

Introduction

The global temperature has rose more than 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit from 1880 until today. We are in the midst of an environmental crisis formally known as global climate change. This crisis is resulted from unsustainable human actions from over consumption and an increase in pollution. It's not just an ecological issue, but a social justice issue as well. These actions are on pace to displace thousands in impoverished communities. This is why the Catholic Church felt the need to address this climate crisis and propose a solution.

In order to solve this global crisis, Pope Francis suggested a shift from addressing climate change in a political matter to addressing it as a moral issue. With that being said, how effective can a global statement given by a high religious authority, on climate change, influence global human behavior? If the global population can recognize the climate change crisis as a social justice issue, we might expect to see more aggressive action to be taken to change human behavior.



"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change."

- Pope Francis

Results

Global Responses and Actions:

Responses were greatly divided based on political backgrounds.

Community Responses from a Private Catholic Institution:

The CSB/SJU community has already taken initiative on this solution. As a liberal arts institution, we are taught how to critically evaluate evidence and arguments centered on the interrelations between all subjects. This type of thinking is deeply tied to Pope Francis' argument.

Individual Responses from a Private Catholic Institution:

The majority of the survey responses agreed with Pope Francis statements. Therefore, one can argue that, within this community, the encyclical was well respected within the CSB/SJU community. Results to two of the question Table 1.

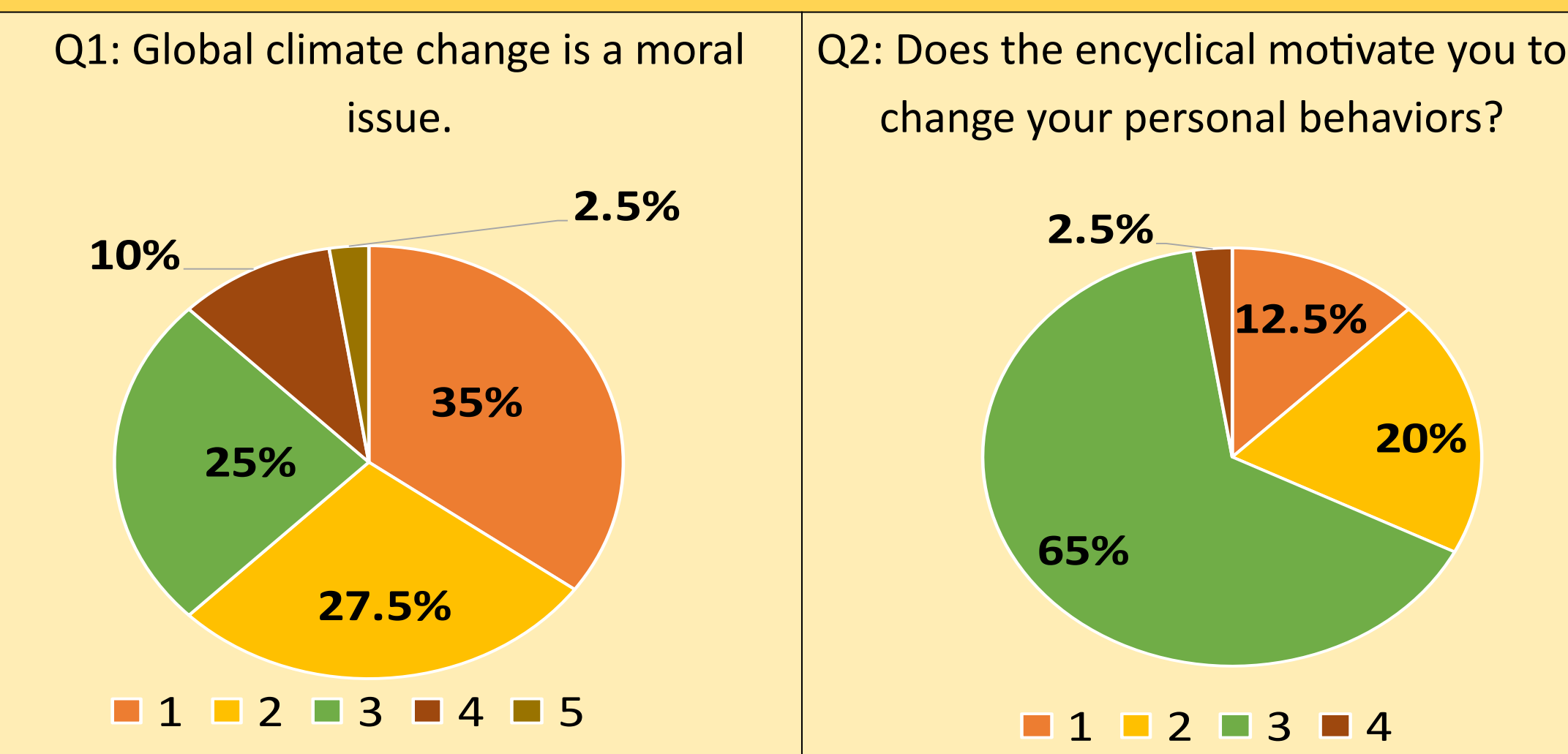
Encyclicals throughout History:

Past encyclicals may not have effectively changed the actions of Catholics every time, but they have triggered different responses throughout history .

