

## Survey Analysis

The following is an analysis of part of the student survey that was done by Prof. Kent Portney’s survey class during the fall semester 1999. 288 undergraduates were interviewed. The questionnaire included a total of 47 questions (some with several sub-questions). This analysis looks at the environmental questions that were asked in the survey with a special focus on climate change.

Three questions dealt directly with climate change:

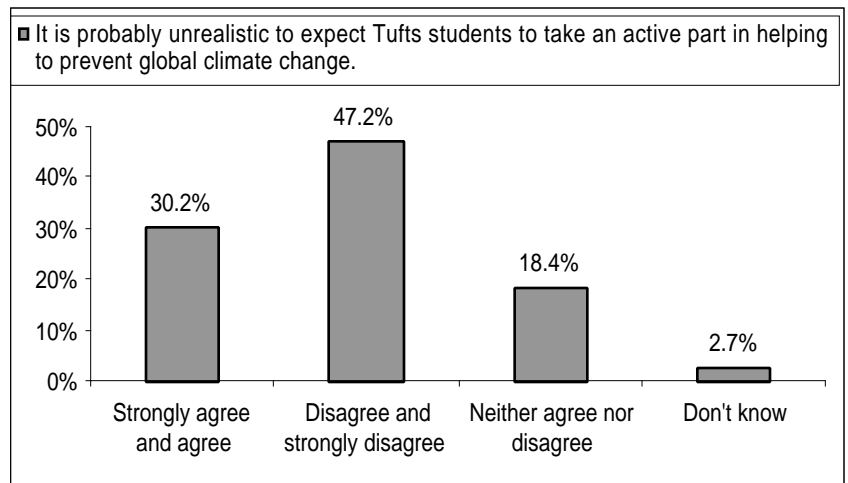
### 1. It is probably unrealistic to expect Tufts students to take an active part in helping to prevent global climate change.

A third of the students felt it was unrealistic to involve Tufts students actively in the fight against climate change. Almost half disagree. The wording of the question is open to interpretation. We don’t know, for what reasons a third of the students felt it was unrealistic. Some of the possible reasons could be that they feel that it is unfeasible because of:

- lack of knowledge: students would not know how to do it
- technical reasons: students do not have the means to change things
- students are not interested enough or too busy
- undesirable, because they felt such a demand would be inappropriate (e.g. because they are “climate skeptics”)
- organizational reasons: Tufts would not have the organizational capabilities to organize the students

The same is true for the almost 50% of students who felt it would be realistic. We do not know why and in what way they felt that it would be realistic. Maybe they simply expressed that they would approve of such efforts.

<b>It is probably unrealistic to expect Tufts students to take an active part in helping to prevent global climate change.</b>	
Strongly agree	3.1%
Agree	27.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	18.4%
Disagree	38.5%
Strongly disagree	8.7%
Don't know	2.7%



### 2. The US government should take an active role in the global effort to curb the problem of rapid climate change.

### 3. How concerned about global climate change do you think the average Tufts student is?

73.6% of the students agreed that the US government should actively combat climate change. Yet the interviewees felt that almost three quarters of the students are not or only slightly concerned by climate change. The survey only asked how concerned they felt other students were; it did not ask how concerned the students themselves felt.

The survey included no other questions that would have given more specific information about how much the students know about climate change (the scientific and the political aspects) or how important/serious they feel climate change is.

<b>The US government should take an active role in the global effort to curb the problem of rapid climate change.</b>	
Strongly agree	19.8%
Agree	53.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	13.2%
Disagree	7.6%
Strongly disagree	1.0%
Don't know	4.2%

<b>How concerned about global climate change do you think the average Tufts student is?</b>	
Very concerned	3.1%
Moderately concerned	19.8%
Slightly concerned	52.1%
Not at all concerned	19.4%
Don't know	4.9%
Not at all and slightly concerned	71.50%
Moderately and very concerned	22.90%
Don't know	4.9%

Several questions dealt with general environmental issues and environmental concern:

**A. Overall, how important would you say environmental issues are to you?**

**B. Which specific environmental issues are most important to you?**

288 students were asked this question. Multiple answers were allowed. A total of 302 answers were given. It is interesting to note that 20% of the interviewed students did not answer the question at all.

Climate change was mentioned most often (31% of the received answers). Pollution (including air and water pollution that were listed as separate items) was mentioned 24%. Third most frequently mentioned was deforestation and rainforest protection (13%/ 10%).

