

Dueling realities? Age, political ideology divide Canadians over cause & threat of climate change

Past Conservative voters significantly more likely to say climate change is a theory not yet proven

November 30, 2018 – With Canada's place recently reconfirmed among the world's [largest greenhouse gas emitters](#), the Trudeau government finds itself under increased pressure and scrutiny in the wake of a United Nations report stating this nation will [fall short](#) of emission reduction goals.

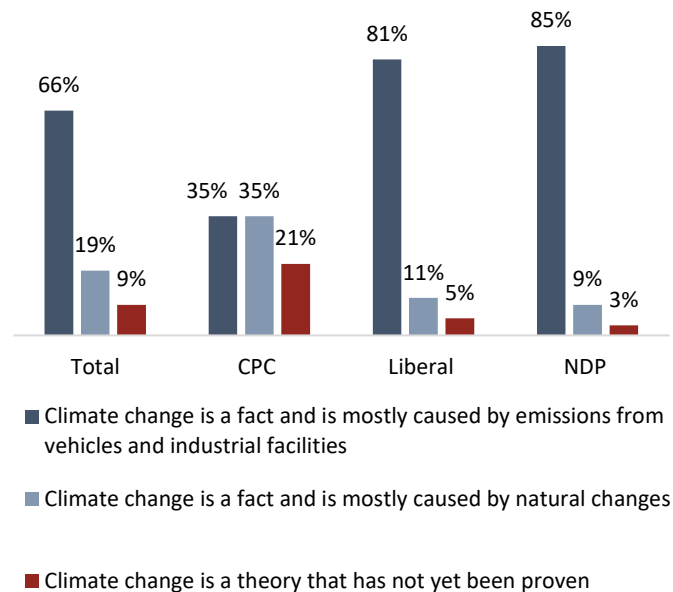
But with just over one month until the implementation of a federal carbon tax ostensibly aimed at reducing Canada's carbon footprint, new public opinion data from the Angus Reid Institute finds one-in-three Canadians skeptical about whether climate change is a fact caused by human activity.

Demographic differences between Canadians on age and political ideology largely drive differences on this quarrelsome issue.

For example, 18 to 34-year-old Canadians appear to carry a heightened sense of gravity than older respondents regarding the threat from climate change.

And while more than four-in-five past Liberal and New Democrat voters believe climate change is a fact, (81% and 85% respectively), this drops to just one-third of those who voted for the Conservative party in 2015.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 24 – 29 among a representative randomized sample of 1,500 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

More Key Findings:

- Half of Canadians (49%) say that they have noticed significant changes to their local climate. Another 37 per cent say that they think they have noticed changes, but not major ones
- Nine-in-ten Canadians say that they believe the global temperature is rising. This slips to 71 per cent among past Conservative voters and rises to near unanimity among past Liberals (95%) and New Democrats (96%)

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- While three-quarters of Canadians say that something can be done to reduce climate change globally, they are less convinced they, themselves, can have an impact. Overall, six-in-ten (61%) say they feel they can personally help – this sentiment is highest in Quebec (80%)

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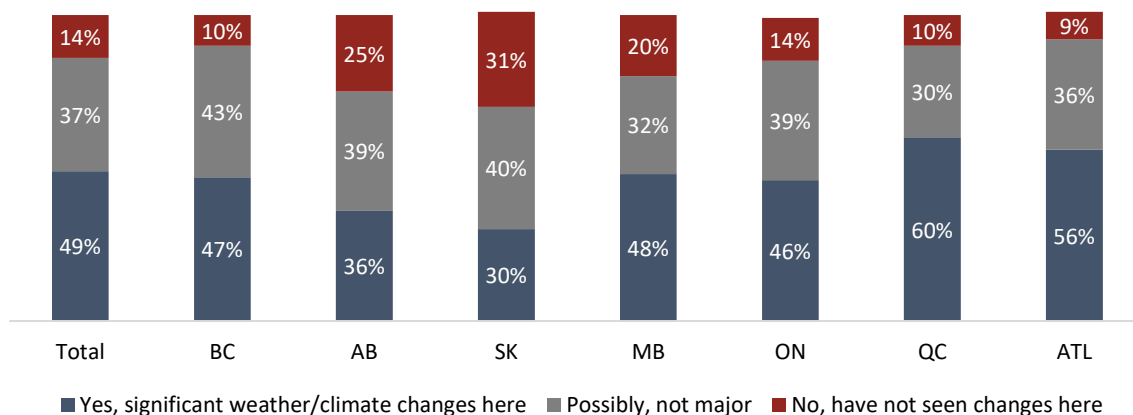
- **Noticed changes to the weather?**
 - Is the global temperature rising?
- **Young people more concerned about potential threat from rising temperatures**
- **Climate change: Real? Natural? Human-caused?**
- **Most say they can help reduce climate change at a personal level**
 - Majority of CPC voters say something can be done, but not by themselves

Noticed changes to the weather?

