

Political ideology and public views of the energy transition in Australia and the UK

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Abstract

We explore the relationship between political ideology and public attitudes towards a range of energy technologies (namely: biomass, coal, shale (or coal seam) gas, natural gas, carbon capture and storage, hydroelectricity, nuclear, solar thermal and photovoltaic, wave and wind energy). Our empirical analysis draws on the results of two similar nationally representative public surveys that were conducted in Australia and the UK in 2017. Our findings suggest that political ideology is significantly associated with public attitudes towards energy technologies. Specifically, supporters of left-leaning political parties tend to be more supportive of renewables and opposed to biomass, shale (coal seam) gas, nuclear and fossil fuel energies compared to right-leaning individuals. We also create an alternative ideological proxy to capture the relative emphasis that parties place on the environment and economy and find that supporters of environmentally focused parties generally express similar energy preferences to left-leaning individuals and economy-focused respondents align with right-leaning attitudes. Our findings are robust to different choices of proxy.

Keywords Political parties, public opinion, climate policy, energy policy

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