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George Mason University

Center for Climate Change Communication

***Global Warming's Six Americas:
An Audience Segmentation Analysis***

**Biennial Conference on Transportation & Energy:
*Rethinking Climate & Energy Strategies for
Transportation***

August 30, 2011

Connie Roser-Renouf, PhD

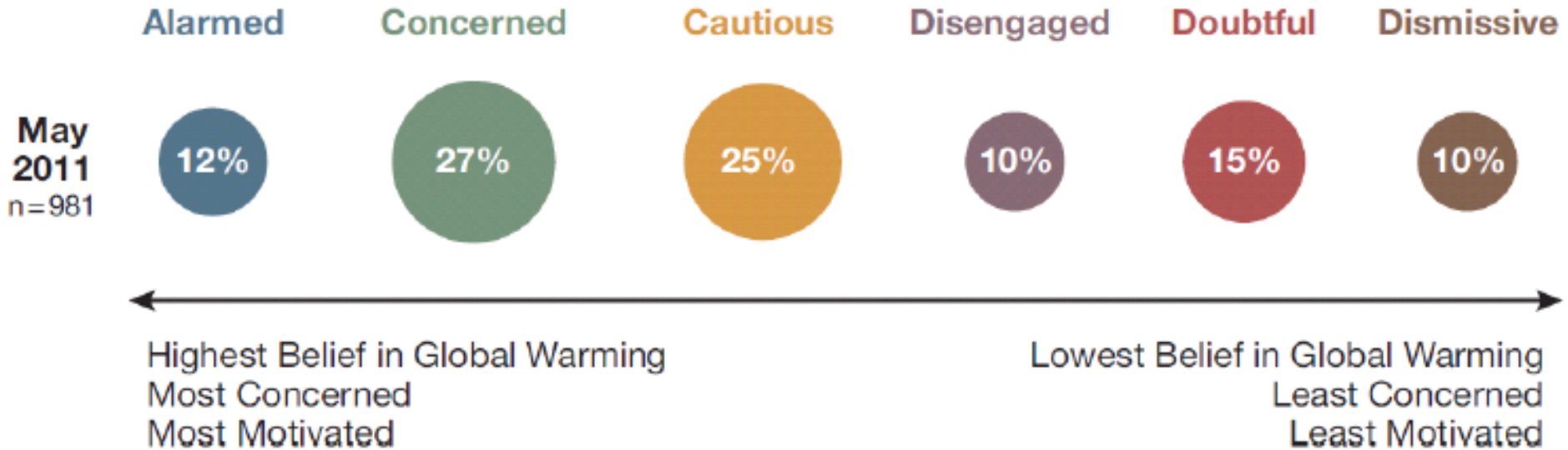
Americans differ in their beliefs & concern about global warming.



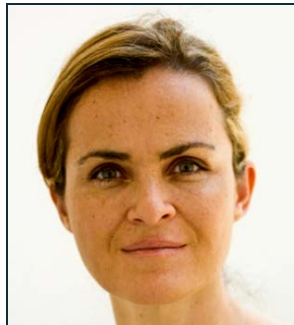
- They fall into six distinct groups.
- Each group has a unique set of beliefs, values, opinions and actions.
- Understanding the differences is vital to effective engagement.
- When we know what our audiences think & how they feel, we can speak to their concerns more directly.



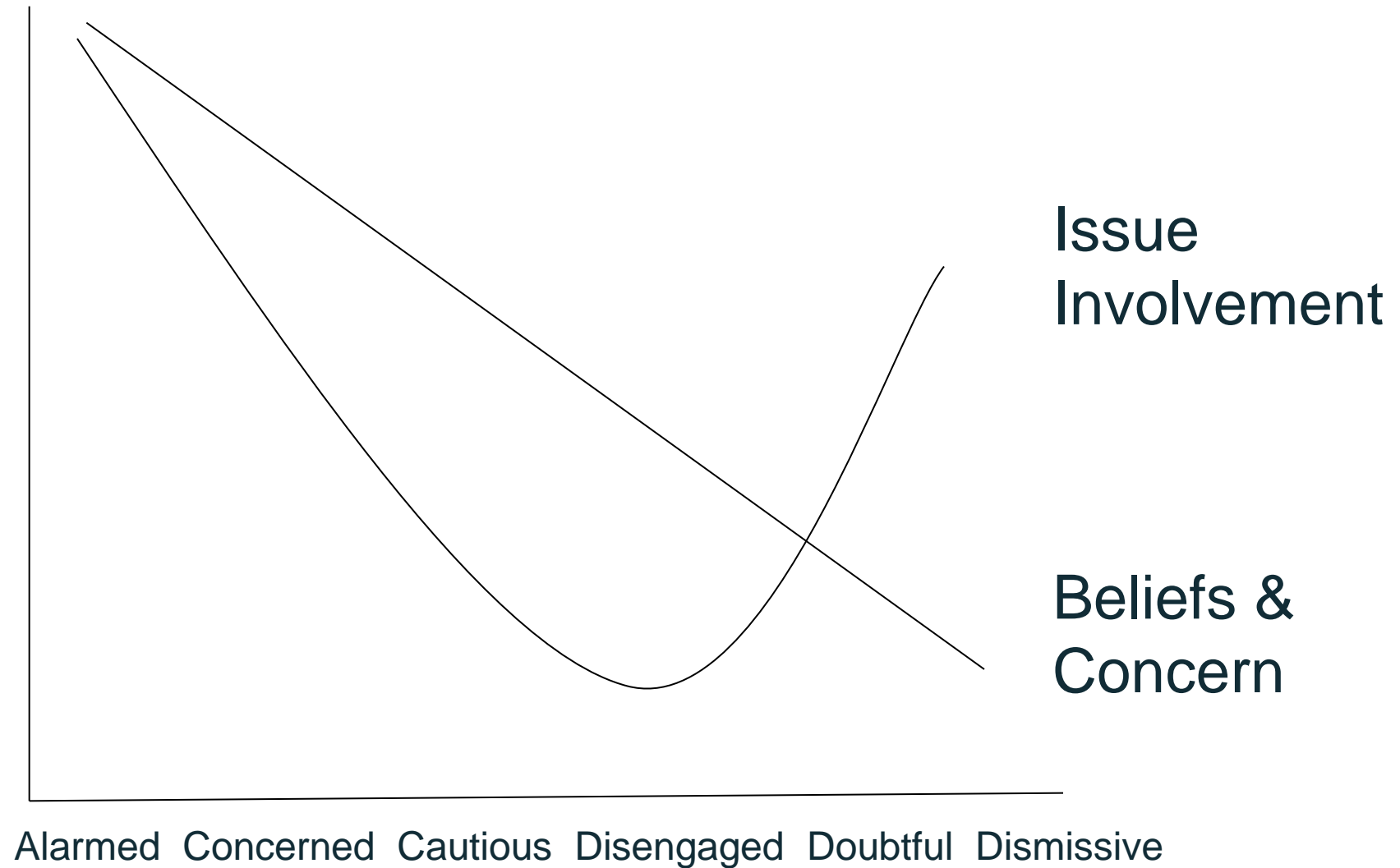
Global Warming's "Six Americas"



