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Problem Acknowledged, Solution Rejected.

Gender, Climate Attitudes and the Asymmetric Effect of Ideology among Polish Youth.

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Why should you read this research?

The fight against climate change is losing ground. Europe is experiencing widespread green backlash, the U.S. has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, and the European Union is quietly rolling back environmental regulation. Public support for climate action is also eroding precisely when it is most needed, as seen for example by the Green Deal protests - and growing ideological polarization is making effective climate policy increasingly difficult to sustain (Lewandowsky et al., 2019a).

Poland is where this crisis is most visible. It is the EU's fourth-largest emitter, the member state most resistant to European climate ambition, and the most politically polarized democracy in Europe, with a polarization index that has more than doubled since 2015. It is also the country where young men and women are diverging ideologically faster than anywhere else in the EU. That divergence matters: it is the youth cohort that will determine the political future of climate policy, and in Poland they are moving in opposite directions.

This paper asks why. Using survey data from 568 young Poles and interviews with right-wing young men, it shows that climate polarization among Polish youth is not a problem of science denial - concern about climate change is high across the ideological spectrum. The barrier is something more difficult to overcome: solution aversion, a rejection of specific policies filtered through frames of sovereignty, autonomy, and gendered identity. Right-wing young men acknowledge the problem and reject the solutions, while women's support remains comparatively stable regardless of ideology. Research on the "cool white male effect" has long shown that conservative men are disproportionately resistant to environmental risk - this paper shows that pattern is now emerging in post-communist Europe, with a distinctly Polish inflection.

This paper contributes by identifying the mechanism through which climate concern fails to translate into policy support, and by specifying the conditions under which climate policies remain acceptable even among resistant groups. In doing so, it shifts the focus from attitudes toward climate change as a scientific issue to climate policy as a politically and culturally mediated object.

As green backlash takes institutional form across the continent, understanding what drives this resistance, but also what doesn't, is no longer only an academic question. Poland may be showing the rest of Europe where this is heading.

1. Introduction

In Poland, climate change is not a niche concern - around 86% of young people identify it as an important issue (Paradowska et al. 2024). This would suggest a generation primed for climate action: as the cohort most exposed to the long-term consequences of climate change, and the one with greatest access to global information flows, youth support for climate policy is often taken for granted. Inglehart's (1971) theory of post-materialist values would further predict that Poland's economic growth should have shifted young people's priorities toward environmental protection. Yet the data tell a different story. In Poland, unlike most EU countries, younger cohorts are less likely than older ones to attribute climate change to human activity - only 34% of 18-to-34-year-olds do so, compared to 48% of those aged 35 to 54 (EIB, 2025). High concern, in other words, does not translate into consistent belief or political alignment. This specific pattern is also seen across Europe, where awareness of climate change amongst youth remains high, but willingness to pay higher prices or accept taxes to mitigate its effects has declined over time (Poortinga, 2025), suggesting a continent-wide erosion of the link between concern and policy acceptance - specifically the gap this paper addresses.

What makes this more puzzling is that the disconnect is not uniform - it is sharply gendered. Young women are significantly more likely than young men to view climate change as a serious threat: 77% compared to 56% (Horonziak & Pazderski, 2025). A gender gap in environmental concern is well-documented across contexts and would not alone be surprising. But this divide is emerging alongside a rapid and strongly gendered political polarization, with young men and women drifting in opposite ideological directions at an unusual pace (Milosav et al. 2025), and Poland already holds the highest political polarization index in Europe (Coppedge et al., 2025). Climate policy, unlike general concern, is an inherently political object: it implicates the state, redistribution, and regulation in ways that raw concern does not. If concern were the primary driver of policy support, we would not expect such divergence. Something else appears to be structuring how young Poles translate concern into political positions, and that something may operate differently for young men and women. This raises a question at the intersection of two literatures that have rarely spoken to each other: the study of gendered environmental attitudes (Bord & O'Connor, 1997; McCright, 2010; Bush & Clayton, 2023) on one hand, and the ideological determinants of climate policy support on the other (Jacquet et al., 2014; McCright et al., 2016; Coffé et al., 2026): Does political ideology shape climate policy support differently among young men and women, and if so, why?

This paper argues that it does, and that its effect is substantially stronger among men than among women. Drawing on OECD survey data from 568 Polish respondents aged 18–34, the analysis finds that ideology shapes climate policy support more strongly among young men than young women in Poland, but this effect is absent for abstract concern and strongest for concrete, lifestyle-constraining policy instruments.

The qualitative phase reveals that this asymmetry is driven not by climate denial, but by solution aversion operating through a distinctive combination of sovereignty framing, autonomy threat, and gendered cultural coding that associates climate policy with feminism,

activism, and progressive politics. Together, the findings suggest that climate polarization among Polish youth is less a problem of awareness or science communication and more a problem of political identity, one whose resolution requires rethinking both the design and the cultural framing of climate policy in an increasingly polarized context. The mechanism is identified as solution aversion filtered through sovereignty, autonomy, and gendered cultural coding.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on gendered environmental attitudes, the ideological determinants of climate policy support, and the specific Polish context. Section 3 describes the data, methodology and analytical strategy. Section 4 presents the quantitative results, followed by the qualitative analysis organized around five themes. Section 5 integrates the two phases in discussion and situates the findings within the existing theoretical literature. Section 6 discusses limitations and possible directions for future research, while section 7 concludes with policy recommendations.

2. Interdisciplinary State of Knowledge

Climate change poses visible threats to ecosystems and human societies, with global greenhouse gas emissions continuing to rise due to unequal historical and ongoing contributions from unsustainable energy use, land-use changes, lifestyles, and consumption patterns (IPCC, 2023). To keep climate change at a level allowing global warming to be limited to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by 40–50% by 2030 (from 2010 levels, IPCC, 2018). Such radical change would require widespread implementation of climate policies and other regulations to facilitate the transformation of energy production. Public support is crucial for scaling up mitigation, yet growing issue polarization undermines the political feasibility of effective climate policy (Lewandowsky et al., 2019a).

Understanding how attitudes towards climate policy are formed is therefore a central task for social science. Within this literature, the environment has been primarily studied through the lens of environmental concern (Dunlap et al., 2000) - "the level of people's knowledge of environmental issues, support for efforts to solve those problems, as well as the level of willingness to contribute to their solutions" (Štreimikienė et al., 2022). This work falls broadly into two strands: a political-science strand focused on public support for environmental policies, perceived responsibility, and judgments about solutions (Dunlap & Jones, 2002); and a psychological strand focused on the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of individual concern and risk perception (Schaffrin, 2011). Throughout this paper, “concern” refers to perceived importance and seriousness of climate change, as distinct from awareness (knowledge that climate change exists) and from policy support (willingness to endorse specific interventions). The dependent variables used here operationalize concern and policy support respectively, not awareness as such.

While environmental concern provides a vital measure of “effective worry”, it is increasingly viewed as just one component of a broader multidimensional framework known as “climate

change attitudes". This broader term captures the cognitive, affective, motivational, and interpersonal processes through which individuals understand the causes and consequences of climate change and evaluate adaptation and mitigation- based responses to it (Swim et al., 2011). By treating these as distinct but related factors, researchers can better understand the complex mental processes that influence how individuals respond to the climate crisis (Peñasco & Grossman, 2025).

This distinction is necessary because empirical evidence shows that environmental concern does not consistently translate into support for mitigation policies. This "awareness-action gap" is heavily moderated by a nation's economic development and its policy history, related to both insufficient introduced policies, as well as to "policy fatigue", where support for climate policies actually decreases in wealthier nations with long-standing environmental regulations (Peñasco & Grossman, 2025). Therefore, using the 'climate change attitudes' scheme allows for a more accurate diagnosis of the paradox of environmental consciousness, acknowledging that awareness and worry are insufficient drivers of climate action on their own.

A significant body of literature has examined the individual and contextual determinants of climate attitudes and policy support (Capstick et al., 2015). At the individual level, people are more willing to support climate action when they believe it is real, human-caused, serious and solvable (Krosnick et al., 2006). Beyond these beliefs, sociodemographic factors have been consistently identified as predictors: higher education and income are generally associated with greater climate concern and policy support (Hornsey et al., 2016; Poortinga et al., 2019), though the income effect weakens or reverses for policies with direct personal costs such as carbon taxes (Bush & Clayton, 2023); women consistently express higher concern than men across contexts (McCright & Dunlap, 2011); and age effects are less consistent, with younger cohorts typically expressing greater concern but not always greater policy support (Poortinga et al., 2023; Zinober, 2026). Trust in government and political institutions emerges as a particularly robust determinant of policy support specifically - those who distrust governing institutions are less likely to support state-led climate interventions regardless of their level of concern (Fairbrother et al., 2019). At the contextual level, extreme weather events, policy history, and media environment have also been shown to shape attitudes, though these operate more as moderators than direct causes (Peñasco & Grossman, 2025).

Drews and van den Bergh (2016) offer a useful synthesis, grouping these determinants into three broad categories: social-psychological factors and climate change perceptions, including political orientation, values, knowledge and risk perception; perceptions of policy design, including perceived effectiveness, costs and fairness; and contextual factors, including social trust, media environment and wider economic and political conditions.

Generally, existing research has largely focused on Western and Nordic European contexts or the United States (Drews & van den Bergh, 2016), leaving other locations, such as Central and Eastern Europe, relatively unexplored (Zinober, 2026).

2.1. Gender Gap in Climate Attitudes

Differences in climate attitudes between men and women have been found in many contexts. Since the 70s, the phenomenon has been observed in the United States and continuously confirmed. In the first studies of the issue focusing strictly on environmental concern, McStay & Dunlap (1983) found constant, but small magnitude differences within the US. population. This study followed the detection of differences in sensitivity towards nuclear power, where studies showed that women tend to assess risk related to these issues higher than men (Passino & Lounsbury, 1976). Research made before that did not detect gender as a significant variable in environmental concern (McStay & Dunlap, 1983), which could suggest that this phenomenon emerged as the issue itself became more salient, or was studied in more advanced manner.

Since Dunlap's study, the phenomenon has been confirmed under many different grounds in the U.S. - women being more likely to have a sustainable lifestyle, believing that humans do harm to nature, as well as assess pollution as a serious issue and see nature as sacred (Blocker & Eckberg, 1997), Mohai (1997) also found women to be more concerned about the ozone layer and acid rain.

In the following years, a growing body of research has confirmed higher levels of concern about both the environment and climate change among women than men across a wide range of contexts and locations. Women have been found to worry more about climate change and global warming, experience a greater perceived threat from it, and view its consequences as more severe than men do, a pattern documented in the United States (Egan & Mullin, 2017), Canada (Davidson & Haan, 2012), and across European countries (Poortinga et al., 2019). The gap extends beyond concern to outright denial: men are consistently more likely than women to believe that the climate is not changing, or that observed changes are the result of natural rather than human processes (McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Krange et al., 2019). Cross-national analyses have confirmed this as a global pattern rather than a Western peculiarity (Knight & Givens, 2021), with women expressing stronger climate concern across diverse economic and political contexts.

Pearson et al., (2017) in an extensive literature review, prove that the gender gap is found consistently, with women expressing larger levels of concern than men, and demonstrating stronger perception of risks across a range of environmental hazards. However, the effect can be contingent on the type of risk concern, as some previous international studies (Hayes, 2001), have found the gap to not be significant while controlling for factors, with different factors, such as ideology or education explaining most of the effect. In the analysis of Bush & Clayton (2023) the gender gap was only apparent in some countries across Europe and the Americas, suggesting that the existence of the gap depends on the wealth of the country - when countries become wealthier, the perceived benefits of mitigation decline, while its perceived costs rise, especially for men.

These studies often do not, however, account for countries outside of the developed scope, including Central and Eastern Europe. Very recent research confirms that the Green Gender

Gap persists in these contexts (Zinober, 2026), and is particularly pronounced among cohorts born after 1997, indicating that this is not simply an age-related pattern, but a cohort effect reproduced within younger generations.

2.2. Explanatory factors of the gender gap in climate change attitudes

Several theoretical frameworks have been proposed to account for the persistent gender gap in environmental concern. These can be broadly grouped into three categories: innate and biosocial explanations, socialization-based explanations, and structural explanations (Echavarren, 2017), each offering a partial account of why women consistently report higher levels of environmental concern than men.

2.2.1. Innate and biosocial explanations

Innate and biosocial explanations represent the earliest and most contested attempts to explain the gap. Some scholars have pointed to biological differences between men and women as a root cause, arguing that women's greater investment in reproduction and caregiving produces a stronger orientation toward environmental protection as a form of threat mitigation (Mies & Shiva, 1993). From this perspective, women's environmental concern is partly an extension of an evolved sensitivity to risks that threaten the wellbeing of dependents. Similarly, research in personality psychology has documented consistent cross-national differences in traits such as agreeableness and empathy, with women scoring higher on average (Schmitt et al.2008), traits which predict greater environmental concern. However, innate explanations are widely regarded as insufficient on their own, as cross-national variation in the size of the gender gap, which tends to be larger in more gender-equal societies (Bush & Clayton, 2023), which suggests that social and structural factors play a substantial moderating role that purely biological factors do not capture.

2.2.2. Socialization-based explanations

Socialization-based explanations have received more empirical support and represent the dominant framework in the literature. The core argument is that gender socialization produces systematically different orientations toward the environment by assigning women to nurturing, care-oriented roles and men to more utilitarian, instrumental ones and providing them with higher levels of socialization to be other oriented and socially responsible (Zelezny, 2000). Mohai (1997) argues that women's socialization as family nurturers shapes their environmental attitudes in two distinct ways. First, concern about environmental pollution arises as an extension of concern for family members' health, particularly children, where environmental risks are experienced as personal and proximate threats rather than abstract global issues. Second, the nurturing orientation itself is generalized beyond the family to encompass nature more broadly, producing what might be described as an ethics of environmental care. By contrast, men are socialized to fulfill roles emphasizing productivity, resource extraction and more instrumental relationship with nature, pointing them to a more utilitarian orientation.

Blocker and Eckberg (1997) found empirical support for these socialization-based differences in the United States, though they noted that the gap did not consistently extend from attitudes into action, which is a distinction that is directly relevant to the question of whether environmental concern translates into policy support.

The socialization framework has been extended by scholars working within the ecofeminist line of thought, arguing that the domination of nature and the domination of women are structurally linked under patriarchal systems. From this perspective, women may identify more strongly with environmental protection as a political cause precisely because they experience a form of structural solidarity with exploited nature (Mies & Shiva, 1993). While the ecofeminist line of thought has long argued that the domination of nature and the domination of women are structurally linked, these theories have historically been neglected in sociological research due to a perceived lack of an empirical approach. Echavarren (2023) addresses this gap by providing quantitative support for constructivist ecofeminism, arguing that the subjugation of women and the exploitation of the environment are part of the same overarching process. Using a sample of 45 countries, his study confirms that those who view the struggle for gender equality and nature preservation as related, challenging the "dual subjugation" of patriarchy and capitalism, report significantly higher levels of environmental concern. Moreover, the study shows gender-egalitarian attitudes to be the only factor among five major theories (including socialisation and parenthood) to be consistently supported by the data. This suggests that the rejection of patriarchal hierarchies is a primary driver of environmental awareness, providing the empirical weight to the theoretical frameworks previously established by Mies and Shiva (1993).

2.2.3. Structural explanations

Structural explanations shift the focus from values and socialization to material conditions and institutional positions.

2.2.3.1. Material interest

Men are disproportionately employed in carbon-intensive industries, such as mining, heavy manufacturing and transport - and this occupational concentration produces material interests that conflict with climate policy. Steel, Warner and Lach (2010) found that gender differences in environmental attitudes were considerably smaller among scientists and senior managers than among the general population, suggesting that professional context moderates the relationship between gender and environmental views. Beyond direct occupational factors, gender differences in mobility patterns and consumption are relevant, as men have consistently larger carbon footprints than women, driven mostly by transport and food choices (Oswald et al. 2020), causing a 26% gap in this sector in France (Berland & Leroutier, 2025). These differences in lifestyle mean that climate policies impose differentially distributed costs across gender lines, which may independently generate differences in opposition, related to cost-benefits calculations and material needs. However, occupational and lifestyle factors capture material interests without explaining differential vulnerability.

2.2.3.2. Risk perception

One important structural mechanism concerns risk perception. Bord and O'Connor (1997) demonstrated that women express greater concern than men across virtually every environmental risk measure, but crucially, they also found that once health-risk perceptions were included as controls, the gender gap in environmental concern largely disappeared. This suggests that women's higher environmental concern may be substantially mediated by a more general pattern of heightened risk sensitivity, which is itself shaped by structural vulnerability: women tend to occupy social positions that make them more exposed to environmental health risks, less insulated by economic resources, and more likely to be primary caregivers for those most affected. This structural vulnerability explanation is consistent with evidence that the gender gap in climate concern tends to be smaller in developing economies, where material insecurity affects both genders more equally (Bush & Clayton, 2023) and fits into a broader debate between material conditions and cultural values as drivers of environmental concern (Inglehart, 1971; Drews & van den Bergh, 2016), revisited in the discussion.

2.2.3.3. Education and knowledge

Education represents an additional structural factor. The gender gap in environmental concern is moderated by educational level, with the largest differences observed at lower levels of education (Gökmen, 2021). It is nevertheless worth noting that education predicts concern independently of gender, and that even among highly educated groups the gender gap persists (Zinober, 2026). In Poland, where young women now significantly outnumber young men in higher education, as 57 % of women aged 30–34 have completed tertiary education, compared with 39 % of men (EIGE, 2025), this educational divergence may be contributing to widening attitudinal differences between the genders.

Knowledge and information processing represent a further dimension. Research has consistently found that men and women differ not only in their environmental concern but in how they relate to their own knowledge. McCright (2010) showed that while women display greater assessed knowledge of climate change than men, they systematically underestimate it, reporting lower confidence than their actual performance warrants, opposite to men who tend to overestimate their knowledge. Leiserowitz et al., (2018) confirmed this pattern, finding that women are more likely to express uncertainty about climate science even when holding accurate views. This epistemic humbleness among women and overconfidence among men may also impact how each group responds to information about climate, shape how each group responds to ideological cues about climate, a point that becomes important when considering the interaction between gender and political identity.

This educational divergence is accompanied by a parallel divergence in social values. Eurostat data show that among Polish youth, agreement with the statement that “a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and family” is substantially higher than the EU average (73% vs. 34% among men aged 15–24; 58% vs. 24% among women). The gender gap within this cohort is wider than in any other age group, with young women consistently agreeing at lower rates than older women (58% vs. 73% among 55+) while young men agree

at similar or only slightly lower rates than their older counterparts (73% vs. 80% among 55+) (European Commission, 2024a). This intragenerational value divergence provides important context for the present study: the gender gap in climate attitudes documented here is not occurring in a vacuum but alongside a broader realignment of gender values among Polish youth, consistent with the gendered political polarization identified by Milosav et al., (2025).

2.2.3.4. Ideology

Although there has long been a connection between political ideology and environmental attitudes, gender-specific research on this relationship is more recent and has received less theoretical attention. Environmental concern began to acquire a political valence in the 1970s, as the emergence of the environmental movement co-occurred with the consolidation of a conservative countermovement in the United States, systematically challenging environmental science and regulation. In effect, by the 1990s, climate change had become a charged political object, with conservative think tanks, various media outlets, and political elites sending a consistent anti-climate message that gradually structured public opinion along ideological lines (McCright & Dunlap, 2011). Climate change has since become increasingly polarized across the world, with left-leaning individuals more likely to support climate action and regulation, and right-leaning individuals more sceptical of both the science and the policy responses it implies (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; McCright et al., 2016).

“The white male effect”

Within this broader ideological divide, a specific gender pattern has been numerously detected, attracting scholarly attention. The "white male effect," observes that white men in particular are substantially more accepting of environmental and technological risks than almost any other demographic group (Finucane et al., 2000). Importantly, this effect appears to be driven not by simply male gender, but by a specific subgroup, which includes politically conservative white males, whose low environmental risk perception reflects what scholars have termed identity-protective cognition: the motivated tendency to dismiss information that threatens one's cultural identity, group membership, or the social and economic order from which one benefits (Kahan et al., 2007; McCright & Dunlap, 2011). Integrating this framework with Jost et al.'s (2008) work on system justification, the psychological tendency of conservatives to defend the status quo and resist change, McCright and Dunlap (2011, 2013) demonstrate that conservative white males are significantly more likely than all other demographic groups to endorse climate change denial across multiple indicators, even when controlling for ideology, race, and gender independently. It is therefore the intersection of the two: gender and ideology that produces the most pronounced denial, suggesting these variables interact rather than operate in parallel.

This interaction has since been confirmed in contexts beyond the United States. Krange et al., (2019) document a comparable conservative male effect in Norway, and Milfont & Sibley (2016) find similar patterns across multiple countries, indicating that this is not an exclusively Anglo-American phenomenon. Importantly for this study, Zinober (2026) finds that the gender gap in environmental attitudes persists across all European regions including Central and

Eastern Europe even after controlling for left-right ideology, suggesting that ideology does not fully account for the attitudinal gap, and that other mechanisms remain at work. Moreover, the persistence of the gap even after controlling for standard socio-economic and ideological factors, alongside its uneven translation into political behaviour across contexts, indicates that the relationship between gender and climate attitudes cannot be reduced to ideology alone but is shaped by additional cultural and structural dynamics.

At the same time, recent research points to an increasing gender divergence in political behaviour among younger cohorts, with young men becoming significantly more likely than young women to support far-right parties (Milosav et al., 2025). This suggests that while ideology alone does not explain the gender gap in climate attitudes, it may nonetheless structure it in increasingly asymmetric ways, particularly among younger generations.

Threatened masculinity

One of such mechanisms, increasingly foregrounded in recent research, is threatened masculinity. The theory of masculine overcompensation holds that when masculine identity feels threatened, for instance by women's advancing social and political status, men tend to respond with hypermasculine behaviours and attitudes as a means of restoring their sense of manhood (Bosson et al., 2009; Willer et al., 2013; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). A compounding element is the fact that environmental concern has become culturally coded as feminine, associated with empathy, care, and sensitivity, and so it can function as a symbolic threat to masculine identity (Brough et al., 2016). Denying climate change or opposing climate policy may therefore represent not simply an ideological position but an identity performance: a way of signaling toughness, independence, and distance from femininity (Remsö & Bäck, 2024). Remsö and Bäck (2024) also find empirical support for this mechanism in Sweden, showing that the relationship between gender and climate change denial diminished substantially once threatened masculinity was accounted for, suggesting that ideology, and specifically gendered ideology, rather than gender itself is the more accurate driver.

Hostile sexism

This aligns with a growing body of evidence linking hostile sexism specifically to climate change denial and opposition to climate policy across a range of subgroups and time periods (Benegal & Holman, 2021; Nicol et al., 2022; Jylhä et al., 2016). Benegal and Holman (2021) show this relationship holds for both Democrats and Republicans and across groups sorted by ideology, gender, education, and age, pointing to the central role that system-justifying beliefs about gender play in structuring climate attitudes more broadly. On the other hand, while hostile sexism is linked to denial, favourable attitudes towards gender equality are highly significant predictors of environmental awareness. Echavarren (2023) finds that as endorsement of gender equity increases, so does environmental concern, suggesting that the rejection of patriarchal hierarchies is inherently linked to a desire for environmental preservation. Both feminism and environmentalism are associated with egalitarianism and nurturance, and the domination of nature has historically been bound up with patriarchal ideologies of control (Bloodhart & Swim, 2010; Stoddart & Tindall, 2011). Men who perceive

women's progress as a threat to their group status may therefore simultaneously reject environmental concern as part of a broader rejection of the values and movements they associate with that threat.

