

SURVEYING CLIMATE SENTIMENTS: UNEARTHING PATTERNS IN CROATIAN PERSPECTIVES

ANALYSIS OF FES SINUS POPULATION SURVEY BASED ON COUNTRY RESULTS CROATIA

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Green Gaps: Croatia's Economic Focus vs. Environmental Blind Spots

The transitional process of the 1990s entailed significant changes to the social context including rising social inequalities and detrimental effects of the war (rising unemployment, impoverishment, dominant nationalist rhetoric in public discourse). One of the most significant structural changes within the process of post-socialist transition was intensive deindustrialisation (complete collapse of industry), leading to high unemployment, rise in inequalities and poverty and depopulation of rural areas, which consequentially led to an increase in overall air and water quality (Domazet and Ančić 2019). The decline in industrial output, including food production for the former federal Yugoslavian market, the tourist industry, and exports, has led to de-agrarization. This collapse has also affected competitive family farms, resulting in increased urban proletarianization, with a shift towards servicing the tourist sector and state administration (Ančić, Domazet, and Župarić-Iljić 2019). The Croatian economy is heavily dependent on the tourist sector, which accounts for 20% of the country's GDP and stands as its most prolific branch. Consequently, Croatia's economic stability is at significant risk of being profoundly impacted by climate change. As extreme weather events become more frequent, coastal erosion threatens key tourist destinations, while changes in temperature patterns could disrupt seasonal tourism flows. Increasingly severe weather patterns, including prolonged droughts and escalating temperatures, heighten the threat of wildfires, posing direct risks to both natural landscapes and tourist infrastructure. Moreover, shifts in precipitation levels may exacerbate water scarcity issues, further challenging the sustainability of both tourism and other sectors reliant on natural resources. In a deindustrialized economy heavily reliant on natural resources, which are vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change impacts, Croatia faces significant challenges. With industries dwindling, the nation's dependence on its natural assets becomes more pronounced, heightening the risks of environmental damage and climate-related disruptions. This vulnerability extends to various sectors, from agriculture affected by erratic weather patterns to increased exposure to natural disasters like floods and wildfires, all threatening Croatia's economic stability.

In social science surveys it is sometimes explored how citizens perceive main social issues and problems in a society, and with this it is interesting to see how citizens prioritize environment on the list of surveyed important socioeconomic problems. As such, it differs among societies and is mostly formatted between individual experiences and perspectives on one hand and media dominated topics in public sphere on the other. In Croatia citizens mostly prioritize economic topics, healthcare system issues and issues concerning growing corruption. Environment as such is perceived as a less important topic for Croatian society and has been so for a while. For instance, the 2011 analysis of the *Environment* module as one of the research topics within the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), respondents from Croatia express a preference for economic topics over issues of limiting and reducing the ecological footprint or of the matter of environment as such (Ančić and Domazet 2013). In a replicated research 10 years later, the distribution of answers is similar. Respondents choose economic issues and issues of poverty as main priorities in Croatian society while they do not perceive the topic of the environment as important, in relation to some other topics, which is evident, among other things, from the drop by one place on the list of the most important social problems in Croatia, compared to 2011. Environment alongside with terrorism and migration issues is seen as a least of the important problems (Cik 2021). Similar findings but with more nuances, due to different survey indicators used, can be seen in the SINUS population survey for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung . Respondents emphasise the importance of issues like public health service and care, rule of law and

fight against corruption, inflation and decline in purchasing power, employment offers and fair wages, as the most important issues for which politicians' care and focus is needed. Environmental, nature and climate protection issues, issues of secure energy supply and affordable energy prices tag along with issues of criminality and internal security, and as such are of moderate interest of a wider public. However, **they are prioritized more than issues like adequate and affordable living spaces, migration and integration of immigrants, peace policy and stable relations with other countries or for that matter digitalization**, which is ranked the lowest. **While respondents in Croatia may not prioritize environmental issues, it is important to note that this does not imply a lack of relevance for these concerns among the public. In the broader public sphere, environmental and climate issues are not distinctly framed as national problems in Croatia to the same extent.** Despite increased media coverage of climate issues in recent years, these discussions predominantly occur within the context of global climate challenges. There is a noticeable absence of a localized framing and narrative, and these issues rarely carry a sense of urgency or importance within the national public discourse.

