

# Policy Myths and Options

EES 3310/5310

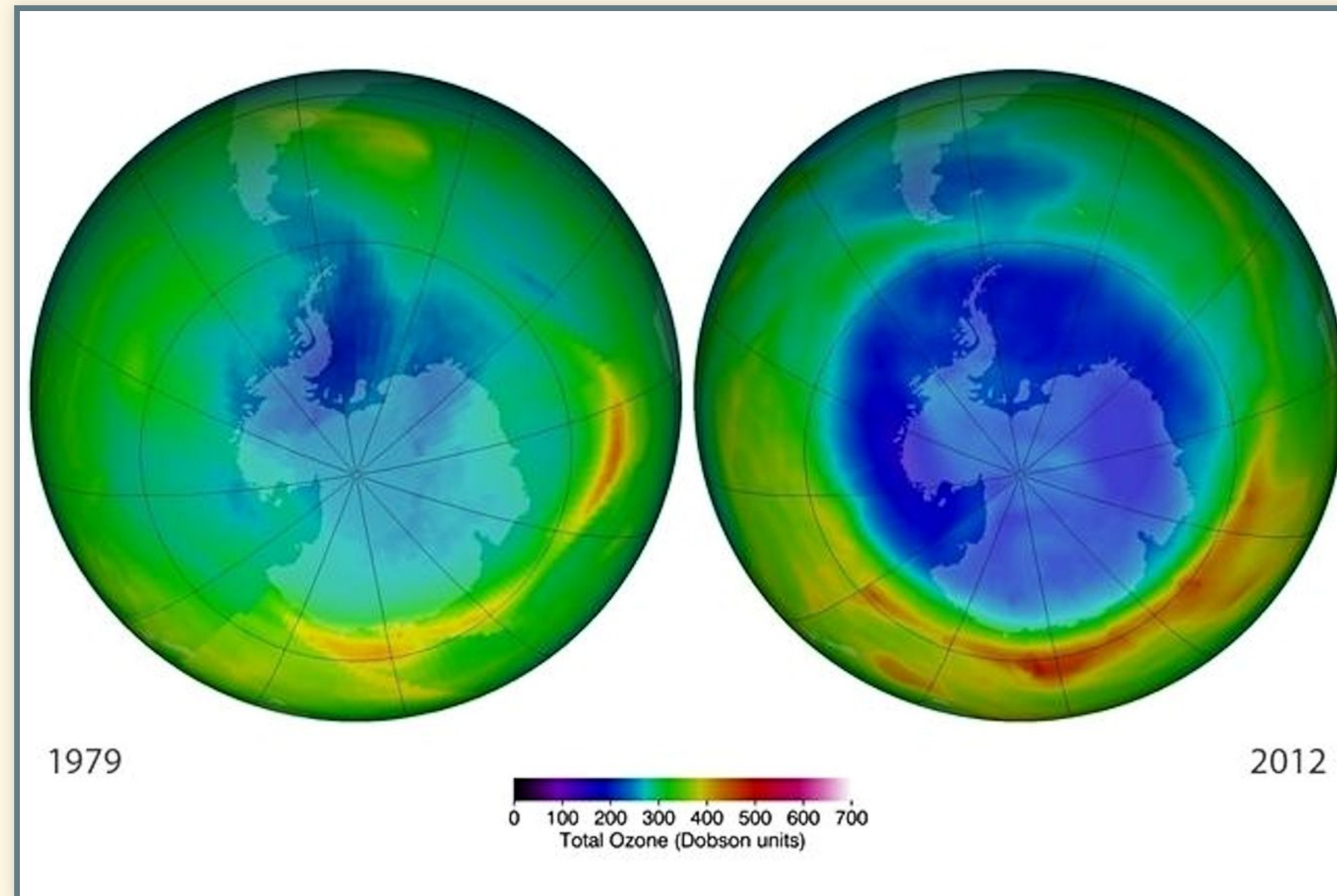
Global Climate Change

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Class #23: Friday, March 18 2022

# Pielke's Lessons from the Ozone Hole

# Pielke's Lessons from the Ozone Hole



- 1970s: Significant scientific uncertainty
- Decision to take action without waiting for certainty
- Discovery of hole: tipping point
- “No regrets” policy
- Flexible policy (renegotiate details every two years)

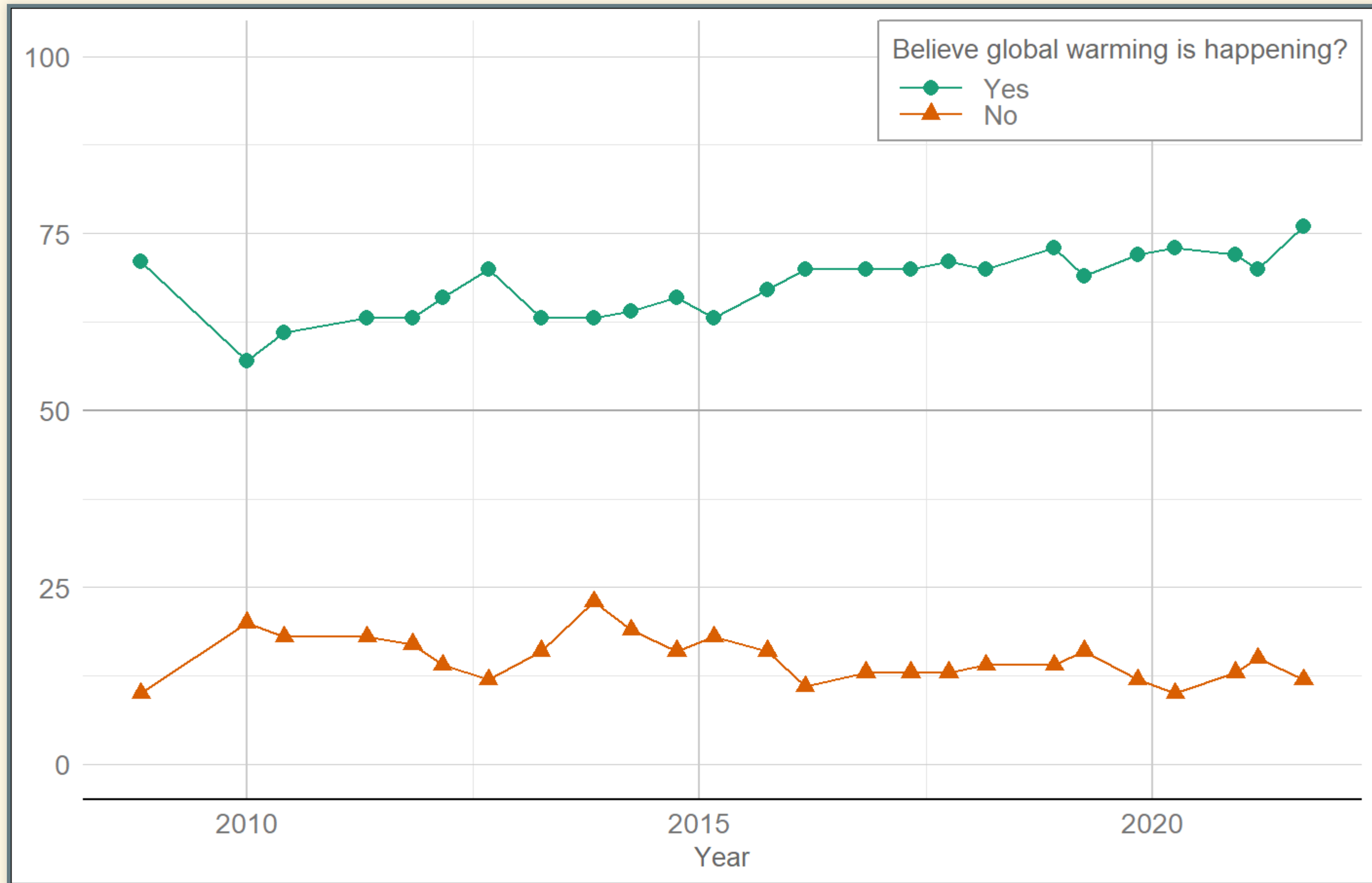
# Policy Myths

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1. We lack political will
2. We must trade off the economy for the environment
3. We have all the technology we need