Kaul and Buchanan (2023) pursue this argument further by arguing that the fundamental variable in environmental concern is misogyny, not gender per se. They conceptualise misogyny as a "transmission mechanism" for a gendered hierarchy, creating a worldview where anything labelled "feminine" is perceived as inferior and easy to attack. From this perspective, the finding that women are more pro-environmental than men can be explained by the fact that men tend to hold sexist views more often than women. This dynamic is central to the political strategy of Electorally Legitimated Misogynist Authoritarians (ELMAs), who use "feminisation as devaluation" to delegitimise climate action as a sign of weakness or a threat to national strength. As misogyny and authoritarianism are positively correlated, climate change denial becomes part of a "bundle" of right-wing attitudes used to maintain existing power structures. Therefore, any policy pursuing environmental justice is seen as less important by those who identify with these gendered hierarchies of control.

Identity-Protection and Industrial Masculinity

This perspective can be further extended by work conceptualising climate scepticism not only as an individual identity, but as a broader defense system of a socio-economic order. Anshelm and Hultman (2014), working on the Swedish case, argue that climate change denial can be understood as a form of identity-protective practice rooted in what they term industrial masculinity: a historically embedded identity tied to engineering rationality, market liberalism, and the dominance of industrial modernity. In this account, resistance to climate policy reflects not only ideological preferences but an attempt to preserve a system of material and symbolic power. Hultman and Pulé (2018) identify "breadwinner masculinity" as a key mechanism sustaining climate denial, linking opposition to environmental regulation with the defense of traditional male provider roles.

Taken together, this body of work suggests that the gender gap in climate attitudes is not simply a matter of women caring more, but a product of ideology operating differently through masculine identity, particularly at the conservative end of the spectrum. However, the majority of this research has been conducted in North American and Western European contexts. McCright et al., (2016) find no significant ideological divide in climate attitudes in post-communist countries, attributing this to the lower political salience of climate change in these contexts and the different meaning of left-right self-identification, where the left-right axis has historically been organised around economic and national identity cleavages rather than post-materialist value conflicts. Whether this post-communist exception holds for an increasingly polarised Poland, and specifically for the youth cohort most exposed to rapid ideological divergence, is the empirical question this paper addresses.

2.3. Hypothesis and contribution

The review establishes three converging conditions that motivate this study. First, a growing body of literature documents that ideology structures climate policy support differently for men and women, with conservative men showing disproportionate resistance to climate action across multiple national contexts (McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Krange et al., 2019; Remsö & Bäck, 2024). Second, this gendered ideological effect has been absent in post-communist countries, attributed to the lower political salience of climate change and the different meaning of left-right identification in these contexts (McCright et al., 2016). Third, Poland represents an increasingly anomalous case within this pattern: its political polarization index has more than doubled since 2015, reaching the highest score in Europe (Coppedge et al., 2025); it remains the EU member state most resistant to the ambitions of the European Green Deal (Biedenkopf, 2021); and young men and women are diverging ideologically at an accelerating pace, with young men shifting markedly toward the far right (Milosav et al., 2025; Marzęcki, 2023). This divergence is reflected in self-identification data: in Poland, women aged 15–29 position themselves clearly to the left (mean = 4.49), while men in the same age group are substantially more right-leaning (mean = 5.53) on an 11-point scale (ESS Round 10, 2022), a pattern consistent with research on gendered political socialisation showing that daughters are less likely than sons to adopt right-wing positions across generations (van Ditmars, 2023). Crucially, Zinober (2026) finds that the gender gap in environmental attitudes is now present across Central and Eastern Europe and is most pronounced among the youngest cohort (born after 1997), suggesting that the post-communist exception McCright et al. identified may be eroding precisely where generational polarisation is strongest. Following the conservative male effect, it is therefore plausible that this emerging divide is structured by ideology to a different degree for young men and young women, with right-leaning young men driving the gap disproportionately. Whether this is the case in Poland remains an open empirical question.

This paper addresses that gap through the following hypothesis:

H0: Political ideology does not shape climate policy support differently among young men and young women in Poland.

H1: Political ideology has a stronger negative effect on climate policy support among young men than among young women in Poland, such that rightward ideological shifts are associated with a steeper decline in policy support for men than for women.

The hypothesis is tested across five distinct climate attitude outcomes, from general concern about climate change to support for specific policy instruments, in order to assess not only whether the gendered ideological effect exists but at which level of policy concreteness it becomes statistically activated. The expectation, grounded in the solution aversion literature (Campbell & Kay, 2014) and the threatened masculinity framework (Remsö & Bäck, 2024; Brough et al., 2016), is that the effect will be absent or weak for abstract concern, where both genders share a high baseline, and strongest for specific policies where identity-based filtering is most likely to operate.

3. Methodology

To address the research question, this study employs a quantitative-dominant explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Castro et al., 2010), in which hypotheses are first tested through quantitative analysis and unexplained patterns are subsequently explored qualitatively for contextual depth. The study proceeds in two phases: a quantitative phase examining the gender gap in climate policy attitudes among Polish youth through OLS regression with an interaction term between gender and ideology; and a qualitative phase consisting of semi-structured interviews with right-wing young men, conducted to explore the mechanisms underlying the asymmetric ideological effect identified in the first phase.

As a quant-dominant integrative mixed methods approach (Castro et al., 2010), the two phases are connected through building rather than simple corroboration (Morgan, 2014): the quantitative phase establishes the pattern, identifies and confirms the core effect of ideology operating asymmetrically across genders, while the qualitative phase provides the explanatory structure through thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and elaborates on the mechanisms through which this asymmetry operates among right-wing young Polish men.

This approach addresses key limitations of qualitative research, including small sample sizes, researcher subjectivity, and limited generalizability (Mwita, 2022), by basing the interpretive claims on statistically significant effects. Where the two methods' results confirm each other, this strengthens confidence in the findings; where they diverge, this refines rather than undermines the theoretical account (Morgan, 2014).

3.1. Quantitative Data and Methods

3.1.1. Data

The quantitative component of this study draws on data from the Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes Toward Climate Policies survey (Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022), a large-scale cross-national study conducted between March 2021 and March 2022 via the survey companies Dynata and Respondi. The survey was administered across 20 countries, covering a broad range of income levels and social and economic contexts, from high-income OECD economies to large emerging economies. The survey companies maintain panels of respondents and send survey invitations to panelists with targeted socioeconomic characteristics, rewarding full completion with points redeemable at partner companies. The full dataset comprises 56,781 responses, reduced to 40,680 after the exclusion of respondents who failed embedded attention check questions or completed the survey in under 11 minutes, accounting for approximately 25% of all participants who began the survey. The median completion time for retained respondents was 28 minutes.

Sampling was designed to ensure national representativeness along the dimensions of gender, age, income, region, and area of residence, and samples were subsequently re-weighted within each country along these same dimensions as well as education and employment, with weights

trimmed so that no respondent received a weight below 0.25 or above 4. The Polish national sample comprises N = 2,053 respondents. As documented in the Poland supplement to the survey (Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022), this sample is broadly representative of the Polish population across gender (44% male in sample vs. 48% in population), age cohorts, and income quartiles. Notable divergences include overrepresentation of urban residents (66% vs. 57% in the population) and college-educated respondents (46% vs. 33% among 25–64-year-olds), as well as a higher share of self-reported voters (87% vs. 63%). These patterns are characteristic of opt-in online panels and are partially addressed through the applied sample weights. The authors note that Poland is among the countries where the college-educated share in the sample exceeds the population figure by between 9 and 23 percentage points, which may result in some overestimation of climate policy support given the documented positive association between education and pro-climate attitudes. In terms of political composition, the sample skews somewhat leftward relative to the voting population, with left-leaning voters overrepresented (6% vs. 2%) and right-leaning voters slightly underrepresented (76% vs. 81%). Table 1. summarises these comparisons between the Polish sample and population parameters.

	Poland	
	Population	Sample
Sample size	NA	2,053
Male	0.48	0.44
18-24 years old	0.09	0.09
25-34 years old	0.17	0.18
35-49 years old	0.28	0.30
More than 50 years old	0.46	0.42
Income Q1	0.25	0.22
Income Q2	0.25	0.27
Income Q3	0.25	0.27
Income Q4	0.25	0.25
Region 1	0.12	0.10
Region 2	0.14	0.13
Region 3	0.23	0.21
Region 4	0.29	0.33
Region 5	0.22	0.23
Urban	0.57	0.66
College education (25-64)	0.33	0.46
Share of voters	0.63	0.87
Voters: Left	0.02	0.06
Voters: Center	0.16	0.13
Voters: Right	0.81	0.76
Voters: Other	0.00	NA
Voters: Not reported	NA	0.05
Inactivity rate (15-64)	0.29	0.18
Unemployment rate (15-64)	0.03	0.09
Employment rate (15-64)	0.69	0.75

Table 1. Comparison of Polish sample characteristics and population parameters. Source: Dechezleprêtre et al., (2022), Poland supplement.

3.1.2. Survey Design and Experimental Treatment

The original questionnaire was structured in four sequential parts: household socioeconomic and demographic characteristics; an embedded experimental video treatment; questions on knowledge of and attitudes toward climate change; and questions on views on climate policies. The survey was translated into Polish by native-speaking translators and adapted to the national context, including country-specific figures such as the price increase implied by a carbon tax.

Prior to answering the attitudinal questions, respondents were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a control group shown no video, or one of three treatment groups shown short pedagogical videos on climate impacts, climate policies, or both, as shown in Figure 1. For the present analysis, treatment group assignment is included as a set of dummy variables in all regression models, with the control group as the reference category. Restricting the analysis to the control group alone, which would be a cleaner approach, would leave only ~140 respondents in the Polish 18–34 subsample, insufficient for interaction modeling. This limitation is mitigated by the fact that only one treatment dummy reached significance across any outcome in the youth subsample (the combined treatment for climate importance, $B = 0.289$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the dummies function primarily as noise controls rather than substantive predictors.

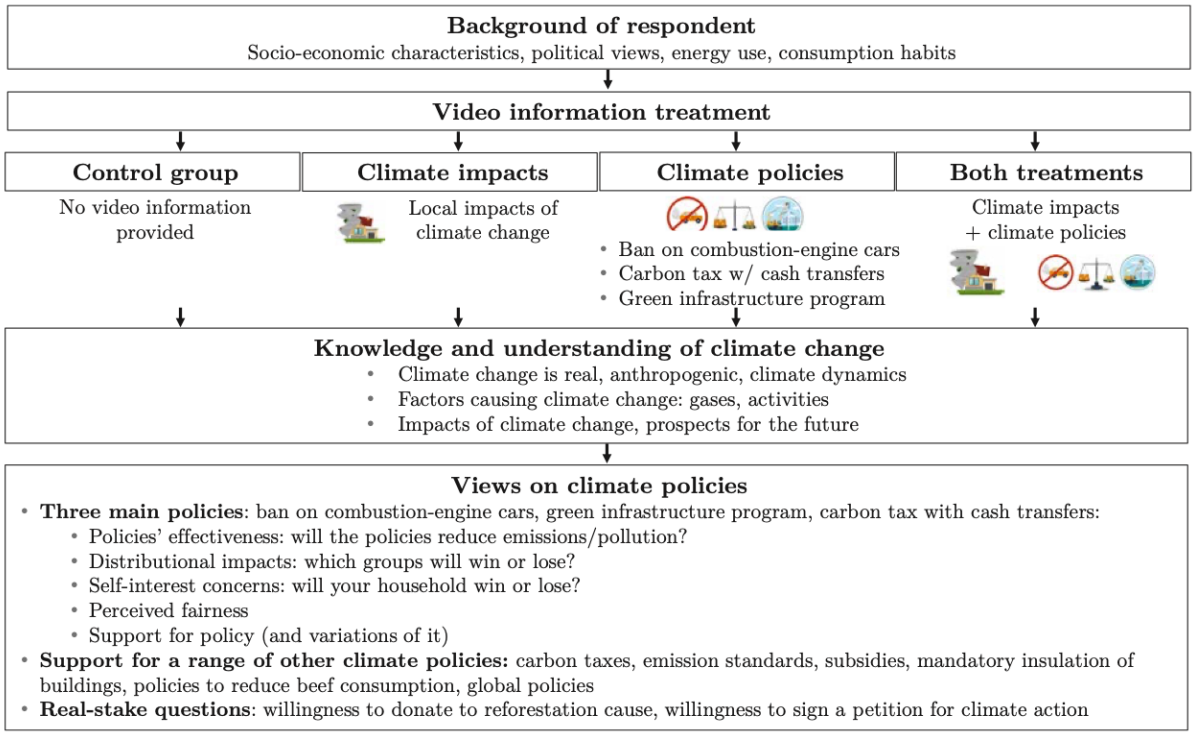

Figure 1. Survey structure and experimental design. Dechezleprêtre et al., (2022)

The present analysis restricts the sample to Polish respondents aged 18 to 34, producing an analytical sample of N = 568, as showcased in Figure 2. This represents 27.7% of the full Polish national sample, aligning with Poland's age structure where 18–34-year-olds comprise ~28% of the adult population (Statistics Poland, 2022).

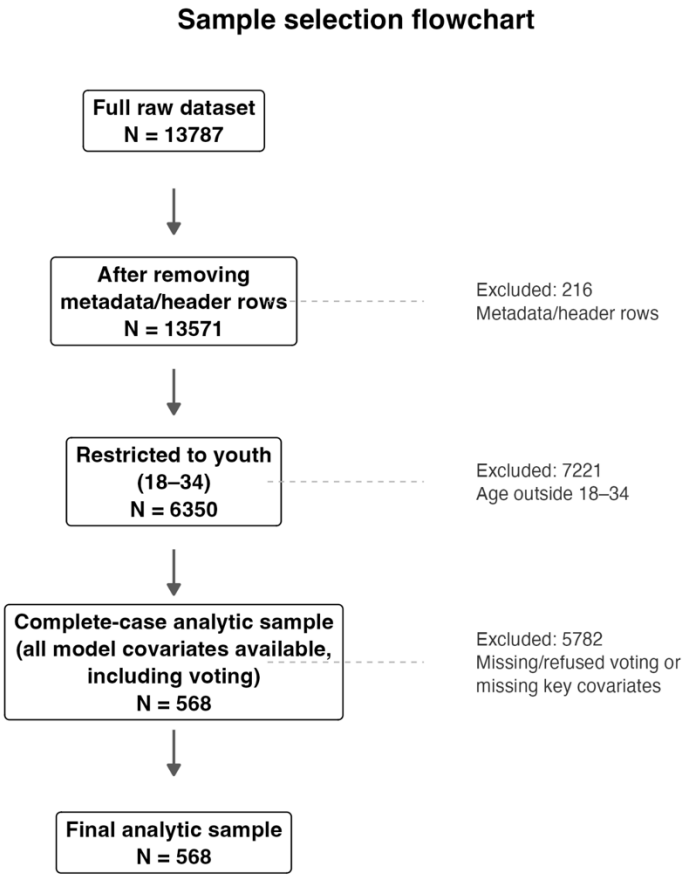

Figure 2. Sample selection flowchart. The analytical sample was restricted to Polish respondents aged 18–34 with complete data on all model covariates (N = 568).

3.1.3. Age focus

This age restriction is theoretically motivated. Polish youth occupies a paradoxical position relative to climate change: it expresses high levels of awareness and concern yet is less likely than older cohorts to attribute climate change to human activity (EIB, 2025), and exhibits the most acute gendered political polarization of any age group in Europe (Milosav et al., 2025). Zinober (2026) identifies the youngest European cohort (born after 1997) as the most polarized in climate attitudes and calls for further research on this group - a call this paper directly answers. Restricting the sample to a single broad cohort also controls for cohort-level confounding in ideological formation and climate socialization, allowing the gender × ideology interaction to be examined more cleanly.

Empirically, the 18–34 age range was determined by the survey's categorical age structure and the need to ensure sufficient group sizes for multivariate analysis, as the youngest category (18–24) alone was too small for robust statistical inference. The resulting operationalization is broader than the EU's common statistical definition of youth as 15–29 (European Commission, 2026) but remains consistent with European policy practice of extending youth into young adulthood.

3.1.4. Analytical Strategy

The core of the quantitative analysis consists of five Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression models, each with one of the five climate attitude items as the dependent variable. Prior to that, descriptive statistics were presented for all key variables, disaggregated by gender, to detect the "raw" gender gap. As shown in the descriptive statistics, the sample comprises 568 respondents (392 women, 176 men), reflecting the gender imbalance characteristic of the original Polish panel. Notable pre-regression differences emerge for climate importance ($p = 0.003$), general policy support ($p = 0.007$), ideology ($p = 0.001$), and trust in government ($p = 0.038$), while the three specific policy items show no significant raw gender differences, a pattern that motivates the interaction modeling in the subsequent stage. OLS is preferred over ordered logistic regression as the dependent variables are measured on five-point scales with approximately symmetric distributions and sufficient variance, and OLS coefficients offer more straightforward interpretation of interaction term, a priority given the centrality of the Gender × Ideology interaction to the research question (Brambor et al., 2006). All five models use the same predictors, which facilitates direct comparison of coefficient patterns across outcomes.

Survey weights provided in the original dataset were not applied. As the weights were calibrated for the full 2,053-person Polish sample and not re-calibrated for the 18–34 subgroup, their application would not straightforwardly correct for youth-specific sampling biases. More broadly, regression-based estimation of interaction effects is less sensitive to sampling imbalance than descriptive prevalence estimates when relevant covariates are controlled (Solon et al., 2015). The overrepresentation of urban and highly educated respondents in the analytical sample should nonetheless be treated as a limitation, particularly for the descriptive statistics.

As interaction effects cannot be meaningfully interpreted from only regression coefficients (Brambor et al., 2006), post-estimation marginal effects are used to examine how the relationship between ideology and climate attitudes varies by gender. Gender-specific ideology slopes are computed, and predicted gender differences are evaluated at the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles of the ideological distribution. To assess the robustness of the results to model specification, additional analyses were conducted using ordered logistic regression, as well as binary and multinomial logistic models based on alternative re-codings of the dependent variables; across all specifications, the substantive patterns remained consistent, particularly with respect to the Gender × Ideology interaction.

3.1.5. Dependent Variables

Five items from the survey were selected for the present analysis as dependent variables, corresponding to conceptually differing layers of climate attitude.

The first item operationalized **climate importance** - the degree to which respondents perceive climate change as a personally salient concern. It draws on respondents' answers to the statement "Climate change is an important problem," rated on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" (−2) to "Strongly agree" (+2), with "Neither agree nor disagree" as the

midpoint. In this sample, the baseline for concern is notably high, with an overall mean of 4.09 (on a scale 1-5) and 81.9% of respondents expressing agreement (Annex, A1).

The remaining four items operationalized climate policy support at increasing levels of concreteness and intrusiveness, each measured on a five-point scale anchored at "Strongly oppose" and "Strongly support," with "Neither support nor oppose" as the midpoint.

The second item measured general, **abstract support for climate policy**, respondents' agreement that their country "should take measures to fight climate change", framed in broad terms without reference to any specific instrument or costs (Model 2).

The third item measured **support for a carbon tax with cash transfers**, described to respondents as a tax raising gasoline prices by 0.4 PLN per liter, with revenues redistributed as equal cash transfers to all households (Model 3), with phrasing (for Poland): “To fight climate change, [Polish] government can make greenhouse gas emissions costly, to make people and firms change their equipment and reduce their emissions. The government could do this through a policy called a carbon tax with cash transfers. Under such a policy, the government would tax all products that emit greenhouse gas. For example, the price of gasoline would increase by [0.4 PLN per gallon]. To compensate households for the price increases, the revenues from the carbon tax would be redistributed to all households, regardless of their income. Each adult would thus receive [600 dollar] per year. We will now ask you a few questions regarding this specific policy.”

The fourth item measured **support for a ban on combustion-engine cars**, a gradual prohibition on the sale of new combustion-engine cars with a total ban introduced in 2030, with no specification of alternative provision (Model 4): “To fight climate change, car producers can be required by law to produce cars that emit less CO2 per [kilometer / mile] of the cars they sell. The emission limit is lowered every year so that only electric or hydrogen vehicles can be sold after 2030. This policy is called a ban on combustion-engine cars. We will now ask you a few questions regarding this specific policy.”

The fifth item measured **support for a green infrastructure program** - a public investment scheme encompassing renewable energy, public transport, and cycling infrastructure, financed through public debt (Model 5), with phrasing as follows: “A green infrastructure program is a large public investment program, which would be financed by additional public debt, to accomplish the transition needed to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Investments would concern renewable power plants, public transport, thermal renovation of buildings, and sustainable agriculture.”

3.1.6. Independent Variables

For independent variables, three were of main interest: gender, ideology and gender x ideology interaction.

Gender (Male) - as the aforementioned literature suggests, males are expected to report lower climate concern and policy support, consistent with a cross-national gender gap in environmental attitudes documented across Europe (McCright, 2010; Zelezny et al., 2000). The binary operationalization of gender used here does not imply that gender is inherently binary; however, as the dataset does not include non-binary or other gender identities, the analysis is necessarily limited to this categorization (Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015).

Ideology (centered) - measured on a 1-5 left-right scale, centered at the midpoint (recalibrated to -2/2 for the analysis). Rightward ideology is expected to negatively predict climate concern and policy support, reflecting the growing partisan divide on climate in European contexts (Poortinga et al., 2019, Coffé et al. 2026). However, the effectiveness and accurateness of this scale is contested (Bauer et al., 2017), with concerns about the tendency of the scale to oversimplify respondents' real views, beliefs and values, which can be described as ideological orientations (Marzęcki, 2023).

Gender × Ideology interaction - the core term of interest. Based on prior work suggesting that political identity moderates environmental attitudes more strongly among men than women, especially on the right (McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Krange et al., 2019), the interaction is expected to be negative: right-wing ideology is expected to produce a steeper decline in support among men than among women.

3.1.7. Control Variables

Trust in government - measured on a Likert scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly Agree" expected to positively predict support for specific climate policies, as institutional trust reduces perceived risks of government overreach and increases belief in policy effectiveness (Kulin et al., 2024; Fairbrother et al., 2025). Not expected to predict abstract concern (M1).

Urban/rural conditions (Urban) - urban residents are expected to show higher policy support, given greater exposure to pollution, better public transport alternatives, and more progressive/educated social environments. At the same time the costs associated with climate policies are seen as higher for rural residents, mostly through their ties with agriculture (Tapia et al., 2023; Tallent, 2025).

Education (Medium / High) - higher education is generally associated with greater climate knowledge and policy support (Hornsey et al., 2016; Ding et al., 2011), though the effect is often attenuated when ideology and trust are controlled for. It is generally considered that the level of climate awareness in Polish society is low (Bokwa et al. 2023) and knowledge in this area among young people is incomplete (Ciepiela et al. 2025).

Voted (vs. did not vote) - civic participation is expected to positively predict support for specific policies, particularly those with redistributive or regulatory dimensions, reflecting greater engagement with collective action problems (Simon, 2023; McCrea et al., 2016). While voting behavior is correlated with ideology, ideology measures the direction of political identity, while voting captures engagement with the political system regardless of partisan

positioning. The variable is included to isolate the effect of political activation from ideological orientation and is expected to be most relevant in models testing support for specific implementation policies rather than abstract concern.

Treatment group (Climate / Policy / Both) - included purely as a control. As discussed, no significant effects are expected in this youth subsample, and the dummies absorb any residual variance from the experimental exposure rather than functioning as substantive predictors.

