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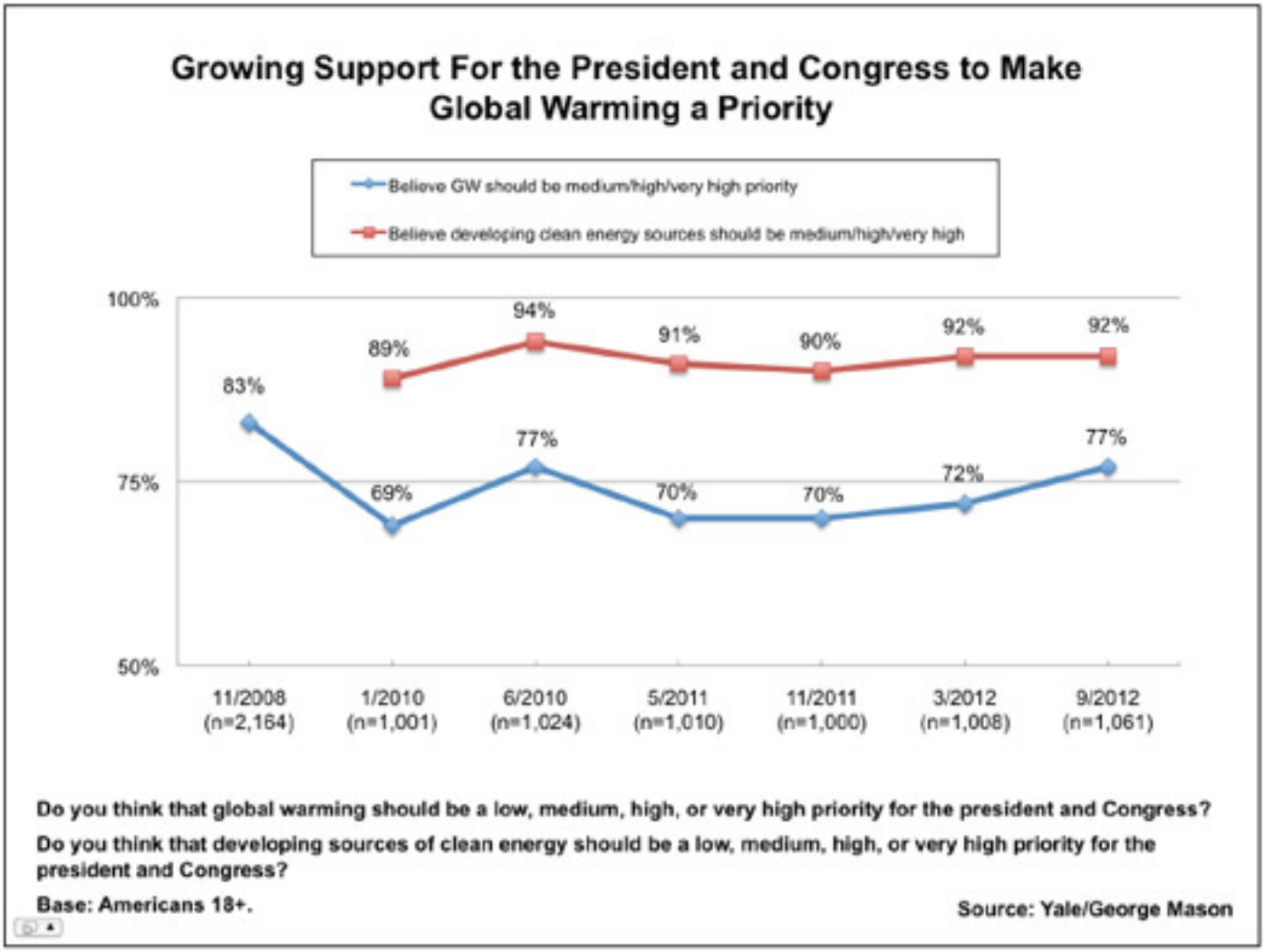

A recent study by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication shows that contrary to received wisdom, a majority of Americans view climate change as a crucial issue – and one that they want to see formal political action on.

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Among the highlights from the study:

- A large majority of Americans (77 percent) say global warming should be a “very high” (18 percent), “high” (25 percent), or “medium” priority (34 percent) for the president and Congress. One in four (23%) say it should be a low priority.
- Nearly all Americans (92 percent) say the president and the Congress should make developing sources of clean energy a “very high” (31 percent), “high” (38 percent), or “medium” priority (23 percent). Very few say it should be a low priority (8 percent).
- A large majority of Americans (88 percent) say the U.S. should make an effort to reduce global warming, even if it has economic costs. A plurality (44 percent) favors a medium-scale effort, even if it has moderate economic costs. One in four (24 percent) supports a large-scale effort even if there are large economic costs. And one in five (19 percent) supports a small-scale effort, even if it has small economic costs.
- Majorities also support funding more research into renewable energy sources (73 percent), providing tax rebates for people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels (73 percent), regulating carbon dioxide (CO_2) as a pollutant (66 percent), eliminating all subsidies for the fossil-fuel industry (59 percent), and expanding offshore drilling for oil and natural gas off the U.S. coast (58 percent).
- A majority of Americans say they would vote for a political candidate who supports a revenue neutral carbon tax if it created more American jobs in the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries (61 percent would support such a candidate), decreased pollution by encouraging companies to find less polluting alternatives (58 percent), or was used to pay down the national debt (52 percent).
- Asked who has influence on elected officials’ decisions about global warming, Americans think the big players are large campaign contributors (50 percent say they have “a lot” of influence) or fossil- fuel companies (42 percent). Fewer think renewable energy companies (23 percent), environmentalists (22 percent), or climate scientists (20 percent) have a lot of influence on elected officials.

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