

# Report on Environmental Survey Questions from the Annual Minnesota Statewide Survey

**Fall  
2014**

## **Introduction**

The SCSU Survey is an ongoing survey research extension of St. Cloud State University. Each fall, the SCSU Survey conducts a survey of adult Minnesotans about their perspectives on relevant political and social issues. Among other issues, this year we asked respondents if they believe that climate change is occurring and what its cause is, the importance of preparing for the effects of climate change, and the proposed Polymet metals mine in northeastern Minnesota.

## **Methods and Sampling Error**

The Fall 2014 St. Cloud State University Survey findings are based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 551 adults in Minnesota. The sample included both landline and cell phones. Interviews were conducted from October 13 to October 22, 2014 at the St. Cloud State University Survey Lab. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 5$  percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). The margin of error for sub-samples, such as party affiliation, is higher due to a smaller sample size.

This is a brief summary of the methods used in the SCSU Fall Survey. For a complete accounting of survey methods, survey questionnaire, and related reports, please consult the materials available on the St. Cloud State University Survey website, <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/scsusurvey/>.

## **Environmental Question Highlights**

- Nearly 90% of Minnesotans believe that climate change is occurring now.
- Over three-quarters of Minnesotans believe that it is important for Minnesota to take action to prepare for climate change.
- Forty percent of Minnesotans are unfamiliar with the mining issue in northeast Minnesota.
- Among those familiar with Polymet's proposal to mine in northeast Minnesota, there are slightly more Minnesotans who support the proposal than who oppose it.

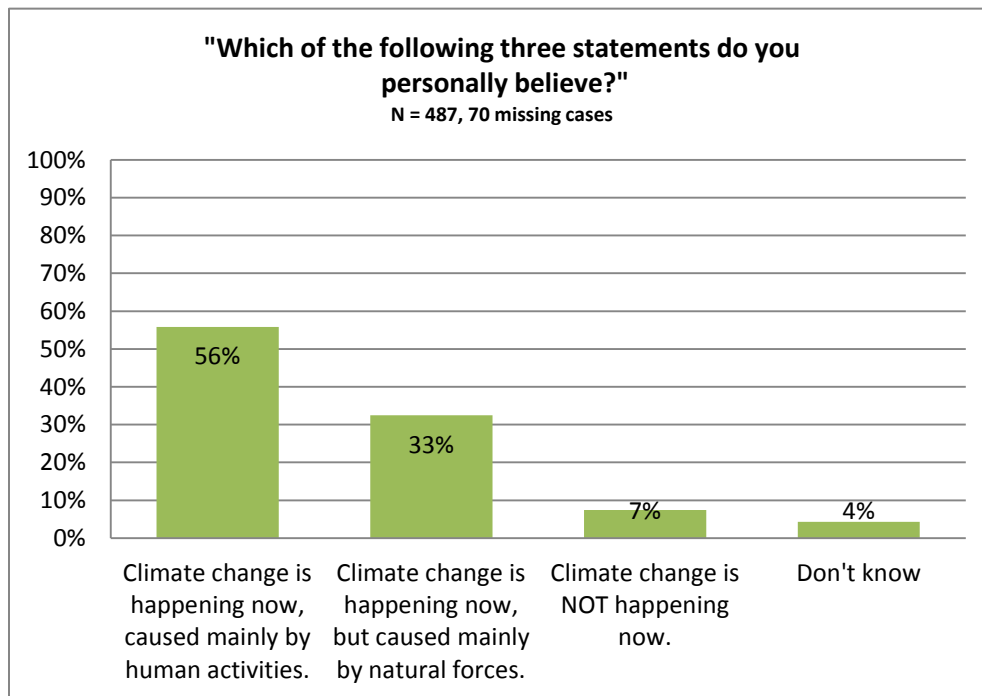
## **Minnesotans' Beliefs Regarding Climate Change**

Nearly 90% of Minnesotans believe that climate change is occurring now. Fifty-six percent believe that climate change is caused by human activities, while 33% believe it is mainly a result of natural causes. Only 7% of Minnesotans do not believe climate change is happening now,

