

## Chapter 4. Support for the green transition

While most people in the EBRD regions are concerned about climate change, such concerns do not necessarily translate into a willingness to pay for environmental policies. People in higher-income households, individuals who expect to be better off in the future, people who are more patient (placing more value on future income) and individuals who trust the government are all more likely to be willing to pay for policies that mitigate climate change. Thus, measures that increase people's incomes, build trust in government, reduce corruption and increase the transparency and efficiency of government spending could help to boost support for green policies.

Communication is also key – not only in relation to the threat posed by climate change, but also as regards progress with the rollout of green technologies. Policies may receive greater support if they take the form of subsidies (where the costs in terms of higher taxes are less salient) or if people can see immediate benefits (as in the case of measures limiting the impact of natural disasters or reducing the concentration of local pollutants).

### Introduction

Climate change poses a significant threat to global development, affecting lives and livelihoods through channels such as the increased frequency of extreme weather events (floods, storms, droughts and so on), the negative impact on agricultural productivity, the loss of water resources, and damage to infrastructure and other assets. While those effects are felt in higher-income and lower-income economies alike, lower-income economies – and lower-income households within those economies – are less equipped to deal with them.

This chapter looks at attitudes towards climate change and willingness to pay for policies that mitigate it. While public support for environmental policies has received increasing amounts of attention in economic literature, analysis of its determinants has tended to focus on advanced economies, rather than emerging markets and developing economies.

Public support for environmental policies depends not only on their ecological benefits, but also on their perceived economic implications.<sup>92</sup> Major economic transitions of the past (such as the rollout of digital technologies, the globalisation of trade and investment, and the phasing-out of coal) offer important lessons for the transition to a less carbon-intensive economy.<sup>93</sup> Such transitions entail a reallocation of employment across sectors and industries, as well as changes to job requirements. They bring substantial opportunities and benefits for workers, but also new risks. Crucially, their impact varies across geographical areas and demographic groups, which can potentially exacerbate existing disparities in the economy. It is therefore essential that the transition to a green economy is fair and benefits most members of society.

The analysis in this chapter draws on a rich set of data on climate change and attitudes towards the green transition that is derived from LiTS IV. Those data are complemented by the results of deep dive surveys conducted by the World Bank in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan as an add-on to LiTS IV. The deep dive surveys included further questions on specific climate-change policies, which were put to the 1,000 LiTS IV respondents in each of those five countries as part of their face-to-face interviews. In addition, they also included telephone interviews with 1,000 business managers in each economy. The companies in question were chosen at random from national registers of firms (with an average response rate of around 53 per cent) and were a representative sample in terms of firm size and sector.

Most survey respondents are concerned about climate change and damage to the environment. However, such concerns do not necessarily translate into a willingness to pay more tax or forgo economic growth and job creation in order to prioritise environmental policies.

Respondents in higher-income households generally express greater willingness to pay in order to protect the environment. Willingness to pay is also generally higher among people with more positive expectations about the future (such as those who expect to be better off in four years' time than they are now).

People who are more patient (valuing future income more highly relative to funds available today) are also more willing to pay for environmental policies, as are those who trust the government more.

Only a small percentage of participants in the deep dive surveys believe that all proceeds from a carbon tax or an increase in electricity tariffs that was aimed at addressing climate change would end up being spent on the green transition.

At the same time, participants in those surveys tend to underestimate the percentage of their country's energy production that currently comes from renewable sources.

<sup>92</sup> See EBRD (2023).

<sup>93</sup> See OECD (2023) and EBRD (2023).

These results underscore the critical importance of effectively communicating green policies and building awareness of the progress made to date.

Efforts to build trust in government, reduce corruption and increase the efficiency and transparency of government spending can also help to boost support for climate-change policies in emerging markets.

The results suggest that environmental subsidies receive greater support than taxes (as the eventual costs of subsidies in terms of higher taxes are less salient). Policies targeting particularly visible aspects of climate change and environmental damage (such as measures aimed at adapting to the changing climate and mitigating the impact of natural disasters) are also more likely to receive broad support. Highlighting the local environmental benefits of green policies (such as improved air quality, health benefits and potential job creation) can also help to leverage popular support for such measures.

