

Information, Political Messaging and Climate Preferences

António Valentim*

Pre-Analysis Plan

Abstract

Why do we observe backlash against climate policy in countries with high levels of climate concern? Political scientists and policy-makers often assume that by providing voters with accurate information on climate change, support for climate policy will increase. Majorities of the electorate in many established democracies are indeed concerned about climate. However, there has been growing push-back against ambitious climate policy proposals. This paper addresses this puzzle and argues that the politicization of climate messages is a key factor in this dynamic. Empirically, I first challenge the assumption that information is the essential driver of climate policy support by showing that: i) in contexts where concern and awareness about climate change is high for several years or even decades, support for climate policy has decreased or become less consensual, ii) that information shocks in the real world have very small or no effects. I suggest that politicizing climate change could explain these patterns. The second of the empirical analyses employs a survey experiment in three high income countries to test the effects of politicizing climate information. This study contributes to our understanding of climate politics and backlash in wealthy democracies.

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As climate change becomes more relevant and its consequences more prevalent, climate policies and popular support for them become more important. A wealth of research looks into what makes voters worried, more supportive of climate policy and, ultimately, more willing to act on climate change. A key assumption in a lot of this work, and in many policy interventions, is that by providing voters with accurate information on the state of climate change and on its future risks, willingness to act and support for climate policy will increase.

This paper departs from two observations to challenge this assumption: One, that in several established democracies where concern and awareness about climate change are high for several years or even decades, support for robust climate policies has recently decreased or become less consensual. Two, that when looking at information shocks in the real world, they have very small or no effects on policy support.

I suggest that politicising climate change could explain these patterns. When citizens consume information on climate change, it is often embedded in other political information and reactions by politicians. More specifically, I argue that when political actors turn climate change and scientific information on it into a political message, they might make voters less likely to support climate policy, and decrease these information effects.

Empirically, I first show the patterns highlighted above using observational data: how information shocks do not replicate experimental findings and how policy support has decayed or remained stable as levels of concern remain high. A survey experiment in Australia, France and Norway tests the effects of political messages about climate change on climate concern, policy preferences, and voting behaviour. This piece is a short summary of what the puzzle and argument are, together with a pre-analysis plan of the survey experiment, outlined in Section A.

Previous Work and Argument

Climate change threatens livelihoods and economies worldwide. Successfully addressing, mitigating or adapting to its consequences requires robust policies, implemented and kept for long periods of time (Finnegan 2022; Hovi, Sprinz and Underdal 2009; Levin, Cashore, Bernstein and Auld 2012). Such an effort would require high, enduring climate policy support. This PAP focuses on assumptions and patterns of climate policy support in established democracies, including many of the countries with highest share of responsibility for historical carbon emissions (Evans 2021).

When discussing the origins of climate policy support, or the public's demand for it, researchers often look at concern and awareness about climate change (e.g., Bolsen, Palm and Kingsland 2019; Drews and van den Bergh 2016; Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole and Whitmarsh 2007; Ruprecht 2023; Sollaci., Khalid., Khan., Magistretti., Dabla-Norris., Helbling and Srinivasan. 2023; Stoutenborough and Vedlitz 2014, 2016). Frequently these studies follow the logic of a knowledge deficiency model (Stoutenborough and Vedlitz 2014): that voters have little or bad information regarding the status of climate science or of specific policy design choices. Once updated with accurate information, voters should become more supportive of climate action.

While concern is often correlated with general climate policy support (Egan and Mullin 2017), a recent body of work documents backlash against climate policies in contexts with very high levels of climate concern. For example, looking at a policy restricting polluting cars' circulation in Milan or a policy that increased taxes on household natural gas in favour of renewable energies in the Netherlands, Colantone, Lonardo, Margalit and Percoco (2023) and Voeten (2023) respectively, show how green policies can create grievances in voters. These voters ultimately went on to support radical right parties as a consequence, the key political actor opposing climate policy in most Western European party systems. These studies are in line with other research that shows that climate policies such as renewable energy source rollout (Stokes 2016) or coalmine phase-outs (Egli, Schmid and Schmidt 2022)

lead to voter backlashes in democracies with very high levels of climate concern. These patterns suggest the assumption and interventions on information provision are not enough to make voters supportive of climate policy.

