

# **Coronavirus Outbreak and Climate Change: Findings from a Public Opinion Survey in the United States**

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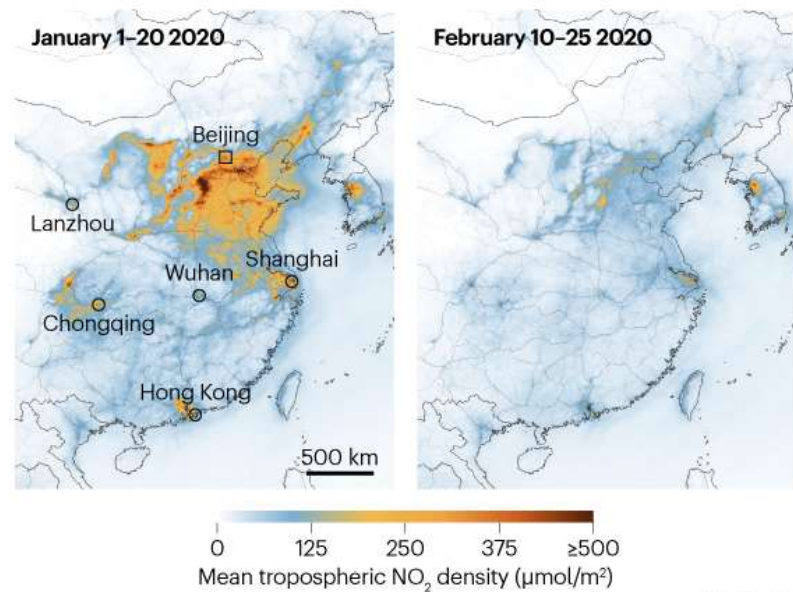
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# Background



## CLEANER AIR

Measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak seem to have reduced nitrogen dioxide pollution across China.



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# Why public views matter?

- Public opinion can, sometimes, translate into policy by signaling to policy makers where voters stand on different issues.
- Public opinion also serves as “a window” to cultural climate.

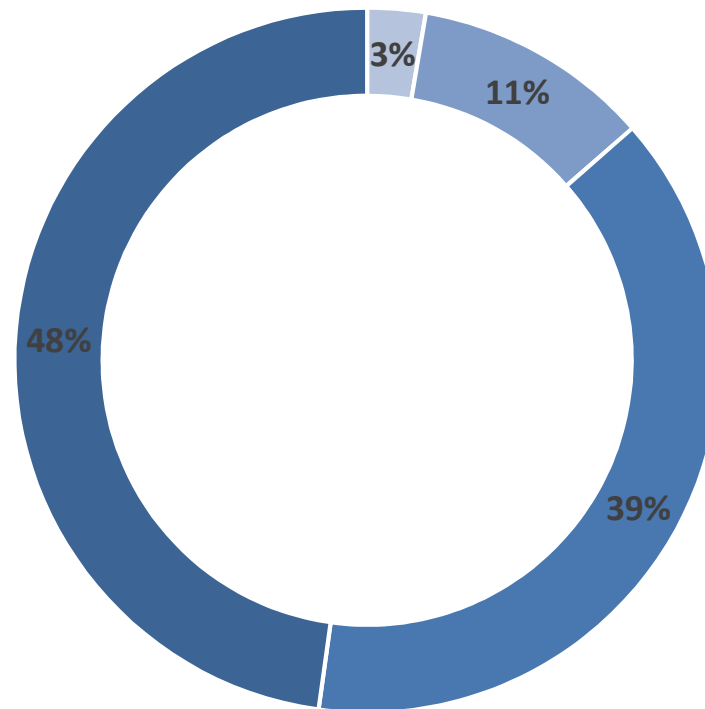
# Research questions

1. What are Americans' views toward the seriousness of the covid-19/coronavirus outbreak?
2. How do views toward the seriousness of the covid-19/coronavirus outbreak associate with attitudes towards climate change?

