

Climate communication: making new connections

DEAR project learning Hub, Frankfurt,
May 2019



#TalkingClimate



@ClimateOutreach



climateoutreach.org

Robin Webster, Climate Outreach



Timings

10:30–11:30 Principles for communicating climate change

11:30–12:00 Reflecting on case studies

12:00–12:30 Project group reflection

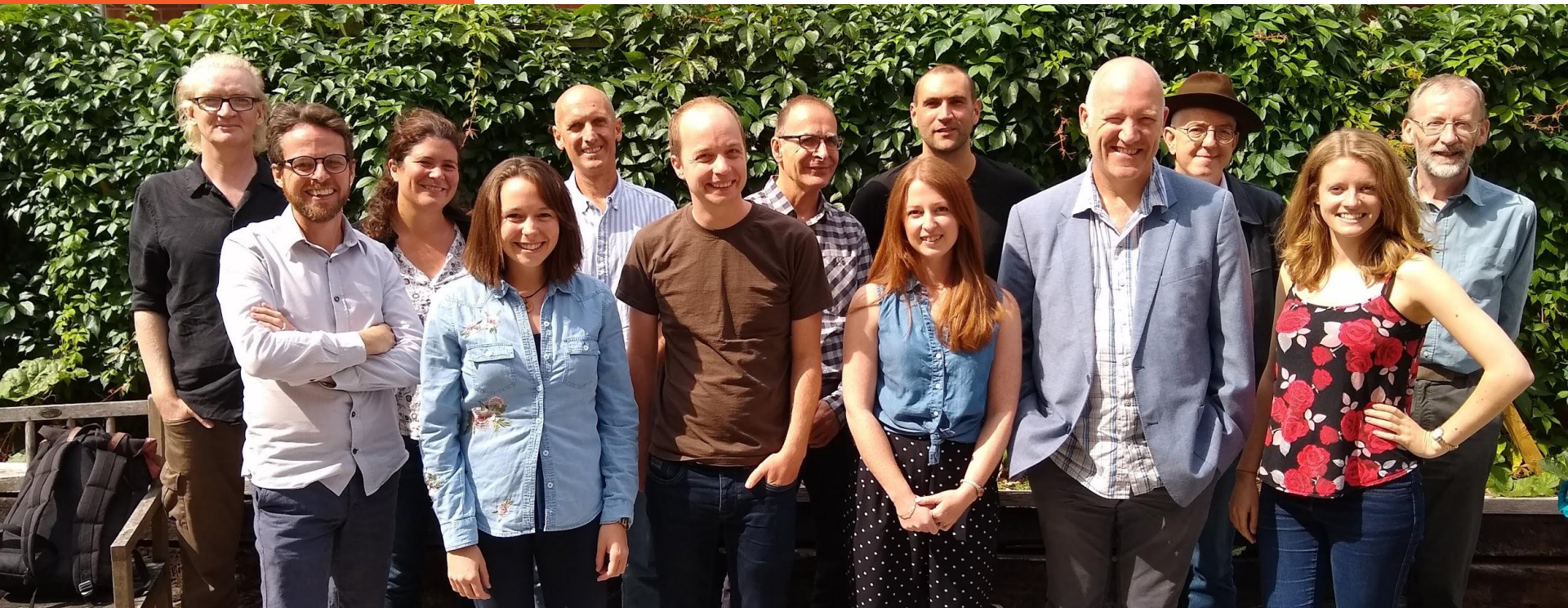
12:30–14:00 LUNCH

14:00–15:15 Three areas of climate change communication

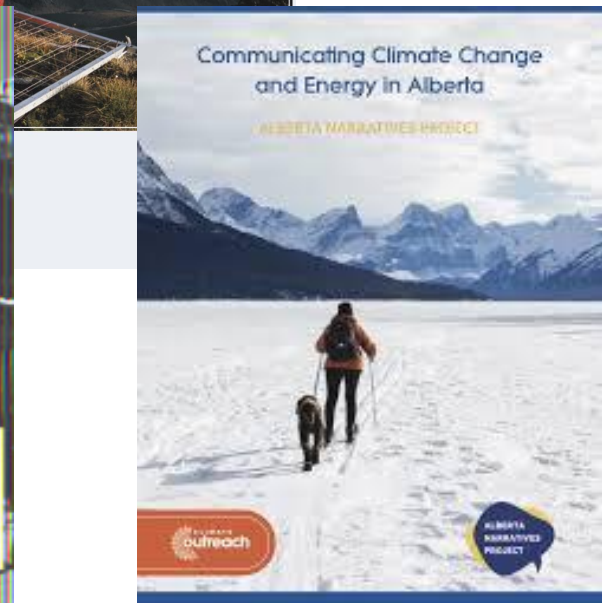
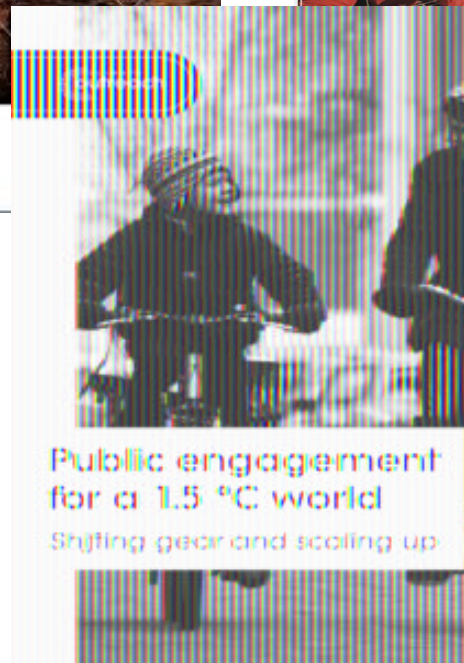
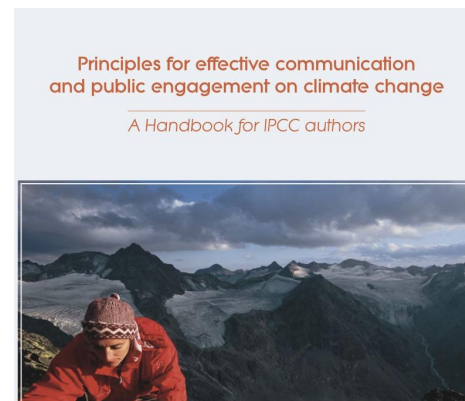
15:15–15:45 Diving deeper into one area

15:45–16:20 Project group reflection

About Climate Outreach



Advice, training, research, engagement



1990

SO, THIS CLIMATE
CHANGE THING
COULD BE A PROBLEM...



1995

CLIMATE CHANGE:
DEFINITELY A
PROBLEM.



2001

YEP, WE SHOULD
REALLY BE GETTING
ON WITH SORTING THIS
OUT PRETTY SOON...



2007

LOOK, SORRY TO SOUND
LIKE A BROKEN RECORD
HERE...



2013

WE REALLY HAVE
CHECKED AND WE'RE
NOT MAKING THIS UP.



2019

IS THIS
THING ON?



TAP TAP
TAP

FORM
28/9/13

20 years of
research





We think in stories

Climate change is understood and believed as a socially constructed **narrative** conveyed by **trusted communicators** that reflects their **identity** and validates their **values**.



Values and communication

Things that matter to us in our lives eg
kindness, beauty, friendship, success etc

‘Intrinsic’ vs ‘extrinsic’ values

Effective communication happens from
the ‘values up’ rather than the ‘numbers
down’

Brexit





Climate concern and climate silence



Talking about climate change (room discussion)

Do you ever talk about climate change?

If so, how often, with whom, in what ways?

What are some reasons people don't talk about climate change?