Addressing climate change and meeting the targets set at the Paris Agreement of 2015 is inherently a political and policy challenge, particularly at the national level (Falkner 2016; Mildemberger 2020). As each country's targets for Paris become closer and demand more action. Assuming that reaching the targets of Paris 2015 is a goal of theirs, elites will have to make decisions as to how to decarbonise their economies, finance these policies, and find alternative sources of energy. These decisions are highly political, and will inevitable create new winners and losers of climate policy (Mildemberger 2020) A body of work has shown that the process through which the policy is enacted, the existence, type and target of economic pay-offs are central to drive support for specific climate policies (e.g., Bolet, Green and González-Eguino 2022; Egan and Mullin 2017; Gaikwad, Genovese and Tingley 2022; Gazmararian and Tingley 2023). This suggests that rather than general support for climate politics, it is the policy decisions, politics and the distributional consequences of each policy that determine support.

I make the argument that while facts about climate change can be provided as factual, scientific information, means to address it are inherently political. I suggest that politicizing climate change could explain the mismatch between high levels of concern and meaningful backlash against policies. As the issue becomes more salient, the prices of these policies and their political nature are likely to become more visible to voters and to elites. This is true to both elites who are in favour of climate policy and will have to outline these costs to voters, as to elites who might oppose it, and seek to capitalize on potential voters' grievances. When citizens consume information on climate change, it is often embedded in other political information and reactions by politicians. More specifically, I argue that when political actors turn climate change and scientific information on it into a political message, they might make voters less likely to support climate policy, and decrease the magnitude of these information

effects. As an example of how this information is processed by voters, take the release of the IPCC report in 2021 - a summary of the state of climate science to the general public that is highly covered and salient (see B.1). Reacting to it, the Australian prime minister highlighted how he and country would not be bullied into climate policies, and emphasized the need for national discussion and policies (see Hurst 2021). I expect similar patterns to happen as climate change becomes politicised, and that it is part of a broader phenomena which can explain the patterns through which information does not increase support for more climate policy.

To be clear, I am not advocating that information provision is not an important part of increasing or maintaining levels of concern high. Instead, I am arguing that these interventions are likely not as effective as one would expect as climate change becomes more politicised and as costlier and more visible policies on it might be implemented.

Following previous research on politicization (Fowler and Gollust 2015; Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015; Zürn, Binder and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012), political entrepreneurship (Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Vries and Hobolt 2020), and the politicization of international agreements (Walter 2021; Zürn, Binder and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012), I define politicization as the process through which an issue that was previously not political becomes political. A key way through which this can happen is when political elites address a previously consensual or technical issue by i) highlighting its political nature and the political conflict surrounding that issue and ii) highlight how it must be addressed through standard political procedures or institutions.

These strategies are particularly likely to be pursued by actors who wish to oppose climate policy. Especially in contexts where explicit climate skepticism can be socially and politically penalized, this may be an effective alternative for politicians. In the survey experiment, outlined in A, I will manipulate whether respondents read no information (control), a pure climate information message (pure information condition), or one of the political messages (politicisation conditions). In these, I focus on two key ways through which elite

discuss climate policy: economic costs, and sovereignty issues (e.g., Cann and Raymond 2018; Conway and Oreskes 2010; Bolet, Gomm and Green 2023). These have also been shown to be important drivers of support (or lackthereof) for climate policy (e.g., Schleich, Dütschke, Schwirplies and Ziegler 2016; Stokes 2013)

The Puzzle: Observational Evidence

Earlier I outline how backlash against specific climate policies casts doubt on the assumption that informed and concerned publics would support climate policy. However, it could be the case that these policies have specific features that are conducive to electoral backlash. In the following sections, I show observational patterns challenge two assumptions in the literature on information provision in climate change: that information provision on climate change increases climate policy demand, and that climate concern would, in of itself, drive policy support. I then present a pre-analysis plan (PAP) of the survey experiment I will field on this question.

Assumption 1: Information creates policy demand

I first look at the assumption that information creates support for climate policy (e.g., Stoutenborough and Vedlitz 2016). I do so by looking at the aftermath of information shocks, where voters receive a very high level of information about climate science and climate change policy.

An event that is particularly likely to function as an information shock are COP meetings. These are meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where the international community meets to discuss, evaluate and set new climate goals. Particularly salient COP meetings include the Kyoto Protocol (1992), the Copenhagen Summit (2009), the summit that lead to the Paris Agreements (2015), or the Glasgow meeting (2021). These are events that are heavily discussed in the national media, social media, and are highly visible (e.g., Hopke and Hestres 2018)(see also B.1). As such,

during these events, and particularly in the countries organizing it, voters are exposed to large amounts of information on climate change, its consequences and the state of climate policy.