The analytical progression from abstract to specific, and from redistributive to regulatory is deliberate. The carbon tax introduces an explicit financial cost and a redistributive mechanism; the combustion-engine ban imposes a direct constraint on consumer lifestyle and personal mobility with no compensatory framing; and the green infrastructure program involves public investment rather than restriction or taxation, representing what the original authors describe as the most broadly palatable instrument across income groups and countries (Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022). This design allows the analysis to see the transgression from concern to general policy support (which is not always a clear predictor; Hornsey et al. 2016) as well as general climate concern, to support for specific climate policies, and to see at what level certain effects become significant.

The questionnaire as well as exact videos and formulations of the questions are available in the original paper: “Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes Toward Climate Policies” (Dechezleprêtre et al., 2022). The survey is available for public use under GNU Affero General Public License. All replication materials, including the dataset, analysis scripts, and robustness checks, are publicly available in an online repository (Annex, A18).

3.2. Qualitative Methods

As majority of the previously mentioned studies inspecting the correlation between gender, ideology and climate attitudes utilised quantitative methods (Krange et al., 2019; Zinober 2026; Echavarren, 2023; Coffé et al., 2026), usually focusing on one of the possible explanations of the abovementioned reasons for the existence of the gender gap, and as the topic has not been previously discussed in specifically Polish context, the analysis has been complemented with exploratory interviews to attempt to explain the mechanisms underlying the observed interaction patterns which are not directly observable in survey data. As the quantitative results indicate that ideological polarization in climate policy support is driven primarily by right-wing men (slope significance), with women's support remaining comparatively stable across the ideological spectrum, which is aligned with peer-reviewed findings (Zinober, 2026; Coffé et al., 2026), the interviews were conducted exclusively with young men who self-identify as right-leaning, using the same assessment as in the quantitative dataset, expanded to the scale of 1-10. This focus is consistent with methodological precedent in studies of gendered political identity, where single-gender sampling is employed when the theoretical interest concerns mechanisms specific to one group (e.g., Kimmel, 2013; Duerst-Lahti, 2002), as well as the right and far right being a disproportionately male-dominated (Garapich et al. 2024). By isolating male respondents, this study avoids treating masculinity as a neutral baseline and

instead examines it as a distinct set of psychological and sociopolitical drivers. The focus on this group is therefore theoretically driven, targeting the subgroup in which the quantitative effect is most pronounced.

The main point of entry for recruiting interviewees were Facebook group chats, a medium widely used by Polish youth (Gemius, 2025). To avoid recruiting participants from the personal networks or immediate environment, a recruitment post was shared across several Facebook groups targeting different segments of young people in Poland, groups connecting students from various Polish universities, local community groups from towns and cities across different regions, and broader youth-oriented pages. Attempts were also made to post the recruitment message in far-right Facebook groups; however, requests to join or post in such groups were rejected. This strategy was adopted to reduce the risk of social desirability bias (Bispo, 2022), as qualitative interviews are particularly susceptible to responses shaped by interpersonal dynamics and the presence of the researcher. Recruiting beyond existing social networks also helps in preserving the analytical neutrality and diversity of perspectives, limiting the influence of shared norms and prior relationships on participants' responses (Knapik, 2006). The sampling method was expected to be a snowball one, accessing informants through contact information provided by other informants (Noy, 2008). According to E. Babbie (2007), snowball sampling is a very helpful technique for gaining access to and information about "hidden populations"(Heckathorn, 1997), or people with an elite status, "hidden by choice". Even though young men identifying as right-wing do not belong to any of these categories within Polish society, finding their representatives online was particularly difficult.

At the same time, recruitment posts (Annex, A19) in public groups have sparked intense discussions. For example, the comment thread (Annex, A20) under the post in the public group "Ogłoszenia Kraków" ("Cracow - Public Announcements") showed signs of a deep polarization around the phenomenon of the right-wing ideology itself. On one side, participants reproduced a strongly negative stereotype of the right-wing man as a "*an insecure, slow-witted failed men"*; on the other, right-wing users reject the imposed political label altogether, presenting themselves as "*normal citizens"* reacting against "*green-haired feminazis"* and *"barking in the streets"* activists. This self-presentation as "normal", against the presumed progressive opponent, is consistent with the "normalisation effect" identified by Bolet and Foos (2025), who demonstrate that exposure to extreme narratives shifts "descriptive norms", an individual's perception of how many others agree with a specific statement. Such exposure fosters the belief that extreme positions are widely shared among the population, which emboldens individuals to frame their views as "silent majority" while perceiving others as abnormal outliers. The discussion very quickly shifts from the framing of my research to reciprocal labelling and moral condemnation, illustrating how emotionally charged the topic of the study remains in public-online discourse. This aspect, nevertheless, deserves its own focus which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

3.2.1. Participants

Overall, 7 interviews were conducted.

ID	Age	Occupation	Residence	Ideology (1–10, L–R)	Trust in government (1–10)
R1	25	Engineer	City	8	1
R2	26	Insurance services	Village	7	2
R3	22	Student (veterinary)	City	7	3
R4	24	Lawyer	City	9	2
R5	30	IT engineer	Village	7	2
R6	22	Student (political sciences)	Medium-sized town	9	1
R7	19	Student (military aviation)	City	9	1

Table 2. Interview participant profiles (N = 7). All participants are male, aged 18–30 and self-identify as right-leaning (7–9 on a 10-point left–right scale). Trust in government is consistently low across the sample.

3.2.2. Structure of the interview

The interviews were organised as semi-structured interviews (Annex, A21) - structured enough to ensure that key topics are consistently addressed across participants, but flexible enough to let participants shape the flow of discussion (Brinkmann, 2020), one of the most widely used qualitative data collection strategies in social science research (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), mostly due to offering a balance of structure and flexibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015).

The semi-structured interview guide was organised into four thematic blocks, designed to progressively move from general perceptions to more sensitive and identity-related topics. First, the "Personal Perceptions of Climate Change" section explored participants' spontaneous associations with climate change, its perceived importance, emotional responses, and perceived personal relevance. Then, the "Climate Policy and Political Identity" section examined deepened attitudes towards general and specific climate policies, perceptions of fairness and effectiveness, and views on the role of governments and supranational actors (e.g., the EU). This section also probed perceptions of freedom, national sovereignty, and the sources of political polarization surrounding climate policy. Third, the "Masculinity, Social Environment, and Information Exposure" section (framed as observational rather than normative) focused on media consumption, influential figures, activists, peer discussions. It aimed to capture how climate attitudes are embedded in socialization processes, identity signaling, and online/offline discourse. The interviews concluded with a short demographic module (age, education, place of residence, occupation, ideology, and trust), followed by open-ended closing questions allowing participants to reflect on hypothetical scenarios and add any additional thoughts.

Almost all interviews were conducted via Google Meets. In most cases, participants chose not to turn on their cameras, except for R4 and R6. All interviews lasted around an hour. One interview (R5) deviated from the standard format: due to concerns about anonymity and recording, the participant declined to use both camera and microphone. In this case, the

interview was conducted synchronously via live chat instead. This adjustment was made to accommodate the participant's preferences while maintaining participation.

The interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis strategy (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Axial themes emerging from the codebook include evaluations of climate policy, effectiveness and fairness; trust, manipulation, and legitimacy of EU and national actors; agency, autonomy, and resistance and political and identity-based meanings of climate protection, which capture how respondents situate climate action within broader political and national-identity discourses. The interviews were then coded using QualCoder, which allowed for systematic application of both the initial descriptive codes and the higher-level thematic categories across all transcripts. All interviews were conducted in March and April 2026.

An important methodological consideration is the role of the researcher's gender in far-right environments. As Britton (2020) suggests, men may discuss their personal lives and opinions more openly with a woman; however, this is balanced by a tendency toward self-restraint regarding views they perceive as overtly sexist or socially unacceptable. As Pini (2005) demonstrates, male participants often adopt an 'expert' stance when interviewed by women. In this study, this didactic positioning proved analytically useful: by 'explaining' policies and social rules to the researcher, participants provided a broader field for interpretation, revealing the gendered hierarchies and logic of their thinking even when they sought to moderate their language (Blee 2003).

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

4.1.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics suggest a limited raw gender gap in the Polish youth sample, as seen on Figure 3. Women reported significantly higher climate importance than men (4.26 vs. 3.98, $p = 0.003$) and higher general support for climate policy (4.22 vs. 3.96, $p = 0.007$). By contrast, no significant gender differences appeared for support for a carbon tax, a combustion-engine ban, or green infrastructure (Table 3.). Men were also significantly more right-leaning on the ideology scale (0.23 vs. -0.06, $p = 0.001$) and reported higher trust in government (2.39 vs. 2.15, $p = 0.038$, see Annex, A1)

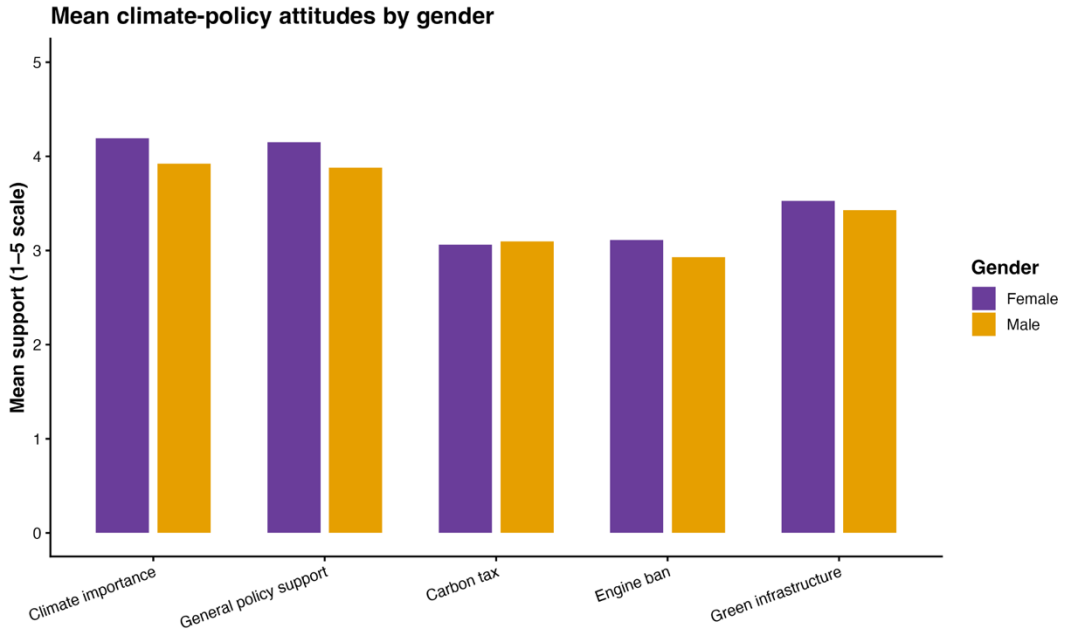

Figure 3. Mean climate-policy attitudes by gender (1–5 scale). Significant gender differences appear for climate importance (p = 0.003) and general policy support (p = 0.007), but not for the three specific policy instruments.

Gender Differences in Climate Attitudes (t-tests)

Outcome	Mean (Female)	Mean (Male)	Difference (Male â^' Female)	p-value
Climate importance	4.261	3.983	-0.278	0.003* * *
General policy support	4.222	3.960	-0.262	0.007* * *
Carbon tax	3.031	3.091	0.060	0.568
Engine ban	3.071	2.938	-0.134	0.247
Green infrastructure	3.531	3.438	-0.093	0.33

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

*Table 3. Gender differences in climate attitudes (t-tests). Negative values indicate lower male means. Significance levels: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.*

Mean-comparison tests confirm that the observed gender differences are limited to more abstract attitudes. Women report significantly higher climate importance and general policy support, while no statistically significant gender differences emerge for specific policy instruments, reinforcing the distinction between general concern and concrete policy preferences. This pattern motivates the subsequent interaction analysis, as it suggests that gender differences may be conditional rather than uniform across the ideological spectrum.

4.1.2. Multivariate regression results

Five OLS regression models were conducted, each using one of the five climate attitude items as the dependent variable, as shown in Table 4. The central pattern is not a uniform gender gap in climate attitudes, but an asymmetric ideological effect that varies across both gender and policy type. These findings are robust across alternative model specifications, including

ordered logistic, binary logistic, and multinomial models, all of which yield substantively consistent patterns for the Gender × Ideology interaction (Annex, A10 – A12).

Multivariate Analysis of Climate Attitudes (Polish Youth 18 - 34)

	Dependent variable:				
	Climate importance	General policy support	Carbon tax support	Engine ban support	Green infrastructure support
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
treatment_groupClimate	-0.025	-0.056	-0.031	-0.058	-0.126
	(0.117)	(0.119)	(0.132)	(0.145)	(0.119)
treatment_groupPolicy	0.095	-0.022	0.099	0.009	-0.156
	(0.111)	(0.113)	(0.126)	(0.137)	(0.113)
treatment_groupBoth	0.289**	0.098	0.177	0.142	0.042
	(0.118)	(0.120)	(0.133)	(0.146)	(0.120)
genderMale	-0.207**	-0.185**	0.072	-0.069	-0.035
	(0.090)	(0.092)	(0.102)	(0.112)	(0.092)
ideology_centered	-0.174***	-0.073	0.015	-0.114*	-0.132**
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.057)
urbanUrban	0.092	0.123	0.005	0.104	0.106
	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.113)	(0.124)	(0.102)
educationMedium	-0.061	0.210	-0.114	-0.138	0.079
	(0.224)	(0.229)	(0.254)	(0.277)	(0.228)
educationHigh	0.086	0.187	-0.239	-0.103	0.177
	(0.229)	(0.235)	(0.260)	(0.284)	(0.234)
voted_catVoted	-0.004	0.174	0.314**	0.304**	0.152
	(0.122)	(0.125)	(0.138)	(0.151)	(0.124)
trust_gov	0.017	-0.041	0.231***	0.221***	0.165***
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.035)
genderMale:ideology_centered	-0.057	-0.182*	-0.273***	-0.278**	-0.179*
	(0.091)	(0.093)	(0.103)	(0.113)	(0.093)
Constant	4.048***	3.864***	2.365***	2.337***	2.893***
	(0.247)	(0.253)	(0.280)	(0.307)	(0.252)
Observations	566	568	568	568	568
R^2	0.069	0.054	0.100	0.094	0.089
Adjusted R^2	0.051	0.036	0.082	0.076	0.071
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

OLS coefficients. Respondents with missing/refused voting data were excluded. * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01.

Table 4. OLS regression results: Multivariate analysis of climate attitudes among Polish youth aged 18–34. The Gender × Ideology interaction term is negative and significant in four of five models. Standard errors in parentheses.

4.1.3. Main effects of gender and ideology

At the ideological midpoint, men report significantly lower climate importance than women (B = −0.207, SE = 0.090, $p < 0.05$) and lower general climate policy support (B = −0.185, SE = 0.092, $p < 0.05$). For the three specific policy outcomes (carbon tax, combustion-engine ban, and green infrastructure) the effect of gender is not statistically significant, indicating that at the centre of the ideological distribution, men and women do not differ meaningfully in their support for concrete policies. Ideology operates as a negative predictor of climate importance (B = −0.174, SE = 0.056, $p < 0.01$), of combustion-engine ban support (B = −0.114, SE = 0.069, $p < 0.10$) and green infrastructure support (B = −0.132, SE = 0.057, $p < 0.05$), but is not a significant predictor of general policy support or carbon tax support when considered independently of gender. The lack of a significant ideology main effect for carbon tax,

combined with the significant interaction term discussed below, would indicate that for this outcome, ideology operates conditionally rather than uniformly.

4.1.4. The interaction term

The core empirical test of the study's hypothesis is the Gender × Ideology interaction term. This coefficient is negative and statistically significant in four of the five models: general policy support ($B = -0.182$, $SE = 0.093$, $p < 0.10$), carbon tax support ($B = -0.273$, $SE = 0.103$, $p < 0.01$), combustion-engine ban support ($B = -0.278$, $SE = 0.113$, $p < 0.05$), and green infrastructure support ($B = -0.179$, $SE = 0.093$, $p < 0.10$). The interaction is not significant for climate importance ($B = -0.057$, $SE = 0.09$). The negative sign of the interaction coefficient indicates that the effect of rightward ideology on each outcome is more strongly negative for men than for women, so as ideology shifts rightward, men's support declines more steeply than women's. The magnitude of the interaction increases from general policy support through to the combustion-engine ban, suggesting that the gender- ideological divergence gains intensity when policies become more concrete, and possibly constraining. The strongest interaction coefficient is observed for the combustion-engine ban ($B = -0.278$), consistent with this being the policy with the most direct implications to freedom of choice, autonomy and mobility.

The absence of a significant interaction for climate importance also is theoretically meaningful. It suggests that the ideological gradient of concern does not differ significantly between men and women, as both genders show a similar downward slope in perceived climate importance as ideology moves rightward. Additional descriptive analysis (see Annex) indicates that even within right-wing men and women in the sample (ideology ≥ 4), climate importance scores remain high. This would explain the reported high level of concern throughout the Polish youth, but low engagement in climate politics. This pattern is related to solution aversion rather than differential concern: right-wing men and women share a broadly similar baseline of climate awareness, but right-wing men filter that concern through a stronger ideological barrier when it comes to translating concern into policy support.

4.1.5. Model fit

Explanatory power increases when moving from the abstract to the concrete outcome levels. The climate importance model explains 6.9% of variance ($R^2 = 0.069$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.051$) and the general policy support model explains 5.4% ($R^2 = 0.054$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.036$). The three specific policy models show considerably stronger fit: carbon tax support ($R^2 = 0.100$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.082$), combustion-engine ban support ($R^2 = 0.094$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.076$), and green infrastructure support ($R^2 = 0.089$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.071$). This gradient is consistent with the theoretical expectation that concrete policies activate a richer set of attitudinal predictors, including trust, voting, and gendered ideology rather than abstract concern or general support, which remain relatively underdetermined by the variables included here.

4.1.6. Marginal effects and gendered ideological polarization

Marginal-effects estimates confirm that ideology structures climate attitudes differently for men and women (Table 5). Among women, a one-unit rightward shift in ideology is associated with a significant decline in climate importance (b = -0.175, p < 0.01), combustion-engine ban support (b = -0.118, p < 0.10), and green infrastructure support (b = -0.125, p < 0.05), while the effects for general policy support and carbon tax support are not statistically significant. By contrast, amongst men, a one-unit rightward shift is significantly associated with lower support across all five outcomes: climate importance (b = -0.221, p < 0.01), general policy support (b = -0.236, p < 0.01), carbon tax support (b = -0.240, p < 0.01), combustion-engine ban support (b = -0.402, p < 0.01), and green infrastructure support (b = -0.296, p < 0.01). The strongest ideological polarization appears for the combustion-engine ban, where the slope among men is more than three times as large as among women, aligning with previous analysis.

Ideology Slopes by Gender (dY/dIdeology from fully adjusted models)

	Female	Male
Climate importance	-0.175* * * < br> (0.055)	-0.221* * * < br> (0.070)
General policy support	-0.072< br> (0.057)	-0.236* * * < br> (0.073)
Carbon tax	0.016< br> (0.063)	-0.240* * * < br> (0.080)
Combustion engine ban	-0.118* < br> (0.068)	-0.402* * * < br> (0.087)
Green infrastructure	-0.125* * < br> (0.056)	-0.296* * * < br> (0.071)

Cells report the marginal effect of a one-unit rightward ideology shift within each gender. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01.

Table 5. Gender-specific ideology slopes (dY/dIdeology) from fully adjusted models. Cells report the marginal effect of a one-unit rightward ideology shift within each gender. Standard errors in parentheses.

Examining predicted gender contrasts across the ideological distribution further clarifies the pattern. This pattern is visualized for the significant outcomes: general climate policy support (Figure 4), combustion engine ban (Figure 5), and carbon tax (Figure 6, graphs for other variables available in the Annex). For climate importance, men show lower support than women across the spectrum, and the difference becomes statistically significant at the centre and right of the ideological scale (Male - Female = -0.191 and -0.238, respectively). For general climate policy support, virtually no gender gap is observed among the left, but a significant male deficit emerges at the centre and widens markedly on the right (0.012 on the left, -0.152 at the centre, and -0.316 on the right). A similar pattern appears for the combustion-engine ban, where the gender gap shifts from positive but non-significant on the left to significantly negative on the right (-0.329). Carbon tax support shows a somewhat different structure: left-wing men are more supportive than left-wing women (0.353, p < 0.05), but this difference disappears toward the centre and reverses direction on the right. Green infrastructure follows the same substantive direction as the other policy outcomes, though the contrasts do not reach conventional significance levels. Overall, the plots indicate that the gender gap is not constant; it is produced primarily at the right end of the ideological spectrum.

These patterns indicate that gender differences are not primarily differences in average levels of support, but in the degree of ideological structuring. Men exhibit substantially steeper ideological gradients across all outcomes, expressing higher support than women on the left for climate importance, policy support and carbon tax, and lower support on the right, while

women's attitudes remain comparatively stable. This suggests that men are more ideologically polarized, whereas women's climate attitudes are less receptive in relation to their ideological positioning.

This is visible in Figure 4., showing predicted support for general climate policy by ideology and gender. As visible, there is no gender gap on the left, but a gender gap on the right, driven by male lowering support, while women's support remain stable across the ideological spectrum.

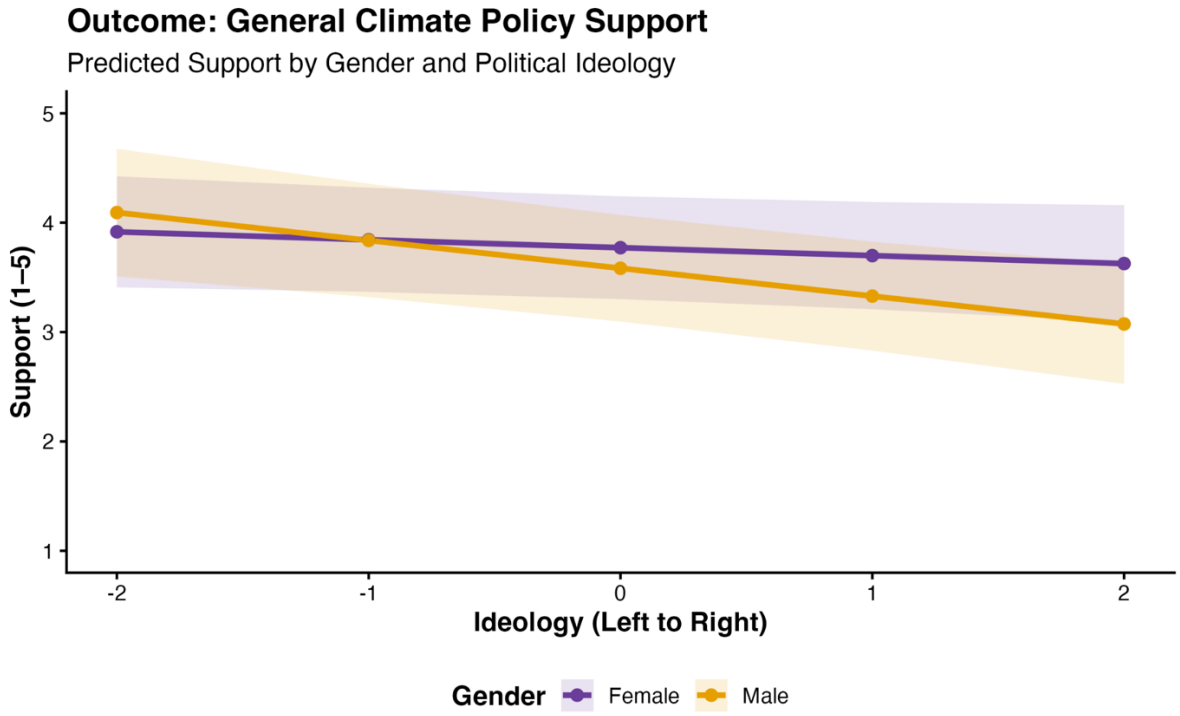

Figure 4. Predicted support for general climate policy by ideology and gender. Predicted values from OLS model with 95% confidence intervals

Similar effects, but with an even stronger slope, are present for combustion-engine ban (Fig. 5) Support declines with rightward ideology for both genders, but more steeply among men, resulting in a widening gender gap on the right. Interestingly, young left-wing men support the ban more than left-wing women.

