

From Glasgow to Dubai to Baku: A Three-Country Study of COP Awareness and Climate Change Perceptions

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) represents a defining moment in the worldwide battle against climate change. This major United Nations climate summit will bring together world leaders, policymakers, and climate experts in Baku, Azerbaijan. They will evaluate the progress toward international climate goals and set new commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build stronger climate resilience strategies.

This year of 2024, Azerbaijan hosts this summit that focuses on climate action through sustainable development, climate finance, and renewable energy adoption. The conference will build international cooperation, share technology, and develop adaptation strategies for at-risk regions.

As Azerbaijan prepares to host COP29, a unique comparative, comprehensive study initiated by SIAR Research and Consulting Group offers unprecedented comparative insights across three COP host nations.

This first of its kind research, comparing public perceptions in three different countries reveals how climate consciousness evolves before, during, and after hosting major climate conferences:

- Azerbaijan's upcoming role as COP29 host in 2024 provides a forward-looking dimension to the research. Here we conducted 500 interviews with sampling error of 4.4%
- The UAE's recent hosting of COP28 in Dubai (2023) offers immediate post-conference insights. In this country we ran 541 interviews with sampling error of 4.2%
- Finally, Scotland's experience with COP26 in Glasgow (2021) adds a retrospective view. And here sample size amounted to 612 with sampling error of 4.0%

The survey has been implemented during October-November months of the year of 2024.



Azerbaijan. Photo by Sakina Mammadli



Scotland. Photo by Dominika Gregušová

Key research objectives of the study included:

1. To assess baseline climate change awareness and concern across different cultural contexts
2. To measure public understanding and engagement with COP conferences
3. To evaluate the perceived impact of hosting COP on local communities
4. To analyze information dissemination patterns and media effectiveness
5. To understand expectations and perceived success of COP events

It is worth noting that the study was based on the questionnaire developed by SIAR team in consultancy with the local COP29 team and was focused on analysis of public awareness and attitudes toward climate change and the Conference of the Parties (COP).

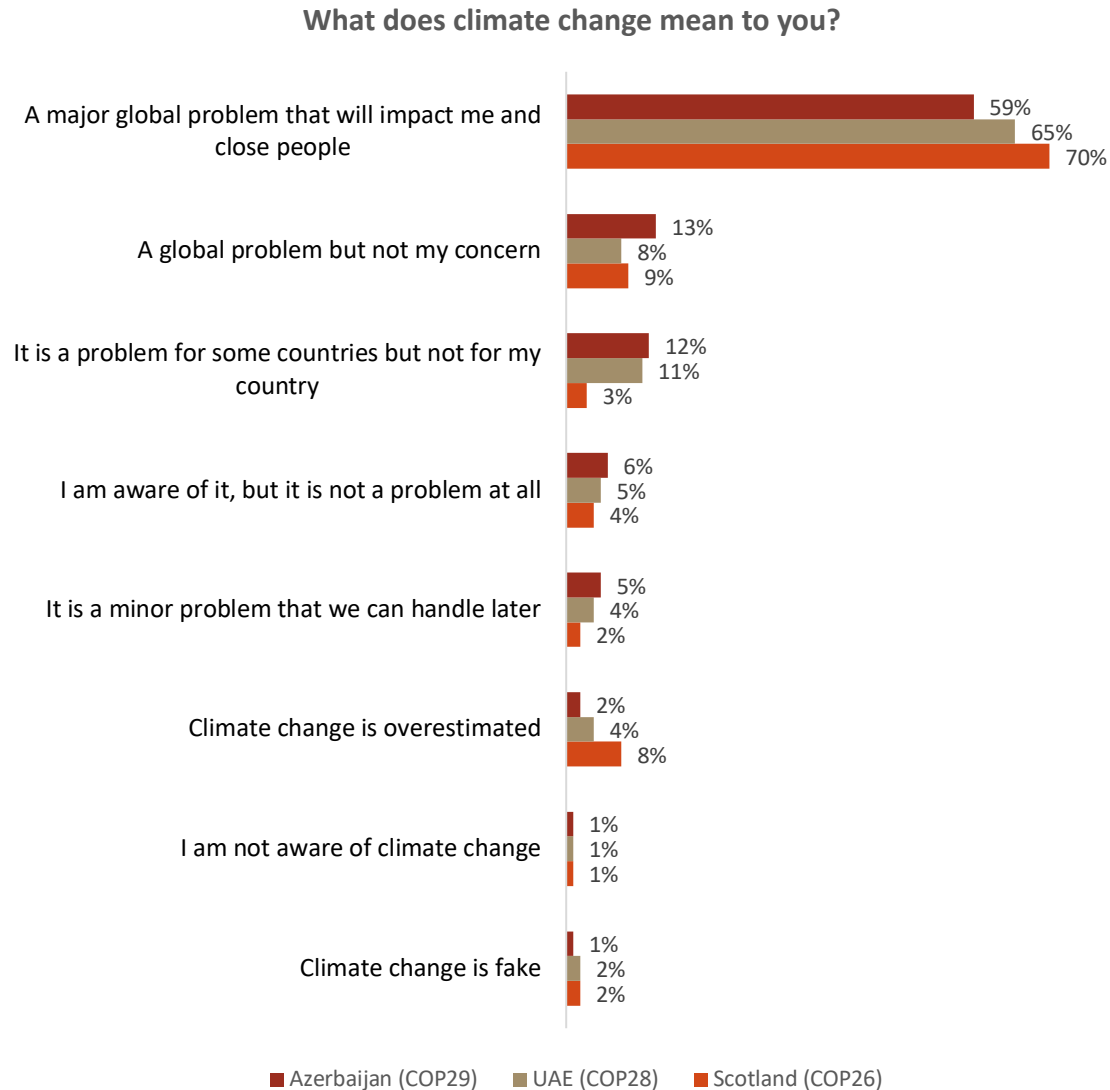
As a result, this multi-country analysis comes at a crucial time when global climate action is increasingly urgent, and understanding public engagement with climate initiatives is vital for effective policy-making and climate communication strategies.