# Data & methods

- Teachers College's Public Mind Project
- Online survey conducted in April 2020 (n=1,550) through Qualtrics Panels
- National representative sample of American adults age 18 and older, with over sampling of racial/ethnic minorities
- Combination of closed- and open-ended questions

# How closely have you been following news about the outbreak of the coronavirus?

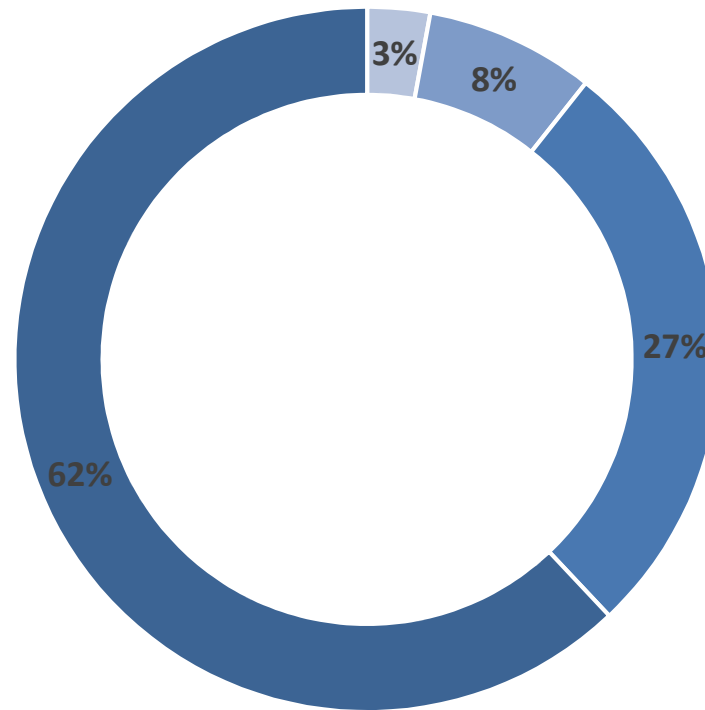


**March 10-16, 2020:**

Very closely 51  
Fairly closely 38  
Not too closely 9  
