

IASS-Blogpost

Datum: 01.11.2021

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Projekt: Die systemischen Auswirkungen der globalen Energiewende (ISIGET)

WORKSHOP

Conducting a survey on climate change and energy in Jordan

How do you conduct a survey in a country you've never been to, where you don't speak the language, and where household surveys are almost unheard of? Add to that, that the country has been on lockdown for a year and a half.

Our answer: it's all about the local partners!

We wanted to gain a better understanding of people's views on climate and energy in Jordan, and whether their views are shaped by their everyday experience of renewables and climate change. There is plenty of research on attitudes towards climate and energy, but a lot of this work is focused on Europe and English-speaking countries. We know a lot less about how people experience climate and energy issues in other parts of the world.

As one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, Jordan is especially vulnerable to climate change impacts. It is also a regional energy transition frontrunner, with a very high share of renewables in the electricity mix and a thriving clean energy industry; for example, the first commercial utility-scale wind power project in the Middle East is located just outside of the town of Tafilah in southern Jordan.

Given the importance of this industry for the country, we wondered: how do Jordanians feel about renewable energy? If it has an impact on their personal lives or communities, does that matter for their perceptions of renewables and climate change? We were also interested in learning about similarities and differences in the perceptions of people who live in places affected by pollution from fossil energy industries or near renewable energy infrastructure. To achieve this, we needed to talk to people from different places in Jordan: ideally, the capital

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Zitation: Silvia Weko | Dr. Esther Schuch (2021): Conducting a survey on climate change and energy in Jordan – IASS-Blogpost, 01.11.2021.

URL: <https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en/blog/2021/11/conducting-survey-climate-change-and-energy-jordan>



city of Amman (more than 40% of the Jordanian population lives here), somewhere with a big renewables projects (like Tafilah) and somewhere with refineries (like Zarqa).

The problem is that such data is hard to collect. If you want to avoid biasing your sample, you can't just post something on Facebook or ask around at the mall. One common problem with online surveys is that people self-select into the survey. This often leads to sample populations that have considerable knowledge and/or interest in the topic (voluntary response bias). Running a survey in public spaces like a mall restricts the sample diversity, since only people that have time and/or money to spend time in the mall will be asked.

As we were interested in measuring the views of people with different backgrounds, we decided to take a different approach and to talk to people on the ground through a survey at the household level. This would enable us to target different regions, broaden our sample diversity, and help to avoid things like voluntary response bias. Our idea was to recruit small teams of students who we would train on the background of the study, survey design, and how to approach interviewees. Equipped with this knowledge they would then go out and do the door-to-door survey in Arabic.

Here's where we met some amazing local partners. Mustafa Hashem, who works at the Jordanian-German Energy Partnership, connected us to the NGO Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya. This non-profit community organization was founded in 2005 and works in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine on issues from community development to youth education and participation. In Jordan, the centres in Amman, Tafilah, and Ma'an work on issues like literacy, creative arts and sports, youth enrichment and scholarships.

Previous



Moath Al Akayleh, Tafileh Coordinator, and Omar Khamiseh, survey enumerator. Esther Schuch



Omar Al Hijazi, Partnership and Learning Officer at the Ruwwad office. Esther Schuch

Next

The students that Ruwwad has been working with are extremely motivated: we had been worried about getting enough people to join our teams, but the Learning Officer at the centre in Amman, Omar Al Hijazi, later told us that they had over sixty applications for the sixteen spots. And the sixteen students recruited as enumerators did not disappoint: they were some of the brightest and most determined people we could have hoped for. Although they came from many different backgrounds and fields of study, they quickly grasped the context of the survey – the possible impacts of climate change in Jordan, the role of renewable energy in climate mitigation, and theories about how people form their opinions.

Not only were they quick to understand the survey and how it was coded, they also came up with some ideas on how to improve their introductions, provide additional information to interviewees unfamiliar with household surveys to avoid offending them (some questions necessary for statistical purposes could possibly seem too intrusive otherwise). They even suggested that we refer respondents to the IASS website so they could follow up on the survey. And when it came time to practice the survey on the other students, they even helped us to improve the Arabic translation!



Mustafa incorporates student feedback into the survey. Esther Schuch

After a full day of training, the students went out to their various areas (East Amman, West Amman, Zarqa and Tafilah) and started knocking on doors. Although some of them were nervous at first, they soon started to enjoy themselves. They were also eager to help each other out. When some of our students were met with suspicion and distrust, others advised them on how to handle these difficult situations. In the end, all our interviewers succeeded in initiating conversations and engaging with people at all the locations. In fact, on the first full day of surveying, the students uploaded so many results that they crashed our open-source survey software! It turned out that our interviewers had exceeded the software's daily limit! The results far surpassed our expectations: we now have over 300 responses from households in different parts of Jordan.

In the next step, we will begin to analyse the data and start to understand how people perceive climate and renewables. We're looking forward to presenting our findings to our student enumerators and hope to continue teaching them about survey methods.

The cooperation with Ruwwad and the local students has been such a success that we are also considering how this work could be replicated at other locations or across multiple years to gain a more nuanced understanding of public opinion around climate change and the energy transition in Jordan. And it certainly doesn't hurt that we would love to travel back to Jordan again!

This research was funded by the Investigating the Systemic Impacts of the Global Energy Transition (ISIGET) project financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) under the "Make our Planet Great Again - German Research Initiative", grant number 57429628, implemented by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).