Environmental policy, by definition, involves addressing issues such as air and water pollution, waste management, ecosystem management, biodiversity protection, the safeguarding of natural resources, wildlife preservation, and the management of resources for the future. However, Croatian respondents do not equally recognize all of these policy fields as relevant. The top three environmental policy areas, in terms of perceived relevance, include water pollution (water quality), air pollution (air quality), and environmental and living environment waste. These are often referred to as 'classic' environmental hazards or traditional issues linked to industry, agriculture, and traffic. In terms of relevance to environmental policy fields of action, respondents prioritize to a lesser extent what are known as 'global ecological problems,' such as climate change and emissions harmful to the climate, the condition of forests, the state of oceans, and the extinction of species in the animal and plant kingdoms. **This highlights the imperative for a more effective articulation of global environmental issues in the public sphere and the necessity to encourage through various campaigns, including political ones, Croatian citizens to be more conscious of the socioecological challenges that lie ahead.**

Is the Croatian population generally interested in climate change issues?

More in-depth exploration of public attitude and beliefs concerning environmental issues displays that Croatian citizens are in general concerned and interested in issues of the socioecological crisis. Concerning to what extent do they personally recognize climate change as an important topic for Croatia, was already explored ten years ago on national and compared with the European level (Ančić, Puđak, and Domazet 2016; Domazet, Ančić, and Brajdić Vuković 2014). In 2013 on a similar indicator with a 10-point answer scale (1 = not important problem at all – 10 = extremely important problem) Croatian citizen scored 6.9. Cumulatively, about 70% of the respondents recognize climate change to be a serious problem (choosing between 6 and 10 on the scale). Data from the 2011 Eurobarometer Climate Change display that the mean value for all the countries of the European Union is 7.4, while the lowest value was reported in Estonia (6.1) and the highest value in Cyprus (8.9) (Ančić et al. 2016). **The FES SINUS survey clearly indicates that the recognition of climate change as an important topic has increased, and the current mean value of 7.6 suggests that the general public is inclined to perceive climate change as a significant problem.** Not only are people living in Croatia able to acknowledge the importance of climate change, but **also nearly 80% of them express fear regarding its consequences.** In connection with this, the acknowledgment of the importance of climate change and the feeling of fear about its consequences lead the majority of respondents (around 60%) to adopt a more pessimistic stance. Rather than focusing on climate protection (mitigation orientation), they

believe it is more prudent to concentrate on adapting to the consequences of climate change (adaptation orientation). A similar percentage does not believe that many things regarding the consequences of climate change are greatly exaggerated.

A decade-long study of Croatian citizens' perspectives on climate change highlights growing concern, with nearly 80% expressing fear about its consequences. This nuanced understanding of public attitudes paves the way for exploring socioecological beliefs and their impact on environmental policies. One of the patterns mentioned in previous section repeats once again when attitudes on climate change are concerned. Although a big majority in Croatian society recognizes climate change as a problem and harbours fears of its consequences, a large majority also believes that there are more pressing issues in Croatia than climate change (75%). In Croatia we have witnessed severe incidences related to climate change, like for instance a big flood in 2014 that hit beside Croatia eight countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Even though there is awareness among decision makers that climate change impact can be seen in the form of ever more intense and more frequent climate extremes, there is a clear lack of the sense of urgency to develop and apply adaptation strategies (Puđak 2019). Similar pattern can be seen in the aftermath of a big storm in Zagreb in the summer of 2023. While in the public sphere, some politicians and climate change experts attempted to highlight the real danger climate change poses to both material and social structures—illustrated by the record-breaking strength of the wind and material damage caused by the Zagreb big storm, including human casualties—overall, the media framing failed to capture this as the most relevant concern. **Overall, the disparity between public opinion recognizing climate change as a frightening and serious danger and the insufficient articulation of climate change issues in the public sphere underscores the imperative to address this gap.** Bridging this gap requires collaboration between political parties and climate change experts, who should articulate a clear narrative regarding the consequences of climate change in the context of Croatia. Due to the infrequency of extreme events with severe material consequences attributed directly to climate change and the absence of widely publicized incidents directly linking to climate change, the majority of Croatian society will likely continue to perceive climate change as a less important topic compared to economic and general political issues relevant for Croatian context. Even more, they will perceive the climate change problem disassociate from economic problems. Nevertheless, people will continue to express concern and fear about climate change.

