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Americans' Global Warming Concerns Continue to Drop

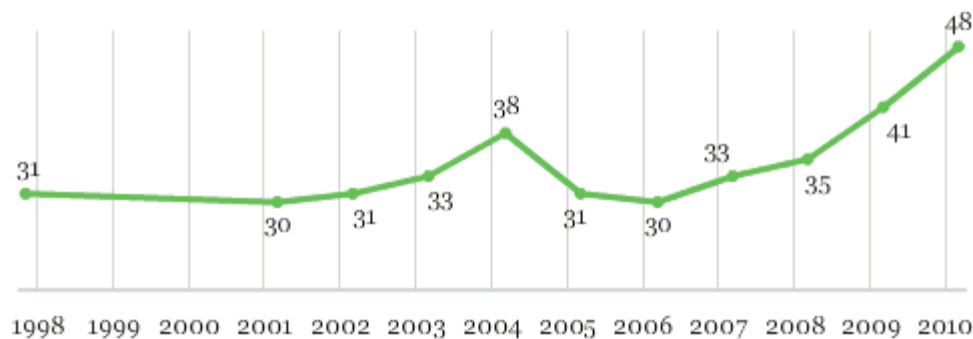
Multiple indicators show less concern, more feelings that global warming is exaggerated

by Frank Newport

PRINCETON, NJ -- Gallup's annual update on Americans' attitudes toward the environment shows a public that over the last two years has become less worried about the threat of global warming, less convinced that its effects are already happening, and more likely to believe that scientists themselves are uncertain about its occurrence. In response to one key question, 48% of Americans now believe that the seriousness of global warming is generally exaggerated, up from 41% in 2009 and 31% in 1997, when Gallup first asked the question.

Thinking about what is said in the news, in your view is the seriousness of global warming -- [ROTATED: generally exaggerated, generally correct, or is it generally underestimated]?

■ % Generally exaggerated



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These results are based on the annual Gallup Social Series Environment poll, conducted March 4-7 of this year. The survey results show that the reversal in Americans' concerns about global warming that began last year has continued in 2010 -- in some cases reverting to the levels recorded when Gallup began tracking global warming measures more than a decade ago.

For example, the percentage of Americans who now say reports of global warming are generally exaggerated is by a significant margin the highest such reading in the 13-year history of asking the question. In 1997, 31% said global warming's effects had been exaggerated; last year, 41% said the same, and this year the number is 48%.

Fewer Americans Think Effects of Global Warming Are Occurring

Many global warming activists have used film and

photos of melting ice caps and glaciers, and the expanding reach of deserts, to drive home their point that global warming is already having alarming effects on the earth. While these efforts may have borne fruit over much of the 2000s, during the last two years, Americans' convictions about global warming's effects have waned.

"In a sharp turnaround from what Gallup found as recently as three years ago, Americans are now almost evenly split in their views of the cause of increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century."

A majority of Americans still agree that global warming is real, as 53% say the effects of the problem have

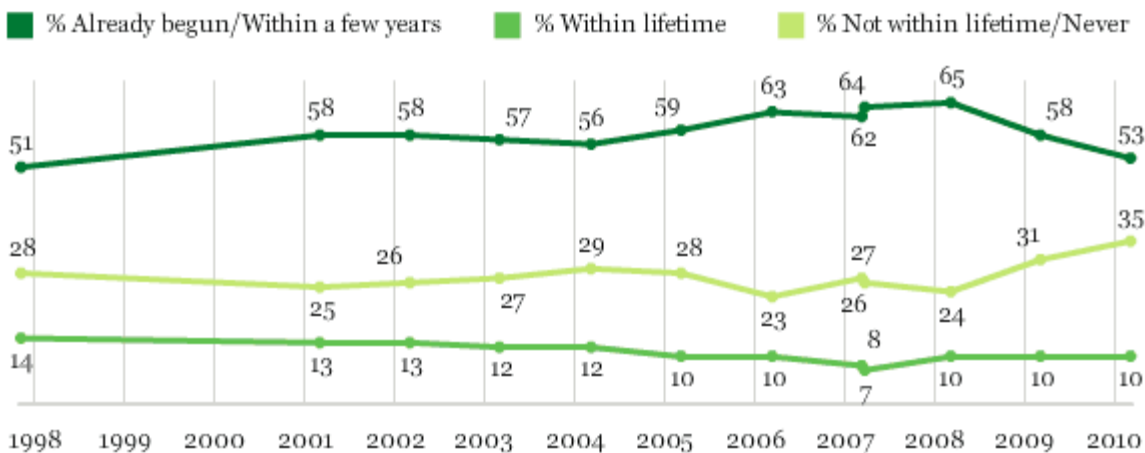
already begun or will do so in a few years. That percentage is dwindling, however. The average American is now less convinced than at any time since 1997 that global warming's effects have already begun or will begin shortly.

