



AMERICAN CLIMATE VALUES 2014 SUPPLEMENT

Faith and Climate Highlights

APRIL 2015

A blue-tinted photograph of a church service, showing people in the pews. A woman in the foreground is looking down, and another woman is holding her hand.

ecoAmerica
start with people

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors

Tim Fink	ecoAmerica
Meighen Speiser	ecoAmerica
Caroline Hodge	ecoAmerica

Partners



Blessed Tomorrow is a coalition of diverse religious partners united under a call to serve as faithful stewards of creation. Blessed Tomorrow offers a program to inspire and empower faith leadership on climate change. You can join these leaders and become a member of the coalition by signing a commitment on behalf of your congregation to walk more gently on the earth and to inspire others to lead on climate in their homes, places of worship, and communities. For more information on Blessed Tomorrow, visit www.blessedtommorrow.org or contact Kara Ball at kara@ecoamerica.org



MomentUs is a strategic organizing initiative designed to build a critical mass of institutional leadership, public support, political will, and collective action for climate solutions in the United States. MomentUs is working to develop and support a network of trusted leaders and institutions who will lead by example and engage their stakeholders to do the same, leading to a shift in society that will put America on an irrefutable path to a clean energy, ultimately leading toward a more sustainable and just future.

Suggested Citation

Fink, T., Speiser, M., & Hodge, C. (2014). *American Climate Values 2014: Faith Communities*. Washington, DC: Strategic Business Insights and ecoAmerica.

CONTENTS

Context & Demographics	5
Climate Attitudes & Faith	6
Climate Solutions & Faith	7
Implications & Recommendations	8

American Climate Values 2014 Research Methodology

The American Climate Values Survey 2014 was co-created by ecoAmerica and Strategic Business Insights (SBI). GfK Knowledge Networks fielded the survey. The survey employs SBI's proprietary VALS methodology to identify psychological motivations that drive attitudes and behaviors in order to guide organizations in identifying, understanding and connecting with people.

Sample Population: The target population consists of non-institutionalized adults aged 18 and over residing in the United States.

Survey Completion and Sample Sizes: The sample included 2,946 individuals. Of those, 1,027 completed the survey, netting a 61.4% completion rate.

Greetings,

Faith has been a core foundation in the lives of Americans since the very beginning of our country. Religious freedom and principles are woven into the fabric of our constitution and culture. And faith continues to guide the values, attitudes, and actions of many Americans today.

In 2014, ecoAmerica released its American Climate Values 2014: Psychographic and Demographic Insights report which detailed the results of a nationally representative survey exploring how Americans think, feel, and react to climate and environmental issues. Included in this survey were questions about faith, enabling the development of this special report focusing on the climate attitudes of Americans who describe their faith as "important" or "the most important" part of their lives. For the purposes of this report, we use the term "people of faith" to refer to these two groups of Americans collectively.

This document has four sections. Part I provides context on how the demographics of people of faith compare to the general public. Part II examines how religious and non-religious Americans respond to a variety of climate-related survey questions, including whether climate change is happening and whether humans can make a difference in stopping it. Part III explores how religious and non-religious Americans think and feel about climate and energy solutions. The final section, Part IV, offers ideas for how the findings from this survey can be translated into action.

It is our hope that this special report will provide faith leaders, their members, and our partners with some of the insights they need to engage even more people of faith across the country in climate solutions. After all, it is only with the participation of a wide range of Americans, from people of faith, to business people, to educators and students, that we will be able to achieve truly meaningful progress on climate change for America, and for the world.



Meighen Speiser
Chief Engagement Officer



Kara Ball
Blessed Tomorrow Program Director

I. CONTEXT & DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2014, ecoAmerica released its "American Climate Values 2014: Psychographic and Demographic Insights" report, the result of a nationally representative survey exploring how Americans think, feel, and react to climate and environmental issues. The survey found an America deeply divided along party lines, with political affiliation trumping all other demographic factors in determining climate attitudes. For instance, 83% of Democrats are somewhat or very convinced that climate change is happening, compared with 56% of Republicans.