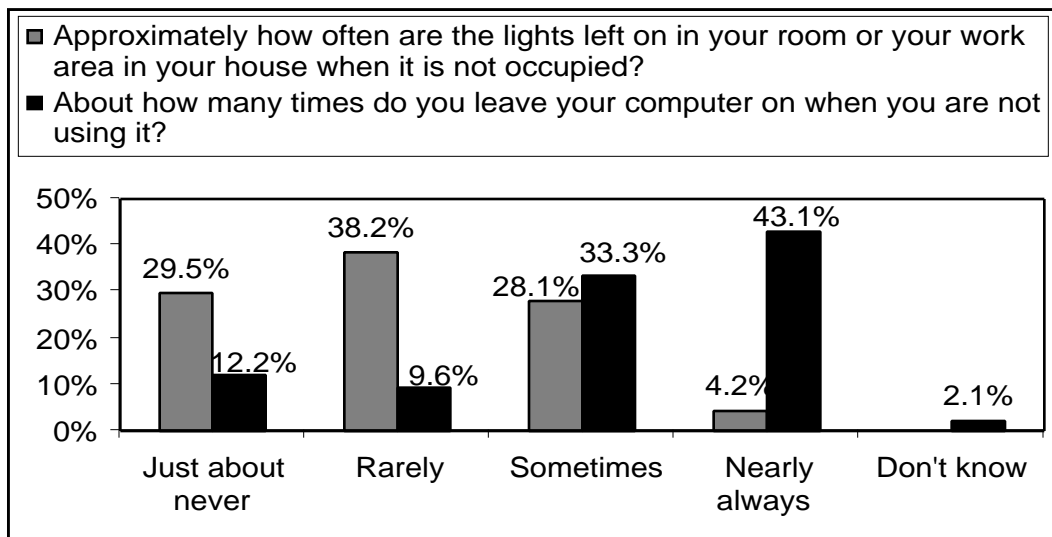
The high number with which climate change was mentioned has to be interpreted with caution. It was the only environmental issue that was mentioned several times before in this survey (population growth was mentioned once.) It is therefore likely that students mentioned climate change more often than they would have, had not been questioned about the issue beforehand.

<b>Overall, how important would you say environmental issues are to you?</b>	
Very important	30.2%
Moderately important	35.4%
Slightly important	31.3%
Not at all important	2.1%
Don't know	0.7%

Which specific environmental issues are most important to you?	Number of answers	% of total responses including missing answers	% of total responses without missing answers
Climate Change	93	24.60%	30.79%
Pollution (including water and air pollution)	72	19.05%	23.84%
Rainforest/ deforestation	39	10.32%	12.91%
Recycling	22	5.82%	7.28%
Population	20	5.29%	6.62%
Species and resource conservation	20	5.29%	6.62%
Ozone depletion	17	4.50%	5.63%
Others	9	2.38%	2.98%
Waste/ Toxic Waste	5	1.32%	1.66%
Water resources	3	0.79%	0.99%
Poverty	2	0.53%	0.66%
Missing	76	20.11%	N/A

A few questions dealt with peoples lifestyles and habits:

