

# Who Are the Climate Skeptics in California?

December 6, 2019

#PPICsurvey

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Public Policy Institute of California

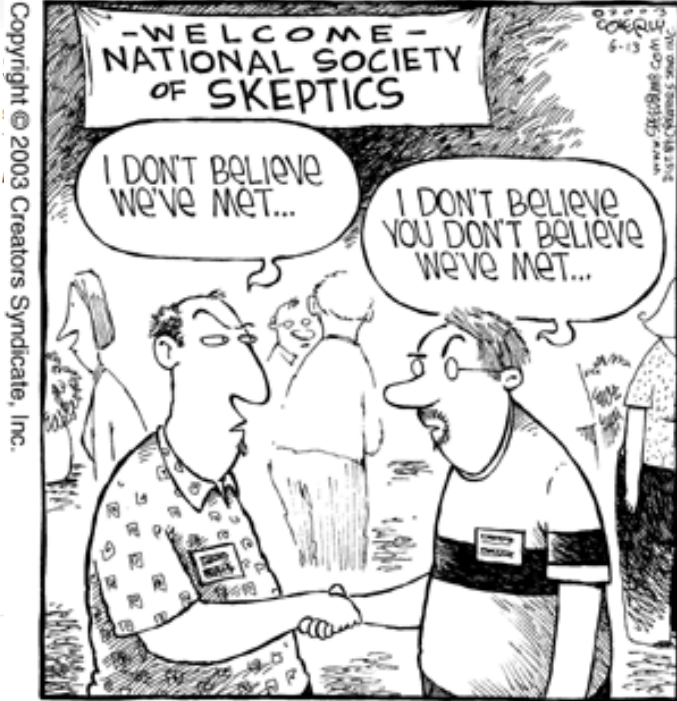


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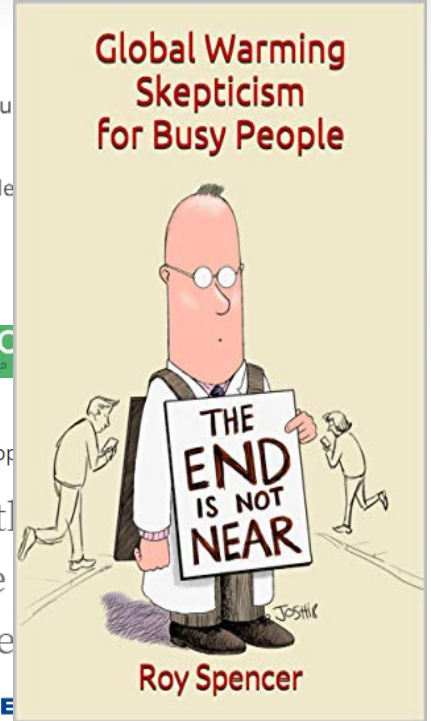
PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

25 YEARS

# Who are climate skeptics?



"Don't believe everything you read."



# Why focus on climate skeptics?

## Pacific Standard AMID THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CLIMATE CHANGE SKEPTICISM, STATES AND COUNTIES ARE THEIR OWN CLIMATE ASSESSORS

FRANCIE DIEP · AUG 29, 2018



Photographer: Sarah Silbiger/Getty Images

They're not trying to resist the Trump administration—they just need a plan for the future.

