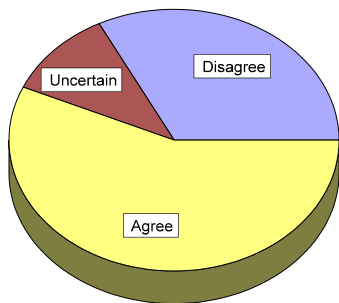
Climate change will have detrimental effects for some societies.



**13. Does the media influence climate research?**

The extraordinary coverage given to global warming by the media means scientists and others who comment on the subject can get lots of attention. This can either advance or retard a young academic’s career.

Publicity influences future research.

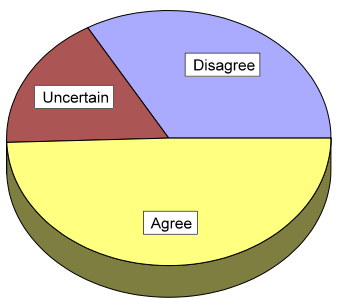


Climate scientists were asked “How much do you think that a scientist’s exposure to publicity influences the direction of his or her future research?” Half of the scientists (51.1 percent) said exposure to publicity influences scientific research while 12.3 percent were unsure and 36.5 percent didn’t think there was much influence or none at all.

**14. Would climate change occur suddenly and have devastating effects?**

Much of the public’s fear of climate change concerns how quickly it may occur and whether societies would have time to respond. Alarmists portray flood waters engulfing entire cities and massive storms emerging with little warming. Skeptics, on the other hand, contend any warming caused by rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels would be gradual and mostly affect temperatures at night and during the winter.

Climate change will happen suddenly.



The survey suggests the scientific community is divided between these two scenarios. In response to the statement, “Assuming climate change will occur, it will occur so suddenly

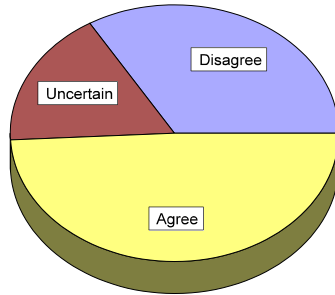
that a lack of preparation could result in devastation of some areas of the world,” 49.3 percent of scientists agreed, 33.4 percent disagreed, and 17.3 percent were uncertain.

**15. Do climate change “skeptics” get too much attention?**

Some journalists and politicians have expressed concern that climate change “skeptics” get too much attention in the press. It is instructive to see whether climate scientists agree.

When asked if “the claims of skeptical scientists who dispute the IPCC consensus get too little or too much coverage?” 12.4 percent said skeptics receive “too little” attention and 18.6 percent said they receive “too much” attention. One could interpret this as meaning 81.4 percent *don’t* believe skeptics get too much attention. Using the convention we used for other questions, though, we would say the 49.1 percent scoring the question 5 - 7 “agree” that skeptics get too much attention, the 33.7 percent scoring it 1 - 3 “disagree,” and the 17.2 percent who scored it 4 think current coverage is just right.

Skeptics receive too much media attention.

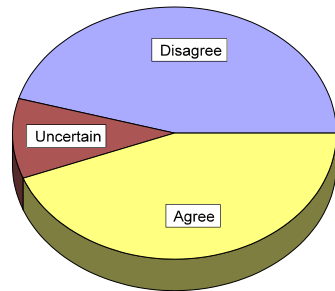


**16. Is the scientific debate over climate change over?**

Those who fear global warming and believe human activities are its cause have been calling for “action, not more debate” since the early 1990s. But the survey shows climate scientists do not believe the debate over the science is over, so the time is not right for politicians and policy analysts to begin crafting plans to “stop global warming.”

Climate scientists were asked to score this statement: “Natural scientists have established enough physical evidence to turn the issue of global climate change over to social scientists for matters of policy discussion.” Once again, the scientific community split,

The science is sufficiently settled that policymakers can now take over.



## SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS ON GLOBAL WARMING

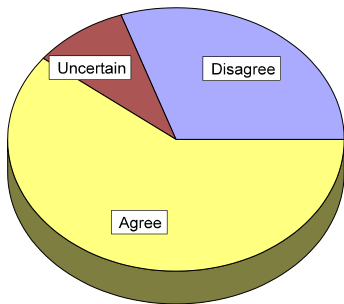
this time almost exactly down the middle. Nearly half (45.8 percent) disagreed with the statement, nearly half (44.1 percent) agreed, and the remainder (10.2 percent) were undecided. Those who say the time for debate is over are at odds with half of the scientists they claim to be speaking for.