This chapter starts by exploring people's attitudes towards climate-change policies and mapping out the level of support for environmental action, building on earlier analysis presented in EBRD (2023). It then looks specifically at the determinants of willingness to pay for climate-change mitigation policies.

## Attitudes towards the green economy

As part of LiTS IV, respondents were asked about their views on climate change and its consequences. Participants were also asked whether they would prioritise the environment at the expense of economic growth and jobs, and whether they would be willing to pay more tax in order to fund policies that addressed climate change and its effects.

There is a growing body of literature looking at attitudes towards climate change, how environmental policies are perceived and what determines their level of support.<sup>94</sup> Most of those studies focus on a single country or a subset of advanced economies, while comparative cross-country surveys looking at the drivers of support for different climate-change policies in emerging market economies are relatively scarce.<sup>95</sup>

Another distinctive feature of LiTS IV was the timing of the survey: it was conducted at a time when energy prices were particularly high in the EBRD regions and Germany. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia, the price of gas and electricity increased significantly in Europe, while consumption of natural gas fell.<sup>96</sup>

In most of the economies surveyed, a large percentage of respondents believe that climate change is real and are

concerned about its consequences (see Chart 4.1). Around 80 per cent of respondents in the EBRD regions (and 67 per cent in Germany) believe that climate change will seriously affect the children of today, while around 67 per cent of respondents in the EBRD regions believe it will seriously affect them, with the difference between the two figures suggesting that people expect climate-change shocks to become more severe in the more distant future. This is in line with the results of various recent global surveys, with such studies consistently finding that most people regard climate change as a serious problem.<sup>97</sup>

Concerns are generally more pronounced when it comes to readily observable implications of climate change and environmental harm. For instance, 72 per cent of respondents in the EBRD regions are concerned about extreme weather events (such as droughts, floods, landslides and wildfires) and other natural disasters, while 65 to 68 per cent are concerned about waste disposal, air pollution, rising temperatures, the loss of plant or animal species, or biodiversity. At the same time, fewer respondents (53 per cent in total) are concerned about the lack of action to address climate change (see Chart 4.1).

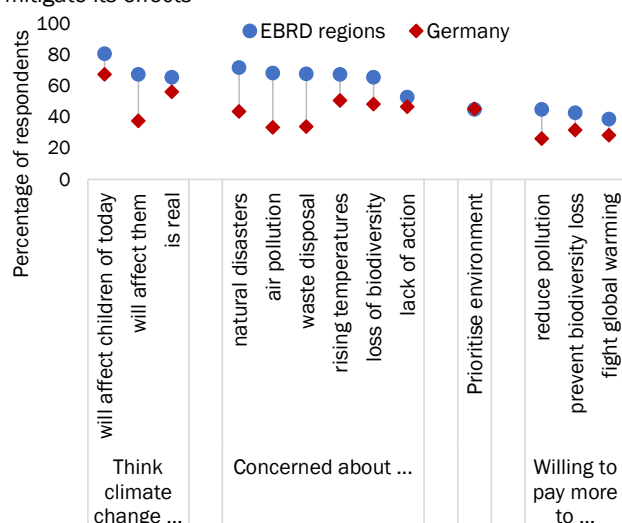
<sup>94</sup> See Bergquist et al. (2022), Bumann (2021), Drews and van den Bergh (2016) and Fairbrother (2022) for reviews.

<sup>95</sup> Notable exceptions include Dabla-Norris et al. (2023) and Dechezleprêtre et al. (2022).

<sup>96</sup> See Plekhanov and Sassoon (2023) for a discussion and country-specific estimates.

<sup>97</sup> See Dabla-Norris et al. (2023, 2024) and Leiserowitz et al. (2021).

