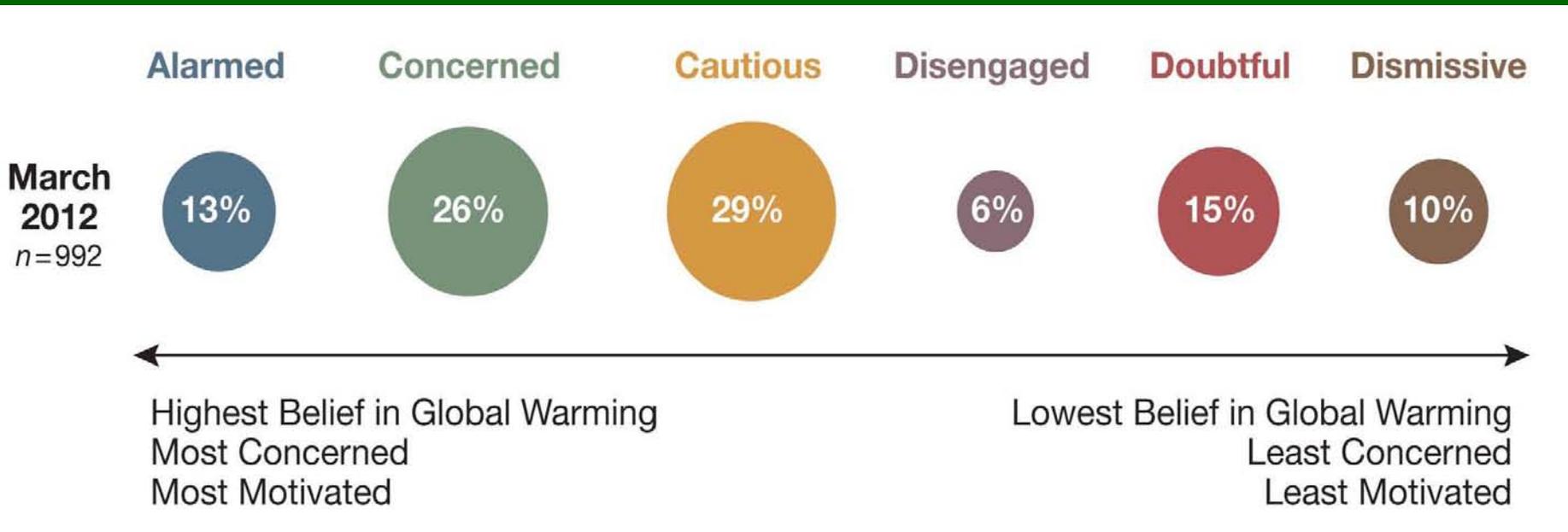


# Climate change communication: what should the conversation be?



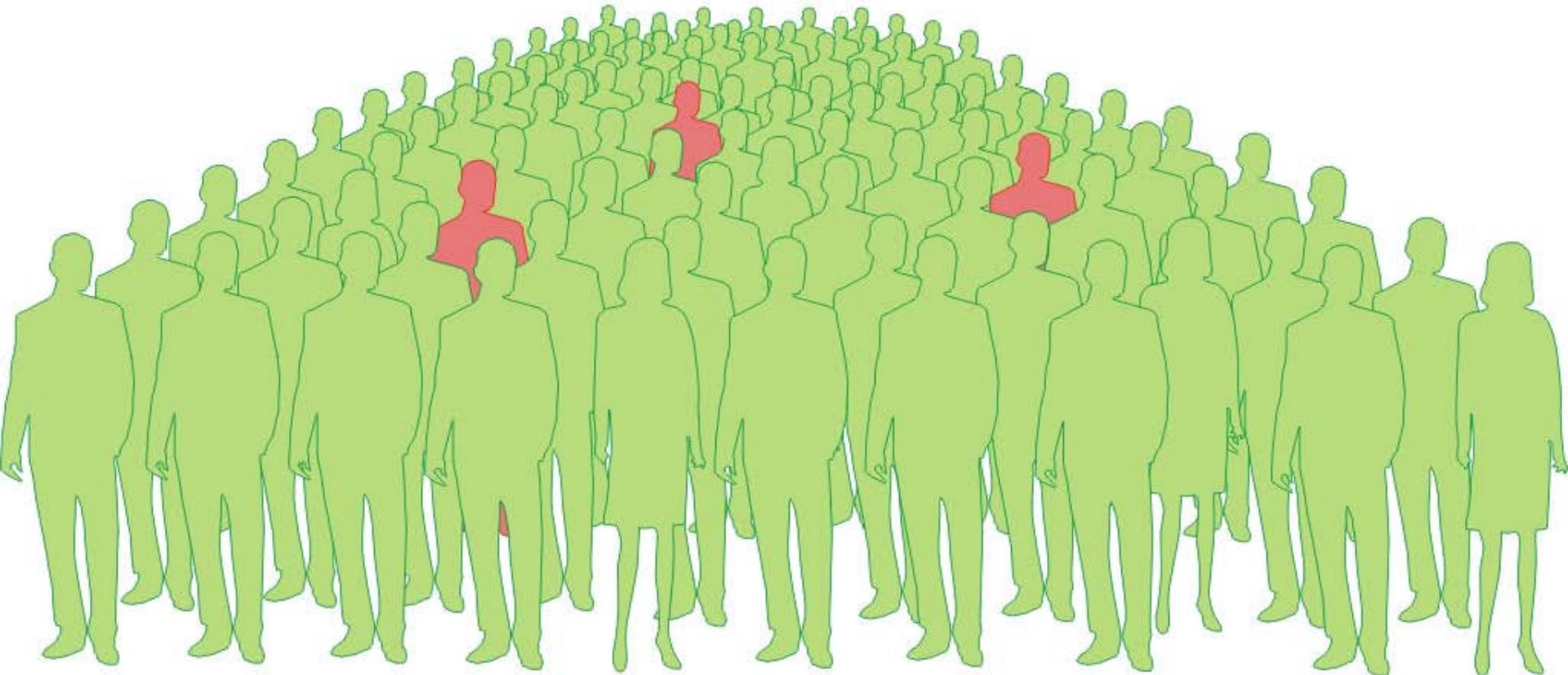
Julie E. Doll & Michael P. Nelson  
September 13, 2012  
LTER ASM

# The Six Americas



# The scientific consensus

97 out of 100 climate experts think humans are changing global temperature



# Who agrees with the scientific consensus?

- US Climate Change Science Program (created by George W Bush Admin)
- US National Academy of Sciences and national academies of 32 other nations (none disagree)
- Every major scientific organization whose members include climate scientists
- More than 97% of climate researchers actively publishing in the field (NAS, 2010)
- The Pentagon, Wal-Mart, American Electric Power, The Pope, The Dalai Lama
- Every major religious denomination w/ a climate change statement except the Southern Baptist Convention