However, the American Climate Values survey was not limited to politics. Participants were also asked about many other topics, including the role that faith plays in their lives. Participants were asked to select one of four choices for this question: "Not at All Important," "Not Important," "Important," and "The Most Important."¹ The survey results indicated that faith plays a significant role in the lives of the majority of Americans. It also demonstrated that people of faith are anything but monolithic. Rather, their makeup and views represent the full spectrum of America, including on political attitudes, shown in Figure 1. For this reason, it is important to note that any conclusions or recommendations within this report are based on the majority responses of a particular group (such as people who say faith is a "very important" part of their lives), and do not necessarily represent the full spectrum of attitudes within the group.

"Importants"

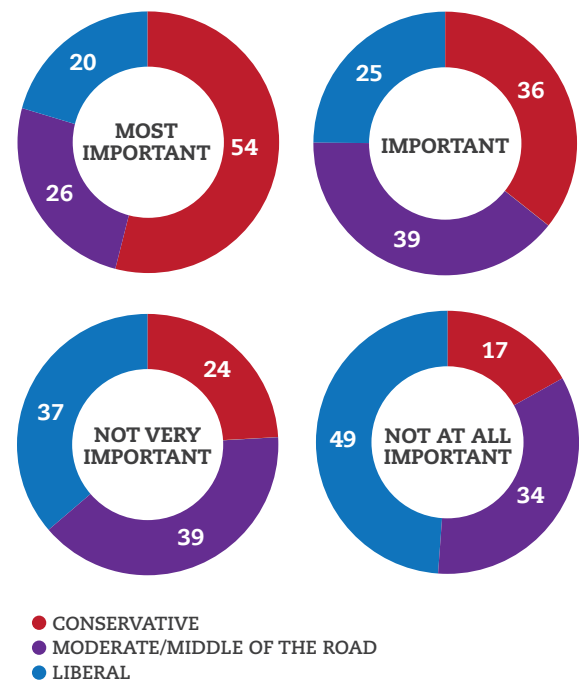
45% of Americans say that religion is an "Important" part of their lives. Their demographics and views on climate change tend to align with those of the general population. As expected, the key demographic difference is that this group is more likely to affiliate with a specific religious tradition than the general public. Only 5% of people whose religion is "important" to them do not belong to a specific tradition. In contrast, 20% of the general public reported not belonging to a religious tradition.

"Most Importants"

19% of Americans say religion is the "Most Important" part of their lives. This group is currently less engaged on climate than the general public and has a slightly different makeup. Nearly two thirds (65%) of individuals who say religion is "the most important" are women. In addition, this group is slightly more likely to live in rural areas (26% vs. 20% of the general public), and slightly less likely to live in suburban areas (43% vs. 47%).

¹ Rather than repeatedly state "for Americans who say faith is most important/important" throughout this report, for the sake of the readability and brevity these groups are referred to simply as "Importants" and "Most Importants."









FIGURE 1: Political affiliation of Americans for whom religion is "not at all important," "not very important," "important," or the "most important" part of their lives.







Most Importants also tend to hold different political views than the general public. They are much more likely to describe themselves as conservative (54% vs. 34% of the general public) and less likely to be politically moderate (26% vs. 36% of the general public). Furthermore, while these Americans are equally likely as the general public to lean Republican (15% vs. 16% of the general public), they are less likely to lean Democrat (12% vs. 19%). In addition, they have a stronger tendency to identify as strong Republicans (26% vs. 14% of the general public). In terms of religious affiliation, these Americans are half as likely to be Catholic, twice as likely to be Baptist, and three times more likely to be Pentecostal than the general public.