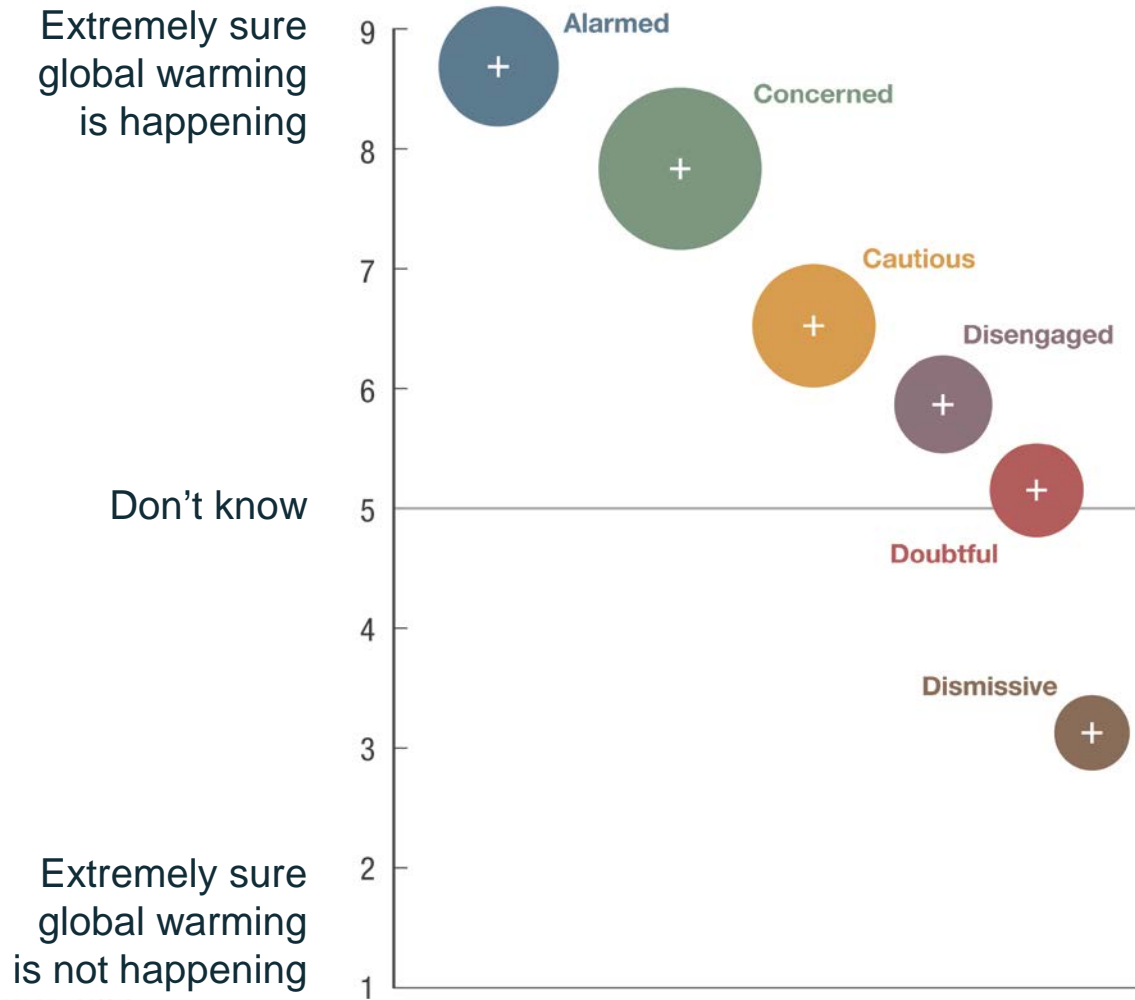
The size of the bubbles shows the proportion of Americans that belonged to each group in May 2011.



Primary Differences between the Six Groups



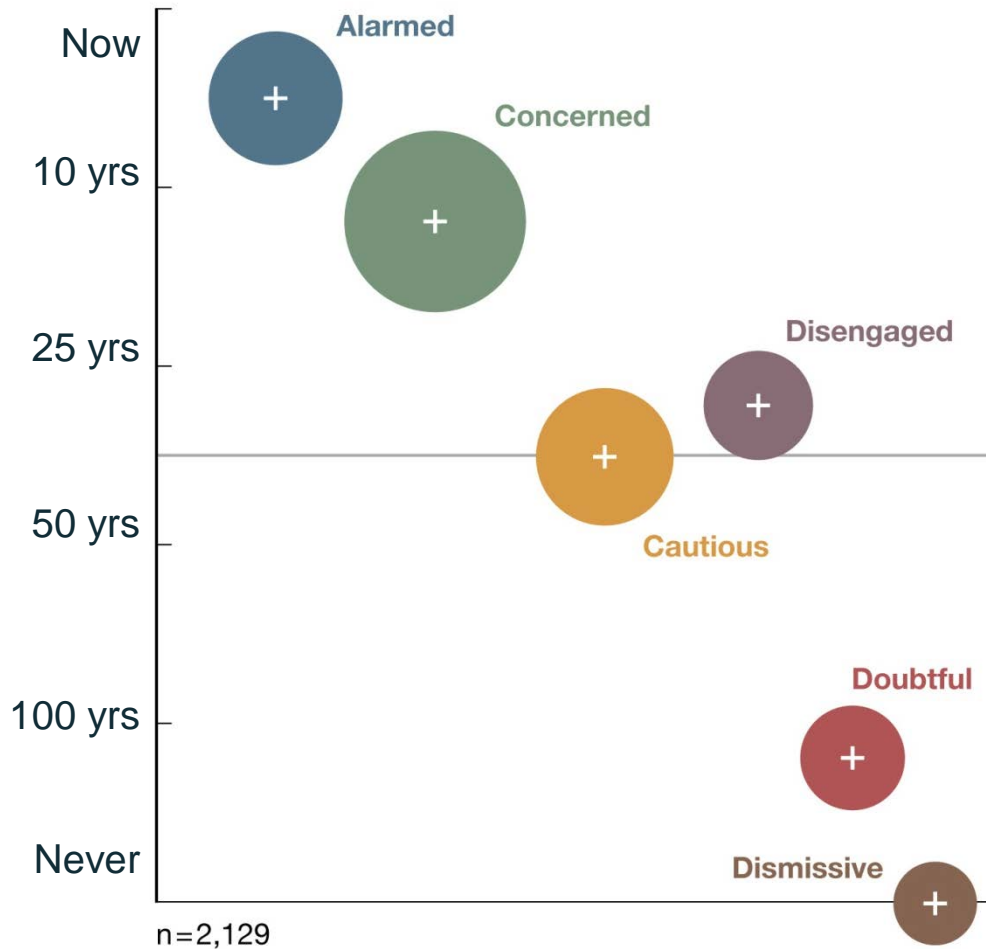
Do you think that global warming is happening? How sure are you?



Yale & George Mason,
2008; n=2,129



When do you think global warming will start to harm people in the United States?