Reasons we don't talk about climate change

Don't think it's happening

Don't think it's relevant to them

Don't know enough about it

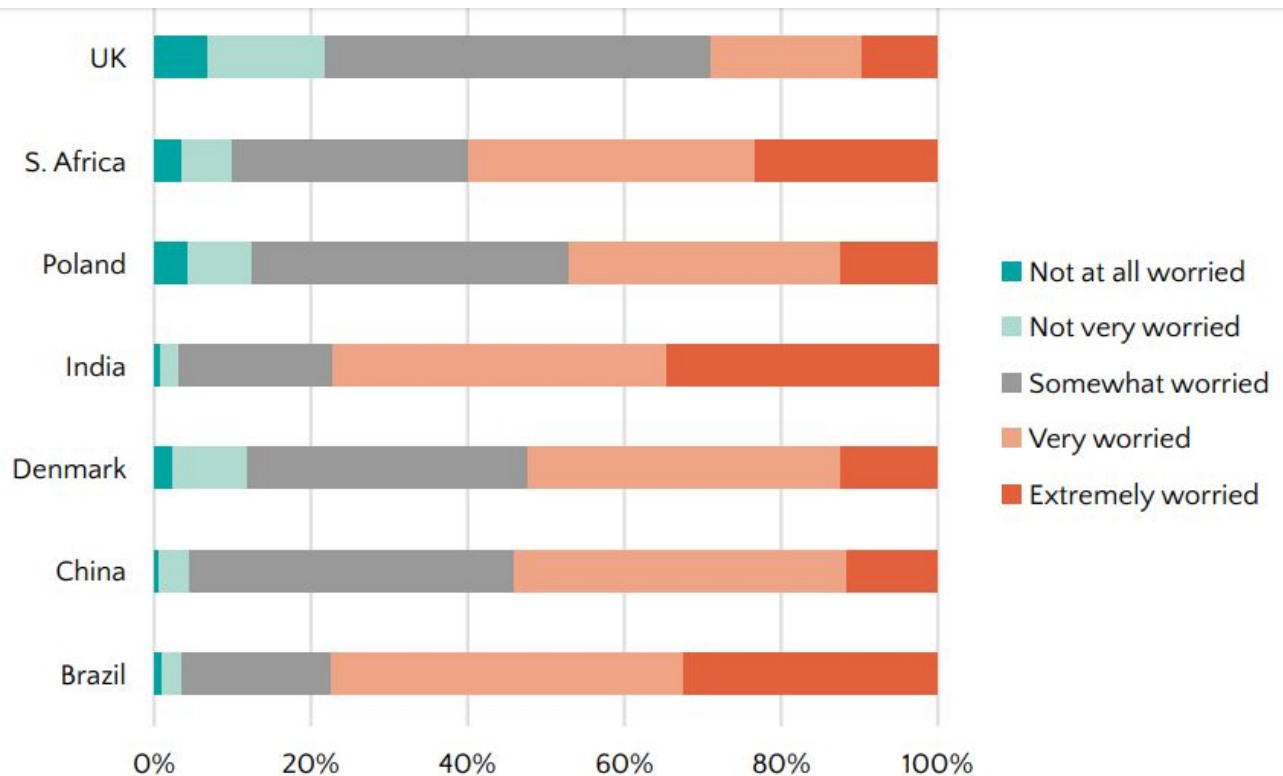
Don't like talking about scary things

Don't know what to do about it

Don't like feeling guilty about it

Don't think other people care

If asked, people are concerned

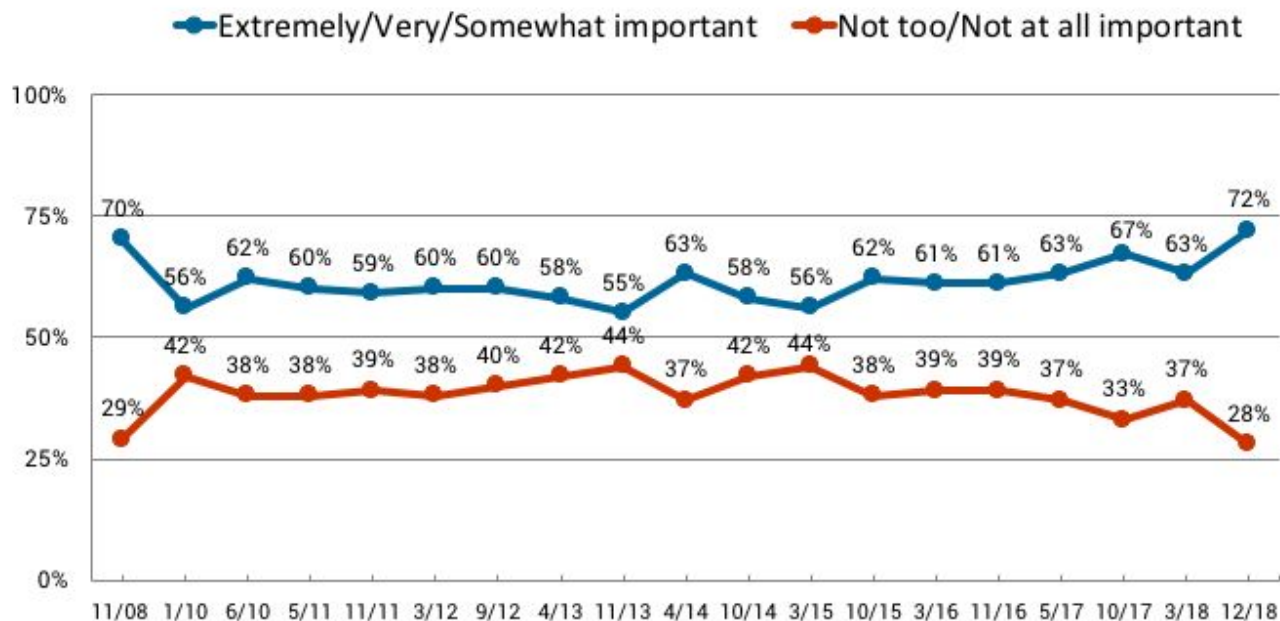


How worried are you about climate change?