# Myth 1: We Lack Political Will

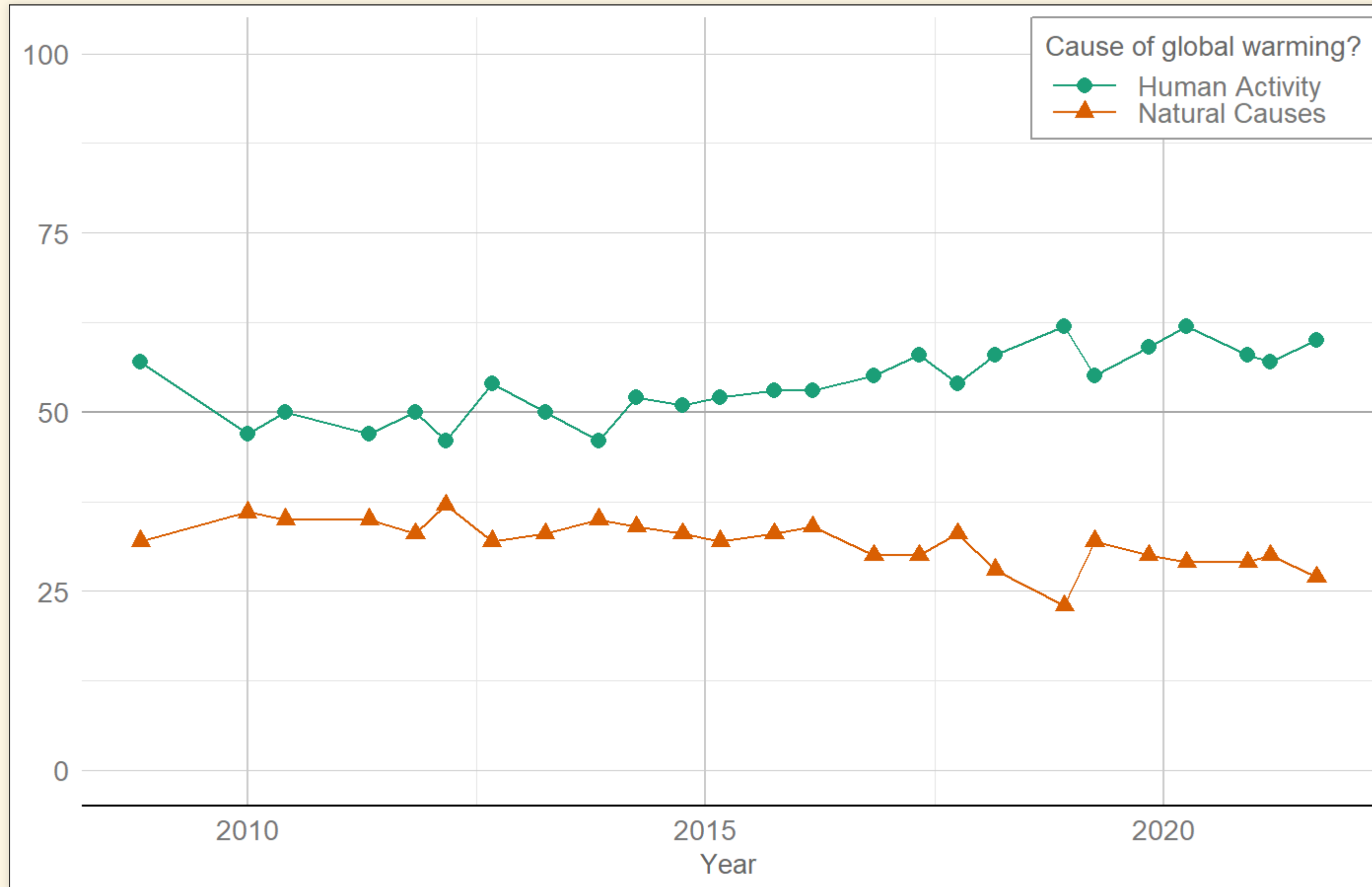
# Public Opinion: Is the Earth Warming



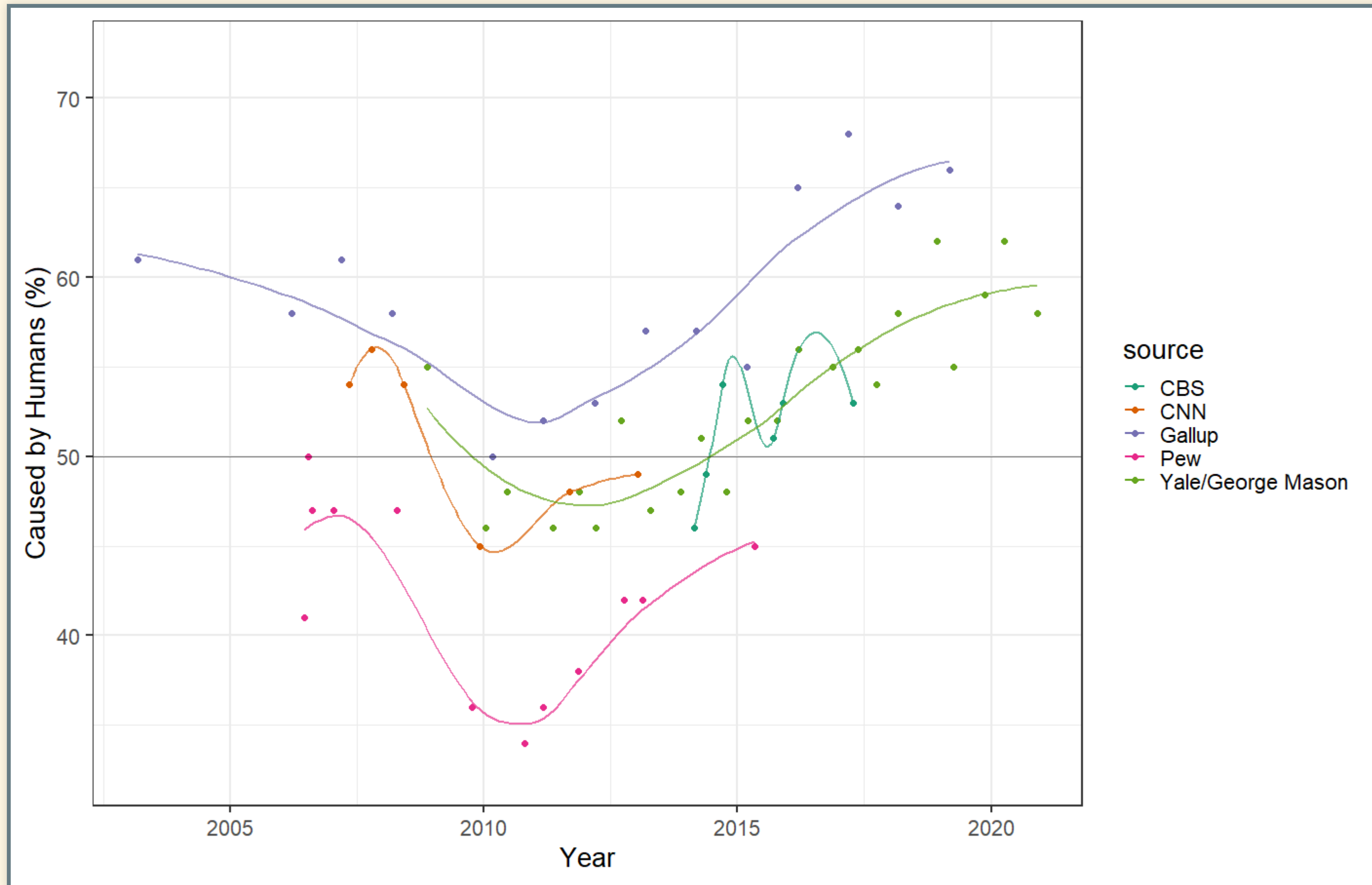




# Public Opinion: Cause of Warming?



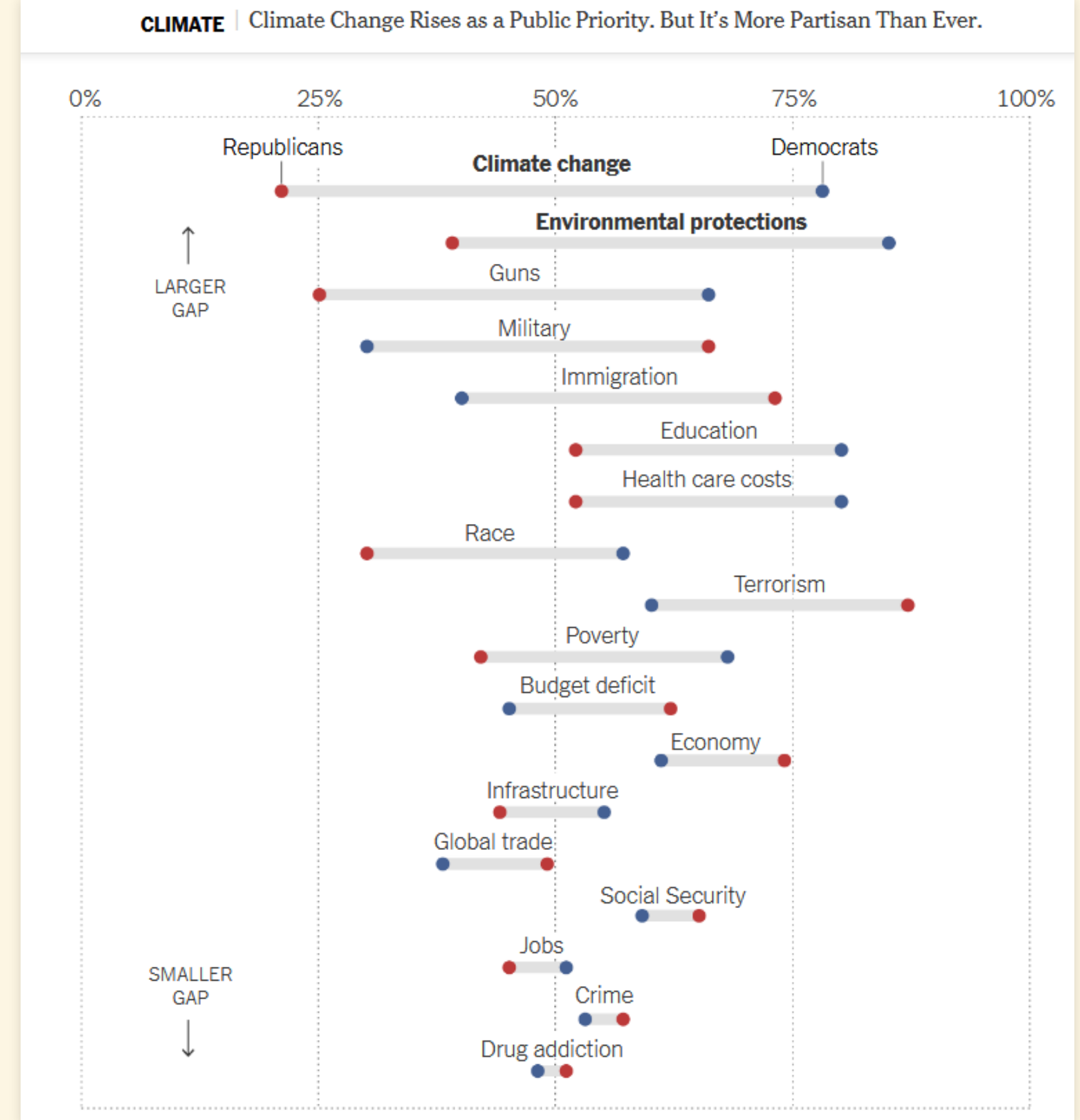