**The Washington Post**  
*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

By Wanyun Shao

Dec. 7, 2018 at 3:00 a.m. PST

## Can 2018's extreme weather convince skeptics that the climate is changing?



**PPIC**

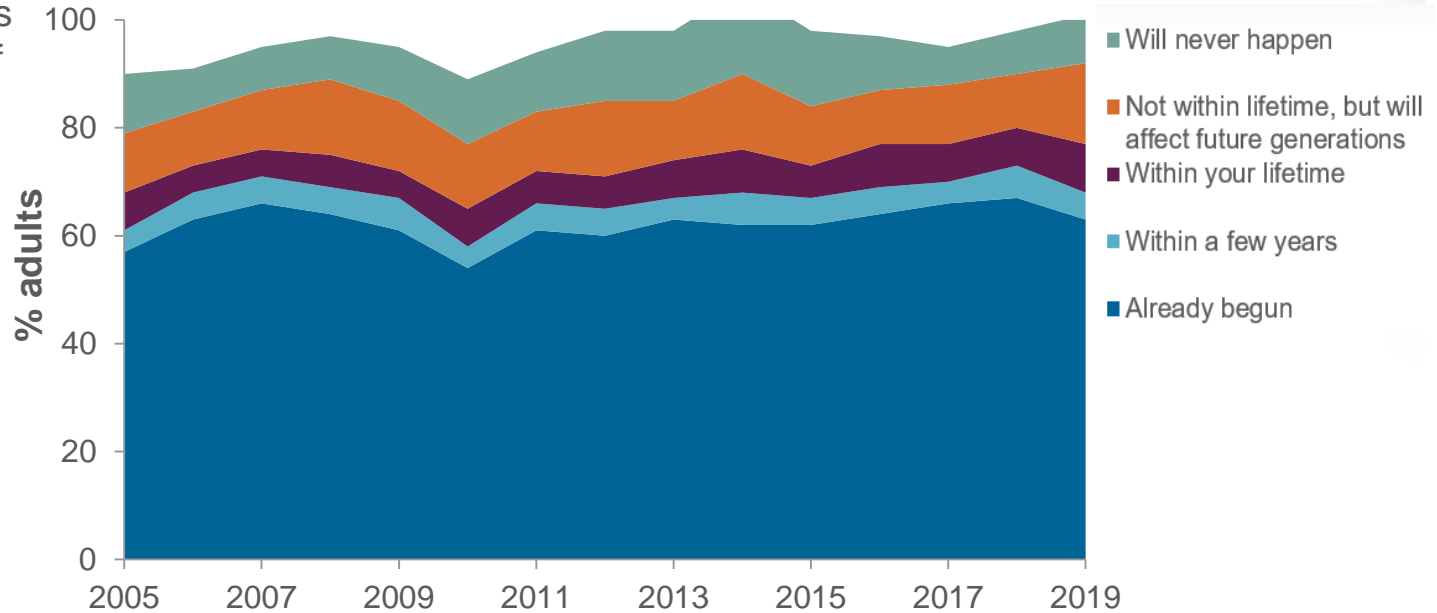
25 YEARS

# Research Questions

- Who are the climate skeptics in California?
- Have opinions of this group changed over time?
- If there have been changes in public opinion, what are the causes (e.g., new legislation, leadership changes, extreme weather events)?

