

International Attitudes Toward Global Policies

Adrien Fabre,¹ Thomas Douenne,² and Linus Mattauch³

1 Abstract

We document majority support for policies entailing global redistribution and climate mitigation. Surveys on 40,680 respondents in 20 countries show strong stated support for an effective way to jointly combat climate change and poverty: a global carbon price funding a global basic income, called the "Global Climate Scheme" (GCS). Using complementary surveys on 8,000 respondents in the U.S., France, Germany, Spain, and the UK, we test several hypotheses that could reconcile strong stated support with a lack of salience in policy circles. The GCS is supported by three quarters of Europeans and half of Americans, even as they understand the policy's cost to them. Using different experiments, we show that the support for the GCS is sincere and that electoral candidates could win votes by endorsing it. More generally, we document widespread support for other globally redistributive policies, such as a wealth tax funding low-income countries or increased foreign aid. In sum, we provide evidence that global policies are genuinely supported by majorities, even in wealthy nations that would bear the burden.

Literature

Few prior attitudinal surveys have examined policies for global redistribution (Carattini et al., 2019; Ghassim et al., 2022).

2 Results

2.1 Data

We assess the stated support for different global policies in a survey on climate attitudes conducted in 2021 on 40,680 respondents from 20 countries covering 72% of global carbon emissions (the questions on national policies are analyzed in another paper: Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022 [which is in revision at the *American Economic Review*]).

We conduct complementary surveys in the U.S. and Europe. The U.S. survey has been divided in two waves, with respectively 3,000 and 2,000 respondents. The European questionnaire combines the two U.S. ones. It was conducted on 3,000 respondents representative of France, Germany, Spain, and the UK.

The surveys are administrated online. The samples are representative along the dimensions of gender, income, age, highest diploma, region, and degree of urbanization.

¹ CNRS, CIRED. E-mail: adrien.fabre@cnrs.fr (corresponding author).

² University of Amsterdam

³ Technical University Berlin, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research -- Member of the Leibniz Association and University of Oxford

2.2 Stated support for global policies

Global support

The global survey shows strong support for climate policies enacted at the global level (Figure 1).

Three policies garner high support across all countries: a global assembly on climate change, a global tax on millionaires, and a global emissions trading system.

Consistent with the existing literature, an equal per capita allocation of emission rights emerges as the preferred burden-sharing principle.

Figure 1 Relative support for global climate policies (Percentage of "Somewhat" or "Strongly support" among non-"indifferent" answers, $n = 40,680$).

	High-income											Middle-income										
	Australia	Canada	Denmark	France	Germany	Italy	Japan	Poland	South Korea	Spain	United Kingdom	United States	Brazil	China	India	Indonesia	Mexico	South Africa	Turkey	Ukraine		
Level at which climate policies are needed (Multiple choice question)																						
Global	85	78	87	81	85	88	92	94	88	86	88	88	70	85	88	87	78	86	88	90	82	76
Federal/Continental	46	67	58	48	37	48	30	40	40	47	52		48	48	61	67	50	41	42	41	24	
State/National	44	54	50	45	27	45	28	50	38	65	34	53	41	42	36	32	59	35	26	53	58	35
Local	36	48	45	33	26	37	24	35	37	41	30	43	35	35	35	29	50	24	28	42	41	27
Global climate policies (5-Likert scale)																						
Global carbon budget (+2°C) divided in tradable country shares	84	79	85		74	89	82	81	92	85	90		90	82	95	89	95	92	90	88	88	
Global tax on millionaires to finance low-income countries	82	74	84	72	86	83	90	88	80	89	86	85	73	92	86	98	92	97	93	89	87	94
Global democratic assembly on climate change	81	74	80	77	82	76	90	88	85	85	88	77	71	91	84	97	88	96	94	89	87	93
Global tax on GHG financing a global basic income	49	41	44	57	51	52	55	53	47	53	50	40	49	79	76	92	88	91	83	54	60	77
Burden sharing preferences for the global carbon budget (5-Likert)																						
Emission share should be in proportion to population*	88	87	87	90	90	85	91	84	89	91	89	88	87	91	84	96	91	94	92	93	90	85
Countries that have emitted more since 1990 should receive a lower share*	72	69	73	57	80	76	80	69	71	75	74	72	68	82	79	92	86	91	75	73	81	74
Countries that will be hurt more by CC should receive a higher share*	71	71	68	62	74	67	71	84	80	72	75	68	59	84	78	95	90	91	77	81	83	69
Emission share should be in proportion to current emissions	54	55	53		47	46	63	57	68	49	48		69	53	86	77	88	56	55	77	46	

Global Climate Scheme

The GCS consists of global emissions trading with emission rights being auctioned each year to polluting firms, and of a global basic income of \$30/month, funded by the auction revenues. We make sure that the respondents understand the redistributive effects of the GCS: The 700 million people with less than \$2/day would be lifted out of extreme poverty, and fossil fuel price increases would cost the typical person in their country a specified amount, e.g. \$85/month in the U.S. or £20/month in the UK.