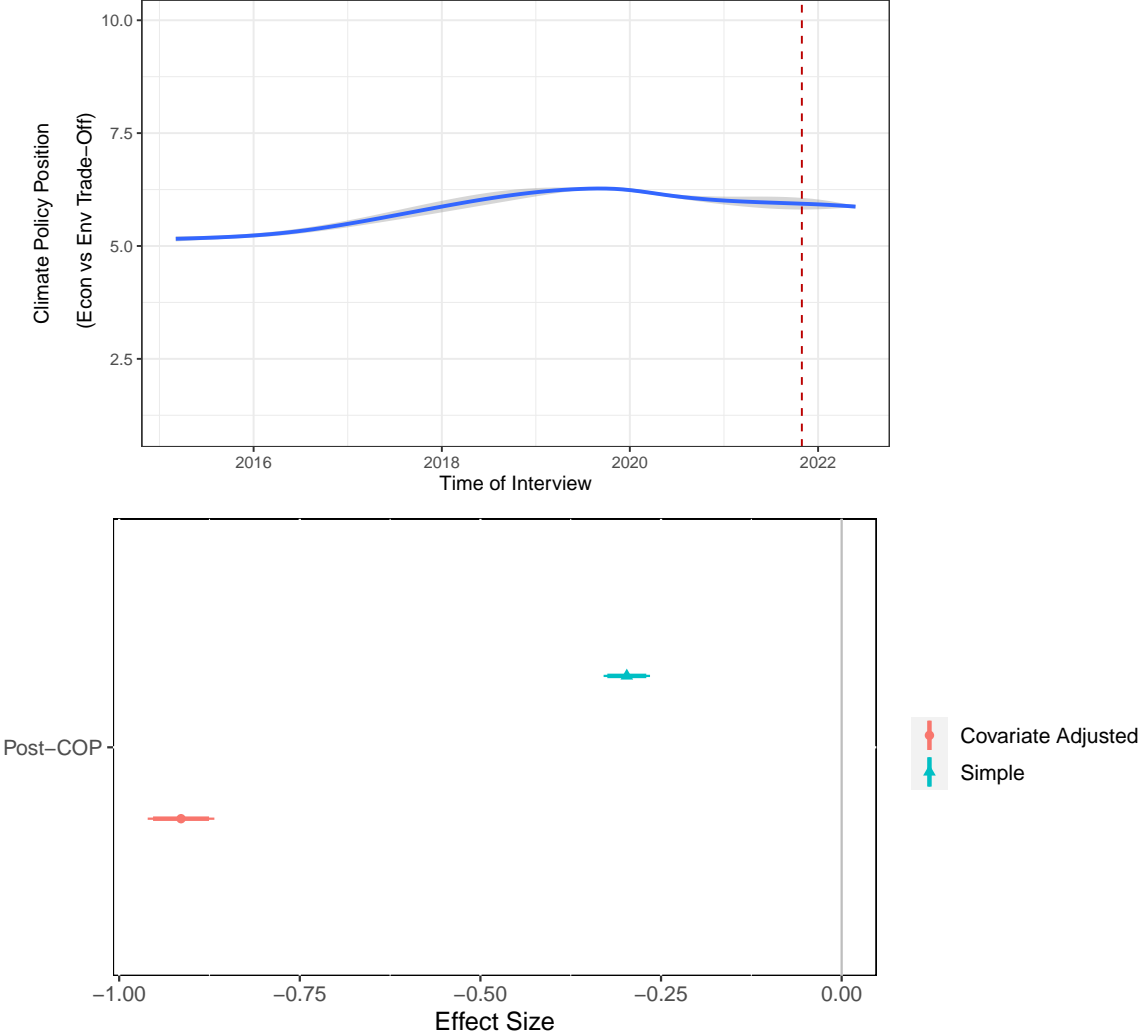
Empirically, I focus on the COP in Glasgow 2021 and its effect on the British voters. While this event took place in the UK, a country not in the survey experiment, it provides some empirical advantages to test the effects of information shocks: it is much more visible and reported on the news than other COP meetings and it took place in the UK, a country with similar patterns to the ones I highlighted earlier, and where there is a panel survey with items on climate salience and policy positions, fielded before and after that event. Specifically, I use data from the British Election Study Internet Panel (BES) (E., J., Evans, Mellon, Prosser, Bailey, de Geus, Schmitt and van der Eijk 2023). This is a panel that surveys British households multiple times a year, on questions regarding socio-economic and political topics. I use a variable that measures whether respondents believe climate policy (10) should prevail over economic growth (1) as a proxy to general climate policy support. With this, I test whether the event increase demand for climate policies among British voters by estimating fixed effects models of the following form:

$$PolicySupport_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta PostCOP_{it} + v_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where $PolicySupport_{it}$ is respondents i 's answer to the item on climate-economic policy trade-off in survey wave t , α_i are respondent fixed effects, which account for time-invariant personal characteristics, v_{it} is a matrix of time-varying covariates which include education, age, pre-treatment party identification, and income level. $PostCOP_{it}$ is the main predictor of interest and is a dummy variable representing whether respondent i at wave t was interviewed before or after COP's starting date, the 30th of October, 2021. Because $PolicySupport_{it}$ is not measure every wave and thus only once yearly, $PostCOP_{it}$ is perfectly collinear with survey wave or year. I first plot the support for climate policy over time on the top panel of

Figure 1. It shows the local averages for each period, while the dotted red line denotes the information shock - COP 2021. As can be seen, there seems to be no evidence of an increase in support for climate policy, even though the event clearly increased people’s exposure to information on climate change and policy, and that it did increase the salience of the issue, as I discuss below.

