

Major differences observed between the climate change views of Finnish citizens and members of parliament

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According to an online survey conducted by "Ilmastofoorumi ry", there are substantial differences between Finnish citizens and MPs regarding the causes of and solutions to global climate change. Thirty three MPs (approximately one sixth of the parliament) and 951 citizens answered the questionnaire during the last two weeks of March this year.

Nearly half of the citizens who answered the survey considered the impact of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions on global warming to be negligible or less than 10 per cent. However, almost 70 per cent of the MPs think that the impact is at least very important or more than half of the total causes.

There are several international efforts to combat the allegedly human induced current global warming, such as the Kyoto protocol and the European carbon trading scheme. However, according to the survey, about 56% of the citizens consider that the international climate treaties are only slightly or not at all useful in combating climate change, whereas the MPs regard them at least somewhat useful nearly unanimously.

Because of the serious criticism laid on the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change by eminent scientists, some of whom have participated on IPCC, the trustworthiness of the IPCC was also surveyed. Again, the difference between the people and their elected officials persist. More than half of the citizen respondents think that IPCC is only slightly or not at all trustworthy source of information concerning climate change. MPs differ and again are nearly unanimous in their trust for the IPCC, saying it's somewhat or very trustworthy.

The party alignment of the MPs didn't make any substantial differences on their views. There seems to be general agreement about climate change issues over the party boundaries. Notably none of the Green MPs or the True Finns parliamentary group answered the survey. Other than that, amount of MP respondents per party reflected well the sizes of the parliamentary groups of the respective parties.

Identifying with a political party did make some differences on the citizen respondents' views. The supporters of the True Finns (nationalists) and the National Coalition Party (conservatives) were more likely to be sceptical or critical about the mainstream views on climate change. On the other hand, the supporters of the Green League and the Left Alliance were more likely to share the mainstream alarmist views.

As a conclusion it should be stated that there seems to be a lack of critical voice in the Finnish parliament, in spite of a large part of the citizens remaining considerably sceptical.

The survey was conducted online between 14th and 31st of March this year, with identical questionnaires to both groups. The estimated margin of error for the survey is plus minus five percentage points.

The full survey report is available in Finnish on the Ilmastofoorumi website at <http://www.ilmastofoorumi.fi/tiedostot/kyselyraportti.pdf>. The chairman of the association board, Mr. Pasi Matilainen, will provide further details and the survey dataset on request via email, firstname.surname@ilmastofoorumi.fi.

Ilmastofoorumi ry is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that holds a sceptical view towards the alleged major anthropogenic contributions on the ongoing global climate change. The organisation is increasingly alarmed by the negative effects on the welfare of both the people and the environment caused by the public policies combating the climate change. Ilmastofoorumi (or Climate Forum in English) was established in July 2007. Their website (in Finnish) is at <http://www.ilmastofoorumi.fi/>, and a summary in English is available at <http://www.ilmastofoorumi.fi/summary-in-english/>.