**Chart 4.1.** Most respondents are concerned about climate change, but fewer than half would be willing to pay more to mitigate its effects



**Source:** LiTS IV and authors' calculations.

**Note:** This chart shows the percentages of respondents who (i) think that climate change will seriously affect the children of today during their lifetime, (ii) think that it will seriously affect them during their lifetime, (iii) are entirely convinced or quite convinced that climate change is real, (iv) are concerned or very concerned about natural disasters, air pollution and so on, (v) agree that protecting the environment should be a priority, even if it causes weaker economic growth and some loss of jobs, and (vi) agree or strongly agree that they would be willing to pay more tax if the extra money were used to reduce/prevent pollution (for example, by improving the quality of air or water, or dealing with waste/sewage), prevent the loss of plant or animal species or biodiversity, or fight global warming or the greenhouse effect. In all of the charts in this chapter, figures for the EBRD regions are simple averages across those economies.

At country level, environmental concerns are more pronounced in lower-income economies and economies where agriculture makes a larger contribution to employment and value added. This may reflect the fact that poorer economies are less able to cope with extreme weather than advanced economies.<sup>98</sup>

At individual level, women, respondents with children and those with higher levels of education are more likely to think that climate change will significantly affect them or the children of today, based on regressions controlling for country fixed effects with standard errors clustered at the level of the PSU (locality).

## Willingness to pay more to protect the environment

Recognition of the risks associated with climate change does not always translate into broad-based support for environmental policies. For instance, some of the most

economically effective climate-change policies, such as comprehensive pricing of carbon emissions, often face political resistance.<sup>99</sup>

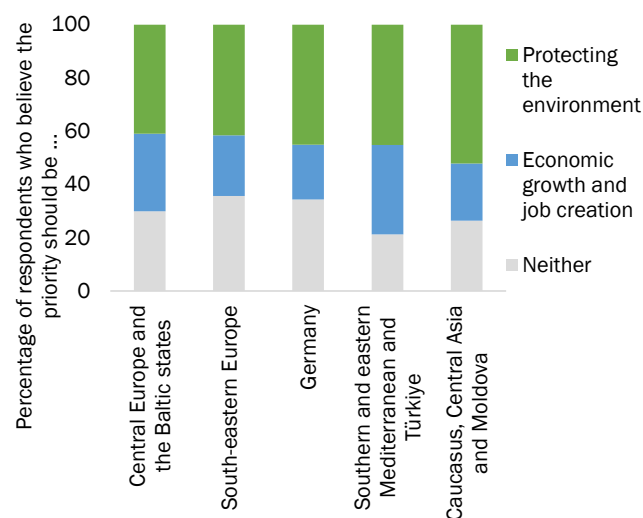
In the EBRD regions – as in other economies – willingness to bear the economic costs of the green transition is significantly lower than the levels of concern about environmental damage (see Chart 4.1).

On average, 45 per cent of respondents in the EBRD regions would prioritise the environment at the expense of economic growth and jobs (see Chart 4.2), with particularly strong support for this viewpoint in Moldova, Morocco, Slovenia and a number of economies in Central Asia.

At individual level, women, older respondents, those with a tertiary education and people in higher-income households are more likely to think that protecting the environment should be the priority, based on regressions controlling for country fixed effects with standard errors clustered at locality level.

Fewer than half of all respondents in the EBRD regions – between 39 and 46 per cent – say that they would be willing to pay more tax if it was used to fight global warming, prevent biodiversity loss or reduce pollution.

**Chart 4.2.** On average, 45 per cent of respondents in the EBRD regions think that protecting the environment should be the priority, even if it results in weaker growth



**Source:** LiTS IV and authors' calculations.

## Ability to pay

To some extent, the views expressed reflect people's ability to pay. People in higher-income households are generally more able – and, accordingly, more willing – to pay for the green transition than those in lower-income households. For example, people in the top household income decile are, on average, around 10 percentage points more likely to be willing

<sup>98</sup> See also Dabla-Norris et al. (2023).

<sup>99</sup> See Douenne and Fabre (2022) for a discussion of the Yellow Vest movement in France; see also Klenert et al. (2018).