In terms of the fear of specific climate change consequences, it's noteworthy that Croatian citizens primarily express concern about the increase in extreme weather events (64%), water shortage in everyday life (56%), and the extinction of species in the animal and plant world (50%). To a lesser extent, around 40% harbour fears of military conflicts over raw materials and water, impairment of their health and quality of life, forest fires and dieback, the rise in humanitarian crises, and the spread of (new) diseases. Interestingly, economic damage and increased immigration are less prevalent fears, probably attributed to the fact that these consequences have not been widely visible or present in Croatia, thus shaping the public's perceptions and concerns in this context. From this, we can conclude that **specific climate change fears among Croatian citizens are notably directed towards tangible and immediate impacts, such as extreme weather events, water shortage, and species extinction.** The lower levels of concern regarding military conflicts, health impairments, forest fires, humanitarian crises, and disease spread suggest a nuanced perception of climate change risks. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of localized experiences in shaping public perceptions of climate change impacts.

Do Croatian citizens want change and are they willing to change?

The level of environmental concern in a society influences the population's environmental behaviour, and so the maintenance or even increase in environmental concern is an important component of environmental protection (Domazet et al. 2014). From the previous section, it is visible that Croatian citizens are concerned and fearful about the consequences of climate change. The question that rises from this is what is a tipping point in a society or an activation threshold above which the population is prepared to democratically support taking radical steps in order to avoid dangerous collapse of earth's biophysical systems? Therefore, it is instructive to see how citizens see their own role and responsibility in potential social and economic transformation.

Firstly, a great majority of citizens in Croatia (around 80% or more), claim to be willing to do more to protect the environment and for the sake of it would be willing to change their way of living, even though to the same extent they are afraid that a needed fundamental change in our way of living and doing business will come at high cost for them. At the same level, they assess that measures to protect the climate and the environment are socially unjust, as they burden low-income earners in particular. This effectively captures the complex and ambivalent sentiments among citizens in Croatia regarding environmental protection. It highlights a willingness to contribute and make lifestyle changes for the environment, but there is a notable concern about the potential personal costs associated with fundamental changes. The acknowledgment of social justice concerns adds depth to the understanding of social inequalities and its role in needed social change, emphasizing the need for policies that consider the impact on low-income earners. This is additionally supported by the fact that 60% of respondents claim to lack the financial means to do something for climate protection, while 48% of respondents are willing to do something to protect the environment if their standard of living is not affected as a result. In debates, there is often a juxtaposition between the acknowledgment that change is necessary and the perceived limitation in engagement due to the comfort provided by current standard of living. While this predicament is evident, it is important to acknowledge that not everyone enjoys affluence and a high quality of life. For some individuals, a decrease in their standard of living is not a viable option. The willingness to sacrifice one's material living conditions for the sake of environmental protection correlates with the level of affluence in a society (Domazet and Ančić 2017). Therefore, this perspective should be considered in discussions about the dilemma between readiness to change and preserving living standards.

In general, **the majority of citizens in Croatia believe they can play a proactive role in climate protection without having to wait for others to join in this endeavour (64%), think they can contribute significantly to environmental protection with their behaviour (65%), and do not find it difficult to shape their life in an environmentally and climate-friendly way (67%).** Over 80% of respondents would disagree with the statement – I don't see the point of changing my behaviour today for something that may happen in the future. This suggests that there is a significant sense of personal responsibility and agency among general population. It also suggests a promising level of environmental consciousness among citizens in Croatia, with a majority expressing a belief in their ability to actively contribute to climate protection and a willingness to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. The notable optimism regarding the impact of individual behaviour indicates a receptive audience for initiatives promoting eco-friendly lifestyles. The widespread disagreement with a statement emphasizing future consequences underscores the significance of highlighting immediate environmental benefits to effectively engage the population in long-term sustainability efforts.