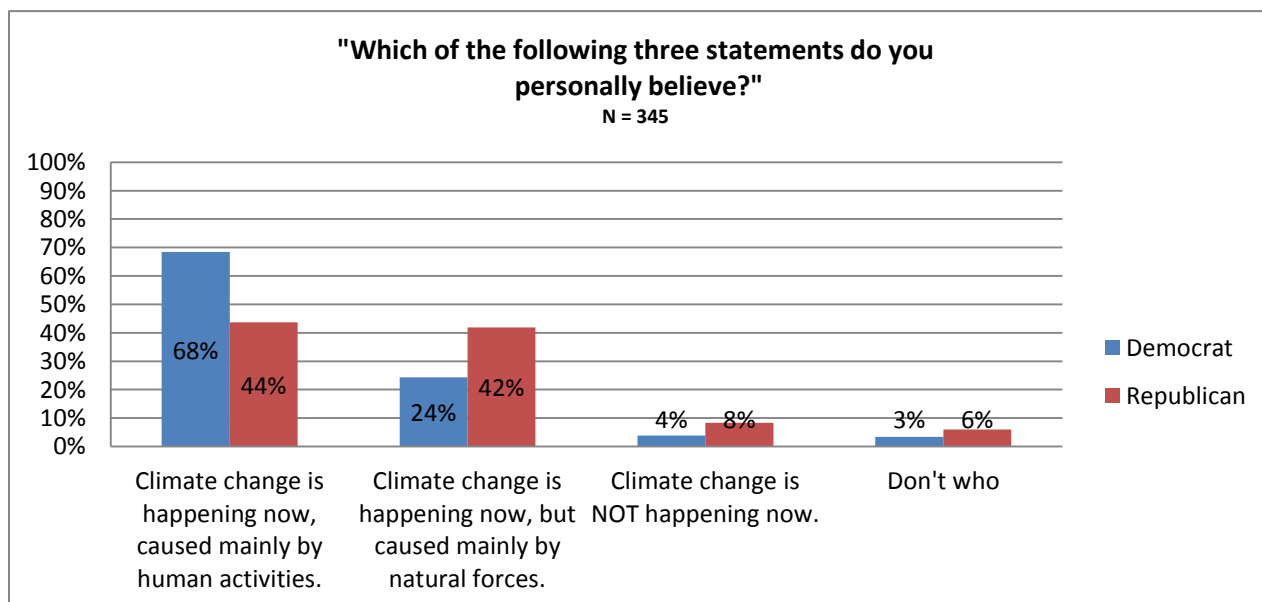
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and 4% indicated they didn't know.



While the majority of both Democrats (92%) and Republicans (86%) believe that climate change is happening now, most Democrats attribute the problem to human activities (68%) whereas more Republicans believe climate change is a result of natural forces (42%). Very few individuals of either party do not believe climate change is happening now.

