

By [Jim Lobe](#)

WASHINGTON, Jun 24 2013 (IPS) - Climate change and international financial instability top a list of seven concerns that publics around the world consider “major threats” to their countries, according to the latest polling of global attitudes by the Pew Research Centre here.

Majorities of respondents in 24 of the 39 countries [surveyed by Pew’s Global Attitudes Project](#) (GAP) described climate change as a “major threat”, although the world’s two biggest contributors to greenhouse gases that most scientists believe are responsible for climate change – the United States and China – were not among them.

Only 40 and 39 percent of U.S. and Chinese respondents, respectively, said climate change constituted a “major threat” – the lowest percentages of all the nations surveyed except Pakistan (15 percent), Egypt (16 percent), Israel (30 percent) and Jordan and the Czech Republic (35 percent).

International financial instability ranked second with majorities in 22 of the 39 nations, calling it a “major threat” to their own country. Fifty-two percent of U.S. respondents agreed with that assessment, compared to a high of 95 percent of respondents in Greece, which has been hit especially hard by the Eurozone crisis, and a low of only 15 percent of Pakistanis.

Of the seven possible threats presented to all respondents in the 39 countries, majorities in 15 of the countries called “Islamic extremist groups” a “major threat”, followed by majorities in 13 countries who cited “Iran’s nuclear programme”, and majorities in 11 who named “North Korea’s nuclear program”.

“U.S. power and influence” was cited by majorities in three countries, as was “China’s power and influence”, while a seventh purported threat, “political instability in Pakistan,” was described as a “major threat” by no more than 37 percent of respondents (the U.S. and Italy) in any of the 39 countries surveyed.

Global Publics See Climate Change, Financial Issues As Top Threats

Posted by Joan Russow
Tuesday, 25 June 2013 05:55 -

The findings constituted one part of this year's survey by GAP, which has carried out annual multinational polling since 2002. The latest survey, partial results of which are being released in stages over several months, was carried out between March and May this year. Nearly 38,000 respondents were interviewed in the 39 countries.

Co-chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former U.N. Ambassador John Danforth, GAP's questions often reflect the particular interests and priorities of U.S. policymakers rather than a more global perspective. Thus, three of the seven questions dealt with threats with some relationship to Islam or predominantly Islamic nations.

In the Americas, this year's survey included the United States, Canada, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico and Venezuela. In Europe, it included respondents from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and Russia, as well as Greece and the Czech Republic.

In the greater Middle East region, the survey covered Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Turkey, as well as Egypt, Jordan and Israel, while Asian countries included Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Korea, as well as Pakistan.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the survey included Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda.

In each of the questions about the seven selected "threats", respondents were given the option of describing it as "major", "minor" or "not a threat".

The survey found some significant regional and national differences. In North America, for example, climate change ranked fifth of the seven threats for U.S. respondents, but it was number one in neighbouring Canada, where 54 percent of respondents said it was a major threat.

Similarly, North Korea's nuclear programme, a major concern in the U.S. media when the poll

Global Publics See Climate Change, Financial Issues As Top Threats

Posted by Joan Russow
Tuesday, 25 June 2013 05:55 -

was taken, topped the U.S. list (59 percent of respondents) of threats, while a mere 18 percent of respondents in the Middle East did so.

Not surprisingly, Iran's nuclear programme evoked the greatest concern in Israel, where 85 percent of respondents called it a "major threat" to their country. But substantially fewer respondents in the Greater Middle East, including Turkey (36 percent), Egypt (42 percent), Jordan (41 percent), Lebanon (51 percent), Palestine (31 percent), Tunisia (26 percent) and Pakistan (7 percent) agreed with that assessment.

In China, only 18 percent of respondents said they considered Iran's nuclear programme a "major threat".

Concern about climate change was most prevalent in Latin America, the Asia/Pacific region, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, according to the survey.

An average of 63 percent of Latin American respondents labelled it a major threat, with the greatest concern registered in Brazil (76 percent) and Argentina (71 percent). Led by South Korea (85 percent) and Japan (72 percent), the median percentage among the eight countries polled in the Asia/Pacific region was 53 percent, although without Pakistan's 15 percent, the percentage would have been on a par with Latin America.

An average of 61 percent of Europeans and nearly 54 percent of Africans also called climate change a major threat, with fears particularly pronounced in Greece (87 percent) and Uganda (66 percent). In the Middle East, the stand-out was Lebanon, where nearly three of four Lebanese (74 percent) saw warming as a major threat.

The greatest fear of international financial stability was found in Europe where an average of 73 percent of respondents called it a major threat. Concern was greatest in the southern European countries – Spain (70 percent) and Italy (75 percent), as well as Greece.

An average of 53 percent of respondents in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa agreed with that assessment.

Related IPS Articles

- [U.S. Public Satisfied With Less Militarised Global Role](#)
- [Pew Survey Shows Deep Global Divisions on Attitudes Towards Homosexuality](#)
- [U.S.-9/11: Poll Finds Waning Faith in Military Interventions](#)

In East Asia, only 38 percent of Chinese respondents cited financial instability as a major threat, compared to 83 percent of South Koreans, the highest percentage after Greece.

Besides financial worries, Europeans on average were found to be most concerned about Islamic extremist groups, Iran's nuclear programme, and global climate change in that order.

In the greater Middle East, climate change was ranked as the greatest threat in both Lebanon and Turkey (47 percent), while in Tunisia and Egypt, international financial instability took its place.

That region was also the one which took the most worrisome view of U.S. power, which was ranked as a "major threat" by 68 percent in Palestine and by 44 percent of Turkish respondents.

Global climate change was rated the top major threat in six of the eight countries in the Asia/Pacific region. The two exceptions were Pakistan, where U.S. power topped the threat list (60 percent) followed by Islamic extremist groups (34 percent); and Japan, where 77 percent of respondents cited North Korea's nuclear programme and 74 percent China's power.

Climate change topped the list for respondents in all seven Latin American countries, where international financial instability was cited most frequently as the second biggest worry. Forty-one percent and 35 percent of respondents in Argentina and Venezuela, respectively, identified U.S. power as a "major threat", while majorities of respondents in Brazil in Chile cited Iran's nuclear programme.

Global Publics See Climate Change, Financial Issues As Top Threats

Posted by Joan Russow

Tuesday, 25 June 2013 05:55 -

In sub-Saharan Africa, climate change was cited most frequently in three of the six countries – Kenya, South Africa and Uganda, while Islamic extremist groups topped concerns in Nigeria and Senegal. In South Africa, 40 percent of respondents named China’s power as a “major threat.

Chinese power was also considered a major threat by 76 and 74 percent of South Korean and Japanese respondents, respectively, compared to 44 percent of U.S. respondents.

By contrast, 39 percent of Chinese respondents characterised U.S. power as a major threat. Significantly, 66 percent of South Koreans and 49 percent of Japanese, respectively, put the United States in the same category despite their country’s alliance status with Washington.