

## **Misconceptions About Climate Change Common Among Science Teachers**

[https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2017/06/secondary\\_science\\_teachers\\_cli.html](https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2017/06/secondary_science_teachers_cli.html)

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Teachers who teach high schoolers about climate change often don't know much more about the subjects than do members of the general public, according to a new study from the University of Missouri.

A survey of 220 secondary school science teachers in Florida and Puerto Rico found that many teachers who reported that they teach about climate change expressed beliefs about the subject the researchers characterize as naive or incorrect.

Just 14 percent of teachers in Florida and 4 percent of teachers in Puerto Rico gave definitions of climate change that matched the definition developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Many teachers also didn't have a full grasp of the activities scientists connect to human-caused climate change: Just 36 percent of Florida teachers and 23 percent in Puerto Rico knew, for instance, that heating and cooling homes is a driver of climate change. And many incorrectly believed that the use of pesticides or insecticides were significant causes of climate change. Most teachers did identify industry, automobiles, and fossil fuel use as drivers of climate change.

The researchers write that secondary science teachers' degree of understanding about climate change is comparable to the general public's.

Benjamin Herman, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri's college of education, said in a press release that it's no surprise teachers don't know more than the average person about climate change. "Teachers want and need support to keep them abreast of scientific discoveries and developments and how scientists come to their well-established claims regarding climate change," he said, but they're usually not afforded opportunities to do so.

Herman said that lack of knowledge is a problem: "Because of existing misconceptions and misinformation regarding climate change, science teachers have a crucial professional and ethical responsibility to accurately convey to their students how climate change is studied and why scientists believe the climate is changing."

The researchers said they chose Florida and Puerto Rico because those teachers teach and live in places that are likely to be affected by climate change in the near future.

But even teachers who are knowledgeable about the state of climate science experience barriers when teaching about the subject, as a recent New York Times story illustrates.