Research Paper:

Community perception, understanding and willingness towards global warming

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SUMMARY

Any attempt by industry or government to address greenhouse gas emissions and global warming will require public understanding or recognition of the problem. Concern about climate change, like ozone depletion and biodiversity loss, is a relatively new phenomenon on the public scene. Over the last century, human activity has led to a dramatic increase in the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Most experts agree that build-up of greenhouse gases has contributed to an increase of 1.3^o Fahrenheit in the Earth's average surface temperature over the past 100 years. Current rate of greenhouse gase build-up will cause further warming and induce additional changes in the climate system that would likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century. This paper summarizes public perception, understanding and willingness towards global warming in Bangalore urban district. The survey found that, 24 per cent of the respondents declared, they were worried "a great deal" over the fluctuated climatic conditions in recent years and were familiar with the causes of global warming and are willing to reduce their greenhouse gases voluntarily. It is hoped that results of this survey will be helpful in designing the first signs of a social tipping point, leading to greater levels of community engagement in mitigation of climate change through campaigns, in a scientific manner to create awareness among the individuals.

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Over the last quarter century, most of researches on environmentalism has been conducted using quantitative analyses of survey data. This tradition is beginning to build cumulative knowledge regarding the demographic determinants of environmental concern (Van *et al.*, 1980, Jones *et al.*, 1992). The build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has been driven largely by growing consumption of fossil fuels in the industrialized world. But in looking to the future, the growth of greenhouse gas emissions will be determined by a number of factors, including the spread of technology, and patterns of economic growth and land use.

The overwhelming majority of this growth will occur in the developing world. As developing countries continue on a path of economic growth and industrialization, their contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions will increase. Awareness of the problem is a necessary, but insufficient condition to motivate an individual or collective response. Meanwhile, social science research has demonstrated that risk perceptions are critical components of public and social responses to hazards. In depth studies often assess public perceptions of the likelihood and severity of potential consequences. Unfortunately, no in depth study on regional risk perceptions of global warming has yet been conducted, so we still know very little about how the global or diverse national publics perceive this issue. There are, however, limited data on the perceived seriousness of global warming.

Public opinion is critical because it is a key component of the socio-political context within which policy makers operate. Public opinion can fundamentally compel or constrain political, economic and social action to address particular risks. Public support or opposition to climate policies will be greatly influenced by public perceptions of the risks and dangers of global warming. Further, successfully mitigating

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