

# Communicating Effectively About Climate Change

Earth Science Information Partners Federation Meeting

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# Three critical questions

- Who
  - With whom are we communicating?
- What
  - What information is most worth (them) knowing, and therefore most worth (us) communicating?
- How
  - How can we communicate this information effectively?





With whom  
are we communicating ?





# Global Warming's "Six Americas"



## An Audience Segmentation

**Anthony Leiserowitz, PhD**  
Yale Project on Climate Change

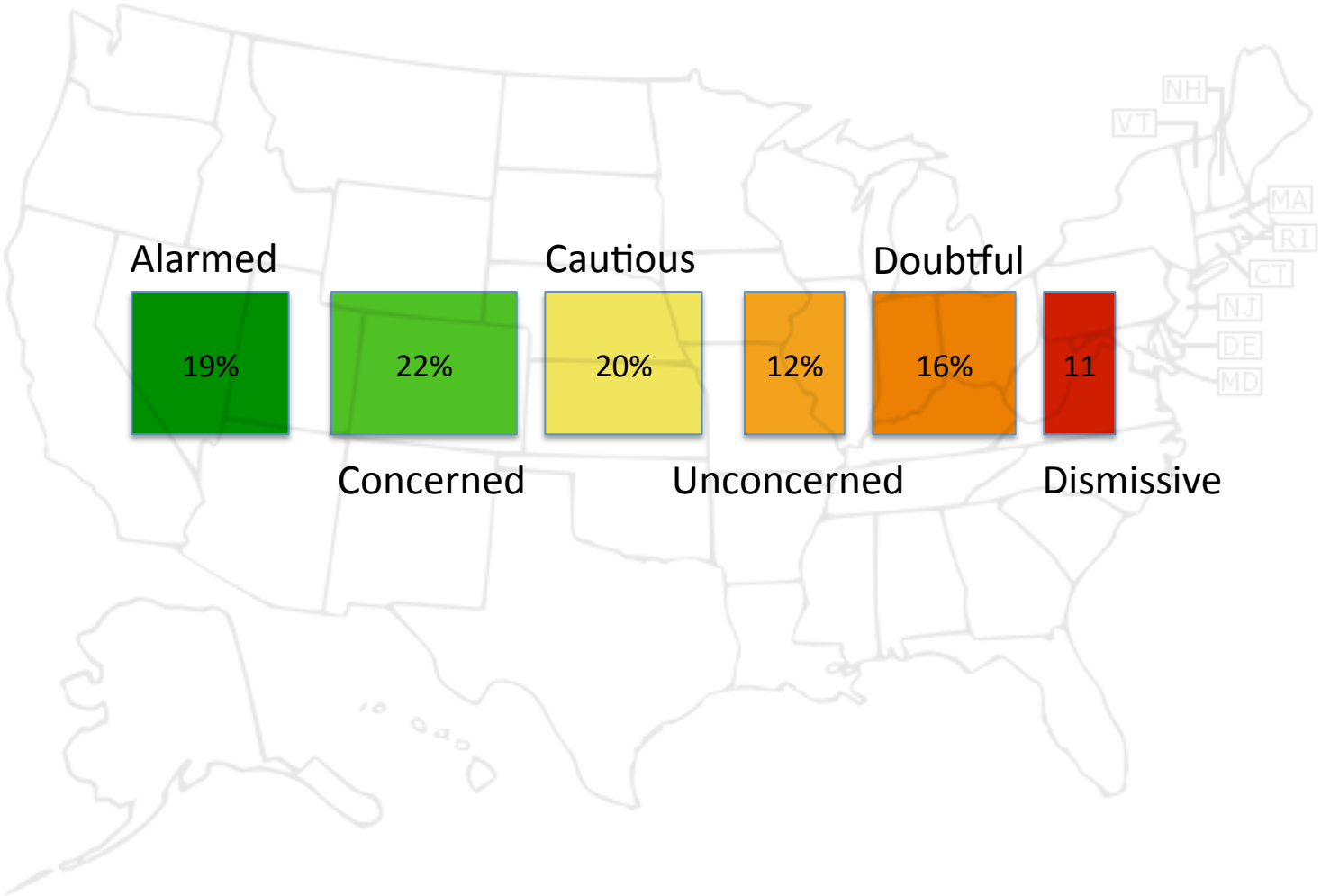
**Edward Maibach, MPH, PhD**  
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George Mason University Center for  
Climate Change Communication



George Mason University  
Center for Climate Change Communication



# Global Warming's Six Americas



# Alarmed Alice



Alice feel personally threatened by global warming, and has behavioral intentions and policy preferences consistent with her belief that aggressive actions are needed immediately to deal with the threat.

