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Perceptions of Climate Change in the Canadian Arctic

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Climate change has been on the political agenda for decades now. Numerous reports by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) have documented the scientific evidence pointing to the human-induced nature of climate change. And yet, denying this reality is alive and well, present online on social media platforms promoting the idea that there is a climate scam or that science is not determined on the causes and consequences of climate change.

It might be surprising to encounter climate denial in the communities of the Canadian Arctic. After all, the Arctic is warming at 4 times the pace of the rest of the planet. Arctic residents are observing firsthand changes to the ice cover, migratory patterns of animals, and the acceleration of coastal erosion. Changes are real and significant, and they affect residents' daily lives and experiences. Hence, the region should be the last place where climate denial finds support.

We wanted to test this assumption at the Observatory on Politics and Security in the Arctic (OPSA) by surveying Canadian Arctic residents. We polled 609 residents from the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut from May 8 to May 26, 2025.

We asked the following question to respondents, presenting them with three choices of answers: *Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view?*

- 1) Climate change is mostly caused by human activities.
- 2) Climate change is mostly caused by natural changes and cycles.
- 3) The cause of climate change is unclear.

A clear majority of respondents (59%) selected the first option, recognizing that climate change is anthropogenic. However, a significant proportion of respondents (38%) were of the opinions that either climate change was caused by natural changes or the scientific evidence about climate change was not sufficient.

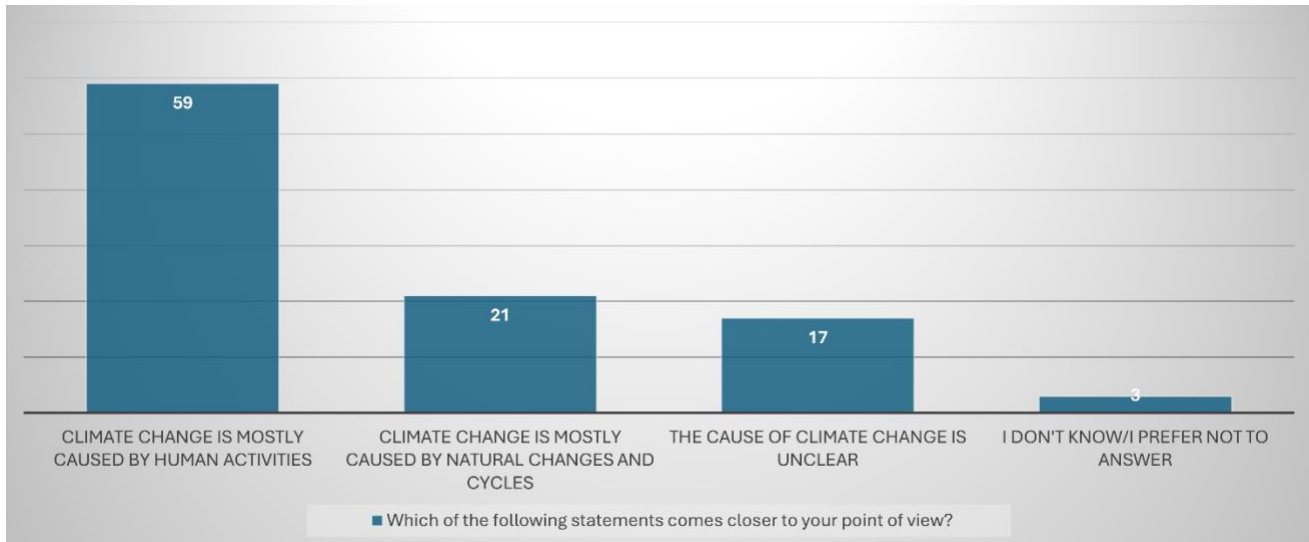


Figure 1: Opinions on the cause of climate change amongst Arctic residents in Canada.

How does this fare in comparison to the rest of the country? Different wording and choices of answers make comparison difficult. The best comparison is a poll conducted by the [Angus Reid Institute in January 2025](#) with Southern Canadians. Our results show that Northerners rally less than other Canadians around the scientific consensus. Overall, 63% believed climate change to be caused by human activities while 32% perceived climate change to be caused by natural changes or with unclear causes. Skepticism towards anthropogenic climate change was stronger amongst rural residents, males over 55, and Conservative voters.

Do we see a similar picture with Northerners? Rurality, age and gender were not defining factors, with rural, older, and male respondents believing in the scientific consensus at the same levels as other respondents in the Canadian North. However, partisan support was a defining variable in denying the human origins of climate change. Only 24% of Conservative voters thought that climate change was caused by human activities, far from the 78% of Liberal voters and 57% of NDP voters supporting this idea. Respondents without a university degree were also susceptible to back climate denialism, although in a smaller proportion (50% believing in the scientific consensus).

Why does this matter? We need to conduct surveys to understand who is likely to believe in different disinformation messages and the success of specific disinformation campaigns. The typical profile of believers will vary, as not all disinformation is popular with the same demographic. Efforts to rectify these views can then pinpoint who to target, on what platforms, and with what types of messages. It is particularly pressing in Canada's North as the consequences of climate inaction are already deeply felt.