



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

LSE GROUPS 2025

Visions for the Future

Friday 20 June 2025, LSE LIFE workspace 4, or [join us on Zoom](#)

10.30-10.40 Welcome

10.40-11.40 Panel 1

Republican or Democrat: Does It Matter for Corporate Carbon Emissions?

Closer to Washington, Further from Paris: Does Alignment with the US affect Countries' Green Investment post US-Praxit?

Mobile Finance and Food Security: Evaluating the Positive Externalities of M-PESA in Kenya

11.40-12.00 Break

12.00-12.40 Panel 2

Deepfakes On Trial: A Mixed-methods Study of Student Perceptions of and Regulatory Concerns about Non-consensual Deepfakes at the London School of Economics and Political Science

You, me ... and AI: the effects of AI on romantic interpersonal relationships

12.40-13.30 Lunch

13.30-14.30 Panel 3

"An Island of Strangers"? Effects of the Anti-immigrant Rhetoric on the Well-being of International Students at LSE

From Tweets to Tomorrow: The Effectiveness of Reform UK's X Presence and Its Implications for Future UK Populist Electoral Strategy

Entry Granted, Future Denied: How have changes in UK visa policies from 2024 onwards affected the job prospects and employment experiences of international students?

14.30 - 15.10 Panel 4

Fading Green Trust: To what extent does a political candidate's stance on sustainability influence the voting preferences of university students in London?

Knowing but not acting: Exploring the disconnect between environmentalism and AI consumption

15.10-15.40 Break and voting

15.40-16.30 Awards and closing remarks

LSE GROUPS 2025: Panel 1

Group 10

Republican or Democrat: does it matter for corporate carbon emissions?

Sudharsana Jayanand, Cheng Chan, Hui Kong, Zixi Wang, Lu Siyu, Abraham Tharakan, Avinash Mysore

This study examines whether corporate political donation leaning predict subsequent carbon intensity changes in U.S. firms. While existing literature demonstrates that firms strategically donate to influence environmental regulation, research has focused on donation volumes rather than partisan direction, overlooked temporal lags between political influence and emissions, and aggregated findings across sectors. Drawing on Neo-pluralist Theory and Signaling Theory, we hypothesize that Democratic-leaning firms will show greater carbon intensity reductions than Republican-leaning firms.

We analyze 37 firms from the oil/gas and chemical sectors across three electoral cycles (2017-2023), constructing a Corporate Political Leaning (CPL) ratio ranging from -1 (exclusively Republican) to +1 (exclusively Democratic). Using fixed effects panel regression, we examine the relationship between CPL and year-over-year percentage changes in carbon intensity (CO₂ emissions/revenue).

Results reveal a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between Democratic leaning and carbon intensity reduction ($\beta = -0.272$). Neither sector-specific effects (oil vs. chemical) nor state-level heterogeneity (Texas vs. others) proved significant. These null findings indicate that the donation-emission relationship is more complex than partisan alignment suggests. Limitations include small sample size (N=37), potential measurement error in self-reported emissions data, and inability to control for renewable technology investments. Future research should expand sample sizes, extend time horizons, and incorporate direct measures of environmental investments to better understand how political strategies influence corporate environmental outcomes.

Keywords: *corporate political donations, carbon intensity, environmental performance*

Group 9

Closer to Washington, Further from Paris: does alignment with the US affect countries' green investment post US-Praxit?