Alice also believes that people around the world are already being harmed by global warming, or they soon will be.

# Concerned Claudia

Claudia is very concerned about global warming, but she feels less personally threatened by it than Alice. Nonetheless, she strongly supports aggressive government policies and is willing to change their own behaviors.

Claudia believes that global warming will begin to harm people around the world about 10 years from now.





# Cautious Connie



Connie is concerned about global warming, she is moderately supportive of government policies to do something about it, and to a certain degree she is willing to change her own behavior.

But Connie sees global warming as a more distant threat – primarily a threat to other people – that won't begin to hurt people around the world for another 15 years or so.

# Unconcerned Uri

Uri is significantly less concerned about global warming than Connie, but he is a considerably stronger supporter of government policies to combat global warming and he is more willing to change his own behavior. His willingness to deal with the threat, despite his lack of concern, may indicate he has a “better safe than sorry” attitude, or perhaps driven by other motivations -- such as a desire to reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil.

Uri believes that global warming will begin to harm people between 25 and 50 years from now.



# Doubtful David



David has his doubts about whether or not global warming is real, and human-caused. He's no "denialist," he just isn't worried about it, probably because David sees global warming as a very distant threat that won't harm people for another 50 to 100 years.

David is modestly in favor of policy measures that have no direct cost to the consumer (e.g., higher efficiency standards for new buildings), but modestly opposed to the US becoming party to an international climate control treaty, and strongly opposed to increasing taxes on gas or electricity to encourage conservation.