II. CLIMATE ATTITUDES & FAITH

FIGURE 2: Americans' Religiosity By Faith Tradition/Denomination

ROLE OF RELIGION IN LIFE	PORTION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
All Americans 	100 %
Catholic 	23 %
Protestant 	19 %
Baptist 	14 %
Pentecostal 	3 %
Mormon 	2 %
Other Christian 	13 %
None 	20 %

 Not At All Important
  Not Very Important
  Important
  Most Important

* Data does not include some religious groups (Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other non-Christian) because there were too few survey respondents to make meaningful comparisons.

The 2014 American Climate Values survey posed a series of questions regarding attitudes on climate change, its causes, as well as our role, collectively or individually, in stopping it. For the most part, the responses of the Importants mirrored those of the general public (see Table 1). The results for Most Importants, however, were quite different. Their responses are the focus of this section.

1. Most Importants are less convinced on climate.

There is good news for climate advocates in that the majority of the Most Importants are at least “somewhat convinced” that climate change is happening (61% vs. 71% of the general public) and that we should do something about it (58% vs. 68%). Most Importants, however tend to be more skeptical about the causes of climate change. They have a greater tendency to believe that climate change is mostly natural (27% vs. 16% of the general public), that it “is an elaborate hoax by scientists” (37% vs. 27% of the general public), that

“we cannot reduce climate change even if it is happening” (24% vs. 15% of the general public), and that it “is an opinion, not a fact” (35% vs. 29% of the general public).

2. Most Importants believe climate action will do more harm than good. A significant minority of the Most Importants see climate change as a distraction from bigger issues (40% vs. 33% of the general public and 19% of the non-religious). They also have a greater tendency to think that climate action will cost jobs and harm the economy (41% vs. 32% of the general public). In addition, they are more likely to think that doing something about climate will harm poor people more than it helps them (30% vs. 24% of the general public).

3. Most Importants are unsure if we can make a difference. Most Importants are more skeptical of our ability to mitigate climate change. Only 29% of these Americans believe humans can make a difference in slowing or reducing climate change, as opposed to 40% of Importants and 52% of those who are not at all religious.

III. CLIMATE SOLUTIONS & FAITH

This section presents findings about how people of faith think about energy and climate solutions. It also presents findings on themes and messages that are particularly compelling for people of faith.

1. Connecting climate with religious values elicits strong support. It may come as no surprise, but connecting climate solutions with God and traditional religious values resonates strongly with people of faith. Both Importants and Most Importants showed stronger agreement than the general public that doing something now about climate change will “protect God’s creation” (70% and 67% respectively, compared with 59% of the general public). In addition, these groups are slightly more likely than the general public to agree that compassion for those who are suffering is the most important virtue (92% for Importants and 88% for Most Importants vs. 86% of the general public). At the same time, people of faith are more likely to agree that it is God’s will that we use up whatever resources nature provides, but this response remains a minority: 31% of the Most Importants compared to 21% of the general public agree with this statement.

2. Clean energy comes out on top. Like the general public, the majority of people of faith support increasing clean energy, including 70% of Most Importants and 82% of Importants. However, clean energy support drops by 20 points when it is presented as a climate change solution (51% for Most Importants and 60% for Importants). When clean energy is framed as a strategy for transitioning off of coal, support declines even further (43% and 46% respectively, vs. 52% of the general public).

3. Not ready to abandon coal. People of faith tend to be more supportive of coal than their less religious counterparts. Not only do people of faith show weak support for transitioning away from coal, these Americans are less likely to think of it as an outdated energy source (21% of Most Importants and 30% of Importants vs. 39% of Not Very Importants and 54% of Not at All Importants). In addition, people of faith are less likely to think of regulating pollution from coal-fired power plants as an effective climate change solution (45% of Most Importants and 53% of Importants vs. 66% of Not Very Important and 71% of Not at All Importants). Most Importants are also more likely to see coal as a way to “keep jobs in local communities” (37% vs. 27% of the general public).