Figure 1: Demand for Climate Policy, Pre- and Post-COP 2021.



Note: The plot on the top panel shows respondents’ average level of agreement with whether protecting the environment (10) should take prevalence over economic growth (1). The red dashed line highlights the timing of COP 2021 in Glasgow. The plot on the bottom panel shows regression coefficients of the post COP period on respondents’ level of agreement with whether protecting the environment (10) should take prevalence over economic growth (1), including respondent fixed effects.

Turning to the regression outlined above, the bottom panel in Figure 1 shows the key results. It shows that, after COP 2021, British respondents were less, not more, likely to support climate policy over economic growth. While this analysis is not able to detect any causal estimates, it casts doubt on what would be a theoretical expectation: that in a context with high climate concern levels (e.g., Lewis and Feng 2019; Verner, Marlon, Carman, Rosenthal, Ballew, Leiserowitz, Buttermore and Mulcahy 2023), when presented with what might be one of the strongest information shocks, voters' support for climate policy would increase. This suggests that even though COP meetings increase the information and salience of climate change, it does lead to climate policy demand. These effects could be explained if the event simply did not register with voters, or was not linked to climate change or climate policy. However, in Table B.1 I use TWFE to find that post COP organization, British voters are more likely to mention climate change or the environment as the most important issue facing the country. Likewise, Figure B.1 shows that the week of COP saw the highest frequency of google searches for the term "climate change" suggesting again that the event was indeed salient and linked to climate change.

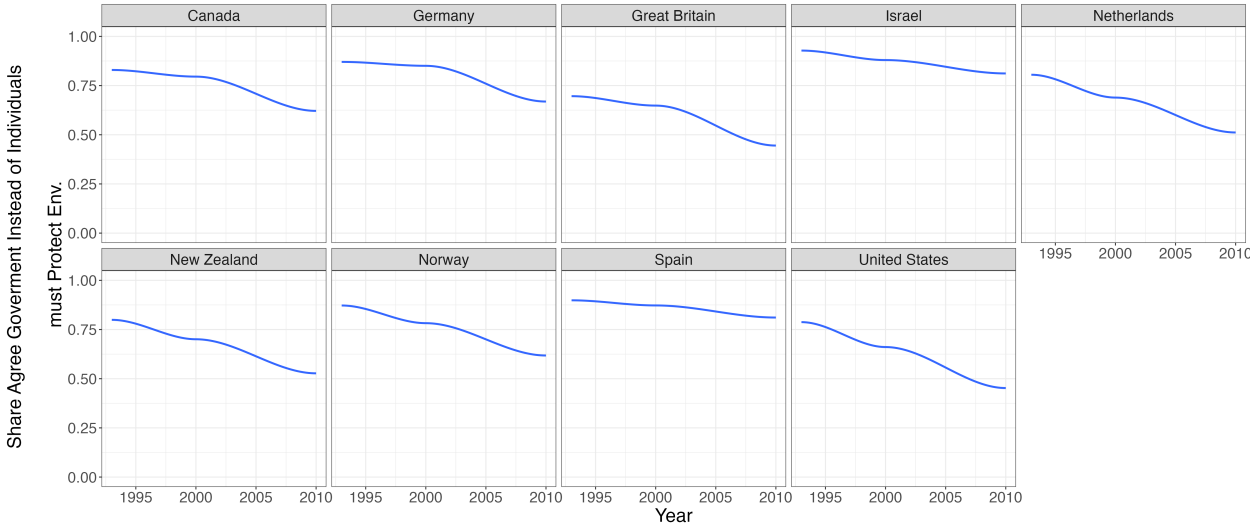
Assumption 2: Climate concern and policy demand

The second key assumption in the literature on climate information provision and on many policy designs is that concern for climate change is a proxy to willingness to act. As a consequence, climate awareness would bring about support for climate policy. In order to investigate whether that is the issue I make use of the ISSP Environment Modules from 1993, 2000, 2010, and 2020 dataset (Group 1995, 2003, 2019, 2023). These Modules focus on environmental and climate change topics and are part of ISSP, a cross-national survey that questions respondents of a total of over 50 countries on a series of topics on politics, socio-economic status, and demography.