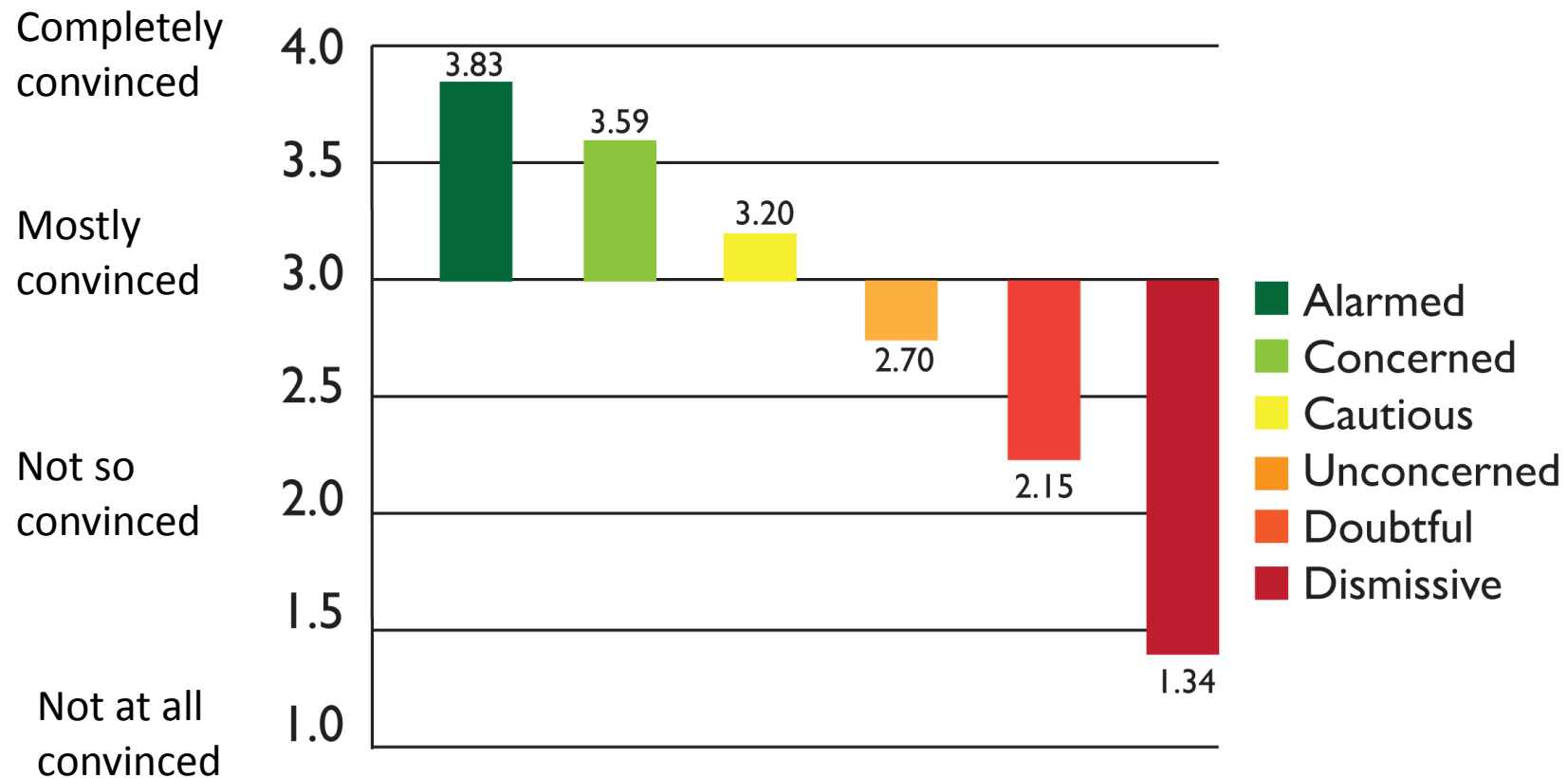
# Dismissive Dan

Dan simply does not believe that global warming is happening, and he believes that many scientists share his views. Needless to say, Dan doesn't support any form of government action against global warming.

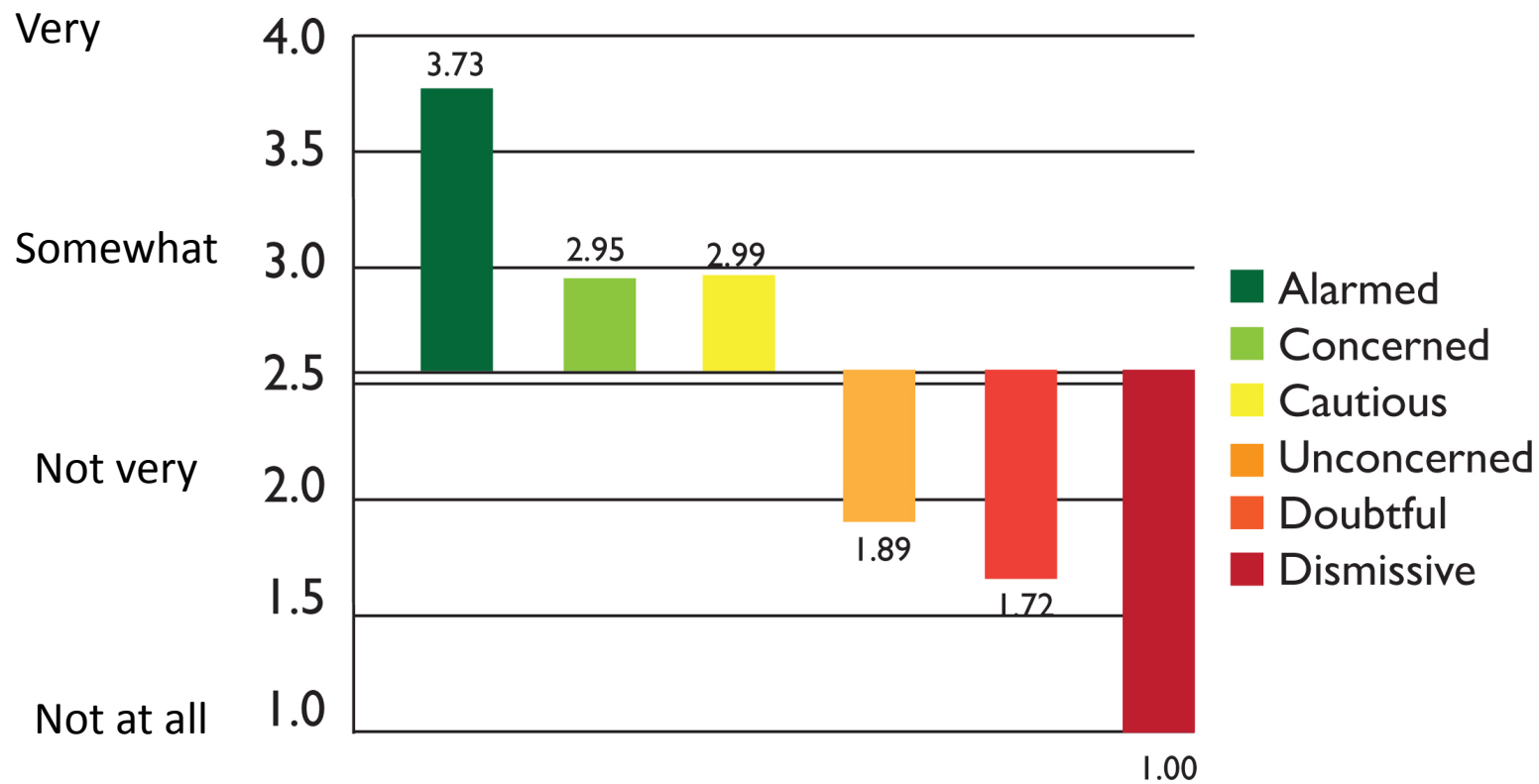
Although, like David, Dan is inclined to buy energy efficient appliances, and he's even OK with policy measures that promote energy savings, as long as they have no direct cost to the consumer (e.g., higher efficiency standards for new buildings).