Aahan Kandoth, Dante Dörr, Leena Safareeni, Yun Xi Simone Lim, Daria Zorina, Yong Xin Chai

In June 2017, Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, sparking heated debate on the future of climate policy. Previous literature has examined the US withdrawal's impact on emission targets (Larch & Wanner, 2024), domestic green financial markets (Pham et al., 2023), and regional green equities (Alessi et al., 2024). This paper takes a broader view, analyzing how US policy shifts and countries' political-economic alignment with the US have influenced global public renewable energy investment (green investment). We employ a two-way random effects continuous difference-in-differences model with relaxed parallel trend assumptions to isolate the effects of US alignment on green investment patterns, controlling for institution type, emissions per capita, total investment, and random effects. Using panel data from 2016-2021, we find that a 1% increase in trade alignment with the US is associated with a 0.701% decrease in public green investment—an effect that is statistically significant at the 5% level. We find no significant effects for climate aid, military aid, or institutional alignment, and heterogeneity tests confirm no significant differences between development groups (all $p > 0.50$). These results suggest that trade-based alignment with the US creates universal constraints on green investment regardless of development status, highlighting the vulnerability of global climate finance to major economies' policy shifts.

Key Words: *Paris Agreement withdrawal, green investment, climate policy, US alignment, renewable energy investment, difference-in-differences*

Group 5

Mobile Finance and Food Security: Evaluating the positive externalities of M-PESA in Kenya

Alexandre Trad, Ananya Bhushan, Junhao Yang, Sebastian Higuera Milenov, Siqi Chen, Vasavi Singhal, Yunhan Wang

Increasingly, developing countries are facing challenges to global food security. Understanding the spillover effects of other industries, such as mobile finance, can help policymakers identify positive externalities and potential solutions to food security problems. However, empirical research on the nexus between mobile finance and food security in the East African contexts remains limited. This study explores whether a mobile finance system like M-PESA in Kenya has an effect on food prices' stability and security. Using secondary data from the World Bank and the Financial Sector Deepening Kenya, regression and GIS mapping, on top of the Logic Model, were employed in the analyses. Results suggest that M-PESA has a positive association with food security in Kenya. First, after the expansion of the M-PESA system in 2009, areas that positively adopted this mobile finance system came along with a more stable food price annually. Second, regional effects brought by the M-PESA system in Kenya were non-negligible; regions with higher population density using M-PESA tend to experience an improvement in food security indicators. The findings suggest that relevant organisations should be aware of the positive contributions brought by mobile finance systems in developing countries and attempt to promote the operating model in Kenya.

Key Words: *Mobile finance, food security, digital financial inclusion, positive externalities*

LSE GROUPS 2025: Panel 2

Group 6

Deepfakes On Trial: A mixed-methods study of student perceptions of and regulatory concerns about non-consensual deepfakes at the London School of Economics and Political Science

Anastasiya Popelo, Ann Yi Ngai, Hana Reid, Hanbhin Seon, Cezara-Teona Zaharia

Despite the extensive academic discussion on borderless personal and legal repercussions of deepfakes, limited studies have explicitly investigated the youth's awareness about non-consensual deepfakes and perception of the need for stricter law enforcement.

Our objective was to critically evaluate: a) perceptions of deepfakes, their risks and impacts; b) the awareness amongst LSE students of deepfake regulations; and c) LSE students' views on the need to criminalise deepfakes, all while accounting for the salience of gender and ethnicity.

This study utilised a mixed-method approach to identify patterns within a survey and focus group. We gathered quantitative data that explores the LSE community's awareness, perception, and opinions on criminal justice around deepfake content. We then conducted one focus group, which allowed us to analyse the rationale behind the survey results. Based on the data, there are heightened concerns about non-consensual deepfakes among the LSE student community and strong support for formal recognition of deepfakes as illegal coupled with the need for stricter regulatory frameworks. These findings may have future policy implications resulting in the enactment of victim-centred laws and prevention of negative impacts caused by non-consensual deepfakes.

