

Personal and Public Responsibility for Climate Change and Trust in Public Institutions

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There is a lot of evidence that a disruptive development phase like the green transition puts citizens' trust in public institutions to the test. At the same time, trust has been considered a significant resource that helps to strengthen justice in the midst of revolutionary developments. We investigate how different types of institutional trust are associated to attitudes about personal and public responsibility in mitigating climate change. Our hypothesis stems from the institution-centered theory. According to that the trust in the impartial public institutions of society, such as the officials and the judiciary, have a stronger association with attitudes indicating the common good than trust in purely political institutions. Partly because of this, the variation between countries representing different institutional designs is significant as well. We assume that instead of political trust, trust especially in impartial institutions has a stronger association with both expectations towards public institutions and the perceived personal responsibility on the climate. The study examines the associations between trust and climate attitudes between 21 European countries and different demographic and socio-economic groups (European Social Survey 2016, N=5,2147). In addition to descriptive methods, we apply multilevel models to simultaneously examine variation between countries and individuals. Compared with political trust, trust in impartial public institutions has slightly stronger positive association with perceived personal responsibility in reducing climate change. Also, the difference between perceived personal and public responsibility on climate seems to be smaller in countries with high trust compared with countries with lower trust and to be explained better by high trust in impartial public institutions. The theoretical and policy implications of the findings are discussed at the end of the paper.