In addition to assessing their own responsibility and potential for change, which is notably high among Croatian citizens in terms of readiness and willingness, participants were asked to express their attitudes about general social change. The results indicate a significant level of support for change, with 48% of respondents choosing 'yes, definitely,' and 45% selecting 'rather yes' in response to the question about the need for fundamental change in our way of living and doing business in Croatia. Only 6% would opt for 'no, not really' (5%) and 'no, not at all' (1%) as answers to this question. In anticipating fundamental change, respondents prioritize the government as the primary actor capable of making the most significant contribution to addressing the climate and environmental crisis (61%). The European Union is chosen as the second most influential entity (51%). In the third position, respondents recognize their own role, opting for the answer 'citizens in their area' (41%). To a lesser extent, they choose the local government/municipality/city level (34%). Scientific communities (9%) and trade unions (2%) are listed lower, similar to political parties (12%). Overall, based on their choices of actors with the greatest potential to tackle the climate and environmental crisis, it is evident that respondents expect structural change and invoke those actors who are key holders of social structure. Thus far, the majority of respondents (ranging from 57% to 88%) have assessed that all listed actors are doing too little to address climate change. However, there is some satisfaction with the actions taken by certain entities, particularly non-governmental organizations (31%) and the European Union (20%), which are recognized to a certain extent as doing the right amount to address climate change issues. **Curiously, despite placing the highest expectations on the Government as the key actor to address environmental and climate crises, respondents overwhelmingly perceive its efforts as inadequate (87%), with a mere 6% expressing satisfaction that the Government is doing an adequate job.**

Political economy of climate change in Croatia

The political economy of climate change underscores the inherent interplay between economic structures, political institutions, and environmental challenges. As the consequences of climate change intensify, there is a growing recognition that mere policy adjustments are insufficient. A comprehensive response demands a profound socioeconomic transformation, necessitating the re-evaluation of traditional economic models and fostering sustainable practices. The capitalist economic system has played a pivotal role in exacerbating environmental degradation, as profit-driven motives often take precedence over ecological sustainability. The relentless pursuit of economic growth has led to the exploitation of natural resources without due consideration for their finite nature, resulting in irreversible damage to the bio-physical foundations of our planet. Despite high politicization of the ecological crisis, political approaches and communication strategies fail to address the root cause of the crisis – capitalism. Instead the intention is to ecologically modernise capitalism (Brand 2022). Unfortunately, the FES SINUS Study did not delve into exploring how people perceive the capitalist system and the imperative of economic growth, thereby leaving a critical gap in our understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions that shape individuals' attitudes towards these fundamental aspects of our economic framework. Additionally, it would have been insightful to investigate whether citizens in post-socialist/post-communist EU member states demonstrate a greater readiness to critique capitalism, given their awareness of alternative economic systems. Understanding citizens' perspectives on the feasibility and desirability of alternative economic models alongside their attitudes towards capitalism would provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural dimensions shaping attitudes towards our economic framework. However, it did explore how citizens perceive some of the elements of political economy of climate change issues and the role of politics in social transformation.

Indicator on recognizing which actors have the greatest potential to tackle the climate and environmental crisis, business has secured the fourth position in the ranking, trailing behind Government, the European Union, and citizens, with 35% of respondents acknowledging it as the most influential actor. Respondents express the expectation that the economic sector must adopt a more climate-friendly stance, as 85% believe there is a risk of economic damage if this transformation does not occur. Just over 50% of respondents believe that businesses are best equipped to implement the necessary changes, while nearly 80% estimate that there are already sufficient guidelines for a fundamental shift in our businesses and lifestyles; the challenge lies in implementing them to set us on the right track. Furthermore, over 90% of respondents believe that businesses require clear guidelines from the state to achieve climate neutrality. This, they argue, should be coupled with support programs designed to assist businesses in transitioning to climate-friendly production processes and products. At a comparable level of support **(85%), citizens emphasize the need for politicians to exert much greater pressure on the economic sector to adopt climate-compatible production methods.** Despite this, there is a paradoxical sentiment, **as almost 80% of respondents feel that politicians are closely aligned with the guidelines of industry and businesses, indicating a perceived closeness between political and business interests.**

This suggests a delicate balance between expectations for economic entities to lead in climate-friendly practices and a concurrent realization that politicians might be too closely aligned with business interests. This recognition emphasizes the need for transparent governance, robust regulations, and proactive measures to ensure that political actions align with the broader imperative of achieving sustainable and climate-friendly practices, independent of undue influence from the business sector. Moving forward, striking a balance between fostering economic growth and safeguarding environmental interests will require careful navigation and a commitment to prioritize the greater good over narrow sectoral interests. This is additionally supported among citizens with the expectation that politicians must work harder to ensure the structuring of our economic system and a way of living that is socially just (over 90%).