So, without any further ado, we are sharing the summary of main findings of this important survey (just a note: % shows the share of all respondents answering in a relevant way).

Chapter 1: Awareness and Understanding

Climate Change: A Matter of Personal Impact?

The fundamental question of climate change perception reveals distinct regional patterns.



As can be seen from the chart above, Scotland has the highest level of personal impact recognition (70% view climate change as a major personal concern). It is followed by the UAE with 65% acknowledging direct impact and Azerbaijan, where 59% of respondents recognize personal implications.

Notably, the "not my concern" perspective shows interesting variations:

- Azerbaijan: 13% (highest detachment)

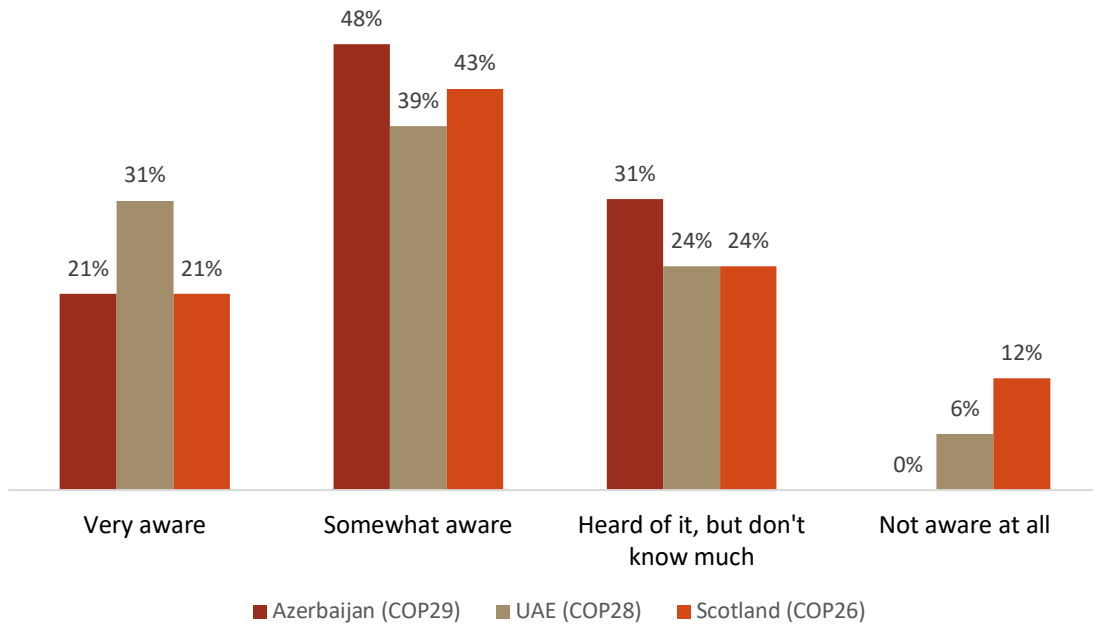
- UAE: 8% (moderate)
- Scotland: 9% (moderate)

And “It is a problem for some countries but not for my country” answer had the following %:

- Azerbaijan: 12%
- UAE: 11%
- Scotland: 3%

COP Awareness: Knowledge across Nations

How aware are you of the COP (Conference of Parties, also known as the United Nations Conference on Climate Change)?