Meanwhile, 35% say that the effects of global warming either will never happen (19%) or will not happen in their lifetimes (16%).

The 19% figure is more than double the number who held this view in 1997.

Which of the following statements reflects your view of when the effects of global warming will begin to happen?

[ROTATED: They have already begun to happen, they will start happening within a few years, they will start happening within your lifetime, they will not happen within your lifetime, but they will affect future generations, (or) they will never happen]

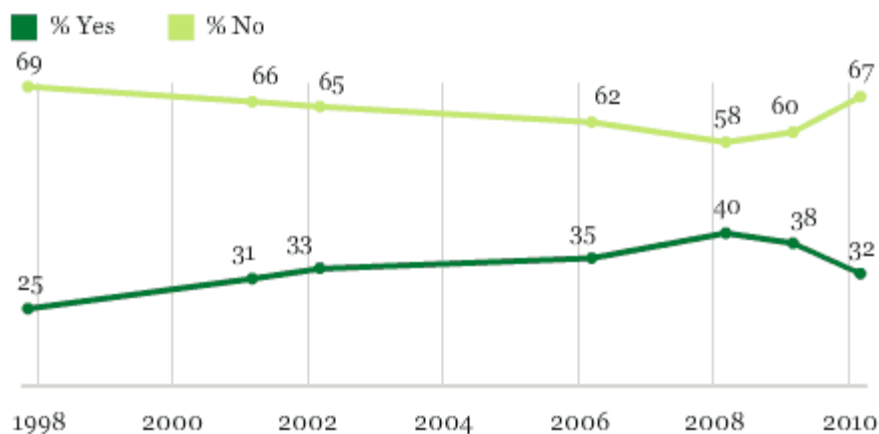


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Fewer See Global Warming as Serious Threat

In similar fashion, the percentage of Americans who believe that global warming is going to affect them or their way of life in their lifetimes has dropped to 32% from a 40% high point in 2008. Two-thirds of Americans say global warming will not affect them in their lifetimes.

Do you think that global warming will pose a serious threat to you or your way of life in your lifetime?



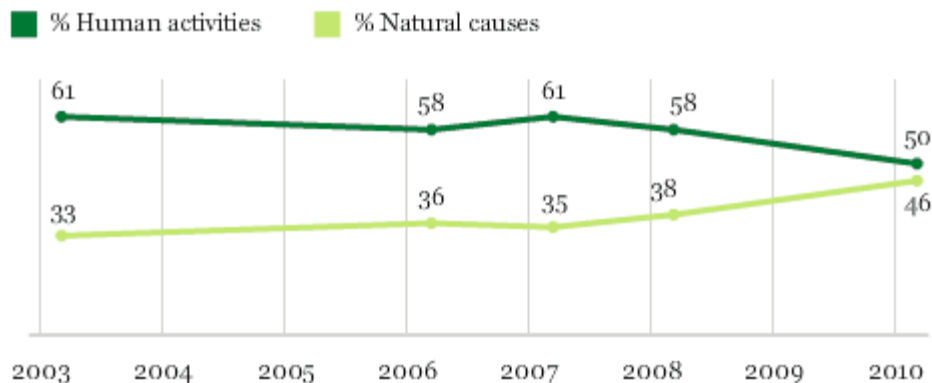
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The shift in these views during the past two years has been particularly striking. The percentage who said global warming would pose a serious threat increased gradually from 1997 through 2008. The trend in these responses changed course last year, with slightly fewer Americans saying global warming would have a significant effect in their lifetimes. This year, that percentage is down even more, marking a six-point drop from 2009, and roughly similar to where it was nine years ago.