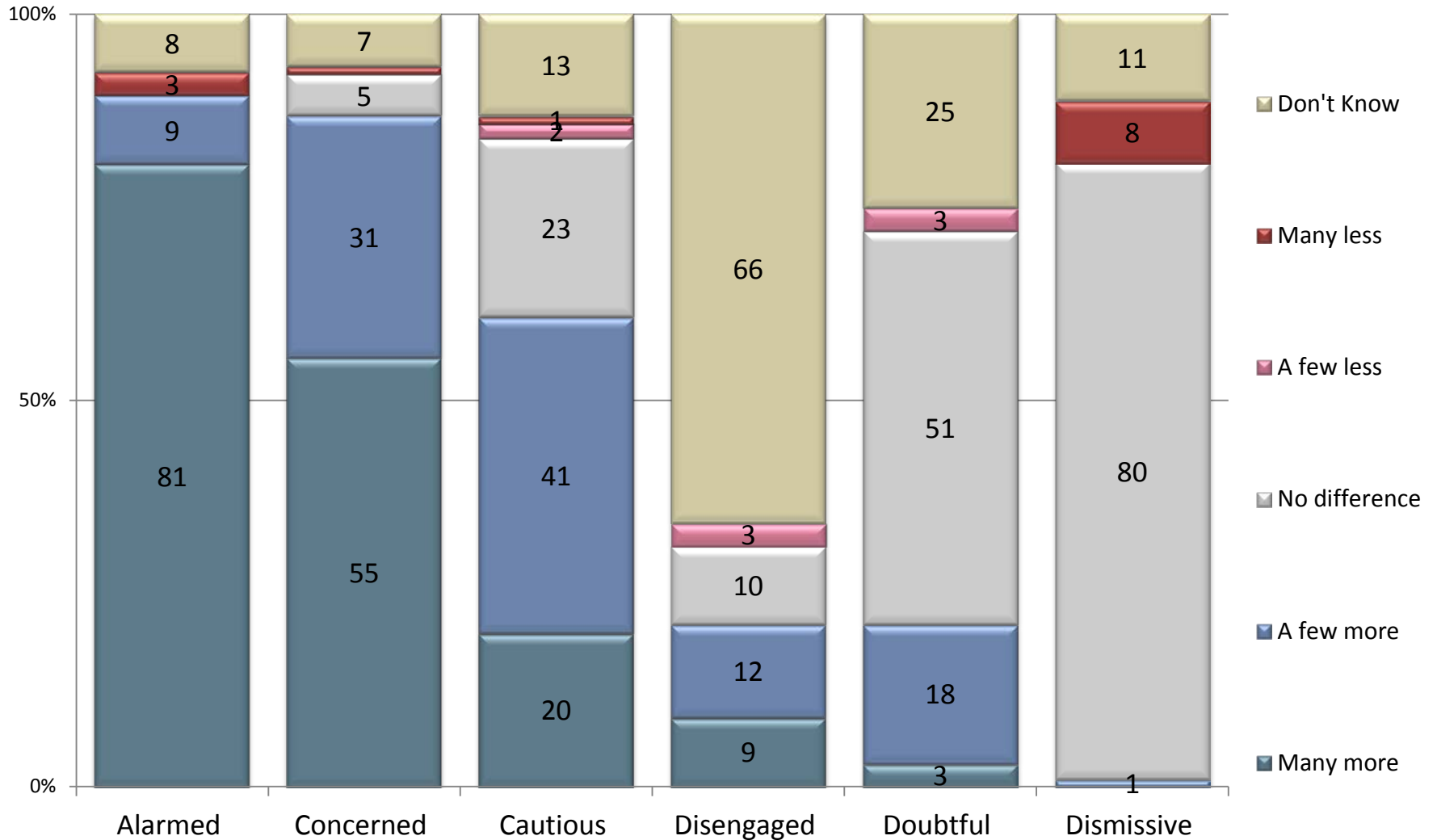


Yale & George Mason,
2008; n=2,129



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Deaths and Injuries Expected from Floods over Next 20 Years in US

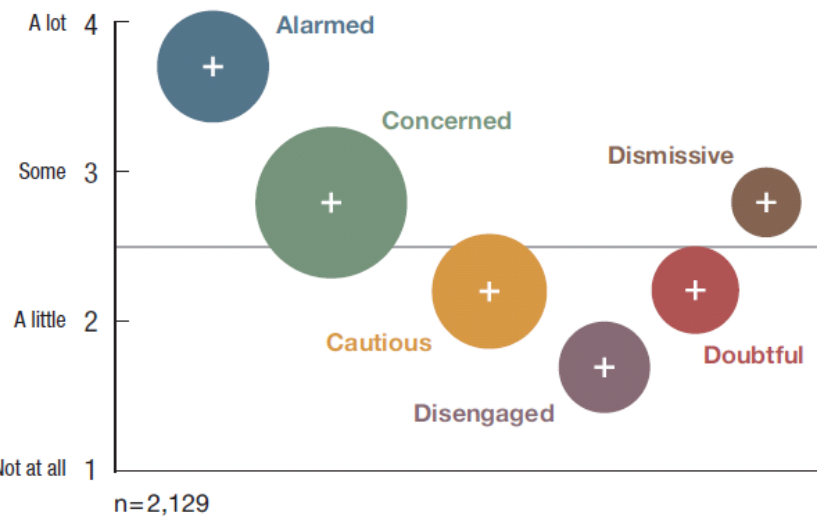


Yale/George Mason, May 2011; n=1,010

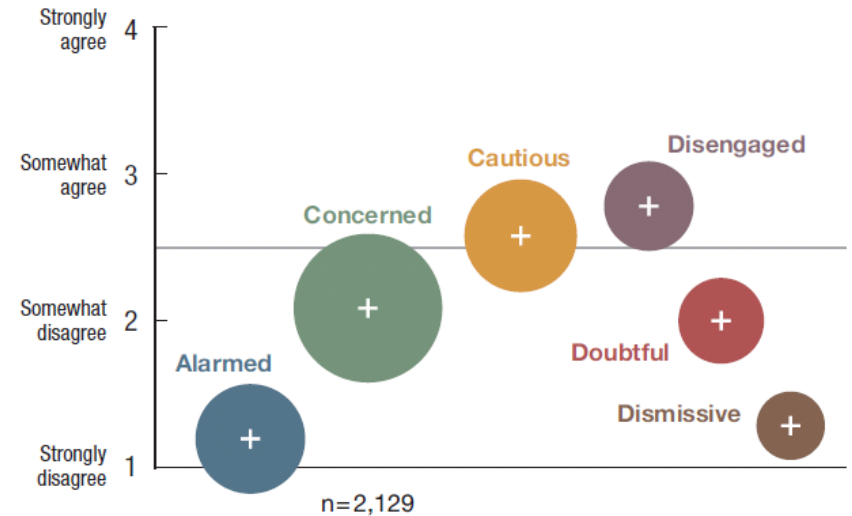


Issue Involvement

How much had you thought about global warming before today?