# Variation across polls



# Partisan Split

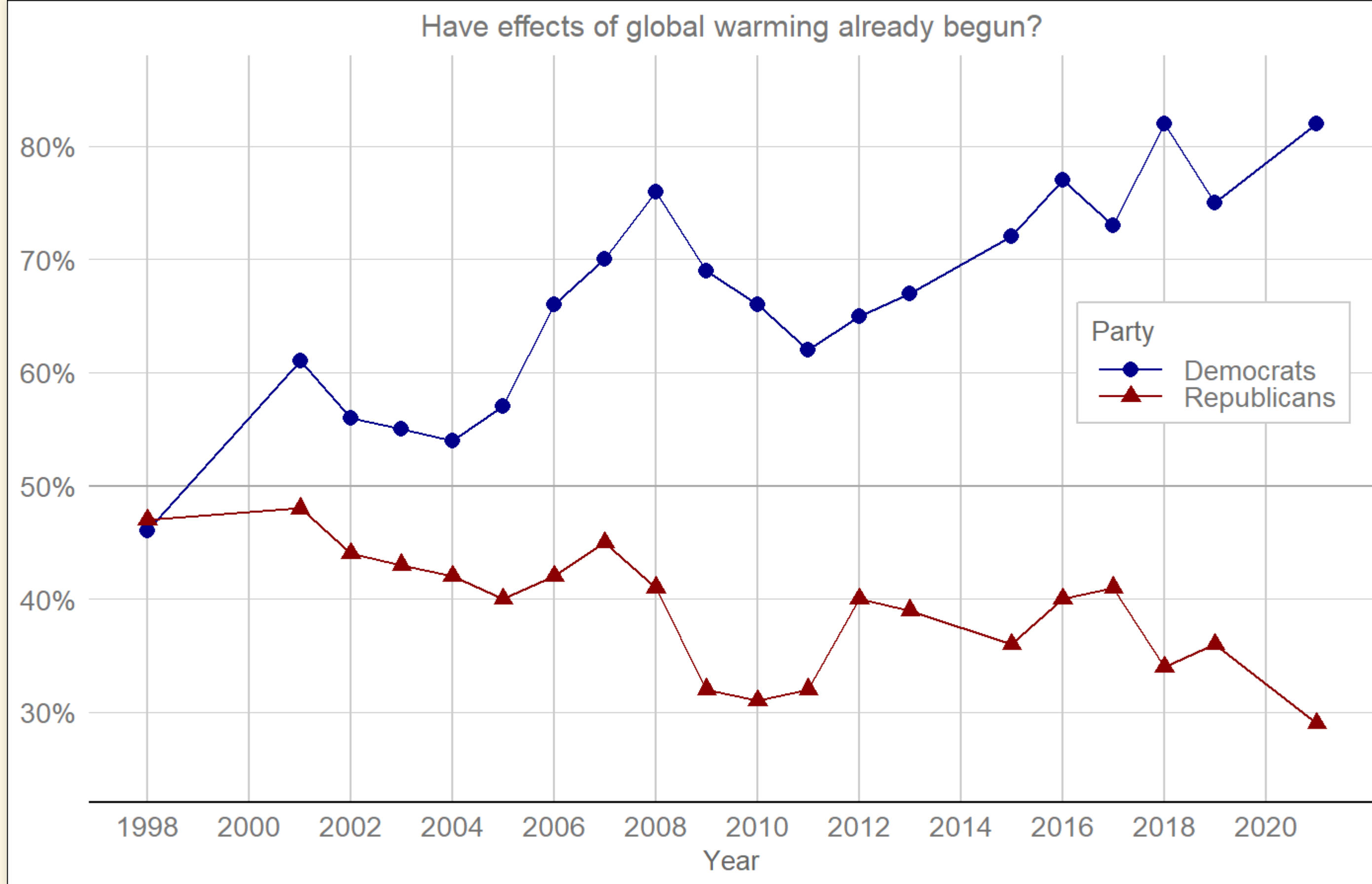
# Partisan Split:

- Climate policy is the most divisive issue
- Greater partisan polarization than abortion