One of the hypothesized impacts of climate change is a changing of the weather. Proponents of climate change will note that all 20 of the hottest years on record have come in the past 30 years. Storms have become more violent, and coastlines are shrinking. But have Canadians noticed changes in their own communities and neighbourhoods?

Half of respondents (49%) across the country, and at least three-in-ten in every region, say that they have notice a significant change to the weather that they believe are attributable to human caused climate change. Alongside them, another four-in-ten (37%) say that they have possibly noticed a change, but it isn't something that they consider to be major. Just 14 per cent of Canadians say they haven't noticed a difference in recent years. Saskatchewan residents are most likely to say they have no seen any changes, while Quebec residents are most certain that they have:

Have you noticed changes in weather patterns where you live which you consider to be part of human caused climate change?

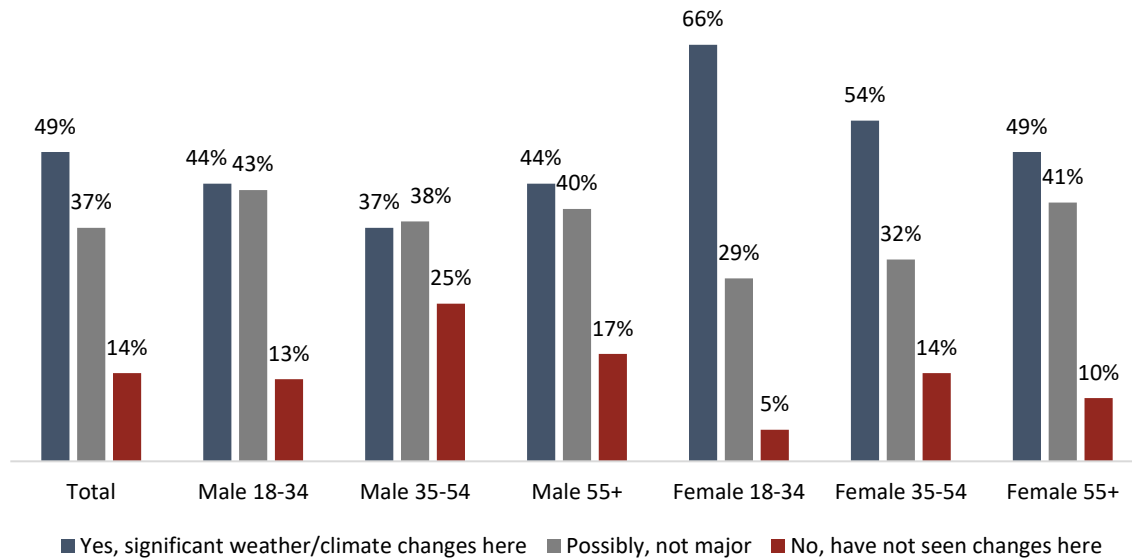


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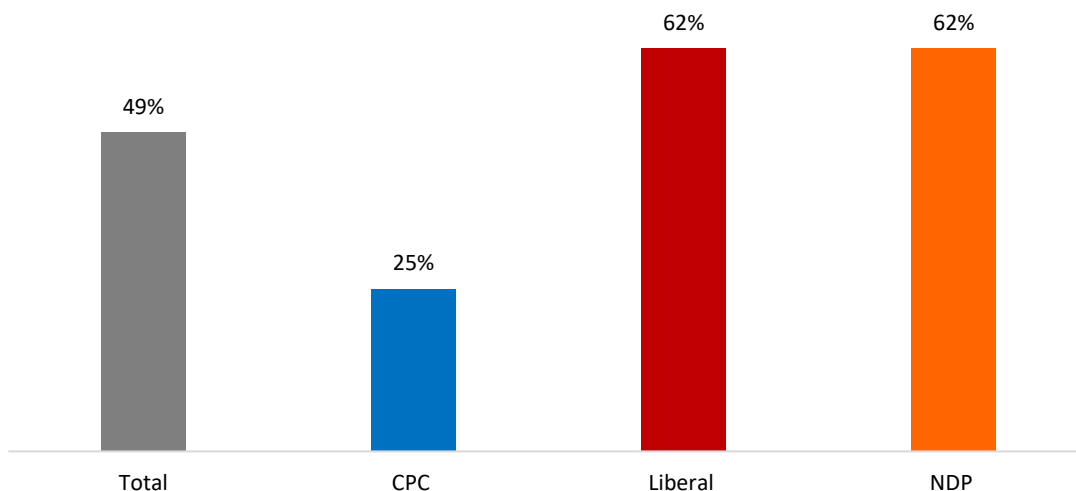
There are varied opinions on this question between men and women, and across generations. For example, two-thirds of young women (66%) say they have seen significant changes, while fewer than four-in-ten males from generation-X hold this view. Women across all age groups are more likely to say changes to the weather are evident to them:

Have you noticed changes in weather patterns where you live which you consider to be part of human caused climate change?



Across political lines, six-in-ten (62%) past centre-left voters say they have noticed a significant change, more than twice the number of past Conservative voters who say the same:

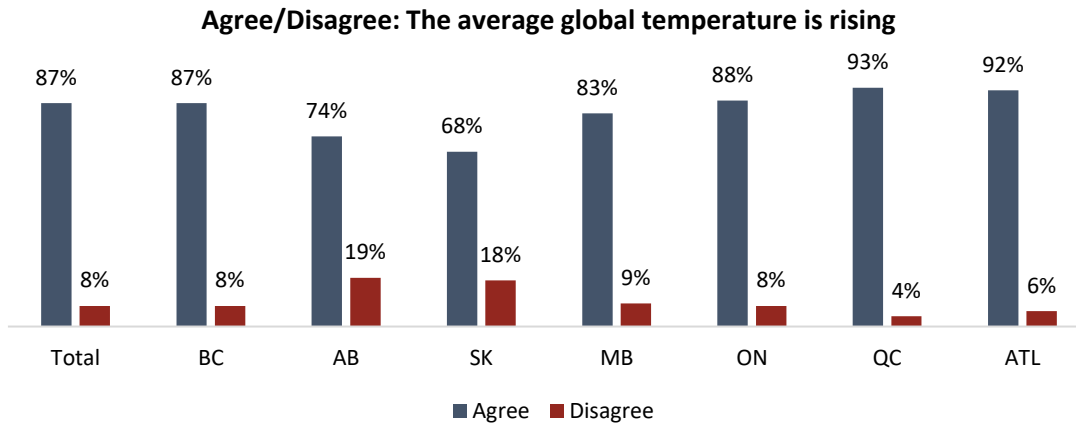
Have noticed significant weather/climate changes in their region



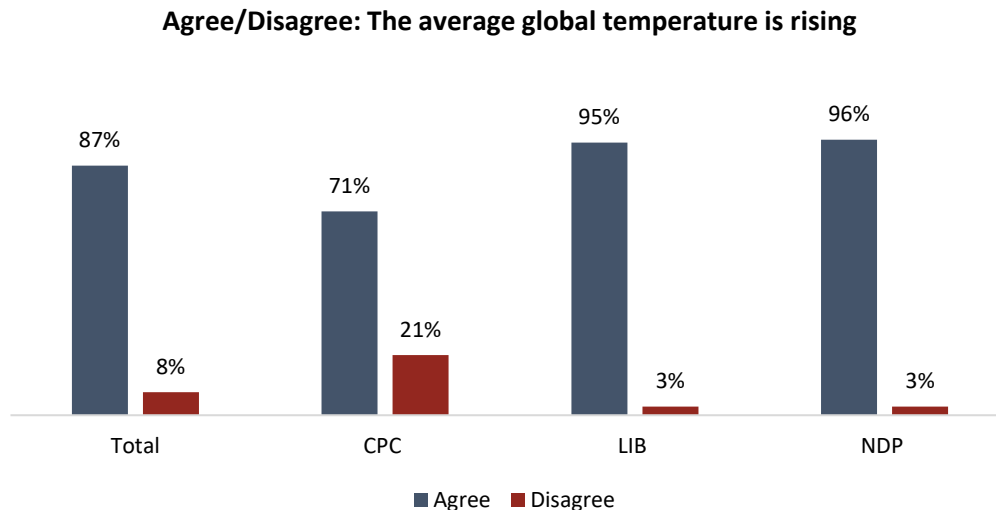
Is the global temperature rising?