### 17. Will the debate end soon?

If half the scientific community doesn't believe the science of global warming is sufficiently established to "turn the issue ... over to social

scientists for matters of policy discussion," then when do they think the science of global warming *will* be sufficiently firm for policymakers? One hint of the possible answer can be found in the answer to this question: "How much has the uncertainty regarding climate change been reduced in the last ten years?"

Scientific uncertainty has been reduced in the past 10 years.



About a third of the climate scientists (30.5 percent) who answered this question said uncertainty has not been reduced in the past 10 years. About one in 10 (9.2 percent) scored the question a 4 – what we've been

calling undecided. And 60.3 percent said uncertainty has been reduced. Remarkably, only 8.3 percent scored the question a 7, indicating that uncertainty has been reduced by "a significant amount."

With so few climate scientists expressing confidence that the amount of scientific uncertainty has declined during the past decade, it seems implausible that the debate is nearing an end. Indeed, some of the brightest thinkers in the global warming debate warn that the more we learn about the climate, the less confident we can be in our ability either to understand how climates "work" or to predict what tomorrow's climate will look like.

## Appendix 1

The tables below contain the data used to construct the pie charts that appear in the text. Numbers correspond to the numbers assigned to each question, not to the numbers originally assigned to questions in the survey.

1. We can say for certain that global warming is a process already underway.			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	31.9	82.2	Agree
2	34.2		
3	16.1		
4	6.4	6.4	Uncertain
5	3.8	11.3	Disagree
6	4.9		
strongly disagree	2.6		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

3. Climate models can accurately predict climate conditions in the future.			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	4	35.1	Agree
2	6.1		
3	28.6		
4	18.3	18.3	Uncertain
5	13.1	46.6	Disagree
6	18.6		
strongly disagree	14.9		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that climate change is mostly the result of anthropogenic causes?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	9.4	55.8	Agree
2	25.3		
3	21.1		
4	14.2	14.2	Uncertain
5	8.5	30	Disagree
6	11.3		
strongly disagree	10.2		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	

4. The IPCC reports accurately reflect the consensus of thought within the scientific community.			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	24.4	72.8	Agree
2	33.4		
3	15.0		
4	7.5	7.5	Uncertain
5	6.7	19.7	Disagree
6	8.4		
strongly disagree	4.6		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	



APPENDIX

**5.a. To what degree do you think the current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climatic variability on time scales of 10 years?**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
a great degree	.5	32	Agree
2	8.2		
3	23.3		
4	14.6	14.6	Uncertain
5	23.3	53.3	Disagree
6	21.1		
none at all	8.9		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

**7. How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with precipitation?**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
very inadequate	11.8	57.5	Disagree
2	26.3		
3	19.4		
4	17.1	17.1	Uncertain
5	16.2	25.4	Agree
6	7.7		
very adequate	1.5		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	

**5.b. To what degree do you think the current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climatic variability on time scales of 100 years?**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
a great deal	.6	27.4	Agree
2	9.8		
3	17.0		
4	16.1	16.1	Uncertain
5	15.2	56.6	Disagree
6	23.1		
none at all	18.3		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.1	

**8. How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with water vapour in the atmosphere?**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
very inadequate	6.5	44.5	Disagree
2	15.4		
3	22.6		
4	14.8	14.8	Uncertain
5	25.8	40.8	Agree
6	13.3		
very adequate	1.7		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.1	

**6. Climate models accurately verify the climatic conditions for which they are calibrated.**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	2.0	46.7	Agree
2	18.4		
3	26.3		
4	17.6	17.6	Uncertain
5	16.5	35.6	Disagree
6	10.8		
strongly disagree	8.3		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

**9. How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with clouds?**

Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
very inadequate	11.7	61.9	Disagree
2	28.4		
3	21.8		
4	14.1	14.1	Uncertain
5	15.4	24.1	Agree
6	5.5		
very adequate	3.2		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.1	

APPENDIX

10. How well do you think atmospheric climate models can deal with radiation?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
very inadequate	1.1	21.7	Disagree
2	9.0		
3	11.6		
4	12.6	12.6	Uncertain
5	31.2	65.7	Agree
6	30.9		
very adequate	3.6		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100	