Not at all closely 2

■ Not at all closely   ■ Not too closely   ■ Fairly closely   ■ Very closely

# Would you say the coronavirus outbreak is:

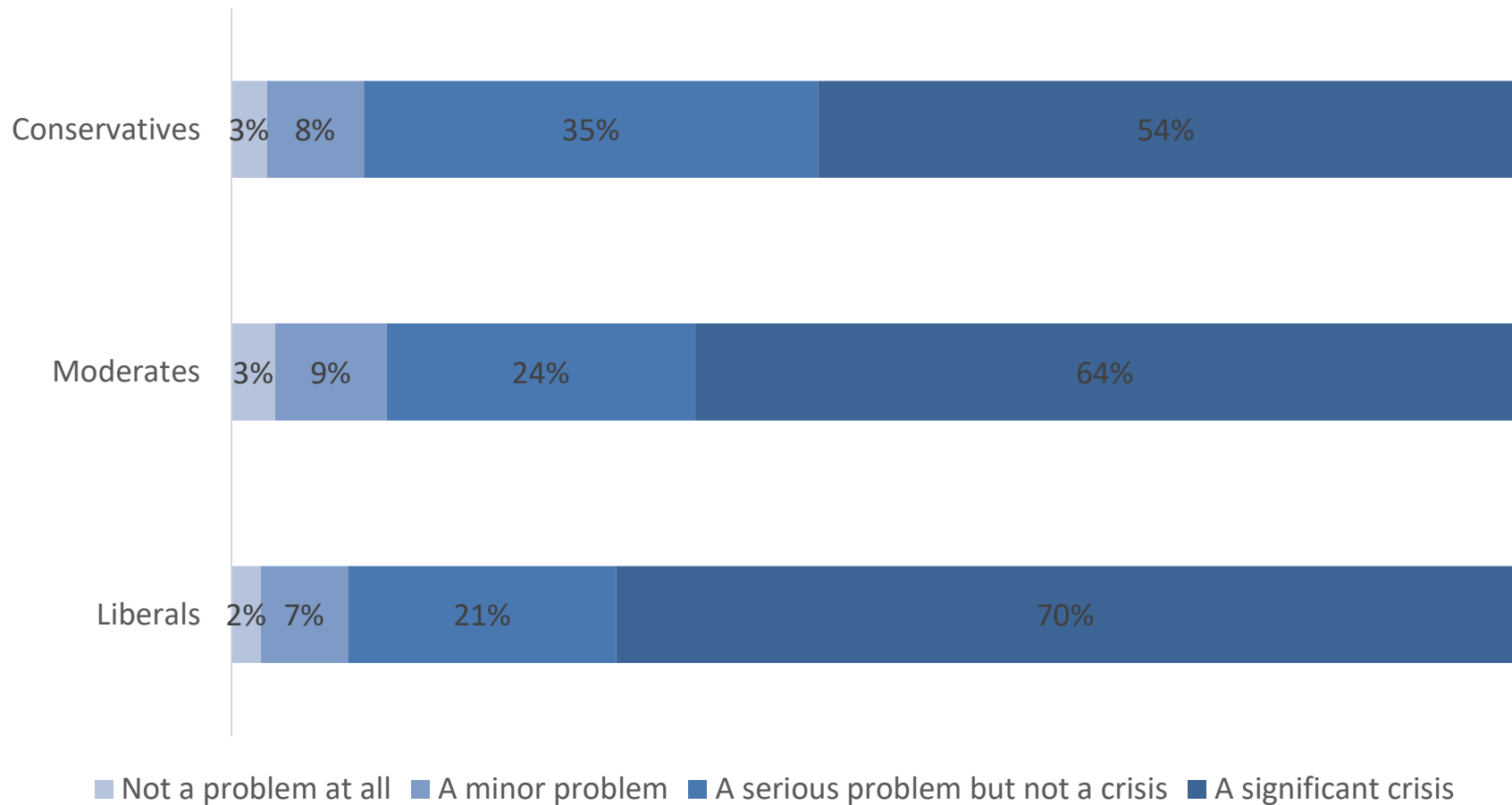


■ Not a problem at all ■ A minor problem ■ A serious problem but not a crisis ■ A significant crisis

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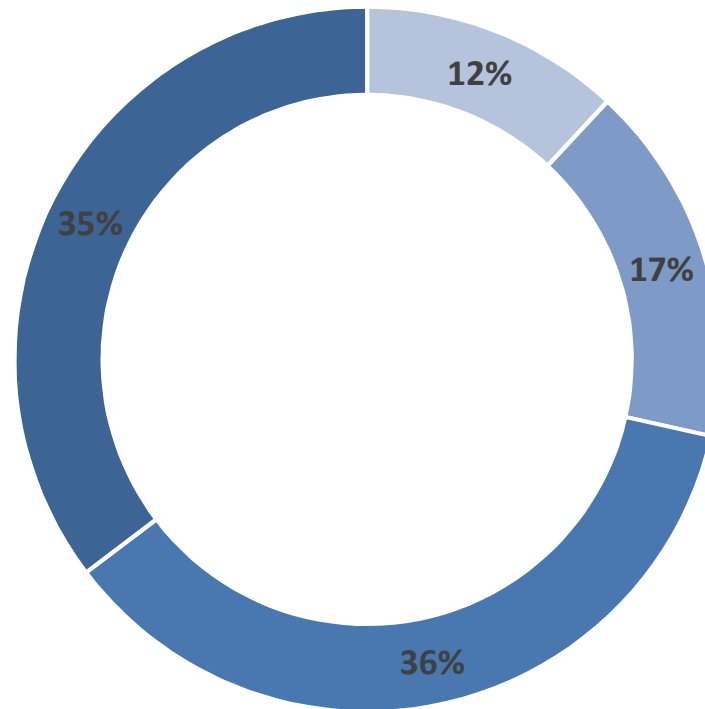
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# Would you say the coronavirus outbreak is, by political ideology





