



Do the American Public and Media

Understand Weather and Climate?

DIRECTIONS

Please read the short article excerpt and look at the graphics below. Then answer the discussion questions.

BELIEF IN GLOBAL WARMING DROPS AFTER COLD WINTER

After an especially cold winter across much of the United States, the American public was slightly less convinced that the planet is heating up, a new survey shows.

A majority of Americans, or 63 percent, still believe there is solid evidence that global warming is real, according to the latest poll from the National Surveys on Energy and Environment (NSEE). That number is down, however, from 67 percent who said the same in the fall.

“The fairly cold winter and slow arriving spring weather this year appears to have contributed to a slight decline in the number of Americans that think global warming is happening,” said Chris Borick, director of the Muhlenberg Institute, which conducts the NSEE in partnership with the University of Michigan.

Previous research has shown that public opinion on climate change often shifts in response to weather events that seem to support or refute a warming trend.

Excerpted from: NBC News, 6/19/2013

www.nbcnews.com/id/52254197/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/belief-global-warming-drops-after-cold-winter/#.VA38SUve71q



'Where's global warming when you really need it?'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate this sentence from the article:

“After an especially cold winter across much of the United States, the American public was slightly less convinced that the planet is heating up, a new survey shows.”

Which word or phrase best describes this sentence?

- a. Fact
 - b. Reasoned judgment based on research findings
 - c. Speculation
2. Does a big winter storm better represent the concept of **weather** or **climate**?
- a. Weather
 - b. Climate
3. Does cold weather in one area of the world mean that the global climate is **not** changing and, specifically, that the earth is **not** warming? Why or why not?
4. Based on the survey data from the article, do you think that, in general, people understand the difference between weather and climate? If not, what can be done to help people understand the difference?
5. Do you think that the media, such as the example news clip and cartoon, can influence the way people think? In general, are newscasters and cartoonists qualified to educate the public about science topics?

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Chattanooga Times Free Press, Dec. 2010
Fox News Television, Jan. 2014