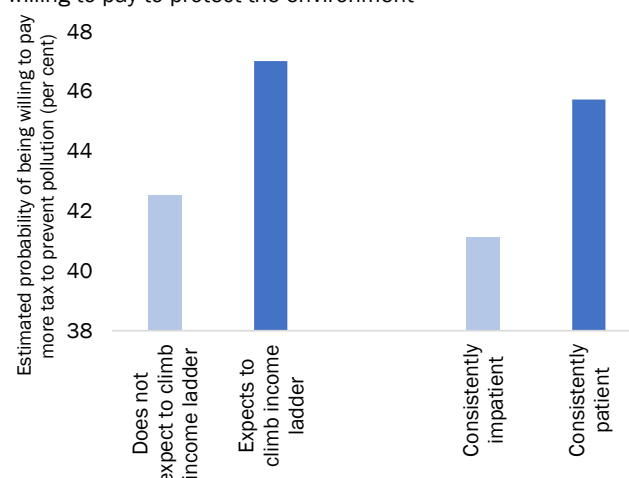
to pay to protect the environment than those in the bottom income decile (controlling for age, gender, the presence of children in the household, urban/rural location, level of education and country fixed effects).

At the same time, the relationship between household income and willingness to pay more to protect the environment is in line with the relationships observed for other policies. When it comes to paying for physical and digital infrastructure, education and healthcare, households in the top income decile are between 7 and 11 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay than households in the bottom decile. As one would expect, the income gradient is less pronounced when it comes to income redistribution policies. For instance, those at the top of the income distribution are only 4 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay to assist the poor and/or reduce inequality and 3.8 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay to create jobs.

Expectations regarding future income also play a role, alongside current income. In particular, respondents who think that their household will be on a higher rung of the income ladder in four years' time are 4.5 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay to reduce pollution, fight global warming and prevent biodiversity loss than similar individuals with no expectations of upward mobility in the future (see Chart 4.3).

Existing research points to several other attributes that shape willingness to pay beyond the simple ability to pay.<sup>100</sup> These include the perceived effectiveness of the policy and the expected benefits (for both the individual in question and society as a whole), the costs associated with its implementation, and the perceived fairness of the policy (how outcomes will be distributed across all parties involved). Broader economic and political attitudes also shape policy support. For instance, right-leaning views have been associated with reduced support for publicly financed climate-change policies, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>101</sup>

**Chart 4.3.** People who expect to climb the income ladder and those who assign greater value to future income are more willing to pay to protect the environment



**Source:** LITS IV and authors' calculations.

**Note:** This chart shows the estimated probability of people agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would be willing to pay more tax if the extra money was used to prevent environmental pollution for respondents who expect/do not expect to climb the income ladder in the next four years and respondents who are consistently patient/impatient, controlling for individual characteristics and country fixed effects.

### Expectations and discount rates

Policies aimed at mitigating climate change will be costly today, but the pay-offs will stretch into the future, so the value that individuals place on the future relative to the present day can affect their willingness to pay for environmental policies.

To measure the value that individuals place on future income relative to today's – that is to say, their discount rates – respondents were asked whether they would prefer to receive (i) an amount corresponding to around 55 per cent of the median household's daily income immediately or (ii) around 85 per cent a month later (in the case of Germany, around €55 today or around €85 a month later). Later in the survey, respondents were asked to choose between (i) 55 per cent of the median household's daily income six months later and (ii) 85 per cent seven months later. The analysis in this section defines respondents as "consistently patient" if they prefer to wait for the larger amount in both situations, while "consistently impatient" individuals are those who prefer to receive the smaller amount sooner in both situations. Those who choose to receive a smaller amount immediately in the first situation but are happy to wait seven – rather than six – months in order to receive a larger amount in the second situation are deemed to exhibit present bias.

Consistently patient respondents (those who value future income more highly) are 4.6 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay to reduce pollution than consistently

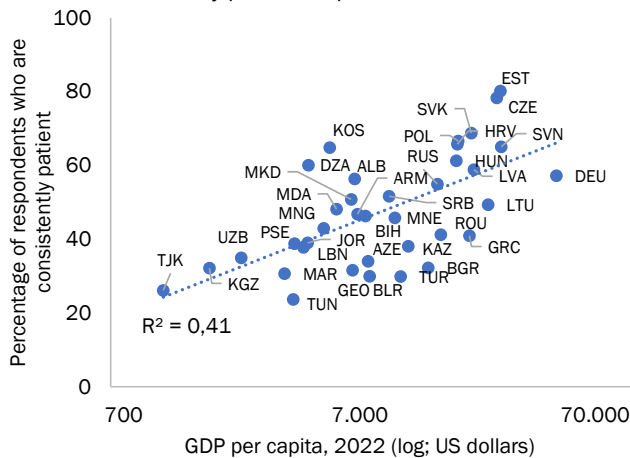
<sup>100</sup> See, for instance, Dabla-Norris et al. (2023), Drews and van den Bergh (2016), Fairbrother (2022), Ziegler (2017) and Carattini et al. (2018).