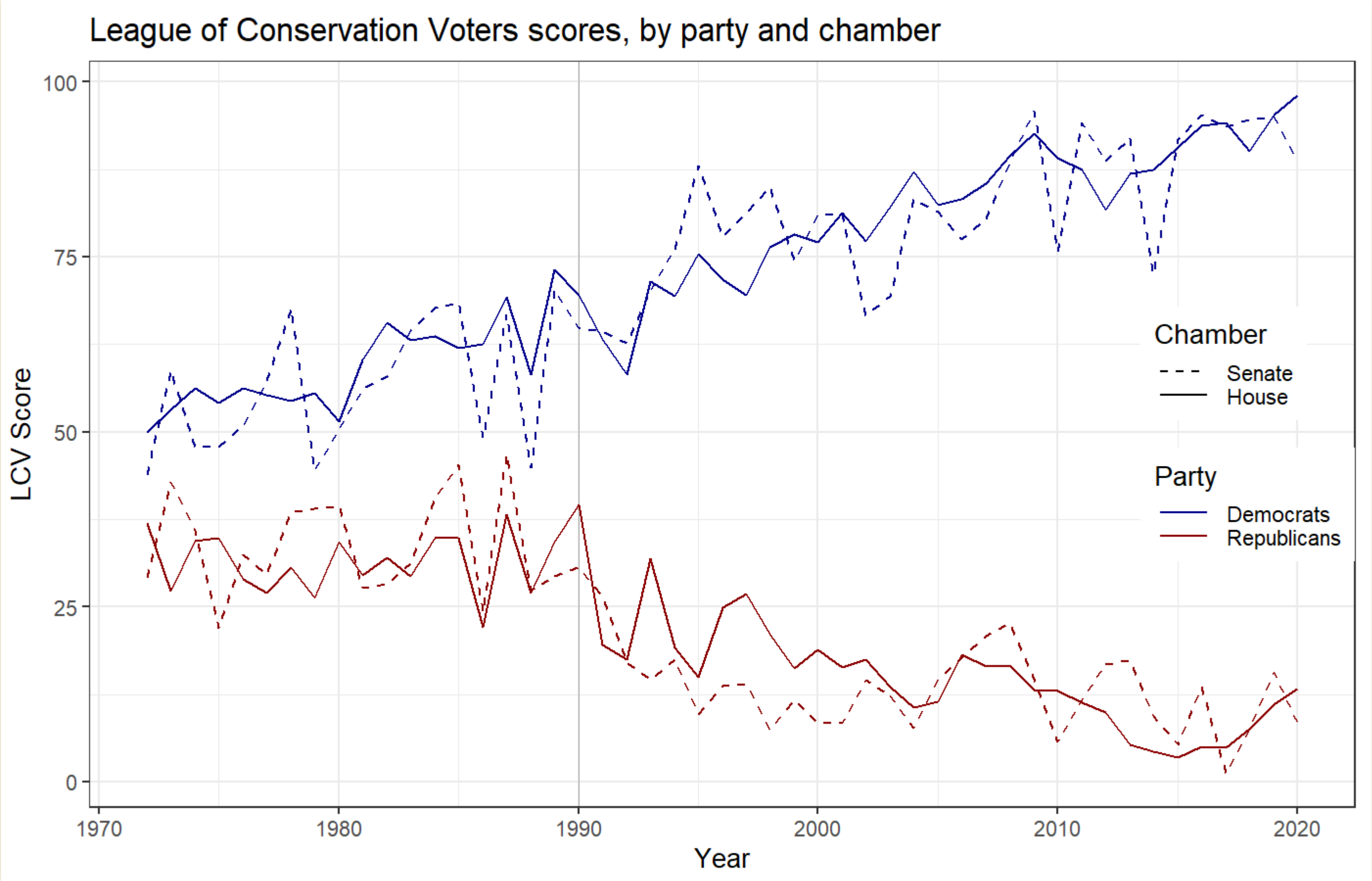
Pew: As Economic Concerns Recede, Environmental Protection Rises on the Public's Policy Agenda

# Partisan split



Gallup: Americans' Views on Global Warming, 2019, U.S. Concern About Global Warming at Eight-Year High (2016) Republican Skepticism Toward Global Warming Eases (2013),

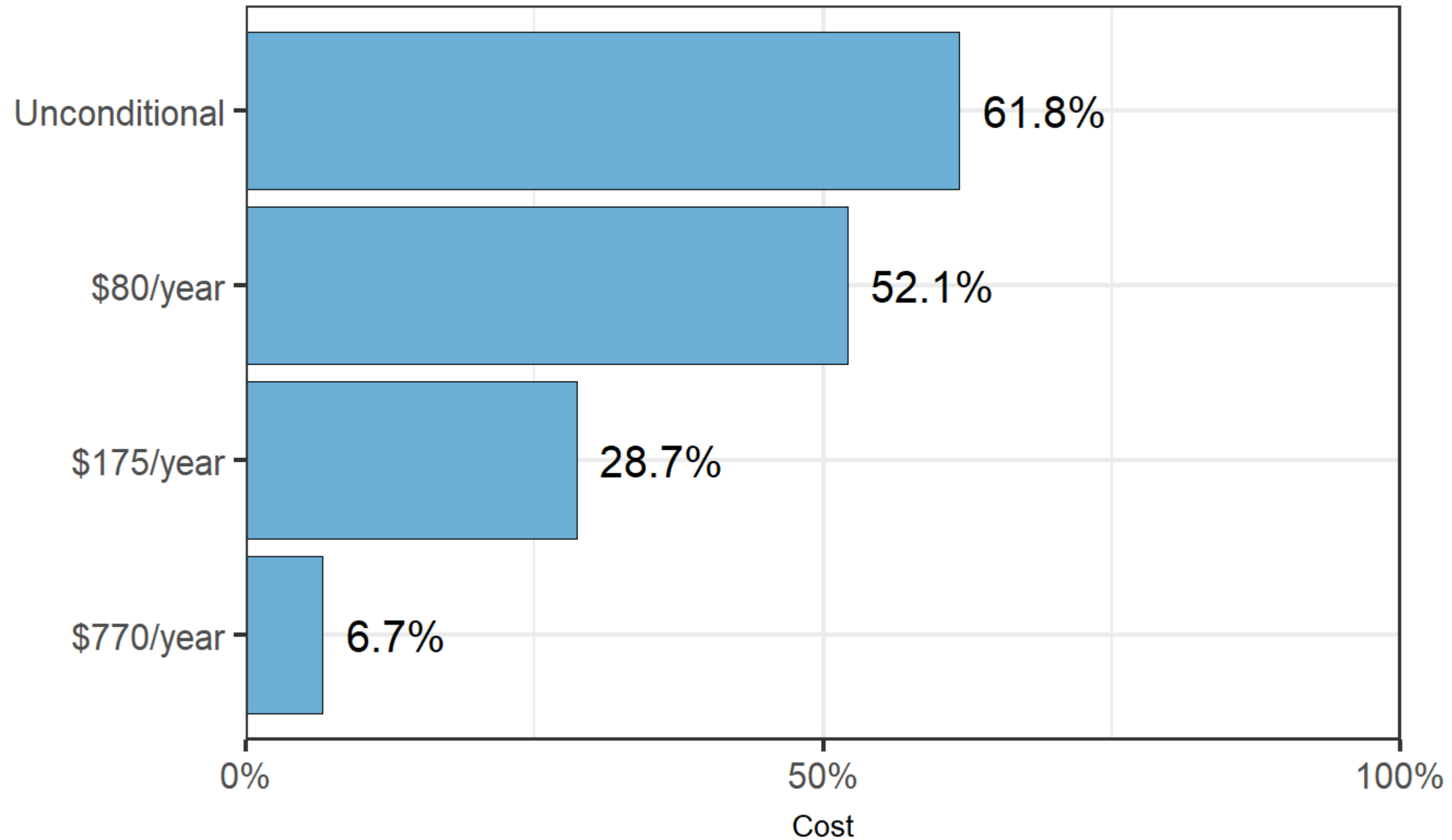
# Polarization in Congress 1972–2020



Myth 2:  
We must trade off the economy  
for the environment

# Willingness to pay (2009)

Would you support a policy if the average cost per household is...?





## Iron Law of Climate Policy

- People want action on global warming
- But **if climate policies conflict with economic growth, growth will win every time.**

## Frank Luntz (2010)

*What has changed is that the American economy went to hell. And when you ask voters are they more concerned about destroying their environment over the next 100 years or rehabilitating their economy over the next 100 weeks, they'll choose the economy over the environment any day.*

"Candidates Take Aim At Climate Bill To Win Votes" *All Things Considered*, NPR, 28 Oct. 2010

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130888515>

# James Inhofe (2016)

*I assumed like everybody else, way back when everyone was talking about global warming and all that, I assumed that that was probably right, until I found out what it was going to cost*

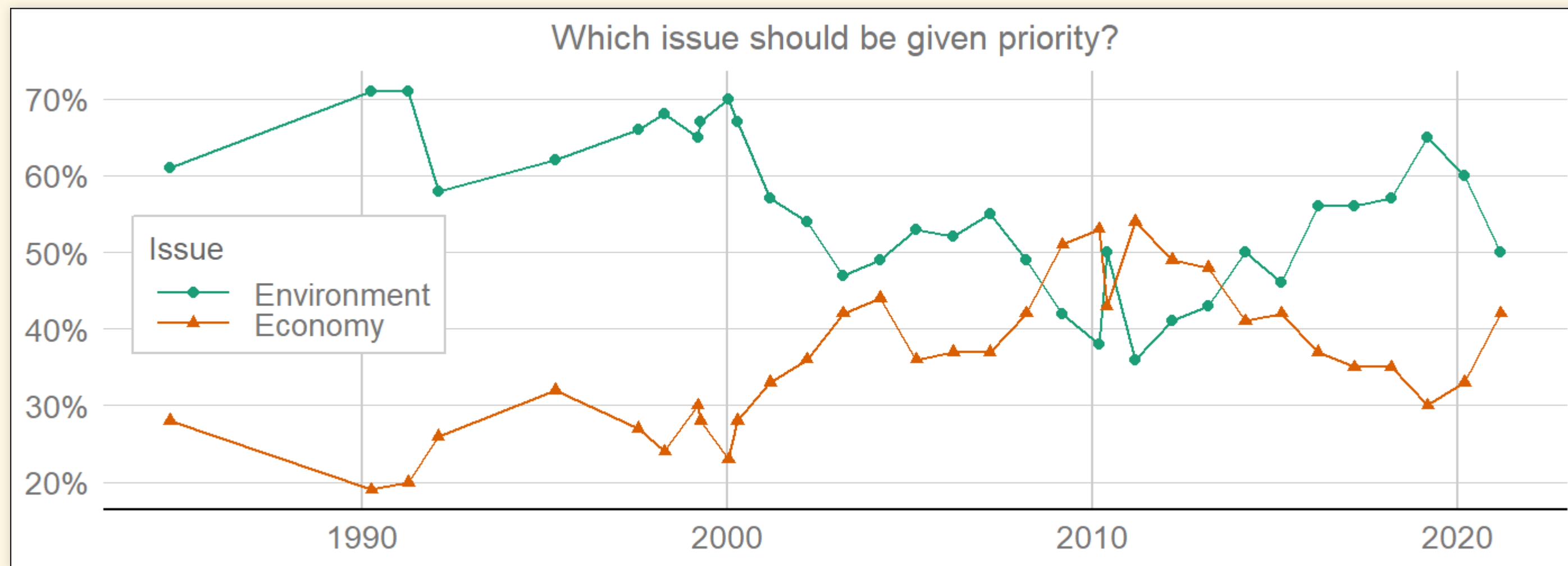
Heritage Foundation Energy & Climate Policy Summit, Dec. 8, 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=surP84BQwhc>

