

Political Orientation & Public Perceptions of Blue Growth Activities: Results from the Seas, Oceans & Public Health in Europe Survey

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1 - Background

- In 2012, the European Commission published the **Blue Growth strategy**¹, identifying 5 marine sectors thought to sustainably benefit economic growth whilst safeguarding the marine environment (Figure 1).
- However, it's unclear how marine activities in these Blue Growth marine sectors are perceived by the European public, particularly in relation to their impact on **public health and wellbeing**.
- Individual differences such as **political orientation** have been shown to be linked to public perceptions of marine environmental issues (e.g. sea-level rise)².



Figure 1. the Blue Growth marine sectors

2 - Methods

- Cross-sectional survey.
- 14,167** respondents from **14** European nations.
- Health-related policy intervention preferences gathered for 14 marine activities including those identified by the **Blue Growth strategy** (aquaculture, renewable energy, deep sea mining, biotech, tourism + others)
- Political orientation measured on a scale of left (0) to right (10).

3 – Research Question

- Is **political orientation** associated with preferences for **health-related policy intervention** in Blue Growth activities? **Due to space constraints, this poster will present results with a focus on two activities - aquaculture and offshore windfarms.*

4 – Preliminary Results

- Left-wing respondents desired **significantly more** health-related policy intervention than right-wing respondents in **aquaculture** ($t_{6019} = 4.39, p < 0.001$) and **offshore windfarms** ($t_{5873} = 2.80, p < 0.001$).
- In a majority of European countries, **left-wing** respondents tend to **desire more** health-related policy intervention than **right-wing** respondents (Figure 2 & 3). However, this is not true for all European countries (e.g. Bulgaria).

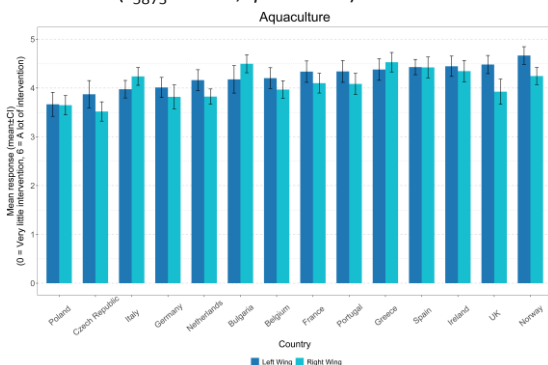


Figure 2. The mean level of policy intervention desired in aquaculture across 14 European countries as a function of political orientation.

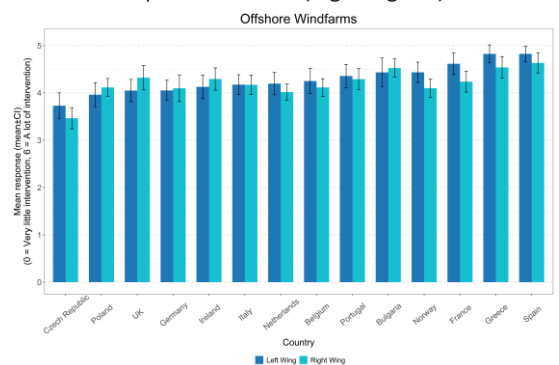


Figure 3. The mean level of policy intervention desired in offshore windfarms across 14 European countries as a function of political orientation.

- In addition, policy intervention preferences differ between countries **depending on the marine activity itself**, e.g. the UK places high amongst the 14 countries in terms of policy intervention preferences for aquaculture, yet low for offshore windfarms.

In conclusion:

- Those with a left-wing political orientation **desire significantly more** health-related policy intervention in certain marine activities than those with a right-wing political orientation.
- With a growing polarisation in European politics, understanding the opinions of people from **different ends of the political spectrum** - in terms of the blue growth agenda - will be key in developing communications and understanding the acceptability of policy initiatives amongst different audiences.

5 - References

¹European Commission. (2012). *Blue Growth opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth*. Brussels: European Commission. ²Hamilton, L. C., & Safford, T. G. (2015). Environmental views from the coast: Public concern about local to global marine issues. *Society & Natural Resources*, 28(1), 57-74.