<sup>101</sup> See Ziegler (2017) and Fairbrother (2022).

impatient individuals (those who value the present more highly), controlling for various individual characteristics and country of residence (see Chart 4.3). Similar results can be seen when it comes to willingness to pay for measures aimed at preventing biodiversity loss and fighting global warming. People's discount rates matter more than whether they have children, which has no bearing on willingness to pay to protect the environment when controlling for age and other characteristics.

The rates at which future income is discounted by individuals are generally higher in poorer economies (see Chart 4.4).<sup>102</sup> In the EBRD regions, Tunisia and Tajikistan have the smallest shares of consistently patient respondents (at 24 and 26 per cent respectively), while Estonia and Czechia have the largest shares (at 78 and 80 per cent respectively).

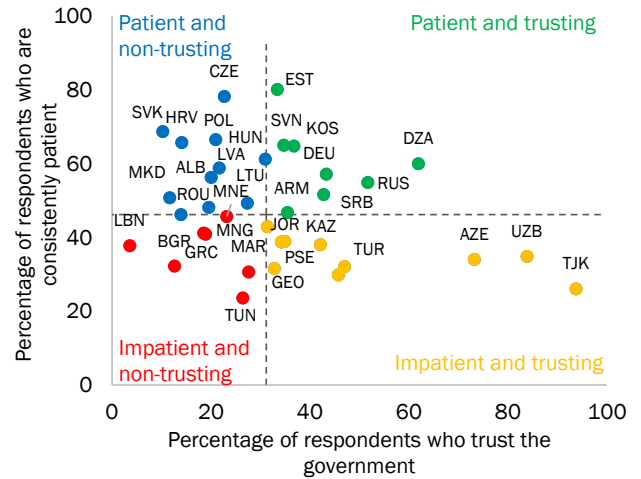
**Chart 4.4.** In general, richer economies tend to have larger shares of consistently patient respondents



**Source:** LiTS IV, World Bank and authors' calculations.  
**Note:** The horizontal axis shows the log of GDP per capita in 2022 in US dollars at market exchange rates.

This could, in part, be because discount rates reflect respondents' lack of trust that the promise of future pay-offs will be kept. Empirically, however, the relationship between discount rates and the degree of trust that respondents have in governments is relatively weak (see Chart 4.5).

**Chart 4.5.** Discount rates and measures of trust capture related but distinct concepts



**Source:** LiTS IV and authors' calculations.

**Note:** The horizontal axis shows the percentage of respondents who, when asked whether the government/cabinet of ministers can be trusted, express either some trust or complete trust. The dotted lines denote medians based on all economies covered by LiTS IV.

The next section explores the relationship between trust and environmental attitudes in greater detail on the basis of the deep dive surveys that were conducted by the World Bank in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.

## Trust

As part of those deep dive surveys, respondents were presented with a hypothetical scenario in which the government introduced a carbon tax of €30 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> in order to raise funds to address climate change. Respondents were then asked how much of these additional funds they thought the government would use to fight climate change. A similar question was asked about a 20 per cent increase in the price of electricity.

