

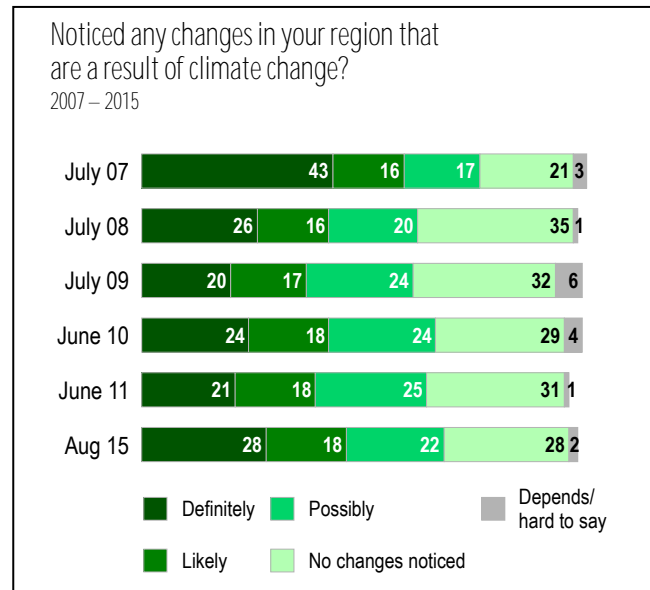
Reality of climate change

Despite growing evidence of climate change, including record breaking weather, fewer than three in ten Canadians are sure they are seeing climate change happening where they live. As in 2014, six in ten are convinced that climate change is for real and human caused, compared with one in ten who remains skeptical.

Evidence of local climate changes. The scientific consensus on the reality of society-induced climate change continues to solidify, and is consistent with unusual weather patterns in almost every part of the globe (e.g., record temperatures, drought, extreme storms). But most Canadians have yet to witness what they consider to be definitive evidence of climate change where they live.

Just under three in ten (28%) Canadians say they have “definitely” noticed changes where they live which they ascribe to climate change. This proportion is up modestly from 2011 (up 7 points), but remains well below the number who expressed this opinion in 2007 (43%) when climate change had a much more significant media profile.

Among those not convinced about local climate effects, four in ten believe they likely (18%) or possibly (22%) are taking place, while another 28 percent do not believe there have been any climate-related changes in their part of the country.

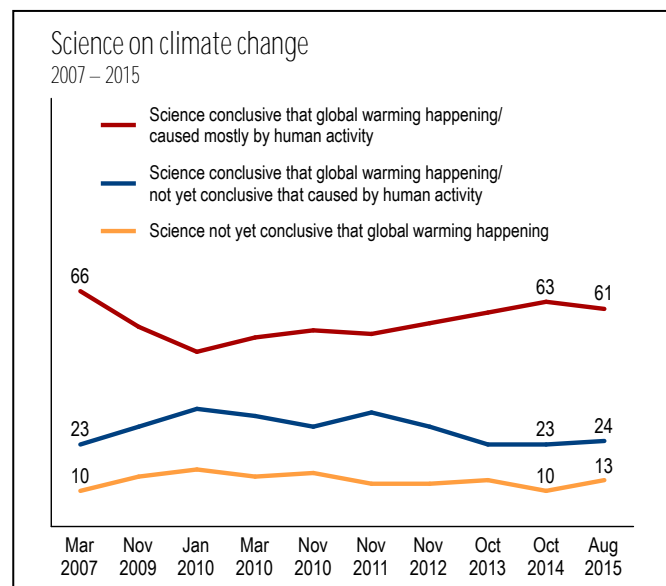


Across the country, the most significant increase in perceptions of local climate change effects is in B.C., where 44 percent now say this is definite (up 25 points since 2011, possibly due to this year’s extensive drought). Smaller increases are evident in Atlantic Canada (up 10), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (up 9) and Ontario (up 7), while unchanged in Quebec and Alberta. Reports of definite climate changes are up in all age cohorts, but most significantly among Canadians 18 to 24 (up 15 points).

Climate change is a politically partisan issue, and this extends to perceptions about evidence of local area climate changes. Definite changes are most likely to be reported by Canadians who currently support the Federal Green Party (39%), followed by the NDP (31%) and Liberal Party (31%), and those currently undecided (28%). In contrast, only 18% of Conservative Party supporters share this view, compared with 44 percent who believe no such changes have taken place in their area [note: there is no trend data on this question by Federal party support].

Is the science conclusive? New evidence and disruptive weather has not had a noticeable impact on public views about the reality of climate change.

Six in ten (61%) Canadians believe the scientific evidence is conclusive and that climate change is primarily caused by human activity.



This number is down marginally since 2014 (when it stood at 63%), ending a gradual upward trend dating back to 2011. The comparable percentage among Americans is 52 percent, and has also held steady over the past several years (from a March 2015 survey by the Yale Project on Climate Change).

Just under one in four (24%, up 1) say climate change is real but is yet to be convinced about the main cause, while roughly one in 10 (13%, up 3) remains skeptical about the science (the comparable US figure is 18%).

This overall stability in opinions over the past year mask notable shifts in subgroups of the population, in some cases reversing previous trends. Acceptance of the science has increased among youth (to 78%, up 11 points), among residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (up 12), Vancouverites (up 9) and Canadians without a high school diploma (up 8). By comparison, this view has declined among women (down 5), Canadians 35 and older (down 5), Quebecers (down 11) and university graduates (down 6).

The survey reveals the importance of local experience in shaping opinions about climate change: Belief in the certainty of the science is expressed by 82 percent of those who believe they have witnessed local area climate changes, compared with only 37 percent of those who have not seen such evidence.

Acceptance of the scientific evidence on climate change continues to be strongly influenced by political party preference, but the past year has seen a modest drop in such acceptance among Opposition Party supporters, while remaining unchanged among Conservative Party supporters and those who remain undecided. Belief in the scientific reality of climate change remains strongest among NDP and Green Party supporters (72% each), and lowest among Conservative Party supporters (43%; compared with 23% who are climate skeptics).