

The New York City Global Warming Survey

This study was designed and funded by the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions (CRED) at Columbia University, the Yale Project on Climate Change at Yale University, and the Center for Energy, Marine Transportation, and Public Policy at Columbia University.

Executive Summary

Overall, a large majority of New York City residents say that they are personally convinced that global warming is happening (78%). Of those personally convinced, 82 percent believe that global warming is caused mainly by human activities (70%), or caused equally by humans and natural changes (12%), while only 15 percent believe it is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment.

A majority of New Yorkers (60%) say they personally worry either a great deal (26%) or a fair amount (34%) about global warming, whereas 39 percent say they worry only a little (24%) or not at all (15%). Yet most New York City residents believe that global warming is a greater threat to species, people, and places relatively far away, than to themselves or other people in the city.

That is not to say, however, that New Yorkers believe the city will escape unscathed. In fact, 22 percent believe global warming is already having dangerous impacts on people in the city now, while another 56 percent believe these dangerous impacts will occur within either the next 10 years (30%), or the next 25 years (26%). More specifically, large majorities of New Yorkers believe that during the next 50 years, global warming will cause more heat waves (85%), energy blackouts (79%), worse storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes (79%), increased rates of disease (72%), and flooding of subways, tunnels, and airports (70%). Finally, a majority (69%) believe it is somewhat (34%) or very likely (35%) that parts of New York City will need to be abandoned due to rising sea levels over the next 50 years.

In line with these concerns about the impacts of global warming on the city, New Yorkers strongly support more action by key policymakers and energy companies. Large majorities of respondents say that Con Ed (82%), Governor Spitzer (75%), and Mayor Bloomberg (72%) should be doing more to address global warming.

Support for PlaNYC Initiatives

In April 2007, Mayor Bloomberg unveiled PlaNYC 2030, a long-term plan to reduce New York City's greenhouse gas emissions by 30% and manage future population growth. This survey measured public support for several initiatives proposed by PlaNYC.

For example, large majorities of New Yorkers support making both existing and new buildings more energy efficient. When told that most of New York City's greenhouse gas emissions come from the energy used to heat, cool, and provide electricity for buildings, 84 percent of New Yorkers say that the City of New York should require owners of *existing* buildings to make their buildings more energy efficient and 88 percent say the city should require developers of *new* buildings to make their buildings more energy efficient than is required under existing building codes.

When asked who should pay to make these improvements, however, a majority (60%) say that the City of New York should require developers of *new* buildings to make buildings more energy efficient *at their own expense*. By contrast, when it comes to making *existing* buildings more energy efficient, a majority (58%) say that *the city should help pay*. These are important considerations given that PlaNYC projects that by 2030, 85 percent of local energy usage and carbon emissions will come from buildings that already exist today.

Mayor Bloomberg has also proposed to establish a New York City-specific surcharge to help finance energy efficiency and education projects. This survey found that New Yorkers are broadly supportive of such a proposal. For example, 66 percent strongly (35%) or moderately support (31%) a \$2.50 surcharge on the average household's monthly electric bill for a special fund to help make buildings more energy efficient and teach New Yorkers how to reduce their energy use. Further, 76 percent of residents strongly (49%) or moderately support (27%) a city subsidy to encourage building owners to replace old furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners, light bulbs, and insulation, even if the subsidy increased the average household's taxes by \$5 a month. Meanwhile, 66 percent of New Yorkers strongly (34%) or moderately support (32%) the installation of solar panels on city-owned buildings, even if the electricity generated is significantly more expensive than what city government normally pays for its electricity.

Regarding congestion pricing, however, New Yorkers are more divided. New York City residents were asked whether they supported an \$8 fee on all motorists entering Manhattan below 86th street between 6 am and 6 pm to reduce traffic in lower Manhattan; the city will use the revenue to improve the subway, train, and bus systems. This survey found that 53 percent of the public strongly (31%) or moderately supports (22%), while 42 percent strongly (28%) or moderately opposes (14%) this fee.

Finally, New Yorkers say they are willing to make individual lifestyle changes to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. Large majorities say they are likely to buy compact fluorescent light bulbs (71%), spend \$5 more a month for electricity produced from renewable energy sources like wind or solar (68%), make their views on global warming clear to politicians (67%), use less air conditioning in the summer (66%), and turn down their thermostat in the winter (60%).

Conclusion

Overall, a large majority of New Yorkers believe that global warming is happening and caused by human activities. Many are worried about climate change and think it will have a variety of dangerous impacts on New York City. New Yorkers think Mayor Bloomberg, Governor Spitzer, and Con Edison should be doing more to address global warming and are broadly supportive of city initiatives to reduce local energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, they say they are willing to take individual action to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

Methodology

The New York City Global Warming Survey was designed and funded by the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions (CRED) at Columbia University, the Yale Project on Climate Change at Yale University, and the Center for Energy, Marine Transportation, and Public Policy at Columbia University.¹ The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research International. Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by Princeton Data Source, LLC from November 28 to December 16, 2007 with a representative sample of 1,000 adults living in New York City households. The AAPOR response rate was 23%. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is $\pm 3.7\%$.

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SURVEY RESULTS

Figure 1: Personally Convinced

“How convinced are you that global warming is happening -- would you say you are completely convinced, mostly convinced, not so convinced, or not at all convinced?”

