Fukushima Effect on Environmental Attitudes
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Contribution
Fukushima’s nuclear accident on March 11th, 2011 was the second major nuclear accident after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.
I hypothesize that the accident increased risk perception towards nuclear energy, leading to a long-term change in attitudes towards nuclear energy.

My research addresses three questions:
1. Did the accident increase people’s risk perception?
2. What are the main social factors influencing individuals’ risk perceptions?
3. Do the same social factors influence risk perception as environmental concern?

Data and Methods

Data: I use data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2010, conducted in 32 member countries between 2010 and 2011. The ISSP conducts mostly face-to-face interviews, providing the exact date of each interview. For the estimation two separate datasets were built: 1) individuals interviewed before the accident and 2) individuals interviewed after the accident.

Method: A fixed effects multi-level model is used to control for unobserved country effects.

Conclusion

Main results:
• There is a Fukushima-Effect: the accident changed individuals’ risk perception but did not change people’s overall environmental concern.

• Status matters: Across all countries, highly educated individuals are less likely to express nuclear risk perception but more likely to have higher environmental concern.

Conclusions:
• Higher economic and social status makes individuals more likely to trust in their own assessment of risk.

• Trust in institutions matters, because in case of a nuclear accident the situation is not personally controllable. Therefore trust in institutions is crucial to trust in high risk technologies.

References
• Dominikus Vogl 2014. The Fukushima-Effect on individuals’ risk perception and individuals’ environmental concern (forthcoming).

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