Share of respondents, who are “Very aware or somewhat aware” of the COP appeared to be quite similar across all 3 countries:

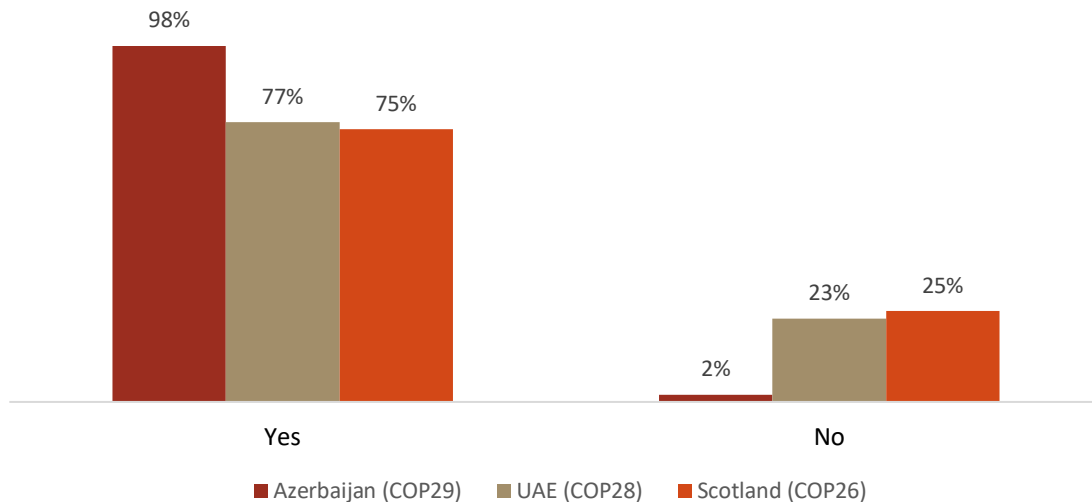
- Azerbaijan: 69% (pre-event engagement)
- UAE: 70% (post-event sustained awareness)
- Scotland: 64% (long-term retention)

And there have been significant regional difference with respect to Event-Specific Recognition, where questions and results are as follows:

Do you know that this year COP conference will take place in the city of Baku?

Did you know that the COP conference took place in the city of Glasgow in 2021?

Did you know that the COP conference took place in the city of Dubai in 2023?



The remarkably high pre-event awareness in Azerbaijan (98%) demonstrates exceptional public communication effectiveness and strong national engagement with the upcoming COP29. The similar post-event awareness levels in UAE and Scotland (77% and 75% respectively) suggest a consistent pattern of retained awareness after hosting.

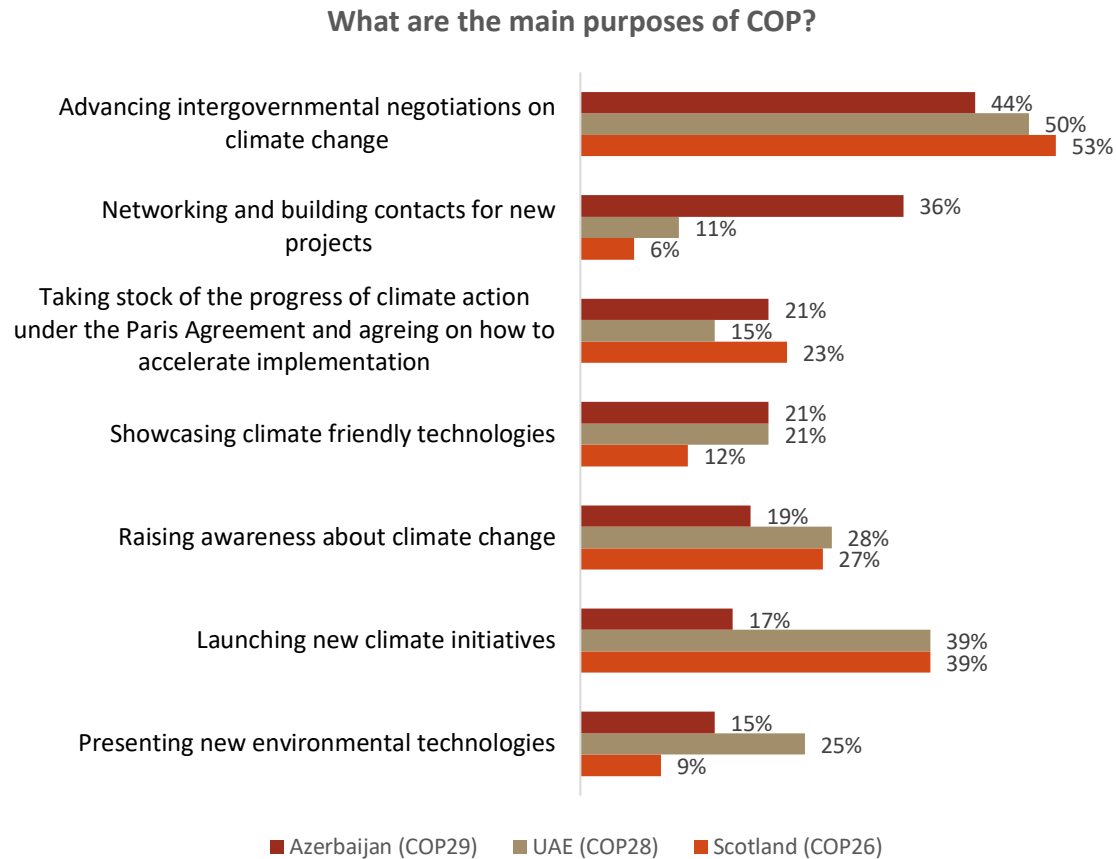
The slight drop in awareness over time (from Azerbaijan's 98% to Scotland's 75%) indicates how public attention naturally wanes post-event, though maintaining relatively high levels even years later. This pattern offers valuable insights for maintaining stakeholder engagement beyond the event itself.

