



# Four In Five Parents Want Schools To Teach About Climate Change

## Ipsos/NPR poll on climate change

**Washington, DC, April 22, 2019** – On Earth Day, students around the country protest to demand tough action on climate change. According to the latest NPR/Ipsos poll, 78% of Americans support schools teaching about climate change, including 84% of parents of children under 18. Parents also believe climate change should be taught early in the pupil's educational career (74% say it should be taught before high school), as most Americans (71%) think that climate change poses a threat to the United States. This NPR/Ipsos survey looks into what Americans as a whole, [and teachers all over the country](#), think about climate change education and how it affects the future of the new generation.

Most Americans agree that climate change is a subject that students should learn about in schools. Sixty-six percent of Americans, including 68% of parents, think that schools should teach about climate change and its impacts on the environment, the economy, and our society. An additional 12% of Americans think that climate change should be taught in schools, but not its potential impacts. Only 10% of Americans think schools should not teach anything about climate change, and 13% have not made up their minds on the subject. A whopping 91% of Democrats think that climate change should be taught in schools in some capacity (with 8 in 10 believing kids should learn about its impacts on our environment, economy, and society), followed by 75% of Independents who also agree. While Republicans are slightly less likely to agree that schools should teach about climate change, two thirds (66%) still think that climate change is a subject that schools should cover.

Seventy-four percent of Americans think that the world's climate is changing. This is statistically unchanged from 2018, when 75% of people surveyed agreed. While the majority of Americans believe in climate change, some partisan differences emerge: 88% of Democrats and 73% of Independents believe in climate change, but only 58% of Republicans do. Republicans (46%) are also less likely to believe that weather-related incidents are becoming more severe compared to Democrats (76%) and Independents (60%). Around a quarter of Republicans (24%) believe that climate change is caused by human activity, compared to half (56%) of Democrats and a third (33%) of Independents. When it comes to people who *do* believe in climate change, both Democrats and Republicans are equally as pessimistic about the prospects of reducing its impact. Forty-nine percent of Republicans and 52% of Democrats who believe in climate change think that it can't be stopped or reversed, but we can lessen the effects.

Discussion about climate change is not just happening in classrooms; some of the conversation is also happening at home as well. Nearly half (45%) of parents speak to their children about climate change. Parents are usually the ones initiating conversation; in 58% of households who have had conversations about climate change, they brought it up to their children. In a quarter of households (26%) who have had conversation about climate change, it was the child who initiated the conversation.

Sixty-five percent of respondents believe that schools do not need parental permission to talk to students about climate change, including 43% who strongly oppose the requirement. Republicans (26%) are more deferential to parents when it comes to teaching their kids about climate change compared to Democrats (18%) and Independents (22%), but still over half of Republicans (57%) oppose getting parental approval. Americans also think that climate change education should start earlier in the educational career of students. Thirty-one percent of people said that climate change should be taught in elementary school. An equal proportion (31%) said that climate change should be taught during middle school. Fourteen percent said it should be in high school, and 5% said after high school or during college.

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1. Do you think weather-related incidents are becoming more severe, less severe, or staying about the same?

	<b>Total (N = 1,007)</b>	<b>Republicans (N = 376)</b>	<b>Democrats (N = 346)</b>	<b>Independents (N = 193)</b>
Becoming more severe	61%	46%	76%	60%
Staying about the same	28	44	14	24
Becoming less severe	3	5	2	1
Don't know	9	5	8	15

2. As far as you know, do you think the world's climate is changing or not?

	<b>Total 2019</b>	<b>Total 2018</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independents</b>
Yes, I think that the world's climate is changing	74%	75%	58%	88%	73%
No, I do not think that the world's climate is changing	14	15	27	4	11
Don't know	13	10	14	8	16

3. Do you think climate change can be stopped? *Asked of people who answered "Yes, I think that the world's climate is changing" to question two.*

	<b>Believe Climate Change Exists (N = 743)</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independents</b>
Yes, climate change can be stopped in my lifetime	10%	12%	11%	5%
Yes, climate change can be stopped in the next generation's lifetime	22	19	25	20
Climate change can't be stopped, but we can lessen the effects	49	49	52	48
There is nothing we can do to stop or reverse climate change	10	13	5	18
Don't know	8	7	7	9

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4. Thinking about the causes of climate change, which, if any, of the following best describes your opinion?