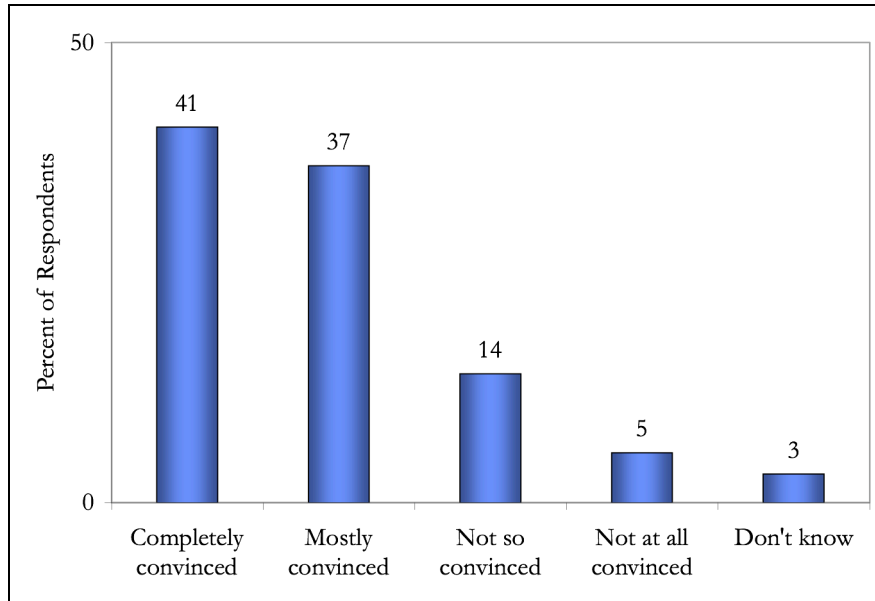


Figure 2: Scientific Consensus

“Which comes closer to your own view -- most scientists think global warming is happening, (or) most scientists think global warming is not happening, or there is a lot of disagreement among scientists about whether or not global warming is happening?”
(asked of those respondents who were mostly or completely convinced global warming is happening)

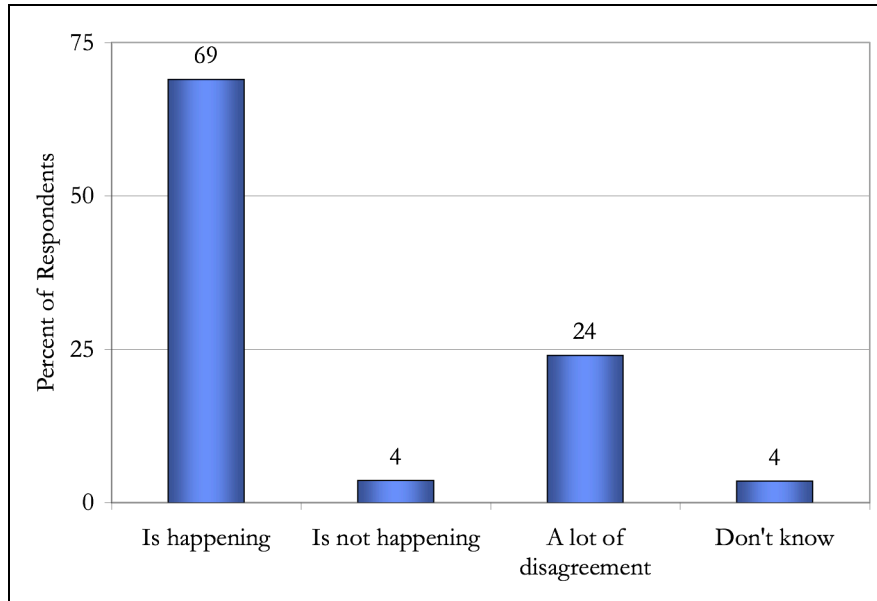


Figure 3: Cause of Global Warming

“If global warming is happening, do you think it is -- caused mostly by human activities (or) caused mostly by natural changes in the environment?”
(asked of those respondents who were mostly or completely convinced global warming is happening)

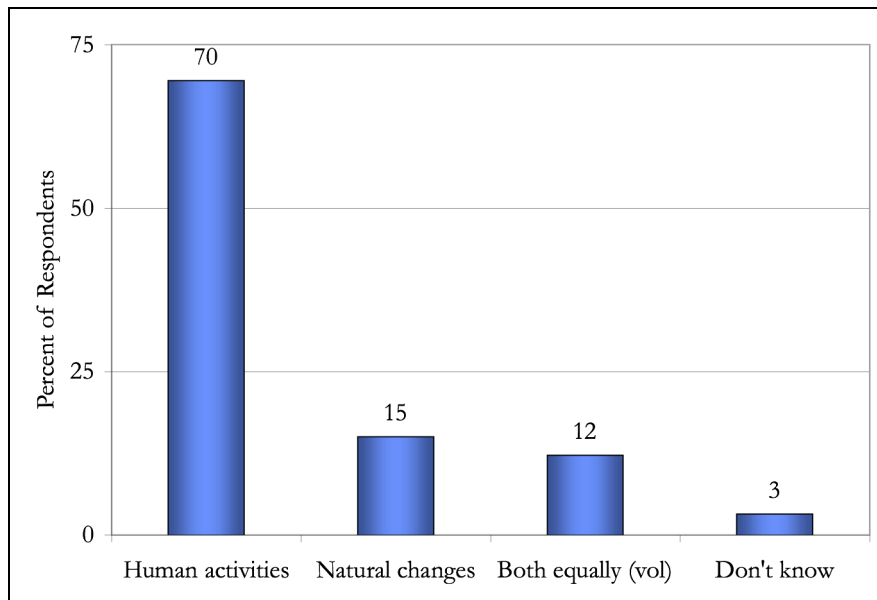


Figure 4: Worry

“How much do you personally worry about global warming – a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all?”