# New Data

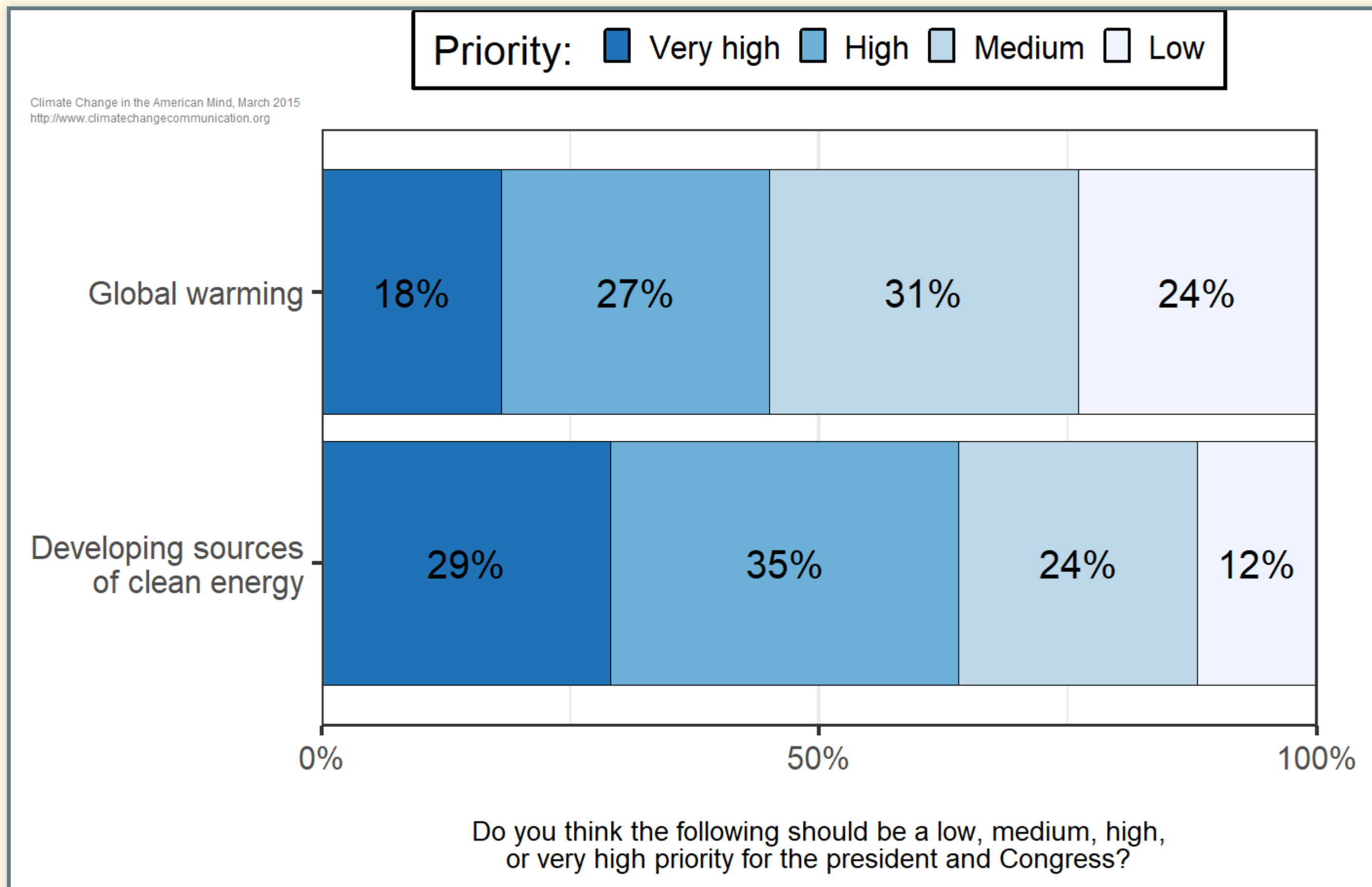
*Nearly two-thirds of Americans ranked protecting the environment as a leading policy priority. — [Pew survey \(2020\)](#)*

*By the widest margin since 2000, more Americans believe environmental protection should take precedence over economic growth. — [Gallup Survey \(2019\)](#)*



Source: Gallup: Preference for Environment Over Economy Largest Since 2000 (2019)

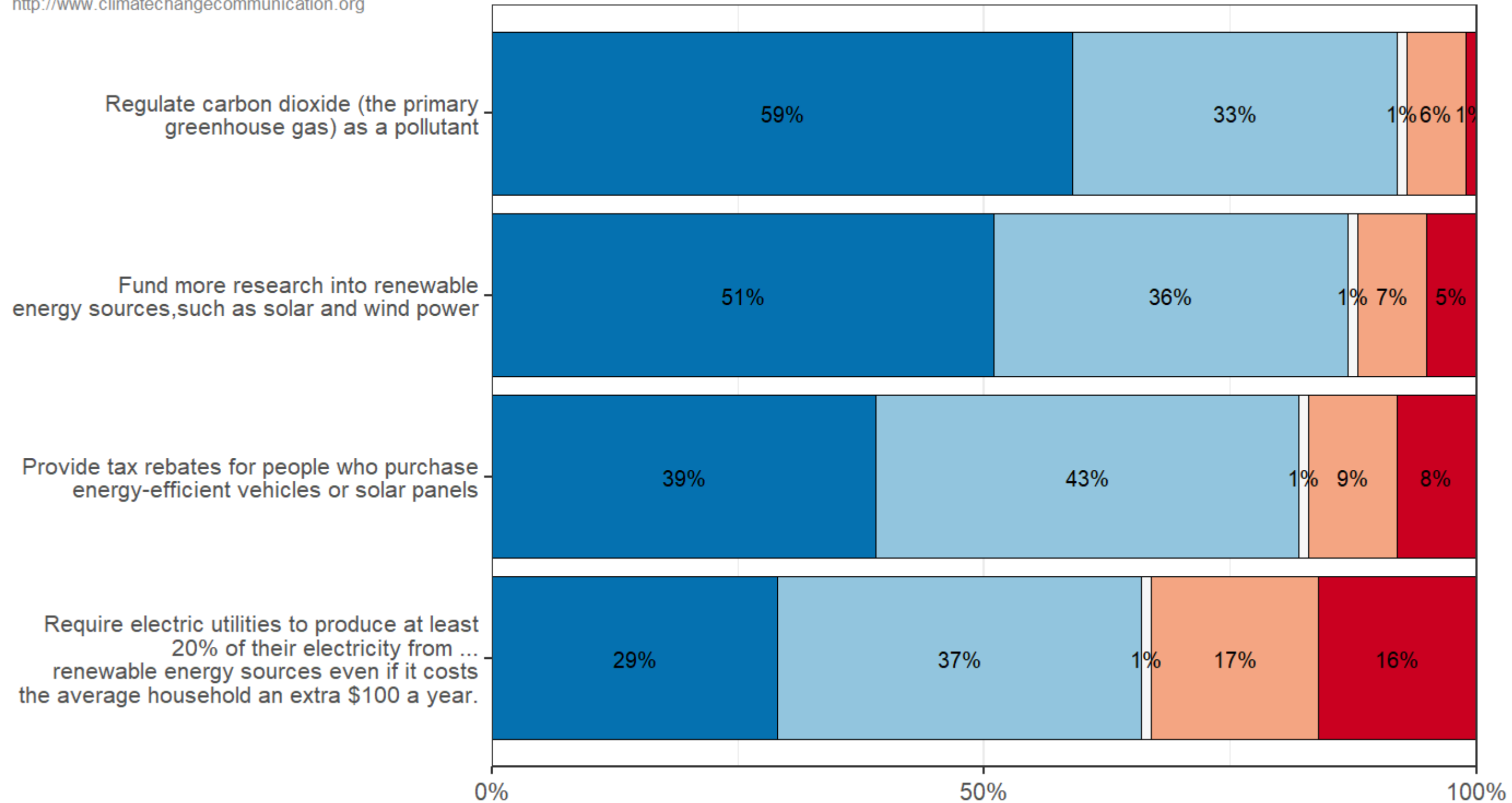
# Public Opinion on Priorities (2015)



# Public Support for Policies (2017)

Climate Change in the American Mind, March 2017  
<http://www.climatechangecommunication.org>

Support: Strongly support Somewhat support No answer Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose



How much to you support or oppose the following policies?

