

Do male climate change 'sceptics' have a problem with women?



Although clearly not all climate change 'sceptics' are male, writes [Bob Ward](#), it does appear that those who most intensely promote climate change denial are usually male, and routinely refer to female climate scientists in a dismissive way. He provides some evidence for his argument.

On 20 February, the Global Warming Policy Foundation launched a new pamphlet at the House of Lords, attacking the mainstream media for not giving more coverage to climate change 'sceptics'. The author, Christopher Booker, is a veteran columnist for *The Sunday Telegraph*. This will be the 65th pamphlet published by the Foundation, since it was registered as an educational charity by Lord Lawson of Blaby in 2009, 57 of which have been written by men only.

However, male dominance of the Foundation's other activities is even stronger. Of [its 10 Trustees](#), all but one are men. All of the 25 members of its "[Academic Advisory Council](#)" are men. Its Chair, Director, Deputy Director, Science Editor, Energy Editor, Director of Development and Researcher are all men. And [all seven of its annual lectures](#) have been delivered by men.

The Foundation does not disclose any details about the identities of its members, thought to number about 100, or its donors [who last year gave more than £284,000](#). It is not obvious why the Foundation should be able to benefit from charity status while appearing to operate as an old boys' club. It is not, for instance, raising awareness of men's issues, such as the risks of prostate cancer.

I asked the Charity Commission to investigate whether the under-representation of women within the governance and activities of the Foundation was the result of discrimination. The Commission had previously carried out an inquiry into the Foundation and concluded that it had [violated the rules for education charities](#) because it was solely promoting climate change denial.

However, it refused to make any enquiries about the under-representation of women on the grounds that "there are no legal requirements around gender balance in governance and that under s20(2) of the Charities Act, the Commission is precluded from interfering in the administration of a charity".

The Foundation may be dominated by older men because climate change denial is simply not popular among women and young people. [Numerous studies](#) have suggested that climate change 'sceptics' are usually older and male, with political views that place less value on the environment. However, recent polls of the UK public suggest that there is little gender difference among the small proportion of the population who are hardcore 'sceptics'.

[A tracking survey](#) commissioned by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy showed that, in March 2017, 7.6% answered "I don't think there is such a thing as climate change" or "Climate change is caused entirely by natural processes", when asked for their views. Among men the figure was 8.1%, while for women it was 7.1%.

Anyone who has engaged with 'sceptics' will have learned that it is the men who are most vocal about their views. They tend to lack any training or qualifications in climate science, but still appear to believe that they know better than the experts. And there is also a degree of male chauvinism that often underlies the arguments put forward by 'sceptics' during public discussions. For instance, when [Lord Lawson was asked to comment](#) on a statement by Professor Dame Julia Slingo, the chief scientist at the Met Office, about the link between flooding and climate change, he did not refer to her by her professional title but as "this Julia Slingo woman".

Other climate change 'sceptics' routinely refer to female climate scientists in a dismissive way. For instance, Professor Joanna Haigh of Imperial College London was called a "puffed-up missy" in [a trademark rant](#) by James Delingpole for the extremist website Breitbart. Mr Delingpole also referred on his website to Dr Emily Shuckburgh, an experienced climate scientist who specialises on impacts in polar regions, not by her name or job title but as "[some foxy chick from the British Antarctic Survey](#)".

Female scientists outside the UK are also exposed to sexist invective from climate change 'sceptics', with [Scientific American](#) reporting that, in the United States, "more than 90 percent of the harassing emails they receive are from men and often include gender-specific abuse".

Of course not all climate change 'sceptics' are male chauvinists, but it is clear that those who most obsessively promote climate change denial are usually male, arrogant, and unable to accept that the experts are right, particularly if they are female.

About the Author



Bob Ward is Policy and Communications Director at the [Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment](#) at the LSE.

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