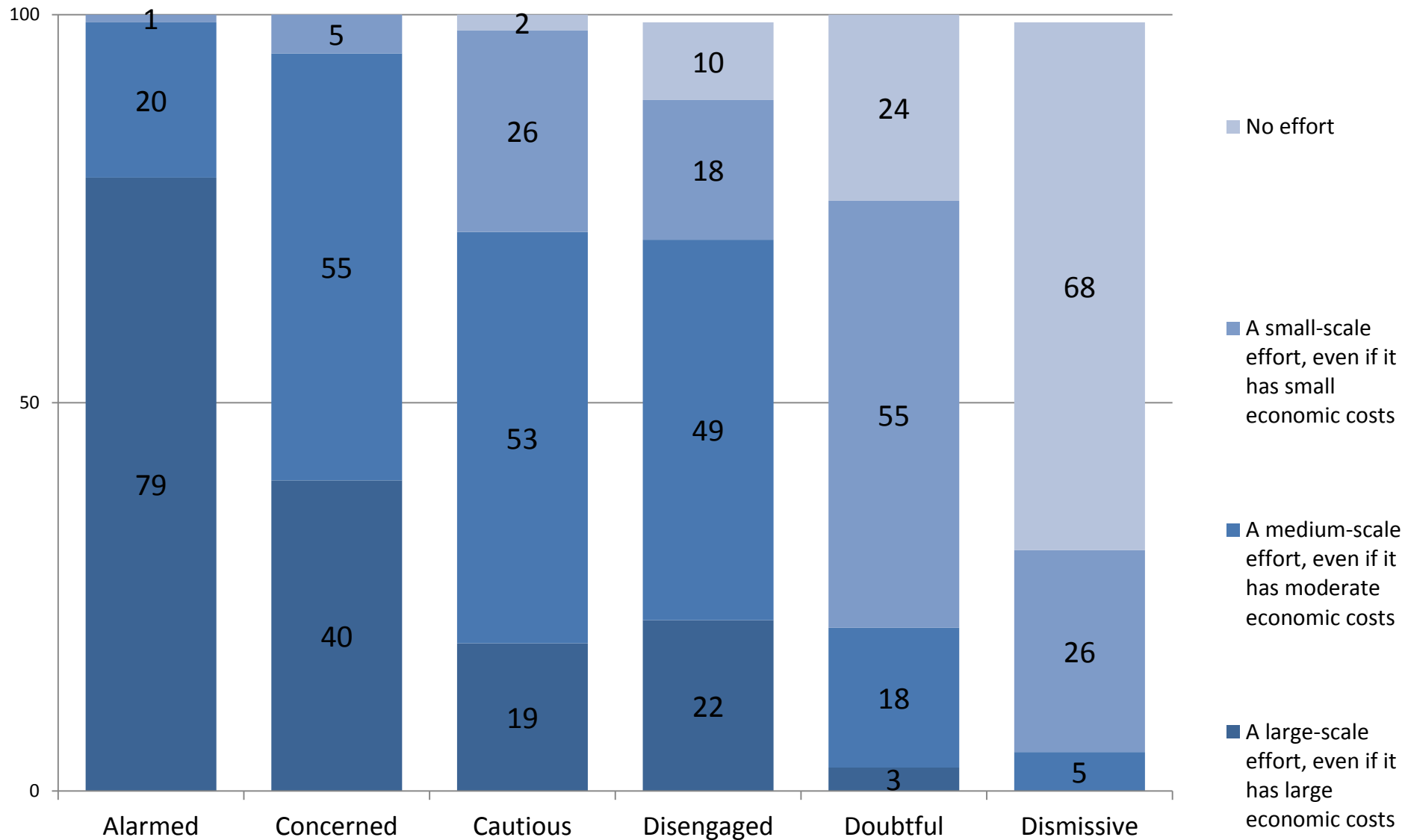
“I could easily change my mind about global warming”



Yale & George Mason, 2008; n=2,129



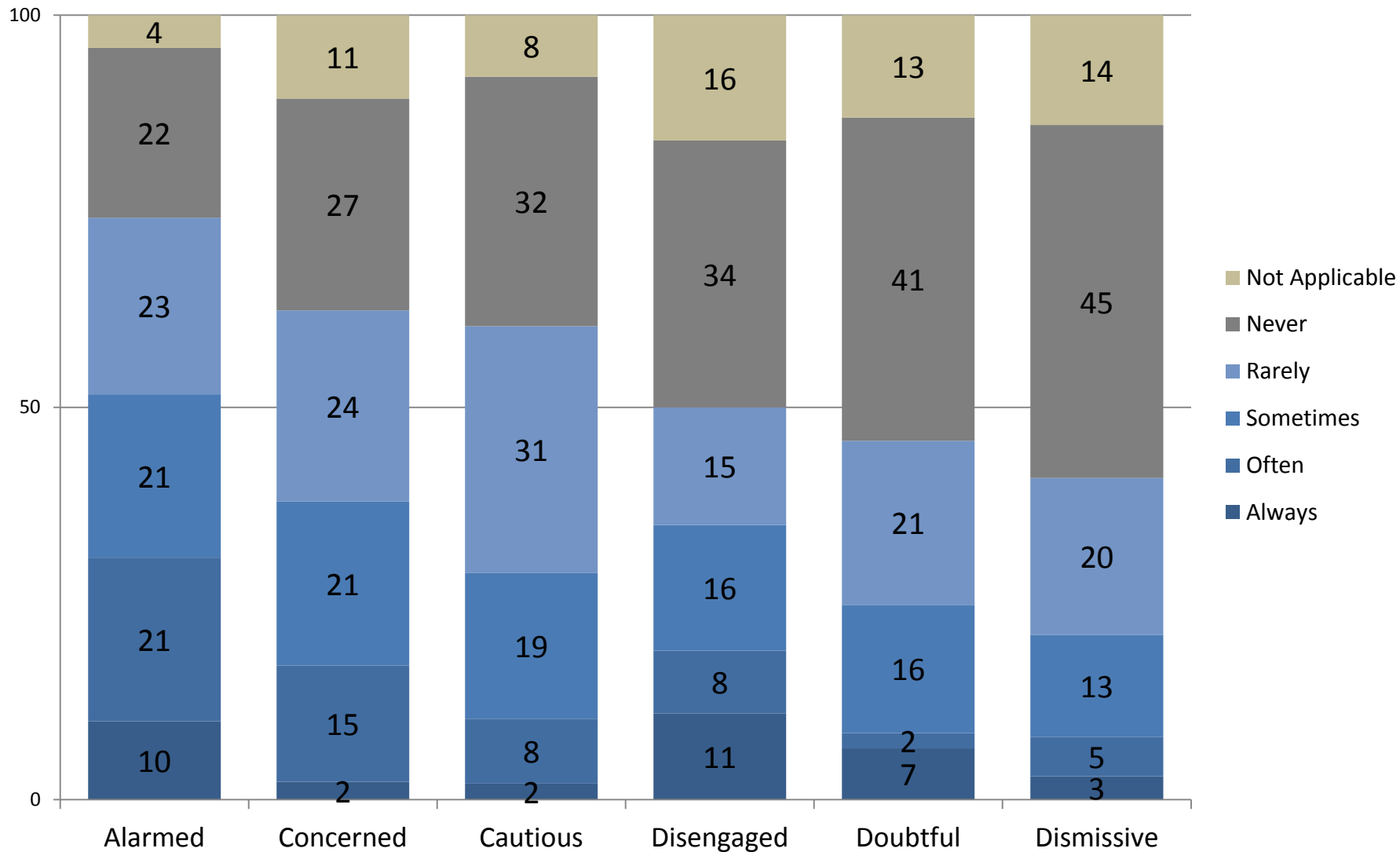
How big of an effort should the US make to reduce global warming?