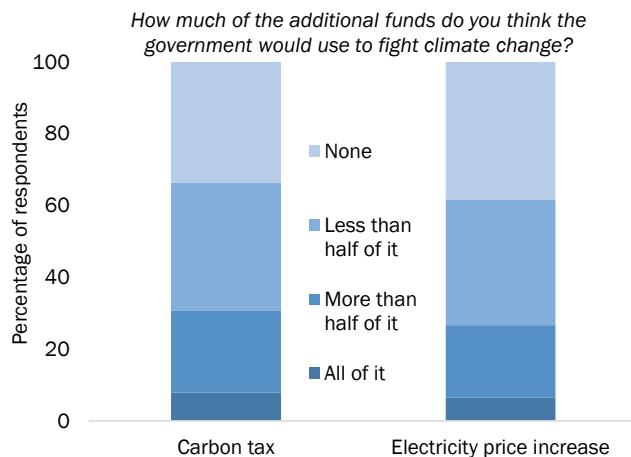
Only 6 to 8 per cent of respondents believed that all of the funds earmarked for fighting climate change would be spent as advertised. A further 20 to 23 per cent thought that at least half of those funds would be spent on mitigating climate change, while the majority were highly sceptical about the actual use of those funds (see Chart 4.6).

While money is fungible and some scepticism about tax revenues being earmarked for particular purposes is understandable, the extent of that scepticism probably points to broader concerns about the transparency of government spending.

<sup>102</sup> See also Yesuf and Bluffstone (2019) and De Lipsis (2021).



**Chart 4.6.** There is widespread scepticism that tax revenues earmarked for environmental policies will be used as advertised



**Source:** World Bank deep dive surveys and authors' calculations.

At individual level, respondents who express higher levels of trust in the government tend to be more willing to pay for environmental policies when controlling for individual characteristics (including discount rates) and country of residence. In particular, respondents who express some trust or complete trust in the government (that is to say, respondents scoring 4 or 5 on a trust scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “complete distrust” and 5 indicates “complete trust”) are, on average, 8.7 percentage points more likely to express a willingness to pay to protect the environment than respondents who do not believe that their government can be trusted.

More broadly, other studies find that respondents who do not support subsidies for low-carbon technologies and renewable energy tend to cite the cost to taxpayers and concerns about corruption and the effectiveness of policies as the primary reasons for their views.<sup>103</sup> Previous studies have shown that countries with higher perceived corruption tend to have weaker environmental policies and higher greenhouse gas emissions after relevant political and economic factors have been taken into account.<sup>104</sup>

### Information

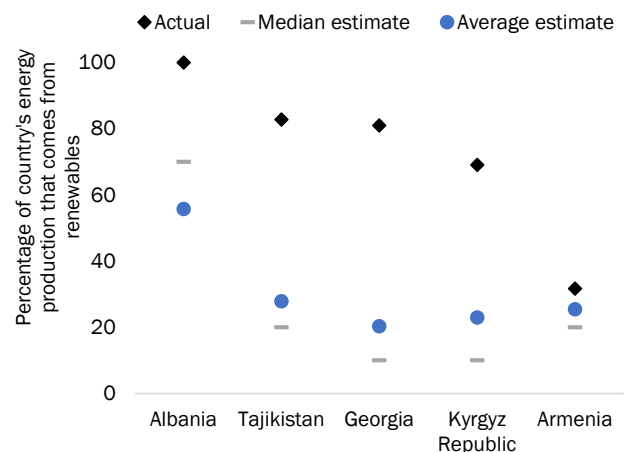
Knowledge and understanding of climate-change policies can boost support for environmental spending. However, there is still a sizeable information gap to be filled in most countries. The percentage of respondents reporting awareness of their government's measures to tackle climate change tends, on average, to be higher in advanced economies, though there is significant cross-country variation. In some emerging market economies (such as Azerbaijan, Colombia, the Philippines and Vietnam) where governments' environmental commitments

have received extensive media attention at domestic level, respondents report higher levels of awareness.<sup>105</sup>

The deep dive surveys suggest that people typically underestimate the percentage of their country's total energy production that comes from renewables. Respondents were asked to estimate the share that came from renewable sources in their country, and in all five economies both the mean and the median were well below the actual figure (see Chart 4.7). Albania, for instance, is entirely dependent on renewable sources for its energy, but the average answer in that country was 56 per cent.

Better awareness of the progress made to date with the transition to a green economy can boost support for climate-change policies. For instance, giving respondents information about the effectiveness of carbon pricing and the benefits of revenue recycling has been found to increase public support for those measures, with larger increases being seen in countries where there was little pre-existing knowledge of carbon taxes as an environmental policy instrument.<sup>106</sup>

**Chart 4.7.** People typically underestimate the percentage of their country's energy production that comes from renewables



**Source:** IEA, World Bank deep dive surveys and authors' calculations.

**Note:** For Albania and the Kyrgyz Republic, actual data relate to 2022; for Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan, they relate to 2021.