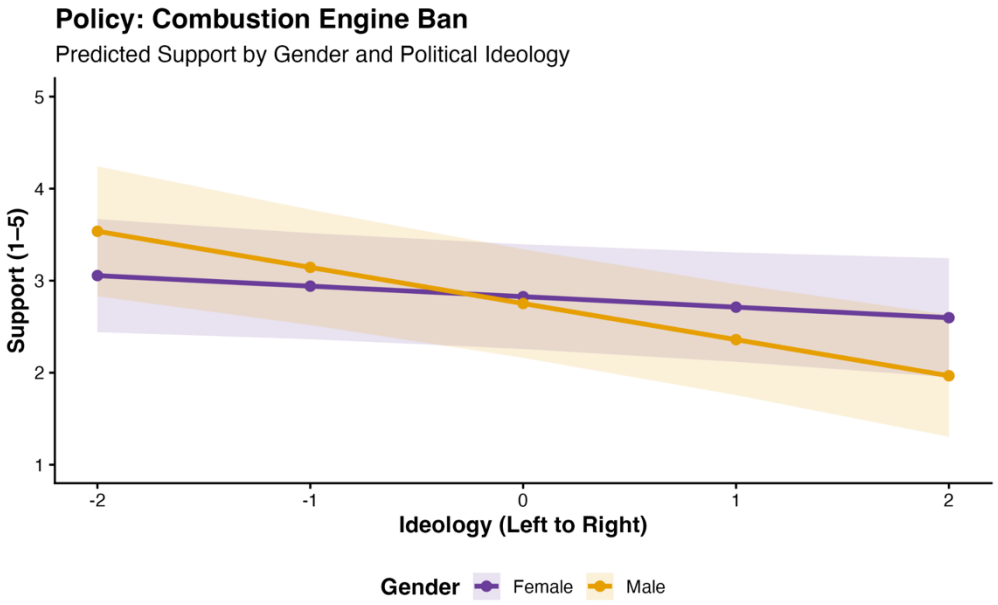

Figure 5. Predicted support for combustion-engine ban by ideology and gender. Predicted values from OLS model with 95% confidence intervals.

The same graph for carbon tax (Fig. 6) shows a more nuanced picture: Left-wing men report higher support than left-wing women; this pattern reverses on the right. Nevertheless, the difference is only significant for men (as shown in Table 5).

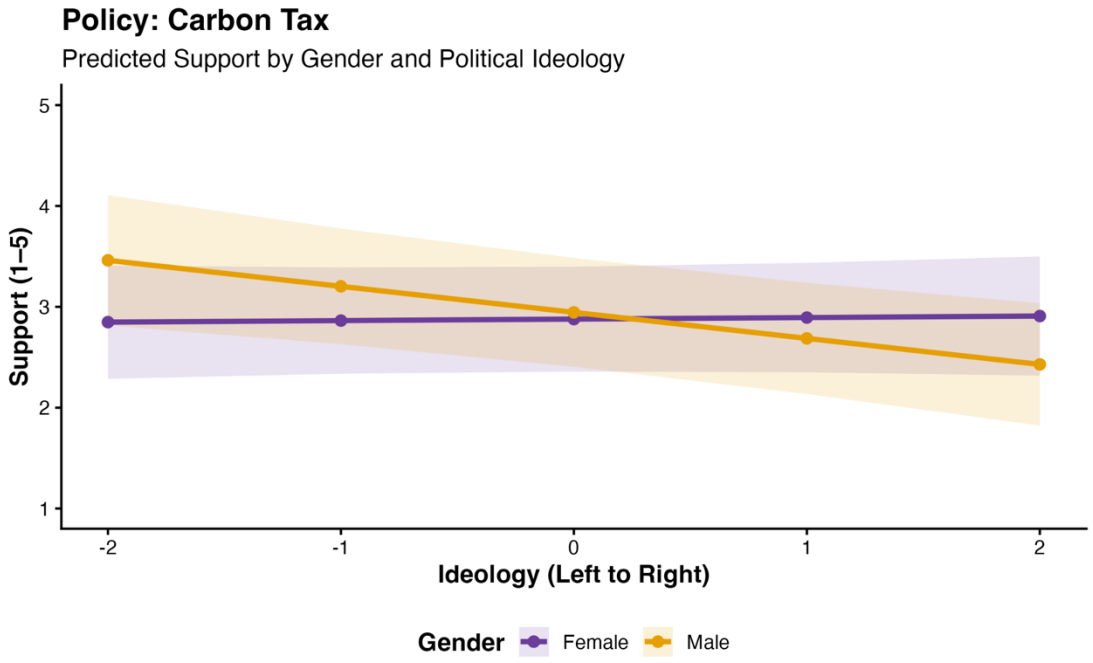

Figure 6. Predicted support for carbon tax by ideology and gender. Predicted values from OLS model with 95% confidence intervals.

Table 6. reports these marginal gender contrasts at three points of the ideological distribution at the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles of the ideological distribution. Consistent with the

graphical evidence, gender differences are minimal on the left but become negative and statistically significant toward the right.

Table: Gender Gap (Male - Female) across the Ideological Spectrum

outcome	Left (10th)	Center (50th)	Right (90th)
Climate importance	-0.145	-0.191* *	-0.238* *
General policy support	0.012	-0.152*	-0.316* * *
Carbon tax	0.353* *	0.097	-0.159
Combustion engine ban	0.239	-0.045	-0.329* *
Green infrastructure	0.152	-0.019	-0.189

Note: Values are marginal contrasts (Male minus Female). Negative values indicate lower support among men. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6. Gender gap (Male − Female) across the ideological spectrum. Values are marginal contrasts at the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles of the ideology distribution. Negative values indicate lower support among men.

4.1.7. Control variables

Among the control variables, institutional trust is the most consistent and substantively large predictor of policy support. Trust in government is positively and significantly associated with carbon tax support ($B = 0.231$, $SE = 0.039$, $p < 0.01$), combustion-engine ban support ($B = 0.221$, $SE = 0.042$, $p < 0.01$), and green infrastructure support ($B = 0.165$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < 0.01$), but is not significant for climate importance or general policy support. This pattern reflects the interaction effects: trust matters specifically for concrete implementation policies, but not as much for abstract concern or general support, suggesting that it operates as an institutional legitimacy filter rather than a general attitude predictor.

Voting is also positively associated with support for the carbon tax ($B = 0.314$, $SE = 0.138$, $p < 0.05$) and the combustion-engine ban ($B = 0.304$, $SE = 0.151$, $p < 0.05$), but not with the remaining outcomes, confirming the expectation that civic engagement predicts support for concrete regulatory policies specifically, consistent with a greater willingness among politically active respondents to accept state-led intervention. Urban residence and education are not statistically significant in any model, though their coefficients are consistently positive in direction. The treatment dummies are jointly insignificant, except for the combined treatment for climate importance ($B = 0.289$, $SE = 0.118$, $p < 0.05$), confirming that video exposure did not systematically shift attitudes in this youth subsample.

Figure 7. visualises the coefficient estimates with confidence intervals across all five models, showing the relative magnitude and significance of each predictor.

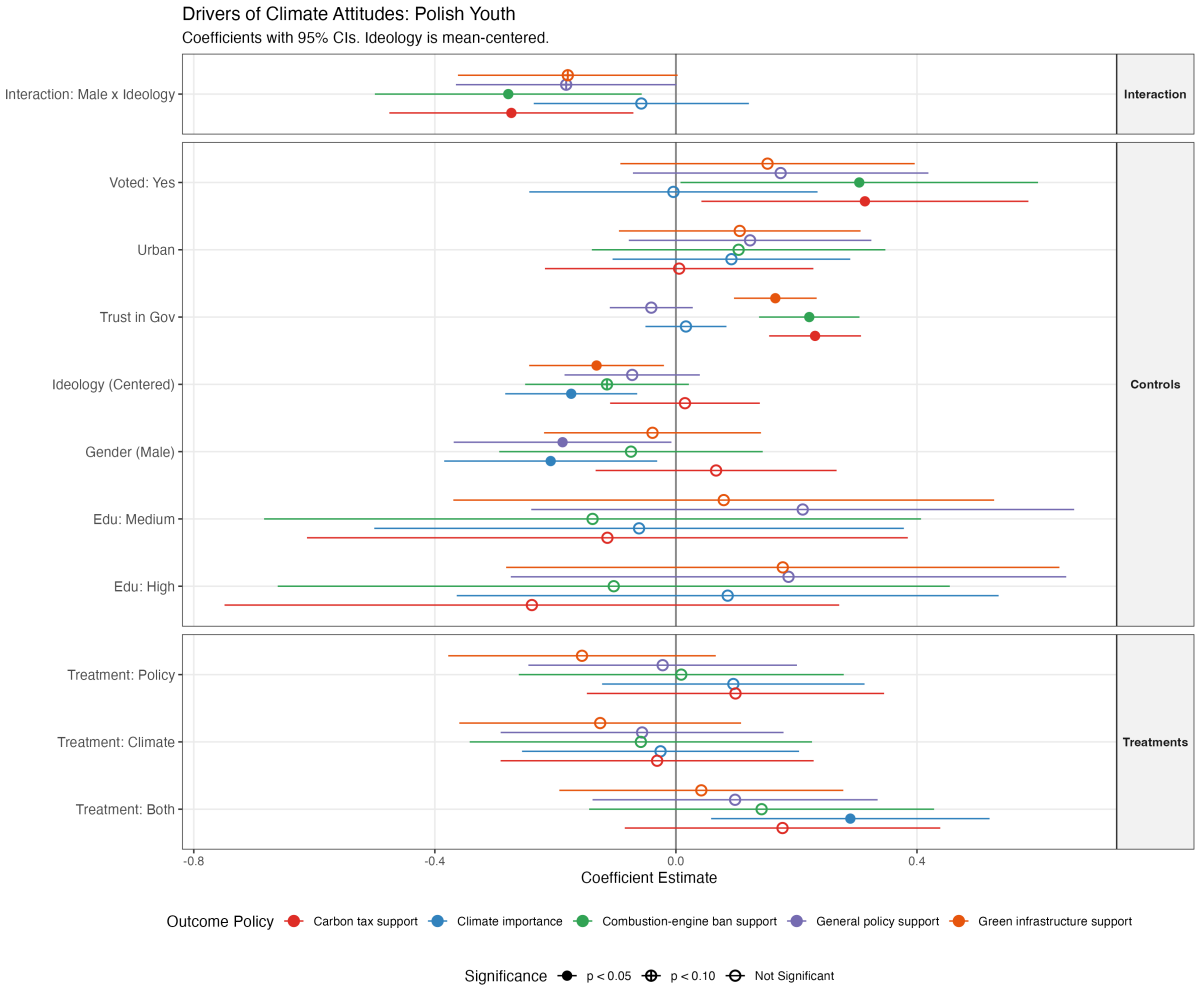

Figure 7. Coefficient estimates with 95% confidence intervals across all five climate attitude models. Filled circles indicate statistical significance at $p < 0.05$; half-filled at $p < 0.10$; open circles are not significant.

4.1.8. Summary of quantitative findings

Taken together, the quantitative results support the hypothesis that political ideology shapes climate attitudes differently among young men and women in Poland. The difference is not primarily visible as a simple average gender gap across all outcomes, but as a stronger ideological structuring of attitudes among men, particularly for concrete climate policies. Women's support is comparatively more stable across the ideological spectrum, while men become markedly less supportive as ideology shifts rightward. The quantitative phase thus suggests that climate polarization among Polish youth is driven less by gender alone than by the interaction between masculinity and right-leaning political identity. Ideology has a stronger and more consistently negative effect on climate policy support among men than among women, while for climate importance the gender difference in ideological slope is comparatively small and not statistically significant. The quantitative phase establishes the pattern but cannot explain the mechanisms. The qualitative phase addresses just this.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

So, if it is the young men that "stand out" in the overall analysis of the climate attitudes, why is it them, not also the right-wing women, that multiply this effect?

Firstly, the interviews clearly show that the issue isn't climate denialism anymore. The issue aligns with the concept of solution aversion (Campbell & Kay, 2014) - not denial, but conditional acceptance of the problem, while simultaneously rejecting the solutions. Respondents did believe in the existence of climate change - however, as the EIB data would suggest, they were not sure about the role of humans in this and even more importantly, about the framing of the issue itself; "*I wouldn't call that a climate catastrophe*" (R2). Respondents' "acceptable ideas" included largely remaining within the closest environment. Any actual existing or proposed policies were often evaluated ambivalently, seen as "*good ideas… in an ideal world*" (R6), but rejected in practice.

This paradox is reflected across the dataset: the coexistence of "good idea" (18) and "not effective" (32) / "bad idea" (15) codes across all interviews indicates that respondents do not reject climate action per se, but rather the form, pace, and perceived authorship of the solutions. This is being well reflected by this quote: "*Under the guise of noble climate policy slogans, the interests of those who know how to look out for themselves are being advanced; I do not believe in an objective good that exists independently and exerts a positive influence selflessly"* (R5).

A final layer of this framing concerns issue salience. When asked directly what problems matter most to them, respondents consistently named other concerns: energy security (R6), economic development (R2, R7, R5), social inequality (R4, R6), infrastructure (R3), security (R1, R2), the quality of public debate (R4). Climate change was acknowledged as a problem, but one ranked below immediate national, economic, and personal concerns, and one whose urgency was systematically deferred. As R4 put it: *"It is significant. One of many problems. It is certainly not a primary problem for me, nor something I deal with daily."* R3 was more direct: "*We simply have too much to do to think about it."* This disconnect between stated importance, and actual prioritisation is itself analytically significant: high salience scores do not indicate readiness for climate action, but rather a kind of abstract acknowledgement that coexists with active issue displacement. The quantitative and qualitative evidence thus converge on the same picture: what looks like climate concern at the level of survey response does not produce policy support at the level of political preference, confirming that the mechanism is one of solution aversion rather than denial.

4.2.1. Theme 1: Is it our responsibility?

The same figure - the EU being responsible for only 7 or 8% of global emissions - appeared in every interview unprompted: "*European Union countries speak for maybe 6 or 7%, depending on estimates, emissions of gases and these pollutants in the global aspect*" (R2); "*the EU accounts for about 7 or 8% of global emissions, while Poland accounts for less than 1%, so our impact is negligible*" (R6). The reasoning follows a consistent structure across all interviews: Europe contributes only ~8% of global emissions; Poland less than 1%; therefore

Polish sacrifice is costly and doesn't bring environmental payoff. China and the US are the real problem. Its uniform presence across respondents with varied occupational and residential backgrounds suggests it is absorbed rather than derived; a pre-packaged rationalization rather than an individually constructed argument, circulating widely in right-wing media ecosystems. As R1 put it: "*if we're saying that we have to work ourselves to death because we're at 8%, we can still put that off for a while*".

Current measures proposed to Poland were seen as a danger to its sovereignty, especially in the context of Polish growth and energy reserves. These ideas fit into the concept of "Polish exceptionalism" in climate policy (Kundzewicz et al., 2019): a narrative framing Poland as structurally distinct, disproportionately burdened, and therefore entitled to a differentiated pathway within European climate policy. Respondents repeatedly emphasised Poland's historical reliance on coal as a foundation of economic development: "*coal mining has, after all, contributed to the country's development, and any attempts to curb it won't do us any good*" (R7). This reflects what Biedenkopf (2021) identifies as the dominant, and still gaining strength, narrative of Poland's "unique situation," rooted in a carbon-intensive energy system and path-dependent development trajectory. R4, a lawyer, frames this in explicitly juridical terms: "*under the guise of environmental concerns, this broad range of fields related to ecology is being somewhat stretched; it's being used as a backdoor to also change legislation in areas such as energy, which requires unanimity when making important decisions.*"

Beyond the EU as an abstract actor, Germany emerged as a concrete and repeatedly invoked reference point which despite not being explicitly mentioned in any of the interview questions was brought up independently by four participants. Respondents pointed to perceived asymmetries between Western and Eastern Europe, arguing that climate policies disproportionately burden Poland while enabling economic advantages elsewhere. Investments in renewable energy were framed not as collectively beneficial but as indirectly benefiting German industry: "*Germany stands to gain from this — take the issue of those controversial wind farms here in Poland; Germany has certainly benefited from them*" (R7). This extended to the broader energy transition: "*Are we supposed to shut down [our industry] just so Germany can open a mine? Then we have no energy, but hey, Germany has opened several mines; they have tons of coal — let's buy it from Germany*" (R1). Germany was simultaneously invoked in the context of blocked national alternatives, particularly nuclear energy: "*Germany has been protesting against nuclear power plants in Poland for many years*" (R5).

Taking these claims together reveals a coherent interpretative framework through which climate policy is understood. In its foundations, it is inherently ineffective, given Europe's low share of global emissions, a frame that excludes considerations of per capita emissions or the EU's consumption-based footprint. It is also politically driven rather than environmentally motivated, embedded in broader struggles over power, sovereignty, and economic advantage in the European Union. Within this view, Poland is positioned as a "loser" of this transformation: a developing economy required to comply with externally imposed transformations, while bearing disproportionate costs. More powerful states, particularly

Germany, are seen as the primary beneficiaries of this process, reinforcing the sense that climate policy operates through unequal hierarchies rather than collective coordination.

This framing not only reflects the logic of Polish climate exceptionalism but extends it further: from a claim of national distinctiveness to a claim of systematic injustice, and ultimately to a form of defensive resistance grounded in perceived external pressure and the unequal distribution of costs. While the sovereignty and exceptionalism frames documented in this theme are not exclusively masculine, they connect to a gendered logic of political identity. The defense of Poland's economic position against EU imposition maps onto what Forchtner and Kølvraa (2015) describe as a gendered protector identity embedded in nationalist populism: the nation, like the family, requires a male defender against external threat. Defending Poland's industrial economy and sovereignty against EU imposition also activates a protector-provider masculine identity (Hultman & Pulé, 2018). This framing is culturally closer to men than women, and more resonant with right-wing masculine identity as it fuses national and personal provider roles, the same roles that climate policy is perceived as attacking through economic costs and industrial growth restriction.

4.2.2. Theme 2: "This war on climate"

4.2.2.1. "This is about politics, not climate" - politicisation of climate change as a dominating lens

The opening question in the interview asked the respondents about their primary associations when hearing about "climate change". The most striking first association for several respondents was not environmental but political, related to politics or activists. R2's immediate answer when asked what comes to mind with "climate change" was simply "*politics*". R5's answer to a question about the importance of climate change was: "*It doesn't directly affect people's lives, but it is dangerous as a political tool... in the way it influences public opinion by appealing to very simplistic emotions."* R6 also opened the interview by noting that the topic has undergone "*significant ideologisation*". For these men, the political association of climate change and climate itself is not a conclusion reached through reflection, but rather a starting position*: "We simply continue to live in a world where climate change is one of the issues that helps people get into power"* (R7).

This political affiliation of the topic itself is another factor influencing the general opinion on climate policy: R7 described his own susceptibility to partisan cueing while also critiquing it, confirming the mechanism: "*Ordinary citizens—like me, for example—may have certain associations with particular political parties, and when I hear a party's name, it shapes my views, including on climate change."* The respondents were also certain that this political situation benefits both sides; R4: *"It has more to do with some kind of political agenda. There are different groups: some that gain political capital by denying it (climate change), and others that gain political capital by promoting it."* Elements of climate policy are seen as a political game; "*Instead of moving in the right direction toward real change, we're heading in the opposite direction—toward rebellion—and it's all because of political gamesmanship." (R7)* - simultaneously acknowledging that the political game is counterproductive, again suggesting

he sees through it while still being shaped by it. This susceptibility to partisan cueing anticipates a further dimension explored in Theme 4.

4.2.2.2. Institutional trust (and distrust)

This politicization and explicit perception of climate change of something deeply embedded into politics, more than the actual world, reflects the general trust in government, which on a scale of 1–10 (towards the current Polish government as of 2026, a liberal-centrist coalition widely perceived as liberal within the Polish political spectrum; Bill & Stanley, 2025) never surpassed 3. This level of trust actively shapes how policy proposals are interpreted: not as technical responses to a collective problem, but as pretexts for extraction, control, manipulation, or power accumulation: "*Often, for example, it's precisely this kind of environmental issue that dominates the mainstream discourse and draws people's attention to things like climate change… while actually important issues like security or the economy are overlooked."* (R2) - climate policy is seen not just as wrong, but as a distraction from what "really matters".

This distrust quickly becomes implementation scepticism: "*What I'm most afraid of is that they'll supposedly implement it, but in the end—as is often the case in Poland—it won't work out, and all these administrative measures will just be a money-grab. In reality, there won't be any visible changes."* (R3). The bureaucracy costs arise in many interviews, especially in relation to the idea of a climate tax: "*But that money probably goes through officials, and they have to process it all through accounting and so on, so that just adds more costs—and as far as I'm concerned, no way, right? It makes absolutely no sense."* (R2). This idea is again compounded by the low institutional trust: "i*n theory it's a good idea; in practice it's a bad one… ETS revenues are supposed to go back into the state budget to modernise the energy sector, but in practice the state isn't doing that… taxpayers are paying, and the money is being spent on other purposes"* (R5). Opposition is not directed at redistribution itself, but at the perceived inability or unwillingness of the Polish institutions to carry it out effectively. In general, the respondents did not believe that the Polish government is doing its best to benefit Poland; *"But overall, I think a lot of government projects are carried out carelessly, and money is being wasted"* (R2). Importantly, cost objections were not framed as personal economic calculations but were filtered through the same politicized distrust framework: costs are seen not as necessary trade-offs but as evidence of manipulation driven by someone else's benefit. It is not only that Poland is perceived as structurally disadvantaged, but that ordinary people are expected to bear the costs while others benefit. Respondents repeatedly emphasised the unfair personal distributional effects of climate policy, particularly in relation to climate taxation. As one participant put it, "*we cannot accept solutions that lead to the mass impoverishment of average citizens and a drastic increase in their cost of living*" (R6).

The rejection of proposed policies was also motivated by a deep distrust toward the intentions of supranational actors, especially the European Union. Climate policy was not perceived as a neutral or technocratic response to a global problem, but as a project advancing particular interests. In this framing, institutions such as the EU are not seen as objective coordinators, but as actors capable of exerting pressure and conditionality, *"if we do something they don't like,*

they have no problem withholding funds… that kind of blackmail I don't like" (R1). They also felt like Poland's position is not taken into consideration when establishing the policies, both culturally: *"There simply isn't that kind of will in our culture. Every country has its own goals it wants to pursue. And the EU doesn't understand those goals." (R3)* and politically*: "And one of the main reasons, among others, is precisely this climate policy that is out of touch with reality. I also believe that this policy is simply being forced upon us" (R2).*

4.2.2.3. From politicisation to evidence-resistant public

These dimensions - politicisation, distrust, and economic grievance - are tightly intertwined and together illustrate a broader inversion of the usual logic of persuasion. When climate policy is experienced as a form of manipulation, additional information does not increase support but instead reinforces suspicion (Lewandowsky et al. 2019b). In this context, respondents' information diets are not incidental but structurally aligned with this interpretive framework: social media platforms such as X (primary source of information for all the participants) and YouTube, alongside alternative information sources, aggregate anti-elite and anti-expert content that confirms rather than challenges prior beliefs. As a result, the interpretive loop closes, producing what Lewandowsky et al., (2019b) describe as evidence-resistant publics.

