

“As Americans Experienced the Warmest May on Record Their Acceptance of Global Warming Reaches a New High”

A Report From the National Surveys on Energy and The Environment (NSEE)

July 2018

Key Findings:

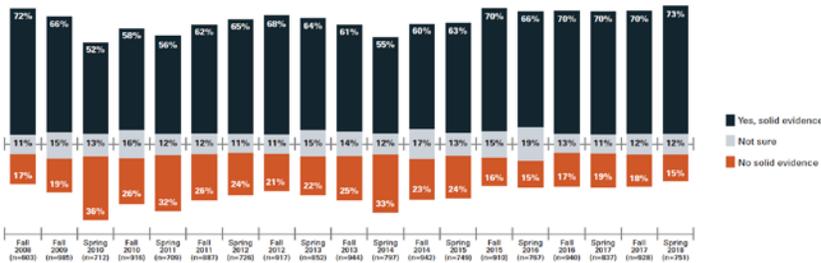
1. More Americans think that there is solid evidence of global warming than at anytime since 2008 with 73% maintaining this view in the latest version of the NSEE conducted in late April and May of 2018.
2. A record 60% of Americans now think that global warming is happening and that humans are at least partially responsible for the rising temperatures.
3. While half of Republicans think that there is solid evidence of global warming, the divide between the 90% of Democrats that hold this view and the 50% of Republicans that maintain this position is as large as anytime since 2008.
4. The divide between Democrats and Republicans on the existence of anthropogenic induced global warming is also at record levels with 78% of Democrats now holding the view that humans are at least partially responsible for warming on the planet compared to only 35% of Republicans.

Summary:

Over the course of the last 10 years the National Surveys on Energy and the Environment (NSEE) has fielded 19 surveys in which Americans have been asked if they believe there is solid evidence of global warming. In the latest version of this ongoing research initiative from the University of Michigan and Muhlenberg College, a larger percentage of Americans reported that there is solid evidence of global warming than at any time since the survey began in the fall of 2008. This record level of acceptance of global warming came as the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that May of 2018 was the warmest in the continental United States since records began to be kept in 1895¹.

The most recent NSEE survey, which was fielded through late April and much of May of 2018, found that 73% of Americans now think there is solid evidence of global warming. This 73% level of acceptance surpassed the previous record level of 72% that was found in the initial NSEE survey during the fall of 2008, and marks the fifth straight survey that at least 70% of Americans think that there is evidence that temperatures on the planet are rising. As can be seen in *Figure 1*, only 15% of Americans report that they do not think there is solid evidence of global warming, matching the lowest level previously found in the Spring of 2016.

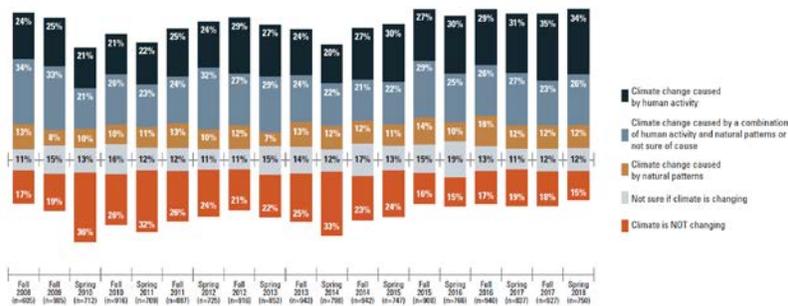
FIGURE 1. American Views on Evidence of Global Warming 2008-2018



Question: From what you've read and heard. Is there solid evidence that the average temperature on earth has been getting warmer over the past four decades?

The record level of acceptance of global warming by Americans was accompanied by the highest percentage of Americans that believe human activity is at least partially responsible for the warming that is being experienced. The most recent NSEE found 60% of Americans believe that humans are either primarily (34%) or partially responsible (26%) for the warming of the planet. The 60% level of belief that humans are contributing to global warming surpasses the previous record of 58% that was established in [NSEE waves in 2008, 2009 and 2017](#). (see Figure 2).

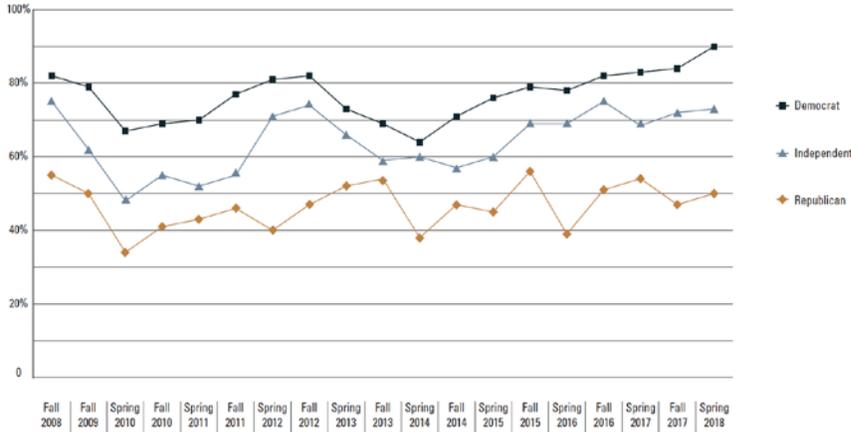
FIGURE 2. American Views on the Existence and Causes of Climate Change 2008-2018