13. How much do you think that a scientist's exposure to publicity influences the direction of his or her future research?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
very much	7.4	51.1	Agree
2	15.3		
3	28.4		
4	12.3	12.3	Uncertain
5	12.1	36.5	Disagree
6	20.5		
not at all	3.9		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

11. To what degree do you think that climate change might have some positive effects for some societies?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
a great degree	9.7	69.8	Agree
2	26.0		
3	34.1		
4	13.1	13.1	Uncertain
5	8.4	17	Disagree
6	7.5		
none at all	1.1		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

14. Assuming climate change will occur, it will occur so suddenly, that a lack of preparation could result in devastation of some areas of the world.			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	10.1	49.3	Agree
2	16.9		
3	22.3		
4	17.3	17.3	Uncertain
5	11.1	33.3	Disagree
6	12.3		
strongly disagree	9.9		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

12. To what degree do you think climate change will have detrimental effects for some societies?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
a great degree	33.1	85.8	Agree
2	37.3		
3	15.4		
4	5.5	5.5	Uncertain
5	4.0	8.6	Disagree
6	3.7		
none at all	.9		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

15. Media coverage: The claims of skeptical scientists who dispute the IPCC consensus get too little or too much coverage?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
too little	12.4	33.7	Disagree
2	12.8		
3	8.5		
4	17.2	17.2	Uncertain
5	12.4	49	Agree
6	18.0		
too much	18.6		
<b>Total</b>	100.0	99.9	

## APPENDIX

16. Natural scientists have established enough physical evidence to turn the issue of global climate change over to social scientists for matters of policy discussion.			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
strongly agree	8.6	45.8	Agree
2	19.9		
3	17.3		
4	10.2		
5	11.2	10.2	Uncertain
6	16.5	44.1	Disagree
strongly disagree	16.4		
Total	100.0		

17. How much has the uncertainty regarding climate change been reduced in the last ten years?			
Score	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Label
not at all	5.9	30.5	Disagree
2	13.9		
3	10.7		
4	9.2	9.2	Uncertain
5	32.2	60.3	Agree
6	19.8		
a significant amount	8.3		
Total	100.0	100	

## Appendix 2

Reported below are the mean average scores for each question in the 1996 and 2003 surveys, as reported at <http://w3g.gkss.de/staff/bray/BrayGKSSsite/BrayGKSS/surveyframe.html>.

*On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 7 being “strongly disagree”:*

1. We can say for certain that global warming is a process already underway.  
1996 – Average response 3.39  
2003 – Average response 2.41

2. We can say for certain that, without change in human behavior, global warming will definitely occur some time in the future.  
1996 – Average response 2.67  
2003 – Average response 2.35

3. Climate should be considered a natural resource.  
1996 – Average response 1.98  
2003 – Average response 2.07

4. Assuming climate change will occur, it will occur so suddenly, that a lack of preparation could result in devastation of some areas of the world.  
1996 – Average response 4.26  
2003 – Average response 3.79

5. There is enough uncertainty about the phenomenon of global warming that there is no need for immediate policy decisions.  
1996 – Average response 5.48  
2003 – Average response 5.67

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6. Climate models accurately verify the climatic conditions for which they are calibrated.  
1996 – Average response 3.93  
2003 – Average response 3.94
7. Climate models can accurately predict climatic conditions of the future.  
1996 – Average response 4.69  
2003 – Average response 4.53
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very inadequate” and 7 being “very adequate”:***
8. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with hydrodynamics?  
1996 – Average response 4.60  
2003 – Average response 4.45
9. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with radiation?  
1996 – Average response 4.63  
2003 – Average response 4.71
10. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with water vapour and liquid vapour in the atmosphere?  
1996 – Average response 3.62  
2003 – Average response 3.85
11. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with the influence of clouds?  
1996 – Average response 3.06  
2003 – Average response 3.22
12. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with precipitation?  
1996 – Average response 3.16  
2003 – Average response 3.29
13. To what extent can atmospheric climate models deal with atmospheric convection?  
1996 – Average response 3.57  
2003 – Average response 3.48
14. To what extent can ocean models deal with hydrodynamics?  
1996 – Average response 4.60  
2003 – Average response 4.71
15. To what extent can ocean models deal with heat transport in the ocean?  
1996 – Average response 4.42  
2003 – Average response 4.49
16. To what extent can ocean models deal with oceanic convection?  
1996 – Average response 3.71  
2003 – Average response 3.82
17. To what extent can ocean models deal with the coupling of atmospheric models and ocean models?  
1996 – Average response 3.29  
2003 – Average response 3.62
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 7 being “strongly disagree”:***
18. The current state of scientific knowledge is developed well enough to allow for a reasonable assessment of the effects of turbulence.  
1996 – Average response 3.68  
2003 – Average response 3.68
19. The current state of scientific knowledge is developed well enough to allow for a reasonable assessment of the effects of surface albedo.  
1996 – Average response 4.58  
2003 – Average response 4.91
20. The current state of scientific knowledge is developed well enough to allow for a reasonable assessment of the effects of land surface processes.  
1996 – Average response 3.71  
2003 – Average response 4.91