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Yale & George Mason, 2008; n=2,129

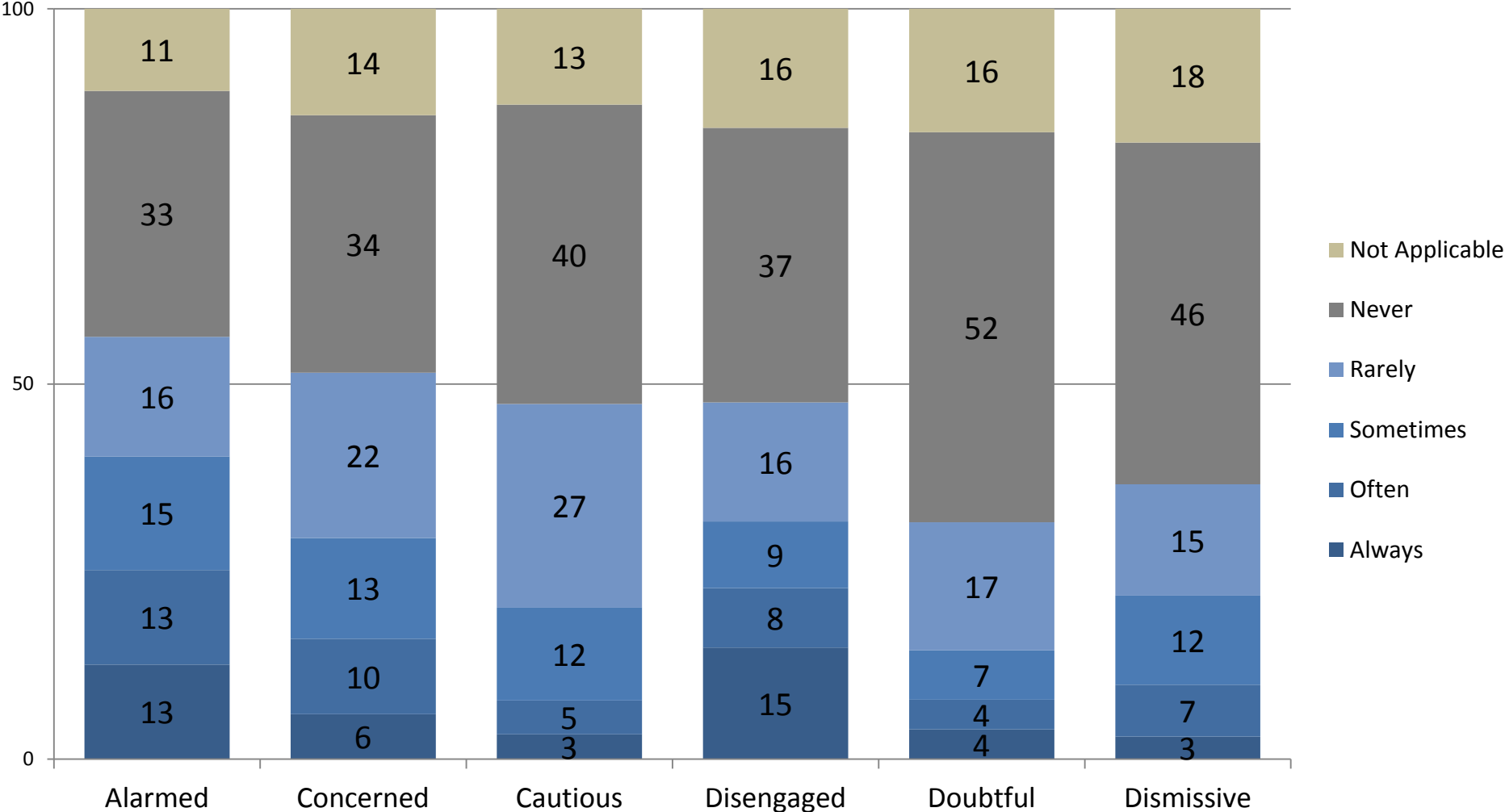
How often walks or bikes instead of driving



Yale & George Mason, 2011; n=981



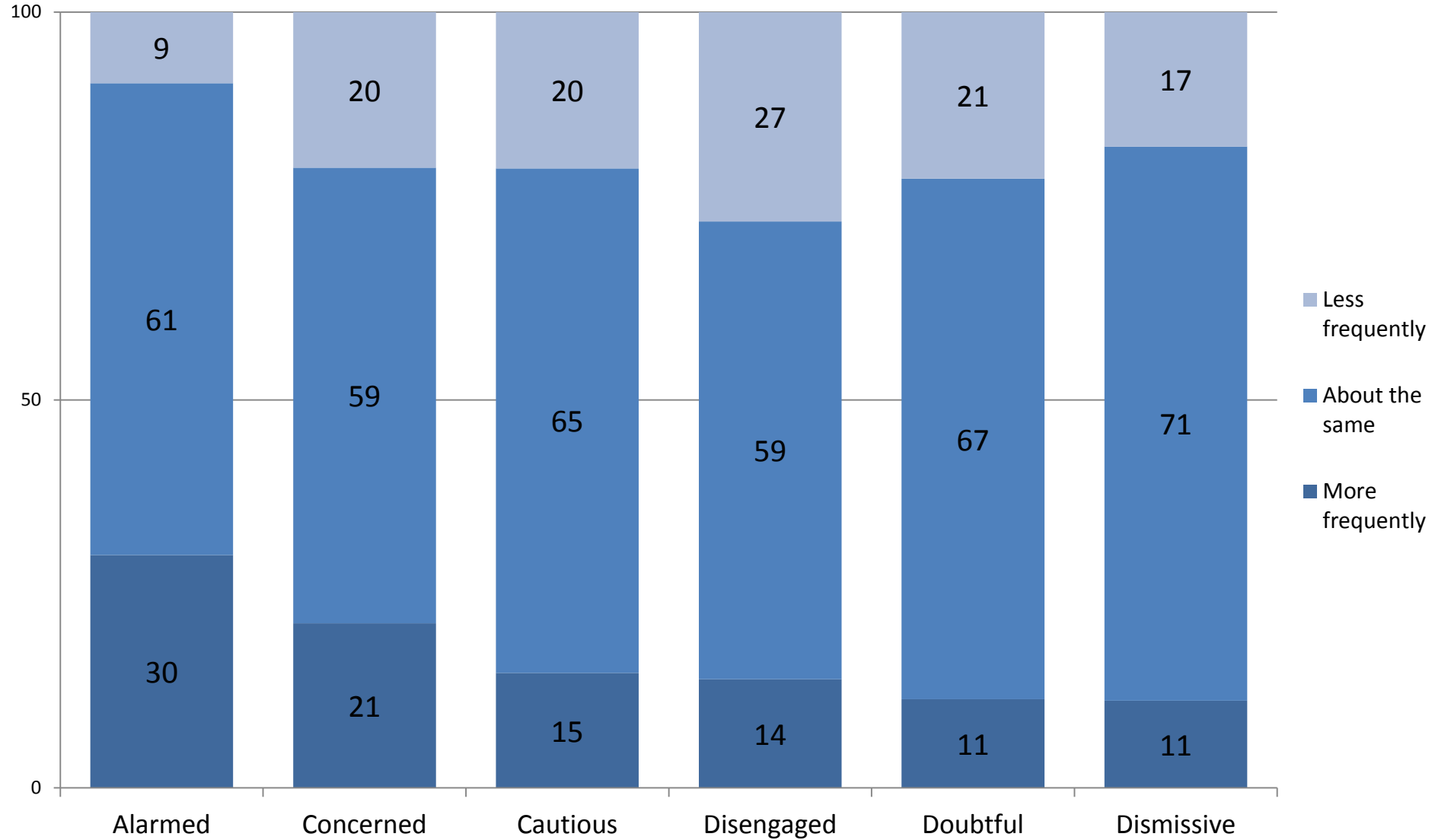
How often uses public transportation or car pools