# How concerned are you about global climate change?

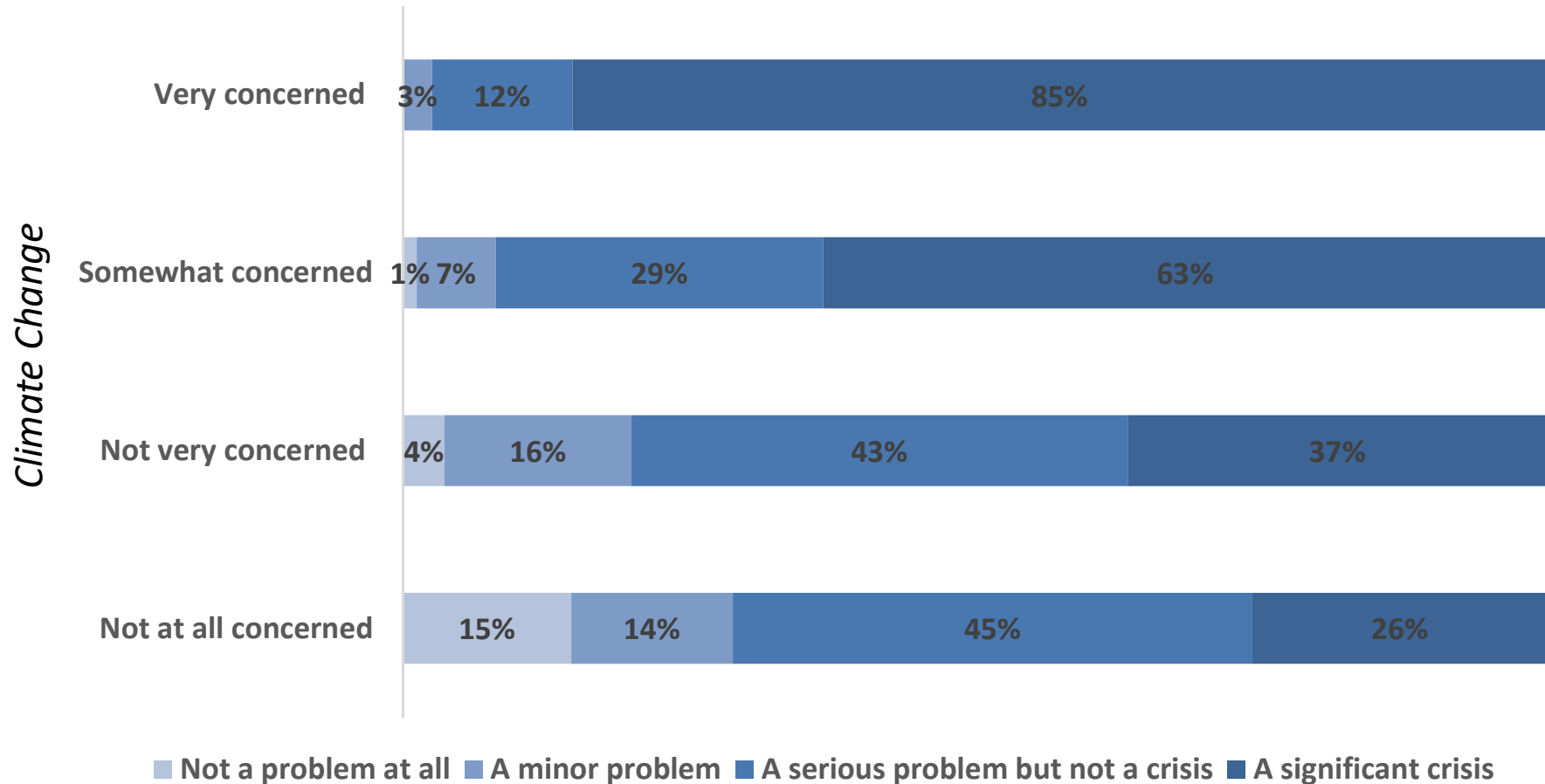


■ Not at all concerned   ■ Not very concerned   ■ Somewhat concerned   ■ Very concerned