The role of party affiliation in determining American views on the existence and causes of global warming has been one of the most salient findings of NSEE studies

over the past decade. The divide between Democrats, Republicans and independents in regards to multiple aspects of global warming has been significant over the past decade and the most recent findings indicate this divide is large and modestly widening. In terms of acceptance of global warming the divide between Democrats and Republicans in the latest NSEE iteration was as large as anytime in the last decade with a 40% gap: 90% of Democrats think there is solid evidence of global warming while 50% of Republicans maintain this same view (see *Figure 3*). This 40% difference matches the previous record divide that was measured in the spring of 2012.

FIGURE 3. Percent of American that Believe there is Solid Evidence of Global Warming, by Party Affiliation



The Spring 2018 NSEE findings also indicate significant divides between Democrats and Republicans on the underlying causes of global warming. While the latest findings show a record 78% of Democrats now believe that global warming is happening and humans are at least partially responsible for the increased temperatures (see *Figure 4*), only 35% of Republicans maintain the same beliefs (see *Figure 5*). Notably, a smaller percentage (35%) of Republicans now believe that humans are at least somewhat responsible for global warming than a decade ago when 39% of those affiliating with the GOP maintained that position.

FIGURE 4. Democrat Views on the Existence and Causes of Climate Change

2008-2018

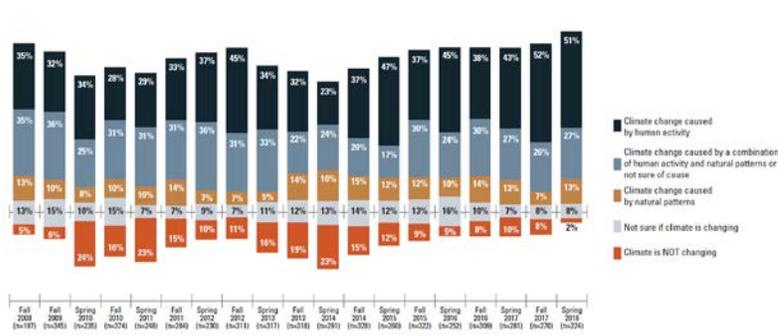
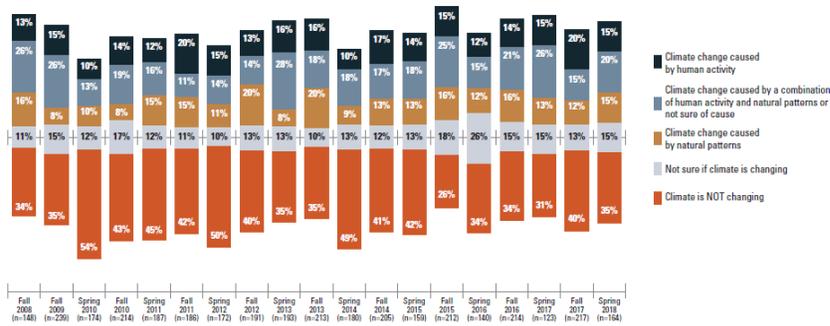


FIGURE 5. Republican Views on the Existence and Causes of Climate Change 2008-2018



Notes

1. [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\). \(2018\). *Contiguous U.S. had its warmest May on record*. Washington, D.C.: NOAA. Retrieved from: <http://www.noaa.gov/news/contiguous-us-had-its-warmest-may-on-record>](http://www.noaa.gov/news/contiguous-us-had-its-warmest-may-on-record)

Methodology:

The following report contains the results of a telephone survey of 751 adult ([age 18 or older](#)) residents of the United States between April 29 and May 25, 2018. Respondents were interviewed in English on both land lines (146) and cell phones (605) by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion (MCIPO) in Allentown, Pennsylvania on the Institute's Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. With a randomly selected sample of 751 respondents the margin of error for the surveys is +/- 4% at a 95% level of confidence. Margins of error for questions with smaller sample size will be larger. In addition to sampling error, one should consider that question wording and other fielding issues could introduce error or bias into survey results. The sample data has been weighted by gender, race, age, income and educational attainment to reflect those population characteristics of the United States as reported by the United States Census Bureau for 2016. The calculation of sampling error takes into account design effects due to the weighting identified above. In order to reach a representative sample of Americans both land lines and cell phones are called up to 5 times. The response rate for this survey as calculated using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) RRII formula is 8%. Due to rounding the totals provided in the frequency report may not total 100%. The survey instrument was constructed by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion and the Center for State, Local and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) of the University of Michigan. The survey was funded exclusively by Muhlenberg College and the University of Michigan. For more detailed information on the methods employed please contact the MCIPO at 484-664-3066 or email Dr. Christopher P. Borick at cborick@muhlenberg.edu.

Deleted: 9%