Key Words: *non-consensual deepfakes, criminalisation, gender-based violence, students*

Group 1

You, me ... and AI: the effects of AI on romantic interpersonal relationships

Preksha Bhansali, Odi Aneji, Suchir Joshi, Vishal RR, Róna Wiles, Shan Shukla, Emma Lidzey

While existing discourse on artificial intelligence (AI) in romantic contexts often centers on human–AI relationships, this study shifts focus to explore how AI may impact human–to–human romantic interpersonal relationships. Addressing this gap, the research investigates the extent to which generative AI influences romantic dynamics among university students. Using a qualitative methodology, data was collected through semi–structured interviews with participants across diverse relationship statuses. Thematic analysis reveals that although various social factors – such as family background, personality, and appearance – shape who individuals choose to date, AI plays a distinct and emerging role in how romantic relationships are navigated and maintained. Participants described using AI tools for communication support, emotional guidance, and online dating interactions. These findings suggest a potential causal association between AI use and the conduct of romantic interpersonal relationships, highlighting the need to further consider the sociotechnical mediation of intimacy in contemporary contexts.

Key Words: *Artificial intelligence, interpersonal romantic relationships, interviews, university students, qualitative research*

LSE GROUPS 2025: Panel 3

Group 7

“An Island of Strangers”? Effects of the anti-immigrant rhetoric on the well-being of international students at LSE

Manan Agrawal, Raphael Del Aguila, Amal Khan, Rory Merritt-Shears, Xin Yi Mu

The UK has experienced a rise in anti-immigration sentiment. Nevertheless, the extent to which this has affected international students has yet to be studied. While studies have been published on the disparity in well-being of international and home students, to our knowledge, in terms of well-being scores, they have never directly assessed anti-immigration sentiment. To help fill this gap, we utilised surveys and interviews that attempted to measure students' awareness of anti-immigration sentiment and its impact on well-being, as well as future plans. We found evidence to suggest that in certain domains, like anxiety and sense of belonging, there were significant negative effects. However, when it came to planning their futures accordingly, the relationship was less clear, with many students concerned about the general future of the UK rather than their plans to stay. The analysis of the data we acquired was done qualitatively, allowing us to dig deeper into the subjective experiences and feelings that international students are experiencing due to the shifting political atmosphere. Future areas of research should focus on combining the impact on well-being from anti-immigration sentiment with the effects that emerging policy is having in combination with this.

Key Words: *anti-immigration sentiment, well-being, international students, LSE, higher education*

Group 8

From Tweets to Tomorrow: The effectiveness of Reform UK's X presence and its implications for future UK populist electoral strategy

Maya Townley, Jaiveer Singh Madan, Karam Khanna, Wen Juin Ng, Quincy Jules Tan, Hanbing Chen

In an age of digital communication and media consumption, the effectiveness of electoral strategy increasingly depends on how well parties interact with potential voters on online platforms. This study examines the activities of the right-wing populist party Reform UK on X (formerly Twitter), with a focus on its use of language and sentiment. Drawing on existing scholarship in sentiment analysis and political communication, this article explores the relationship between sentiment, user engagement, and voting intentions: an under-researched yet increasingly relevant area in light of the growing influence of right-wing populist parties worldwide. Performing sentiment analysis on over 1,300 posts by Reform UK on X, we evaluated the role of social media in the party's electoral strategy during the period between the 2024 general election and the 2025 local council elections. We tested the relationship between sentiment and engagement, engagement and voting intention, sentiment and voting intention, across different electoral periods. We then conducted an SEM to investigate a hypothesised partial or full mediation model of sentiment to voting intention via engagement. Our findings indicate that engagement partially mediates the relationship between sentiment and voting intention. Specifically, more negative sentiment drives higher engagement, which in turn slightly increases voting intention.

Key Words: *sentiment analysis, Reform UK, political communication, Twitter, electoral strategy*

LSE GROUPS 2025: Panel 3 (contd.)

Group 4

Entry Granted, Future Denied: How have changes in UK visa policies from 2024 onwards affected the job prospects and employment experiences of international students?

