

Attitudes to climate change depend on people's sense of belonging to the planet

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New research led by the University of Exeter has found that people who have a stronger sense of place at the global than the national level are more likely to accept that climate change is caused by human activities. This is the first time that acceptance of human causes of climate change has been shown to be linked to people's sense of place at the global level. The findings have significant implications both for climate change communications and for our understanding of place and identities.

The study 'My country or my planet? Exploring the influence of multiple place attachments and ideological beliefs upon [climate change](#) attitudes and opinions' found that individuals with stronger global than national attachments were more likely to perceive climate change as an opportunity rather than a threat - for example perceiving positive economic impacts to arise from climate change responses, and the potential to build a stronger sense of community worldwide. These individuals were more likely to be female, younger, and self-identify as having no religion, to be more likely to vote Green, and to be characterised by significantly lower levels of right wing authoritarian and social dominance beliefs.

Professor Patrick Devine-Wright from Geography at the University of Exeter said: "The results of this study suggest that local place attachments are not strongly linked to climate change beliefs. Rather, it is the interplay between national and global levels that is significant. Those with stronger global than national sense of place are more likely to accept that climate change is caused by human actions and could be an

opportunity for society, to bring people together, not just a threat to the economy."

People generally view a sense of place in purely local terms - the area near to where they live. The study broadens this perception in important ways to encompass national and global forms of belonging - known as place attachments and identities.

The research was conducted in Australia, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), using a survey method with a nationally representative sample.

Professor Devine-Wright said "Given the study was conducted in Australia, we need to replicate the study in other national contexts, for example in the UK or US, to see whether similar results will be found".

The study is published in the journal *Global Environmental Change*:
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378014001794>

Provided by University of Exeter

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