Regardless of what they may have noticed themselves, asked whether they agree or disagree that the global temperature is indeed rising, consensus is more easily found: 87 per cent of Canadians agree.

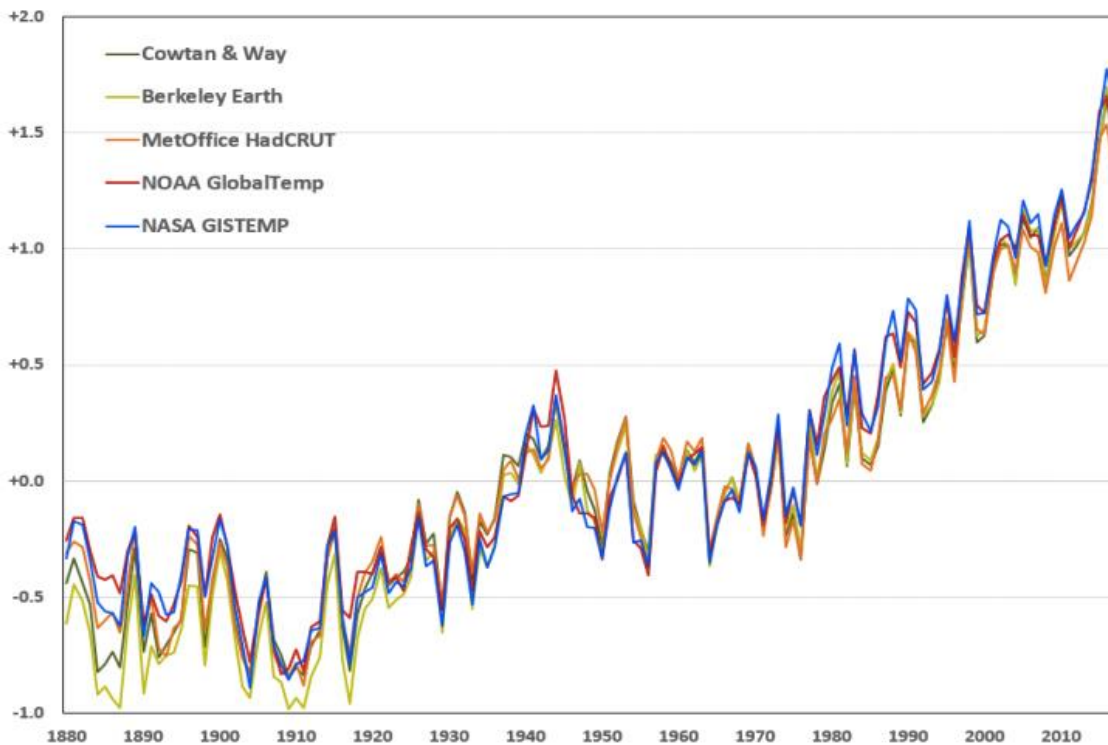
This sentiment is almost unanimous in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, dropping to a lesser, but still significant majority in Alberta and Saskatchewan:



Federal voting patterns in those provinces correlate with views on this issue when viewed through a political lens. While significant majorities among the bases of all three major political parties agree that the earth is getting hotter, fully one-fifth (21%) of past Conservatives disagree, compared to just three per cent of past Liberals and New Democrats:



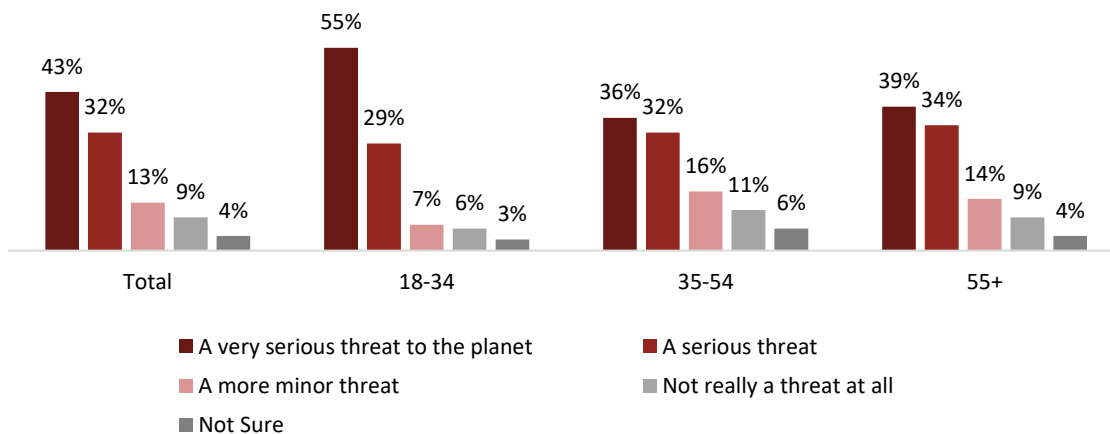
In terms of data available on this topic, several international monitoring agencies agree that indeed, the global temperature is rising:



Young people more concerned about potential threat from rising temperatures

Asked whether they consider climate change a threat or not, more than half of 18 to 34-year-olds (55%) say they believe it to be very serious. Overall, just one-in-ten Canadians (9%) say that they do not perceive a threat.

How much of a threat, if any, do you think climate change poses for planet Earth? Is it:



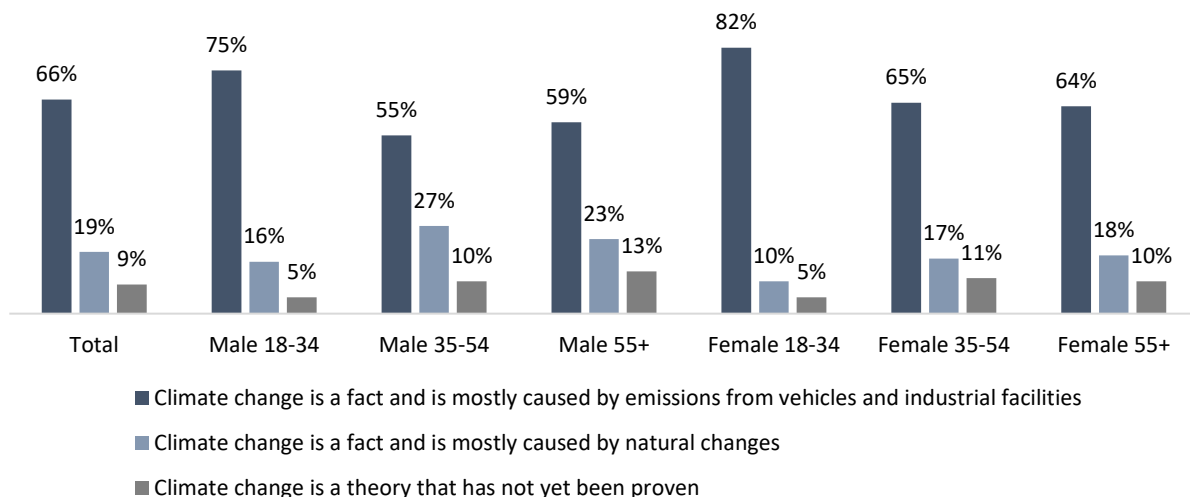
Climate change: Real? Natural? Human-caused?

Debates about climate change are likely to roil both sides. In Canada, the pending implementation of a federal carbon tax for jurisdictions unwilling to create their own emissions reduction plan has increased the profile and temperature of the domestic debate. At the federal level, each of the three major federal parties say they support reaching the Paris Agreement’s targets, though the Liberal government’s plans are reported to be insufficient according to a recent [United Nations report](#) and the Conservatives have [yet to offer any details](#) of what path they would take if in power.