In discussions about essential social transformations, the discourse often juxtaposes the necessary alterations in labour requirements and changes within the job market, weighing the preservation or potential loss of jobs against the imperative to transform the economic sector, particularly in response to the ecological and climate crisis. Concerning Croatian citizens, there is a more nuanced approach, yet still in favour of economic transformation. Just under 60% would prioritize the need for preserving jobs over climate and environmental protection. A similar level of support is evident for the assertion that structural change measures should be implemented, even if jobs are lost as a result. However, this should be set within the context that Croatian society is experiencing two conflicting trends. One is lack of necessary skills in the labour market suitable for jobs in transition while the other is consequential to demographic loss since there is a shortage of workers (Boromisa 2023). Additionally, with an economy heavily reliant on natural resources and tourism as dominant economic sectors, the risks posed by climate change represent a significant threat to employment stability. Although there isn't a clear-cut inclination toward transformation here, it still highlights that the majority of Croatian society is aware that socioeconomic transformation will necessitate substantial changes in the labour market. This points to a collective understanding that addressing the challenges of transformation requires proactive adjustments and underscores the importance of adaptability in shaping the economic landscape. A decade ago, a significant finding emerged as over 1/3 of respondents in Croatia prioritized the future of the environment over current economic concerns (jobs and prices), highlighting a nuanced perspective (Ančić and Domazet 2013). Reflecting on this, it is intriguing to assess how public attitudes may have evolved since then, considering the growing global emphasis on sustainable practices and the ongoing dialogue surrounding the intersection of environmental stewardship and economic well-being. **This observation clearly indicates a noteworthy shift,**

suggesting that over the past decade, Croatian citizens have heightened their concern regarding climate and environmental issues.

Various specific policies need to be implemented to drive socioeconomic transformation, and it is anticipated that certain measures will garner more public support, while others may face greater contention. Drawing insights from the FES SINUS survey, **the majority of proposals aimed at advancing climate and environmental protection in the realms of mobility, energy, technology/innovation/business, education, and housing enjoy significant support among Croatian citizens, with around 90% endorsing these initiatives.** However, only two proposals within the realm of mobility encounter significantly less support. One pertains to a carbon tax on airline tickets, where the support is just below 70%, still representing a considerable share of citizens inclined toward this policy. The second proposal involves introducing a car toll for those who drive more to pay more, and it divides the population, with only 51% supporting it, although currently this is a dominant model in Croatian system of highway roads. Similar findings emerge in other studies on pro-environmental behaviour (Ančić and Domazet 2015; Domazet, Dolenc, and Ančić 2012), where giving up driving for environmental reasons is the least accepted behavioural pattern. The poor public transportation outside highly-developed urban areas is identified as a primary reason, limiting people's independence from their motor vehicles. This is supported also here since 64% of respondents consider that poor infrastructure (e.g. lack of cycle paths, lack of train routes, too little public transport) makes it impossible for them to give up driving a car.

The traditional perception of energy issues has predominantly framed them as technological concerns, isolating them from broader societal dimensions. It is imperative, however, to reconceptualise energy as an inherent facet of social transformation, intricately linked to issues of social order and power dynamics within society. Access to energy becomes a contested matter, entwined with technological solutions, political processes, economic structures, and socio-cultural developmental trajectories. In the realm of political economy, geopolitical relations often pivot around securing access to significant fossil fuel reserves, emphasizing those with considerable financial potential. Shifting towards a sustainable energy system, detached from fossil fuels and environmentally and socially conscious, necessitates not only technical interventions but also socio-political and socio-cultural innovations (Ančić et al. n.d.). This underscores the essence of "sustainability transition" within the interdisciplinary exploration needed to comprehend barriers hindering systemic and radical changes essential for a meaningful transition in the political economy landscape (Markard, Raven, and Truffer 2012). The FES SINUS survey provides insights into people's perceptions and attitudes regarding issues related to the energy system and its transformation. Building on earlier surveys, it remains evident that Croatian citizens prioritize renewable energy sources (Ančić and Domazet, 2013a; Cik, 2021). This orientation is reaffirmed in the current research, with over 90% of respondents advocating for a more consistent shift to renewable energy. In the context of this transition, Croatian citizens demonstrate a strong inclination toward state intervention, particularly in supporting affected workers and regions, where approximately 90% of respondents expect government program interventions. Beyond addressing the concerns of affected workers and regions, there is a widespread expectation (95%) that the government should support the development of energy communities—local organizations focused on shaping sustainable and independent energy supplies. Furthermore, **not only do citizens anticipate government support for community energy initiatives, but a significant proportion (27% yes, definitely; 46% somewhat yes; 21% no, not really; 4% no, not at all) express a willingness to actively engage in shaping their community's energy supply. Remarkably, over 90% of respondents can envision themselves actively participating in the generation of their own energy.** These findings gain particular significance in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as 67% of respondents

