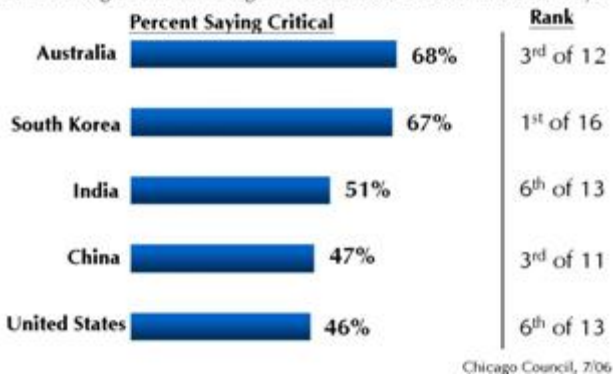


## Global Warming as a Critical Threat

Percentage in each country calling global warming a critical threat and ranking of threat among all threats asked about in that country.



## World Publics Willing to Bear Costs of Combating Climate Change

October 11, 2006

Concern about global warming has increased sharply in the United States. Nearly half of the American public sees climate change as a critical threat to vital U.S. interests.

The U.S. public is not alone. A multinational poll by the [Chicago Council on Global Affairs](#) finds that global warming is a big concern among the Chinese and the Indian publics and is viewed especially urgently by South Koreans and Australians.

Only small minorities in the United States and the other countries surveyed think that evidence for global warming is too weak to justify measures that might entail economic costs. Many Americans, Australians and the Chinese agree that action needs to be taken now, even if it involves significant expenditures. Indians prefer a more gradual approach.

### More Americans See Global Warming as Threat

American concern about global warming has surged nine points since 2004, when only 37 percent believed global warming put U.S. vital interests at risk. The Chicago Council's 2006 survey shows that 46 percent of Americans now consider climate change menacing, raising it to the upper half of international threats.

Asked to choose the argument that comes closest to their opinion about global warming, only 17 percent of Americans agree that "until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs." Thirty-seven percent think that the problem of global warming should be addressed but that "its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually." The highest percentage (43%) says global warming is "a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs." This percentage is up 9 points from the 34 percent willing to pay significant costs in a [Program on International Policy Attitudes \(PIPA\) poll](#) taken in June 2005.

The sharp increase in concern about global warming among Americans may have been triggered by the devastation wrought by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. In the fall of 2004, most Americans (58%) thought extreme weather patterns were "part of a natural pattern," according to a poll by [GlobeScan](#). In the fall of 2005, shortly after Katrina devastated New Orleans, GLOBEscan found that six out of ten Americans (59%) said such extreme weather was unusual and only four out of ten (39%) thought they were part of a natural pattern.

Americans' preference for multilateral solutions to global crises also applies to environmental issues. Nearly nine out of ten (87%) of Americans say it is somewhat important (34%) or very important (53%) that the United States work together with China

## Responses to Global Warming

- It's a serious problem. We should begin taking steps, even if this involves costs.
- Its effects will be gradual, so we should deal with it gradually.
- Until we are sure it's a problem, we should not take steps that have costs.



and India to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Only 8 percent say working together is not important. Americans also continue to support participation in the Kyoto accords to reduce global warming. Seventy percent of Americans say that the U.S. government should take part in the Kyoto efforts, despite the Bush administration's opposition to the treaty.

Americans also want environmental protections to be incorporated in trade agreements. An overwhelming majority (91%) says that international trade pacts should require signatory countries to maintain minimum standards of environmental protection. Americans are divided on whether international trade hurts or helps the environment. About half (49%) believe that international trade tends to be "bad" for the environment; approximately the same number (46%) disagree.

### Asians Willing to Take Action

Climate change is seen as among the most important international issues by large numbers of those polled around the world. Sixty-eight percent of Australians call global warming a "critical threat" to their country's "vital interests." About the same proportion (67%) of South Koreans call it a critical threat, putting it at the top of their list of key challenges. Nearly half of the Chinese (47%) call the issue critical, making it number three on their list. For Indians (51%) and Americans (47%), global warming is around the middle of the list of 13 possible threats. Substantial numbers also consider it to be an "important" threat.

The publics in these countries not only believe that climate change is a serious problem, they are also willing to bear the cost of combating it. Most Australians (68%) and pluralities of the Chinese (42%) agree that global warming is a serious problem that must be addressed now "even if this involves significant costs." Indians are the most reluctant: only one in five Indians (19%) feel that the problem is urgent enough to justify immediate action with significant costs; one in three (30%) favor gradual, less costly measures and nearly a fourth (24%) say no action should be taken. Only small percentages in Australia (7%) and China (8%) believe the evidence for global warming is too weak to justify paying the cost of environmental protections.

This willingness on the part of many Chinese and Indians to take action against global warming puts them at odds with their own governments. Both the Chinese and the Indian governments have argued that as developing countries, they should not be obligated to curb emissions.

The publics of both China and Indians say less-developed countries should promise to limit their greenhouse gas emissions if developed nations are willing to provide substantial aid. The Chinese support such commitments overwhelmingly (79% to 8%); the Indians also express strong support (48% to 29%).

Asians also express willingness to incorporate environmental safeguards into international agreements. A plurality of South Koreans (49%) think that international trade is bad for the environment, small majorities in China (58%) and India (51%) consider it to be good. An overwhelming majority of the Chinese (85%) favor incorporating environmental standards into international trade agreements, as does a majority (60%) of Indians.