Related - Carbon Pricing: Rebate announcement tips opinion in favour of federal plan, slim majority now support it

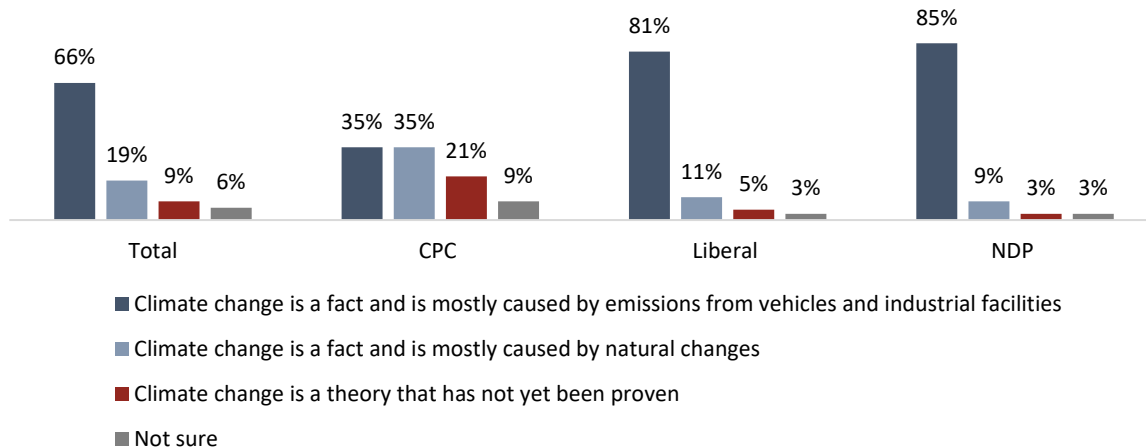
A full majority of all age and gender cohorts in this country express agreement that climate change is a fact and mostly caused by human activity, though men over the age of 35 are more inclined to believe that changes are natural:

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



One-in-three past CPC voters say they believe that global warming is primarily due to human activities. The same number say that they believe in the principle of global warming, but that it is a natural process. Three-in-ten Conservatives either disagree (21%) or remain unsure (9%) that that climate change is a fact. This stands in stark contrast to views among those who cast ballots for the NDP or the Liberal Party in the 2015 election:

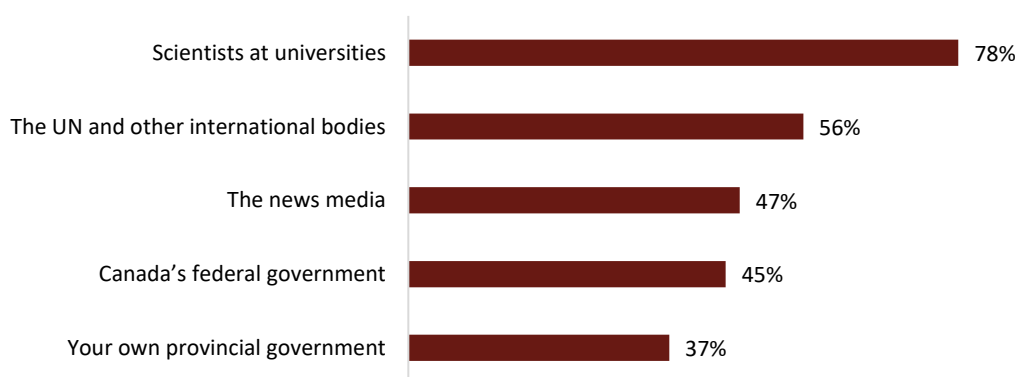
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



Another key issue of this issue is trust. Indeed, when asked who carries the most credence when it comes to information about climate change, Canadians are most likely to choose university scientists – eight-in-ten (78%) do. Proponents of action on climate change have often cited the scientific consensus, which suggests that warming trends are *extremely likely* due to human activity. A majority of Canadians (56%) also say they trust international bodies doing work on this topic.