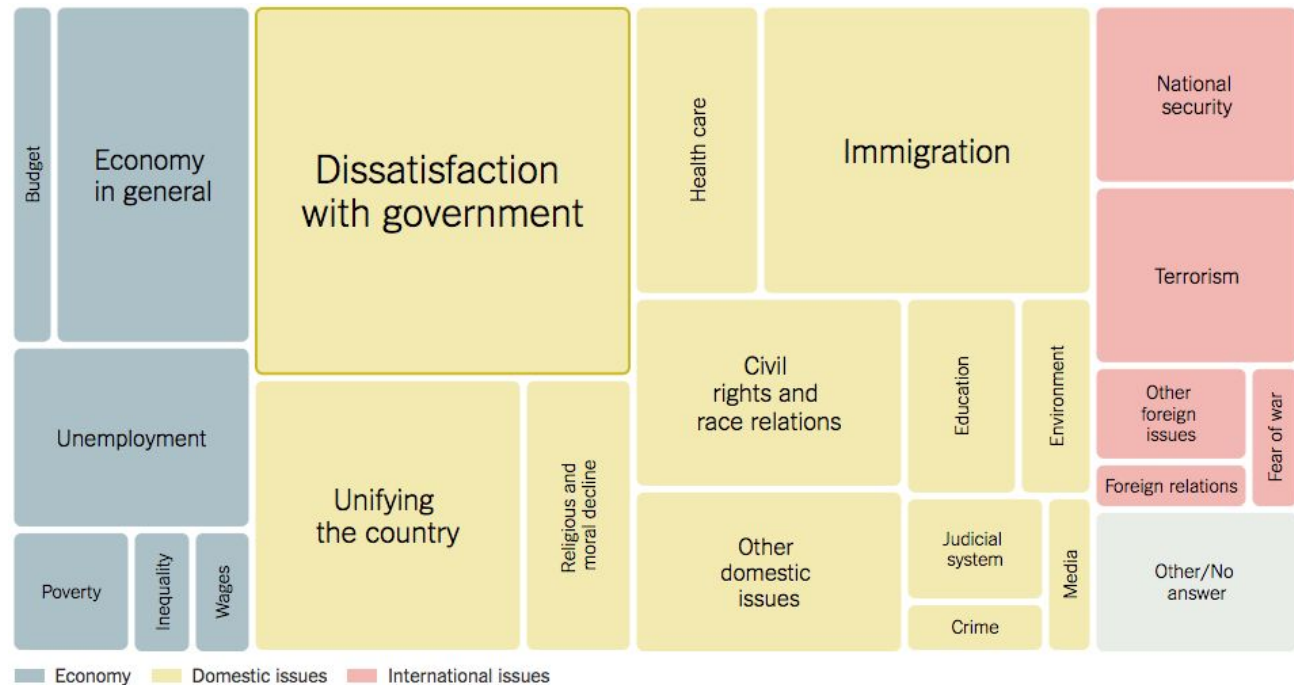
....even in the
USA

Climate change and the
American mind, Yale
Climate Change
Communications

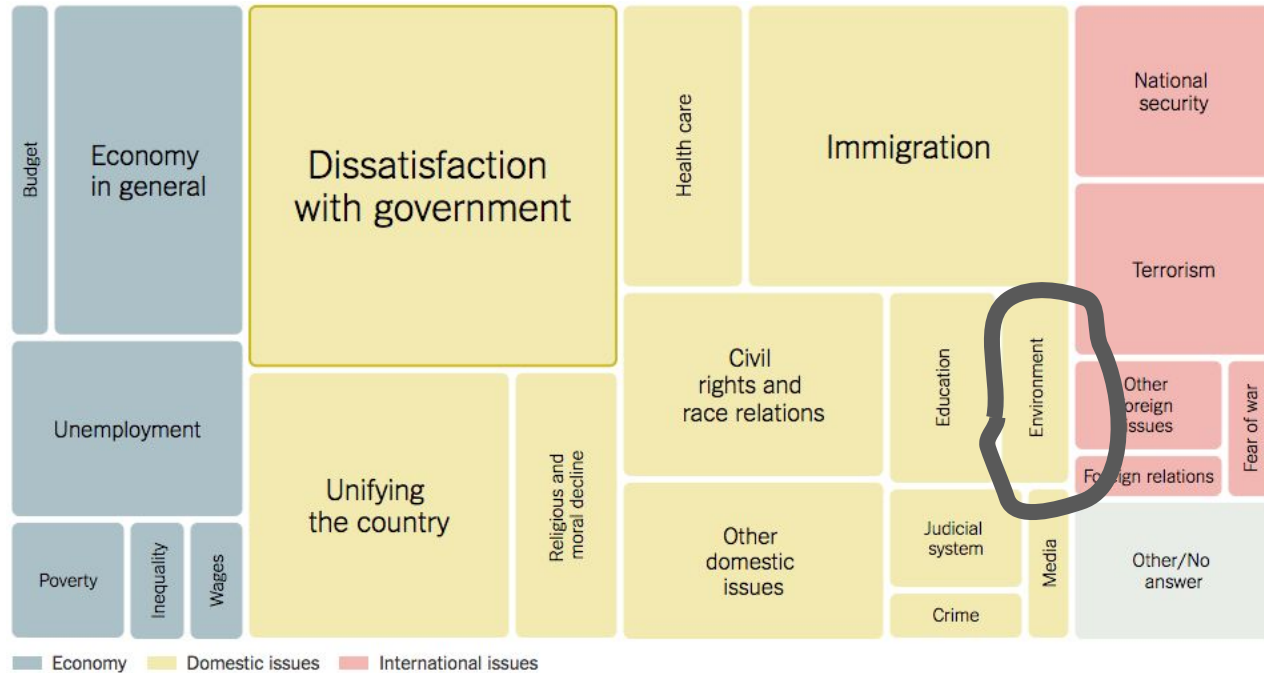
The Issue of Global Warming Is Personally Important to About Seven in Ten Americans



But
unprompted, it
figures less



But
unprompted, it
figures less



(But we're
having a bit of a
moment)



Image credit or link goes
here - delete if not needed



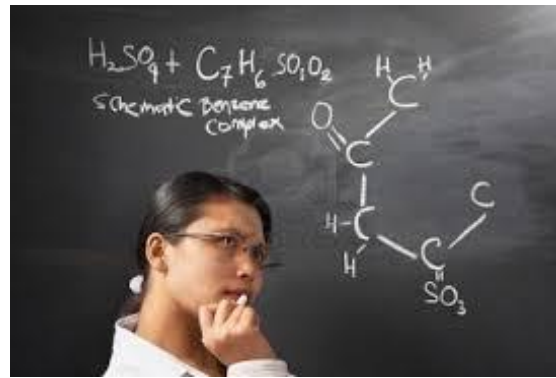
Changing social norms? (UK data!!)