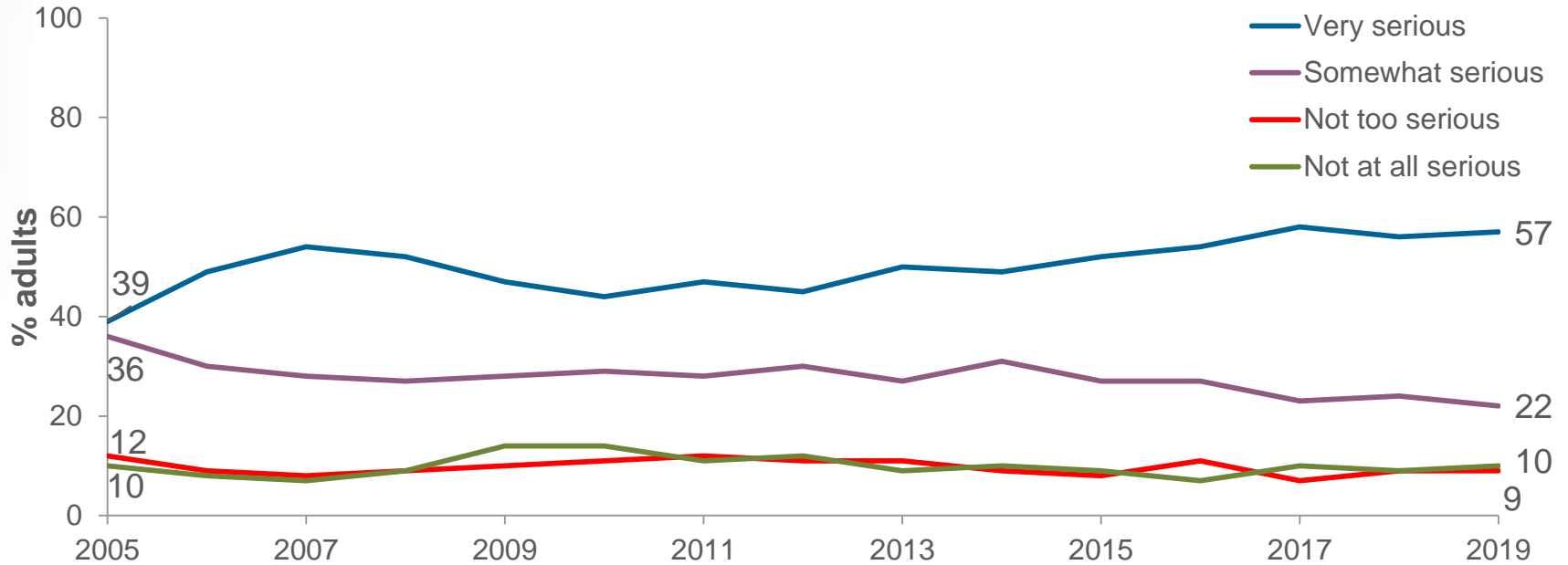
# Effects of global warming

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



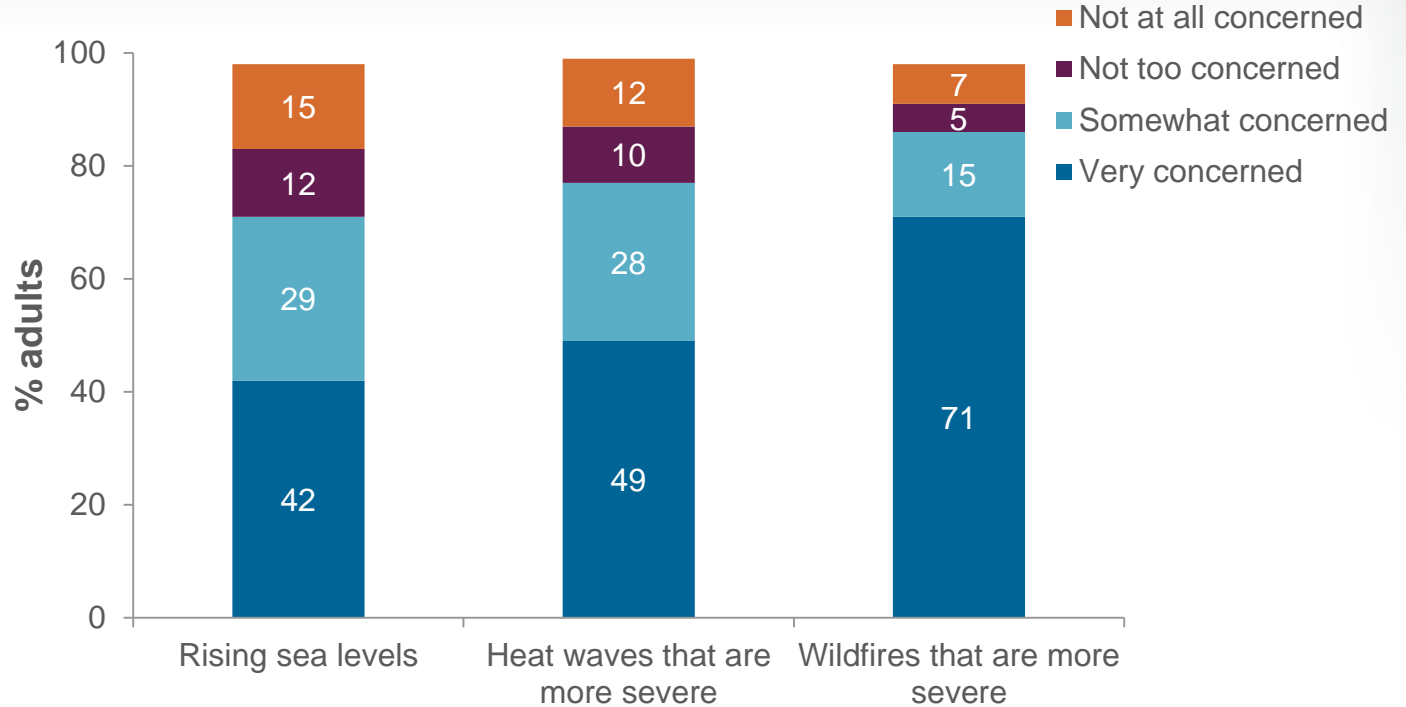
# Threat of global warming

How serious of a threat is global warming to the economy and quality of life for California's future?



