

Question in Project:

German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) 2021 (English Version)

Question Topic:

Environment/ Climate protection

Construct:

Belief in climate change

General Information:

***Note: The item was tested in German. This is an English translation of the original German wording.**

Question Text:

Many people see climate change as proven. Others, however, doubt that the climate is changing. What do you believe?

[Viele Menschen sehen den Klimawandel als erwiesen an. Andere bezweifeln hingegen, dass sich das Klima ändert. Was glauben Sie?]

Answer Categories:

The climate is changing. *[Das Klima verändert sich.]*

The climate is not changing. *[Das Klima verändert sich nicht.]*

Don't know *[weiß nicht]*

Cognitive Techniques:

Difficulty Probing, Specific Probing

Findings for Question:

1. Do the respondents have difficulties answering the question based on the two possible answers?

Across the board, all respondents stated that, in their opinion, the climate was changing and that they found it "very easy" ($n = 8$) or "rather easy" ($n = 2$) to answer the

question. The majority of the test persons justified this by saying that they noticed that the weather was changing, that it was getting warmer and warmer, and that they were concerned with the issue:

- *"I looked outside there. For example, we had quite good weather yesterday [at the end of October], 22 degrees, so something must be changing. That's where the climate changes in the long run, too." (TP 01)*
- *"Because I'm older and I know what the weather situation was like about 20, 30 years ago." (TP 07)*
- *"Because I deal with it. When I think about Lesch's Cosmos, which proves this over and over again, how Antarctica is melting down more and more and the polar bears ... I already think that the climate is changing." (TP 08)*

Only one respondent expressed the opposite view, that the weather was getting colder:

"Because the weather is really definitely changing a lot, especially if you look, one, two years ago [...] it was 27 degrees, and it's just getting colder, felt." (TP 02)

Most of the test persons stated that they did not wish for another answer category. Others (TP 04, 06, 10) said that it depended on the purpose of the question and that they would have liked to be asked about human influence or specific things instead of asking a blanket yes-no question:

- *"Yes, [...] how much influence we have. You can add that as a second question. But that's fine so far. I would only have expected something like: 'To what extent do humans have an influence on the climate?'" (TP 06)*
- *"Yes, there would be, for example, something with modifications, how does climate change manifest itself, also that this is still embedded in other questions. And especially not climate change as a generic term, but that there are more specific ..., so, climate change, what can that be, melting of the poles, forest dieback and stuff like that, CO₂, so that one lists that already a bit more satisfactory. [That] the question is then embedded in an overall context and I don't see that here." (TP 10)*

Only one test person (TP 09) explicitly expressed the wish for a more graduated answer scale and also stated that, in her opinion, the question was asked suggestively:

- *"You could make a scale with 'are minor changes' to 'are grave changes.' That's a yes-no question. It doesn't do much good. [...] If I had a scale, I could do more with the question."*

- *"The question is not fairly posed. 'Many people see climate change as proven, while others doubt it.' With that you imply ... Everyone wants to be among the many, no one wants to speak out against the masses. So it will come out, the climate changes. The question is not asked neutrally. Every normal person ticks, the climate is changing. [...] That is a suggestive question, you can't leave it like that."*

Recommendations:

Introduction & question: In order to get straight to the point with the question, we recommend deleting the introductory sentence and instead use the following question wording:

"Now follow with two statements about climate change. What is your personal opinion on this?"

If the original question is retained, we recommend that to avoid the question suggesting that the majority of the population sees climate change as a fact, instead of "Many people" write "Some people."

Response format: No changes recommended.