4.2.3. Theme 3: "I'll do it myself, when I'm ready"

4.2.3.1. Imposition as the primary frame

Across all seven interviews, climate policies were not primarily evaluated on their environmental merits but on the terms of their introduction. Specific policies, including the combustion engine ban, clean transport zones, and carbon taxation, were seen as potentially acceptable in principle, but rejected because of how they were being imposed. The distinction between voluntary adoption and coerced transition was drawn explicitly and repeatedly: respondents oppose climate policy not when it proposes change, but when it mandates, restricts, or compels it. Words recurring across interviews included "restriction, imposition, ban, interference, regulation, top-down, coercion." The autonomy code appeared 30 times across the full dataset - the most frequently coded single theme - and emerged in each interview in almost identical form.

The clearest formulation comes from R1: "*I'll buy an electric car if I decide on my own that I want to switch to an electric vehicle, then there's no problem at all, but if someone tells me to get rid of my car and buy an electric one because it'll be better for the climate, then I'll say: don't do that here — go to America, for example, and tell them to sell all those five-litre cars."* Opposition is directed not at the technology but at the experience of being compelled: "*If the EU forces your country to replace your car's engine with an electric one, well, to me that's just a restriction — I don't see it as an incentive, because an incentive could be, say, a TV campaign — so I see it, well, 100% as a restriction, and it definitely stirs up negative emotions"* (R7). Incentives, campaigns, tax reliefs, and gradual encouragement were seen as legitimate; bans, taxes, and mandates were not.

4.2.3.2. The everyday sense of coercion

Coercion was not experienced only as a political abstraction. It was attached to very specific, ordinary practices: driving into the city, using one's home freely, eating meat, grilling in the garden, deciding how to power one's house - many of them also being activities culturally associated with masculinity (Leer, 2022). As R6 put it: "*the issue is to respect both the fact that someone wants to drive through the centre of Warsaw or Kraków in a combustion car, and the fact that someone else wants to take the tram or the bus."* The conflict, in this framing, is not between sustainable and unsustainable lifestyles but between different legitimate ways of living that should coexist. R1 made the same argument through a deliberately domestic image: "*You're at home, you want to rest, light a barbecue, and someone comes and tells you that you can't... if you forbid people to do something, it works like a red rag to a bull."*

This grounding of policy resistance in everyday bodily practices suggests that for these respondents, climate policy is not experienced primarily as a political or economic problem but as an intrusion into the texture of their daily life and identity.

4.2.3.3. The car as an identity object

The autonomy argument documented above operates not only at the level of principle but becomes particularly intense when the policy in question intersects with identity. The car represents the point where autonomy threat and identity threat converge - it is simultaneously a restriction on choice (the autonomy frame) and a restriction on a culturally masculine practice (the masculine identity frame discussed in Theme 4). The combustion engine ban provoked the most visceral responses of all policies discussed, and in most interviews the topic was raised before any question about it was asked. This alone is revealing. The car was not discussed only as a means of transport but as a marker of mobility, competence, and in some cases ritual. Respondents spoke not only about the technical limitations of electric vehicles, although poor charging infrastructure and fire risk both appeared frequently, but about the sensory experience of driving: R3 spoke of "*the sound"* of combustion engines and "*the whole ritual of refuelling"*; R4, after listing the practical advantages of combustion cars, pivoted without prompting to: "*I just prefer driving gas-powered cars; I like them better — I don't know, it's the sound of the engine."* The car discussion was the only moment across all seven interviews where respondents moved unprompted from policies to sensory experiences. This aligns with Daggett's (2018) concept of *petro-masculinity*, in which the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels function as a performance of masculine identity and a 'fossil fantasy' of self-sufficiency. The car represents material extension of the self, a site where masculine agency is practiced through technical mastery and physical mobility. Climate policy is experienced as a shrinking of the horizon, narrowing the terms of that agency. This also manifests as anticipatory sense of loss: R7, aged 19 and not yet owning a car, noted: "*Theoretically it limits me, but I don't feel it on my own skin yet — however, I don't know if it won't limit me more in the future."*

At the further end of this spectrum, externally imposed restriction produces not only disagreement but strong negative affect and, in some cases, radicalised interpretations of policy intent. R5 framed EU climate regulation as: "*simply very restrictive regulations based on*

utopian and unscientific goals... they will destroy people by taking away their homes, cars, and opportunities — from my point of view, this is enslavement." Prohibition is also seen as triggering the opposite of its intended effect: "*once something is forbidden, people will do even more of it out of defiance"* (R1).

4.2.3.4. Gradualism or deferral?

Every interview contained an appeal to gradualism - the idea that climate action is acceptable in principle, as long as it happens slowly, "rationally", and without disruption to daily life: "*it should be done gradually, slowly, and gently, so that these changes won't really be that noticeable in everyday life* (R2)*; gradual introduction of rules is much better than suddenly cutting things off — today we get rid of plastic, tomorrow we get rid of cars"* (R1).

Seemingly, this framing suggests openness to compromise and sets conditions under which certain policies could potentially be accepted. This is further reinforced by references to everyday "common sense" environmental behaviour, such as saving water or reducing energy use, which respondents perceive as legitimate, sufficient and already practiced: "*there is no shortage of people who apply common sense in everyday life… the key is to for common sense to appear in climate policy and actually encourage care for the environment in daily practices, like turning off the light and switching off the water"* (R6).

However, on closer inspection, this "openness" dissolves the moment any concrete proposal enters the conversation. When asked directly about specific policies, respondents reject them regardless of their alignment with the stated direction of gradual change. As one interviewee summarised, such compromise exists only in theory: "*That's what I'm saying—it'd work in an ideal world, but it's impossible to make it work"* (R2).

Gradualism therefore functions less as a concrete policy preference than as a rhetorically reasonable form of deferral, a way of preserving autonomy while postponing obligation, acknowledging the existence of climate change without engaging with its urgency, framing it as a manageable or distant issue rather than one requiring an immediate constraint on action, suggesting radicalism from the other side of the political spectrum. This logic also intersects with narratives of Polish exceptionalism: respondents express a general willingness to "do something," but insist that in Poland change must occur more slowly, given its perceived developmental position and minimal contribution to global emissions. As a result, responsibility is shifted toward individual, voluntary action (not expecting to result in any change besides the immediate environment), reinforcing the broader pattern in which climate mitigation is accepted in principle but deferred in practice.

4.2.4. Theme 4: "Women are emotional about it" - activists, feminization, and the gender frame

Returning to the opening question about associations with climate change, which most often produced political answers, a follow-up asking respondents to describe a concrete image proved equally revealing. Across interviews, the dominant image was not a weather event or a

scientific findings, but activists: paramilitaries blocking roads for R3, people gluing themselves to asphalt for R1 and R2, the vandalism of the Warsaw Mermaid in 2024 for R6. The fact that activist disruption - rather than drought, flooding, or temperature rise - dominates the mental image of climate change shows how the issue and its most visible advocates have fused into a single representation for these men, a fusion largely driven by the media environment discussed in the previous section.

The activist figure is described in strikingly consistent terms across respondents: irrational, emotionally captured, ideologically programmed, unable to think independently. R1 describes the typical climate activist as *"a damaged person"* who *"watched foolishness and genuinely believes it"* and - crucially, using a feminine pronoun without being prompted - *"doesn't think for herself"*. Activists are viewed less as genuine political actors than as instruments of the manipulation frame discussed in Theme 2: mascots of a political project, acting not from conviction but from ideological capture. They are regarded with something close to pity, yet their actions are consistently cited as a reason for dismissing climate policy or disengaging from the topic altogether. As R6 put it:

"The vandalism of the Warsaw Mermaid — which is listed as a monument and has significant historical value — took place on International Women's Day in 2024, in the name of protest, to draw attention to the fact that we have climate problems. But these actions are based on a desire to provoke controversy and stir up very negative emotions. Public reception of activist actions is decidedly negative, and these methods ultimately discredit the debate on the topic."

R3 echoes this concisely: *"People in general — the general public — just don't take it seriously. Especially when, as I said, their methods speak for themselves."* The perception that activists harm rather than help the climate cause recurred in every interview, and functions as a convenient reason to disengage from the issue without having to justify it with its substance.

4.2.4.1. Climate as part of a progressive package

Another finding concerns the spontaneous association of climate policy with other progressive causes. References to gender rights, queerness, and LGBTQ+ communities appeared in five of seven interviews, always unprompted, always in the context of bundling climate concern with a broader cultural-political package that also includes feminism, migration (mentioned in four interviews), and left-wing politics. For these respondents, supporting climate policy is experienced as an act of cultural affiliation, an implicit commitment to an entire progressive worldview they oppose.

This is explicitly stated by R4: *"These are largely activist circles — not necessarily connected to sexuality — but they are simultaneously very strongly associated with climate issues. So, when I hear the phrase 'climate catastrophe' coming from people connected to those circles, I'm automatically sceptical and look at it with considerable reserve. Which doesn't mean they can't be right in a given situation — but sometimes I won't even verify something, because I already assume the opinion being expressed is wrong."* This is an unusually self-aware statement, explicitly acknowledging dismissing claims based on their source rather than their

content. It is elaborated elsewhere: *"The same people who in Poland are very active in the climate domain are also active in domains I strongly disagree with — for example, issues related to sexuality. So when someone hears the phrase 'climate tax,' and its proponents are circles one dislikes, that inevitably shapes one's reaction to the initiative."*

R2 makes the bundling explicit and economical, also relating it back to the issue of trust: *"There are a lot of things like this — it's not just climate. LGBT issues and so on — these are also good territory for making easy money."* R1, when attempting to clarify that he has no problem with sexual diversity (again, unprompted), still cannot help organizing his answer around the same bundled categories - the very effort to separate them reveals how tightly they are linked in his associative framework.

A further illustration comes from R3's account of a university lecturer teaching the only climate change–related course, who also organized a Pride march. The respondent argues that she should not be teaching at a state-funded institution because "*her views were seeping into her lectures.*" The slippage between environmentalism, progressive politics, and institutional illegitimacy within this single quote captures the bundling logic: climate education becomes suspect not because of its content, but because of who delivers it and what else they represent.

This constitutes what might be described as an association fallacy structuring political perception: accepting one element of the bundle implies acceptance of all others. The topics: activists, the left, LGBT rights, feminism, migration, converge into a composite image of climate concern as something that does not belong to the respondents' world. R3's dismissal of activists as coming from *"English philology or art theory — degrees on paper*, *idle people with too much free time"*, performs this separation through class register: climate concern is positioned as the province of people who are unproductive, emotionally indulgent, culturally foreign, and disconnected from reality.

4.2.4.2. The gender frame: women and activists as overlapping categories

The feminine pronoun in R1's activist description *"doesn't think for herself" is* not incidental. It points to a pattern in which women and activists are treated as partially overlapping categories, rarely named together but consistently conflated in the logic of the interviews. This is most visible in R3's response to a direct question about gender differences in climate attitudes - asked about differences between how men and women relate to climate change, he moves through a sequence that begins with women, shifts to activists, and ends with why the topic is not taken seriously, as if the three were a single continuous thought:

"I think both sexes simply think differently. Women approach it more emotionally, I think — or maybe it's not just an impression, maybe that's just how it is. Maybe they don't fully believe in their own views and just do it because others are doing it. Because it's popular, because it's on trend right now. Just like with the war in Ukraine, then Palestine, now Iran — it changes very quickly. And activists can't seem to stay with one thing; they just follow the mainstream."

He then concludes, without a break, that this is why the public does not take them seriously - the "them" referring simultaneously to activists and, implicitly, to women. The transition is smooth enough to suggest the respondent may be speaking about both groups at once.

Another revealing instance of this conflation comes from R2. When asked about associations with climate policy, his first spontaneous response is the name of a female left-wing MP - "*I keep thinking about MP Żukowska, though she's barely connected to it*" - before later adding, unprompted: "*Oh, now you've reminded me — I forgot to mention the most important artist in Poland, Sylwia Spurek*" (a MEP known for her positions on animal rights and environmental policy, delivered with audible sarcasm). When asked about his political identity and left-wing politicians more broadly, he refers to female MPs exclusively, using the grammatically incorrect, depreciating form of a feminine form of congressman "*posłanki, poszlice, czy jak to się tam nazywa" - MPs, congresswomen, or whatever you call them*, and concludes that they have largely brought their political decline upon themselves.

What is significant here is not any single remark but the structure: when asked to think about climate politics, R2 thinks exclusively about female politicians; when asked about the left, he again produces exclusively female politicians, this time with explicit disdain. The male political field appears to be cognitively organized differently from the climate-and-activist field - the latter is inhabited, in his mental map, by women. This is not stated as a claim about gender. It simply is the associative architecture, visible only because the interview format forces its sequential expression.

This mechanism, however, operates largely through implication and association rather than explicit statement - it includes three registers: pronoun choice (R1), narrative slippage from women to activists (R3), and spontaneous cognitive mapping onto female politicians (R2). Every respondent noted that he discusses environmental issues more often with women than with men, attributing this primarily to women being more empathetic (R1, R2, R3, R6). None directly states that caring about the climate is unmasculine. The feminization of climate concern is instead performed through the consistent bundling of activists, emotion, fashion-following, and progressive causes - never through a direct claim. This indirectness is meaningful and may be partially shaped by the researcher being a woman: as Britton (2020) and Pini (2005) suggest, male respondents in cross-gender research settings tend to moderate overtly sexist language while the underlying logic remains structurally present.

If climate concern is culturally coded as feminine, progressive, and activist, then for right-wing young men, expressing support for climate policy carries an identity cost that is independent of the policy content itself. Accepting the combustion engine ban is not only accepting a restriction, but affiliating with a cultural world these men actively reject. This helps explain why the ideological slope is steepest for the engine ban specifically: it is the policy most densely saturated with this cultural coding - EU imposition, activist demand, lifestyle restriction, and progressive values - and therefore the one that triggers the most complete identity-based resistance. This connects to Brough et al.'s (2016) finding that the green-feminine stereotype operates as a genuine barrier to male pro-environmental behaviour, and that men's willingness to engage with climate issues is shaped by whether doing so threatens

or confirms their sense of masculine identity. A further dimension reinforcing this gendered identity cost is that respondents were openly opposed to other elements of the progressive-egalitarian package, particularly LGBTQ+ rights and feminist activism. While none expressed explicit hostility toward women as such, their consistent rejection of the movements and values culturally associated with climate concern (feminism, sexual diversity), aligns with the ecofeminist prediction that resistance to gender egalitarianism and resistance to environmental concern are structurally linked (Echavarren, 2023). The rejection is not directed at women per se, but at the egalitarian value system with which climate policy has become associated, a system these respondents seem to oppose.

4.2.5. Theme 5: The acceptable alternative - nuclear, infrastructure, and the technocratic exception

The four preceding themes document what right-wing young men oppose. An equally important pattern emerging from the data concerns what they support. Nuclear energy was raised enthusiastically and without prompting across the full sample, making it the only climate-adjacent topic to attract genuine and unambiguous consensus across the full sample. This consensus complicates any reading of these respondents as simply anti-environment or pro-fossil fuel, as they are not defending the status quo, but defending a specific idea of what legitimate climate action looks like.

Profitability and growth were seen as a primary criterion for introducing or evaluating climate policy, taking precedence over environmental goals. Respondents argued that structural transformations should be guided first by economic viability, and only subsequently by environmental reasons: "*we should follow the path of profitability first, and only later look at it through an environmental lens, because we are not a global leader yet"* (R2). Major changes, such as the closure of coal-based energy production should also occur only when objectively justified by economic conditions, rather than climate goals: "*a power plant should only be shut down when there are objective economic reasons showing that an alternative — for example nuclear — is better… otherwise, costs such as ETS may artificially accelerate closure"* (R6).

The nuclear position was stated in almost identical terms across respondents varying widely in age, education, occupation, and location. R3 reduced it to its essentials: *"Poland should close the mines and go nuclear."* R1 also accepted closing coal plants *in favour of nuclear, because that seems reasonable."* R7 argued that *"everyone agrees with this idea — it really only brings benefits, and that's where we should start."* R6 framed it as a sovereignty argument: nuclear means *"clean energy and energy independence."* R4 made the comparative case explicitly: EU money would be better spent *"helping Poland build a nuclear power plant, which we badly need, rather than subsidising electric cars."* Even R2, the most sceptical respondent overall, agreed that nuclear is *"the most profitable method — we should go down that road of profitability first, and only then look at things through an environmental lens."*

What unites these formulations is a specific logic of acceptability. Nuclear energy is sovereign rather than externally mandated- it enhances Poland's energy independence from EU conditionality or German infrastructure. It is technologically intensive; it does not require

lifestyle changes. It is associated with engineering expertise and industrial capacity rather than activist demands and progressive cultural politics; it is economically framed as a development investment rather than a cost imposition. Nuclear satisfies none of the conditions that generate resistance in Themes 1–4. it is not perceived as foreign imposition, does not violate personal autonomy, is not associated with the progressive cultural bundle, and does not raise questions of institutional trust in the same way as redistributive taxation.

The frustration that Poland has not yet built a nuclear plant, despite repeated promises, is itself telling. R4 notes that *"no one is willing to actually change anything"* and that the absence of nuclear power is *"the cause of many problems in the climate domain."* R5 links this directly to the Germany theme: *"Germany has been protesting against nuclear power plants in Poland for many years."* This frustration is not environmentalist, but sovereigntist and technocratic. The failure to build nuclear power is experienced as evidence of the same political dysfunction and external interference that generates resistance to EU climate directives elsewhere in the interviews.

The nuclear consensus is the mirror image of the combustion engine ban; the policy that attracts the most visceral resistance and the one that attracts universal enthusiasm are the inversions of each other in terms of their cultural and political coding. The engine ban is externally imposed, activist-associated, lifestyle-constraining, personally costly, and undermining autonomy & sovereignty. Nuclear, on the other hand, is technically prestigious, rational economically, and has no impact on lifestyle, while at the same time strengthening energy sovereignty. Together they illuminate the logic of acceptability more precisely than either finding alone. This pattern is consistent with existing research showing that men, particularly those with right-leaning political orientations, tend to perceive technological and environmental risks of nuclear plants as lower and more acceptable, and are consistently more supportive of nuclear energy than women (e.g. Flynn et al., 1994; Sundström & McCright, 2016; Pampel, 2011; Greenberg & Truelove, 2011; De Groot et al, 2013).

This logic extends beyond nuclear energy to investment-based policies, though with less intensity. Green infrastructure and public transport improvements were the only other measures to receive consistently positive feedback. Respondents praised existing systems, such as their local public transport systems (R2, R3, R4, R7), and framed further investment as a preferable alternative to coercive instruments (such as carbon taxation). As R6 suggested: "*instead of implementing things like the ETS, perhaps the right direction would be to focus on how to speed up the construction of a nuclear power plant and how to better develop public transport".*

The pattern across infrastructure also is investment-based, capacity-building, locally beneficial - these instruments are acceptable; coercive, prohibitive, or externally mandated ones are not. Public transport expansion is welcomed; combustion engine bans are rejected. The dividing line is not between pro-environment and anti-environment, but between voluntary or investment-based change and mandated or prohibitive change, the same logic that structures the autonomy argument.

5. Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative results allow us to reject the null hypothesis; Ideology shapes climate policy attitudes more strongly among young men than young women in Poland. However, this effect is not present for all outcomes; it is absent for climate concern (where a raw gender gap persists despite controls), marginally present for general policy support and green infrastructure programme, and strongest for the combustion engine ban and carbon tax.

However, this study shows that the core factor within the Polish male youth is not climate change denial, aligning with the data showing that majority of young people see climate change as an important issue. Both the survey data, with its high concern baseline, and the interaction being insignificant for M1, and the interviews converge on the same conclusion: the mechanism is solution aversion operating through gendered ideological identity, not scepticism about the science behind the phenomenon. The qualitative phase explains why this gradient exists.

The five themes identified in the qualitative analysis are not mutually exclusive mechanisms but complementary and reinforcing filters that operate simultaneously. Themes 1 (sovereignty) and 2 (distrust/politicization) establish the interpretive context, the lens through which any policy proposal is decoded. Theme 3 (autonomy) operates as the dispositional trigger - the psychological mechanism activated when a policy is perceived as coercive. Theme 4 (gender coding) adds the identity cost specific to men, explaining why the same autonomy threat produces a steeper response among men than among women. Theme 5 (nuclear/infrastructure) functions as the counter-case that confirms the logic of the other four: policies that bypass all four filters attract support regardless of ideology. The themes therefore interact cumulatively: the more filters a given policy activates simultaneously, the stronger the resistance, as shown on the combustion engine ban example (Figure 5).

5.1. Why is the explanatory power increasing when moving to specific policy support?

A central theoretical contribution of this study is the identification of what might be called an "ideological activation gradient" in climate attitudes. The regression models show that explanatory power increases significantly as we move from abstract concern (R^2=0.069) to specific policy support (R^2=0.100 for carbon tax), and that the Gender × Ideology interaction term, absent for climate importance, strengthens in parallel. This suggests that ideology does not structure all climate attitudes equally: it is activated more strongly as policies become more concrete, behaviourally constraining, and identity threatening. While abstract concern is a "soft" attitude relatively decoupled from political identity, concrete policies trigger a richer set of identity-based predictors, specifically solution aversion and identity-protective cognition, that filter the response along both ideological and gendered lines. The gradient is therefore not simply one of policy specificity but of ideological and gendered structuring: the more a policy threatens autonomy, imposes costs, or carries progressive cultural coding, the more sharply the Gender × Ideology interaction impacts the response.

5.2. Why is the interaction absent for climate importance?

The absence of a significant Gender × Ideology interaction for climate importance (B = −0.057, n.s.) is also a meaningful finding. Among right-wing men specifically, the group whose policy support declines most steeply with ideology, climate importance scores remain high: the distribution for men with ideology scores of 4 or 5 shows 73% rating climate change as important or very important (Annex A3).

However, this item, while commonly interpreted as a measure of issue salience, captures only abstract recognition of the issue, not necessarily its prioritisation. The qualitative data makes this distinction clear. While all respondents acknowledged the existence and relevance of climate change, they consistently positioned it below other concerns, most notably economic development, cost of living, and security. Climate change was framed as "one of many problems," but not a primary one.

This finding is consistent with the Eurobarometer data (European Commission, 2024b), according to which only 25% respondents aged 16-30 in Poland identified "the environment and climate change" as one of the top priorities, compared to 33% across the EU average, while issues such as rising prices (46% in Poland) and economic conditions (32%) ranked substantially higher. This reinforces the interpretation that climate concern in the Polish context coexists with lower political prioritisation relative to immediate material issues.

The issue is therefore seen as existent; it is not denied. What ideology structures, then, is not whether climate change matters but what, if anything, should be done about it, by whom, and on whose terms.

This pattern maps precisely onto the qualitative evidence. Across all five themes, the interviews document not scepticism about the existence of climate change but a systematic rejection of the proposed solutions. The scale argument (Theme 1) accepts that climate change is happening while denying that European action is meaningful. The trust deficit (Theme 2) accepts that emissions are a problem while dismissing the institutions proposing to address them. The autonomy frame (Theme 3) expresses a desire for a gradual change while rejecting any specific implementation. The feminist bundling (Theme 4) accepts environmental concern as a private matter while refusing to affiliate with climate politics publicly. In every case, the concern stays significant - it is the policy support which does not. Gendered ideological polarization in Polish youth is therefore a policy phenomenon, not a science communication problem. Therefore, interventions aimed at raising climate concern, communicating scientific consensus are unlikely to shift policy support among this group, because the barrier is not located at the level of belief.