indicate that renewable energy (solar, wind, etc.) has become more important to them since the outbreak of the war. The FES SINUS study underscores a consistent and strong preference among Croatian citizens for renewable energy sources, indicative of a collective commitment to a sustainable energy transition. The inclination towards state intervention, especially in supporting affected workers and regions, reflects the recognition that energy transformation requires comprehensive policy measures. Moreover, the widespread expectation for government support in developing energy communities emphasizes a desire for localized, sustainable energy solutions. The particularly interesting aspect of these findings is juxtaposed with the challenges posed by the inadequate implementation of EU directives into national laws, specifically targeting the facilitation of citizen-driven energy initiatives (Boromisa 2021). The disconnect between public preferences, as revealed by the FES SINUS study, and the current state of policy implementation highlights a crucial area for improvement in aligning legislative frameworks with the evolving priorities and aspirations of the populace in the realm of energy transition.

Social groups opened to change

The examination of attitudes toward climate change in Croatia reveals a distinctive pattern among individuals identified as part of the milieu of *Intellectuals*. These individuals ascribe a high personal importance to the topic of climate change, surpassing other sociodemographic factors such as education, income, settlement size, and occupation status. When evaluating concerns about the consequences of climate change, intellectuals exhibit heightened anxiety, particularly in relation to humanitarian crises. Moreover, they express more significant apprehension about extreme weather events, falling yields in agriculture, and economic damage. This group also showcases a proclivity for critical thinking, as they are more inclined to disagree with the notion that many aspects of climate change are exaggerated. The agreement with statements advocating for active involvement in climate protection and a willingness to change lifestyle is notably higher among *Intellectuals*. Regarding the legitimization and acceptance of barriers to climate-conscious behaviour, the milieu of *Intellectuals* exhibits a lower level of acceptance, both on a personal and societal level. The *Intellectuals* express a higher level of criticism toward business, political parties, and scientific communities regarding their perceived responsibility for addressing climate change. Policy preferences among intellectuals lean toward a fundamental shift to renewable energy, clear guidelines for businesses to achieve climate neutrality, and greater political pressure on the economic sector for climate-compatible production methods. In their attitudes toward information and knowledge, *the Intellectuals* milieu demonstrates a higher interest and a more substantial level of knowledge concerning climate change issues compared to other sociodemographic groups. In summary, **the milieu of *Intellectuals* in Croatia emerge as a distinct group with heightened concern, critical thinking, and proactive attitudes toward climate change. Their preferences align with policies promoting sustainability and a sense of individual responsibility in mitigating climate-related challenges.**

In examining attitudes toward climate change in Croatia, beside *Intellectuals*, the milieu of *Progressive Realists* emerges as a distinct group with notable characteristics. *Progressive Realists* express a proactive stance by supporting policies aimed at climate protection. They are inclined to actively participate in climate protection efforts, showing a willingness to alter their lifestyles and contribute to renewable energy initiatives, especially if the costs are distributed fairly. In terms of accepting barriers to climate-conscious behaviour, *Progressive Realists* exhibit a lower level of approval, both on a personal and societal level. They differ from other groups by not subscribing to the notion that businesses with high-energy needs cannot implement strict climate protection requirements. Motivation for climate-conscious behaviour is higher among progressive realists. Their willingness to

actively work for societal change aligns with their support for a fundamental shift in business and lifestyle practices. Regarding responsibility attribution for addressing climate change, progressive realists tend to adopt a critical perspective, particularly towards businesses, political parties, and scientific communities. When envisioning community involvement, *Progressive Realists* see themselves as active contributors, particularly in shaping their community's energy supply. They are willing to engage in renewable energy initiatives, such as joining energy cooperatives or participating in community projects. Geopolitical events, like the Russia-Ukraine conflict, influence the perspective of the *Progressive Realists* milieu, making renewable energy sources like solar and wind more pertinent to them. *Progressive Realists* exhibit a heightened interest in information and possess a more substantial level of knowledge concerning climate change issues compared to other demographic groups. In summary, the ***Progressive Realists* milieu in Croatia stands out for its proactive and informed approach, advocating for policies that prioritize climate protection, sustainable practices, and equitable distribution of costs. Their critical perspective on responsibility and active community involvement positions them as key contributors to progressive climate initiatives.**

