

Media Release: Climate change remains a concern, while climate literacy decreases significantly

- **Allianz's latest survey on the climate literacy of the population in eight countries shows that 76.8% of all respondents are concerned about climate change.**
- **However, only around 8% of respondents have a good level of climate literacy, while 48.2% have a poor level of knowledge about global warming.**
- **Climate change remains an emotional issue and makes climate policy susceptible to populism.**

Munich, November 29, 2023

More and more people see climate change as a serious threat, but at the same time have less and less basic knowledge about global warming and its consequences. According to the latest Allianz Climate Literacy Survey, an average of 76.8% of respondents in Germany, Brazil, China, France, India, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA say they are alarmed and concerned about the consequences of global warming.

Paradoxically, the high concern factor does not go hand in hand with better information: only 7.9% of respondents have a high level of climate knowledge. In contrast, the proportion of respondents with low climate literacy is 48.2% in the overall sample.

Low climate literacy goes hand in hand with an increasing nonchalance about the impact of climate change. For example, only 50% of respondents were still aware of the threat of physical damages if temperatures rise above 1.5C. Two years ago this proportion was still 67% in the five countries surveyed. And only 31% of respondents realized that a drastic reduction in emissions is necessary.

These are the key findings of the second "Allianz Climate Literacy Survey" published today, which examines the population's knowledge of climate issues and climate policy. Allianz surveyed a representative sample of 1,000 people in Germany, Brazil, China, France, India, Italy, the UK and the USA at the beginning of October.

"We were really shocked that low level of climate literacy is even declining further," said Ludovic Subran, Chief Economist of Allianz. "There is no shortage of information about climate change. The issue is almost every day in the news, be it extreme weather events, new climate

policies measures or street protests. But it might be precisely this omnipresence that seems to have the opposite effect. Many people seem to react to the daily news with indifference or ignorance. This bout of climate fatigue is alarming.”

Detailed findings of the survey

From bad to worse

Only 7.9% of respondents in our survey proved to be truly climate literate i.e. having high climate literacy.¹ In contrast, the share of respondents with low climate literacy stood at 48.2% for the total sample. Comparing with the 2021 survey which was conducted in Germany, France, Italy, the UK and the US only, the share of participants with a low level of climate literacy has significantly risen by 16pp on average. The only exception is the US, where climate literacy – at a low level – has hardly changed.

High climate anxiety

In contrast to climate literacy, the level of climate anxiety is high. 76.8% of all respondents were concerned (anxious) or even alarmed (very anxious) about climate change and its consequences. Italy (86.7%) and Brazil (86.1%) reported the highest shares; again, UK showed an average number (73.4%). In the USA, “only” two thirds of respondents were (very) anxious. On the other hand, 12.6% of US respondents – the highest share in our survey – denied that climate change is happening.

Contrary to the literature, our study showed no significant differences between the generations: Age is not a predictor of climate stress – nor is it statistically significant. Interestingly, there is only a loose correlation between climate anxiety or stress and climate literacy. Just under a third of sceptics have a basic understanding of climate change – and still deny it. Similarly, at the opposite end of the spectrum, just under half of the Alarmed have little to no knowledge of climate change. There is another, often overlooked component that creates diffuse fear: Emotionality.

Growing climate populism

The emotional response towards climate change – coupled with an overall low level of climate literacy – is a double-edged sword. Emotionality can be used both for and against climate change. It makes climate policy susceptible to populism, simplifying complex issues and embedding them within the typical “us vs. them”-narrative. As seen during the pandemic, key to this strategy is the disavowing of experts as climate change tends to be publicized as a technical issue and is framed as an emergency.

¹ To measure climate literacy, respondents had to answer a total of ten questions about the climate, concerning both scientific and political aspects. On average, the participants answered 3.6 questions correctly. With four to six correct answers, respondents were deemed to have “average climate literacy”; participants with more than seven correct answers are considered “highly climate literate”; three or fewer correct answers is accordingly considered “low climate literacy”.

Cracks are already visible. Several countries have recently watered down their climate targets. It can already be seen that countries with a higher populist vote share in the last elections tend to have a lower climate performance.

“The super-election year 2024 might be a crossroads for climate policy,” said Patricia Pelayo Romero. “A three-pronged approach is necessary to keep climate policy on the road to the Paris target: Staying the course to provide industry and households with clear signals that the transition will be followed through; combining the consistent pursuit of targets with equally consistent social safeguards for the green transformation; and last but not least, upping the fight for better climate literacy, even if – or rather because – emotionality plays a major role in climate issues.”

The level of climate literacy

Share of respondents by level of climate literacy in % (in brackets 2021)

Country	Low	Average	High
UK	44.2 (32.3)	46.7 (53.2)	9.1 (14.5)
Brazil	41.6	45.7	12.8
China	41.1	54.2	4.6
France	46.2 (32.6)	42.9 (47.0)	10.9 (20.5)
Germany	47.5 (32.5)	41.9 (51.1)	10.6 (16.4)
India	58.0	38.3	3.6
Italy	51.5 (29.4)	42.2 (55.8)	6.3 (14.8)
US	55.4 (56.3)	39.2 (38.8)	5.3 (4.9)
Total	48.2	43.9	7.9

The report is available here: https://www.allianz.com/en/economic_research.html

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* Including non-consolidated entities with Allianz customers.

** As of Dec 31, 2022

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