Understanding COP's Purpose

Understanding public perception of COP's purpose reveals how effectively the conference's mission is communicated across different cultures and contexts. While COP serves multiple functions, public understanding often varies based on local priorities and communication emphasis.

Taking this into account, we first of all checked Primary Purpose Recognition via asking the following question: *What are the main purposes of COP? (respondents could select a maximum of 2)*

And the responses in our 3 countries appeared to be as follows:



The stark difference in how each country views COP's primary purpose reflects varying stages of climate diplomacy engagement. Scotland's focus on negotiations (53%) suggests a mature understanding of COP's core diplomatic function. Azerbaijan's emphasis on networking (36%) indicates a more practical, development-focused approach, typical of emerging markets hosting their first major climate conference.

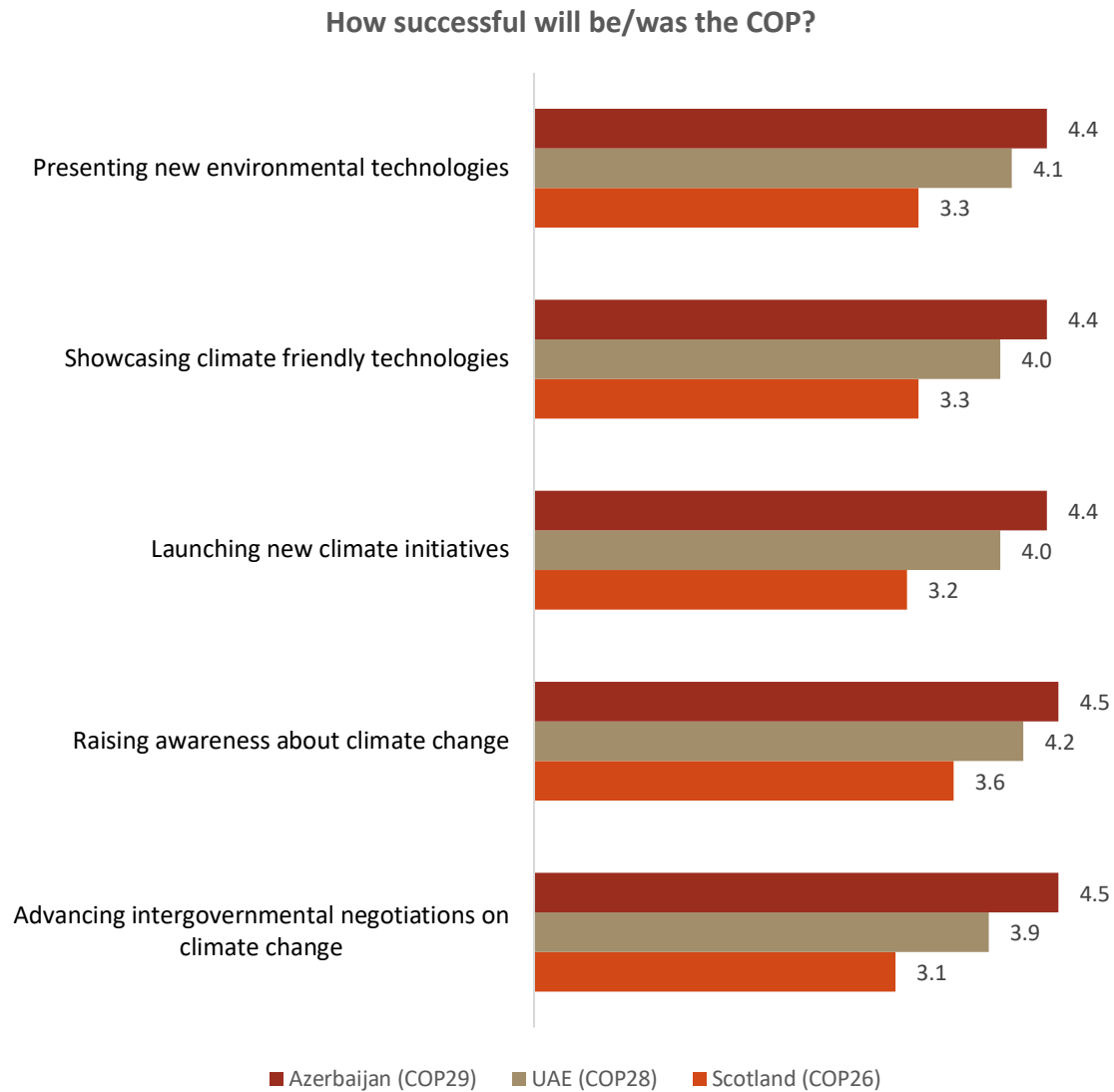
Besides, we thought to also check **Success Expectations (in Azerbaijan) and Perceptions (in other 2 COP host countries):**

And here the questions were as follows:

- In the directions shown below, how successful will be the COP that will be conducted in Azerbaijan?

