

are rife. These debates are further complicated by the gap between scientific and public perceptions regarding climate change. Though scientific opinions regarding climate change are nearly unanimous, almost 60% of the American public report that they either believe climate change is not caused by humans or unsure about the issue (Marlon et al., 2013). Thus, organizational communication is implicated in the representation of ideas about climate change to the general public.

Organizational communication is also important in dealing with many of the effects of global warming, such as the increased incidence of forest fires and extreme weather events. For example, Silverstein (2012) questions whether organizations such as public utilities have the decision-making capability and infrastructure needed to deal with serious disasters such as hurricanes. Finally, addressing global warming and climate change can open up opportunities for businesses that want to raise their level of environmental responsibility and sell themselves as “green” companies to consumers. Although there is debate about the extent to which “going green” is a move that businesses should take for the overriding goal of protecting the planet (Marcus & Fremeth, 2009) or only when it can affect the bottom line (Siegel, 2009), it is clear that an increasing number of organizational executives are making decisions about their businesses with environmental considerations in mind.

Thus, the field of organizational communication must be ready to deal with the complex questions that stem from climate change and global warming, including:

- How can organizations reinvent themselves to reduce or eliminate their contributions to global warming?
- How can government representatives engage in productive debate about ways nations can work together to influence climate change?
- How can entrepreneurs address the “greening of organizations” as an opportunity for both profit and social responsibility?
- As climate change increasingly affects local weather events and patterns, how should local, state, national, and international agencies coordinate their activities to cope with the human consequences of global warming?
- How do organizational and government representatives speak to various publics about ways in which energy policy and practices influence the environment?
- How can organizations effectively enhance awareness of the ways in which individuals can make a difference in influencing the process of climate change?

Changing Demographics

Compared to issues like globalization, terrorism, and climate change, the concept of **demographics** sounds pretty tame. Demographics refer to statistical descriptions of characteristics of a population, such as age, race, income, educational attainment, and so on. In one sense, these descriptions are simplistic, but they are also undeniably important. Demographics describe who we are in the most basic of terms and thus can have a foundational impact on how we communicate with each other, how we organize, and how we address critical problems in our social world as well as what those problems are in a given time and place.