In the context of attitudes toward climate change in Croatia, older individuals, particularly those aged 50-69, exhibit distinct patterns. This demographic tends to prioritize climate change more personally compared to other sociodemographic factors, emphasizing its importance for Croatia. Concerns among this age group often centre around specific consequences, such as heightened anxiety regarding extreme weather events, falling yields in agriculture, and economic damage. Notably, older individuals express less agreement with the idea that many aspects of climate change are exaggerated. Their motivation for climate-conscious behaviour varies, with some statements garnering more support from those aged 60-69. Additionally, **older individuals, particularly those aged 60-69, exhibit greater motivation and interest in information concerning climate change issues.** Despite variations in attitudes and concerns, older individuals are crucial stakeholders in shaping perceptions and responses to climate-related challenges. In contrast, younger individuals, particularly those in the age group of 18-29, display a different set of attitudes toward climate change in Croatia. While they generally rank climate change lower in personal importance compared to older cohorts, their concerns often revolve around extreme weather events, aligning with the anxieties of older age groups. However, younger individuals are less likely to express anxiety about falling yields in agriculture and economic damage. Motivations for climate-conscious behaviour are mixed, with some statements resonating less strongly among the younger population. Additionally, the interest in information and knowledge concerning climate change issues is comparatively lower among individuals aged 18-29. Despite these variations, engaging younger individuals is crucial for fostering collective awareness and a proactive approach to climate change challenges. Based on this survey, it is evident that actions should be more oriented towards the younger population to enhance their engagement in socioeconomic transformation.

Some policy recommendations

Given the disparity between public perception and the urgency of climate change, it is imperative for Croatian policymakers to initiate a comprehensive public awareness campaign focused on the immediate and tangible impacts of climate change within the Croatian context. This campaign should involve collaboration between political parties and climate change experts to articulate a clear narrative that highlights the direct consequences of climate change on material and social structures in Croatia, drawing upon recent severe incidents such as the 2014 floods and the 2023 Zagreb storm. By effectively communicating the link between climate change and these events, the campaign aims

to bridge the gap between public concern and the prioritization of climate change issues, ultimately fostering a sense of urgency and garnering public support for the development and implementation of adaptation strategies.

Given the recognition of citizens in their area as important actors in addressing climate and environmental crises, local governments should prioritize community engagement initiatives. These programs could involve regular town hall meetings, citizen forums, or participatory budgeting processes to involve residents in decision-making processes related to sustainability initiatives, urban planning, and environmental policies. To capitalize on the potential of local initiatives in addressing environmental challenges, policymakers should establish a centralized platform for showcasing and exchanging best practices. This platform would facilitate the systematic sharing of successful environmental and climate initiatives among local governments, encouraging replication and adaptation across different regions. By promoting local successes and fostering knowledge exchange, Croatia can accelerate its efforts towards comprehensive climate action at the grassroots level.

Given the widespread support and willingness among Croatian citizens to engage in community energy initiatives, policymakers should prioritize the development and implementation of supportive policies for the establishment of energy communities. This entails providing financial incentives, regulatory frameworks, and technical assistance to facilitate the creation and operation of local organizations focused on sustainable and independent energy supplies. Additionally, policymakers should actively engage with communities to ensure their participation in decision-making processes related to energy generation and transition, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment in shaping their energy future.

Given the distinct profile of the *Intellectuals* milieu in Croatia, policymakers should prioritize targeted engagement and collaboration with this group to leverage their heightened concern, critical thinking, and proactive attitudes toward climate change. To capitalize on the distinct concerns and proactive attitudes of *Intellectuals* in Croatia toward climate change, policymakers should actively engage and collaborate with this group in decision-making processes and policy formulation. Integrating the milieu of *Intellectuals* into decision-making processes can serve as a catalyst for disseminating ideas and knowledge within society. Their involvement not only ensures the incorporation of informed perspectives into policies but also facilitates the communication and popularization of critical concepts, fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry.

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