# Political Will

# Political Will

- Walter Lippmann (Pielke's paraphrase):

*The goal of politics is not to get everyone to think alike, but to get people who think differently to act alike*

- Cass Sunstein

*people can often agree on constitutional practices, and even on constitutional rights, when they cannot agree on constitutional theories*

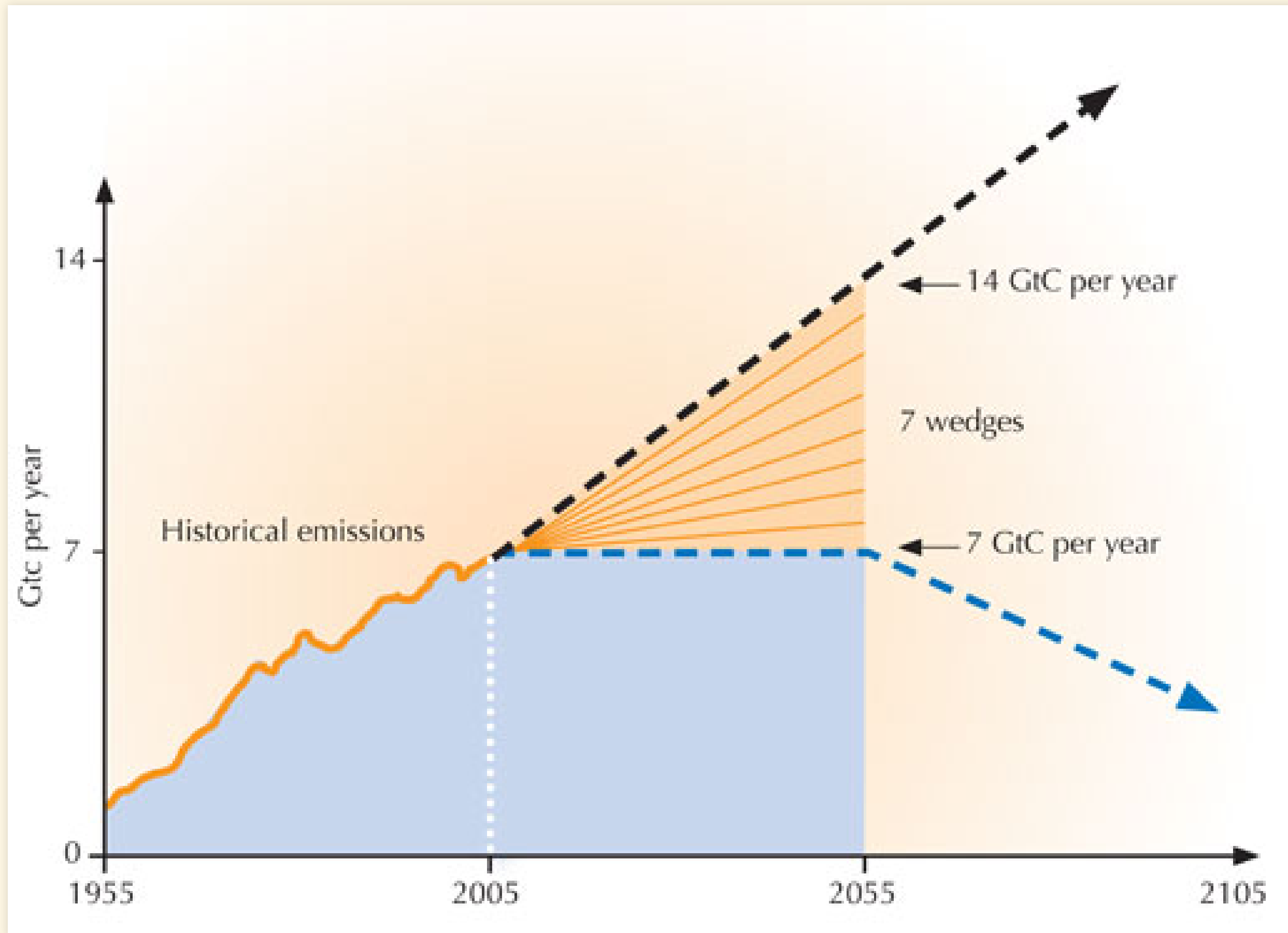
...

*a major goal of a heterogeneous society [is] to make it possible to obtain agreement where agreement is necessary, and to make it unnecessary to obtain agreement where agreement is impossible.*

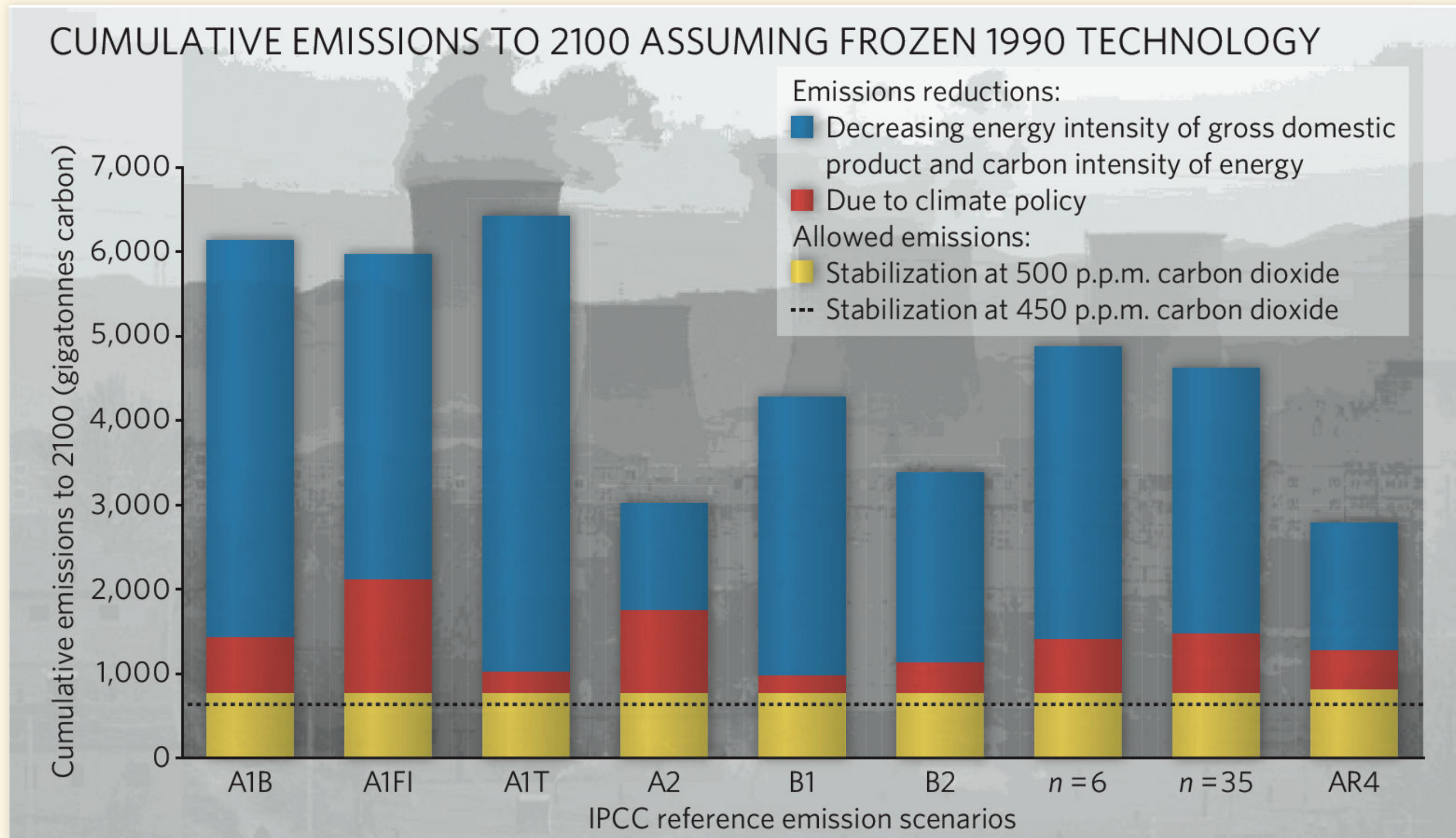


Myth 3:  
We have all  
the technology we need.