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21. The current state of scientific knowledge is developed well enough to allow for a reasonable assessment of the effects of sea ice.  
1996 – Average response 3.86  
2003 – Average response 4.09
22. The current state of scientific knowledge is developed well enough to allow for a reasonable assessment of the effects of greenhouse gases.  
1996 – Average response 4.47  
2003 – Average response 4.84
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “none at all”:***
23. The current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of inter-annual variability.  
1996 – Average response 4.63  
2003 – Average response 4.01
24. The current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climatic variability of time scales of 10 years.  
1996 – Average response 4.89  
2003 – Average response 4.51
25. The current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climatic variability of time scales of 100 years.  
1996 – Average response 5.24  
2003 – Average response 4.78
26. The current state of scientific knowledge is able to provide reasonable predictions of climatic variability of time scales of greater than 100 years.  
1996 – Average response 5.47  
2003 – Average response 5.11
27. To what degree do you think that, through the process of downscaling, it is now possible to determine local climate impacts?  
1996 – Average response 4.75  
2003 – Average response 4.57
28. To what degree can we explicitly state the detrimental effects that climate change will have on society?  
1996 – Average response 4.43  
2003 – Average response 4.22
29. To what degree do you think climate change will have detrimental effects for some societies?  
1996 – Average response 2.47  
2003 - Average response 2.25
30. To what degree do you think climate change will have a detrimental effect for the society in which you live?  
1996 – Average response 3.81  
2003 – Average response 3.70
31. To what degree do you think that climate change might have some positive effects for some societies?  
1996 – Average response 3.39  
2003 – Average response 3.11
32. To what degree do you think that climate change might have some positive effects for the society in which you live?  
1996 – Average response 4.70  
2003 – Average response 4.30
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 7 being “strongly disagree”:***
33. Climate change is mostly the result of anthropogenic causes.  
1996 – Average response 4.17  
2003 – Average response 3.62
34. The IPCC reports are of great use to the advancement of climate science.

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1996 – Average response 3.04  
2003 – Average response 2.61

35. The IPCC reports accurately reflect the consensus of thought within the scientific community.

1996 – Average response 3.38  
2003 – Average response 2.83

36. Climate change is an extremely complex subject, full of uncertainties, and this allows for a greater range of assumptions and interpretations than many other scientific endeavors.

1996 – Average response 2.34  
2003 – Average response 2.52

37. The users of the information produced by General Circulation Models are most often aware of the uncertainties associated with such models.

1996 – Average response 4.10  
2003 – Average response 4.24

38. In general, those scientists producing GCMs are knowledgeable about what data are needed by those scientists that endeavor to study the impacts of climate change.

1996 – Average response 3.64  
2003 – Average response 3.47

39. CO<sup>2</sup> will have controlled emission levels in the near future.

1996 – Average response 4.41  
2003 – Average response 4.79

40. Natural scientists have established enough physical evidence to turn the issue of global climate change over to social scientists for matters of policy discussion.

1996 – Average response 4.27  
2003 – Average response 4.11

41. Stabilizing CO<sup>2</sup> emissions will require a fundamental restructuring of

the global economy.