# How convinced are you that global warming is happening?

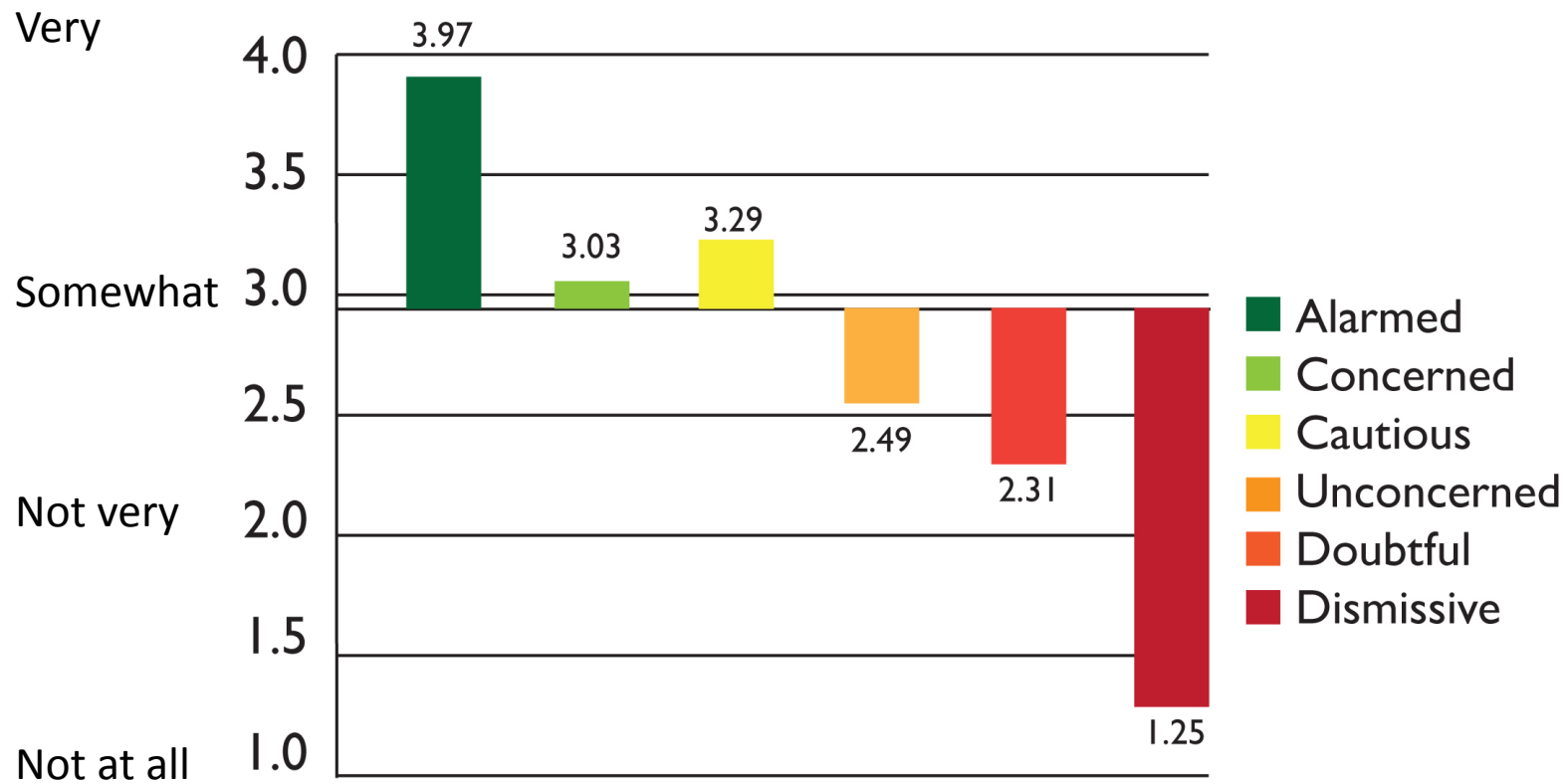


# How serious a threat is global warming to you and your family?

