

Sociology Association of Ireland (SAI) Environment & Society Study Group – Electoral Commission Research Proposal Submission

Dear Electoral Commission Members

Climate Change is the most looming existential threat facing humanity at present and many countries across the developed world appear to be locked in a paralysis of procrastination when it comes to decision-making about their environment. Ireland, in many respects, is no different. While some high aspirational commitments are made, the measures needed to bring the country into line with our international commitments have been mired by some strong local, regional, and national resistance often fuelled by poor communications of the science, a lack of leadership, and the absence of an understanding of the clear social and economic opportunities and benefits transitioning to a more sustainable future offers. Missing from much of environmental decision-making in Ireland is robust sociological research on how communities understand, perceive, and anticipate the necessary steps needed to transition away from a reliance on fossil fuels to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future, and the opportunities these changes offer to society at large. There is a pressing need to better understand the sociocultural dimensions of Climate Change and a requirement for a much more sociological understanding and analysis of the consequences and impacts of our reliance on fossil fuels, and how we can successfully transition to more sustainable futures. With practical and accurate evidence, decision-making becomes much more valuable and effective.

The Sociology Association of Ireland (SAI) Environment & Society Study Group calls on the Electoral Commission to fund and oversee sociological research into understanding the electorate's awareness and perception of the pressures and barriers to transitioning away from fossil fuels. Sociologically issues such as institutions, culture, class, gender, a sense of issue-ownership, connections, and empowerment, are all important concerns in Climate Change debates. In particular, in an Irish context, a significant rural/urban divide has emerged over the recent past over the responsibility and actions needed, leading to anti-science rhetoric and hostility to Climate Change action. Research into the emergence and spread of such feelings is both urgent and vital for national understanding and effective action planning. It will permit a consensus to coalesce around the facts of Climate Change and the need for real and positive action.

Specifically, the Sociology Association of Ireland (SAI) Environment & Society Study Group call for specific Irish:

- Research from a sociological perspective on electoral sentiment and understanding of Climate Change and Climate Change action

- Research from a sociological perspective on perceived differences between rural and urban voters towards Climate Change and Climate Change action
- Research from a sociological perspective on electoral sentiment and understanding of the pressures and barriers that impede Climate Change action
- Research from a sociological perspective into anti-climate action discourses.

Kind regards

The SAI [Environment & Society Study Group](#):

Dr [Emmet Fox](#), South East Technological University; Dr [Egle Guscione](#), University College Dublin; Dr [Michael Hynes](#), University of Galway and Dr [Robert Egan](#), Trinity College Dublin.