While the ISSP does not measure support for specific policies over time, it does measure who people think is responsible for addressing climate change. Respondents are asked

whether "Government should let ordinary people decide for themselves how to protect environment" or "Government should pass laws to make ordinary people protect environment". I take the share of people agreeing with the statement that "Government should pass laws to make ordinary people protect environment" as a proxy to whether respondents believe governments are the ones with the duty to address climate change, and as a proxy to whether there is demand for *any* climate policy. Figure 2 plots the trends over time of the share of respondents agreeing with this statement, among OECD established democracies, who participated in the survey in all waves. It shows that across all these countries, there is a downward trend.

Figure 2: Demand for Climate Policy: Government Policy, 1993-2020.



Note: The plot displays the share of respondents agreeing with the statement "Government should pass laws to make ordinary people protect environment" instead of "Government should let ordinary people decide for themselves how to protect environment", in the OECD countries with the item measured multiple times in the period of 1993-2020.

A possible explanation for these patterns could be driven by either voters thinking climate change is not relevant or not concerned enough. Importantly, this happens as levels of concern remain high among the same groups of respondents (see C.2), and majorities in these countries remain concerned about climate change (e.g., Lewis and Feng 2019; Verner et al. 2023). This suggest citizens in these countries still believe climate change is something

that merits action, just not government or policy action.

Research Design

Experimental Evidence

While the analyses above cast doubt on the role of information and concern on climate policy support, they are mainly descriptive and correlational in nature, and do not test for the idea of politicising climate information. To test whether political messages mitigate the information effects on climate science, I will conduct a survey experiment in Australia, France and Norway. These are all countries with majorities showing high levels of concern (Verner et al. 2023). The pre-analysis plan can be found in Section A . The experiment is not in field yet, so all feedback is very welcomed and can still be incorporated.

The experiment will manipulate whether respondents get i) no message, ii) a pure information message, and iii) a political message, building on previous work on key political frames politicians use to discuss climate policy (e.g., Cann and Raymond 2018; Conway and Oreskes 2010; Bolet, Gomm and Green 2023). As outcomes, I focus on common outcomes in the climate information provision literature: general and specific climate policy preferences, climate change concern, perceived benefits (over costs) of climate policy and support for green parties. The hypotheses on heterogeneous treatment effects build on previous work showing that the degree to which the Australian electorate and elites are polarized on climate change is higher than in the other two contexts (Caldwell, Cohen and Vivyan 2023; Crowley 2017; Mildemberger 2020), and showing important gender differences on climate attitudes (Bush and Clayton 2022).

Conclusion

What explains climate policy backlash among electorates which are very concerned about climate change? This PAP challenges the assumption that information is a key driver of climate policy. First I use observational data to show that this assumption does not match the descriptive patterns in observational data. Specifically, I show that there is little evidence of information shocks influencing climate policy preferences (even though they are associated with increased salience on the issue), and that demand for climate policy has been decreasing while climate concern has remaining relatively stable, and high.

The second part of this text outlines a PAP of a survey experiment that intends to manipulate information messages and test whether they mitigate the effect of pure information messages on climate policy preferences. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the politics of climate policy by problematizing the assumptions surrounding the effects of information provision, and highlighting how general information provision is a limited mean to induce climate policy support in the real world, and how other types of more specific and contextualized information (e.g., Bernauer and McGrath 2016) might be more successful at increasing support for specific policies

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Supporting Information

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A Pre-Analysis Plan

Preregistration

Information, Political Messaging and Climate Preferences

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Study Information

Title Information, Political Messaging and Climate Preferences

Description This PAP describes a survey experiment testing whether political information mitigates the effects of information provision on climate policy preferences.

Political Scientists and Policy-Makers often assume that information shocks and information provision are what is needed for citizens to be more informed, concerned and likely to act on climate change. Yet, while experimental studies find positive effects of information provision, observational studies find at best smaller and short-lived effects. This study tests the extent to which political messaging explains these patterns. The study will manipulate whether respondents get i. no information, ii. information on the latest IPCC report findings, and iii. a political message in response to the report. It will test the effects on several outcomes: a) climate change concern, b) climate policy support, c) support for fuel taxes, d) support for renewable energy sources, e) perceived benefits (over costs) of climate policy and f) support for green parties