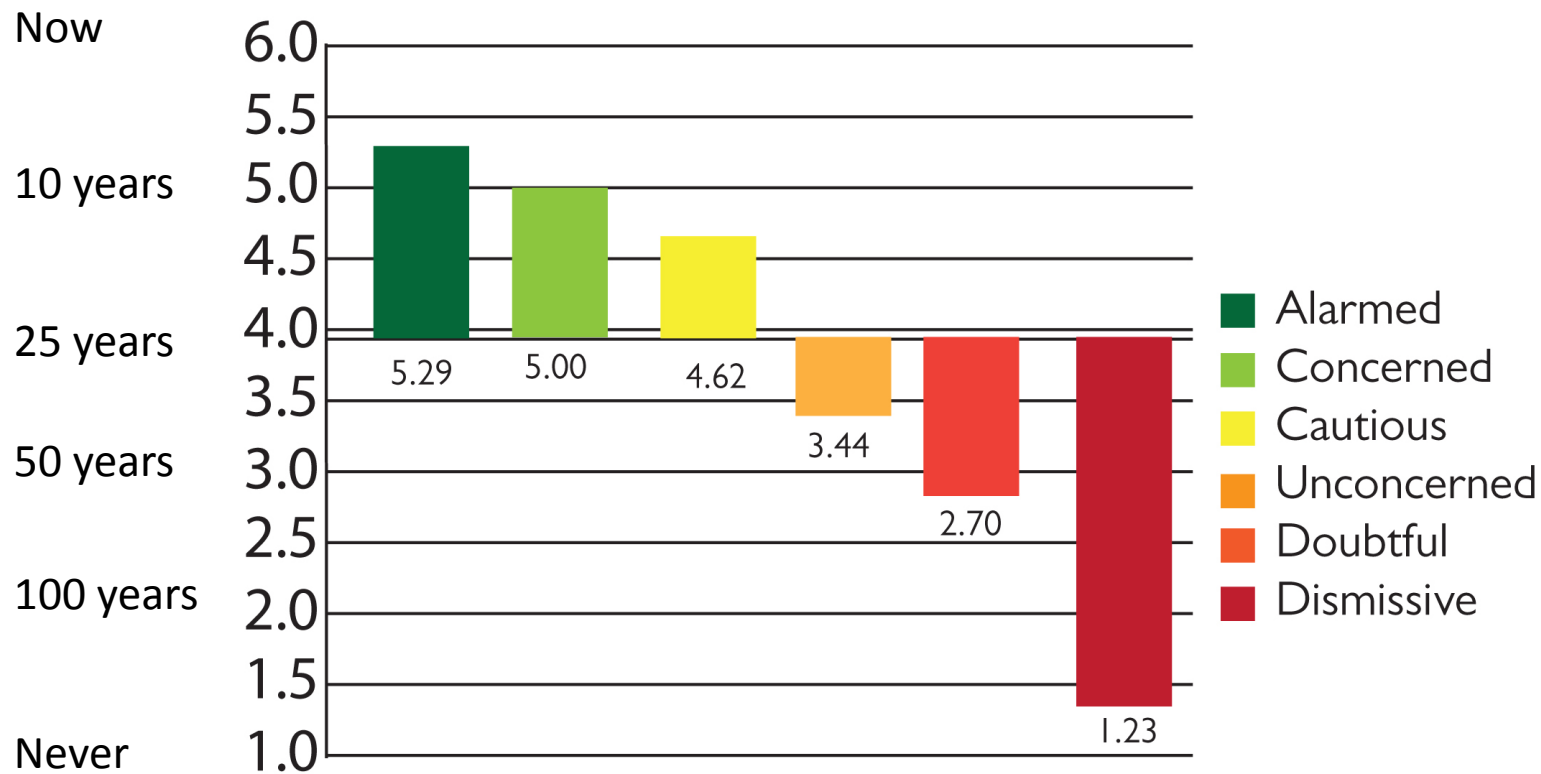




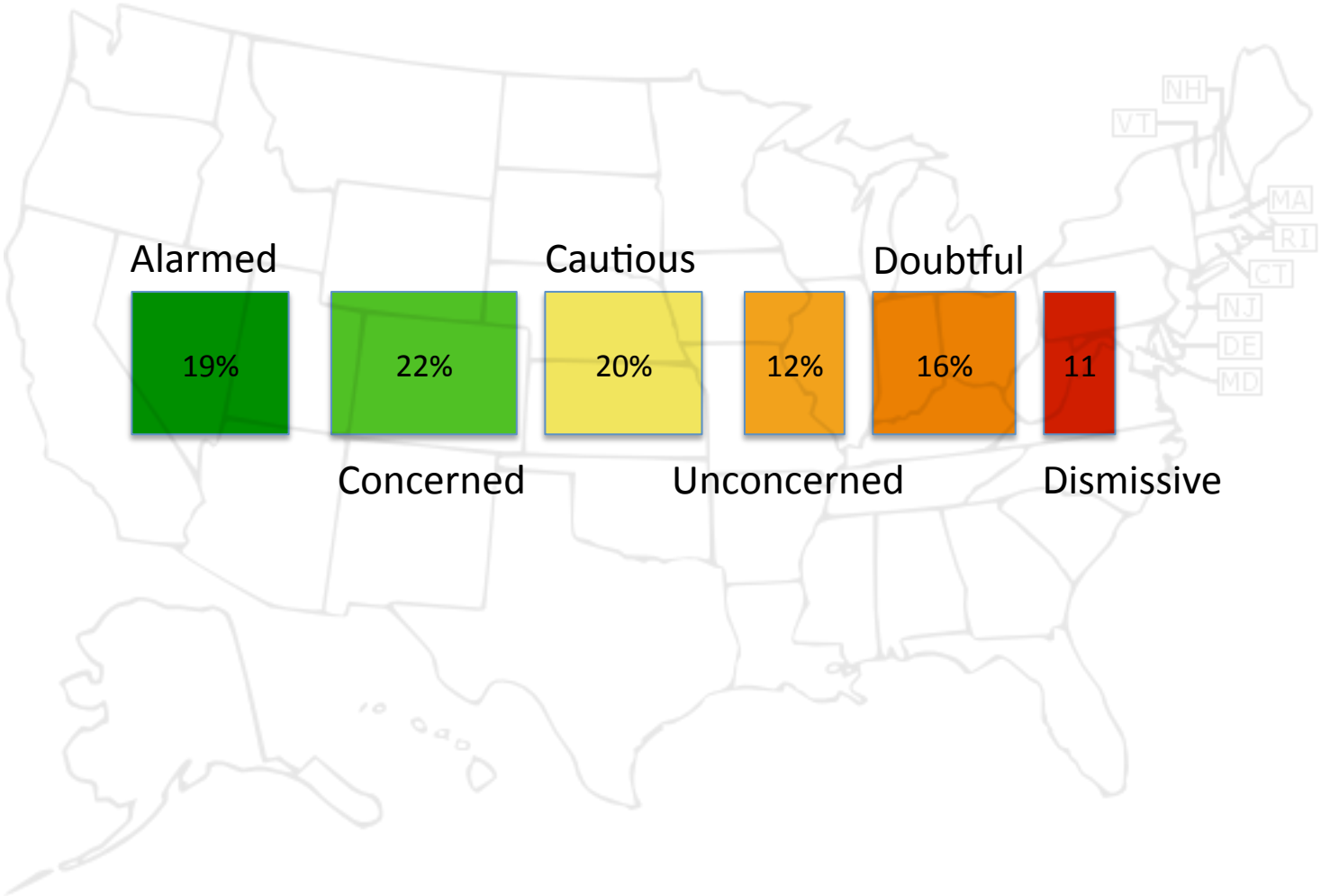
# How serious a threat is global warming to people in the United States?



