

# WHAT IS A SURVEY?

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication conducts scientific studies on public opinion and behavior. The data for these studies is often gathered by using scientific polling techniques. The Yale Climate Opinion Maps and Global Warming's Six Americas, which your students use in many of the activities we've created, were developed based on polling and survey data. The annotated list of links below can be used to teach your students about surveying in general and scientific polling in particular (polling is one type of survey data collection).

Estimated % of adults who think that global warming is happening (nat'l avg. 72%), 2024

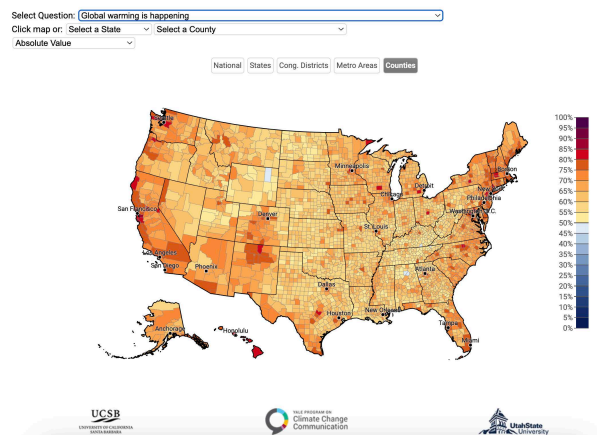


Image 1. Yale Climate Opinion Maps are produced using a statistical model based on national survey data.

These resources can help answer questions about what polls are, why we use polling and surveying, what survey data shows us, and how we can conduct polling and other methods of survey data collection in ways that are reliable.

## SURVEYING IN GENERAL

### ● Sampling Methods and Bias with Surveys: Crash Course Statistics

Crash Course is an education YouTube channel that makes student-friendly videos for a wide variety of content areas. This Crash Course video explains why we might want to use surveying to collect data as opposed to experimental methods, what makes a good survey question, and different methods of surveying sources. Additionally, the video covers several examples of bias and sources of error in surveying.

## POLLING IN PARTICULAR

Polling is a particular kind of survey research that measures public opinion based on data collected from a representative sample of the population. When we think of polling, we often think of political polling that occurs around elections. Indeed, the lessons provided below are about election polling. It is important to remember, however, that polling is used in many other social science settings including psychology, marketing, and communications. Polling is essential to the work at the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication to learn about how to most effectively engage people in climate change solutions.

- **Polling Fundamentals**

Cornell University’s Roper Center for Public Opinion Research has a web page devoted to explaining the basics of polling. It is easy to navigate and is accessible for high school students.

- **How Do Polls Inform, Influence, and Impact Elections?**

The ADL published this lesson plan for high schoolers, which helps students understand the importance of demographics in polling, identify bias and sources of error in polling, and create their own polls.

- **Polling Pitfalls**

This lesson is a part of PBS’ We the Voters collection. Intended for high schoolers, Polling Pitfalls asks students to watch a video about valid polling and evaluate the validity of three real public opinion polls.

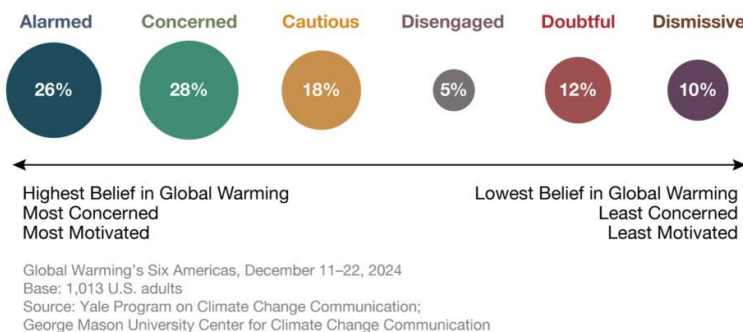


Image 2. Global Warming's Six Americas breakdown for December 2024. National survey data is used to determine the percentage of Americans that makes up each of the Six Americas.