

Society has been discussing climate change's impacts long before we knew it existed

9 July 2015

For the first time, a new analysis shows an impact of climate change on human society long before we knew the climate was actually changing.

Exploring Google's scanned book collection, the analysis finds that society in general increasingly discussed some of the predicted effects of [climate change](#)—such as [heat waves](#), drought, and flooding—long before current global weather alterations were widely known about.

The authors note that while the science of climate change and climate action has come under sustained political attack, buttressing the physical record with social evidence presents a useful counterargument.

"Though climate change came to global attention in the late 1980s, this analysis suggests we were responding to it far earlier," said Dr. Will Grant, lead author of the *Weather* study. "In fact, in this very precise area we humans are perhaps more responsive to climate change than even traditional physical indicators of climate change like tree ring measurements."

More information: Grant, W. J. and Walsh, E. (2015), Social evidence of a changing climate: Google Ngram data points to early climate change impact on human society. *Weather*, 70: 195-197. [DOI: 10.1002/wea.2504](https://doi.org/10.1002/wea.2504)

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