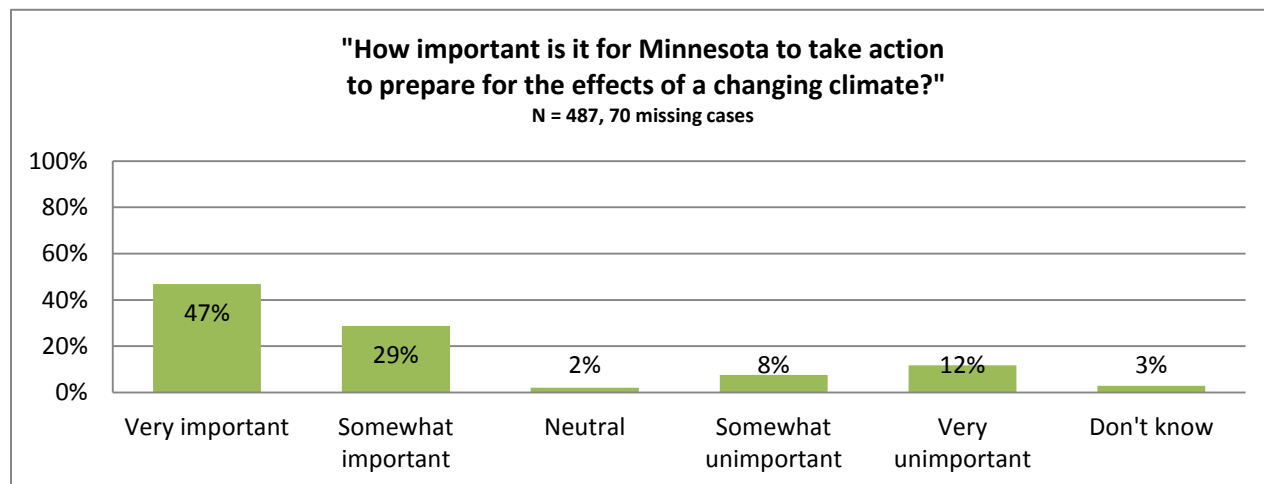


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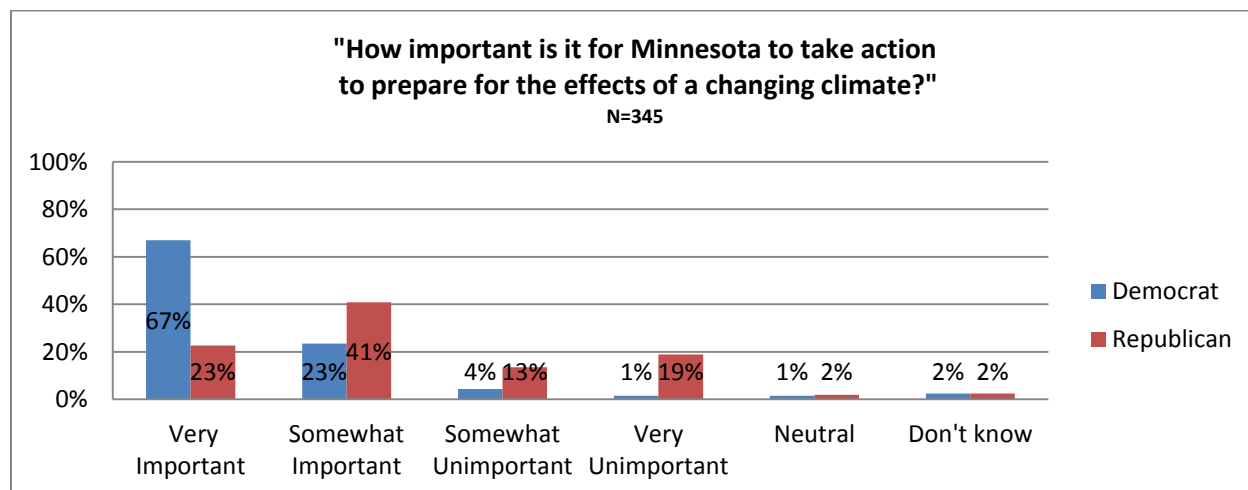
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## Importance of Preparing for Climate Change

A strong majority of Minnesotans believe it is important for the state to take action to prepare for climate change. Over three quarters of respondents indicated that it is somewhat or very important that Minnesota take action, while only twenty percent indicated that it is somewhat or very unimportant.



Both Minnesotan Democrats and Republicans agree that taking action to prepare for climate change is important. Ninety percent of Democrats believe it is somewhat or very important, while 64% of Republicans believe it is somewhat or very important.

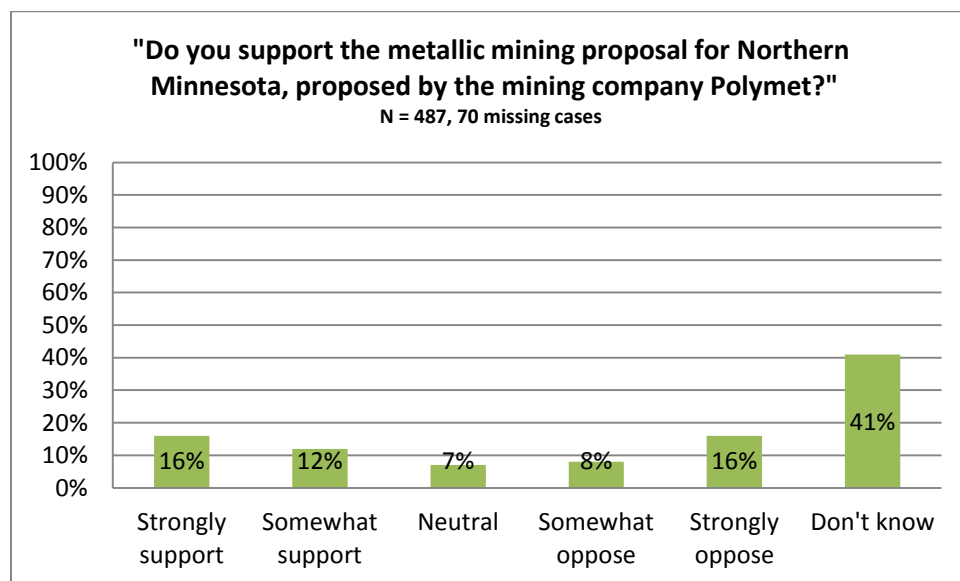


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## Polymet Mining Proposal

There is no clear majority opinion among Minnesotans on the Polymet Mining proposal for Northeast Minnesota; 41% of respondents answered “Don’t know” when asked if they supported or opposed the proposal. Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated they either somewhat or strongly supported the proposal, while 24% of respondents indicated they either somewhat or strongly oppose the proposal.



## Comparing climate change belief results with national surveys

As compared to recent national surveys, our results show that a higher percentage of Minnesotans believe that climate change is occurring than do Americans as a whole. For example, the Pew Research Center finds that in January 2014 67% of American adults said there is solid evidence that the Earth has been warming (PewResearchCenter, [www.pewresearchcenter.org](http://www.pewresearchcenter.org)). Similarly, a survey conducted in November 2013 by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication (<http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication>), found that 67% of Americans believed that climate change was occurring, and 47% of Americans indicate they believe that climate change is caused by humans. Compare these results to those presented here in which 89% of Minnesotans report believing that climate change is occurring, and 56% believe that human action has caused climate change.

**For additional information, please contact Dr. Ann Finan, St. Cloud State University**

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