Better awareness of environmental risks also plays a role. Respondents who have personally experienced disruption or damage caused by flooding, drought or other natural disasters are, on average, around 8 percentage points more likely to be willing to pay to prevent environmental pollution and fight climate change than those who have not had such personal experiences (controlling for individual characteristics and country fixed effects).

### Attitudes towards climate-change policies

Governments frequently invoke the principle of distributive justice in climate negotiations and public debate in order to justify their position on sharing the cost of reducing carbon

<sup>103</sup> See Dabla-Norris et al. (2023).

<sup>104</sup> See Klenert et al. (2018).

<sup>105</sup> See Dabla-Norris et al. (2023).

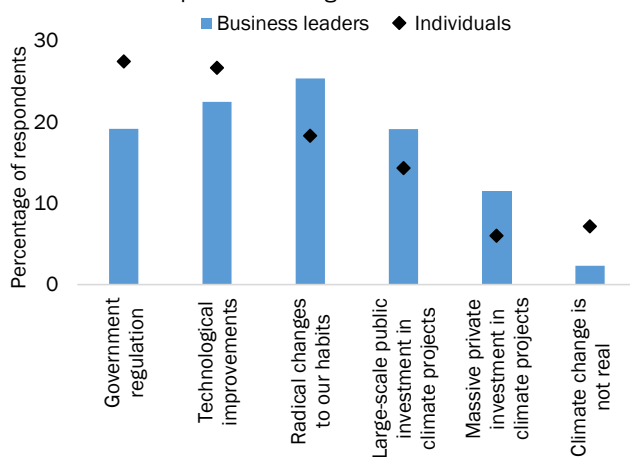
<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

emissions. Such stances are typically aligned with their countries' economic interests. Some arguments are based on the "polluter pays" principle, with costs apportioned on the basis of current greenhouse gas emissions or cumulative emissions over time;<sup>107</sup> other arguments are based on the "ability to pay" principle, with higher-income economies expected to pay higher costs.

In line with this, respondents in the deep dive surveys felt that all countries should, to some extent, pay to help address climate change, but the burden of financing climate-change policies should increase with the level of economic development and personal income.<sup>108</sup> These views were also shared by a sample of business leaders – managers of manufacturing or service companies that had been selected at random from national registers of firms.

As regards policy design, individual respondents taking part in the deep dive surveys felt that government regulation and technological improvements were the most important means of tackling climate change (see Chart 4.8).<sup>109</sup> Both were chosen by around 27 per cent of respondents from a list of six different options (with other options including radical changes to habits, large-scale public investment and massive private investment). Business leaders, in contrast, prioritised radical changes to habits over regulation and technology.

**Chart 4.8.** Most individuals see regulation and technological improvements as the best way to fight climate change, while business leaders prioritise changes to habits



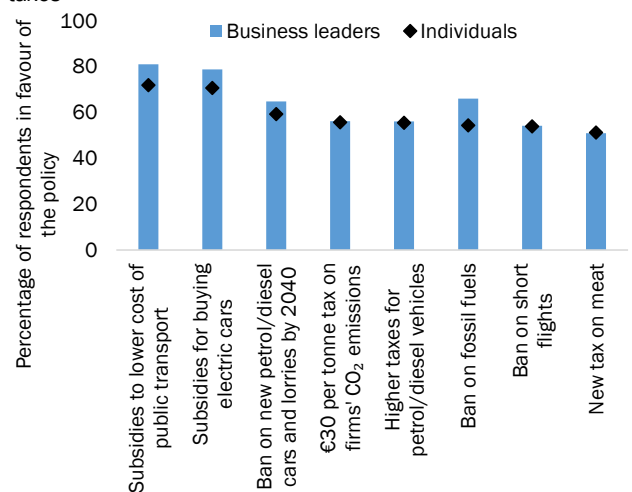
**Source:** World Bank deep dive surveys and authors' calculations.