Methods

- I investigated the basis of his argument within the context of this encyclical.
- I analyzed responses at a global, community, and at an individual level.
 - Global- newspaper articles and primary source journals to gain this information.
 - Community- magazine articles
 - Individual- conducted a survey, asking 40 students at CSB/SJU their initial responses to many quotes from the encyclical and if they would change their unsustainable behavior because of the quotes.
- I compared and contrasted Francis' encyclical to other encyclicals from the past Popes.
- Counted the number of newspaper hits "Papal Encyclical" received since 1881.

Table 1. Data received by individual CSB/SJU students, based on Likert-five point scale. 1- Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neither, 4- Disagree, and 5- Strongly Agree



"Environmental problems occur because of the interaction between human and the natural world, so we must include both scientific and social aspects when we seek solutions."

-Judy Purman (CSB director of sustainability)



Vatican City has over 24,000 solar panels



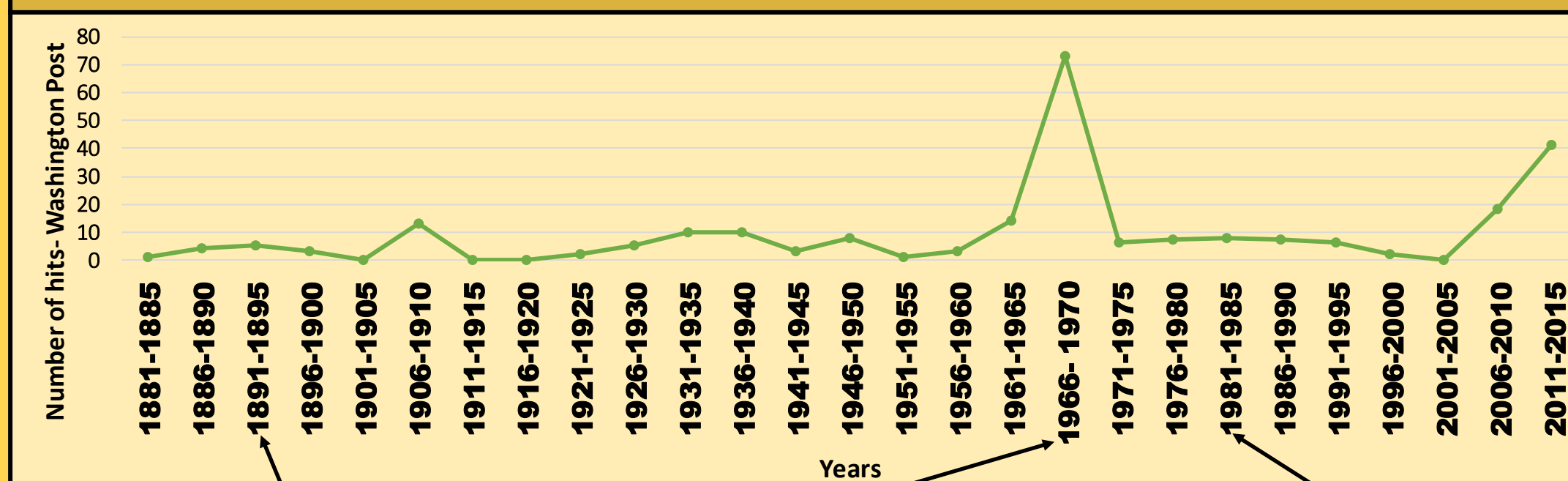
Pope Francis and President Obama

Content of *Laudato Si'*

An **encyclical** is a document written by the Pope addressed to a general circulation, composed of influential teaching written on behalf of a global justice issue of the time.

To start off, Pope Francis' recognizes that our human/nature relationship is not sustainable. He backs this up with ecological data about the causes of Climate Change. The second section is where Pope Francis states his solution. He suggests that the "people of all good" should consider some elements of integral ecology or the interconnections between people, class, culture, generations, and of course the environment. In order for this solution to happen, he suggests we invest in strong leadership and educators, as well as pass regulatory laws at a global and local level.

Encyclicals Throughout History (Case Study)



Rerum Novarum Pope Leo XIII

- The rights and duties of capital and labor workers

Humanae Vitae Pope Paul VI

- Forbidding artificial contraceptives

Redemptor Hominis Pope John Paul II

- The deeper understanding of the human person

Conclusion

From the information I gathered, I can argue that a high religious authority can have an impact on the people and their recognition of the environment. Any politically addressed or in this case religiously addressed issue will always lead to some controversy, but because Pope Francis' argument showed the social justice side of climate change, many people have been more influenced to change their behavior as seen in my student surveys. I will not know the amount of impact in which the encyclical brings because it takes time to create strong leaders and global influential policies. We could see policies being formed in the up and coming global climate change conference in Paris this December as a result. As for now, this document has opened the door for other rising environmental issues to be discussed within the church.