# Do we have the technology?



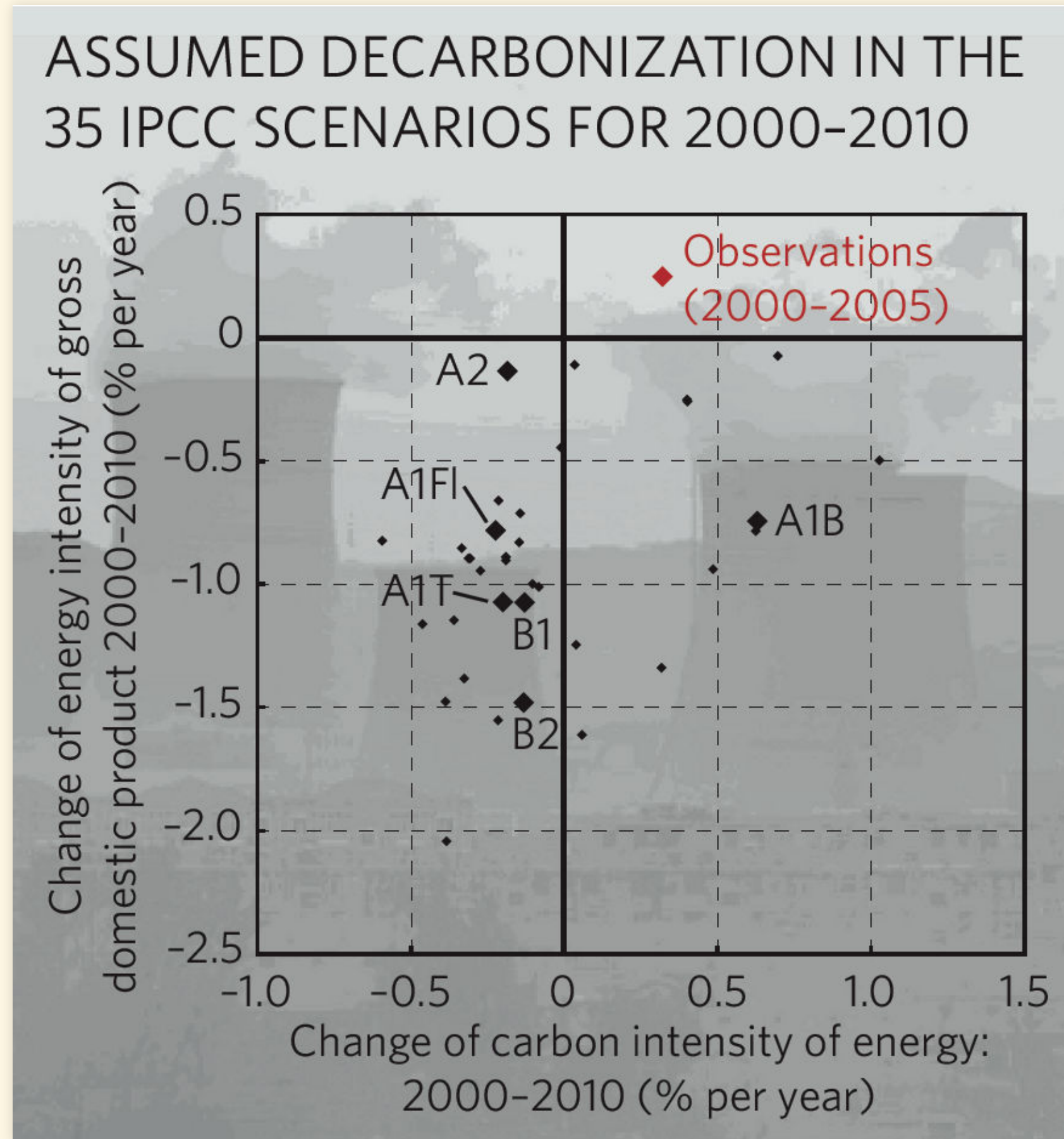
# Do we have the technology?



R.A. Pielke, Jr. et al., Nature **452**, 531 (2008). doi: 10.1038/452531a

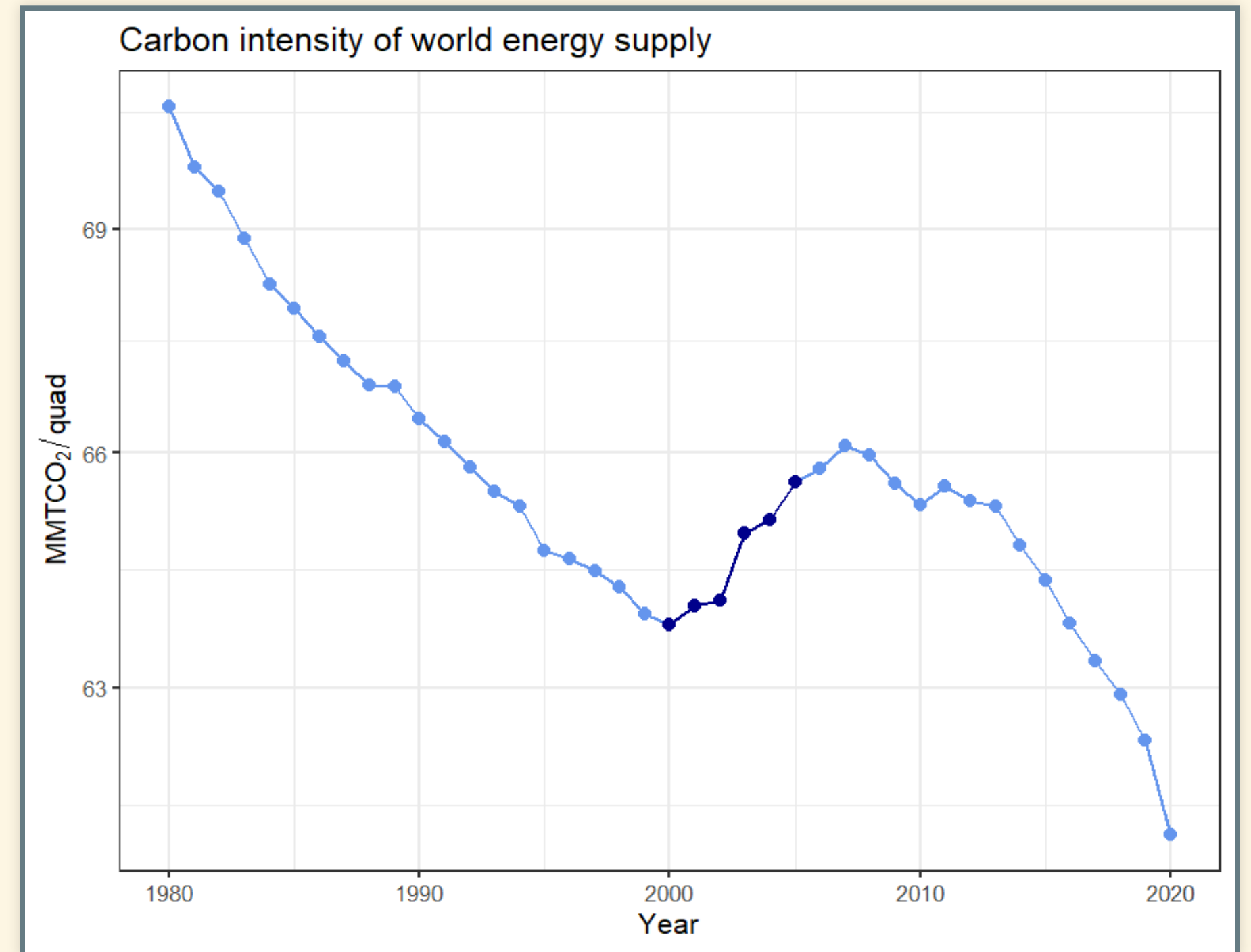
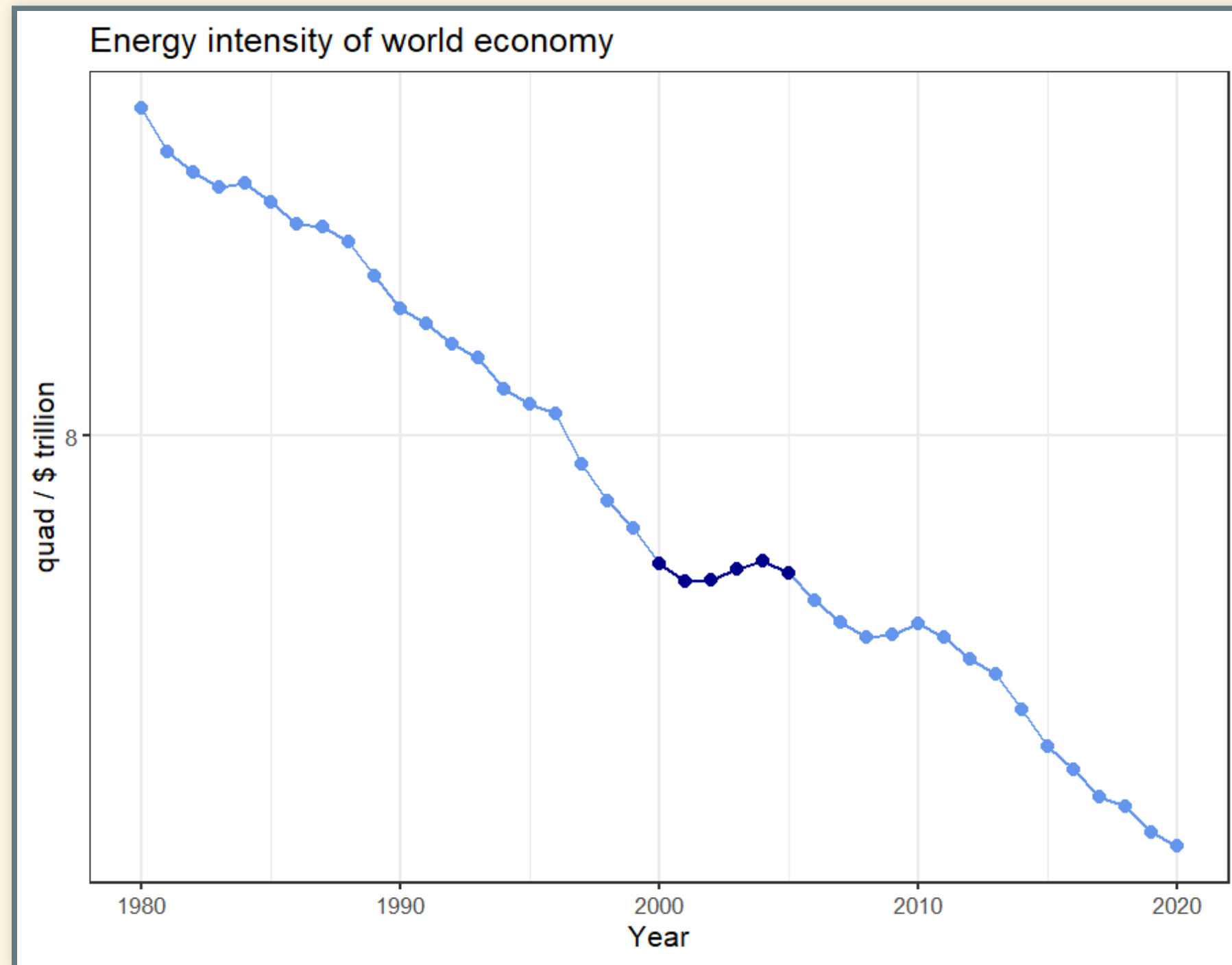
- Blue = Assumed spontaneous emissions reduction
- Brown = Regulations
- Yellow = Allowed emissions to stabilize CO<sub>2</sub> at 550 ppm.