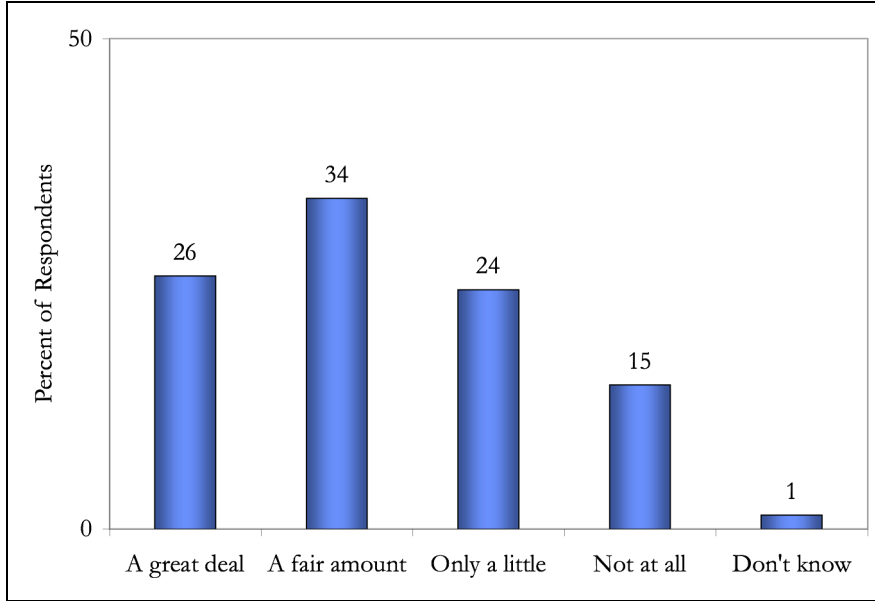


Figure 5: Seriousness and Geography of Impacts

“How serious of a threat is global warming to -- [ITEMS READ IN ORDER] -- very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?”

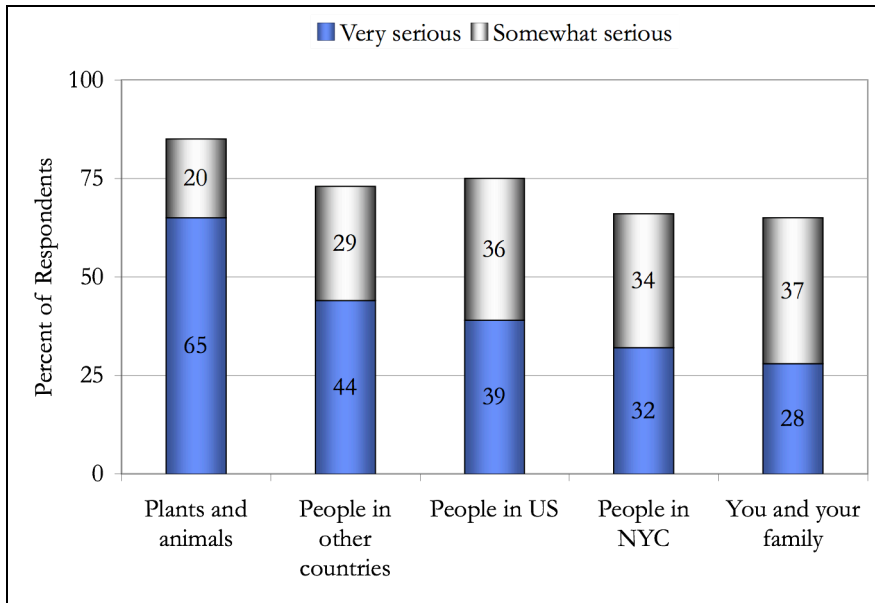


Figure 6: Dangerous Impacts on New York City

“Do you think global warming will have dangerous impacts on people in New York City or not?”

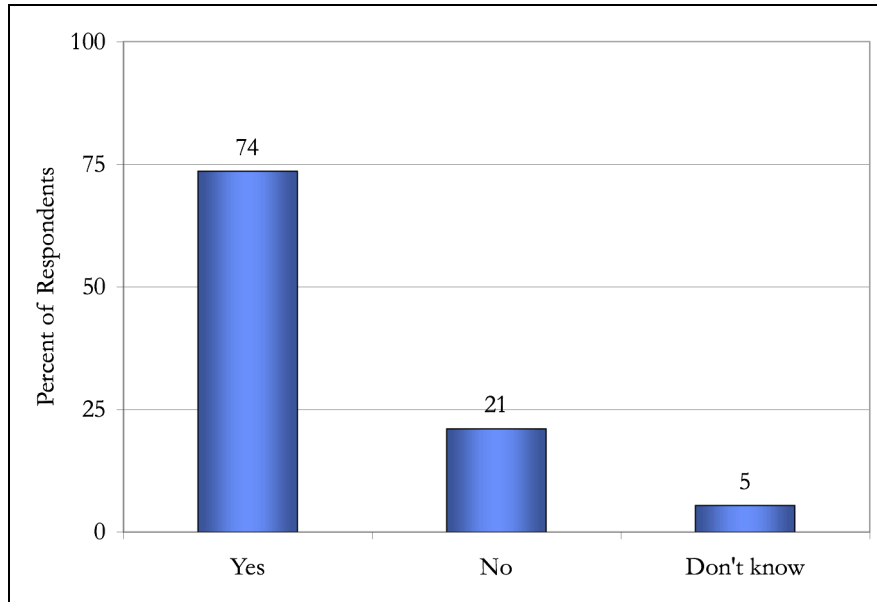


Figure 7: Timing of Impacts

“When do you think these dangerous impacts will start to occur in New York City?”

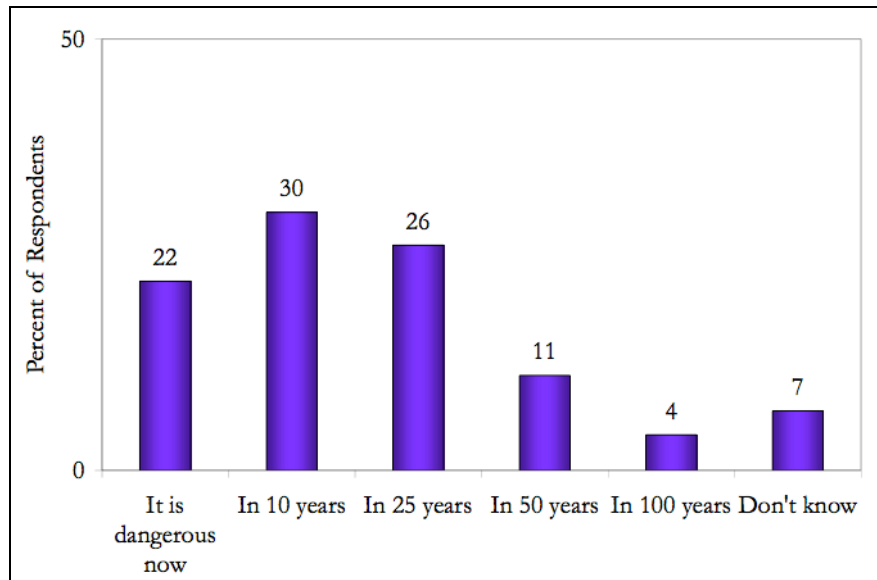


Figure 8: Likelihood of Impacts on New York City

“In New York City, how likely do you think it is that each of the following will occur during the next 50 years due to global warming?”

