

Climate Change Beliefs Among Māori

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May 2021

Introduction

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to humanity¹ and will have widespread effects across Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ).² While it is theoretically possible for NZ to reach net zero emissions by 2050 as proposed by the Zero Carbon Bill,^{3,4} a complicated network of social, political, cultural and economic factors detract from this goal.⁵

According to the latest International Panel on Climate Change report and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, decisive action and large-scale changes across all sectors are needed within the next decade.^{3,4} There is widespread scientific consensus that anthropogenic climate change is real. Yet, public opinion is divided on how worried we should be about climate change. In New Zealand, a report from Colmar Brunton (2018)⁸ commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry for the Environment, found that New Zealanders overall seem somewhat sceptical about climate change. Only 39% believe climate change is caused entirely or mainly by human activity and just over 50% believe that climate change is likely to have a big impact on them. Just less than 32% of New Zealanders are deeply worried about climate change. Policy action on the part of governments is likely to be at least partly dependent on public opinion and pressure. Governments may be less willing to take action if their voters are not concerned about climate change. Public views on these matters are therefore crucial for prompting change.

A 2018 Colmar Brunton report found around one in three New Zealanders are fired up on climate change. Most others see it as an issue but not one which motivates them.



39%

of New Zealanders surveyed in 2018 believe climate change is caused entirely or mainly by human activity

50%

of New Zealanders surveyed in 2018 believe that climate change is likely to have a big impact on them

32%

of New Zealanders surveyed in 2018 are deeply worried about climate change

Māori Identity and Financial Attitudes Study/Te Rangahau o te Tuakiri Māori me ngā Waiaro ā-pūtea/MIFAS

Te Rangahau o Te Tuakiri Māori me Ngā Waiaro ā-Pūtea | The Māori Identity and Financial Attitudes Study (MIFAS) is a longitudinal nationwide survey- based study of Māori identity and attitudes towards society and economic development.

Doctors Carla Houkamau, Jamie Newth, Kiri Dell, Jason Mika and Chris Sibley form the core MIFAS research group.

The first MIFAS survey ran between September and December 2017, and round two went out between April and November 2020. The MIFAS questionnaire itself contains 340 items and took participants 35–45 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about attitudes towards the environment, the use of natural resources on the part of iwi, and climate change beliefs among Māori.

In 2017, 7019 Maori aged over 18 responded to the MIFAS and this information sheet reports data from that sample.

For more information about the MIFAS please visit our study website

<https://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/maori-identity-financial-attitudes-study.html>



Environmental Values

We asked participants

How much importance they give to two environmental values, “protecting the environment” (preserving nature) and “unity with nature” (fitting into nature).

They responded on a **7-point scale** ranging from **1 (not important)** to **7 (of supreme importance)**.

Climate Change

We also asked participants if they believed

- (1)** climate change is real
- (2)** climate change is caused by humans
- (3)** if they were deeply concerned about climate change.

They responded on **7-point** rating scale ranging from **1 (strongly disagree)** to **7 (strongly agree)**.

Protection of iwi natural assets

Three items measured support for utilisation of land for profit, as opposed to protecting the land for generations to come. These were

“Protecting iwi assets (including land) means preserving things exactly as they are even if it means missing out on potential profits”

“I think that many iwi should take bigger risks with their resources in order to make more money”

“Iwi should protect their resources at all costs, even if that means not using them to make money”.

They responded on **7-point rating scale** ranging from **1 (strongly disagree)** to **7 (strongly agree)**.



Analysis & Results

Overall, our data from 7019 Māori shows.

97%

agree
that climate change is real



Women are more concerned
about climate change
than men are.



As education level increases
people report more concern
for climate.

69%

believe
climate change is caused by
humans



As age increases, a sense of
unity with nature and concern
for the environment increases
among Māori.



As age increases for Māori,
belief in the existence of
human-driven climate change
decreases.

61%

are deeply concerned
about climate change




Younger people were more likely to
want to protect iwi assets for future
generations while older adults were
more likely to support using iwi assets
for financial gain (increased profits).

Conclusion

The study found Māori to be deeply concerned about climate change. While international trends tend to show younger age groups as more likely to be worried about climate change, older Māori, Māori women and Māori with higher educational attainment appear the most concerned.

The particular concern Māori have about climate change may reflect cultural values that connect Māori to the natural environment. The Māori origin story bestows this connection, portraying Māori as born of Papatūānuku (Earth mother) and therefore 'of the land and sea' (tāngata whenua). Concepts such as mauri (a life force that binds all things) frame natural entities to be imbued with intrinsic value. Protocols for both development and conservation, such as kaitiakitanga (practices of guardianship, protection or preservation), permeate Māori cosmology and the Māori worldview.

Mātauranga Māori⁹ (Māori knowledge) offers a way forward to achieving environmental imperatives related to sustainability and the need to value our natural environment.



Māori are more likely than members of other ethnic groups in New Zealand attribute climate change to human activity

For more information about the MIFAS contact c.houkamau@auckland.ac.nz or go to <https://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/maori-identity-financial-attitudes-study.html>

This research was supported by a Marsden Grant from the Royal Society of New Zealand awarded to Carla Houkamau for 'How Great Can We Be: Identity Leaders of the Māori Economic Renaissance'. Associate investigators, Professor Chris Sibley, Associate Professor Mānuka Henare.

Ka nui te mihi ki a Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga (New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence) mo to koutou putea tautoko i awhi mai te kohinga raraunga tuarua i te tau 2020.



¹ B. Ki-moon, “‘The Race Is on, It’s Time to Lead,’ UN Chief Tells Abu Dhabi Climate Change Event.”

UN News Centre, May 4, 2014, accessed September 26, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47718#.Vh-bqNbfc9F>

² Overview of likely climate change impacts in New Zealand | Ministry for the Environment. (n.d.).

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³ Zero Carbon Bill | Ministry for the Environment. (n.d.).

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⁴ Low-emissions economy | Productivity Commission of New Zealand. (n.d.).

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⁵ Harré, N. (2007). Carbon Neutral by 2020: How New Zealanders Can Tackle Climate Change

⁶ Climate Change. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>

⁷ Global Warming of 1.5 °C —. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

⁸ Colmar Brunton. (2018). Environmental Attitudes Baseline.

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<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Extra%20downloads/Other%20documents/new-zealanders-environmental-attitudes.pdf>

⁹ Hikuroa, D. (2017). Mātauranga Māori—the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand.

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