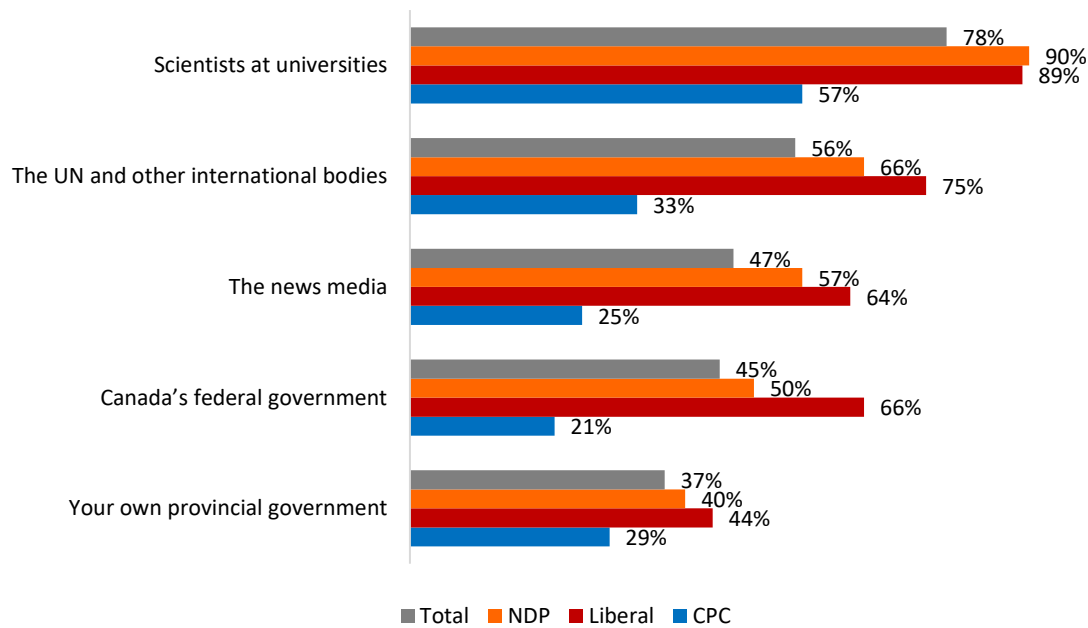
However, fewer than half say they trust the news media (47%) and their federal government (45%) on this subject, while under four-in-ten (37%) say they have faith in their own provincial government:

When it comes to information about climate change and global warming, how much do you personally trust each of the following:



There are again, notable differences on this question when viewed through the lens of past political preferences:

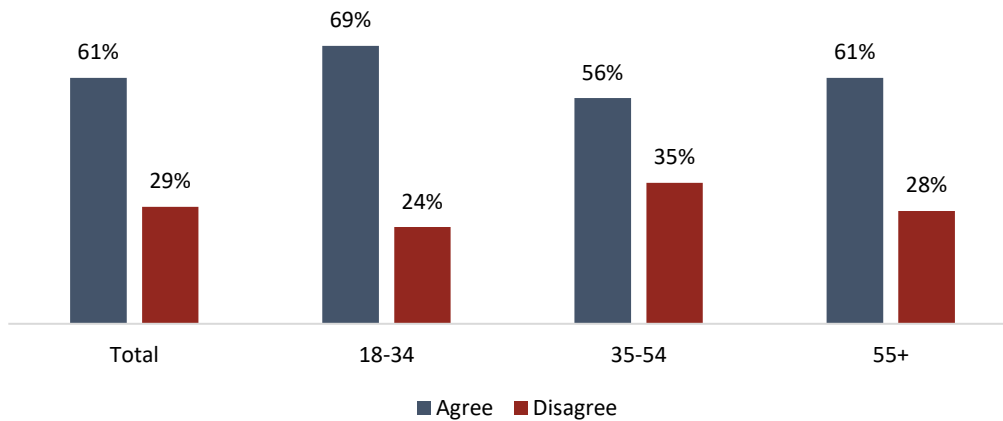
**When it comes to information about climate change and global warming, how much do you personally trust each of the following:
(among past major party voters)**