# Concern about effects of global warming

Thinking about the possible impacts of global warming in California, how concerned are you about...?



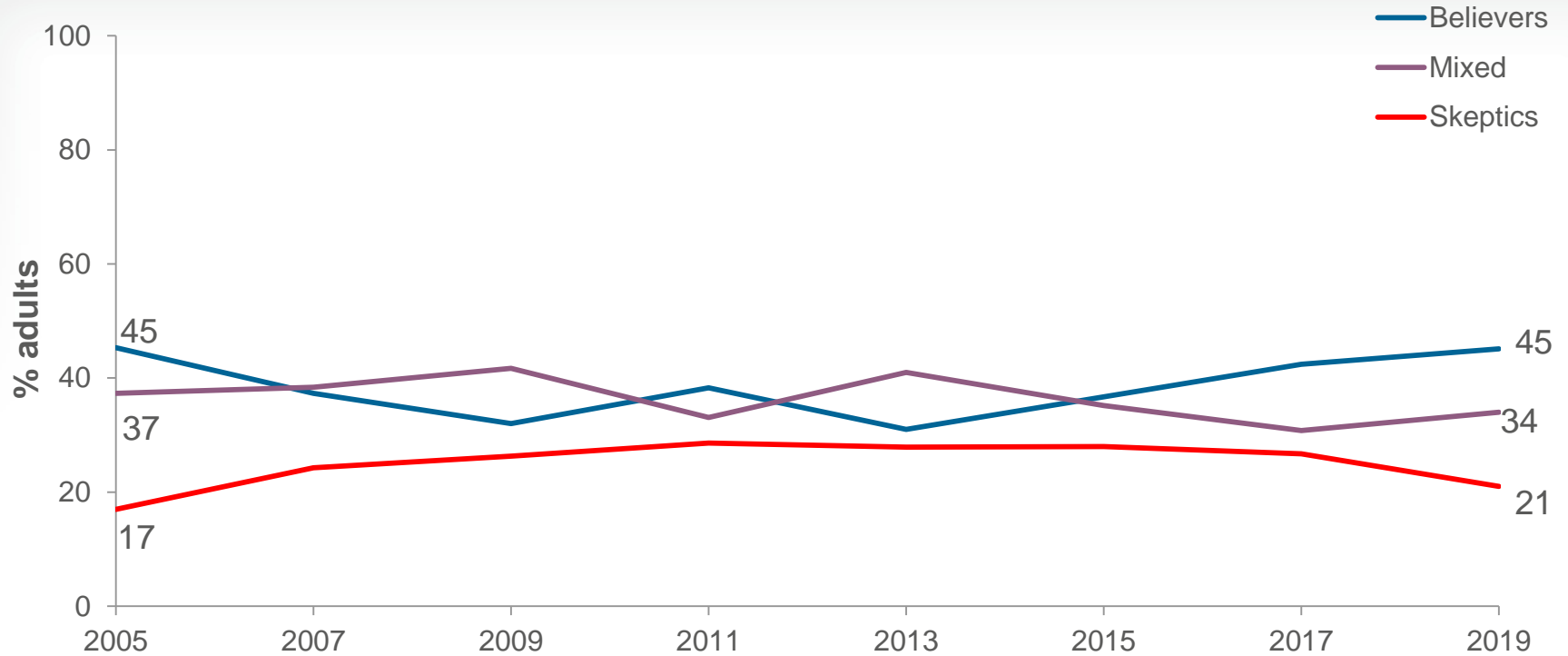
# Global warming opinion groups

- Methodology
  - Cluster analysis: gain insights into data distribution and discover distinct groups.
- Findings
  - Californians hold consistent views that are either supportive or dismissive of global warming; remainder have mixed views (e.g., may acknowledge global warming but express less concern about its impacts).
  - Three groups of global warming opinion:
    - **“Believers”** – Think the effects of global warming have begun, believe it is a very serious threat, and are very concerned about its impacts
    - **“Skeptics”** – Think the effects of global warming will not occur during lifetime or never begin, believe it is not a serious threat, and are not concerned about its impacts
    - **“Mixed”** – Combination of views





