

## Press Release

### Climate Week September 2020

#### **New Research**

#### **Climate Awareness and Action –**

#### **Is there a link between public perceptions and government performance on climate policy? – An international comparison**

On the occasion of Climate Week 2020, the Association for Environmental Justice in Israel publishes a new study that examines the complex relationship between climate awareness and perceptions and the ambition of climate policy in specific countries via reviewed the literature that gathered the results of key international climate awareness polls that took place for the last 5 years. By observing factors that influence climate awareness and concern at the global and regional level, and by examining climate perceptions and mitigation policy in several countries, the new research provides better understanding for the critical discourse on the link between public climate awareness and political climate action in a particular country and in the global arena.

#### **The research main outcomes in brief:**

##### **I. Global Scale, based on international polls:**

- In general, the greater a country's per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the less intensely concerned its population was about climate change (Figure 4).
- Latin America and European countries displayed greater Climate Change Risk Perception (CCRP) when respondents believed that climate change is mostly human-caused, while in several Asian and African countries, CCRP was most strongly associated with perceived changes in local temperatures.
- Local political ideologies played a role in the CCRP of some countries, especially in the USA where the politically liberal are more likely to express concern about climate change than the politically conservative.
- Few studies apply the psychological distance theory to explain low CCRP in developed countries. According to this theory, members of developed country populations may feel as though the threat of climate change is far removed from them geographically.
- According to the 2019 European Investment Bank (EIB) Climate Survey about half of Europeans, 39% of Americans, and 73% of Chinese think climate change is a major threat (Figure 9).
- Across the studies were analyzed and discussed in this report, **climate change concern in the US was typically found to be lower than concern in EU countries by up to 10%**, while concern in China between 2007 and 2015 was significantly lower than both the EU and the US, and only recently may have experienced a significant increase.
- In Europe, the perceived influence of climate change in daily life is slightly different by region, with **over 90% of South and Eastern Europeans perceiving a daily impact from climate change**, versus **70% or less** of North Europeans (Figure 10) (EIB, 2020).

## II. Country-Specific Findings and Comparisons: The US, Norway, and Israel

This section has examined climate change perceptions and the ambition of climate action policy in three countries: USA, Norway, Israel.

*In Israel*

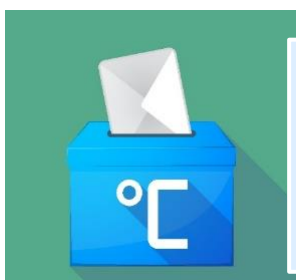
- Climate change awareness has been growing slowly but CCRP remains fairly low despite the severe climate impacts predicted for the Middle East in the coming decades. In a 2010 Gallup Poll, **83% of Israelis were familiar with the terms 'global warming' and 'climate change'**, though a survey conducted by AEJI to assess public climate perceptions in Israel in 2015 found that **only 73% of Israelis were familiar with climate change**.
- Even in the last five years, CCRP in Israel has been quite low, with less than **30% of Israelis** considering climate change a very serious problem according to the 2015 Pew Survey (Figure 3 & 4), though there was an increase to **38% in the 2018 version of the survey** (Figure 8).
- The research also crossed the data with budget allocating for climate policy based on AEJI' economic research (2016), which indicated that Israel has spent substantially less of its state budget on climate change-related programs compared to the EU and the United States. For example, in 2010 Israel spent only about **0.07% of its state budget** on a nation-wide plan to reduce GHG emissions, which is **about 57 times less than the average national budget expenditure for climate action in the EU (4%)**, and **4.3 times less than federal budget climate expenditure** in the United States (0.3%) (Levy, 2016).

## III. To Summarize - The following points should be considering:

- From Lee et. al's findings, it is clear that **education** is vital for increasing climate awareness, which is a necessary precursor for cultivating climate concern, risk perception, and advocacy (2015). Thus, all countries, **especially developing ones**, would benefit from increasing basic education and climate literacy.
- Due to the obstacle that psychological distance poses for cultivating climate change concern and activism in some countries, **especially wealthy, developed ones**, increasing individuals' understanding of the localized impacts and personal significance of climate change through public education initiatives could be an effective way to cultivate public engagement and support for climate action (Leiserowitz & Howe, 2015).
- We must be **proactive** about cultivating climate awareness and advocacy in the present and near future, as the mitigation window we have to enforce strong policies and reduce global emissions before future climate impacts become drastic is narrowing quickly.
- For the long-term strategy dealing with economic and political issues is to bolster the value of the natural environment, sustainability, and climate advocacy within a country's national identity by increasing basic education and climate literacy.

AEJI New Report LINK:

[http://www.aeji.org.il/sites/default/files/2020\\_story\\_files/aeji\\_climate\\_awareness\\_and\\_government\\_performance\\_on\\_climate\\_policy\\_international\\_comparison\\_september\\_2020.pdf](http://www.aeji.org.il/sites/default/files/2020_story_files/aeji_climate_awareness_and_government_performance_on_climate_policy_international_comparison_september_2020.pdf)



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