Americans Divided on Causes of Global Warming

In a sharp turnaround from what Gallup found as recently as three years ago, Americans are now almost evenly split in their views of the cause of increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century.

And from what you have heard or read, do you believe increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due more to -- [ROTATED: the effects of pollution from human activities (or) natural changes in the environment that are not due to human activities]?



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In 2003, 61% of Americans said such increases were due to human activities -- in line with advocates of the global warming issue -- while 33% said they were due to natural changes in the environment. Now, a significantly diminished 50% say temperature increases are due to human activities, and 46% say they

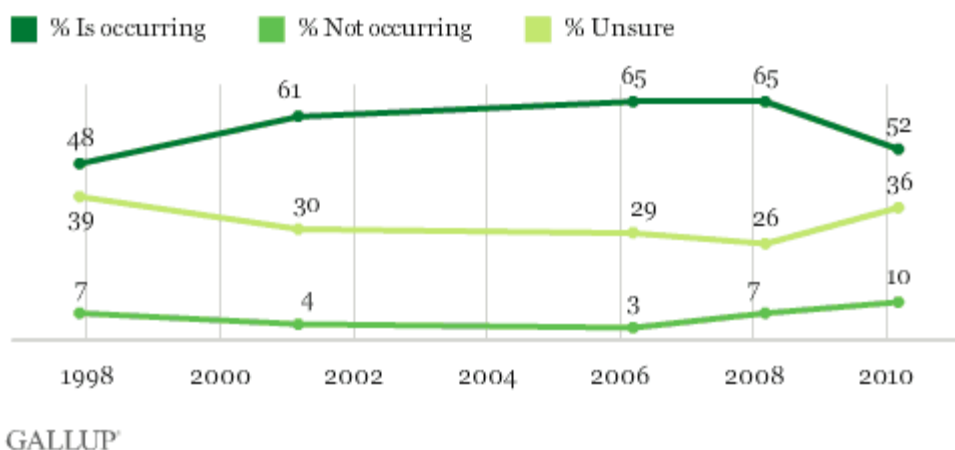
are not.

Americans Less Sure About Scientists' Beliefs

Since last fall, there have been widespread news accounts of allegations of errors in scientific reports on global warming and alleged attempts by some scientists to doctor the global warming record.

These news reports may well have caused some Americans to re-evaluate the scientific consensus on global warming. Roughly half of Americans now say that "most scientists believe that global warming is occurring," down from 65% in recent years. The dominant opposing thesis, held by 36% of Americans, is that scientists are unsure about global warming. An additional 10% say most scientists believe global warming is *not* occurring.

Just your impression, which one of the following statements do you think is most accurate -- most scientists believe that global warming is occurring, most scientists believe that global warming is NOT occurring, or most scientists are unsure about whether global warming is occurring or not?



The percentage of Americans who think most scientists believe global warming is occurring has dropped 13 points from two years ago, and is the lowest since the first time Gallup asked this question back in 1997.

Implications

The last two years have marked a general reversal in the trend of Americans' attitudes about global warming. Most Gallup measures up to 2008 had shown increasing concern over global warming on the part of the average American, in line with what one might have expected given the high level of publicity on the topic. Former Vice President Al Gore had been particularly prominent in this regard, with the publication of his bestselling book, "An Inconvenient Truth," an Academy Award-winning documentary movie focusing on his global warming awareness campaign, and Gore's receipt of a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

But the public opinion tide turned in 2009, when several Gallup measures showed [a slight retreat in public concern](#) about global warming. This year, the downturn is even more pronounced.

Some of the shifts in Americans' views may reflect real-world events, including the publicity

surrounding allegations of scientific fraud relating to global warming evidence, and -- perhaps in some parts of the country -- a reflection of the record-breaking snow and cold temperatures of this past winter. Additionally, evidence from last year showed that the issue of global warming was becoming heavily partisan in nature, and it may be that the continuing doubts about global warming put forth by conservatives and others are having an effect. A forthcoming analysis here at Gallup.com will examine shifts in global warming attitudes in recent years among various demographic and political groups.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with a random sample of 1,014 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted March 4-7, 2010. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

22. Which of the following statements reflects your view of when the effects of global warming will begin to happen -- [ROTATED: they have already begun to happen, they will start happening within a few years, they will start happening within your lifetime, they will not happen within your lifetime, but they will affect future generations, (or) they will never happen]?

