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Overcoming scepticism: Interacting influences of geographical location on perceived climate change adaptation measures to water resources in Spain

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Though many climate adaptation efforts attempt to be defined with the participation of local communities, these strategies may be ineffective because among citizens affected equally, a local risk perception rather than scientific understanding largely drives adaptation choices. Further, the geographical location may polarize climate risk perceptions, making some adaptation efforts ineffective among sceptics. This study examines how the local degradation of the environment and water resources relates to adaption choices and in turn, climate change risk perception among a range of citizens in the Tagus basin, Spain (n = 300). We find respondents of less degraded areas have individualistic responses, and are significantly less likely to accept adaptation strategies than respondents in water stressed communities. The interaction between climate knowledge and adaptation choices is positively related to acceptance of adaptation choices in both groups, and had a stronger positive relationship among individualists. There is no statistical difference in acceptance of adaptation between individualists and communitarians at high levels of knowledge (top decile). Thus, education efforts specific to climate change may counteract divisions based geographical location and environmental stress.