Yale & George Mason, 2011; n=981



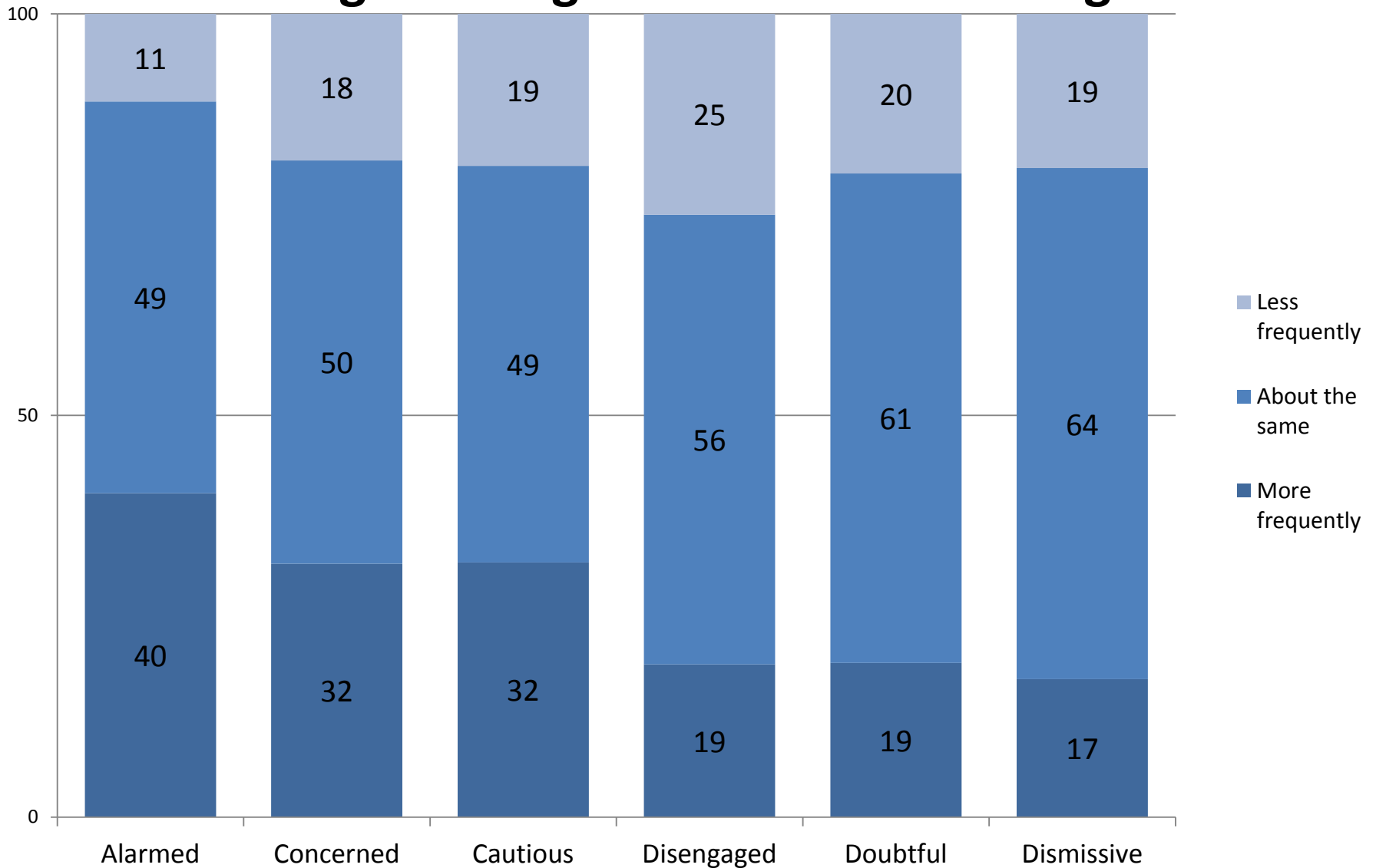
Public Transportation & Car Pool Intentions for Coming Year



Yale & George Mason, 2011; n=981



Walking & Biking Intentions for Coming Year



Yale & George Mason, 2011; n=981



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Challenges to Climate Change Communication

1. Climate change is politically polarized.
2. Informational needs & willingness to process information vary.
3. Many in the audience:
 - Don't understand the issue;
 - Lack interest in it;
 - Are suspicious of news reports on the topic;
 - Have a low sense of efficacy for solving it.



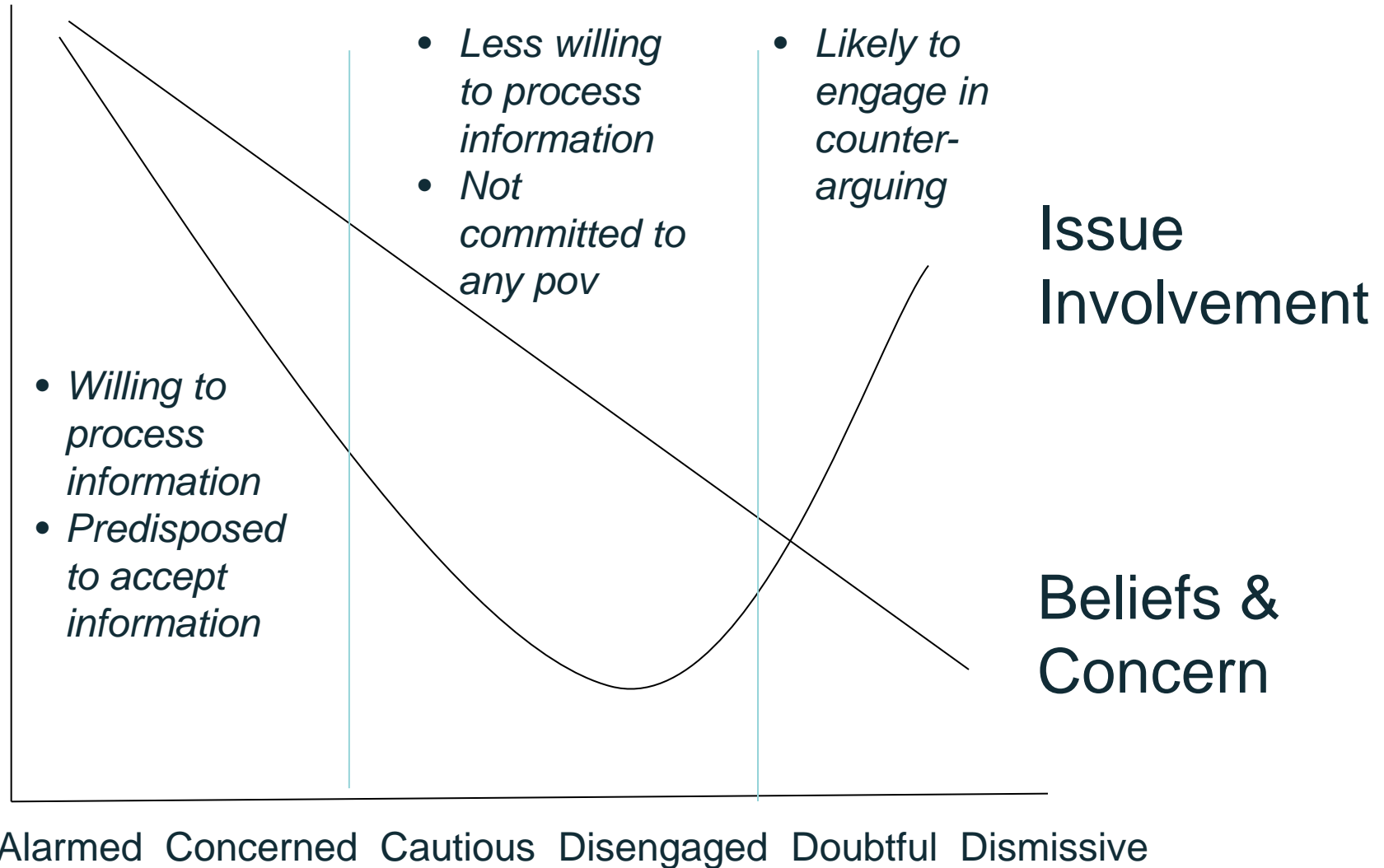
A Rational Information-Processing Model:

Knowledge → Attitudes → Behavior

- The K->A->B model of communication only works for some audiences.
- Audiences that are emotionally involved with the issue & predisposed to accept your message may follow the KAB model, but most others won't.
- Audiences that don't care much about the issue aren't willing to invest much effort in processing information.
- Vivid, emotional, human content is more likely to be processed & retained than facts, figures & logical arguments.



Primary Differences between the Six Groups

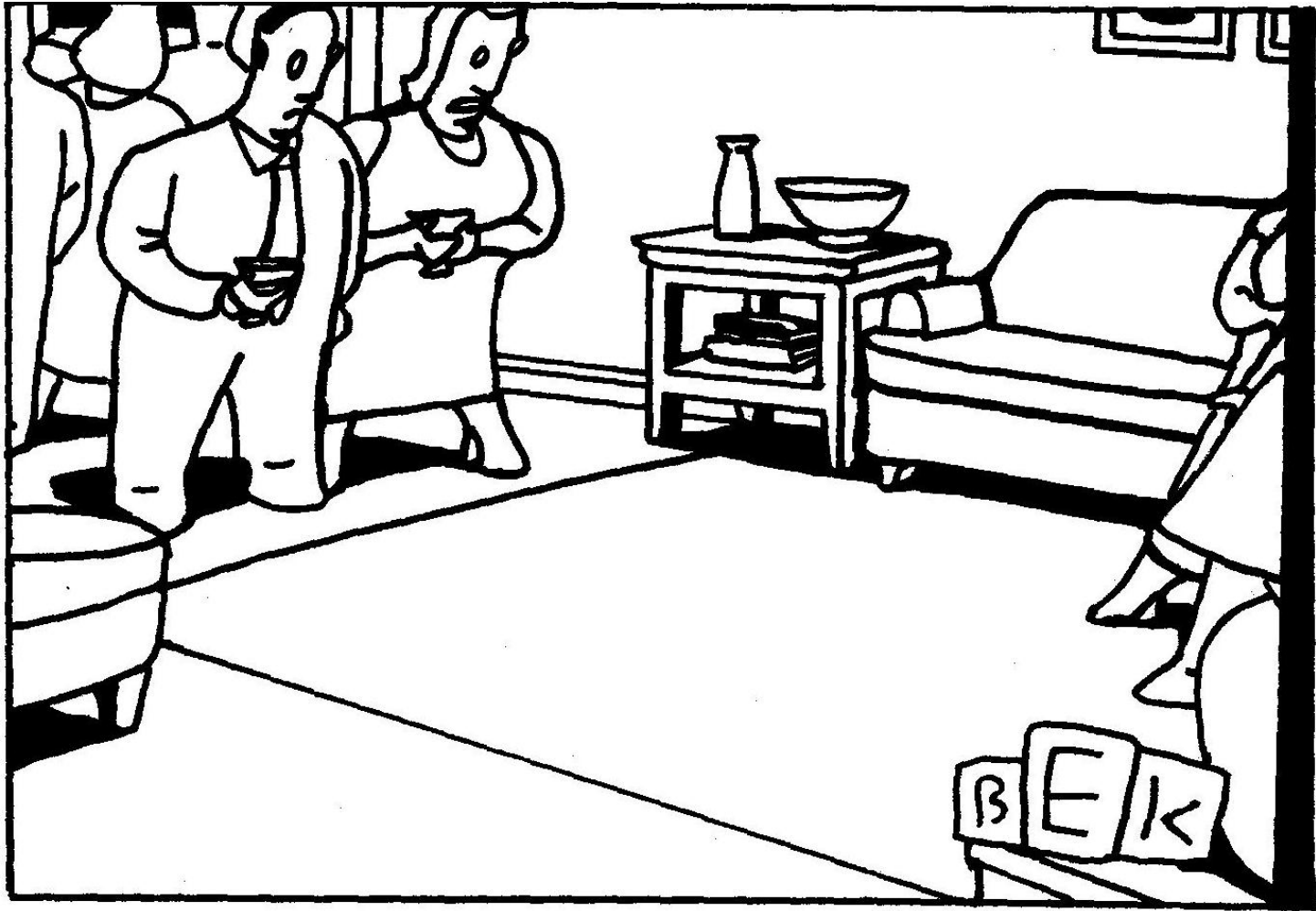


For Low Involvement Audiences...

- Sources are extremely important;
- Emotional, vivid content is more effective;
- Narratives with characters they can identify with can help them engage with the issue;
- Broadcast media will reach them; print is less effective;
- They're looking for cognitive short-cuts to help them make up their minds without putting much effort into learning or understanding.



Another Strategy: Build New Social Norms



“Oh God, here they come—act green.”

Build New Social Norms

Shape messages to build sustainable behavior norms

- Emphasize prevalence: *many people are doing the right thing*
- Show approval: *trusted sources believe it's the right thing for you to do*
- Messages that say “many people do the wrong thing” actually increase the behavior you’re seeking to extinguish

Help People Understand Their Influence on Others

- Healthy behaviors are contagious
- The typical person’s actions influence the actions of as many as 1,000 others (James Fowler, *NYT*, 9/13/2009)





Alarmed Alice

- High certainty, belief in human causation & high perceived threat
- Uncertain about the effectiveness of action, both collective & own
- An opinion leader
- High public affairs media use

- *Information on the effectiveness of action will give her hope*
- Correct her misconceptions
- Likely to read information, process it carefully & accept it
- She will share what she's learned with others



Concerned Claudia

- Fairly high on certainty, human causation & threat
- Uncertain about the effectiveness of action, collective & own
- Average attention to news & public affairs content

- *Focus on what she can do & how it will help*
- Increase her sense of the local, immediate & human threats
- Correct her misconceptions
- Teaching her about the impacts of her actions will increase her reduction efforts
- Address her loss of trust in scientists & loss of certainty

Cautious Carl



- Weak on all key beliefs
- Unlikely to discuss or seek info on climate change
- Very low attention to the issue
- No strongly held values
- Average media use, lower attention to news

- *Normative messages may influence him*
- Don't talk about the number of people doing the wrong things – instead point out & praise the right actions. The more he believes others like him are concerned & environmentally aware, the more he will be as well
- Localize the threats & emphasize the scientific consensus to increase his certainty

Disengaged Diane



- Very low on all key beliefs
- Has never thought about the issue
- Traditional religious beliefs, lowest trust in science
- Very unlikely to discuss or seek info
- Low civic engagement
- Low attention to news, but high TV viewers

- *Narratives may capture her*
- She's not yet aware that global warming is a problem.
- Needs to understand the impacts on people here and now
- Try serial drama with a hero (environmental scientist?), villain (corporate polluter?), and vulnerable heroine (low income female in impacted location who evolves into an activist?)