# So what should we do about climate change?



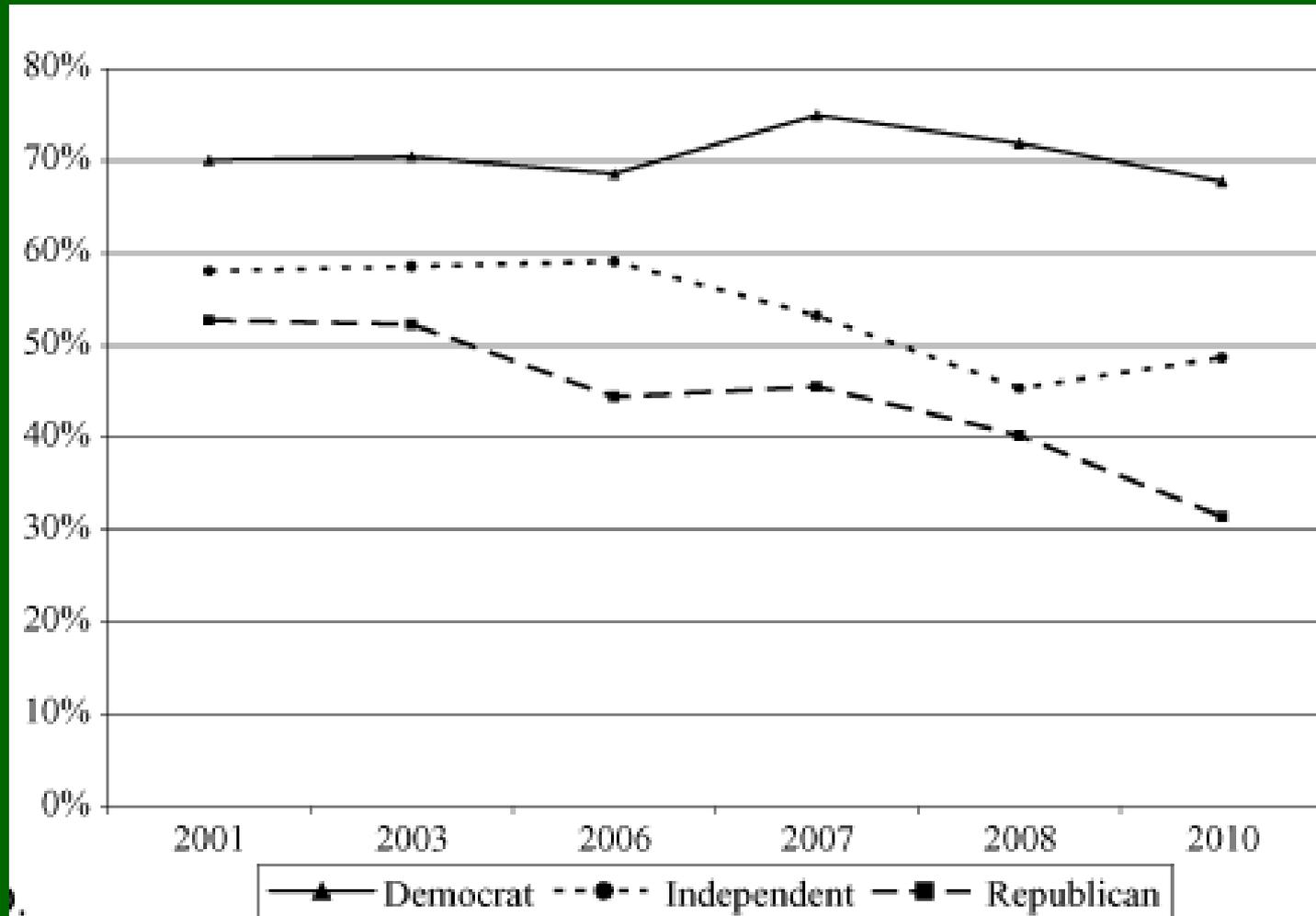
Why do you think this is a contentious question?