- 63% of UK public agree we are facing a climate emergency (69% young people)
- 66% willing to make sacrifices for the planet as long as others are doing the same
- In last three of YouGov's polls - 17% put environment amongst top three issues facing the country (24% mid April)



What doesn't work

Communicating
climate change
is hard to do



SPECIAL REPORT GLOBAL W

TIM

**BE
WORRIED.
BE VERY
WORRIED.**

Climate change isn't some vague future problem—it's already damaging the planet at an alarming pace. Here's how it affects you, your kids and their kids as well

EARTH AT THE **TIPPING POINT**
HOW IT THREATENS YOUR **HEALTH**
HOW **CHINA & INDIA** CAN HELP
SAVE THE WORLD—OR DESTROY IT
THE CLIMATE **CRUSADERS**

Overwhelming and disastrous, with no solutions

"I feel, I don't know... I feel like emotionally abused. I don't want to think about that and it's just like, why are you showing that right now?... It causes emotions but not nice ones. I just feel like, I want to go away, I don't want to be confronted with that."

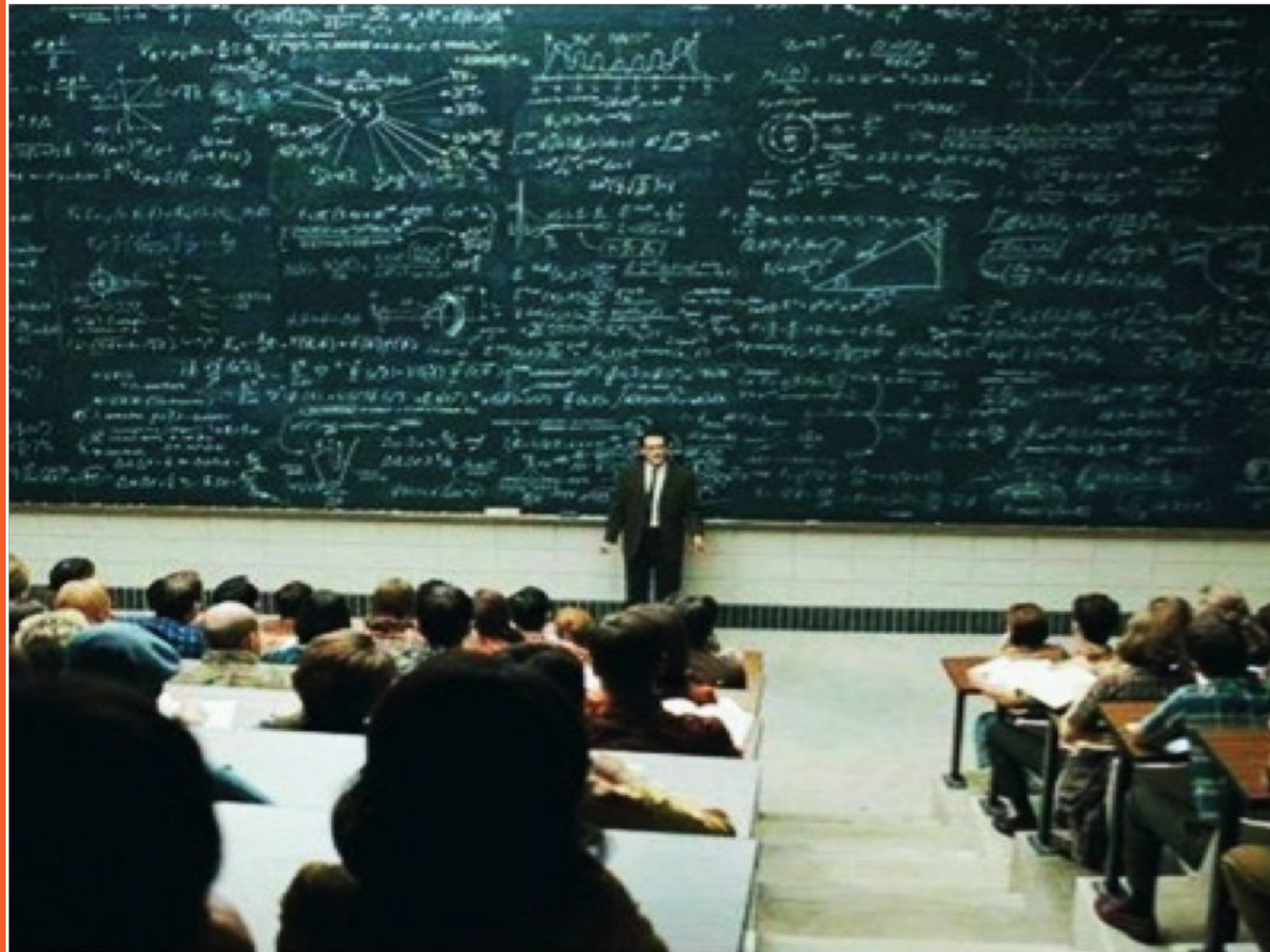


Psychological distance

Distant impacts both in space and time are discounted