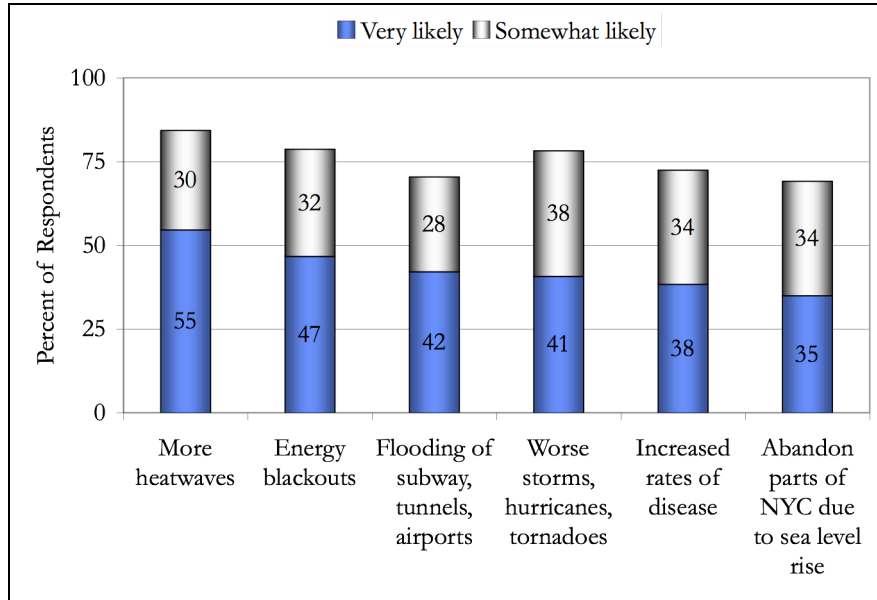
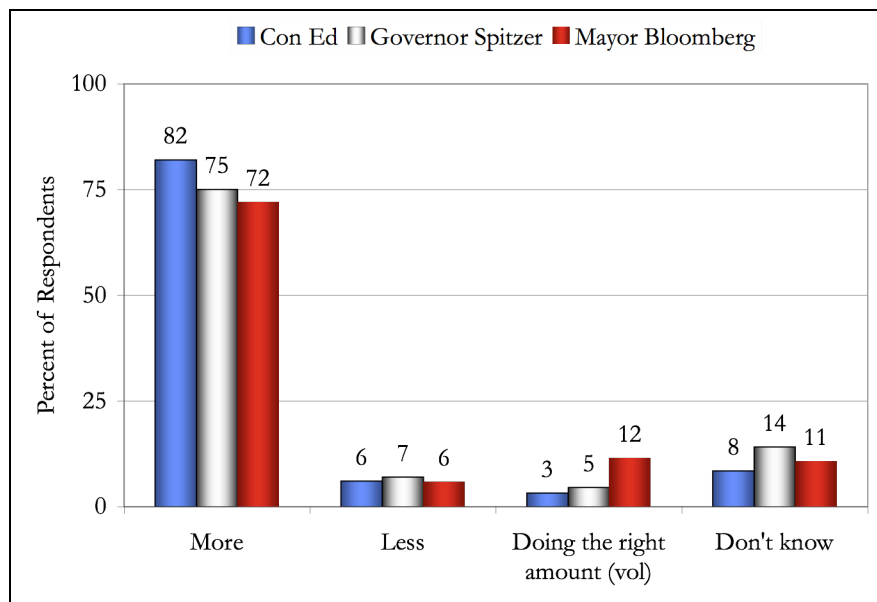


Figure 9: Addressing Global Warming

“For each of the following, please tell me what you think about how this person or company is addressing global warming. Do you think [RANDOM ORDER] should be doing more or less to address global warming? How about...?”



Policy Preferences

“Some people say that New York City should act to reduce global warming, while others say the city should have different priorities. Please tell me what you think about each of the following policies.

Would you strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose this?

First/Next...”[RANDOMIZED LIST]

Figure 10: Require Existing Buildings to be More Energy Efficiency

“Most of New York City’s greenhouse gas emissions come from the energy used to heat, cool, and provide electricity for buildings. Do you think the City of New York should REQUIRE owners of existing buildings to make their buildings more energy efficient or not?”

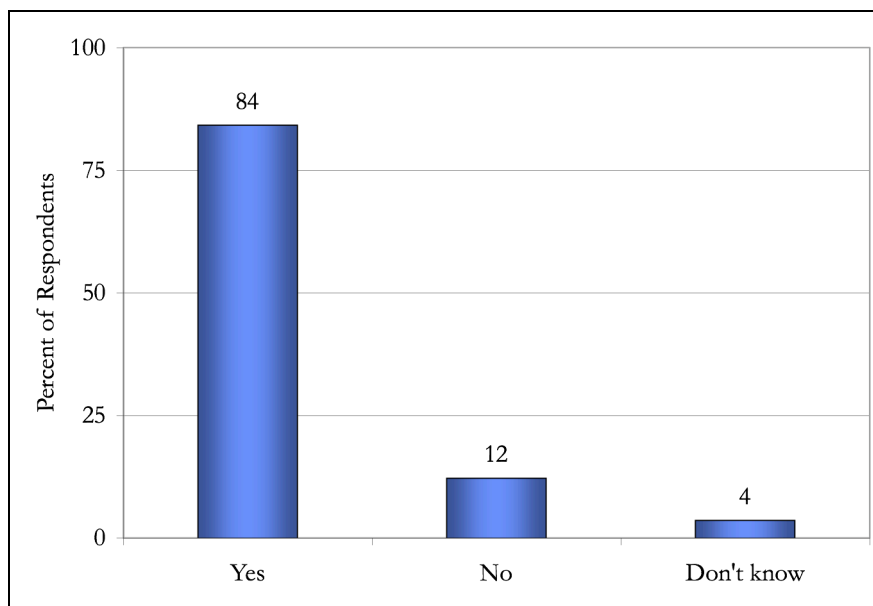


Figure 11: City Help for Owners of Existing Buildings

“Should the city of New York help pay to make existing buildings more energy efficient or require owners to do it at their own expense?”