Doubtful David

- Low on all key beliefs
- Believes in natural causes
- High Biblical literalism
- Occasionally discusses global warming & pays attention to energy conservation
- Average attention to most news

- *Correct his misconceptions about the science, but avoid restating myths - even to refute them.*
- Focus on energy independence, economic opportunity, and responsible stewardship
- He's not likely to be persuaded on the issue, but may be influenced by framing in terms of his core values



Dismissive Dan



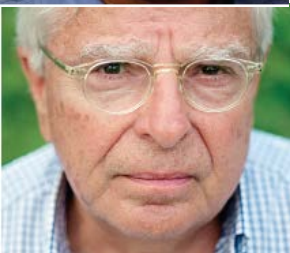
- Very low on all key beliefs
- May view climate change as a hoax
- Likely to be an opinion leader advocating *against* action
- Strong individualistic values
- Specialized media diet, with preference for sources that reflect his own point of view

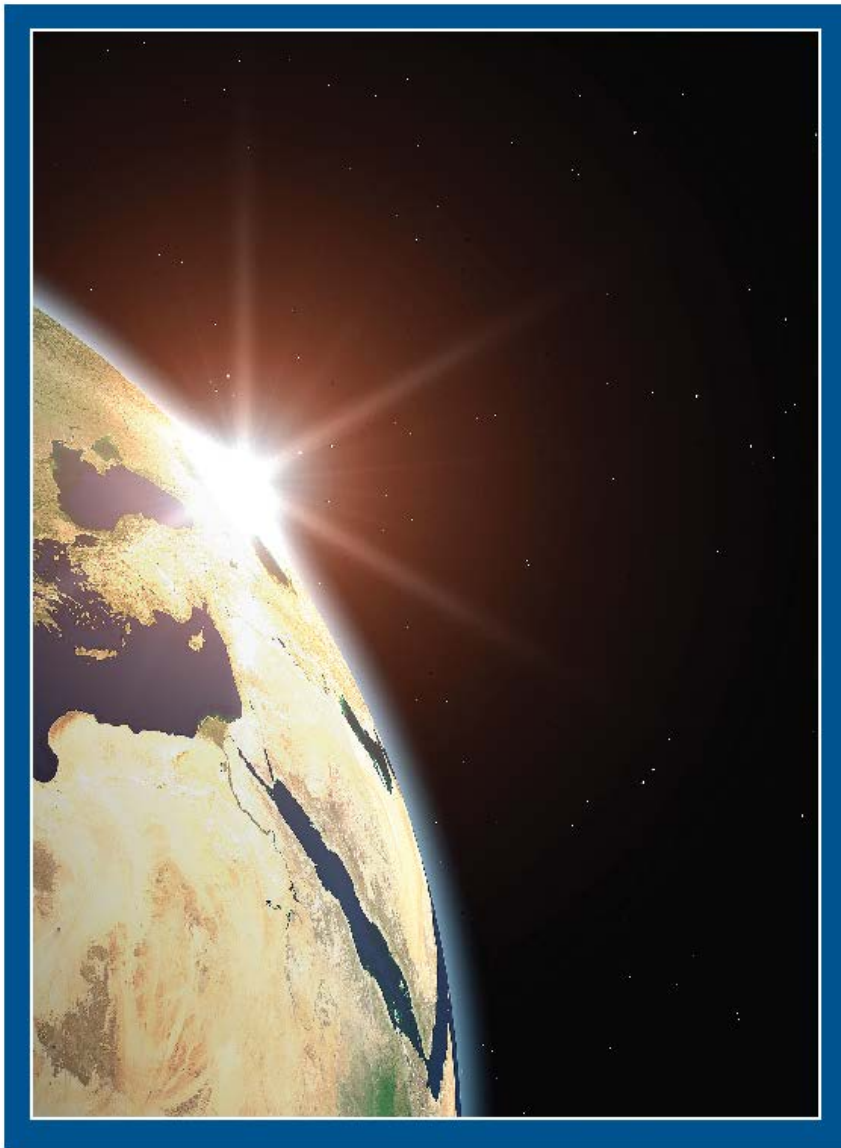
- *Not a promising target audience.*
- Unlikely to change his beliefs about climate change, but willing to reduce energy use to save money.



In a nutshell...

- Encourage Alarmed Alice to act as an opinion leader.
- Teach Concerned Claudia what actions she can take & how they will help to reduce the threat.
- Build Cautious Carl's perceptions that energy conservation is socially admired.
- Tell Disengaged Diane stories that bring home the threat of global warming and engage her with characters who are addressing the problem.
- Teach Doubtful David and Dismissive Dan how they can save money through energy conservation.





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<http://climatechange.gmu.edu>

<http://research.yale.edu/environment/climate>

What follows are slides showing the demographics of the 6 Americas.

Age Distribution among the Six Americas

	Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive	Total
75+	3%	4%	4%	6%	9%	6%	5%
65-74	15%	13%	9%	15%	17%	22%	14%
55-64	26%	23%	24%	26%	23%	21%	24%
45-54	21%	20%	17%	16%	18%	21%	19%
35-44	13%	16%	15%	16%	14%	13%	15%
25-34	13%	13%	15%	13%	9%	10%	12%
18-24	9%	12%	17%	9%	11%	6%	12%

Yale/George Mason, May 2011; n=1,010



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Race/Ethnicity Distribution among the Six Americas

	Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive	Total
2+ Races, Non-Hispanic	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	4%	2%
Hispanic	14%	11%	11%	11%	7%	6%	10%
Other, Non-Hispanic	4%	4%	5%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Black, Non-Hispanic	9%	9%	12%	20%	7%	3%	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	71%	73%	70%	66%	81%	86%	74%

Yale/George Mason, May 2011; n=1,010



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Education Distribution among the Six Americas

	Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive	Total
Bachelor's degree or higher	36%	31%	27%	12%	25%	36%	29%
Some college	24%	32%	34%	26%	35%	29%	31%
High school	30%	30%	29%	40%	30%	29%	31%
Less than high school	9%	7%	9%	21%	10%	5%	10%

Yale/George Mason, May 2011; n=1,010



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Gender Distribution among the Six Americas

	Alarmed	Concerned	Cautious	Disengaged	Doubtful	Dismissive	Total
Female	55%	56%	51%	69%	43%	43%	52%
Male	45%	44%	49%	31%	57%	57%	48%

Yale/George Mason, May 2011; n=1,010

