

Press Release

Survey: Israeli public supports strong action on climate change

The Israeli public is a few steps ahead of its government in wanting to see strong action on climate change. Thus reveals the first comprehensive national survey on the topic, conducted by Ben Gurion University. The survey was conducted ahead of the international Climate Summit which will convene in Copenhagen on December 7th, where a new international framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is hoped to be created.

The survey found that among those Israelis who are aware of climate change (about three quarters of the public),

- 73% believe that the international community “needs to take urgent steps very soon to reduce climate change”
- 74% believe that Israel should sign a treaty to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 90% by 2050.

The telephone survey was conducted between 27th October and 3rd November 2009 among 552 respondents, a random representative sample of the population¹. Only 8% of the respondents had never heard of climate change or global warming, and 20% had only heard the expression. 72% said they knew at least a little about the topic. Among these, researchers found that 66% believed that “although Israel is very small, it can still take steps to reduce climate change”.

According to researcher Lucy Michaels, the data suggests that Israelis make a clear connection between climate change and the current water crisis:

- 73% of Israelis recognize that if nothing is done to address climate change in the next 20 years, water shortages will increase.
- Fewer, however, registered the concern that not addressing climate change could lead to greater regional conflict (36%).

While climate change ranks at the bottom of a list of the most important issues on the national agenda, with only 37% ranking it high or very high, Israeli respondents ranked the water crisis highest out of a list of key issues on the national agenda (73.5% ranked it high or very high). This is followed by the economic situation (72%); the situation with Iran (64%); and swine flu (45%).

“These results will come as a surprise to many” said Michaels. “Many would expect that Israelis are not engaged with the climate change issue, but our research shows that not only are they concerned, but they want to see action with Israel playing its part in the international effort”.

The research was carried out as part of a doctoral project supervised by Prof. Alon Tal. According to Tal, “the research proves that the Israeli government lags behind its citizens as far as international responsibility to save the planet is concerned. The Copenhagen summit is a basic test for the Israeli government’s seriousness, and we hope that we will not fail this moral test.”

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¹ These results have Confidence intervals of 95% and a Margin of Error of between +/- 4% and +/- 5%.