**Note:** This chart is based on responses to the question "Which of the following do you believe is the most significant way to mitigate climate change?" Participants could only choose one answer.

Looking at respondents' support for individual measures, subsidies (for public transport or purchases of electric cars) were preferred to higher taxes (on greenhouse gas emissions, internal combustion vehicles or meat; see Chart 4.9). While the benefits of subsidies are well understood by the public,

their costs (in the form of higher taxes or reduced spending elsewhere) tend to be less salient.<sup>110</sup>

**Chart 4.9.** Subsidies (and some bans) are preferred to higher taxes



**Source:** World Bank deep dive surveys and authors' calculations.

**Note:** Respondents were asked whether they favoured or opposed the adoption of these various policies in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The calculations exclude respondents who replied "don't know", as well as missing responses.

That being said, a caveat is required. The five economies that were studied in the deep dive surveys are not necessarily representative of the "typical" economy in the EBRD regions. For example, the quality of their economic institutions is below the average for the EBRD regions, including when it comes to indicators of government effectiveness. This may explain some of the scepticism as to whether the government would use funds for the advertised purposes.

Respondents in those five economies are also significantly above the average for the EBRD regions in terms of both (i) their willingness to pay for climate-change mitigation policies (with figures of 46 to 68 per cent, compared with an average of 39 per cent across the EBRD regions as a whole) and (ii) their willingness to pay for education, healthcare, housing, pensions, social welfare and infrastructure. Consequently, the support for individual policies that is depicted in Chart 4.9 may be higher than the average for the EBRD regions as a whole.

## Conclusions and policy implications

The overwhelming majority of LiTS participants are concerned about environmental damage and the impact that climate change will have on them and their children. However, such concerns about climate change do not necessarily translate into a willingness to pay for environmental policies: the majority of the population are concerned, but those who are

<sup>107</sup> See Dabla-Norris et al. (2024).

<sup>108</sup> See also Dabla-Norris et al. (2023).

<sup>109</sup> See UNFCCC (2022).

<sup>110</sup> See also Fairbrother (2022).

willing to pay higher taxes or prices to protect the environment remain a minority – albeit a large one.

Tackling climate change will require broad public support for environmental policies. Economic development may, over time, strengthen support for the green economy, since higher-income individuals tend, in general, to be more willing to pay for policies that mitigate climate change (as well as other public services). Such shifts are bound to be relatively slow, however.

A lack of trust in government and concerns about corruption can result in opposition to climate-change policies, particularly in emerging markets with weaker economic institutions. For example, very few of the respondents who took part in the World Bank's five deep dive surveys believed that all proceeds from a hypothetical carbon tax or an increase in electricity tariffs would actually be spent on measures addressing climate change, despite those funds being earmarked for such initiatives. Building trust in public institutions and increasing the transparency and efficiency of government spending may help to overcome such scepticism.

The results of those surveys also underscore the importance of communicating effectively about green policies implemented to date and building awareness of progress made with the green transition, in addition to raising awareness of the cost of failing to cut pollution. For example, the deep dive surveys suggest that people vastly underestimate the percentage of their country's energy production that comes from renewables.

Climate-change policies should be designed in such a way that they are affordable and regarded as being fair to everyone. The funding of those policies needs to ensure that more of the costs are borne by higher earners, while benefits also accrue to individuals on lower incomes. The results of the deep dive surveys indicate that respondents expect to see these features in environmental policies. Social safety nets can help to protect the most vulnerable, while active labour market policies can assist with the transition process where workers are displaced by technological change.

Recycling some of the tax receipts from carbon pricing in order to subsidise investment in low-carbon technologies such as renewable energy or electric vehicles – a policy that enjoys broad-based support – could increase the availability of cleaner alternative energy sources.<sup>111</sup> Subsidies tend to enjoy greater popular support, since their costs in terms of higher taxes are less salient.

Highlighting additional benefits of climate-change policies, such as improved air quality, health benefits and potential job creation, can also help to reduce the public's sensitivity to their short-term costs.

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<sup>111</sup> See EBRD (2023), IMF (2019, 2022) and Shang (2021).



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