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# Concerns about global climate change AND views towards the coronavirus outbreak



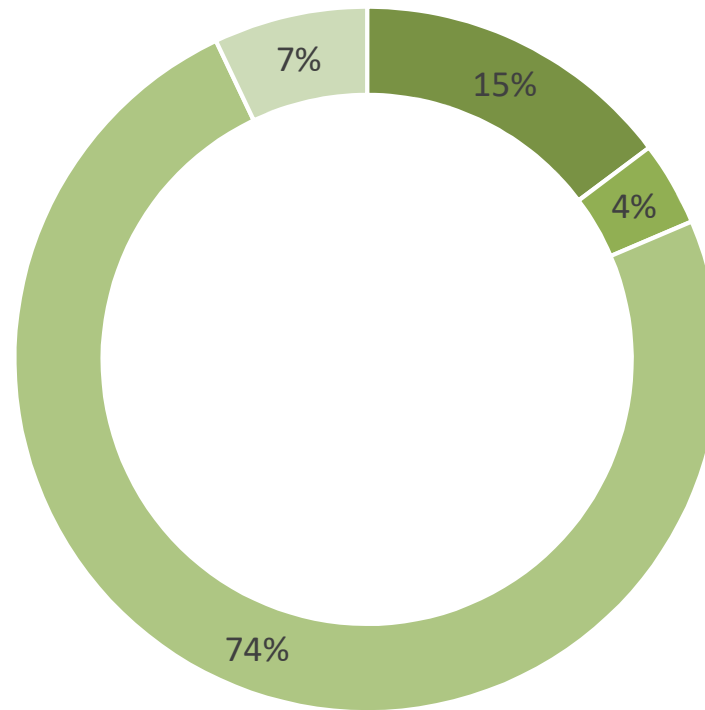
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# Concerns about global climate change AND views towards the coronavirus outbreak

- Pearson's correlation: .441
- Correlation is slightly stronger among liberals ( $r=.464$ ), compared to moderates ( $r=.433$ ) and conservatives ( $r=.433$ ).
- Correlation is stronger among younger adults 18-24 ( $r=.677$ ), compared to other age groups (.367-.488)

Over the past month, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, have you changed your opinion about global climate change?