1996 – Average response 2.36  
2003 – Average response 2.42

42. The climate sciences are developed well enough to provide information for local social impact assessments.

1996 – Average response 4.56  
2003 – Average response 4.53

43. Climate scientists are well attuned to the sensitivity of human social systems to climate impacts.

1996 – Average response 3.87  
2003 – Average response 4.70

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very often” and 7 being “not at all”:***

44. How often are you contacted by the media for information pertaining to climate change?

1996 – Average response 4.95  
2003 – Average response 5.12

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great deal” and 7 being “not at all”:***

45. To what degree do you think exposure to the media has the potential to change the attitude of the scientist?

1996 – Average response 3.95  
2003 – Average response 3.77

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***

46. How much do you think scientists actually enjoy the attention they receive in the popular media?

1996 – Average response 3.24  
2003 – Average response 3.13

47. How much do you think that a scientist’s exposure to publicity influences the direction of his or her

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future research?

1996 – Average response 3.65

2003 – Average response 3.84

48. How much have you been involved with those people who make climate related policy decisions?

1996 – Average response 5.37

2003 – Average response 5.24

49. How much would you rate global climate change as a problem that concerns the social and economic aspects of societies?

1996 – Average response 2.57

2003 – Average response 2.55

50. How much do you think global climate change is one of the leading problems facing humanity?

1996 – Average response 3.21

2003 – Average response 2.92

51. How much do you think the IPCC reports are used in the decision making process of climate related policy issues?

1996 – Average response 3.65

2003 – Average response 3.14

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great extent” and 7 being “none at all”:***

52. To what extent are those who present the extremes of the climate debate, for example, those presenting the worst case scenarios or those claiming that climate change is a hoax, the people most likely to be listened to by those involved in making policy decisions?

1996 – Average response 3.13

2003 – Average response 2.72

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very good” and 7 being “very poor”:***

53. How would you describe what you see as the working relationship between

climate scientists and policy makers?

1996 – Average response 4.72

2003 – Average response 4.74

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very aware” and 7 being “not aware at all”:***

54. How much do you think climate scientists are aware of the information that policy makers incorporate into their decision making process?

1996 – Average response 4.59

2003 – Average response 4.56

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***

55. To what degree do you think that the results of scientific inquiry are instrumental in causing policy makers to redefine their perception of a climate related issue?

1996 – Average response 4.01

2003 – Average response 3.99

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “always” and 7 being “never”:***

56. How often do you think policy makers draw on the most current and state-of-the-art knowledge of the climate sciences?

1996 – Average response 4.62

2003 – Average response 4.66

57. How often do you think that experts frame problems so that the solution fits his or her area of expertise?

1996 – Average response 3.04

2003 – Average response 3.07

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***

58. How much do you feel that scientists have played a role in

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transforming the climate issue from being a scientific issue to a social and public issue?

1996 – Average response 3.15

2003 – Average response 3.22

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “not at all”:***

59. To what degree do you think climate science has remained a value-neutral science?

1996 – Average response 4.23

2003 – Average response 4.29

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***

60. Some scientists present the extremes of the climate debate in a popular format with the claim that it is their task to alert the public. How much do you agree with this practice?

1996 – Average response 4.09

2003 – Average response 4.75

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “none at all”:***

61. How much influence do you think the IPCC has over what areas come to be considered worthy research topics?

1996 – Average response 3.31

2003 – Average response 2.82

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***

62. How much do you think the direction of research in the climate sciences has been influenced by external politics?

1996 – Average response 3.14

2003 – Average response 2.82

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “none at all”:***

63. To what degree do you think climate scientists have control over what information gets transferred to the policy makers?

1996 – Average response 4.06

2003 – Average response 4.23

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “not at all”:***

64. To what degree do you think policy makers are influential in causing scientists to redefine their perceptions of an issue?

1996 – Average response 4.37

2003 – Average response 4.27

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “none at all”:***

65. To what degree do you think there is growing pressure for climate research to be justified in terms of policy relevance?

1996 – Average response 2.98

2003 – Average response 2.63

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great degree” and 7 being “not at all”:***

66. How much do you think climate scientists should be involved in alerting the general public to the possible social consequences arising from changes in the climate?