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- Hypotheses**
- Hypothesis 1:** When compared to the control condition, pure information provision has a positive effect on all four outcomes: a) climate change concern, b) climate policy support, c) support for fuel taxes, d) support for renewable energy sources, e) perceived benefits (over costs) of climate policy and f) support for green parties.
- Hypothesis 2:** When compared to the pure information condition, both political message conditions will decrease the magnitude of the positive effects listed under Hypothesis I a) - f).
- Hypothesis 2b:** The magnitude of the politicization effects are larger in Australia, than in France and Norway.
- Hypothesis 2c:** The magnitude of the politicization effects are larger for men than for women.
- Hypothesis 2d:** The magnitude of the politicization effects are larger for those who identify with right of center voters than with those who are on the left.
- Hypothesis 3:** When compared to all other conditions, the politicization - jobs condition has a negative effect on the perceived benefits (over costs) of climate policy
- Hypothesis 4:** When compared to all other conditions, the politicization - IO condition has a negative effect on the probability of choosing “international Organizations” as the entity who is responsible for climate policy.

Design Plan

Study type **Experiment.** A researcher randomly assigns treatments to study subjects, this includes field or lab experiments. This is also known as an intervention experiment and includes randomized controlled trials.

Blinding No blinding is involved in this study. Respondents will not know the treatment group to which they have been assigned.

Study design This is a between-subjects design, where respondents are randomized into four conditions: control, information treatment, political message treatment (international organizations message), political message treatment (jobs message). For two

outcomes that are also measured pre-treatment (general climate policy support and general climate concern) this will be a within-subject design.

Randomization	Within each country sample, a fourth of respondents will be randomized to each of the conditions mentioned above.
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Sampling Plan

Existing data	Registration prior to creation of data. As of the date of submission of this research plan for preregistration, the data have not yet been collected, created, or realized.
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Explanation of existing data	Not Applicable.
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Data collection procedures	Participants will be recruited online, through IPSOS online panel of respondents from Australia, France, and Norway. Participants are over 18 years old, citizens of each country and the sample will mimic the countries' distribution of age, gender, occupation, region and market size. No additional incentive or payment will be provided to participants other than that provided by IPSOS.
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The experiment will be part of a larger survey where other items and survey experiments are included. Assignment within each separate survey experiment will be independent.

Sample size	1,500 participants from each country, totalling 4500.
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Sample size rationale	As mentioned above, the survey experiment is included in a larger survey. Sample size was determined by the other goals of this larger project. There was no pilot or pre-test survey.
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Stopping rule	Not applicable.
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Variables

Manipulated variables Assignment into each of the treatment arms is the key manipulated variable. In the **control group** (25%), participants receive no message.

The pure information group (25%) receives the following text:

A recent scientific report by a team of UN scientists, says that the Earth is on path to warm 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next decade relative to pre-industrial levels.

The scientists warn that countries should do everything in their powers to decrease carbon emissions, namely by investing in public transport and renewable energies and moving away from other energy sources, such as coal and fossil fuels. Beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius, the reports warns, the rate and severity of natural disasters will become harder for humans to deal with.

The **political message group - international organizations** (25%) receives the following text:

A recent scientific report by a team of UN scientists, says that the Earth is on path to warm 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next decade relative to pre-industrial levels.

The scientists warn that countries should do everything in their powers to decrease carbon emissions, namely by investing in public transport and renewable energies and moving away from other energy sources, such as coal and fossil fuels. Beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius, the reports warns, the rate and severity of natural disasters will become harder for humans to deal with.

Reacting to the report, a key [AUSTRALIAN/ FRENCH/ NORWEGIAN] politician said “I think understanding the science here is important, but these suggestions are very political. We cannot be mandated by international organizations like the UN. We must discuss these topics within our country and it must be us deciding if and how to address it.”

The **political message group - jobs** (25%) receives the following text:

A recent scientific report by a team of UN scientists, says that the Earth is on path to warm 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next decade relative to pre-industrial levels.

The scientists warn that countries should do everything in their powers to decrease carbon emissions, namely by investing in public transport and renewable energies and moving away from other energy sources, such as coal and fossil fuels. Beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius, the reports warns, the rate and severity of natural disasters will

become harder for humans to deal with.

Reacting to the report, a key [AUSTRALIAN/ FRENCH/ NORWEGIAN] politician said “I think understanding the science here is important, but these suggestions are very political. Completely changing the way we fuel our lifestyle and our economy is going to cost us a lot of money and jobs. We must discuss these topics with our companies and workers before deciding if and how to address it.” __

Measured variables: As part of the survey, a series of socio-demographic and political questions are asked: their gender, how female/male they identify as, preferences on gender and ethnic equality, perceptions of climate change seriousness and level of action need to address it (both these them with regards to their country and themselves), support for international cooperation on climate change, climate policy support, climate concern, commuting habits, car ownership, perceptions of climate policy costs, right-left placement, party identification, political interest and knowledge, ethnic and religious identity, employment status and industry, are of residence, trade union membership, income and whether they have children and how many live in their households.