5.3. Why didn't the experimental treatment have a significant effect?

This also explains the joint insignificance of the experimental treatments across the youth sample. This "non-effect" on policy outcomes reinforces the interpretation that opposition operates at the level of identity and trust rather than any information deficits. As the interviews

show, information is not perceived as trustworthy, and the issue lays in the potential implementation, as well as the progressive bundle, autonomy filter etc. - the information itself is dismissed regardless of its scientific merit. This results in evidence-resistant publics, (Lewandowsky et al., 2019b) for which more facts may actually reinforce suspicion.

The gradualism finding adds another layer that the regression itself couldn't capture. The interviews show that this opposition to policies coexists with a rhetorical acceptance of gradual change, which dissolves on contact with any concrete proposal. Another policy implication coming from that is that trying to explain the policies clearer might not bring significant results, mostly due to low level of trust in institutions.

5.4. Why does the engine ban have the steepest slope?

The combustion engine ban produces both the largest interaction coefficient ($B = -0.278$, $p < 0.05$) and the most dramatic gender divergence in marginal effects: the male ideology slope (-0.402) is over three times steeper than the female slope (-0.118). No other policy in the dataset approaches this magnitude of ideological differentiation between genders. The qualitative evidence offers a precise explanation: the engine ban is the only policy that simultaneously activates all four mechanisms of resistance identified in the thematic analysis.

From Theme 1, the ban is experienced as the archetypal case of EU imposition on Poland - it is externally mandated, costly, and universal - timed without consideration for Poland's developmental trajectory or energy infrastructure. From Theme 3, it is the policy most directly implicated in personal autonomy and masculine identity: the car represents more than transport choice; a symbol of freedom, mobility, competence, with connections made even on a visceral level, the ban is experienced not as policy but as dispossession.

Notably, respondents did not frame their opposition to the engine ban in terms of personal economic hardship or transport. The resistance was articulated almost entirely through the autonomy and identity registers documented in Themes 3 and 4, with only R7 anticipating future material impact. This suggests that for this group, the engine ban's exceptional polarizing effect is driven less by material living conditions than by its symbolic density - it is the policy that most completely concentrates sovereignty threat, autonomy violation, and progressive cultural coding into a single instrument.

Simultaneously, as the combustion engine ban was the only policy discussion during which respondents moved from policy content to sensory experience, sounds and rituals, the group seems to be susceptible to this topic also due to emotional, social and cultural connections. This is precisely the register Daggett (2018) identifies in the concept of petro-masculinity: the fossil fuel relationship as a performance of masculine self-sufficiency. From Theme 4, the engine ban carries the densest progressive cultural coding of all policies, as it is associated simultaneously with EU activism, environmental NGOs, the left, and a lifestyle transformation that these men associate with a world they reject. No other policy concentrates all three filters simultaneously, which could explain why no other policy produces a comparable slope divergence.

The green infrastructure programme, by contrast, produces the weakest and least significant interaction ($B = -0.179$, $p < 0.10$), consistent with Theme 5: it is investment-based, capacity-building, and locally beneficial, and therefore escapes the filters that block the engine ban. The contrast between the two outcomes shows that the mechanism is not about opposition to climate action as such but about the specific cultural and political form that action takes.

5.5. Why is trust the strongest control variable predictor?

Institutional trust is positively and significantly associated with support for specific policies (Models 3–5) the carbon tax ($B = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$), the engine ban ($B = 0.221$, $p < 0.01$), and green infrastructure ($B = 0.165$, $p < 0.01$), but not with climate importance or general policy support (Models 1–2). This pattern initially appears as strange: why should trust predict support for specific policies but not also for more general "[Poland] should take measures to fight climate change"?

Theme 2 resolves the puzzle. The qualitative evidence shows that trust is not an independent attitudinal variable sitting alongside ideology and concern, but it is quite concretely intertwined with how specific policy proposals are interpreted. When institutional actors are perceived as fundamentally untrustworthy, policy proposals are not evaluated on their technical merits but as pretexts for extraction, manipulation, or political advantage. This interpretive framework applies selectively: abstract climate concern does not require institutional legitimacy to exist, and general support for "measures to fight climate change" remains sufficiently vague to bring about association with distrust, especially as qualitative evidence shows that a general need to "do something" is consistently expressed. Support at this level therefore reflects principled acknowledgment rather than commitment to particular interventions. But once a specific instrument enters the picture, tax, a concrete ban, a public investment programme, it must pass through the exact local context and institutional filter. A carbon tax administered by a government perceived as wasteful and corrupt is experienced not as redistribution but as a pretext for opportunistic appropriation of public funds by untrusted institutions. An engine ban mandated by an EU perceived as acting against Polish interests is experienced not as climate policy but as economic aggression and manipulation. Trust, in this reading, is not a stable background variable but the mechanism through which specific policy designs are decoded, which is precisely why it matters for Models 3 - 5 and not for Models 1- 2.

5.6. Why are men more polarized than women on climate change?

The results suggest that the gender difference in Polish youth is not primarily one of level, but of structure. As demonstrated by the marginal effects, men's attitudes are more tightly organized by ideology, showing steep downward slopes across all five outcomes, especially driven by the right. In contrast, women's attitudes remain comparatively decoupled from their ideological positioning, maintaining more stable levels of support even on the right. This explains the observed "left > right crossover" where left-wing men report higher support for policies and climate importance than left-wing women, but right-wing men show the most acute resistance. The pattern raises a question the regression alone cannot answer: why does ideology pull men's climate attitudes more sharply than women's? If the interaction were purely

ideological, we would expect the same slope among all right-wing respondents regardless of gender. The fact that it is significantly steeper among men indicates that something specific to masculine identity amplifies the ideological effect.

The interviews provide that explanation. Climate concern has been coded as feminine, progressive, and activist in a way that creates a gendered identity cost for male conservatives. It seems that due to feminine coding of the issue, right-wing women can support climate policy without it threatening their identity, while right-wing men see higher risk to their masculinity within this move: doing so affiliates them with a cultural world defined against their own, one associated with feminism, LGBTQ+ activism, and left-wing politics. For these men, environmentalism has been successfully absorbed into a composite progressive signal that triggers identity-based filtering: accepting the policy means accepting the cultural package.

Importantly, not all four mechanisms identified in the qualitative phase are inherently gendered. The sovereignty framing (Theme 1) and institutional distrust (Theme 2) appear to operate as context-setting mechanisms that apply broadly across the right, and the qualitative analysis cannot establish a clear gendered dimension for these themes on its own. While existing literature offers plausible interpretations - Forchtner and Kølvraa (2015) link nationalist protector identities to gendered logics, and Hultman and Pulé (2018) connect opposition to environmental regulation with the defence of traditional male provider roles - without also conducting interviews with right-wing women, such implications cannot be confirmed here. It is Themes 3 and 4 (autonomy threat and cultural-gender coding) that introduce the clearly gendered dimension, explaining why the same contextual distrust translates into steeper policy resistance among men than among women. The interaction between gender and ideology is therefore not produced by any single mechanism but by the layering of gender-neutral and with gender-specific factors. Whether women's comparatively stable support reflects the absence of these identity costs, or whether it is sustained by a distinct value-based orientation toward environmental concern that operates independently of ideology, remains an open question that the male-only qualitative design of this study cannot resolve, leaving an important avenue for further research.

Figure 8. summarises this conceptual framework, illustrating how solution aversion operates through four gendered ideological filters to produce differential policy outcomes.

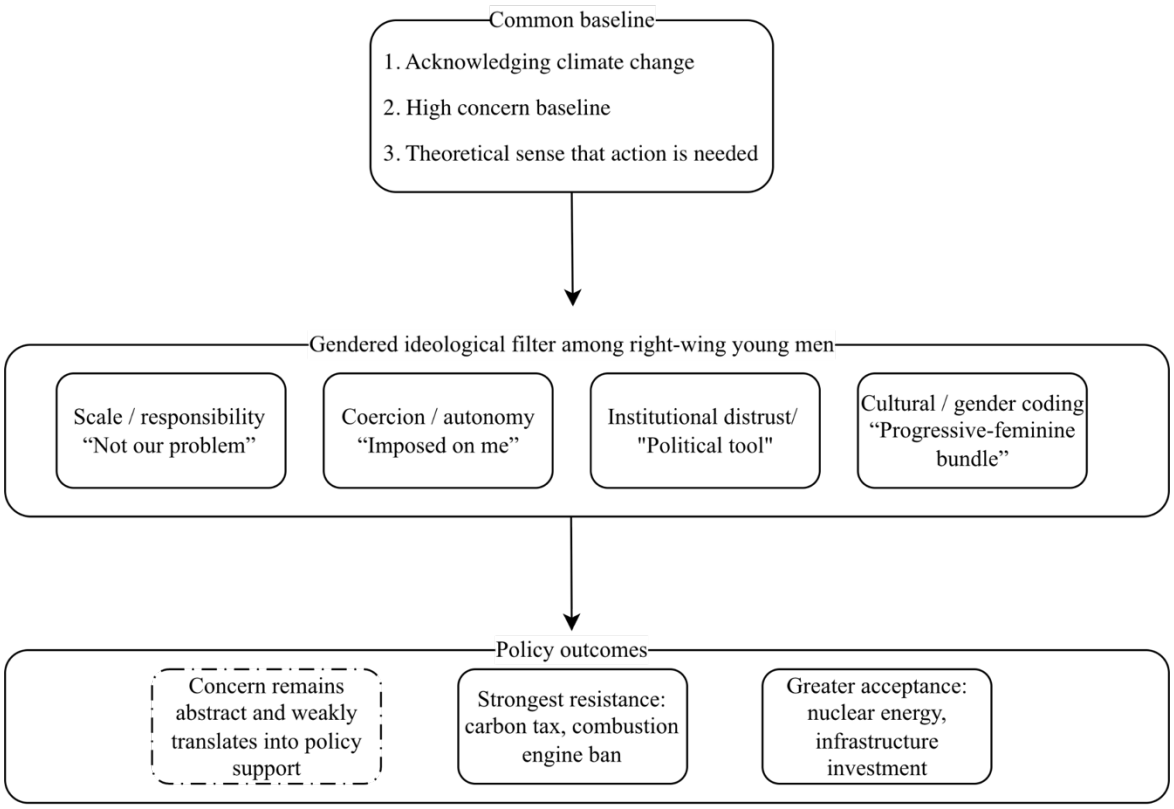

Figure 8. Conceptual framework: how solution aversion operates through gendered ideological filters among right-wing young men.

5.7. Theoretical contributions

The findings of this study move the "conservative male effect" beyond its original context. The effect documented in the US and Norway seems to be present within Polish youth, but the mechanism is not primarily identity-protective cognition about climate sciences, but rather solution aversion filtered through a sovereignty and autonomy frame. Respondents are not just rejecting climate change as an occurrence, they are also not defending industrial capitalism as McCright and Dunlap's "white male effect" subjects are - they are defending national economic position and personal autonomy against perceived EU hegemony. The identity being protected is different, which means the mechanism, while structurally similar, has a distinctly Polish inflection, being focused locally, on the position of Poland within the EU, almost as a developing country, still deserving special rules to allow it to grow. The mechanism that is structurally similar but contextually distinct.

The findings advance the longstanding debate between material and cultural explanations of environmental support (Inglehart, 1971; Drews & van den Bergh, 2016). Rather than competing, these operate as co-constitutive filters: material concerns (energy costs, economic dependence) become legible through cultural frames of sovereignty and masculinity. Right-wing young men don't mention personal economic hardship, their rejection centers on "state control" and "feminist policies" (Theme 2, Theme 4). This suggests material interests don't

drive opposition directly but gain political force when filtered through identity-protective cognition.

The results also resonate with research linking environmental attitudes to gender identity and masculinity. However, the mechanism operating within Polish young men seems to be more indirect than suggested by ecofeminist or hostile sexism frameworks (Remsö & Bäck, 2024; Brough et al., 2016; Benegal & Holman, 2021; Jylhä et al., 2016; Echavarren, 2023). Climate concern is not experienced as a direct threat to masculine identity, but it becomes gendered through association. The consistent associations of climate policy with feminism, LGBTQ+, activism, and progressive politics signals the existence of the masculinity threat operating without explicit articulation. This suggests that the threatened masculinity mechanism can operate at the level of cultural association rather than direct personal threat; it is a dynamic that may be particularly significant in politically polarized environments, such as Poland. The qualitative evidence is also consistent with the constructivist ecofeminist framework (Echavarren, 2023), though the mechanism operates through cultural association and issue bundling rather than through explicit anti-feminist ideology.

Combined with rising political polarization in Poland (Coppedge et al., 2025), resistance to the European Green Deal (Biedenkopf, 2021), and increasing gender divergence among younger cohorts (Milosav et al., 2025; Marzęcki, 2023), the Polish case points to an emerging ideological structuring of climate policy attitudes. The qualitative findings further indicate that this polarization is mediated through politicisation and issue bundling: climate change is interpreted less as a scientific problem than as a political signal, embedded within broader conflicts over sovereignty, economic priorities, and progressive agendas.

More broadly, the findings contribute to the literature on climate attitudes in post-communist contexts. McCright et al., (2016) previously found no consistent ideological divide on climate change in post-communist countries. However, their operationalization of "climate attitudes" primarily included the belief in the scientific phenomenon, with only limited attention to policy preferences - the results presented here suggest that this distinction is crucial: while climate change is widely acknowledged among Polish youth, also on the right, gendered ideological polarization emerges strongly at the level of policy support rather than belief. Within this group, climate policy is becoming an ideological battleground, similar to patterns observed in Western Europe and the United States but articulated through a distinct national frame centred on sovereignty, national vulnerability, and historical narratives of external imposition, rather than market liberalism.

A further implication concerns the source of gender polarization in climate attitudes. The general political youth gender gap in Poland (Marzęcki, 2023; Milosav et al., 2025) and across Europe appears driven primarily by women shifting leftward, adopting more progressive views faster than men. Yet the climate-specific gap documented here appears driven primarily by men on the right. Similarly, Coffé et al., (2026) find that in Germany it is culturally right-wing ideology and populist radical right parties that drive the gap in climate action support, suggesting that across contexts, the climate gender gap may be produced more by male-right deactivation (or activation in opposition), than by female-left activation. The question is: is the

climate gender gap produced by the same mechanism as the general ideological gender gap, or a different one? Whether this reflects the greater salience of identity-protective mechanisms for men on this specific issue, or whether it reflects the institutional absence of green parties that could translate feminist values into pro-climate political behavior, as Zinober's (2026) analysis of gender voting gaps in Eastern and Southern Europe suggests - remains an open question. The Polish case, where green institutional alternatives are absent but male resistance remains strong, is more consistent with the deactivation mechanism being primary, though the feminist activation mechanism may be latent rather than absent, awaiting institutional conditions that would allow it to emerge. The two mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and may operate simultaneously, but their relative contribution has direct implications for where intervention is most likely to be effective.

6. Limitations & Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged.

First, the quantitative analysis is based on a cross-sectional design that precludes causal inference, particularly for relationships between ideology, trust, and policy attitudes, where reverse causality and omitted variable bias cannot be ruled out. The models do not allow for conclusions about the direction of effects or statistically confirmed underlying causal mechanisms linking ideology, gender, and climate attitudes.

Second, issues of representativeness arise at both the quantitative and qualitative levels. The sample of the survey (N = 568) is broad in terms of age range (18-34), relatively small and not weighted, with the male sample being underrepresented (176 vs 392, see Annex A1), as available weights were not calibrated for the youth subsample analysed here. As a result, the findings should be interpreted with caution in terms of their generalizability to the broader population of Polish youth.

Third, the qualitative component is based on a small number of interviews (N = 7), with participants recruited through self-selection, mostly coming from cities, and mostly with higher educational backgrounds. While the interviews provide explanations, depth, and allow for the identification of underlying themes, they cannot be considered exhaustive or representative. Additionally, the design choice to focus on men means the absence of right-leaning female respondents, which limits the ability to directly compare gendered mechanisms and to fully argue the claims about the specificity of responses as being specific for young conservative men. The qualitative findings do not therefore allow for a definitive explanation of why ideological gradients are weaker or absent among women, which remains an open question for future research.

Fourth, the positionality of the researcher may have shaped the data collection process. As a female interviewer, interactions with male respondents may have influenced the articulation of gendered attitudes, particularly in relation to potentially sensitive topics such as potential sexist claims and broader terms of masculinity. While efforts were made to minimise bias, this

dynamic should be considered when interpreting the qualitative findings, especially ones regarding the implicit, rather than explicit, feminisation of the issue.

Fifth, the quantitative data used in this study were collected in 2021, while the interviews were conducted in the beginning of 2026. Given the rapid evolution of climate policy debates and political polarization in Poland and Europe, the observed patterns may have shifted over the past five years, particularly considering energy security concerns and geopolitical developments, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The "trust in current government" variable might also yield different results if replicated, as respondents in 2021 were assessing a right-wing government, whereas they are now evaluating a liberal-centrist one. Nonetheless, in both the survey and the interviews, overall trust in government remained low.

Finally, the study does not systematically analyse the media environments shaping respondents' attitudes. While interviews indicate that most participants rely heavily on platforms such as X and YouTube, and existing research suggests that algorithmic curation on these platforms can amplify polarised and fringe content (Whittaker et al., 2021; Gauthier et al., 2026), and that the interaction between users and comment sections can shape perceptions of consensus and credibility regarding climate change (Lewandowsky et al., 2019a), this mechanism is not directly tested here. The role of online ecosystems, including gendered digital spaces such as the manosphere, remains a very important avenue for future research.

7. Conclusion

Policy acceptance within young men is not about believing or not believing in climate change, but about compatibility with identity, sovereignty, and autonomy frames.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence converge on a picture that is more specific than just "young men opposing climate policy". The pattern is conditional: mostly driven by the right of the ideological spectrum and strongest for policies perceived as imposed, coercive or threatening identity, and absent for abstract concern which remains high across gender and ideology. The mechanism is not scepticism about climate science, but a gendered ideological filter through which specific policies are decoded as foreign impositions, autonomy threats, or affiliations with a progressive cultural world these men reject. This has direct implications for policy design and communication (visualized in Fig. 9.), not because the group is necessarily persuadable, but because understanding the structure of the resistance clarifies both where intervention is not worth investments, and where it might find actual traction.

7.1. Policy recommendations

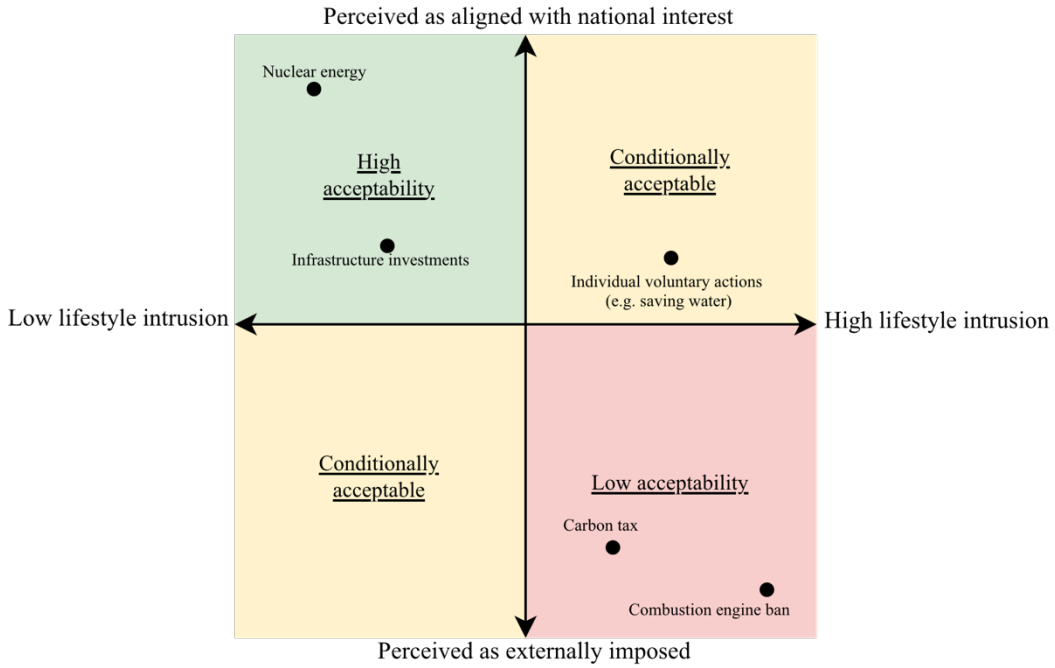

Figure 9. Policy acceptability matrix among right-wing young men, based on qualitative findings.

1. **Focus on tapping into women's potential and propose green political alternatives to activate this group.** The quantitative results show that women's climate policy support is comparatively stable across the ideological spectrum, while the qualitative findings suggest that right-wing young men's apparent openness to gradual change functions as a deferral strategy rather than genuine policy acceptance. Investing communication and mobilization resources in converting this stated gradualism into concrete support is unlikely to be productive. As Mudde (2025) argues, in the context of the radical right more broadly, centre-left parties should stop focusing on "angry young men" and instead direct their political capital toward the persuadable, most notably young women whose progressive values are already tilted toward the left, as targeting the resistant is both empirically flawed and politically suboptimal (Mudde, 2022). Zinober (2026) further suggests that women in Central and Eastern Europe represent an underutilized reservoir of green political potential, one that, unlike its male counterpart, is not structurally blocked by identity costs. Activating this group through building broader progressive circles, green policy and politics alternatives and participatory channels for the youth may bring greater returns than continued attempts to shift deeply entrenched male resistance.
2. **Decouple climate communication from progressive cultural signalling for this demographic.** For young right-wing men, climate policy is not evaluated on its merits but as part of a cultural-political package that includes feminism, LGBTQ+ activism, migration, and left-wing identity. This association structures rejection before any policy content is considered, *"sometimes I won't even verify something, because I*

already assume the opinion being expressed is wrong" (R4). Policy communication that emphasises economic rationality, national interest, energy sovereignty, and technological capability rather than social justice and collective values may reduce the identity cost of climate engagement for this group. This is not a recommendation to abandon progressive values in climate policy design, but to pursue strategic framing.

3. **Communicate global climate action more effectively to counter the scale argument.** The EU 8% figure, absorbed rather than derived, present in every interview, functions as a foundational rationalization for inaction. Countering it requires not simply disputing the figure but reframing the narrative: demonstrating that China, India, and the United States are also undertaking significant energy transitions, that Poland's per capita footprint and consumption-based emissions tell a different story than total national figures, and that EU climate action has measurable geopolitical leverage rather than representing unilateral sacrifice. The sense that Europe acts alone while others free ride is false, and policy communication that makes global climate momentum visible, particularly in economic and security terms rather than environmental ones, may contest this rationalization.
4. **Where possible, shift the instrument mix from prohibition toward investment and incentive.** The findings consistently show that the distinction between coercion and investment is not just rhetorical for this demographic, it is structurally constitutive of how policies are evaluated. Bans, taxes, and mandates trigger autonomy threat and activate the resistance documented in Theme 3 regardless of their environmental rationale; nuclear energy, public transport investment, and deposit return schemes do not. Policy instruments framed around national capacity building such as energy independence, technological innovation, modernisation are significantly more likely to find traction among young right-wing men than lifestyle restrictions or redistributive mechanisms. The nuclear consensus across all seven interview respondents is the clearest practical signal: decarbonization through sovereignty focused and engineering-intensive investment is not only acceptable but actively desired. Leveraging this preference as an entry point into broader climate engagement may be more productive than continued reliance on prohibitive instruments that consolidate resistance.
5. **Explicitly link infrastructure investments to climate policy.** This preference for investment over prohibition also points toward a communication opportunity that is currently underused. Several respondents expressed genuine enthusiasm for public transport, cleaner local environments, and urban infrastructure, including improved public transit networks, while simultaneously rejecting abstract "climate policy" as a category. The two positions coexist because the link between them has not been made. Systematically framing infrastructure improvements, cleaner air, reduced congestion, quieter cities, faster rail, as concrete and already-visible outcomes of climate policy can make an abstract, politicized discourse feel proximate and desirable. This also is proven by the quantitative data, where the gender/ideology interaction in regard to green infrastructure was marginally significant ($p<0.1$), also being the most supported measure on average. By linking climate action to immediate

environments rather than the EU-level, Brussels and “big politics”, the sovereignty and trust filters blocking acceptance of abstract policy may not be activated.