4. Libertarian values may hinder support for solutions. Libertarian values and attitudes may hinder support for solutions among Most Importants. Questions that included reference to property rights, government regulation, or wealth inequality elicited a strong negative response leading to an average $\pm 14\%$ difference from the general population, and not in the direction of climate advocacy. For example, 50% of Most Importants say that environmental regulations infringe too much on individual property rights, compared with just 35% of the general public.

5. People of faith trust their religious leaders, but are mixed on scientists. Religious Americans are more likely than the general population to trust their religious leaders (44% of Most Importants vs. 27% of the general public) or members of their religious community (41% of Most Importants vs. 27% of the general public) on climate change. Importants trust scientists at roughly the same amount as the general public (70% vs. 69%), while Most Importants are more skeptical of them. However, a majority of Most Importants (56%) still trust scientists on climate change.

IV. IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings presented in the previous sections offer a number of insights about how climate change and climate solutions can be effectively communicated to people of faith. Below are a series of further recommendations for engaging religious communities in the U.S. on climate change.

1. Connect the dots between faith and climate. The number one predictor of people's views on climate change is their political affiliation. This means that people most often (consciously or unconsciously) look at climate change through the lens of their political orientation rather than their faith. Helping people to develop a new lens, one that recognizes the connection between the callings of their faith and the moral imperative to act on climate change, is critical. Themes such as "being good stewards of God's creation" and "compassion for those suffering" are compelling messages for people of faith. These can be infused into the everyday life of congregations in services, sermons, scripture studies, and many other ways.

2. Leaders must help build the faith and climate connection. The right message is meaningless without the right messenger. For people to build connections between their faith and climate, they will need the guidance and inspiration of voices they trust, such as their clergy, fellow congregation members, and other respected leaders from their faith tradition. These leaders can help to set a positive tone and lend credibility to new or existing faith and climate care efforts.

3. Meet your audience where they are. While the results of this survey show that the most religious are more skeptical of climate change than the general public, they also reveal rich opportunities for outreach. The catch is that the traditional language of the environmental movement will likely be ineffective, if not counterproductive. Most Important do not respond well to government-based solutions and attacks on traditional energy sources like coal. Themes like independence, personal responsibility, and self-sufficiency are more likely to lead to success.

4. Practice what you preach. This research indicates that people of faith are doers. They are more likely to volunteer and believe in doing so to "set a good example" (80% of Most Important vs. 70% of the general public). Provide opportunities for people of faith to translate their beliefs into action, whether it is hosting events or by making the house of worship and its operations a model of good stewardship to be emulated at home.

5. Make it personal. The results of this survey show that many people of faith are still struggling to see how climate change impacts and solutions relate to themselves and what they treasure most. Leaders meet this challenge by localizing the issue. Point to how the climate has changed in your area and the jobs in solutions that already exist within your community. Instead of offering statistics, tell stories of individuals that can serve as microcosms for the larger issue. For instance, a congregation that does mission work within a country particularly affected by climate change can serve as a powerful teaching tool.

6. Inspire hope. The results of this survey show that many Most Important are unsure if they can make a difference. Throughout the history of our country, people of faith have been instrumental in social movements as presenters of a powerful, alternative positive vision of a better world. In doing so, they have helped turn possibility into reality. This same spirit of hope and faith is essential to our success in addressing climate change.

TABLE 1: Religious and Less Religious Americans' Attitudes on Climate Change

Table 1 illustrates how more and less religious Americans think and feel about climate change. Values for items 1-13 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who either "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement.