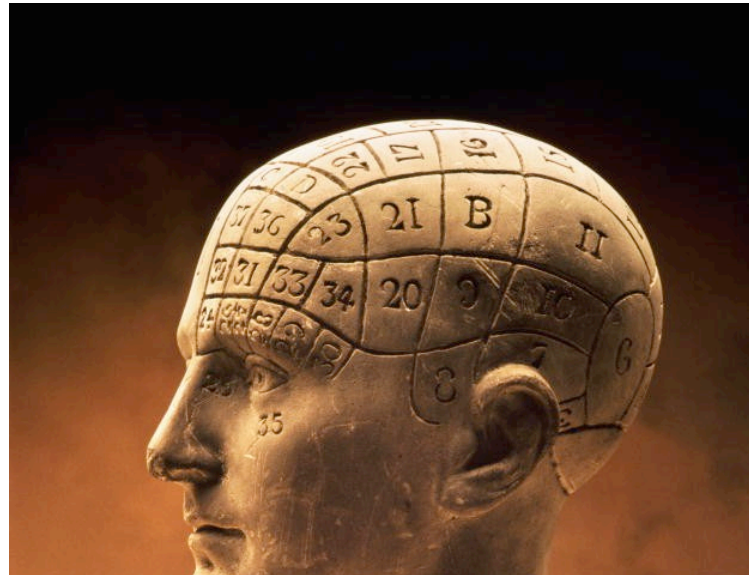
# When do you think global warming will start to have dangerous impacts on people around the world?