As outcome measures, the survey measures:

i) Climate policy responsibility. *Who do you think should be responsible for addressing climate change?* Answered from *Individuals* , *Companies*, *Local Governments*, *National Governments*, *NGOs*, *International Organizations*;

ii) General climate policy support. *How strongly do you support or oppose policies designed to prevent global climate change?* Answered in a 4-point scale from *Strongly Oppose* to *Strongly Support*;

iii) Climate policy costs. *How much do you agree with the following statement: “Addressing climate change will have more costs than benefits”?* Answered in a 5-point scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*;

iv) Fossil fuel tax support. *How strongly do you support increasing taxes on fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas)?* Answered in a 5-point scale from *Strongly Oppose* to *Strongly support*;

v) Climate Concern. *In general, how concerned are you about climate change?* Answered in a 5-point scale from *Not at all concerned* to *Extremely concerned*;

vi) Vote Choice. *If elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?*
Answered by choosing one option from each countries' parties with parliamentary representation;

Indices An index will be used for the items on political knowledge when using that for covariate adjustment. For the pooled analysis on the party support outcome, an index for left and right parties will be created. Another measure will be created for Green and ecological parties. Both of these will be based on standard party classification (Manifesto Project classification, EP party family membership). For testing Hypothesis 2d, a similar indicator will be created for pre-treatment party support.

Analysis Plan

Statistical models For each hypothesis, both covariate adjusted and not adjusted regression estimates will be reported. Each of these will also be reported both pooled across countries and for each country separately. For the items on climate concern and climate policy preferences, the pre-/post-treatment difference will be used as the outcome.

Transformations As mentioned earlier, dummy outcomes will be created for voting behaviour outcomes: support for Green Parties (0/1), support for Left-(0/1) and Right-Wing parties (0/1). For testing Hypothesis 2d, a similar indicator will be created for pre-treatment party support. Political knowledge will be measured as an index as mentioned above.

Inference criteria I will report 90 and 95 % confidence intervals for two-tailed tests, p-values will be corrected for multiple hypotheses.

Data exclusion The survey includes several attention checks. Participants who fail those, as well as *speeders* will be excluded from the sample.

Exploratory analyses (optional) I will look at heterogeneity by country, as well as individual-level socio-economic variables, previous voting behaviour and climate change concern.

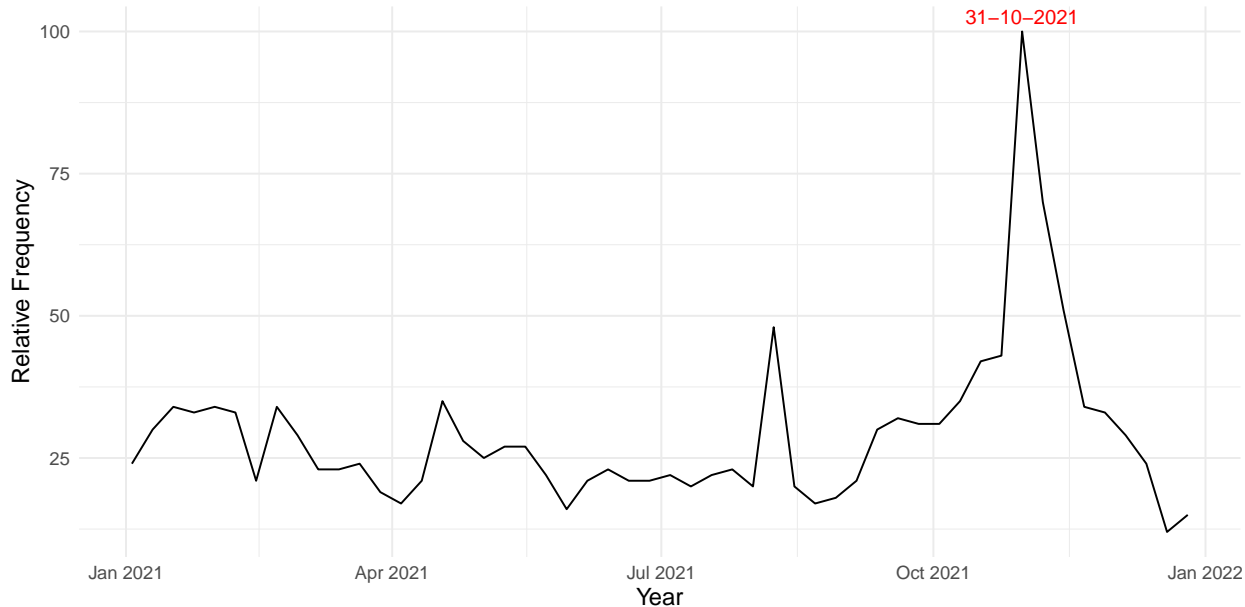
B Information Shocks and Saliience

It could be that the lack of changes in climate policy demand post COP presented in this paper are driven by the event not registering with voters. To test for that alternative explanation I proceed in two steps. First, I look at google trends for "climate change" over the year of 2021 in the UK. Second, I test for that alternative using the BES panel survey and TWFE.