6. **Address the institutional trust deficit directly.** Both the quantitative finding - trust in government is the most consistent predictor of specific policy support - and the qualitative evidence from Theme 2 converge on the same conclusion: the barrier to climate policy acceptance among this group is not primarily informational but institutional. Providing better climate science communication will not overcome the fundamental belief that climate policy is a vehicle for political manipulation and economic extraction rather than a genuine governance response to a collective problem. Rebuilding institutional legitimacy requires concrete demonstration that redistribution mechanisms actually redistribute, that ETS revenues reach the communities they are supposed to benefit, and that policy implementation is accountable and transparent at the local level.

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9. Annex

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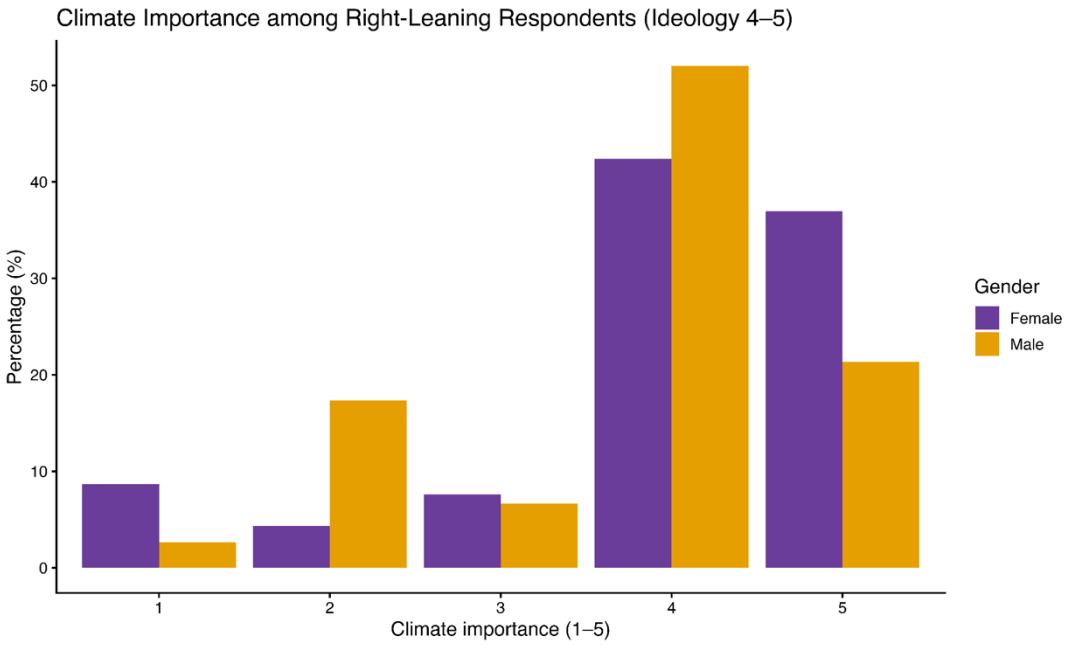
A1. Descriptive statistics by gender. Means with standard deviations in parentheses for continuous variables; percentages for categorical variables. p-values from two-sided t-tests (continuous) and chi-squared tests (categorical). N = 568 (392 female, 176 male).

Variable	Total	Female	Male	p_value
N	568	392	176	
Climate importance	4.17 (0.99)	4.26 (0.94)	3.98 (1.05)	0.003
General policy support	4.14 (1.00)	4.22 (0.95)	3.96 (1.10)	0.007
Carbon tax	3.05 (1.14)	3.03 (1.12)	3.09 (1.18)	0.568
Engine ban	3.03 (1.24)	3.07 (1.21)	2.94 (1.30)	0.247
Green infrastructure	3.50 (1.02)	3.53 (0.99)	3.44 (1.08)	0.33
Ideology (centered)	0.03 (0.95)	-0.06 (0.90)	0.23 (1.03)	0.001
Trust in government	2.22 (1.22)	2.15 (1.19)	2.39 (1.27)	0.038
Urban	78.9%	78.1%	80.7%	0.551
Education				0.126
Voting	85.4%	87%	81.8%	NaN

A2. Pearson correlation matrix for key continuous variables. All dependent variables are measured on 1–5 scales; ideology is centred at the midpoint.

variable	climate_importance	policy_general	policy_carbon_tax	policy_engine	policy_green_infra	ideology_c	trust_gov
climate_importance	1.00	0.55	0.26	0.26	0.39	−0.19	−0.02
policy_general	0.55	1.00	0.26	0.26	0.45	−0.18	−0.07
policy_carbon_tax	0.26	0.26	1.00	0.44	0.46	0.00	0.25
policy_engine	0.26	0.26	0.44	1.00	0.43	−0.11	0.20
policy_green_infra	0.39	0.45	0.46	0.43	1.00	−0.16	0.16
ideology_c	−0.19	−0.18	0.00	−0.11	−0.16	1.00	0.17
trust_gov	−0.02	−0.07	0.25	0.20	0.16	0.17	1.00

A3. Distribution of climate importance scores among right-leaning respondents (ideology score 4–5), by gender. 73% rates climate change as important or very important.



A4. Distribution of combustion engine ban support by gender. Responses on a five-point scale from "Strongly oppose" to "Strongly support".

gender	policy_engine	n	proportion
Female	Strongly oppose	53.00	0.11
Female	Oppose	98.00	0.21
Female	Neutral	112.00	0.24
Female	Support	147.00	0.32
Female	Strongly support	55.00	0.12
Male	Strongly oppose	35.00	0.16
Male	Oppose	53.00	0.25
Male	Neutral	37.00	0.17
Male	Support	68.00	0.32
Male	Strongly support	20.00	0.09

A5. Distribution of carbon tax support by gender. Responses on a five-point scale from "Strongly oppose" to "Strongly support."

gender	value	n	proportion
Female	Strongly oppose	52.00	0.11
Female	Oppose	77.00	0.17
Female	Neutral	151.00	0.33
Female	Support	148.00	0.32
Female	Strongly support	31.00	0.07
Male	Strongly oppose	28.00	0.13
Male	Oppose	29.00	0.14
Male	Neutral	70.00	0.34
Male	Support	57.00	0.27
Male	Strongly support	24.00	0.12

A6. Distribution of green infrastructure programme support by gender. Responses on a five-point scale from "Strongly oppose" to "Strongly support".

gender	value	n	proportion
Female	Strongly oppose	21.00	0.05
Female	Oppose	41.00	0.09
Female	Neutral	133.00	0.29
Female	Support	207.00	0.45
Female	Strongly support	60.00	0.13
Male	Strongly oppose	13.00	0.06
Male	Oppose	26.00	0.12
Male	Neutral	58.00	0.28
Male	Support	84.00	0.40
Male	Strongly support	29.00	0.14

A7. Ordered logistic regression results (robustness check). Key coefficients shown for all five climate attitude outcomes. The Gender × Ideology interaction term is significant for general policy support, carbon tax, engine ban, and green infrastructure, consistent with OLS results in the main analysis.

outcome	term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value
climate_importance	genderMale	−0.41	0.18	−2.27	0.02
climate_importance	ideology_c	−0.36	0.12	−3.03	0.00
climate_importance	trust_gov	−0.03	0.07	−0.38	0.70
climate_importance	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.17	0.19	−0.93	0.35
policy_general	genderMale	−0.31	0.18	−1.77	0.08
policy_general	ideology_c	−0.06	0.11	−0.55	0.58
policy_general	trust_gov	−0.13	0.07	−1.94	0.05
policy_general	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.39	0.19	−2.10	0.04
policy_carbon_tax	genderMale	0.14	0.17	0.83	0.41
policy_carbon_tax	ideology_c	0.04	0.11	0.36	0.72
policy_carbon_tax	trust_gov	0.42	0.07	6.13	0.00
policy_carbon_tax	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.56	0.18	−3.15	0.00
policy_engine	genderMale	−0.09	0.17	−0.55	0.58
policy_engine	ideology_c	−0.16	0.11	−1.49	0.14
policy_engine	trust_gov	0.35	0.07	5.24	0.00
policy_engine	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.51	0.18	−2.81	0.00
policy_green_infra	genderMale	−0.06	0.17	−0.36	0.72
policy_green_infra	ideology_c	−0.22	0.11	−2.01	0.04
policy_green_infra	trust_gov	0.32	0.07	4.64	0.00
policy_green_infra	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.39	0.18	−2.09	0.04

A8. Binary logistic regression results (robustness check). Dependent variables recoded as binary (support vs. neutral/oppose). Estimates are odds ratios. The Gender × Ideology interaction is significant for carbon tax support (OR = 0.53, p < 0.01), consistent with the main OLS model choice.

term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	conf.low	conf.high	outcome
genderMale	0.99	0.29	−0.02	0.98	0.57	1.79	climate_importance
ideology_c	0.68	0.17	−2.23	0.03	0.48	0.95	climate_importance
trust_gov	1.05	0.10	0.45	0.65	0.86	1.29	climate_importance
genderMale:ideology_c	0.77	0.28	−0.94	0.35	0.44	1.32	climate_importance
genderMale	0.67	0.24	−1.68	0.09	0.42	1.08	policy_general
ideology_c	0.85	0.16	−1.01	0.31	0.62	1.16	policy_general
trust_gov	0.94	0.09	−0.64	0.52	0.79	1.13	policy_general
genderMale:ideology_c	0.86	0.24	−0.63	0.53	0.53	1.38	policy_general
genderMale	1.05	0.20	0.24	0.81	0.71	1.56	policy_carbon_tax
ideology_c	1.10	0.12	0.77	0.44	0.87	1.40	policy_carbon_tax
trust_gov	1.40	0.08	4.40	0.00	1.21	1.63	policy_carbon_tax
genderMale:ideology_c	0.53	0.21	−3.06	0.00	0.34	0.79	policy_carbon_tax
genderMale	1.04	0.20	0.21	0.83	0.71	1.53	policy_engine
ideology_c	0.99	0.12	−0.11	0.91	0.78	1.25	policy_engine
trust_gov	1.32	0.07	3.67	0.00	1.14	1.52	policy_engine
genderMale:ideology_c	0.68	0.20	−1.89	0.06	0.46	1.01	policy_engine
genderMale	0.85	0.20	−0.80	0.42	0.58	1.26	policy_green_infra
ideology_c	0.77	0.12	−2.10	0.04	0.61	0.98	policy_green_infra
trust_gov	1.38	0.08	4.14	0.00	1.19	1.61	policy_green_infra
genderMale:ideology_c	0.89	0.20	−0.58	0.56	0.59	1.32	policy_green_infra

A9. Multinomial logistic regression results (robustness check). Reference category: neutral. Estimates shown for "Oppose" and "Support" relative to neutral. The interaction term is significant for carbon tax support (estimate = −0.67, p < 0.01) and engine ban opposition (estimate = 0.59, p = 0.04).

response	term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	outcome	odds_ratio
Oppose	genderMale	1.90	0.69	2.77	0.01	climate_importance	6.71
Support	genderMale	1.26	0.61	2.05	0.04	climate_importance	3.52
Oppose	ideology_c	0.28	0.32	0.89	0.38	climate_importance	1.32
Support	ideology_c	−0.23	0.24	−0.96	0.34	climate_importance	0.80
Oppose	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.33	0.61	−0.55	0.58	climate_importance	0.72
Support	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.48	0.54	−0.89	0.37	climate_importance	0.62
Oppose	genderMale	0.41	0.45	0.90	0.37	policy_general	1.51
Support	genderMale	−0.22	0.31	−0.72	0.47	policy_general	0.80
Oppose	ideology_c	0.54	0.30	1.79	0.07	policy_general	1.72
Support	ideology_c	0.04	0.20	0.21	0.83	policy_general	1.04
Oppose	genderMale:ideology_c	0.12	0.44	0.27	0.79	policy_general	1.13
Support	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.03	0.31	−0.10	0.92	policy_general	0.97
Oppose	genderMale	−0.05	0.26	−0.19	0.85	policy_carbon_tax	0.95
Support	genderMale	0.04	0.23	0.16	0.87	policy_carbon_tax	1.04
Oppose	ideology_c	0.15	0.16	0.94	0.34	policy_carbon_tax	1.16
Support	ideology_c	0.16	0.14	1.15	0.25	policy_carbon_tax	1.18
Oppose	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.07	0.26	−0.28	0.78	policy_carbon_tax	0.93
Support	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.67	0.24	−2.85	0.00	policy_carbon_tax	0.51
Oppose	genderMale	0.59	0.28	2.11	0.04	policy_engine	1.80
Support	genderMale	0.44	0.27	1.63	0.10	policy_engine	1.55
Oppose	ideology_c	0.41	0.17	2.45	0.01	policy_engine	1.50
Support	ideology_c	0.22	0.15	1.46	0.14	policy_engine	1.25
Oppose	genderMale:ideology_c	0.11	0.29	0.40	0.69	policy_engine	1.12
Support	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.27	0.27	−0.98	0.33	policy_engine	0.77
Oppose	genderMale	0.05	0.32	0.15	0.88	policy_green_infra	1.05
Support	genderMale	−0.10	0.22	−0.47	0.64	policy_green_infra	0.90
Oppose	ideology_c	0.26	0.20	1.32	0.19	policy_green_infra	1.30
Support	ideology_c	−0.17	0.14	−1.23	0.22	policy_green_infra	0.84
Oppose	genderMale:ideology_c	0.47	0.32	1.47	0.14	policy_green_infra	1.60
Support	genderMale:ideology_c	0.08	0.24	0.33	0.74	policy_green_infra	1.08

A10. OLS model diagnostics summary. Max VIF values indicate no multicollinearity concerns. Breusch-Pagan tests and RESET tests reported for each outcome. Cook's distance and leverage statistics confirm no influential outliers driving the results.

OLS diagnostics summary

outcome	n	max_vif	bp_p	reset_p	max_cooks_d	cooks_d_over_4n	max_leverage	leverage_over_2p_n	abs_rstudent_over_3
climate_importance	566.00	1.07	0.01	0.01	0.06	33.00	0.07	30.00	14.00
policy_general	568.00	1.07	0.23	0.38	0.06	34.00	0.07	30.00	12.00
policy_carbon_tax	568.00	1.07	0.00	0.04	0.04	26.00	0.07	30.00	1.00
policy_engine	568.00	1.07	0.08	0.34	0.03	25.00	0.07	30.00	0.00
policy_green_infra	568.00	1.07	0.54	0.00	0.06	39.00	0.07	30.00	1.00

A11. Sample sizes across model specifications. All models use the same analytical sample (N = 566–568), with minor variation due to missing values on climate importance.

Sample sizes across model specifications

outcome	ols_n	ordered_n	logit_n	multinom_n
climate_importance	566.00	566.00	566.00	566.00
policy_general	568.00	568.00	568.00	568.00
policy_carbon_tax	568.00	568.00	568.00	568.00
policy_engine	568.00	568.00	568.00	568.00
policy_green_infra	568.00	568.00	568.00	568.00

A12. Robustness of the Gender × Ideology interaction across alternative political variable specifications. "Both" includes ideology and voting; "ideology_only" and "vote_only" include each separately. The interaction term remains substantively consistent across specifications.

outcome	specification	term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	n
climate_importance	both	genderMale	−0.20	0.10	−2.05	0.04	585.00
climate_importance	both	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.05	0.11	−0.41	0.68	585.00
climate_importance	both	ideology_c	−0.18	0.06	−2.77	0.01	585.00
climate_importance	both	trust_gov	0.01	0.04	0.37	0.71	585.00
climate_importance	both	voted_catVoted	−0.00	0.11	−0.00	1.00	585.00
climate_importance	ideology_only	genderMale	−0.18	0.10	−1.93	0.05	591.00
climate_importance	ideology_only	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.05	0.11	−0.47	0.64	591.00
climate_importance	ideology_only	ideology_c	−0.17	0.06	−2.68	0.01	591.00
climate_importance	ideology_only	trust_gov	0.01	0.04	0.17	0.86	591.00
climate_importance	vote_only	genderMale	−0.26	0.09	−2.81	0.01	597.00
climate_importance	vote_only	trust_gov	−0.01	0.04	−0.16	0.87	597.00
climate_importance	vote_only	voted_catVoted	0.02	0.11	0.21	0.84	597.00
policy_carbon_tax	both	genderMale	0.09	0.11	0.85	0.40	587.00
policy_carbon_tax	both	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.25	0.12	−2.13	0.03	587.00
policy_carbon_tax	both	ideology_c	0.01	0.07	0.19	0.85	587.00
policy_carbon_tax	both	trust_gov	0.23	0.04	5.56	0.00	587.00
policy_carbon_tax	both	voted_catVoted	0.31	0.12	2.59	0.01	587.00
policy_carbon_tax	ideology_only	genderMale	0.07	0.11	0.65	0.52	593.00
policy_carbon_tax	ideology_only	genderMale:ideology_c	0.26	0.12	2.22	0.03	593.00
policy_carbon_tax	ideology_only	ideology_c	0.02	0.07	0.27	0.78	593.00
policy_carbon_tax	ideology_only	trust_gov	0.23	0.04	5.75	0.00	593.00
policy_carbon_tax	vote_only	genderMale	0.04	0.10	0.36	0.72	599.00
policy_carbon_tax	vote_only	trust_gov	0.22	0.04	5.70	0.00	599.00
policy_carbon_tax	vote_only	voted_catVoted	0.32	0.12	2.68	0.01	599.00
policy_engine	both	genderMale	−0.07	0.11	−0.58	0.56	587.00
policy_engine	both	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.28	0.12	−2.31	0.02	587.00
policy_engine	both	ideology_c	0.12	0.08	1.59	0.11	587.00
policy_engine	both	trust_gov	0.23	0.05	5.01	0.00	587.00
policy_engine	both	voted_catVoted	0.30	0.14	2.11	0.04	587.00
policy_engine	ideology_only	genderMale	−0.08	0.11	−0.74	0.46	593.00
policy_engine	ideology_only	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.29	0.12	−2.35	0.02	593.00
policy_engine	ideology_only	ideology_c	−0.11	0.08	−1.47	0.14	593.00
policy_engine	ideology_only	trust_gov	0.23	0.04	5.11	0.00	593.00
policy_engine	vote_only	genderMale	−0.15	0.11	−1.35	0.18	599.00
policy_engine	vote_only	trust_gov	0.21	0.04	4.70	0.00	599.00
policy_engine	vote_only	voted_catVoted	0.29	0.15	1.97	0.05	599.00
policy_general	both	genderMale	−0.17	0.10	−1.77	0.08	587.00
policy_general	both	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.16	0.12	−1.39	0.17	587.00
policy_general	both	ideology_c	−0.07	0.06	−1.26	0.21	587.00
policy_general	both	trust_gov	−0.04	0.04	−1.19	0.23	587.00
policy_general	both	voted_catVoted	0.18	0.12	1.44	0.15	587.00
policy_general	ideology_only	genderMale	−0.15	0.09	−1.62	0.11	593.00
policy_general	ideology_only	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.17	0.12	−1.47	0.14	593.00
policy_general	ideology_only	ideology_c	0.07	0.06	1.15	0.25	593.00
policy_general	ideology_only	trust_gov	−0.05	0.04	−1.34	0.18	593.00
policy_general	vote_only	genderMale	−0.24	0.10	−2.50	0.01	599.00
policy_general	vote_only	trust_gov	−0.05	0.03	−1.45	0.15	599.00
policy_general	vote_only	voted_catVoted	0.21	0.12	1.74	0.08	599.00
policy_green_infra	both	genderMale	−0.03	0.09	−0.36	0.72	587.00
policy_green_infra	both	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.17	0.11	−1.52	0.13	587.00
policy_green_infra	both	ideology_c	−0.13	0.06	−2.06	0.04	587.00
policy_green_infra	both	trust_gov	0.16	0.04	4.42	0.00	587.00
policy_green_infra	both	voted_catVoted	0.15	0.12	1.31	0.19	587.00
policy_green_infra	ideology_only	genderMale	−0.03	0.09	−0.37	0.71	593.00
policy_green_infra	ideology_only	genderMale:ideology_c	−0.17	0.11	−1.55	0.12	593.00
policy_green_infra	ideology_only	ideology_c	0.12	0.06	1.98	0.05	593.00
policy_green_infra	ideology_only	trust_gov	0.16	0.04	4.48	0.00	593.00
policy_green_infra	vote_only	genderMale	−0.12	0.09	−1.26	0.21	599.00
policy_green_infra	vote_only	trust_gov	0.14	0.04	4.05	0.00	599.00
policy_green_infra	vote_only	voted_catVoted	0.17	0.12	1.48	0.14	599.00

A13. Predicted values from marginal effects models for all five outcomes, by ideology score and gender. Predicted values computed at representative ideology values with 95% confidence intervals, holding all other covariates constant.