	Total 2019	Total 2018	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Climate change is entirely a natural process	10%	7%	15%	7%	10%
Climate change is mostly a natural process	11	9	17	4	13
Climate change is partly a natural process and partly human caused	34	37	36	28	38
Climate change is mostly caused by human activity	30	22	18	43	28
Climate change is entirely human caused	9	11	6	12	6
Climate change does not exist	6	6	8	5	6
<i>Natural process (net)</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>23%</i>
<i>Human caused (net)</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>33</i>

5. How much of a threat does global warming or climate change pose to the United States? *Thomson Reuters trend question.*

	Total 2019	Total 2018	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Very serious threat	25%	35%	11%	44%	19%
Serious threat	23	21	16	28	21
Moderate threat	23	17	29	16	27
Minimal threat	12	9	23	4	12
No threat	6	10	11	1	7
Not sure	11	8	10	7	14
<i>Very serious/serious threat (net)</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>40%</i>
<i>Minimal/no threat (net)</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>19</i>

6. Which statement comes closest to your view? *Asked of people ages 18-37.*

	Millennials (N = 268)
I plan on not having children because of climate change	5%
I plan on having fewer children because of climate change	12
Climate change does not influence my decision to have children	63
Don't know	21

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7. Do you talk, or have you talked, to your child(ren) about climate change? *Asked of people with children under 18 in their household.*

	<b>Parents (N = 236)</b>
Yes, I speak to my children about climate change	45%
No, I do not speak to my children about climate change	46
Don't know	9

8. Typically, who initiates conversations between you and your child(ren) about climate change? *Asked of people who answered "Yes, I speak to my children about climate change" to question seven.*

	<b>Parents Who Speak to Their Kids about Climate Change (N = 102)</b>
Myself or my partner/spouse	58%
My child(ren)	26
Another family member	4
Instructions from school	5
Other	2
Don't know	5

9. Which of the following comes closest to your own view?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>Parents</b>
Schools should teach about climate change and its impacts on our environment, economy, and society	66%	49%	81%	68%	68%
Schools should teach that climate change exists, but not the potential impacts	12	17	10	7	16
Schools should not teach anything about climate change	10	17	2	11	6
Don't know	13	17	7	14	9

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10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parental permission should be required before teaching climate change. *Asked of people who answered “Schools should teach about climate change and its impacts on our environment, economy, and society” or “Schools should teach that climate change exists, but not the potential impacts” to question nine.*

	<b>Believe Climate Change Should Be Taught in Schools (N = 904)</b>	<b>Republicans (N = 309)</b>	<b>Democrats (N = 338)</b>	<b>Independents (N = 173)</b>	<b>Parents (N = 221)</b>
Strongly agree	8%	11%	8%	6%	12%
Somewhat agree	13	15	11	16	15
Somewhat disagree	23	28	19	22	22
Strongly disagree	43	29	53	45	39
Don't know	14	17	10	11	11
<i>Agree (net)</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>27%</i>
<i>Disagree (net)</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>61</i>

11. When should climate change first be taught in schools? *Asked of people who answered “Schools should teach about climate change and its impacts on our environment, economy, and society” or “schools should teach that climate change exists, but not the potential impacts” to question nine.*

	<b>Believe Climate Change Should Be Taught in Schools</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Parents</b>
Kindergarten	9%	5%	12%	10%	8%
Elementary school (1 <sup>st</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	31	24	40	26	32
Middle school (6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	31	32	29	36	34
High School (9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	14	19	9	15	13
College or Post-high school	5	8	3	4	4
Don't know	10	12	6	9	9

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### About the Study

These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of NPR between March 21-22, 2019. For the survey, a sample of 1,007 adults 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii were interviewed online in English. The sample includes 346 Democrats, 376 Republicans, and 193 Independents. The sample also includes 236 parents and 268 Millennials.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=1,007, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-5.0 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 6.0 percentage points for Democrats, 5.8 percentage points Republicans, 8.0 for Independents, 7.3 percentage points for parents and 6.8 for Millennials.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

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