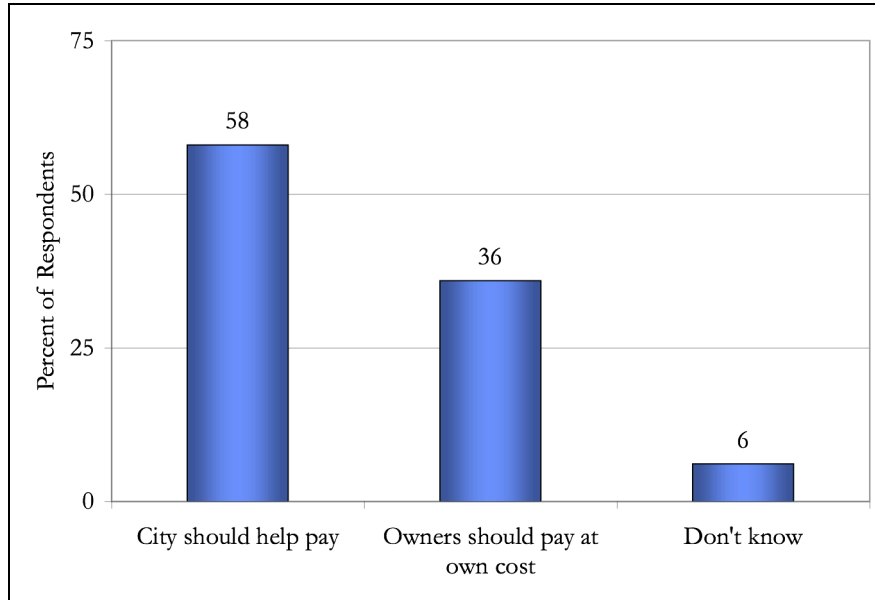


Figure 12: Require New Buildings to be More Energy Efficiency

What about for new buildings? Do you think the City of New York should REQUIRE developers of new buildings to make their buildings more energy efficient than is required under the existing building code or not?

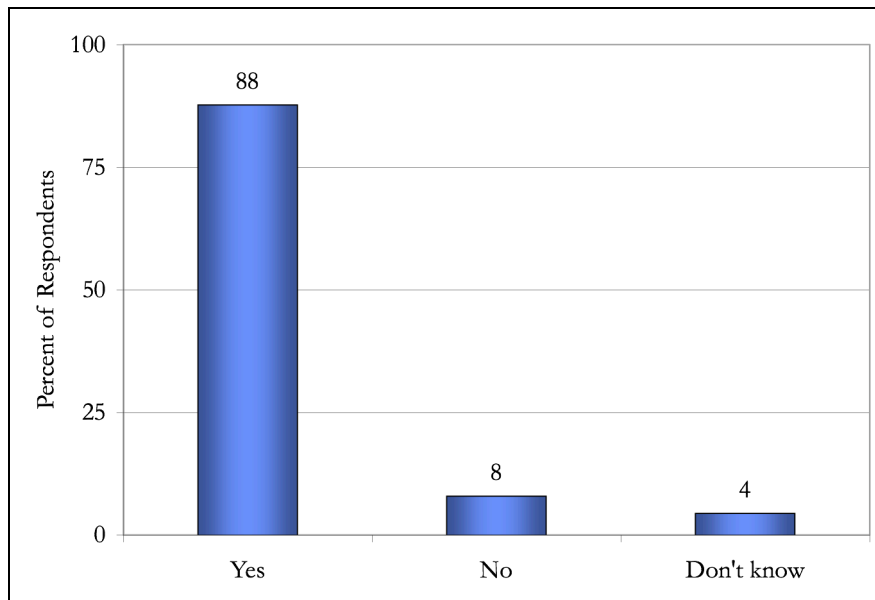


Figure 13: City Help for Developers of New Buildings

“Should the city of New York help pay to make new buildings more energy efficient or require developers to do it at their own expense?”

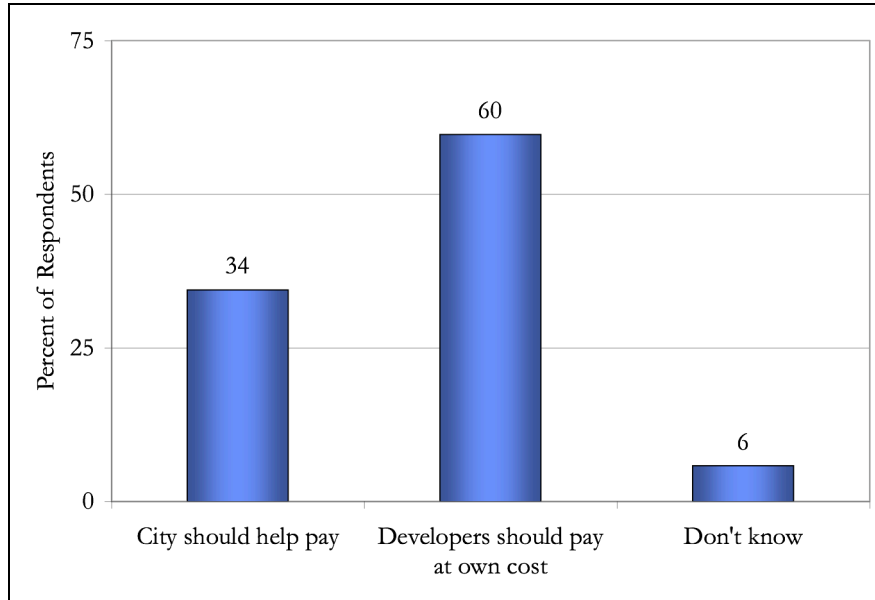


Figure 14: Special Fund for Energy Efficiency in Buildings

“A \$2.50 surcharge on the average household’s monthly electric bill for a special fund to help make buildings more energy efficient and teach New Yorkers how to reduce their energy use.”