# Global Warming's Six Americas



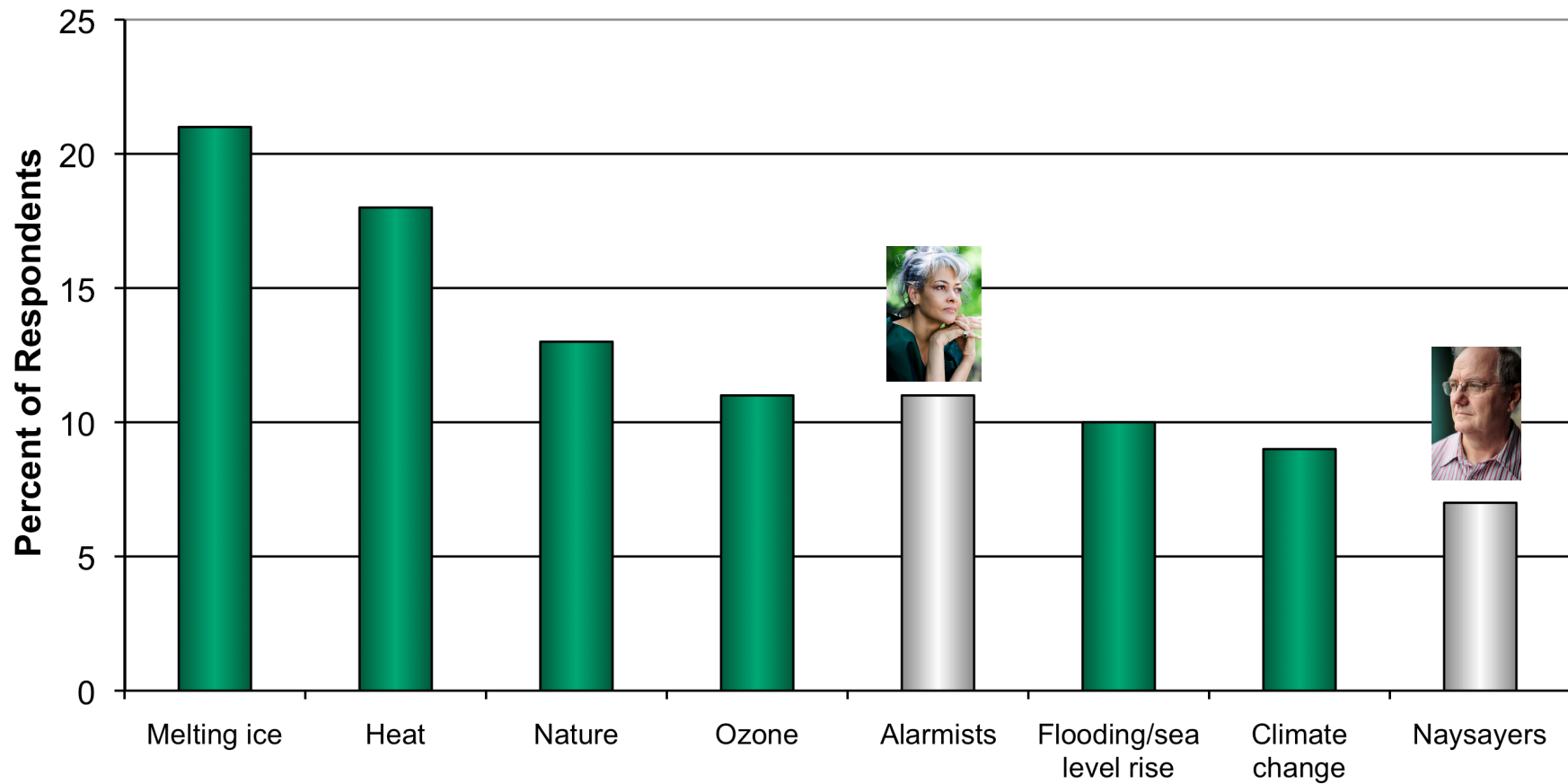
# What information is most worth knowing?



With the answer to this question, we can *accentuate the relevant* by communicating that which is most worth knowing.



