

Abstract

Climate change tends to be depicted and perceived as a catastrophic event occurring in remote places of the Earth or will affect people living in the future. This portrayal and the resulting psychological distance to climate change is blamed for the public's lack of engagement in climate action and scepticism. However, academic literature suggests that it is one of the possible outcomes of psychological distance to climate change, and some people may be inclined to engage even if climate change is perceived to be psychologically distant. This study sets out to explore the perceived psychological distance and risks of climate change and natural disasters on intention to engage in climate action. Factorial survey experiment, or vignette study, is used to explore perspectives of participants from UK, European countries, and Asian countries about impacts of climate change and natural disasters located near them and far from them. Thematic analysis results indicate that participants rely on social aspect of the situation to reduce their psychological distance to the situation. This indicates that climate information and engagement could be improved by emphasising the social costs of climate change and suggesting solutions that the audience can apply in their day-to-day lives to mitigate climate change.