- In the directions shown below, how successful was the COP that was conducted in the UAE?
- In the directions shown below, how successful was the COP that was conducted in Scotland?

Worth noting is that in all 3 countries we used a similar 5-point scale, where 1 meant not successful at all, and 5 meant completely successful.

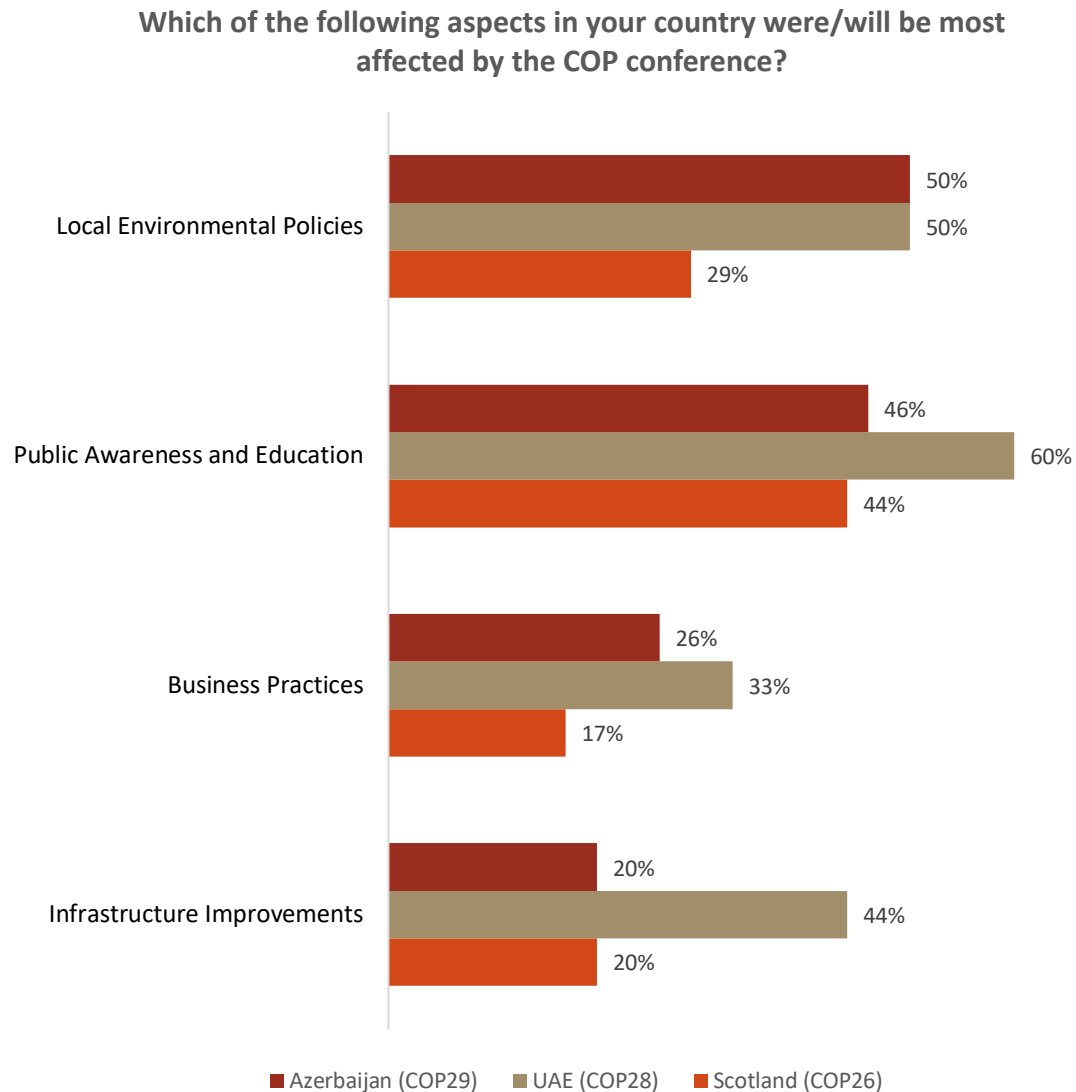


As we can see, a clear "expectation gradient" emerges from past to future hosts. Azerbaijan's high scores (4.5) reflect pre-event optimism, while Scotland's more moderate ratings (3.1-3.6) suggest a post-event reality check. UAE's intermediate position provides valuable insights into immediate post-event assessment.

Chapter 2: Impact of the COP

As we know, the impact of major climate conferences extends beyond environmental policies, creating ripple effects across multiple sectors of society and economy. And we thought to check people's expectation/understanding about impact of the COP on the following aspects:

Local impact dimensions



The survey has shown that in the UAE there is consistently higher impact expectations across all dimensions, suggesting potentially a more comprehensive approach to COP implementation than in Scotland and/or an effect of factor of time that has passed since COP26.