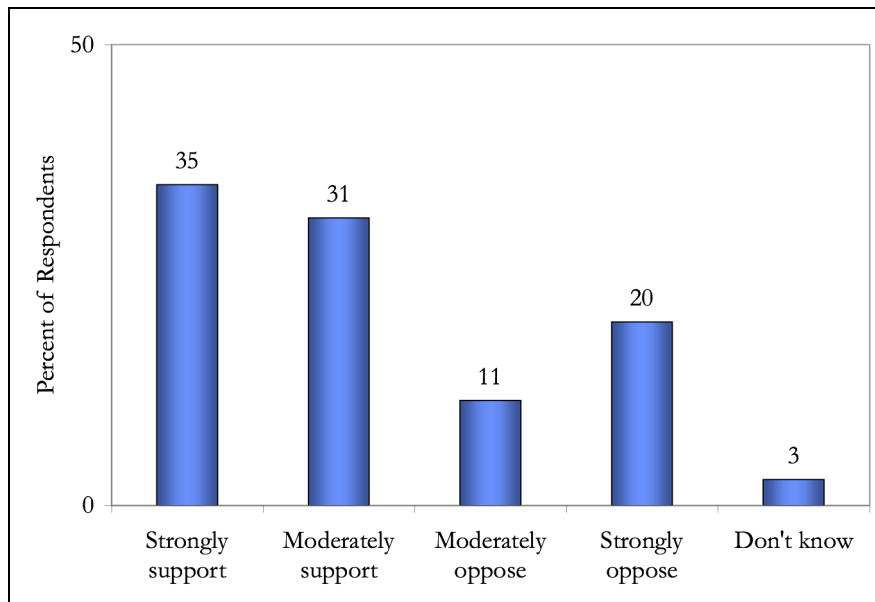


Figure 15: Energy Efficiency Subsidy for Building Owners

“A subsidy to encourage building owners to replace old furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners, light bulbs, and insulation. This subsidy would cost the average household \$5 a month in higher taxes. Those buildings that took advantage of the program would save money on their utility bills.”

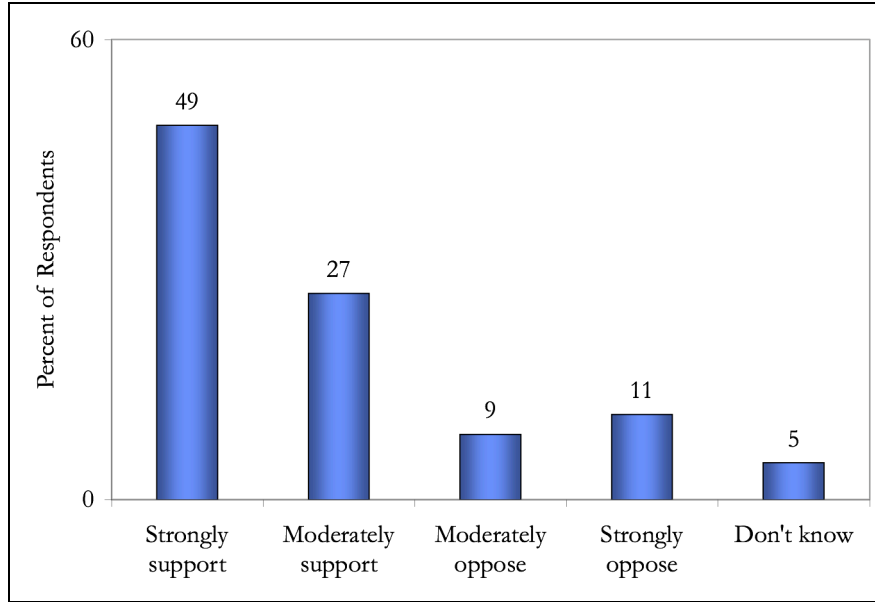


Figure 16: Solar Panels on City-Owned Buildings

“Installation of solar panels on city-owned buildings, even if the electricity generated is significantly more expensive than what city government normally pays for its electricity.”

