

# A social tipping approach for acceptance research

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# The social tipping concept

## Social tipping as counterpart to natural tipping

A small change (a piece of coal) can "tip" a system and bring it into a new state: non-linearity, irreversibility

## Applying the concept to the study of policy support: tipping towards the majority!

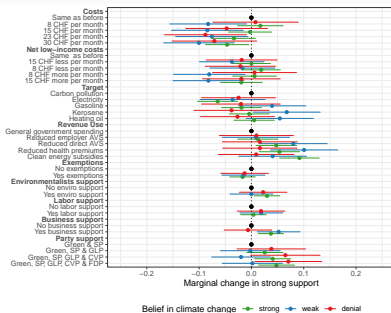
- A realistic measure of policy support needs to integrate the "pass/fail"-logic **and** the absolute level of support.
- Whether or not an increase in support makes a difference depends on **where** on the "support scale" this change occurs.
- Concentrate on those voter groups that can make the majority tip (e.g., "the middle group").

# An example: Conjoint experiment on the support for carbon taxation policies

## The central variables

- The dependent variable: rating question made binary (a measure of **strong support**)
- **Climate change beliefs:** climate change believers, climate change deniers and the “middle group”

**Figure 1:** Swiss sample: its about cost-benefit considerations - business matters!



# Implications for future research

A plea for a social tipping approach: gaining majority support is not about gradual increases but we need to focus on the areas of support and groups that are decisive for a tipping towards majority support.

- Underlines the non-linearity in these political processes and enables us to better conceptualize the “dependent variables”
- Helps to focus on relevant actor groups, and calls for context-specific analyses
- Has the potential to provide more precise and realistic recommendations to policy-makers

Looking forward to the discussion!

# The study - data

## Data from the U.S. and Switzerland

- Online panel conducted in December 2019
- 1,034 U.S. residents and 1,167 Swiss residents
- **Conjoint experiment**: support for carbon taxation policies varying on **policy design and supporting coalition**

## The central variables

- The depending variable: rating question made binary (a measure of **strong support**)
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## Only a minority indicates strong support

**Table 1:** Proportion of proposals with strong support

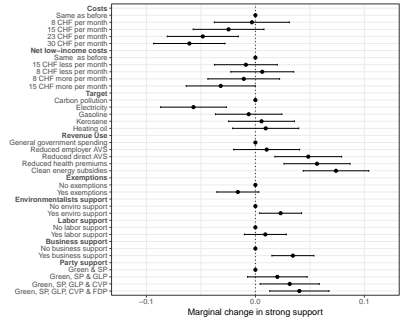
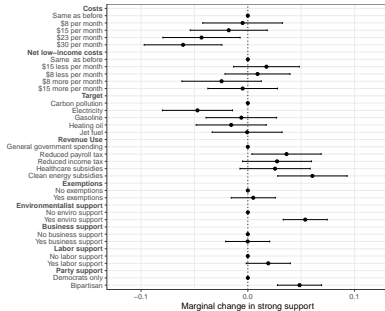
Climate change belief	USA	Switzerland
Strong belief	31.4	30.5
Weak belief	22.6	22.7
Denial	24.5	17.8

Note: Proportion of proposal ratings between 8 and 10 on the 0-10 scale per group.

# Full sample: Similar results in both countries

Figure 2: U.S. sample

Figure 3: Swiss sample

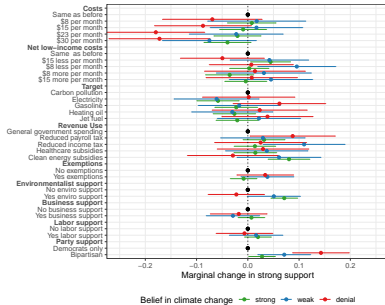


- Minor/medium costs are no significant barrier to strong support.
- Benefits for low-consumption households do not sell
- Coalitions matter

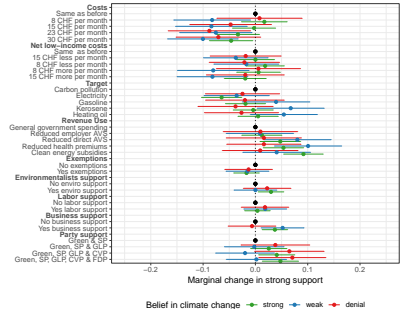


# Focus on “relevant groups”: different paths to majority support

**Figure 4:** U.S. sample: its politics - but business support does not help



**Figure 5:** Swiss sample: its about cost-benefit considerations - business matters!



# Conclusions

## Main findings

- A **potential for carbon taxation policies** to gain majority support is existent but small. Crucial to identify them!
- Different policy designs attract different groups in different countries - concentrating on the relevant groups affects conclusions
  - **Clean energy subsidies** for the climate change believers (talk about the bigger picture!)
  - **Revenue recycling**: Reduced health care premiums (CH) and reduced income taxes (U.S.) for the “middle group”
  - **Country-specific challenges**: How to create bipartisan support in the U.S., and how to get away from the discussion on the short-term costs?

# The conjoint experiment

Environmental taxes can be designed in different ways. For example, taxes can be imposed on different types of pollution. The level of the tax can vary. And the tax can effect different households differently, or provide exemptions for certain sectors.

We want to know what types of environmental taxes are popular and which are not. Over each of the following four screens, you will see two different policy packages. Please choose which of the two packages you prefer, assuming you have to pick one.

Characteristics	Variant 1	Variant 2
<b>What is taxed?</b> <b>Use of tax revenues</b> <b>Net cost for the average household</b> <b>Net costs for a household with low energy consumption</b> <b>Exemptions for energy-intensive industries</b> <i>Party support</i> <i>Environmental groups</i> <i>Business groups</i> <i>Labour unions</i>		
<p>Regardless of whether you support environmental taxation or not, which of these two packages would you prefer if you had to pick one?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <span>Variant 1</span> <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Variant 2</span>  <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> </p> <p>If you were asked to vote directly on which package you prefer, how likely would you be to support each of these policy options?</p> <p><b>Variant 1</b></p> <p>0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p> <p><b>Variant 2</b></p> <p>0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/></p>		

Figure 6: Conjoint attributes