# Global warming opinion groups



# Global warming opinion groups – 2005

		“Believers”	“Mixed”	“Skeptics”
<i>Percent of all respondents</i>		45%	37%	17%
Party registration	Democratic	58	33	9
	Independent	45	37	18
	Republican	30	38	32
Ideology	Liberal	60	32	8
	Moderate	48	37	15
	Conservative	30	43	27
Gender	Men	39	38	23
	Women	51	37	12
Age	18 to 34	42	45	12
	35 to 54	49	36	16
	55 and older	44	33	23
Education	Not a college graduate	41	42	17
	College graduate	52	31	17
Unweighted n		1130	929	433

# Global warming opinion groups – 2019

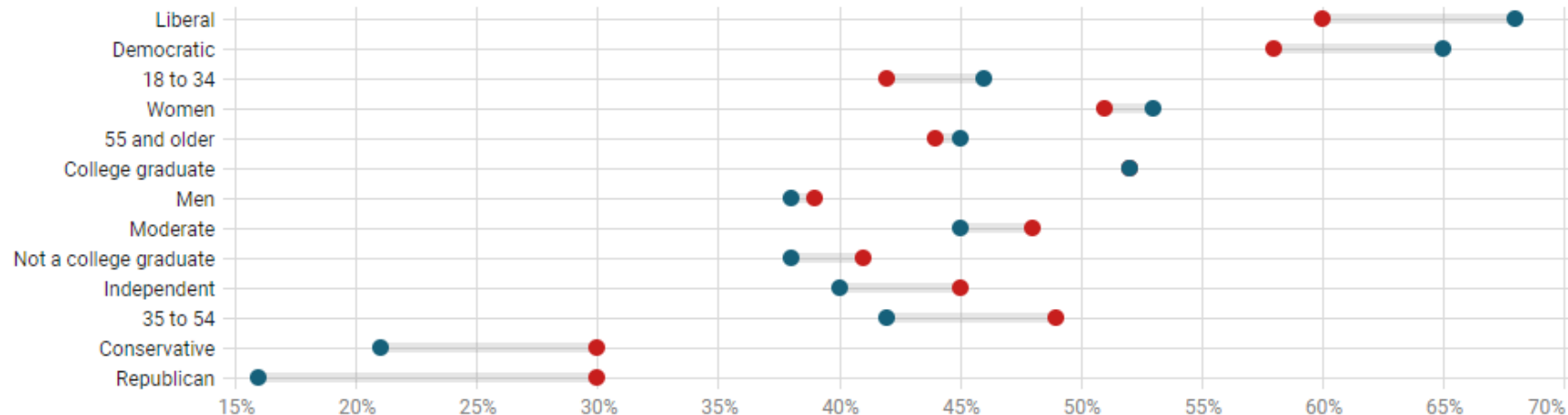
		“Believers”	“Mixed”	“Skeptics”
<i>Percent of all respondents</i>		45%	34%	21%
Party registration	Democratic	65	28	7
	Independent	40	36	24
	Republican	16	35	49
Ideology	Liberal	68	27	6
	Moderate	45	38	17
	Conservative	21	40	40
Gender	Men	38	38	24
	Women	53	31	16
Age	18 to 34	46	40	14
	35 to 54	42	36	21
	55 and older	45	32	23
Education	Not a college graduate	38	39	23
	College graduate	52	30	18
Unweighted n		751	585	352

