

Global Warming:

A self-inflicted, very serious problem, according to more than half the world's on-line population

Yet still not a major personal concern for many
Human activities and natural climate changes the major cause

FREAK WEATHER PATTERNS that have caused tsunamis, droughts, hurricanes and wildfires have made global warming an issue that the world can no longer ignore.

"It has taken extreme and life threatening weather patterns to finally drive the message home that global warming is happening and is here to stay unless a concerted, global effort is made to reverse it, said Patrick Dodd, President, ACNielsen Europe, the world's largest market information country who recently conducted a global online survey on consumer attitudes towards global warming.

"The good news is that, nine out of 10 people globally are aware of global warming. The bad news is that only over half of them (57%) consider it a "very serious problem," said Dodd.

The ACNielsen Global Online Consumer Opinion Survey, the largest half-yearly survey of its kind, was conducted in late October/early November, surveying 25,408 internet users in 46 markets from Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, the Baltics and Middle East.

In Europe, 95% of consumers say they are aware of global warming and 57% consider it's a very serious problem.

"The countries who are most aware and most concerned about global warming are, not surprisingly, those who have experienced firsthand and directly suffered from the effects of global warming in the past few years," observed Dodd.

Globally, Czechs are the most aware about global warming with 99% saying they know about this issue, followed by 98% of Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Thai consumers.

In August 2002, Prague – one of the world's most beautiful and well preserved medieval cities, became submerged under water as flash floods caused 40,000 residents to leave their homes and caused devastation throughout the city.

A year later in August 2003, Europe recorded its hottest summer ever on record which resulted in an estimated 35,000 deaths across Europe, with 14,804 people perishing in France from heatwave-related deaths. France's recent experience with global warming three years ago prompted French consumers (80%) along with Brazilians (81%) to top the world for thinking that global warming is a "very serious problem."

Most Aware and Most Concerned – Latin Americans and Europeans.

Latin Americans, who live in a region where scientists predict will be one of the worst hit by global warming in the next twenty years, are the most aware and concerned group about global warming globally.

Ninety six percent say they are aware of global warming and three in four consumers (75%) considering it's a very serious problem. "Their concern is well founded. Latin America is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes and flash floods. In this emerging part of the world, peoples livelihoods are dependent on export crops such as bananas and coffee and freak weather patterns can wipe out their villages and livelihoods within days," said Dodd. Amazon deforestation and the El Nino phenomenon has already increased flooding and a decline in fish stocks in Latin America.

North America – Least Aware and Least Concerned

In North America which is the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions, 84% say they are aware of global warming, but less than half of them (43%) consider it's a very serious problem. More worrying, 13% of North Americans said they had never heard or read anything about global warming and one in ten consumers said it was "not a serious problem at all."

"North Americans consistently ranked least aware and least concerned about global warming," said Dodd. North America's national apathy towards global warming was likely to be a major reason for Al Gore to make his controversial environmental film documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth" which was described by critics as "the most important movie made in 2006".

The three lowest countries globally in terms of awareness were the UAE, where 16 percent of respondents said that they had not heard of global warming, followed by the US (13%) and Malaysia (11%).

Global Warming – a result of human actions?

Half the world's population (50%) said global warming is a result of human actions and 43% believe it's a combination of both natural changes in the climate and human actions. Again, Latin Americans lead the world for believing global warming is a direct result of human actions – 43% of Latin Americas compared to 32% of North Americans say global warming is a direct result of our human actions.

"Those who believe global warming is a result of human actions are more likely to make changes to save the environment," said Dodd. "In this case, its gratifying to see that those who believe

that global warming is caused by human activites are the Chinese (73%) followed by 70% of Brazilians – two of the largest world developing economies

One out of eight North Americans,(12%) - the highest majority globally, thought global warming is caused by natural changes in the climate. ●

North Americans consistently ranked least aware and least concerned about global warming

Patrick Dodd
President, ACNielsen Europe

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