

Relevance of Global Warming as a Voting Issue is Undeniable

Soham Mohan Dalal*

Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New Delhi, India

Editorial

In democratic societies, voting for candidates who support climate policy solutions is arguably the most important action citizens can take. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of global warming as a voting issue is crucial for building public and political will for climate solutions. Using data from two nationally representative surveys conducted this exploratory study investigated the influences of cognitive, experiential, socio cultural, and sociodemographic factors on two measures of perceived importance of global warming as a voting issue absolute importance. As expected, in both surveys, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to perceive global warming as an important voting issue [1]. The perceived importance of global warming as a voting issue was also positively associated with certainty in belief that global warming is happening, perceived risk, worry, positive social norms, and discussing global warming with family and friends, it was also negatively associated with exposure to conservative media [2]. In both surveys, discussing global warming with family and friends was positively associated with considering global warming to be the **most** important voting issue, whereas perceived personal experience and worry were significant predictors in only one survey. These results suggest that global warming's importance as a voting issue is influenced by a range of individual, social, and media influences, and that the predictors of the issue's absolute importance to voters overlap only partially with the predictors of its relative importance. Protecting society from the risks of climate change requires systemic policy changes to fully address its current and looming impacts [3]. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that unmitigated climate change will have severe impacts on societies and ecosystems. According to the Fourth National Climate Assessment, climate change has already begun to transform. The present and future impacts of climate change are clear indicators that large-scale, transformative actions are necessary to preserve human and ecosystem health and wellbeing. In a democratic society, elected officials are expected to act on the preferences of their constituents. Thus, the importance that citizens place on certain issues in the voting booth can have important downstream consequences for policy agendas by signaling to candidates and elected officials which issues are priorities for their constituents [4]. As a result, understanding the factors that may influence the importance citizen's place on global warming as a voting issue is a vital, yet underexplored, antecedent to securing action on global warming. Past research has focused on predictors of climate change risk perceptions, policy support, perceptions of the national seriousness of global warming, and consumer and political activism behaviors [5]. To guide our selection of potential predictors, we adopted a framework constructed to organize our focal constructs in four categories: cognitive factors, experiential processing factors, socio-cultural influences, and sociodemographics. Each of the constructs in these four categories has previously been shown to play an important role in shaping global warming risk perceptions, policy preferences, and political and consumer behavior [6]. We hypothesized that these constructs would also be associated with the perceived importance of global warming as a voting issue. A considerable body of research has demonstrated the importance of cognitive factors on climate change opinion formation. In this study, we included people's certainty that global warming is happening (which we term belief certainty) and their

perception of risks associated with global warming [7].

global warming, the phenomenon of increasing average air temperatures near the surface of Earth over the past one to two centuries. Climate scientists have since the mid-20th century gathered detailed observations of various weather phenomena (such as temperatures, precipitation, and storms) and of related influences on climate (such as ocean currents and the atmosphere's chemical composition) [8]. These data indicate that Earth's climate has changed over almost every conceivable timescale since the beginning of geologic time and that human activities since at least the beginning of the Industrial Revolution have a growing influence over the pace and extent of present-day climate change. Giving voice to a growing conviction of most of the scientific community, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was formed in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), published in 2021, noted that the best estimate of the increase in global average surface temperature between 1850 and 2019 was 1.07°C (1.9°F) [9]. An IPCC special report produced in 2018 noted that human beings and their activities have been responsible for a worldwide average temperature increase between 0.8 and 1.2°C (1.4 and 2.2°F) since preindustrial times, and most of the warming over the second half of the 20th century could be attributed to human activities [10,11].

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*Corresponding author: Soham Mohan Dalal, Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New Delhi, India, E-mail: sohamdalal9481@gmail.com

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