Azerbaijan's strong focus on environmental policies nearly matches UAE's, indicating clear regulatory priorities.

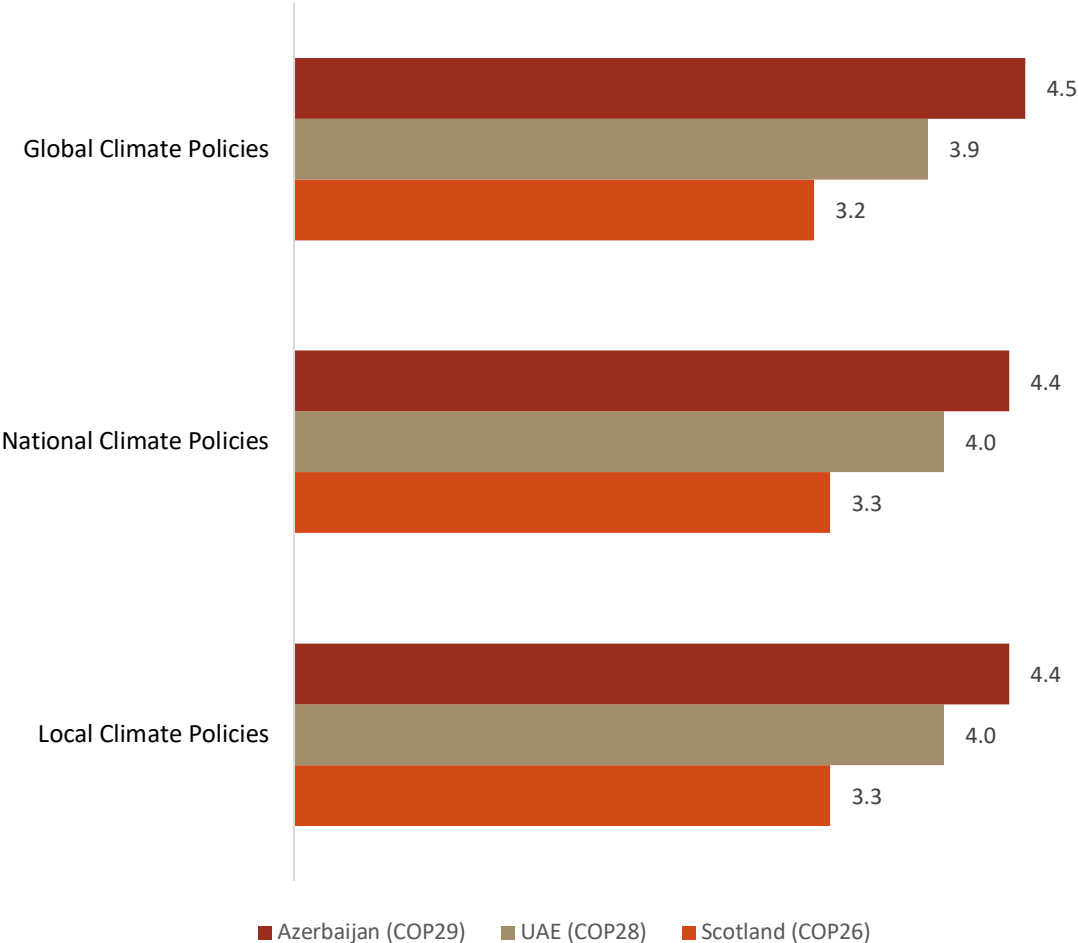
Scotland's more modest numbers might reflect post-event realism or different pre-event priorities.



UAE. Photo by Kevin Villaruz

Policy impact dimensions

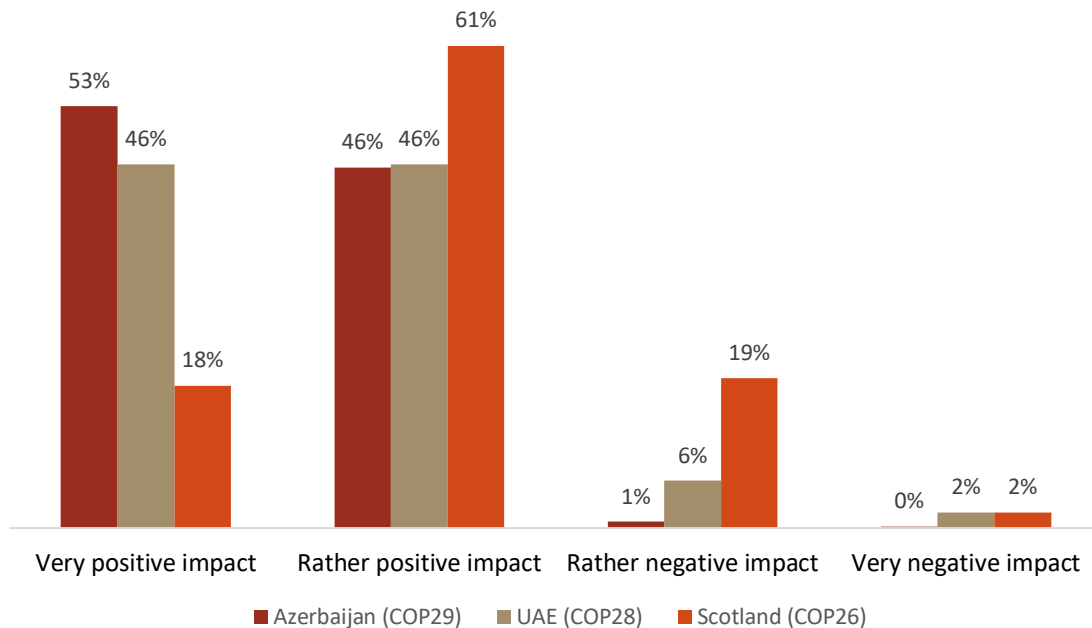
On a 5-point scale, where 1 is not affect at all and 5 is definitely affect, to what extent do you think COP in your country will affect (Azerbaijan) or has affected (UAE, Scotland) the following:



Here we can see that there is a consistent pattern emerges across all policy levels: highest expectations in Azerbaijan, moderate-high impact reported in UAE, and more modest long-term assessment in Scotland. This "temporal gradient" in impact perception suggests how expectations meet reality over time.

Local business and tourism dimension

How do you think a COP conference that will take place in Baku/took place in Dubai/Glasgow can impact local businesses and tourism?



Azerbaijan's near-unanimous positive expectation (99% very positive + rather positive) reflects:

- Pre-event optimism about economic opportunities
- High anticipation of international exposure
- Strong confidence in local business capacity
- Minimal concern about potential negative impacts

UAE's very high positive assessment (92%) indicates:

- Immediate post-event satisfaction
- Tangible business benefits realized
- Successful tourism impact
- Limited negative experiences

Scotland's more moderate but still positive view (79%) suggests:

- Long-term realistic assessment
- Balanced view of benefits and challenges
- Practical experience of actual impact
- More critical retrospective evaluation

This pattern of declining positive perception from future to past hosts provides valuable insights for:

1. Managing expectations for future host cities
2. Planning realistic business opportunities
3. Developing sustainable tourism strategies
4. Preparing local business communities

The significantly higher "very positive" ratings in Azerbaijan (53%) and UAE (46%) compared to Scotland (18%) further emphasizes the role of temporal proximity in shaping economic expectations.

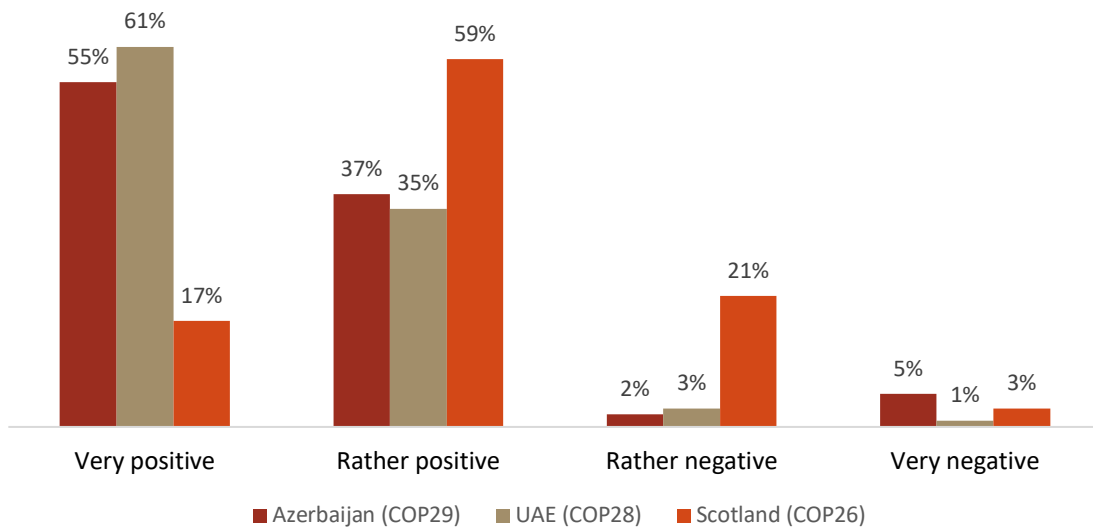
Overall COP expectations

Overall expectations were also assessed and the results appeared to be as follows:

Azerbaijan: "What are your expectations from the upcoming COP in Baku?"

UAE: "What is your impression of the COP that took place in Dubai?"

Scotland: "What is your impression of the COP that took place in Glasgow?"