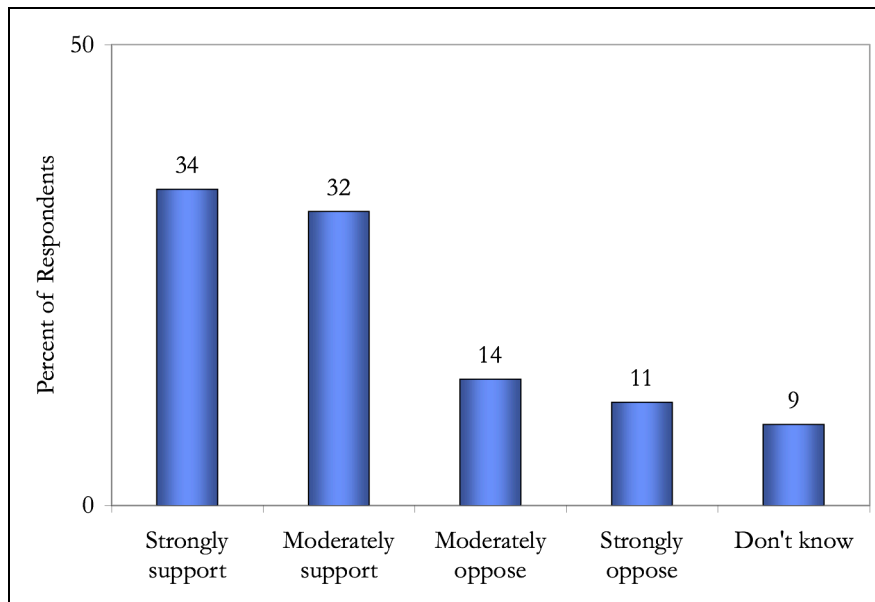
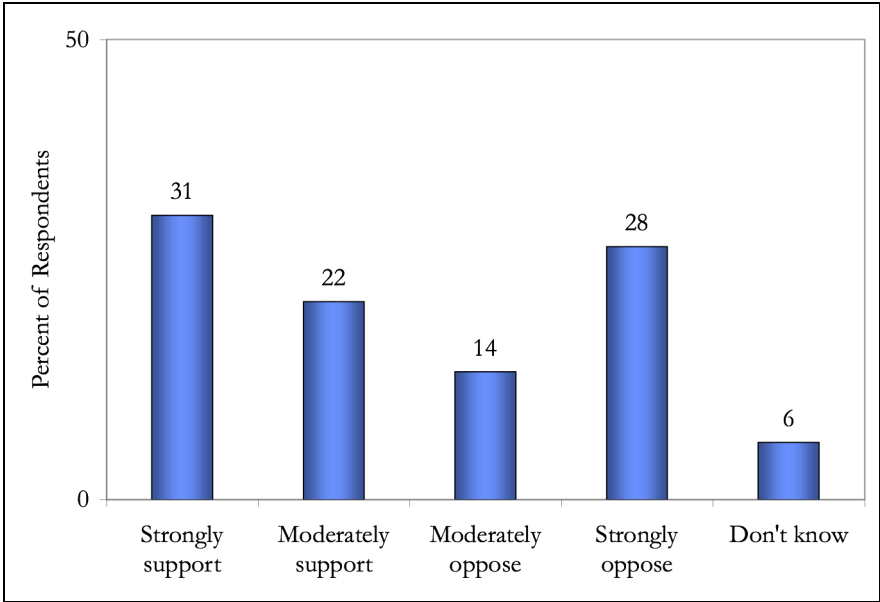


Figure 17: Congestion Pricing

“An \$8 fee on all motorists entering Manhattan below 86th street between 6 am and 6 pm to reduce traffic in lower Manhattan. The city will use the revenue to improve the subway, train, and bus systems.”



Individual Behaviors

“Please tell me how likely you are to take each of the following actions to reduce your own greenhouse gas emissions. Do you think you are very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely to...? [RANDOMIZE]

Figure 18: Buy Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

“Buy compact fluorescent light bulbs.”

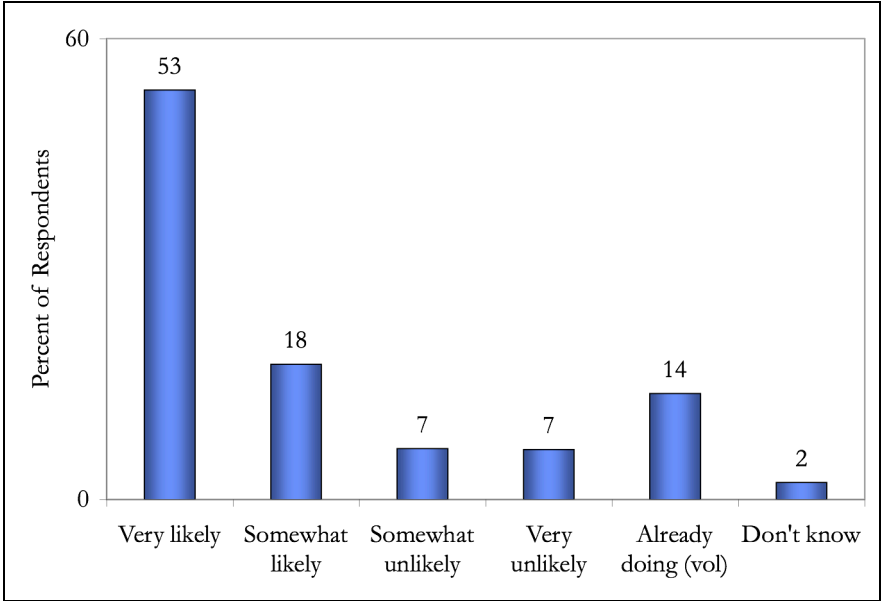


Figure 19: Pay More for Green Energy

Spend \$5 more a month for electricity produced from renewable energy sources, like wind or solar.

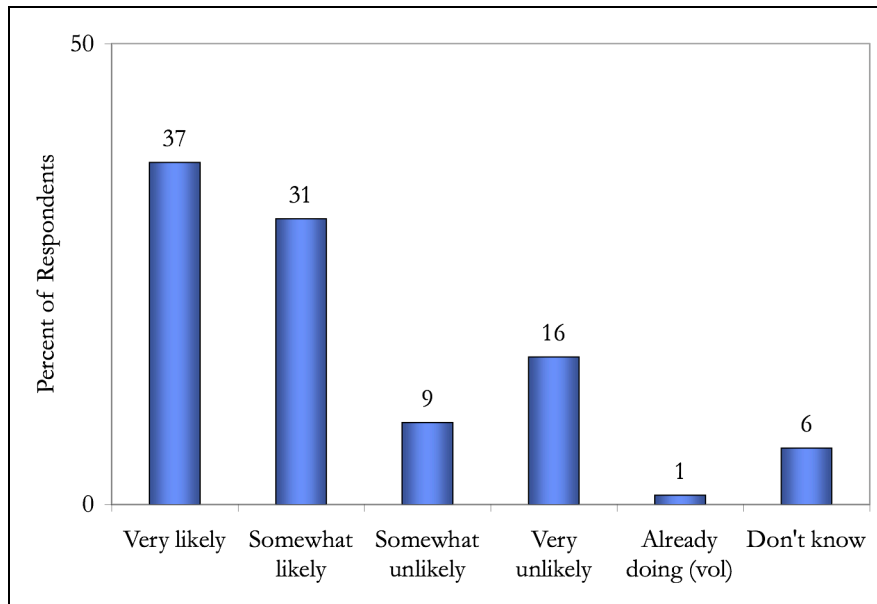


Figure 20: Use Less Air Conditioning in the Summer

“Use less air conditioning in the summer.”