ITEM		ROLE OF RELIGION IN LIFE				AVERAGE
		Not at All Important	Not Very Important	Important	Most Important	
1	I am convinced/somewhat convinced that climate change is happening.	79	78	70	61	79
2	We should do something about climate change even if what we do isn't perfect.	75	73	66	58	68
3	We could reduce the pollution that is causing more extreme weather events.	78	72	68	58	68
4	Americans have overcome big challenges in the past and will overcome the challenge of climate change.	59	64	60	53	60
5	The potential consequences of climate change are so serious that we ought to do something even if we are not sure it's happening.	66	64	58	49	58
6	If we work hard enough, we can prevent most damage from climate change.	63	61	51	47	55
7	To me, the claim that the climate is changing because of people's actions is a hoax perpetrated.	19	25	27	37	27
8	I believe climate change will be good for people.	13	16	16	19	17
9	I would trust scientists for guidance on solutions to climate change.	77	72	70	56	69
10	I would trust my religious leaders for guidance on solutions to climate change	8	18	31	44	27
11	I would trust members of my religious organization for guidance on solutions to climate change.	9	18	33	41	27
12	I would be willing to urge elected officials to pass legislation to prevent climate change.	66	63	58	49	59
13	I would volunteer in order to set a good example.	52	65	75	80	70
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?						
14	Humans can definitely make a difference in slowing or reducing climate change.	52	41	40	29	40
15	Humans may or may not be able to reduce climate change.	30	41	36	35	36
16	Humans can't reduce climate change even if it's happening.	11	10	16	24	15
17	Climate change isn't happening.	8	9	8	13	9
WHAT CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE?						
18	I believe climate change is caused by both natural causes and human activities.	43	53	51	37	47
19	I believe climate change is mostly caused by human activities (such as driving cars, burning coal, oil, and gas, cutting down forest...).	34	23	22	16	23
20	I believe climate change is mostly natural.	7	13	15	27	16
21	Don't know.	12	9	6	11	9
22	I don't believe climate change is happening.	3	2	4	7	4
23	Other/Neither	0	1	1	2	1

TABLE 2: Points of Divergence on Climate Attitudes Between Religious and Non-religious Americans

Table 2 shows the survey items that generated the biggest differences between people of faith and the general population. Values for items 1-11 represent the percentage of respondents in each category who either "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement.

ITEM		ROLE OF RELIGION IN LIFE				AVERAGE
		Not at All Important	Not Very Important	Important	Most Important	
1	Compassion for those who are suffering is the most important virtue.	74	87	88	92	86
2	We should use more clean energy sources like solar and wind power in the future.	90	81	82	70	81
3	Increasing the use of renewable energy will be effective at stopping climate change in the next 20 years.	51	60	73	75	63
4	Doing something about climate change now could protect God's creation.	29	56	70	67	59
5	Regulate and limit carbon pollution that comes from coal-fired power plants will be effective at stopping climate change in the next 20 years.	71	66	53	45	58
6	Moving away from using coal and oil will be effective at stopping climate change in the next 20 years.	75	66	51	43	57
7	Raising energy efficiency standards for appliances will be effective at stopping climate change in the next 20 years.	61	60	51	44	53
8	Environmental regulations infringe too much on individual property rights.	24	28	37	50	35
9	It is God's will that we use up whatever resources nature provides.	5	20	24	31	21
10	I would be more likely to support environmental causes if they proposed fewer government regulations.	27	45	53	58	48
11	I think it's morally wrong that 1 percent of the population owns 40 percent of the wealth.	74	64	56	46	59
WHICH OF THE BELOW STATEMENTS DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL VIEW ON THE USE OF COAL AS A SOURCE OF ENERGY IN AMERICA? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)						
12	We need to transition off of using coal and start using cleaner sources of energy.	69	58	46	43	52
13	Coal is an outdated source of energy.	54	39	30	21	34
14	We need coal to keep jobs in local communities.	13	25	28	37	27
15	Coal is good for American workers.	9	19	21	24	19
16	Coal harms the health of American workers.	49	44	34	31	38
17	Coal is dirty.	52	44	33	34	39

ecoAmerica

start with people

1730 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036

870 Market Street
Suite 428
San Francisco, CA 94102

202.457.1900
ecoAmerica.org
ecoAffect.org

ecoAmerica grows the base of popular support for climate solutions in America with research-driven marketing, partnerships, and national programs that connect with Americans' core values to bring about and support change in personal and civic choices and behaviors.

This report is printed on post-consumer fiber content recycled paper.