# Optimism on energy efficiency



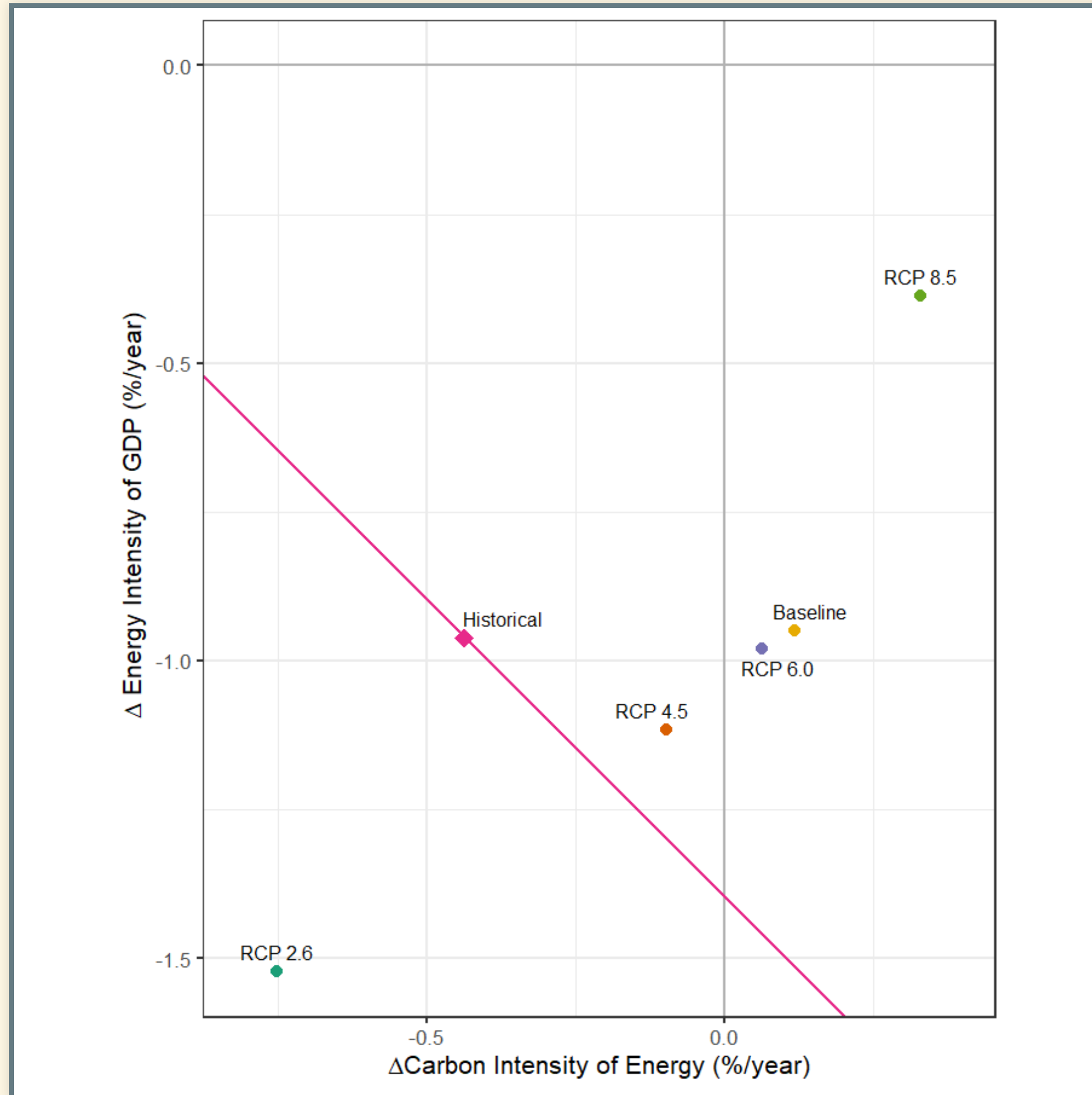
# The View from 2018:

- Pielke's numbers focus on 2000–2005
  - The years when China's economy began really rapid growth
- After 2005, things changed:





# Current Emissions Pathways



- Comparing actual trends for 2005–2017 to trends for 2005–2020 in 5 emissions scenarios:
  - Points above & right of the magenta line have higher emission trends than historical
  - Points below & left of the magenta line have lower emission trends than historical
- The historical trend from 2005–2017 is doing better (lower emissions) than several scenarios including baseline (no policies) and RCP 6.0 (business as usual with current policies).

# Summary

- Pielke and others were very pessimistic around 2010
- Ten years later:
  - Some reasons for greater optimism
  - But still cause for concern

# 2021 UN Report



*“Current levels of climate ambition are very far from putting us on a pathway that will meet our Paris agreement goals,” said Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.*

*Even if countries follow through, [they] would put the world on a path to achieve only a 1 percent reduction in global emissions by 2030....*

*By contrast, scientists have said that emissions must fall by nearly 50 percent this decade for the world to realistically have a shot at avoiding devastating temperature rise.*



# Do we have the technology?