B.1 Google Trends

To look at whether COP was salient and linked to climate change in the UK in 2021, I first present descriptive evidence from google search trends. The weekly relative frequency of searches for the term "climate change" throughout 2021 are presented below. As it shows, the peak was on the week of 31/10, the date of the start of COP. Interestingly, other than the period leading to COP, the highest spike is in August 2021, the date of the release of a IPCC report, another information shock on climate change science

Figure B.1: Saliience of Climate Change and COP: Google Search Trends.



Note: The plot displays the relative frequency of weekly searches for the term "climate change" in the UK, in 2021. 31/10/2021 is the starting date of the Glasgow COP.

B.2 Panel Survey

To test for the alternative explanation that the COP meeting is not sufficiently salient, I use the BES's item on what respondents think the most important issue is. Respondents' open-ended answers are then coded into several larger categories, and of which refers to climate change and the environment. I create a dummy variable where mentioning the environment takes the value of 1 and not mentioning it takes the value of 0. I use the same empirical strategy as outlined in the panel analyses in the text. However, because this question is surveyed more times, year fixed effects are not perfectly collinear with the main predictor. For that reason, I include both respondent and calendar year fixed effects. Results are presented below in Table B.1.

Table B.1: Salience of the environment post COP 2021.

Dependent Variable:	MII Environment (0-1)	
Model:	(1)	(2)
<i>Variables</i>		
Post-COP	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
Covariates	No	Yes
<i>Fixed-effects</i>		
Respondent	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>		
Observations	280,958	271,953

Clustered (Respondent) standard-errors in parentheses

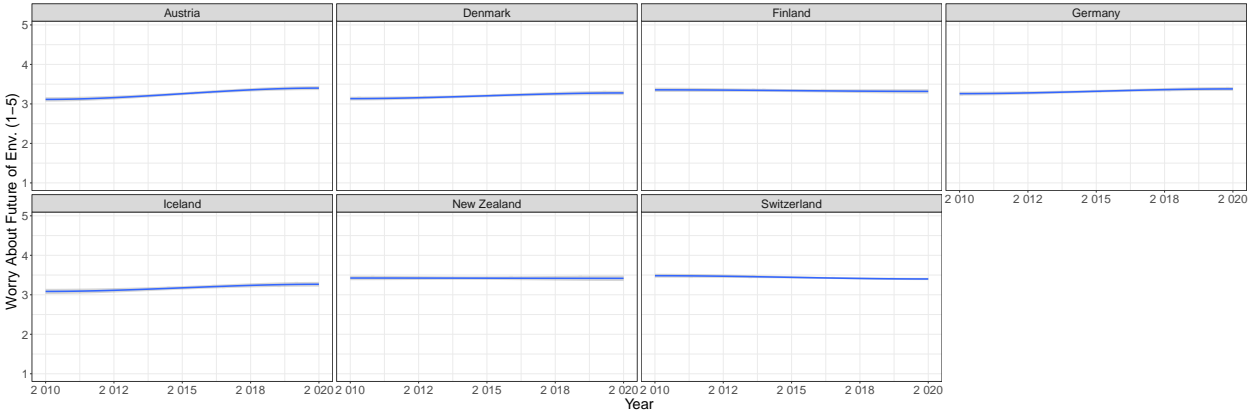
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Note: TWFE estimates of the effect of COP 2021 on the salience of the environment. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level (in parentheses). Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1

C Concern about the future of the environment over time

It could be that a reason why respondents are less likely to believe governments should take responsibility for environment and climate policy is that they are less concerned about it than they used to be. To test for that I plot average levels of concern from 2010-2020 in Figure C.2 using an ISSP variable that asks respondents how concerned they are about the future of the environment from 1: 1 Not at all concerned to 5: Very Concerned. As the Figure below shows, concern levels have remained stable, or have even increased from 2010 to 2020.

Figure C.2: Concern about the Environment, 2010-2020.



Note: The plot displays the local averages of ISSP respondents' level of concern with the environment, 1-5 among OECD countries where the question was fielded more than once.