	Already begun	Within a few years	Within your lifetime	Not within lifetime, but affect future	Will never happen	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
2010 Mar 4-7	50	3	10	16	19	2
2009 Mar 5-8	53	5	10	15	16	2
2008 Mar 6-9	61	4	10	13	11	1
2007 Mar 23-25	60	4	7	15	11	3
2007 Mar 11-14	59	3	8	19	8	3
2006 Mar 13-16	58	5	10	15	8	3
2005 Mar 7-10	54	5	10	19	9	3
2004 Mar 8-11	51	5	12	18	11	3
2003 Mar 3-5	51	6	12	17	10	4
2002 Mar 4-7	53	5	13	17	9	3
2001 Mar 5-7	54	4	13	18	7	4
1997 Nov 6-9	48	3	14	19	9	7

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23. Thinking about what is said in the news, in your view is the seriousness of global warming -- [ROTATED: generally exaggerated, generally correct, or is it generally underestimated]?

	Generally exaggerated	Generally correct	Generally underestimated	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2010 Mar 4-7	48	24	25	3
2009 Mar 5-8	41	29	28	2
2008 Mar 6-9	35	33	29	2
2007 Mar 11-14	33	29	35	4
2006 Mar 13-16	30	28	38	4
2005 Mar 7-10	31	29	35	5
2004 Mar 8-11	38	25	33	4
2003 Mar 3-5	33	29	33	5
2002 Mar 4-7	31	32	32	5
2001 Mar 5-7	30	34	32	4
1997 Nov 6-9 ^	31	34	27	8

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24. Just your impression, which one of the following statements do you think is most accurate -- most scientists believe that global warming is occurring, most scientists believe that global warming is NOT occurring, or most scientists are unsure about whether global warming is occurring or not?

	Believe it is occurring	Believe it is not occurring	Are unsure	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2010 Mar 4-7	52	10	36	2
2008 Mar 6-9	65	7	26	3
2006 Mar 13-16	65	3	29	3
2001 Mar 5-7	61	4	30	5
1997 Nov 21-23	48	7	39	6

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25. And from what you have heard or read, do you believe increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due more to -- [ROTATED: the effects of pollution from human activities (or) natural changes in the environment that are not due to human activities]?

	Human activities	Natural causes	No opinion
	%	%	%
2010 Mar 4-7	50	46	5
2008 Mar 6-9	58	38	5
2007 Mar 11-14	61	35	5
2006 Mar 13-16	58	36	6
2003 Mar 3-5	61	33	6

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26. Do you think that global warming will pose a serious threat to you or your way of life in your lifetime?

	Yes	No	No opinion
	%	%	%
2010 Mar 4-7	32	67	2
2009 Mar 5-8	38	60	2
2008 Mar 6-9	40	58	2
2006 Mar 13-16	35	62	2
2002 Mar 4-7	33	65	2
2001 Mar 5-7	31	66	3
1997 Nov 6-9 ^	25	69	6

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Americans' growing understanding of global warming is part of a long-term trend, he said. But he attributed the recent increases to a number of extreme weather events with plausible connections to a warming planet, and to the publicity that surrounded two major scientific reports on climate change last year. Image. Hurricane Michael destroyed much of Mexico Beach, Fla. Credit...Johnny Milano for The New York Times. Those reports, from the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change and the United States government, laid out grim prospects for the future if action is not taken to reduce e Multiple indicators show less concern, more feelings that global warming is exaggerated. By Frank Newport. Gallup's annual update on Americans' attitudes toward the environment shows a public that over the last two years has become less worried about the threat of global warming, less convinced that its effects are already happening, and more likely to believe that scientists themselves are uncertain about its occurrence. In response to one key question, 48% of Americans now believe that the seriousness of global warming is generally exaggerated, up from 41% in 2009 and 31% in 1997, when Gallu