1996 – Average response 2.65

2003 – Average response 2.77



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***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “always” and 7 being “never”:***

67. How often do you think the members of the general public are being given only part of the picture?  
1996 – Average response 2.34  
2003 – No results given

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “not at all” and 7 being “a significant amount”:***

68. How much has climate science advanced in the understanding of climate change in the last 5 years?  
2003 – Average response 5.04

69. How much does new scientific discovery in the last decade confirm the anthropogenic influence on climate?  
2003 – Average response 5.24

70. How much has the uncertainty regarding climate change been reduced in the last ten years?  
2003 – Average response 4.40

71. Are we beginning to experience the effects of climate change?  
2003 – Average response 5.10

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “not feasible at all” and 7 being “very feasible”:***

72. How feasible is adaptation to climate change an option for the society in which you live?  
2003 – Average response 5.38

73. How feasible is adaptation as a global option?  
2003 – Average response 2.12

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “not at all” and 7 being “very much”:***

74. To what degree is mitigation still an option?  
2003 – Average response 4.52

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “hardly varied” and 7 being “greatly varied”:***

75. The region in which you live could be defined as having a pattern of seasonal change that is  
2003 – Average response 5.12

***On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very easy” and 7 being “very difficult”:***

Concerning the ease of adaptability of certain social and economic sectors, how easy would it be for the following to adapt to climate change:

76. The general daily routine of the people who live in your local region  
2003 – Average response 2.95

77. The general daily routine of the people who live in your nation  
2003 – Average response 3.29

78. Agriculture in your region  
2003 – Average response 3.89

79. Housing design in your region  
2003 – Average response 2.74

80. Transportation in your region  
2003 – Average response 3.06

81. Public utilities in your region:  
water  
2003 – Average response 3.94

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82. Public utilities in your region:  
natural gas, heating/air conditioning fuel  
2003 – Average response 3.46
83. Public utilities in your region:  
electricity  
2003 – Average response 3.57
84. Forestry in your nation  
2003 – Average response 3.84
85. Tourism in your nation  
2003 – Average response 2.93
86. Manufacturing in your nation  
2003 – Average response 3.02
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 7 being “strongly disagree”:***
87. How much would you agree that  
future research efforts and funding  
should focus more on adaptation and  
less on detection?  
2003 – Average response 4.31
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “very much” and 7 being “not at all”:***
88. How much do you think the media  
influences the public perception of  
climate change?  
2003 – Average response 1.56
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “a great extent” and 7 being “not at all”:***
89. To what extent do you think that the  
media provides the public with adequate  
information to understand the basics of  
climate change?  
2003 – Average response 5.00
- On a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “too little” and 7 being “too much”:***
- Does the media provide too much  
coverage, about the right amount of  
coverage (middle of the scale) or too  
little coverage for the following:
90. The most current state of the art  
knowledge of the climate sciences  
2003 – Average response 2.59
91. The likely effects of climate change  
on the society in which you live  
2003 – Average response 3.01
92. The likely effects of climate change  
in other societies  
2003 – Average response 2.74
93. Conflicting findings or conclusions  
reached by climate scientists  
2003 – Average response 3.62
94. The changes that would be  
necessary to adapt to climate change in  
their region  
2003 – Average response 2.42
95. The worst case scenarios of climate  
change  
2003 – Average response 4.78
96. The claims of skeptical scientists  
who dispute the IPCC consensus  
2003 – Average response 4.33
97. The possible costs of implementing  
the Kyoto Accords  
2003 – Average response 3.42
98. The gains that might be made  
through energy efficiency  
2003 – Average response 2.25
99. Personal differences among claims-  
makers who differ about the reality of  
climate change  
2003 – Average response 3.58

## About the Authors

Joseph Bast is president of The Heartland Institute, a national nonprofit organization based in Chicago. He is the publisher of *Environment & Climate News*, coauthor of *Eco-Sanity: A Common-Sense Guide to Environmentalism* (1994, second ed. 1996), and author or editor of numerous studies and articles on climate change.

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# What do climate scientists know about global warming?

Global warming is one of the most controversial topics of debate today. Is Earth's temperature rising? If it is, how rapid is the increase and will it benefit or harm humanity and nature? Are human greenhouse gas emissions to blame?

This booklet summarizes the results of international surveys of climate scientists conducted in 1996 and 2003 by two German environmental scientists, Dennis Bray and Hans von Storch. More than 530 climate scientists from 27 different countries provided numerical answers each time the survey was conducted.

The average responses to every question in both the 1996 and 2003 surveys are reported in the appendix of this booklet. To make the survey results more transparent, the authors singled out 17 questions from the 2003 survey and present the answers here in a simplified and less academic style.

## Is human activity causing climate change?



## About the Authors

Joseph L. Bast is president of The Heartland Institute, a national nonprofit organization based in Chicago. James M. Taylor, J.D., is a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute and managing editor of *Environment & Climate News*.



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