**Do you believe in climate change?**

This may seem like an odd question for a climate scientist to ask, but it is one I am constantly asked now. The typical discussion starts: "I know that the climate is changing, but hasn't it always changed through natural cycles?" Then they will often give an example, such as the medieval warm period to prove their point.

Those asking the question include a wide range of people I meet in the pub, friends, politicians and, increasingly, even some of those active in sustainable development and the renewable energy businesses. What I find interesting is that I have known many of these people for a long time and they never asked me this before.

Recent studies show that public acceptance of the scientific evidence for man-made climate change has decreased. However, the change is not that great. The difference I find in talking to people is that they feel better able to express their doubts.

This is very hard for scientists to understand. The scientific evidence that humanity is having an effect on the climate is overwhelming and increasing every year. Yet public perception of this is confused. People modify their beliefs about uncomfortable truth, they may have become bored of constantly hearing about climate change; or external factors such as the financial crisis may have played a role.

Around three years ago, I raised the issue of the way that science can be misused. In some cases scare stories in the media were over-hyping climate change, and I think we are paying the price for this now with a reaction the other way. I was concerned then that science is not always presented objectively by the media. What I don't think any of us appreciated at the time was the depth of disconnect between the scientific process and the public.

Which brings me to the question, should you believe in climate change? The first point to make is that it's not something you should believe or not believe in — this is a matter of science and therefore of evidence — and there's a lot of it out there. On an issue this important, I think people should look at that evidence and make their own mind up. We are often very influenced by our own personal experience. After a couple of cold winters in the UK, the common question was: "Has climate change stopped?" despite that fact that many other regions of the world were experiencing record warm temperatures. And 2010 was one of the warmest years on record. For real evidence of climate change, we have to look at the bigger picture.

You can see research by the Met Office that shows the evidence of man-made warming is even stronger than it was when the last report was published. A whole range of different datasets and independent analyses show the world is warming. There is a broad consensus that over the last half-century, warming has been rapid, and man-made greenhouse gas emissions are very likely to be the cause.

Ultimately, as the planet continues to warm, the issue of whether you believe in climate change will become more and more irrelevant. We will all experience the impacts of climate change in some way, so the evidence will be there in plain sight.

The more appropriate questions for today are how will our climate change and how can we prepare for those changes? That's why it's important that climate scientists continue their work, and continue sharing their evidence and research so people can stay up to date — and make up their own minds.

How does the author feel about the evidence of climate change?

1. It's not enough yet.
2. It's irrelevant so far.
3. It's not very convincing.
4. It soon would become conclusive.