

60% of people support costly climate policies if they are international

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60% of people support costly climate policies if other countries also participate, reveals new research by University of Cologne, Yale University and Stanford University.

The study, conducted by Professor Dr Michael Bechtel (University of Cologne), Professor Dr Kenneth Scheve (Yale University), and Dr Elisabeth van Lieshout (Stanford University), investigated the extent to which the public supports costly climate policies.

They found that 60% of people are willing to support costly climate policies, such as a domestic carbon tax, if other countries are also investing in climate action. This number drops down to 53% when other countries do not participate.

“This is because the policies are seen to be fairer and more effective if it is a joint effort globally. When domestic climate measures are embedded internationally, people are more likely to believe that these reforms will have a positive impact on important social, economic, and environmental sustainability goals,” says Michael Bechtel, Professor for Political Economy at the WiSo Faculty and member of the Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute: Markets and Public Policy.

The study also found that in order for this to work, costs must be equal among all countries involved.

“If domestic household costs increased significantly, support for the policies would decrease by 7 percentage points, however if other industrialised countries also had increased monthly costs, support only fell by 5 percentage points. Even if people generally dislike costs, they are more willing to accept cost increases if other countries also make higher contributions,” says Michael Bechtel.

The researchers say that climate change measures in other countries play a crucial role in securing mass support for domestic climate policy.

They add that investing in well-functioning international agreements is worthwhile not only from a natural science perspective, but also for policymakers interested in securing broader public support for costly climate action domestically.

The study surveyed a total of 10,000 people in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States and was published in the journal Nature Communications.

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