

The Teaching, Research, and International Policy Project

Public Opinion Poll July 11, 2016 to July 27, 2016

About the Study:

The Teaching, Research & International Policy (TRIP) – housed in the Institute for the Theory & Practice of International Relations at the College of William and Mary – conducted a public opinion survey of 2,685 Americans in 2016. The study was designed to systematically investigate how the public responds to scholarly opinions on international relations issues. Gaining a better understanding of how the public responds to different efforts to communicate the views of international relations scholars is the first step in formulating policy-relevant research and findings that can have an impact on the public debate over competing foreign policy proposals.

Study Methodology:

We hired Survey Sampling International (SSI) to survey a sample of 2,695 Americans. The survey was in the field from July 11, 2016 to July 27, 2016. We designed several experiments designed to explore the impact of scholarly consensus influencing public opinion. Additionally, we asked several questions to determine public approval of various agreements including the COP21 Paris climate agreement and a host of other foreign policy related questions. Initial results are detailed below.

Key Findings:

By and large, we found that the public was deferential to the views of scholars, believing scholars had greater knowledge than the average American. Additionally, we found domain relevance matters; expert knowledge was assumed to be the highest when issue area and expertise aligned. We also found results suggesting a wide gap in approval of the COP21 climate agreement between supporters of Hillary Clinton and supporters of Donald Trump.

	COP21 Approval(1-7)	Presidential Voting Preference	N
1	4.71	Neither	1474
2	3.82	Donald Trump	503
3	5.21	Hillary Clinton	721

	Climate Scholars	Agreement Type	se	ci
1	3.99	climate change	0.04	3.915, 4.071
2	3.23	security	0.04	3.155, 3.295
3	3.31	trade	0.04	3.234, 3.384

Climate scholar knowledge(1-5)

	IR scholars	Agreement Type	se	ci
1	3.55	climate change	0.04	3.477, 3.617
2	3.80	security	0.04	3.721, 3.872
3	3.81	trade	0.04	3.736, 3.892

IR scholar knowledge(1-5)

	Intl Econ scholars	Agreement Type	se	ci
1	3.47	climate change	0.04	3.401 , 3.541
2	3.50	security	0.03	3.437, 3.572
3	3.86	trade	0.04	3.783, 3.939

Intl Econ Scholar Knowledge(1-5)

	Q130	N	freq
1	A maritime and fishing agreement	273	10.5
2	A military security alliance	1054	40.5
3	A tariff-free trade zone	618	23.7
4	An economic development union	656	25.2

Q: What is NATO?