Outcome: Climate Importance — Predicted Values

x	predicted	std.error	conf.low	conf.high	group
−2.00	4.43	0.25	3.93	4.92	Female
−2.00	4.34	0.29	3.77	4.91	Male
−1.00	4.26	0.24	3.79	4.72	Female
−1.00	4.11	0.26	3.60	4.61	Male
0.00	4.08	0.23	3.62	4.54	Female
0.00	3.87	0.24	3.40	4.35	Male
1.00	3.91	0.24	3.43	4.39	Female
1.00	3.64	0.25	3.16	4.13	Male
2.00	3.73	0.27	3.21	4.26	Female
2.00	3.41	0.27	2.88	3.95	Male

Policy: Carbon Tax — Predicted Values

x	predicted	std.error	conf.low	conf.high	group
−2.00	2.85	0.29	2.29	3.41	Female
−2.00	3.46	0.33	2.82	4.11	Male
−1.00	2.86	0.27	2.34	3.39	Female
−1.00	3.20	0.29	2.63	3.78	Male
0.00	2.88	0.26	2.36	3.40	Female
0.00	2.95	0.27	2.41	3.48	Male
1.00	2.89	0.28	2.35	3.44	Female
1.00	2.69	0.28	2.14	3.24	Male
2.00	2.91	0.30	2.32	3.50	Female
2.00	2.43	0.31	1.82	3.03	Male

Policy: Combustion Engine Ban — Predicted Values

x	predicted	std.error	conf.low	conf.high	group
−2.00	3.06	0.31	2.44	3.67	Female
−2.00	3.54	0.36	2.83	4.24	Male
−1.00	2.94	0.29	2.36	3.52	Female
−1.00	3.14	0.32	2.52	3.77	Male
0.00	2.83	0.29	2.26	3.39	Female
0.00	2.75	0.30	2.16	3.34	Male
1.00	2.71	0.30	2.12	3.31	Female
1.00	2.36	0.31	1.76	2.96	Male
2.00	2.60	0.33	1.95	3.24	Female
2.00	1.97	0.34	1.30	2.63	Male

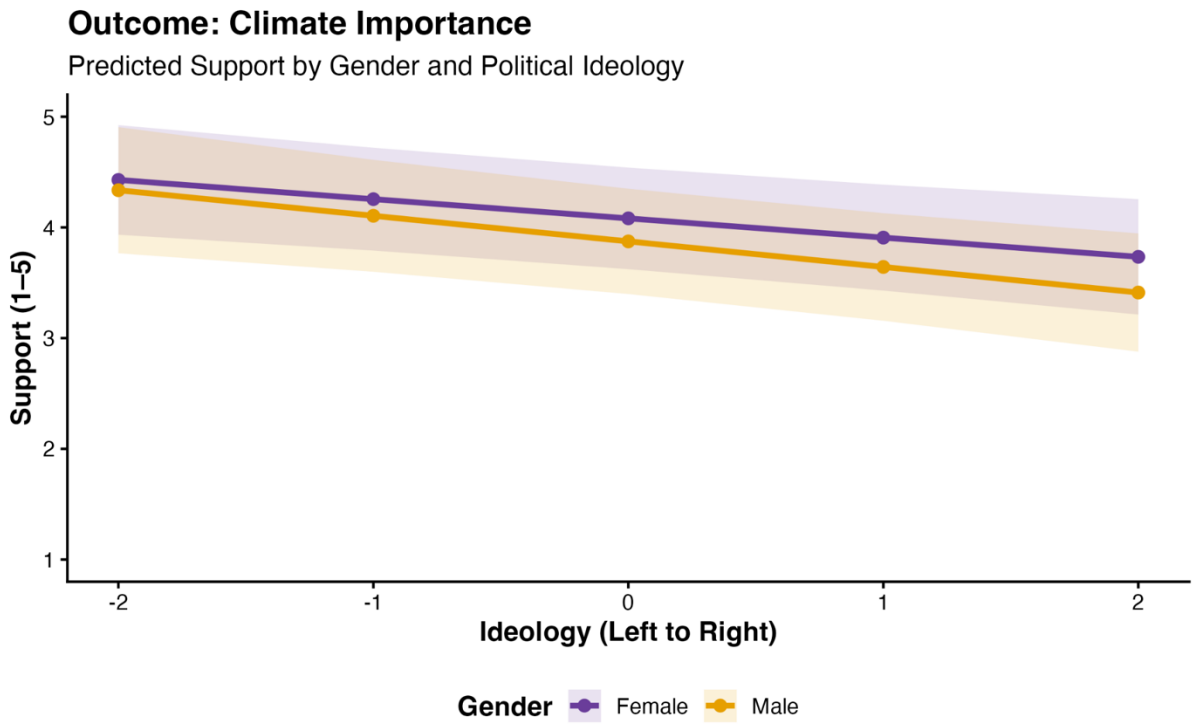
Outcome: General Climate Policy Support — Predicted Values

x	predicted	std.error	conf.low	conf.high	group
−2.00	3.92	0.26	3.41	4.42	Female
−2.00	4.09	0.30	3.51	4.68	Male
−1.00	3.84	0.24	3.37	4.32	Female
−1.00	3.84	0.26	3.32	4.36	Male
0.00	3.77	0.24	3.30	4.24	Female
0.00	3.58	0.25	3.10	4.07	Male
1.00	3.70	0.25	3.21	4.19	Female
1.00	3.33	0.25	2.83	3.83	Male
2.00	3.63	0.27	3.09	4.16	Female
2.00	3.07	0.28	2.53	3.62	Male

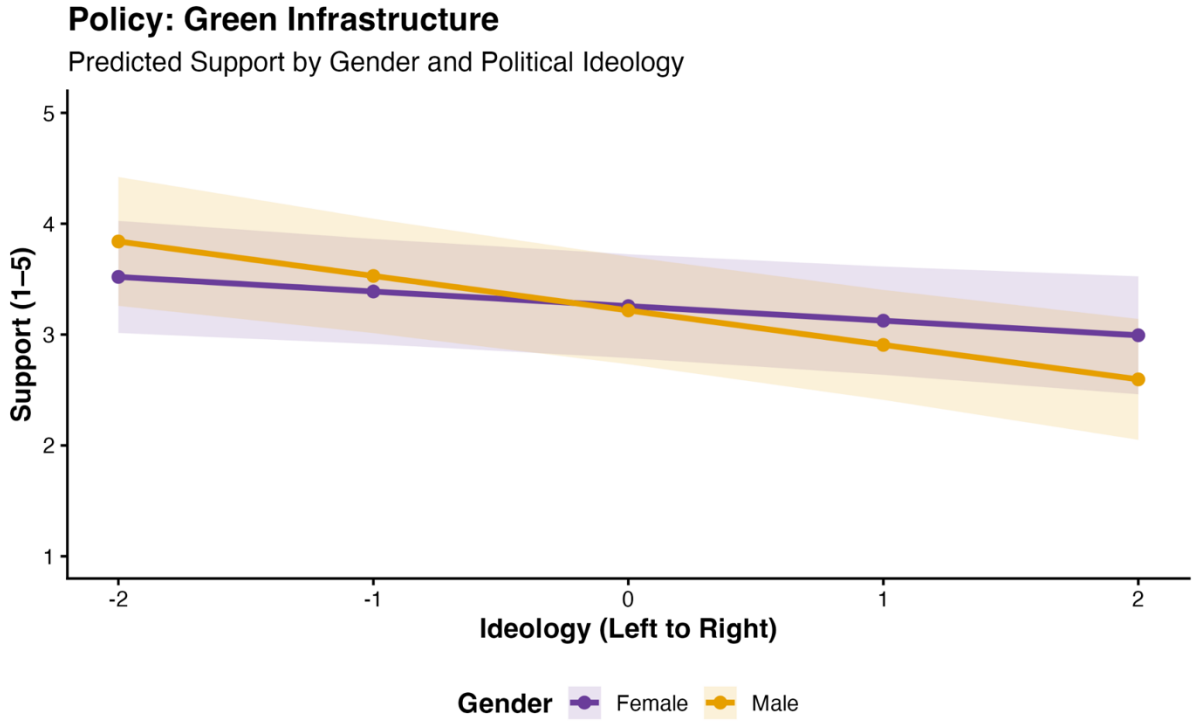
Policy: Green Infrastructure — Predicted Values

x	predicted	std.error	conf.low	conf.high	group
−2.00	3.52	0.26	3.01	4.03	Female
−2.00	3.84	0.30	3.26	4.42	Male
−1.00	3.39	0.24	2.91	3.86	Female
−1.00	3.53	0.26	3.01	4.04	Male
0.00	3.26	0.24	2.79	3.73	Female
0.00	3.22	0.25	2.73	3.70	Male
1.00	3.13	0.25	2.64	3.61	Female
1.00	2.91	0.25	2.41	3.40	Male
2.00	2.99	0.27	2.46	3.53	Female
2.00	2.60	0.28	2.05	3.14	Male

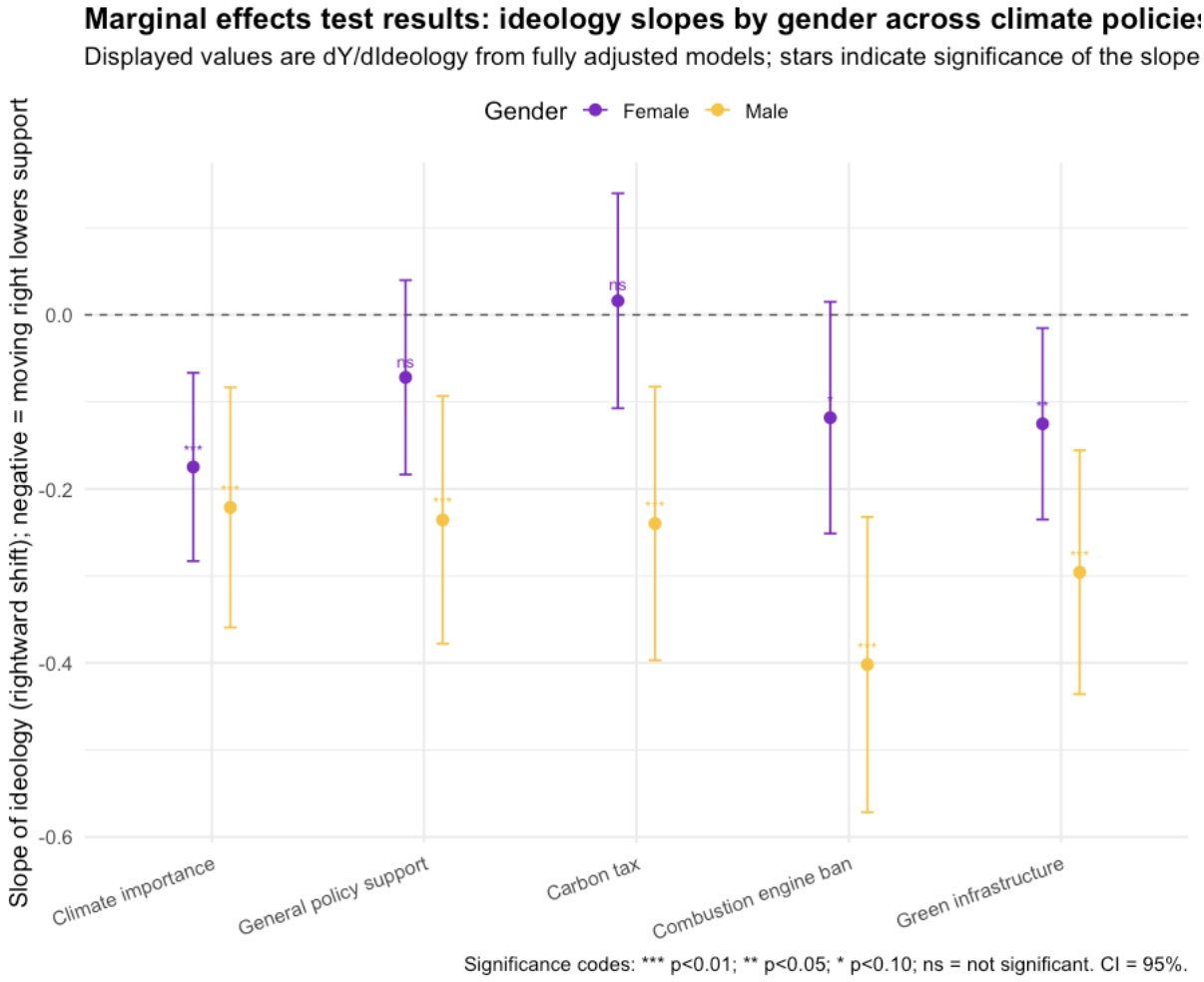
A14. Predicted support for climate importance by ideology and gender. Predicted values from OLS model with 95% confidence intervals.



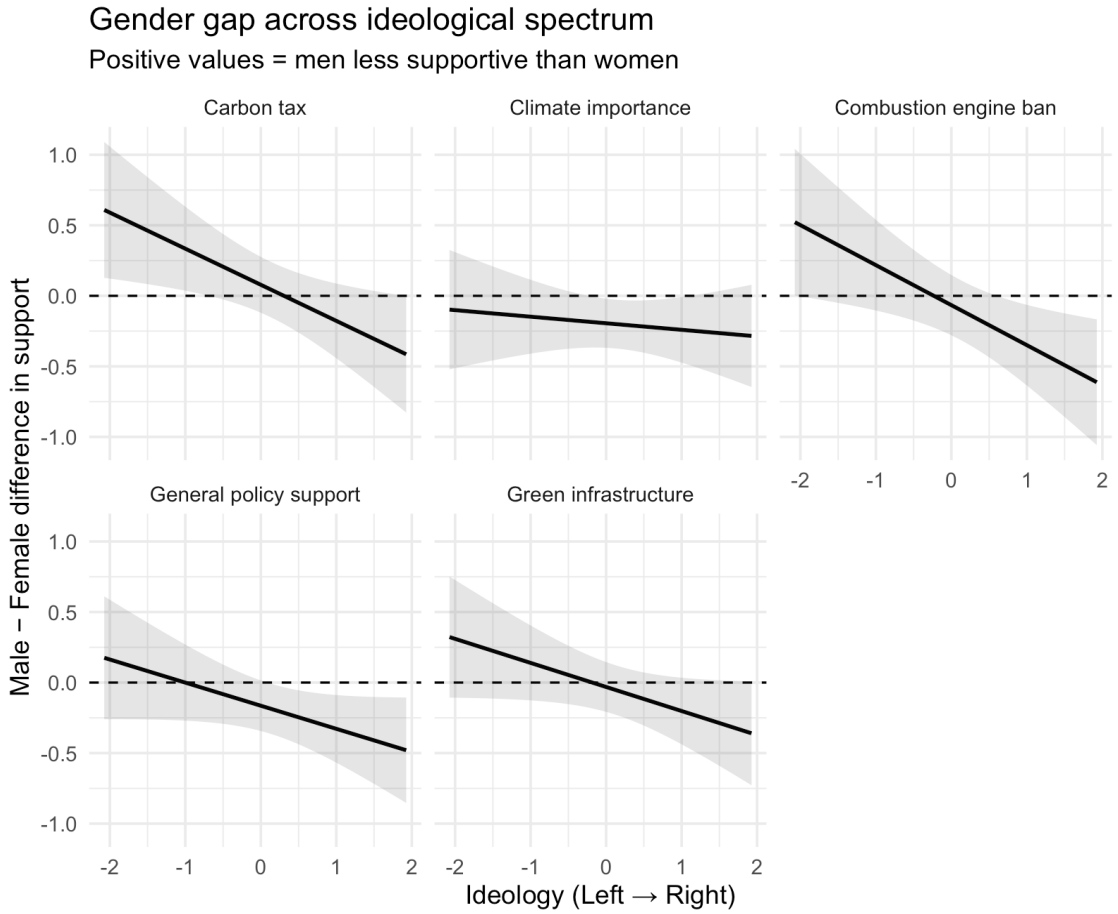
A15. Predicted support for green infrastructure by ideology and gender. Predicted values from OLS model with 95% confidence intervals. The pattern follows the same direction as other policy outcomes, but gender differences do not reach significance.



A16. Gender-specific ideology slopes across all five climate attitude outcomes. Points represent the marginal effect of a one-unit rightward ideology shift; error bars show 95% confidence intervals. Male slopes (gold) are steeper than female slopes (purple) across all outcomes, with the largest divergence for the combustion engine ban.



A17. Predicted marginal gender differences (Male − Female) across the ideology distribution for all five climate-policy outcomes. Negative values indicate lower male support. The gender gap widens toward the right for all outcomes except climate importance, where it remains relatively stable.



A18. Replication package.

All data and code required to reproduce the quantitative analysis are available at: https://github.com/wawunia/Gender-ideology-and-climate-attitudes

A19. Recruitment post (Polish original and English translation). Posted across Facebook groups targeting Polish youth from diverse regional and educational backgrounds.

Cześć!

Szukam mężczyzn w wieku 18–30 lat o poglądach prawicowych, którzy chcieliby wziąć udział w krótkim wywiadzie. Prowadzę badania dotyczące opinii młodych osób w Polsce na temat polityki klimatycznej i środowiska w ramach mojej pracy magisterskiej na Sciences Po. Rozmowa byłaby w pełni anonimowa i dotyczyłaby ogólnych opinii na temat polityki, klimatu oraz doświadczeń młodych mężczyzn w Polsce.

Jeśli znacie kogoś lub sami bylibyście zainteresowany udziałem, będę wdzięczna za komentarz lub wiadomość prywatną

Dziękuję bardzo!

Ewa

Translation:

Hello,

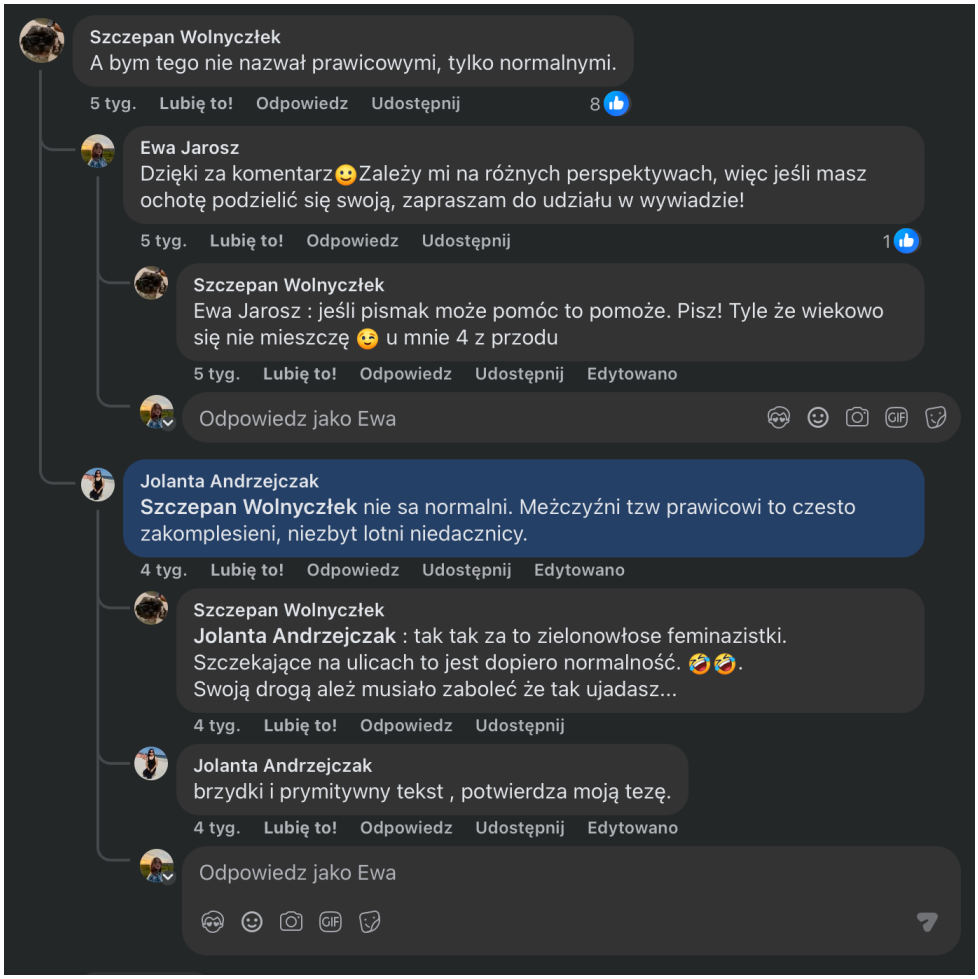
I am looking for men aged 18–30 with right-wing views who would be willing to take part in a short interview. I am conducting research on young people's attitudes towards climate policy and environmental issues in Poland as part of my Master's thesis at Sciences Po.

The interview would be fully anonymous. We would talk about climate, politics, and the experiences of young men in Poland.

If you know someone who might be interested, or if you would like to participate yourself, I would be very grateful if you could leave a comment or send me a private message.

Thank you very much,
Ewa

A20. Facebook comment thread from recruitment post, 'Ogłoszenia Kraków' group, illustrating polarisation around right-wing identity and climate activism.



A21. Semi-structured interview guide (Polish and English)

1. Personal Perceptions of Climate Change

Kiedy słyszysz „zmiana klimatu", co pierwsze przychodzi Ci do głowy? (Słowa, obrazy)
When you hear "climate change," what is the first thing that comes to mind? (First words, then images)

Czy uważasz to za ważny problem?
Do you consider this an important problem?

Czy zagraża on Twojemu życiu?
Does it threaten your life?

Jakie emocje Ci to wywołuje?
What emotions does it evoke?

2. Climate Policy and Political Identity

Co myślisz, kiedy mówię „polityka klimatyczna"?
What do you think of when I say "climate policy"?

Jakie konkretne działania przychodzą Ci do głowy, gdy myślisz o polityce klimatycznej?
What specific policies come to mind when you think about climate policy?

Kto powinien to robić?
Who should be responsible for this?

Czy zgadzasz się z obecną polityką klimatyczną?
Do you agree with current climate policy?

UE planuje wycofać silniki spalinowe (wytłumaczenie). Co o tym myślisz? Czy to Cię dotknie?
The EU plans to phase out combustion engines (explained). What do you think about this? Will it affect you?

Podatek węglowy (pieniądze zwracane obywatelom): Co o tym myślisz? Czy to sprawiedliwe?
Carbon tax (with revenues returned to citizens). What do you think? Is it fair?

Polityki klimatyczne często pochodzą z UE lub ONZ - jak to wpływa na Twoje zdanie?
Climate policies often come from the EU or UN - how does this affect your opinion?

Dlaczego polityka klimatyczna wywołuje takie ostre spory polityczne?
Why does climate policy generate such strong political conflict?

Jak odbierasz komunikaty typu: „musimy ograniczyć samochody/mięso/loty"?
How do you perceive messages like "we must reduce cars/meat/flights"?

Czy Twoim zdaniem te polityki są w ogóle realistyczne do wprowadzenia?
Do you think these policies are realistic to implement?

W 2050 roku — jak te polityki wpłyną na Twoje życie? I środowisko?
By 2050 — how will these policies affect your life? And the environment?

3. Masculinity, Social Environment, and Information Sources

Skąd masz najwięcej informacji o polityce? O klimacie?
Where do you get most of your information about politics? About climate?

Czy można być prawicowym i proklimatycznym, czy to się wyklucza?
Is it possible to be right-wing and pro-climate, or do these conflict?

Co myślisz o aktywistach klimatycznych? Dlaczego to robią?
What do you think about climate activists? Why do they do what they do?

Czy w Twoim otoczeniu mówi się o klimacie? Jak i kto o tym mówi?
Is climate discussed in your environment? How and by whom?

W Twoim otoczeniu (znajomi, rodzina, online), kto najczęściej mówi o klimacie?
In your environment (friends, family, online), who talks most about climate?

Czy w internecie lub wśród znajomych pojawiają się memy lub filmy o klimacie? Jakie są najczęstsze lub najbardziej trafne?
Do you see memes or videos about climate online or among friends? Which ones are most common or resonate the most?

4. Demographic Data (End)

Wiek, wykształcenie, miasto lub wieś, zawód lub planowany zawód
Age, education, urban or rural residence, occupation or intended occupation

Ideologia polityczna (1–10, lewica–prawica). Zaufanie do rządu (1-10).
Political ideology (1–10, left–right). Trust in government (1-10).

Public Policy Master's Thesis Series

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Problem Acknowledged, Solution Rejected. Gender, Climate Attitudes and the Asymmetric Effect of Ideology among Polish Youth.

Ewa Jarosz

Abstract

This paper examines how political ideology shapes climate policy support differently among young men and women in Poland. Using survey data from 568 Polish respondents aged 18–34, five OLS regression models test whether ideology's effect on climate attitudes is stronger among men than women across five outcomes ranging from abstract concern to support for specific policy instruments. The Gender × Ideology interaction is significant for four of five outcomes: rightward ideology reduces policy support substantially more steeply among men than women, with the largest divergence for the combustion-engine ban. The interaction is absent for abstract climate concern, where both genders share a high baseline — indicating solution aversion rather than science denial. Explanatory power increases as policies become more concrete, revealing a gradient in which ideology structures attitudes more strongly at the level of specific instruments than general concern.

Semi-structured interviews with seven right-wing young men identify four filtering mechanisms through which concern fails to translate into policy support: sovereignty framing that positions Poland as disproportionately burdened; institutional distrust that recodes policy proposals as manipulation; autonomy threat triggered by coercive instruments; and cultural-gender coding that associates climate policy with feminism, activism, and progressive politics. Nuclear energy and infrastructure investment attract consensus by contrast, being sovereign, technologically framed, and free of progressive cultural coding. The findings extend the conservative male effect to a post-communist context and suggest that climate polarization among Polish youth is a policy phenomenon rooted in gendered political identity, not a science communication problem.

Key words

climate policy, gender gap, climate attitudes, solution aversion, Poland, youth, polarization