# Global warming opinion groups – 2005 vs. 2019

## Believers

Changes in "Believers" group from 2005 to 2019

● 2005 ● 2019



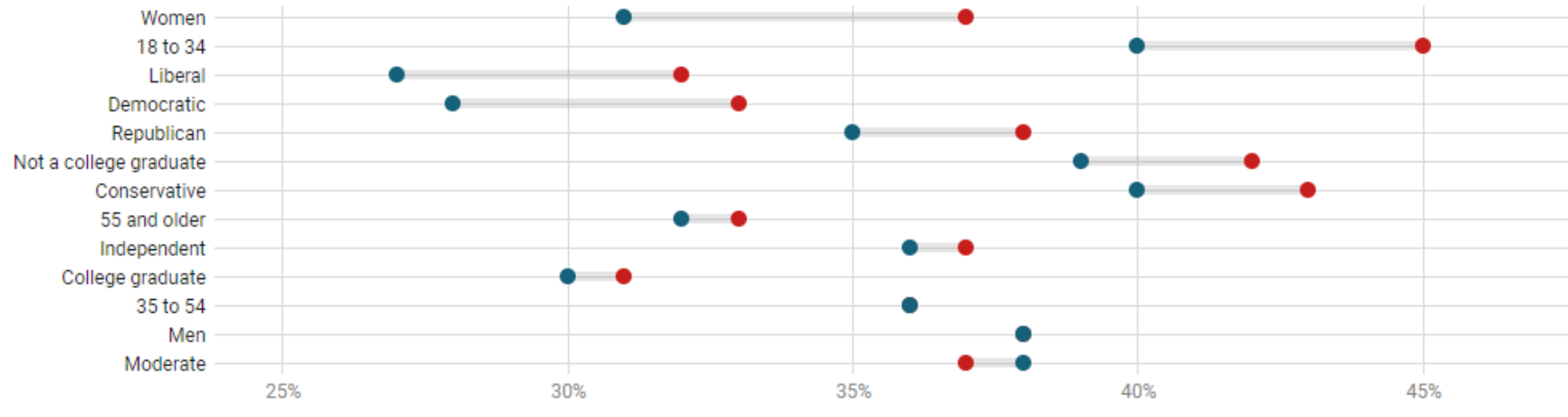
Source: PPIC Statewide Surveys 2005 and 2019 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

# Global warming opinion groups – 2005 vs. 2019

## Mixed

Changes in "Mixed" group from 2005 to 2019

● 2005 ● 2019



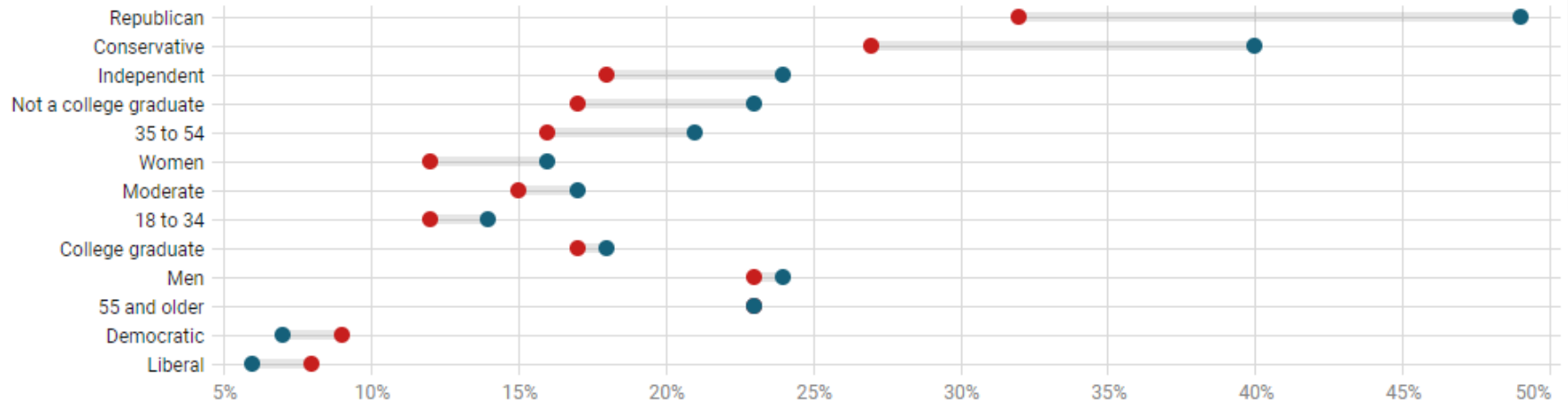
Source: PPIC Statewide Surveys 2005 and 2019 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

