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UNH Survey Finds Trump and Sanders Supporters Differ on Key Scientific Fact

DURHAM, N.H. -- New Hampshire voters who support Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders for president differ sharply in their beliefs about the global rise in carbon dioxide (CO2) levels, a recent University of New Hampshire poll found. Trump supporters are much less likely (47 percent) than Sanders supporters (78 percent) to believe the well-established scientific observation that atmospheric CO2 levels have increased in recent decades.

Similar contrasts occurred when matching Trump vs. Biden voters (45 to 79 percent) and Trump vs. Clinton voters (46 to 78 percent).

The WMUR/CNN poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center asked voters who they would vote for if the 2016 presidential election was being held today (Trump vs. Sanders, Clinton and Biden) as well as a question about whether the concentration of CO2 in the Earth’s atmosphere is increasing, decreasing or staying about the same.

Putting together responses to the political and CO2 questions, researcher Lawrence Hamilton, a UNH sociologist and senior fellow at the Carsey School of Public Policy, noticed a 31-point gap between Sanders and Trump supporters. Seventy-eight percent of those who said they would vote for Sanders in that match-up, but only 47 percent of those favoring Trump, agreed with scientists that CO2 is increasing.

“Party-line divisions are a common finding now when surveys ask science or environmental questions,” Hamilton said. “What was unusual this time was the unplanned combination of a basic science question with pre-election match-ups in an early-primary state.”

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.
The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

Available for download:
Brief: https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/trump-and-sanders
Diagram 1: http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/10/images/img-2Figure 1.jpg
New Hampshire voters on a Trump vs. Sanders election
Diagram 2: http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/10/images/img-6Figure 2.jpg
New Hampshire voters on increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide

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