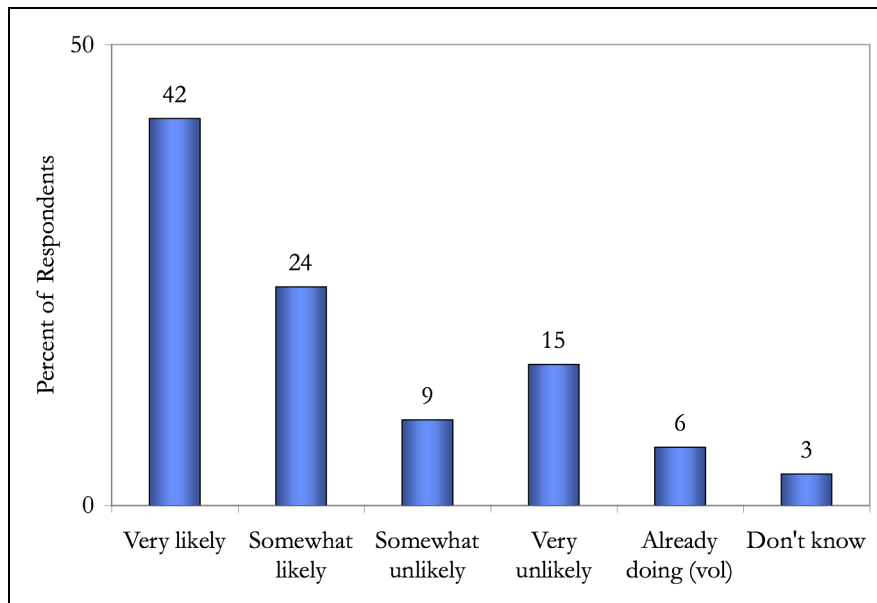


Figure 21: Turn Down Your Thermostat in the Winter

“Turn down your thermostat in the winter.”

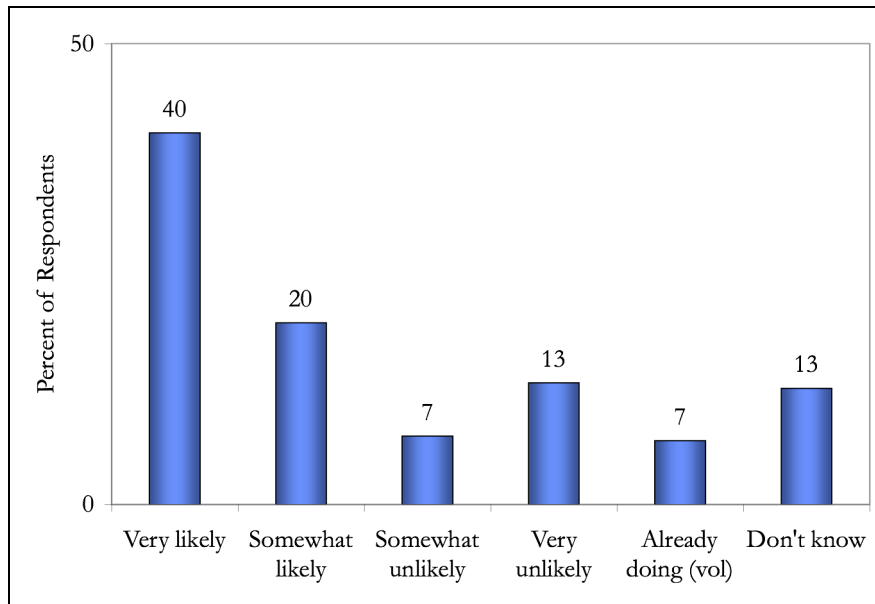
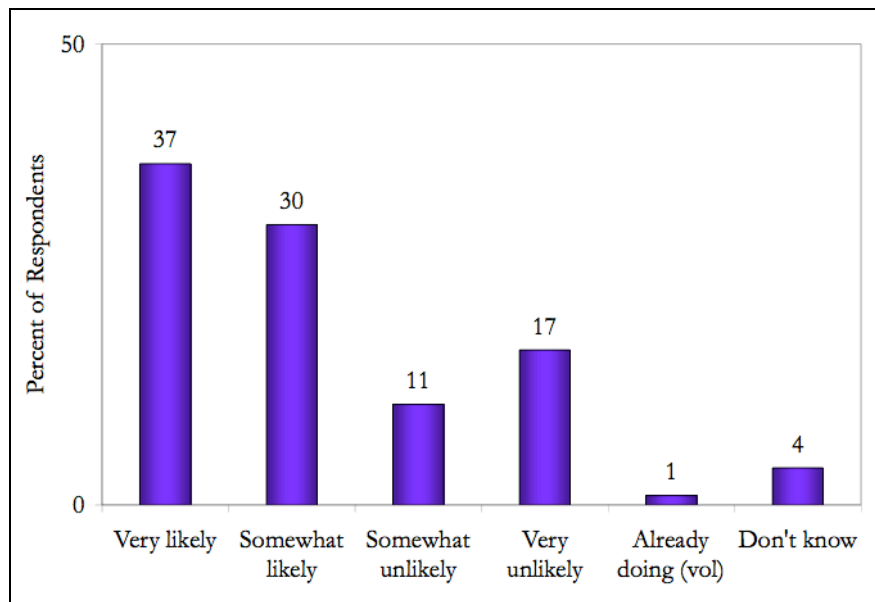


Figure 22: Contact Politicians

“Make your views on global warming clear to politicians. [For example by writing letters, telephoning, sending e-mails, or signing petitions]”



Methodology

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