

Abstract #: 232

Author Name: Kim Wolske

Author Company: Erb Institute, University of Michigan

Second Author's Name: Jason Duvall, University of Michigan

Abstract Title: Crafting more effective climate change communications: Does talking about local impacts and adaptation help?

Abstract Text:

Recent research suggests there may be advantages to framing climate change in terms of local impacts and to focusing on adaptation rather than mitigation. To test these claims, we conducted a 2x2 framing experiment with an online sample of U.S. residents. Participants (N = 963) were randomly assigned to read one of four news stories about climate change. We varied whether stories presented potential health impacts of climate change to a distant (Europe) or local (U.S. Midwest) place, and whether cities in those locations were engaged in mitigation or adaptation efforts. After reading the story, participants rated their reactions to it, their interest in taking personal action, and their support for local government action. The results show that Midwestern participants responded more positively to the local mitigation framing than the local adaptation framing, but no such difference was found among non-Midwesterners. There was also a significant interaction between message type and political ideology. While, in general, liberals responded more favorably to the news stories than conservatives, the relative effectiveness of the four stories differed within each group. The four stories produced equivalent results among liberals, suggesting that their concerns about climate change outweigh the framings. Among conservatives, the effect of the adaptation framing depended on the distance of the impacts described: no differences were found between adaptation and mitigation in the local stories, but adaptation was more effective than mitigation when describing distant impacts. Overall these findings support the use of local frames and suggest cautious use of adaptation messaging.