# Support for climate policies diverges sharply between global north and south amid rising neoliberalism



Political sentiments regarding climate policy are undergoing significant shifts across the globe, culminating in diverse responses from various countries in terms of public support for climate initiatives. Recent discussions have highlighted a retreat from progressive climate policies in multiple established democracies.

In the United States, Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 election, driven largely by a campaign that focused on reversing environmental regulations, set a tone that continues to resonate with certain factions of the electorate. Concurrently, in the UK, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch has characterised the national Net Zero target as “impossible,” a statement reflecting a growing reluctance among political leaders to commit to ambitious climate goals. Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has similarly critiqued the current strategy of phasing out fossil fuels, declaring it “doomed to fail.” These sentiments mirror broader trends observed in other countries, particularly with Germany's recent electoral outcomes. Notably, major political parties largely avoided engaging with climate issues, and the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which openly denies human contributions to climate change, garnered 20 per cent of the national vote.

In a detailed exploration of public opinion and its connection to climate policy, a recent study surveyed representative populations across six countries, aiming to unravel how personal ideologies influence attitudes toward climate initiatives. The countries involved included the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, and China, collectively responsible for approximately half of global CO₂ emissions.

As defined by the UN, the "global south" encompasses a range of developing nations, which generally exhibit different economic conditions and priorities compared to the "global north." The study revealed a stark contrast in public support for climate policies between these two groups. In high-income nations, such as Germany, support for regulatory policies, including new building and vehicle standards, as well as climate-related taxes, was considerably low—only 18 per cent of respondents supported such measures. Subsidies for renewable energy and similar sectors yielded slightly more favourable responses, with 35 per cent support in Germany and 48 per cent in the US. In contrast, the majority of respondents from the global south expressed strong backing for various climate policies, including regulatory measures and subsidies.

Noteworthy differences emerged in attitudes toward information-based policies. The survey found robust support in the global south, with figures ranging from 74% to 79%, compared to minority backing in the US (49%) and Germany (36%). Interestingly, the UK revealed a moderate level of support, with 53% expressing favour for such initiatives.

The study also examined the influence of personal values and political trust on support for climate policies. Individuals who identified more strongly with environmental values—prioritising the relationship between humans and nature—exhibited greater support for climate initiatives, regardless of their country of residence. Those who expressed a higher degree of trust in political institutions were also more aligned in their support for climate policies.

Conversely, demographic factors such as age, gender, education, or income appeared to have a negligible effect once ideological variables were controlled for. The influence of neoliberal beliefs emerged as particularly significant; the study found a consistent relationship between a neoliberal worldview and diminished support for climate policies. This indicates that individuals who subscribe to the notion that the market is more efficient than government in addressing human needs often resist interventionist climate measures.

Neoliberalism, as a political and economic philosophy, has its roots in the global north but is gaining traction in the global south, notably in Latin America. Its principles foster an individualistic perspective where personal responsibility and self-reliance overshadow collective societal concerns. Empirical evidence highlights a marked shift towards individualistic values over the last several decades, impacting various aspects of public opinion, including climate policy support.

The findings shed light on the complex interplay between public perception and government action in the realm of climate change. The implications suggest that the adoption of effective climate policies is not solely contingent upon beliefs about climate science but is also significantly influenced by underlying ideological convictions. This nuanced understanding of public attitudes may prove essential for those advocating for substantive climate action in the future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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