# Adult Americans' Images of Global Warming



Four key beliefs predispose people to support aggressive public policy responses to climate change:\*

(1) Global warming is real (and I am certain of that)

- 38% are completely convinced; 34% mostly convinced

(2) Global warming is human caused

- 57% see it as human-caused & 12% see human & natural causes

(3) Global warming is harmful to people\*

- People elsewhere (40%); in US (30%); in my community (18%)

(4) Global warming is a problem that can be solved

- 66% strongly agree; 21% somewhat agree

*\* Who better than us – health professionals – can make the case that climate change is harmful to people?*

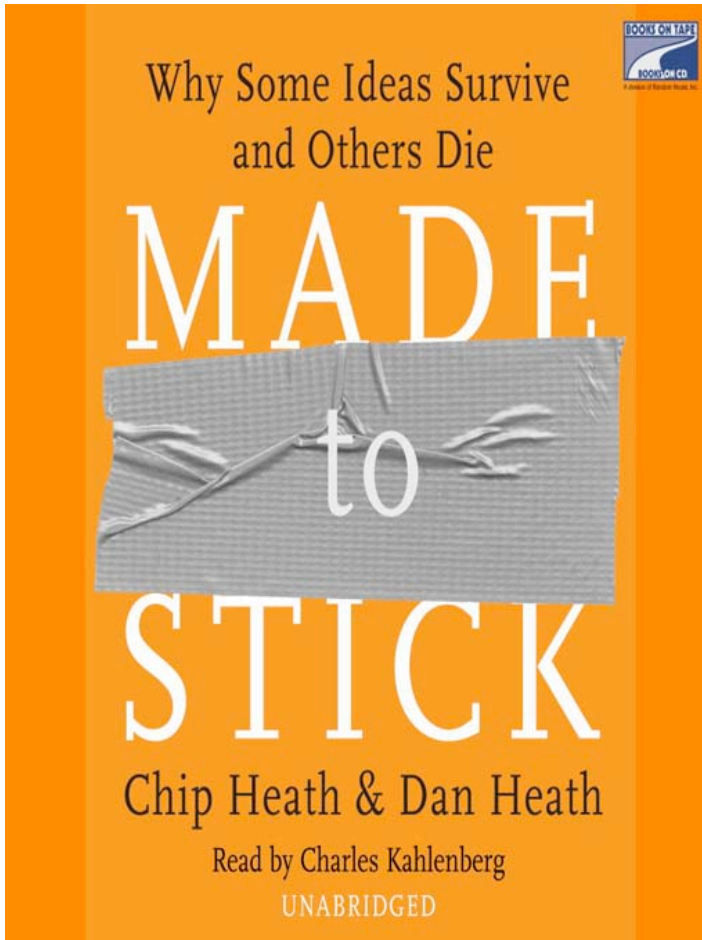
\* Krosnick JA, Holbrook AL, Lowe L, Visser PS. The origins and consequences of democratic citizens' policy agendas: A study of popular concerns about global warming. *Climatic Change*, 2006; 77:7-43 .

\* Leiserowitz, A (2007) Americans Opinions About Global Warming. <http://environment.yale.edu/news/5305/american-opinions-on-global-warming/>

# **How** to communicate effectively: 3 easy steps

- (1) Identify your target audience
- (2) Determine – by interacting with them - what is most worth their knowing
- (3) When you communicate with them (face-to-face, in the media, through curricula, etc.), strive for SUCCES

# Chip & Dan Heath's (2007) acronym for communication effectiveness: **SUCCESS**



- **S**imple
- **U**nexpected
- **C**oncrete
- **C**redible
- **E**mootional
- **S**tories



# Global Warming:

Why Public Health Professionals Care,  
and Why You Should Too.

Ed Maibach, MPH, PhD  
Professor, George Mason University  
Public health professional since 1982



Add local logos  
here

# Format

30 minute “lunch & learn” style presentation suitable to any audience:

- Community groups
- University lectures
- Business audiences
- NGOs, professional associations
- Elected officials, city counsel meetings\*

\* A 5-10 minute module that explains the specific role of public health in addressing climate change is under development.

# Agenda

4 things you need to know about global warming:

- It's real
- We're causing it
- It's bad for us\*
- We can solve it\*



- Lower CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions
- Increased Physical Activity
- Less Osteoporosis
- Fewer Injuries
- Lower Air Pollution
- Lower Infrastructure Costs
- Increased Social Capital
- Less Depression
- Increased Happiness



<http://climatechange.gmu.edu>



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