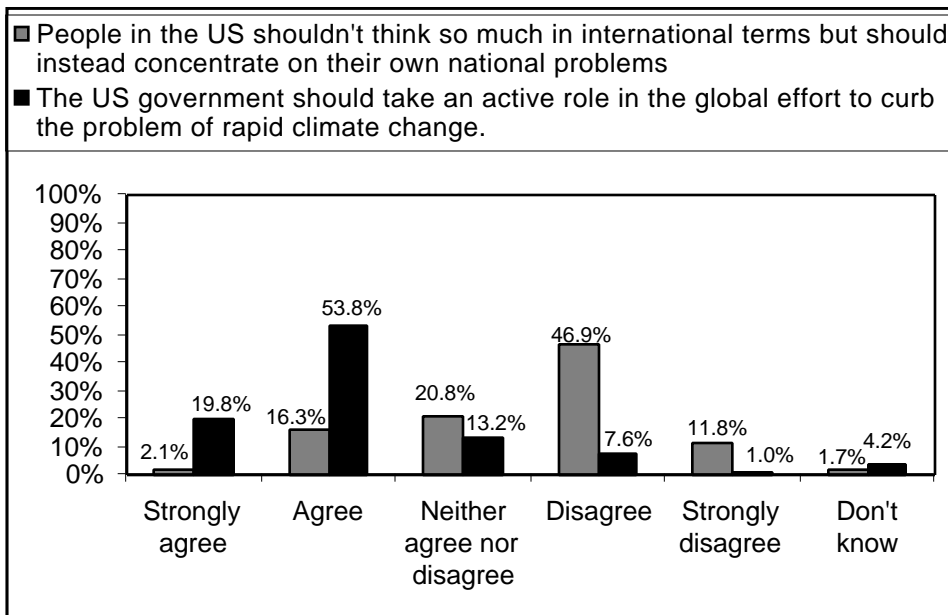
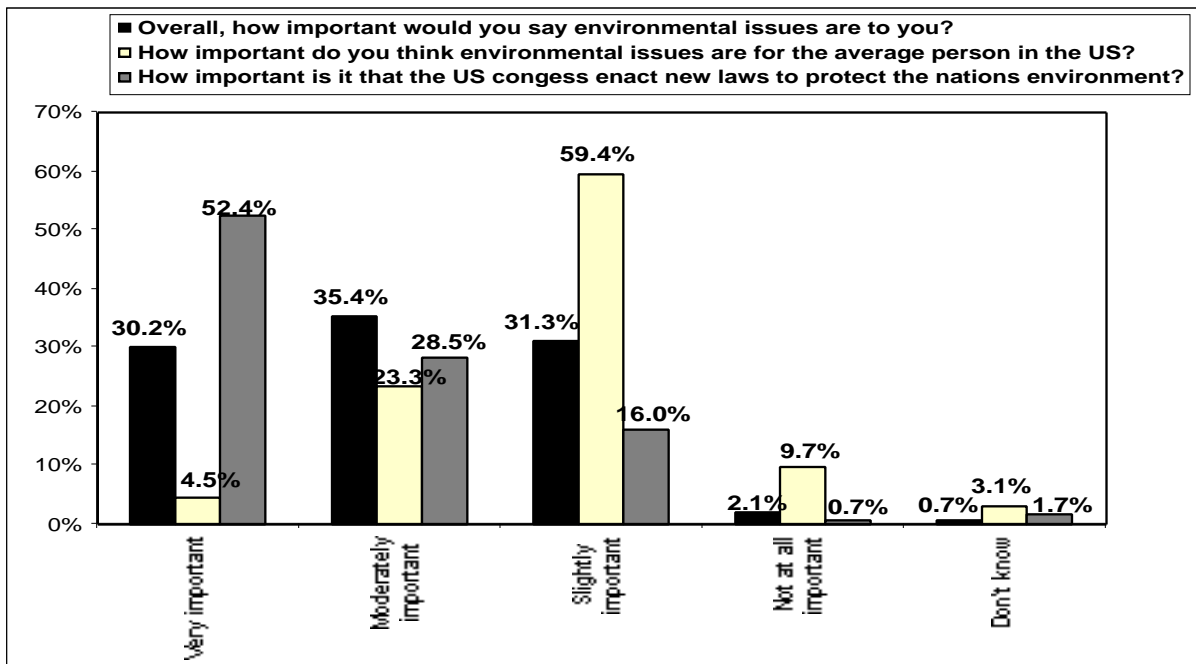
Environmental activities participated over the last year:	Yes	No
Lived in an environmentally responsible way (e.g. recycled, conserved energy, etc.)	91.9%	8.1%
Attended a meeting of an environmental group	21.5%	78.5%
Participated in a protest over an environmental issue	6.0%	94.0%
Contributed money to an environmental group or cause	29.5%	70.5%
Signed a petition about an environmental issue	49.5%	50.5%



The graph above shows the answers to question 30 and 31. It shows that although over 90% of students indicated that they participated in some environmentally friendly activity (most likely recycling) many

students are not very energy conscientious. Almost half of the students reported that they almost always leave their computer on, even when not using it. Almost 80% of the students leave their computer sometimes or nearly always on. The survey did not have any questions that would have indicated, if the students make a connection between energy consumption and climate change.

The survey also included some general questions about the environment (see graphs below). Tufts students feel that they are more environmentally concerned than the average American. Over two thirds feel that the environmental issues are of at least moderate importance to them. It is interesting that 80.1% of the students feel that it is at least moderately important that the US enact new environmental laws. This indicates that even students who are personally not that interested in environmental issues still feel that strong laws are important.



### **Conclusion**

It would be very interesting to conduct a follow-up survey which explored in more depth the student's knowledge and attitude towards climate change. Some issues that would be interesting to explore in such a survey would be:

- How much do the students know about climate change? (scientific and political aspects)?
- How much do they know about the solutions to climate change?
- How much do they care about climate change?(E.g. Making a list of what they feel the most pressing global issues are. This would indicate how they rank climate change among other issues. Having them rate different issues (among them climate change) would indicate how serious a problem they feel climate change is.)
- How much do they feel they can and should contribute to the fight against climate change?
- Do they know which of their actions contributes to climate change? Which activity would they be most willing to engage in?

If you would be interested in helping to organize such a study, please contact TCI at [tci@tufts.edu](mailto:tci@tufts.edu) or 617-627-5517.S