



Views of Climate Change

EUROPE BACKGROUNDER

France

Like most Europeans polled, the French agree that human activity contributes to climate change, support taking major steps to address the issue, and feel that both wealthy and less wealthy countries should limit their emissions. A very large majority (89%) says that human activity, “including industry and transportation,” is a significant cause of climate change. France has one of the largest majorities (85%)—after Spain and Italy—believing that it is necessary to start taking major steps very soon. A significant majority (61%) endorses the argument that emissions from less wealthy countries are “substantial and growing” and therefore they should be required to impose caps, while only 31 percent favor the view that less wealthy countries should not have to do so because their per capita emissions are relatively low. More than three out of four (78%) favor a deal requiring wealthy countries to provide financial assistance and technology to less wealthy countries if they agree to limit greenhouse gases. An overwhelming majority of the French are aware of the issue: 92 percent saying they have heard a great deal (62%) or some (30%) about climate change.

Germany

Although Germans consider human activity an important cause of climate change and believe both developed and developing countries should limit emissions, they are more divided than other publics about whether immediate action is necessary. Eighty-seven percent of German respondents agree that human activity is a significant cause of climate change and 95 percent think it is necessary to take measures to deal with the problem. But while half (50%) endorse taking “major steps starting very soon,” nearly as many (45%) prefer “modest steps over the coming years.” Sixty-one percent endorse the argument that both wealthy and less wealthy countries should limit their greenhouse gas emissions because the production of such pollutants in the developing world is “substantial and growing.” Only 34 percent think that because less wealthy countries produce “relatively low emissions” per capita and they should not be expected to impose caps. Three-quarters (75%) would support a deal requiring wealthy countries to give financial assistance and technology to developing countries that agree to limit their emissions. Germans are somewhat less aware of the issue of climate change than other Europeans: 76 percent say they have heard or read a great deal (28%) or some (48%) about the issue, while 24 percent have not heard much (22%) or anything at all (2%).

Great Britain

Britons believe human activity is a major factor contributing to climate change, support taking immediate action to address the problem, and are among those publics most supportive of providing technology and financial assistance to developing countries if they agree to limit emissions. Nearly four out of five respondents (78%) believe that human activities such as industry and transportation are a significant cause of climate change. A large majority (70%) believes major steps should be taken in the immediate future to reduce the impact of these activities, while another 25 percent prefer to take more modest, gradual measures (only 3 percent reject taking any steps). Similar numbers (70%) favor the argument that because emissions in less wealthy countries are substantial and growing, they should be expected to impose limits along with wealthy countries. Only 25 say they should not be expected to do so because their per capita emissions are relatively low. A very large majority (81%) supports a deal that would require wealthy countries to provide technology and financial assistance to developing countries if they agree to cap their emissions. Britons are also among those most aware of the issue: nine in 10 say they have heard a great deal (61%) or a lot (29%) about global warming or climate change.

Italy

Like most Europeans, Italians agree that humans have contributed to climate change, and they are among those most supportive of immediate action to address the problem. But Italians are somewhat divided about whether developing countries should limit their emissions unless they are given foreign assistance. An overwhelming majority (92%) sees human activity as a significant cause of climate change. Italy is second only to Spain in the percentage favoring strong, quick action to address the problem: 86 percent say “it is necessary to take major steps starting very soon.” But they lean toward the view that developing countries should not have to take such measures. Asked whether less wealthy countries should or should not be required to limit emissions about half (49%) believe they should not (because they “produce relative low emissions per person”) and nearly as many (42%) say they should (because their total emissions are “substantial and growing”). More than three out of four (77%) would support a deal requiring less wealthy countries to limit emissions in return for financial assistance and technology from wealthy countries. Most Italians are aware of the issue, with 87 percent saying they have heard or read a great deal (51%) or some (36%) about global warming.

Russia

Although Russians agree that human activity is a significant cause of climate change and believe both wealthy and less wealthy countries should limit emissions, they are divided about whether immediate or gradual steps are necessary. Russians are less aware of the issue than other European publics. Eight in 10 (79%) believe human activity, “including industry and transportation,” is a significant cause of climate change. Although most Russians (87%) favor action to address the problem, they are divided about whether urgent measures are needed. Forty-three percent say “it is necessary to take major steps starting very soon” while 44 percent prefer “modest steps over the coming years.” A significant majority of Russians (58%) support the argument that “because total

emissions from less wealthy countries are substantial and growing, these countries should be expected to limit their emissions along with wealthy countries.” Only 20 percent favor instead the position that “because countries that are less wealthy produce relatively low emissions per person” they should not be expected to do so. More than three-quarters (77%) would support a deal requiring wealthy countries to provide financial assistance and technology to developing countries if they agree to limit emissions. But a majority of Russians (64%) say they have heard or read little (55%) or nothing (9%) about the issue of climate change.

Spain

Spaniards are among those most convinced that human activity is a significant source of climate change and most in favor of taking immediate action to address the problem. An overwhelming 93 percent of Spaniards agree that human activity is a significant cause of climate change. Ninety-one percent—the highest level among the 21 countries polled—say that major steps should be taken “starting very soon.” More than two out of three (72%) believe that because total emissions from developing countries are “substantial and growing” they should be required to impose limits. Only 20 percent take the opposing position that they should not have to do so because they produce relatively low emissions per capita. More than three-quarters (76%) favor a deal requiring wealthy countries to provide financial assistance and technology to less wealthy countries that agree to cap green house gas emissions. Most Spaniards are aware of the climate change issue: 77 percent say they have heard a great deal (32%) or something (45%) about it.

For more information on this poll, please see the Questionnaire/Methodology:
http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/sep07/BBCClimate_Sep07_quaire.pdf