Xiaoxue Chen, Ke Du, Jiayi Li, Sarah Onifade, Hitaarth Raheja, Atticus Stephenson

This research paper aims to explore this research question: How have changes in UK visa policies from 2024 onwards affected the job prospects and employment experiences of international students? Employing a mixed-methods approach combining the 65 survey responses from current and recent international students with secondary data (Change in Skilled Worker Visa, Change in Application by Industries, Application by Occupation, UK employment by occupation in 2024) on visa trends and sector-specific employment patterns, this paper will explore how these policy changes reshape the experiences and decisions of international students after graduation. The analysis has an interdisciplinary foundation including Geography, Migration studies and Economics. It draws on a combination of theories, including Push-Pull Plus, Supply and Demand, and concepts from Behavioural Economics (Human Capital and Animal Spirits) to understand both the systematic barriers and cognitive impacts these policy changes have had. These frameworks help show how visa policy changes have not only influenced the employment market, but also influence international students' perceived value of their education and how they make future decisions regarding their career. We find that international students are aware of changes to visa policy, and that these changes have made them reconsider their future trajectory and decreased their confidence in finding post-grad employment in the UK. The analysis will also showcase the compounding effect of structural and social barriers due to policy change. In particular, these changes disproportionately affect the outcome of international students when navigating the job market.

Key Words: *Immigration, visa, policy change, international students, employment, behavioural economics, human geography, education, United Kingdom*

LSE GROUPS 2025: Panel 4

Group 3

Fading Green Trust: To what extent does a political candidate's stance on sustainability influence the voting preferences of university students in London?

Cecília Zamboti Pessoa, Dharma Couture, Francesca Carol Mossa, Jianggaowa Zhu, Laliythkumar Saravanan, Shinichiro Hayashi

Amid growing environmental awareness, it is often assumed that young voters prioritise sustainability in their political decisions (Sloam, Pickard and Henn, 2022). However, little empirical research has tested whether university students translate their environmental concern into votes, particularly when faced with trade-offs such as candidate credibility or competing policy issues. Drawing on a mixed methods approach, comprising a controlled survey experiment (n=106) and two focus groups, we evaluated the role of environmental policies in influencing the voting behaviour and political distrust of university students in London. Our findings demonstrated a clear gap between students' stated environmental values and their actual voting decisions. Even though the consciousness of sustainability seemed to be widespread among the students, they prioritised more immediate issues such as education, healthcare or job security in their votes. Distrust in politicians, scepticism about policy feasibility and concerns over symbolic environmentalism further undermined the students' green support. The findings of this research indicate the need for an increased robustness in establishing sustainability policies to better reflect the beliefs of students.

Key Words: *political distrust, sustainability, symbolic environmentalism, voting behaviour, youth*

Group 2

Knowing but not acting: Exploring the disconnect between environmentalism and AI consumption

Vrinda Parekh, Suha Farook, Satyasree Vangoor, Mahira Haque, Phool Ashraf, Charikleia Giagkozoglou, Vera Povaiah

Despite thorough documentation of generative AI's environmental impact, end-users remain largely unaware of the environmental costs. The widespread adoption of generative AI by university students is particularly concerning in light of this awareness gap. Existing models consider the drivers of AI usage through a framework of consumer-specific constructs, performance and effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. However, this framework neglects sustainability-oriented factors. Drawing on environmental behaviour research highlighting the Value-Action Gap – a model explaining the disconnect between pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours through psychological and structural barriers – this study proposes an extension of existing AI use models by uncovering previously excluded relevant factors. Using data collected from 26 semi-structured interviews of university students from the UK, US, and the Netherlands, this exploratory study reveals how increased awareness of Generative AI's environmental impacts relates to reduced student consumption of it. Specifically, students revealed a preference for limiting their personal use of the technology in the face of environmental consequences, while academic use remained largely unchanged. Discussion of these findings illustrates potential directions for future research and university policies surrounding AI and environmental education.

Key Words: *Environmentalism, AI consumption, exploratory research, Generative AI, university students, qualitative research*

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