This data has revealed several important patterns:

Temporal Impact:

- Future host (Azerbaijan) shows high but measured optimism (93%)
- Recent host (UAE) demonstrates peak satisfaction (96%)
- Past host (Scotland) maintains positive but more tempered view (76%)

Intensity of Positive Response:

- UAE leads in "very positive" responses (61%)
- Azerbaijan shows strong optimism (55% very positive)
- Scotland's response is more moderate (17% very positive)

This pattern potentially points to:

1. Expectation Management:
 - Pre-event enthusiasm (Azerbaijan) remains high but realistic
 - Immediate post-event satisfaction (UAE) peaks
 - Long-term assessment (Scotland) settles at a more moderate level
2. Event Impact Evolution:
 - Initial high expectations (Azerbaijan stage)
 - Peak satisfaction during/immediately after (UAE stage)
 - Realistic long-term assessment (Scotland stage)
3. Regional Variations:
 - Middle Eastern markets (UAE/Azerbaijan) show higher overall positivity
 - European market (Scotland) demonstrates more measured assessment

These findings have important implications for:

- Stakeholder communication strategies
- Event planning and execution
- Long-term impact assessment
- Future host city preparation

The data suggests that while immediate perceptions are highly positive, managing long-term expectations and delivering sustainable impact requires careful planning and realistic goal-setting.

Chapter 3. Information Sources

The effectiveness of climate communication depends heavily on understanding and utilizing appropriate information channels. Different societies show varying preferences in how they consume climate-related information. Understanding these patterns is crucial for effective climate communication strategies.

And here we asked 2 questions:

Question A: How did you first hear about COP conferences?

Top 3 sources here appeared to be TV, Social media and Online News

Traditional Media (TV):

- Azerbaijan: 32%
- Scotland: 28%
- UAE: 9%

Social Media:

- Azerbaijan: 40%
- UAE: 28%
- Scotland: 18%

Online News:

- UAE: 21%
- Azerbaijan: 19%
- Scotland: 12%

Question B: In which sources of information have you heard about the COP conference conducted/to be conducted in your country?

Traditional Media:

- TV:
 - Azerbaijan: 60%
 - UAE: 27%
 - Scotland: 40%
- Radio:
 - Azerbaijan: 14%
 - UAE: 15%
 - Scotland: 20%
- Print Media:
 - Azerbaijan: 3%
 - UAE: 22%
 - Scotland: 17%

Digital Channels:

- Social Media:
 - Azerbaijan: 75%
 - UAE: 51%
 - Scotland: 37%
- Online News:
 - Azerbaijan: 54%
 - UAE: 37%
 - Scotland: 30%
- Government Websites:
 - Azerbaijan: 4%
 - UAE: 34%
 - Scotland: 14%

Personal Networks:

- Family/Friends:
 - Azerbaijan: 26%
 - UAE: 25%
 - Scotland: 19%
- Colleagues:
 - Azerbaijan: 10%
 - UAE: 18%
 - Scotland: 12%

The data reveals a fascinating evolution in climate communication channels.

Azerbaijan's hybrid approach (high TV and social media usage) suggests a transition phase in media consumption. UAE's digital-first approach reflects its technological advancement, while Scotland's more traditional media mix might indicate established information consumption habits.

This suggests the need for tailored communication strategies in countries, where COP will be planned in future.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals several key patterns and implications:

Temporal Perspective Effects: The study demonstrates how timing relative to COP hosting influences public perception. Scotland's post-COP26 responses reflect a more measured, experience-based assessment, while UAE's immediate post-COP28 feedback shows high enthusiasm, and Azerbaijan's pre-COP29 outlook demonstrates peak optimism. This suggests a

"reality adjustment" effect as countries move from anticipation through implementation to reflection.

Geographic and Cultural Variations: Climate change perception varies significantly by region, with Scotland showing the highest personal concern (70% viewing it as a major personal issue), followed by UAE (65%), and Azerbaijan (59%). This may reflect differences in environmental education, economic development, and cultural perspectives on environmental issues.

Media Evolution:

- Traditional media dominance in Scotland (TV: 28%)
- Balanced media mix in UAE (social media: 28%, online news: 21%)
- Social media prominence in Azerbaijan (40%).

This progression suggests evolving communication strategies for climate initiatives, with newer host nations leveraging digital platforms more effectively.

Local Impact Perceptions: A clear pattern emerges in how countries view COP's local benefits:

- Scotland: 79% positive (retrospective view)
- UAE: 92% positive (immediate view)
- Azerbaijan: 99% positive (prospective view)

This declining optimism from future to past hosts suggests the need for more realistic expectation management in pre-event communications.

Implications for Future COP Events:

1. Communication Strategies: Need for balanced media approach combining traditional and digital channels
2. Expectation Management: Importance of realistic goal-setting and public communication
3. Legacy Planning: Necessity of long-term engagement strategies to maintain public interest post-event
4. Cultural Adaptation: Recognition that climate change messaging must be tailored to local contexts

Wishing everyone a successful COP29 in Azerbaijan!

SIAR Research and Consulting Group (www.siar.az)

For any questions on the study, feel free to contact:

office@siar.az
994124472934
994502207903