The stated support for the GCS is 54% in the U.S. and 76% in Europe.

Global wealth tax

We inquire about respondents' preferences regarding the redistribution of revenues from a global wealth tax. In each country, at least 88% of respondents prefer to allocate 10% or more to low-income countries, with a median of 30%.

Other global policies

Other global redistributive policies garner majority support across all countries.

Foreign aid

In each country, a majority supports increased foreign aid, with or without conditions. The most cited condition is the guarantee that aid is not diverted.

2.3 Robustness and sincerity of support for the GCS

All our analyses suggest that the support is sincere.

List experiment

By asking *how many* policies within a list respondents support, and adding for some respondents the GCS in the list, we identify the tacit support for that policy. It is not significantly different from the stated support.

Petition

The GCS receives comparable support in a real-stake question, knowing that the results of that question will be sent to the head of state's office.

Conjoint analyses

We present to two random branches hypothetical progressive and conservative platforms that differ only by the presence (or not) of the GCS in the progressive platform. Table 1 shows that a progressive candidate would not significantly lose voting share by endorsing the GCS in any country, and may even gain 11 p.p. ($p = .005$) in voting intention in France and 3 p.p. ($p = .13$) in the U.S.

Table 1 Preference for a progressive platform depending on whether it includes the Global Climate Scheme.

	Prefers the Progressive platform					
	All	United States	France	Germany	UK	Spain
GCS in Progressive platform	0.028* (0.014)	0.029 (0.022)	0.112*** (0.041)	0.015 (0.033)	0.008 (0.040)	−0.015 (0.038)
Constant	0.623	0.604	0.55	0.7	0.551	0.775
Observations	5,202	2,619	605	813	661	504
R ²	0.001	0.001	0.013	0.0003	0.0001	0.0003

Note: The 14% of *None of them* answers have been excluded from the regression samples. GCS has no significant influence on them. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

We make respondents choose between two pairs of random platforms (in the U.S., these questions are framed as a Democratic primary and asked only to non-Republicans). In the first question, a policy (or an absence of policy) is randomly drawn for each platform in each of five categories. In the UK, Germany, and France, a platform is about 9 to 13 p.p. more likely to be preferred if it includes the GCS rather than no foreign policy. This effect is between 1 and 4 p.p. and no longer significant in the U.S. and in Spain. Moreover, a platform that includes a global tax on millionaires rather than no foreign policy is 5 to 13 percentage points (p.p.) more likely to be preferred in all countries.

The second question draws random platforms similarly, except that candidate A's platform always contains the GCS while B's includes no foreign policy. In this case, A is chosen by 60% in Europe and 58% in the U.S.

Overall, taking the U.S. as an example, our conjoint analyses indicate that a candidate at the Democratic primary would have more chances to obtain the nomination by endorsing the GCS, and this endorsement would not penalize her or him at the presidential election.

Prioritization

The global tax on millionaires consistently ranks no lower than fifth position (out of 15 or 17 policies) in every country, and the GCS is prioritized over prominent national climate policies.

Pros and Cons

The support for the GCS decreased by 11 p.p. after simulating a campaign by showing participants a list of its pros and cons, where the cons were over-represented.

2.4 Universalistic values

Answers to broad value questions are consistent with majority support for global redistribution: Europeans and U.S. Democrats are as much willing to give to poor Africans than to poor fellow citizens in an incentivized donation experiment; most people find that global issues are among the biggest problems, almost half of them are universalist when they vote, and most of them wish that their diplomats take into account global justice.

2.5 Second-order Beliefs

The evidence for pluralistic ignorance (underestimation of public support) is limited based on an incentivized question: The mean perceived support of the GCS is 52% in the U.S. and 59% in Europe.

3 Discussion

Having ruled out insincerity and underestimation of fellow citizens' support as potential explanations for the scarcity of global policies in the public debate, we propose different alternative explanations.

First, there may be pluralistic ignorance *among policymakers*. Second, policymakers may believe that globally redistributive policies are politically infeasible in some key countries like the U.S. Third, political discourse centrally happens at the national level, shaped by media and institutions such as voting. In turn, national framing may suppress universalistic values.

Bibliography

Carattini, Stefano, Steffen Kallbekken, and Anton Orlov. 2019. "How to Win Public Support for a Global Carbon Tax." *Nature*.

Dechezleprêtre, Antoine et al. 2022. "Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes toward Climate Policies." *NBER Working Paper*.

Ghassim, Farsan, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, and Luis Cabrera. 2022. "Public Opinion on Institutional Designs for the United Nations: An International Survey Experiment." *International Studies Quarterly*.