*Photo courtesy of Gary Syrba*

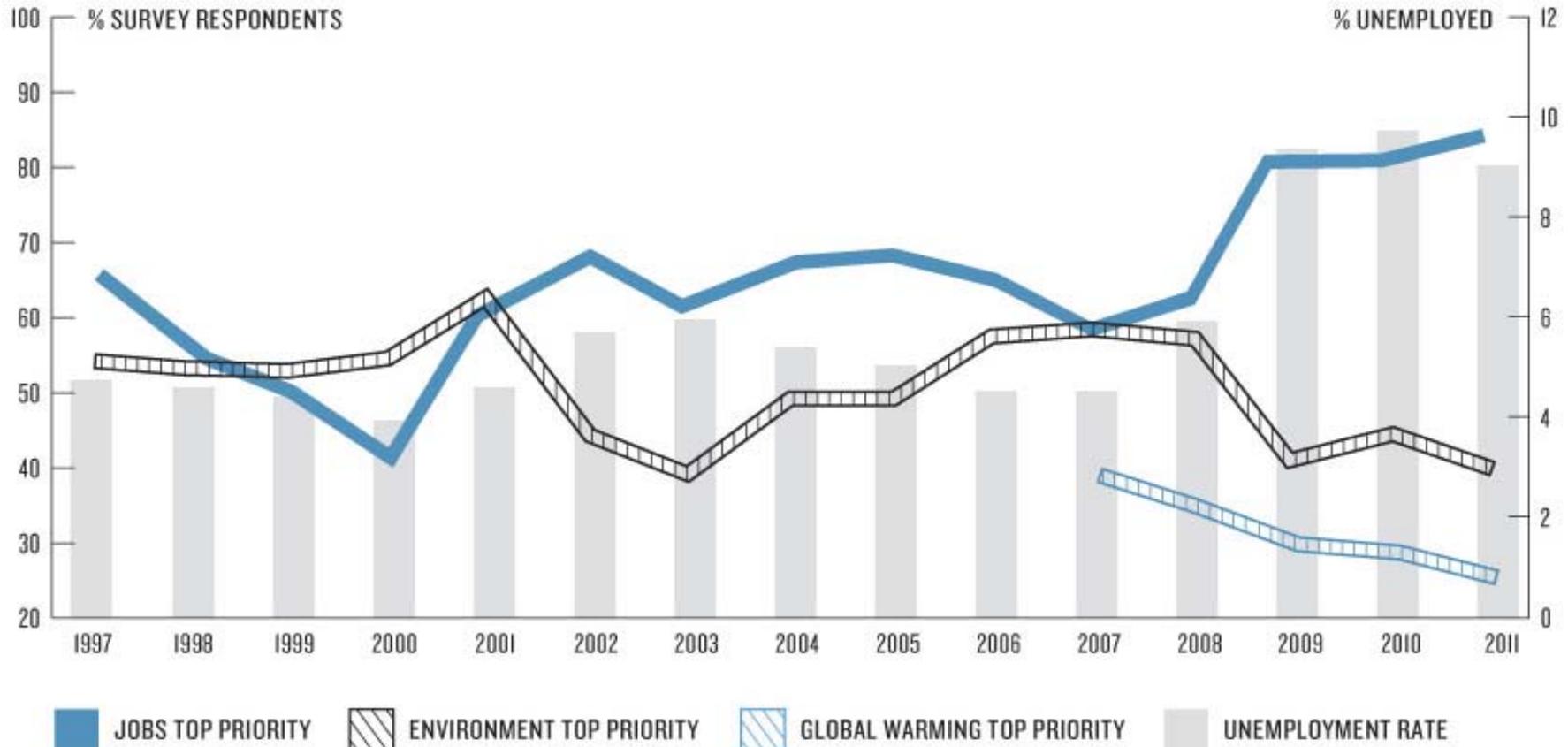
# There's a political divide

Percent who believe changes in Earth's temperature due more to human activities than to natural changes



# When the economy is hurting...

Relationship between the economy & perceived priorities



# “Uncertainty” language a barrier

- Scientists: “how well something is known”
- Public: “not knowing”
- Less than complete certainty  $\neq$  not knowing anything



# Climate change is overwhelming

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June 6, 2012

## Earth Is Headed for Disaster, Interdisciplinary Team of Scientists Concludes

*By Paul Basken*

An interdisciplinary group of 22 scientists, combining paleontological evidence with ecological modeling, has concluded that the earth appears headed toward catastrophic and irreversible environmental changes.

# *Global Warming*

When his ship first came to Australia,  
Cook wrote, the natives  
Continued fishing, without looking up.  
Unable, it seems, to fear what was too  
large to be comprehended.

Jane Hirshfield, *After* (2006)

# Doing something involves our values

Addressing climate change means assessing the nature of acceptable risks, impacts, costs and tradeoffs.

Any policy consideration is going to impose change on some group. These changes would result in costs and/or benefits for different groups.

So sometimes people debate the science rather than openly debate the values.

# The Practical Syllogism

P1. Descriptive, empirical      This is the way the world *is*.

P2. Normative, ethical      This is what we value,  
this is what we believe is right,  
this is how the world *ought to be*.

---

Conclusion      This is what we *ought to do*.