# Global warming opinion groups – 2005 vs. 2019

## Skeptics

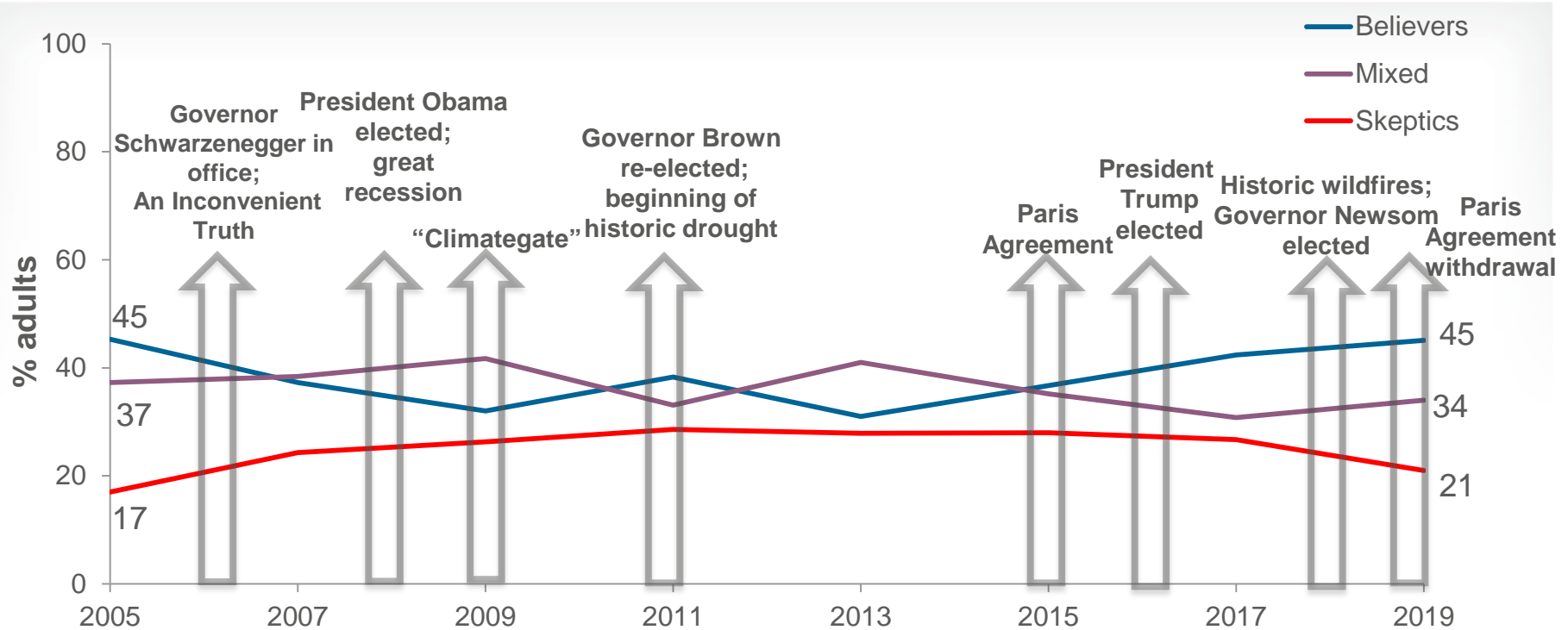
Changes in "Skeptics" group from 2005 to 2019

● 2005 ● 2009



Source: PPIC Statewide Surveys 2005 and 2019 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

# Global warming opinion groups



# Conclusions

- Today, Californians who fall within a global warming “skeptics” group tend to be Republican, conservative, older than 55, and those without a college degree.
- Over the last 15 years, more Republicans and conservatives have become “skeptics”, while more Democrats and liberals have become “believers”; independents and moderates have remained relatively stable.
- Looking at major political, social, economic, and environmental events in the last 15 years provides a window into possible causes of changes in public opinion, but warrants further investigation.
- Further research is needed to look at the causality and significance of such events on public opinion on global warming.





# Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.