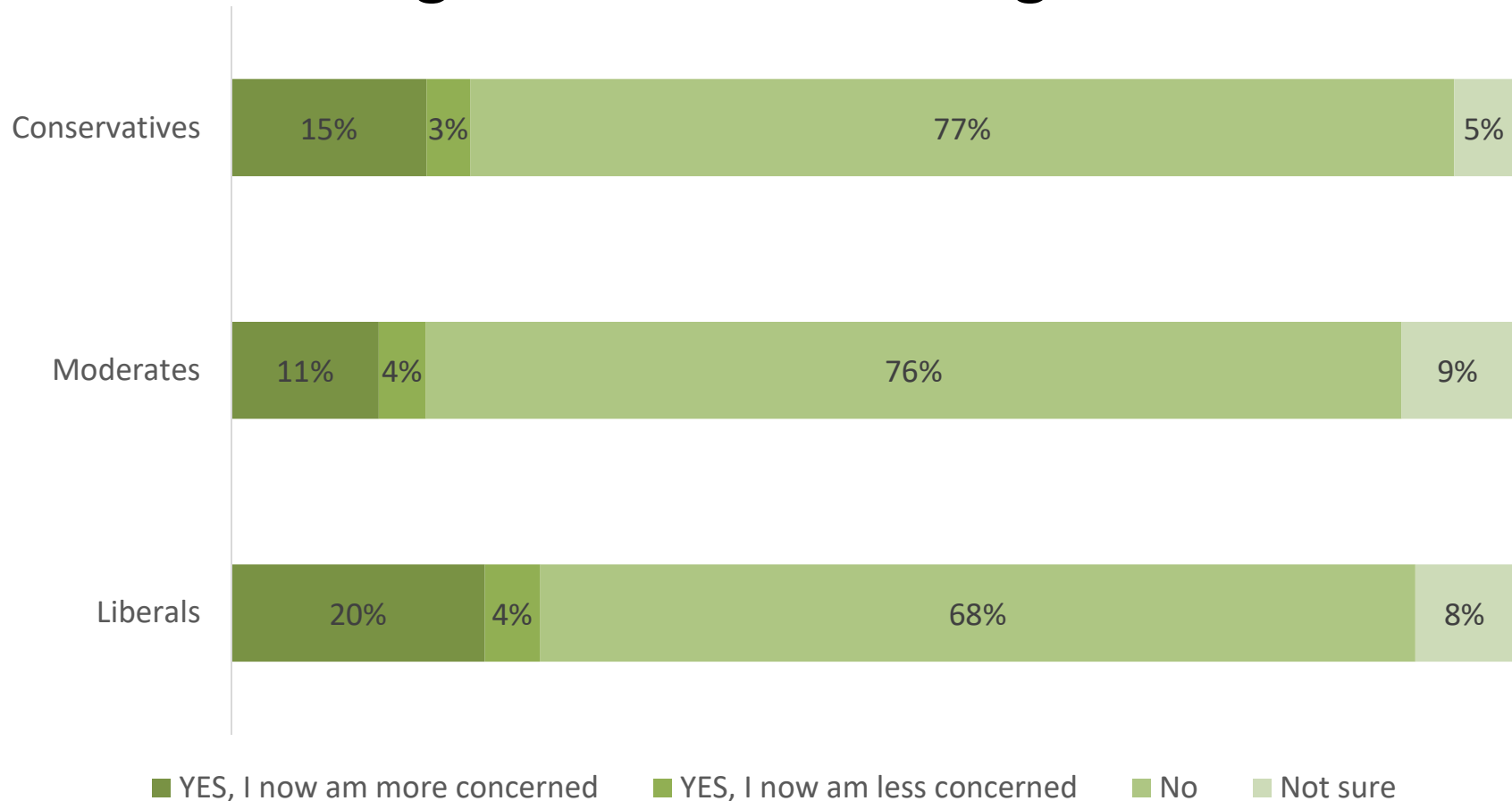


■ YES, I now am more concerned   ■ YES, I now am less concerned   ■ No   ■ Not sure

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# Over the past month, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, have you changed your opinion about global climate change?



# Please explain why your opinion changed

Four themes:

- Visible improvements due to lockdown underline human impact on climate change
- Covid-19 and climate change are connected
- Reflection on global challenges
- Belief that climate change is serious and worsening and needs to be addressed

## *Visible improvements due to lockdown*

- “Air cleared up and animals are moving back to the coasts.”
- “As people are not around as much anymore we are seeing animals return to their natural habitat. Examples the waters in Venice are clear and animals are seen.”
- “I see photos of animals coming out of the wild because there is no people out in the national parks .so they will go back to the wild once people are gone.”
- “It is amazing that in the Himalayas they can see Mt Everest. pollution has subsided due to less driving.”

# *Covid-19 and climate change are connected*

- “Because the virus life is related with the environment. So Global climate is very important for this.”
- “I kind of feel like Mother Nature is punishing us with the Coronavirus for not taking care of her. And I feel like everyone should be doing more to make sure climate control is at the top of their list of things to protect.”
- “The pandemic is a direct result of environmental factors. Just like the stock market experiences market corrections, the global climate and environmental changes are in the process of self-correcting via the pandemic.”
- “We are suffering from this COVID outbreak and somewhere we are responsible about this. There is lack of awareness and responsibility towards the nature in us.”



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# Prompts for small group discussion

- In your opinion, what is the link between the coronavirus outbreak and sustainability/climate change?
  - Think about the implications in education
- If you had the opportunity to interview a teacher about her/his work after the coronavirus outbreak, what would you ask?
- What research questions would you like to explore in the context of the coronavirus outbreak and sustainability/climate change?