Most say they can help reduce climate change at a personal level

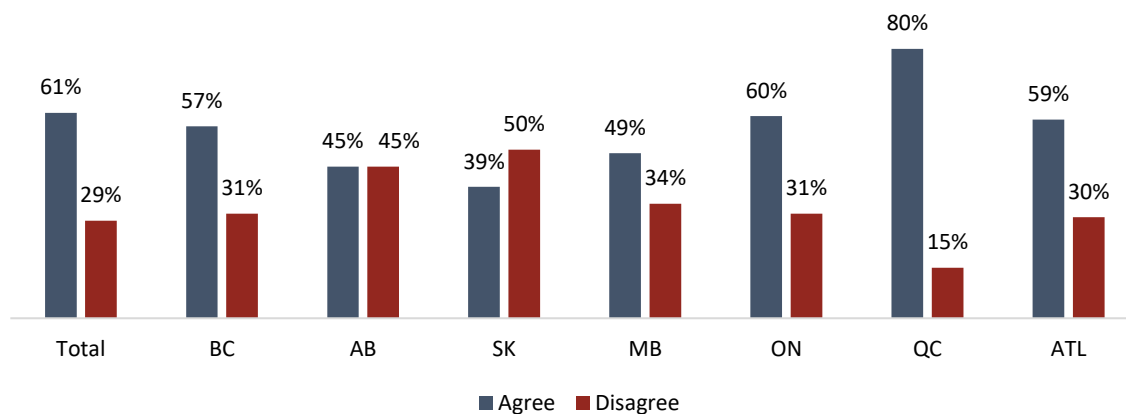
If climate change is indeed a threat and emission reductions are a necessary component of mitigation, Canadians are generally positive about the role they can play personally. Overall, Canadians are twice (61% to 29%) as likely to say there *is* a role they can play as individuals in efforts to reduce global warming. While younger Canadians are most likely to say they can make a difference, a full majority across each generation say they have something to offer:

Agree/Disagree "I feel I personally can help reduce global warming"



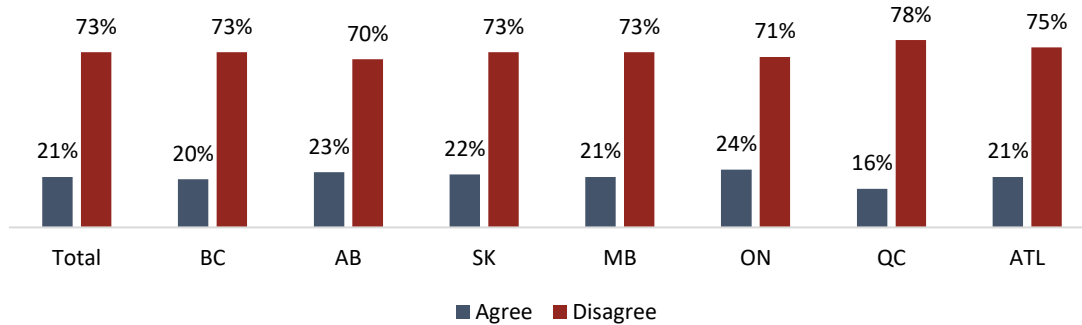
Perspectives differ widely by region however, with Saskatchewan residents leaning toward disagreement, Albertans divided, and Quebec residents most bullish:

Agree/Disagree: "I feel I personally can help reduce global warming"



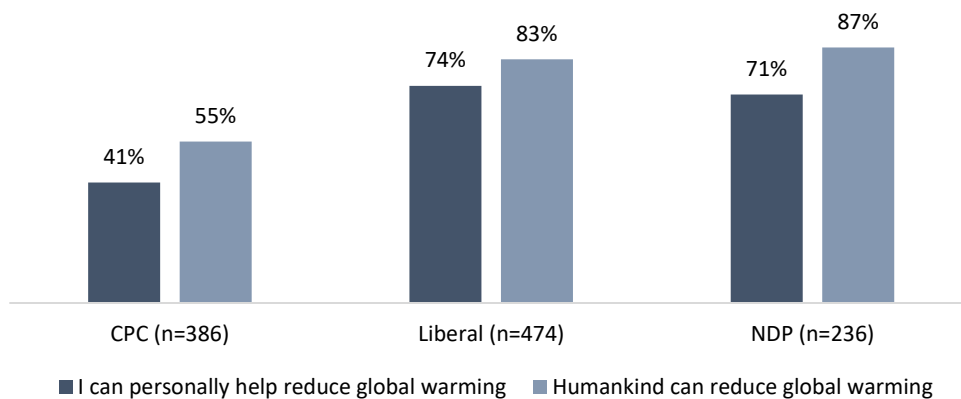
Further, one-in-five Canadians say that ultimately, they do not believe there is anything that can be done to reduce global warming – a proportion remarkably consistent across the country. The vast majority (73%) disagree that any action taken will be in vain:

Agree/Disagree: Ultimately, there's nothing humankind can do to reduce global warming



Comparing these two perspectives, it is clear that regardless of political view, Canadians are more likely to say something can be done than at a broader level than to believe they can do have an impact themselves. Notably, just four-in-ten Conservatives say that they feel they can help to reduce emissions and challenge global warming:

Views on reducing climate change at personal vs global level



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).