Eg "By 2050, four million people, and around 70% of today's Arctic infrastructure, will be threatened by thawing permafrost, the report notes."

Just facts and graphs



It's your fault

Blame



It's your fault

"if climate change really were a religion, it would be a wretched one, offering guilt and blame and fear but no resource to salvation or forgiveness"

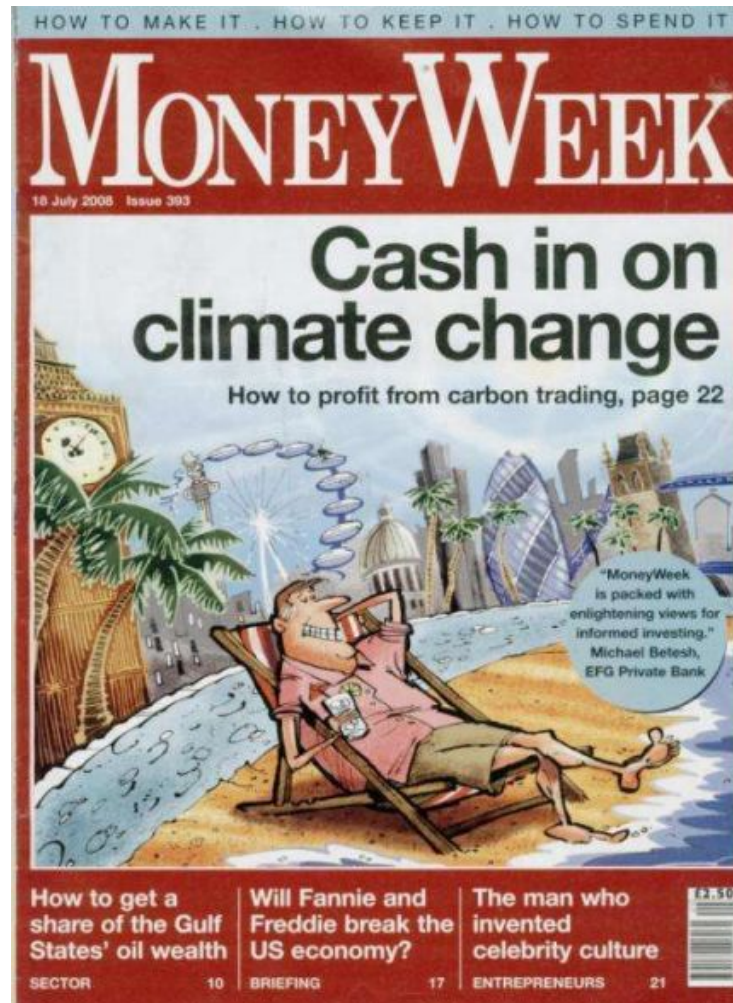
(Marshall, 2015)



Dave Coverly

"MISS WILCOX, SEND IN SOMEONE TO BLAME."

Focusing on
financial
incentives





What works better



Strong communications say....

This is who you are.

This is what you care about

Other people like you agree with this.

When you do this you belong more to
your group.

And the world becomes more how you
want it to be

Reframing
threat - a
typical climate
storyline

A terrifying future is coming.
Whatever we do it will be a
disaster.

You must immediately give things
up to prevent it being even worse.

And even then it may be too late.

...a different
version

Big changes are already
happening.

We are resilient, creative and
proud of who we are. We can work
together to prepare and protect
ourselves.

When we do, we can make the
future better.

...a different
version

Identity

Big changes are already
happening.

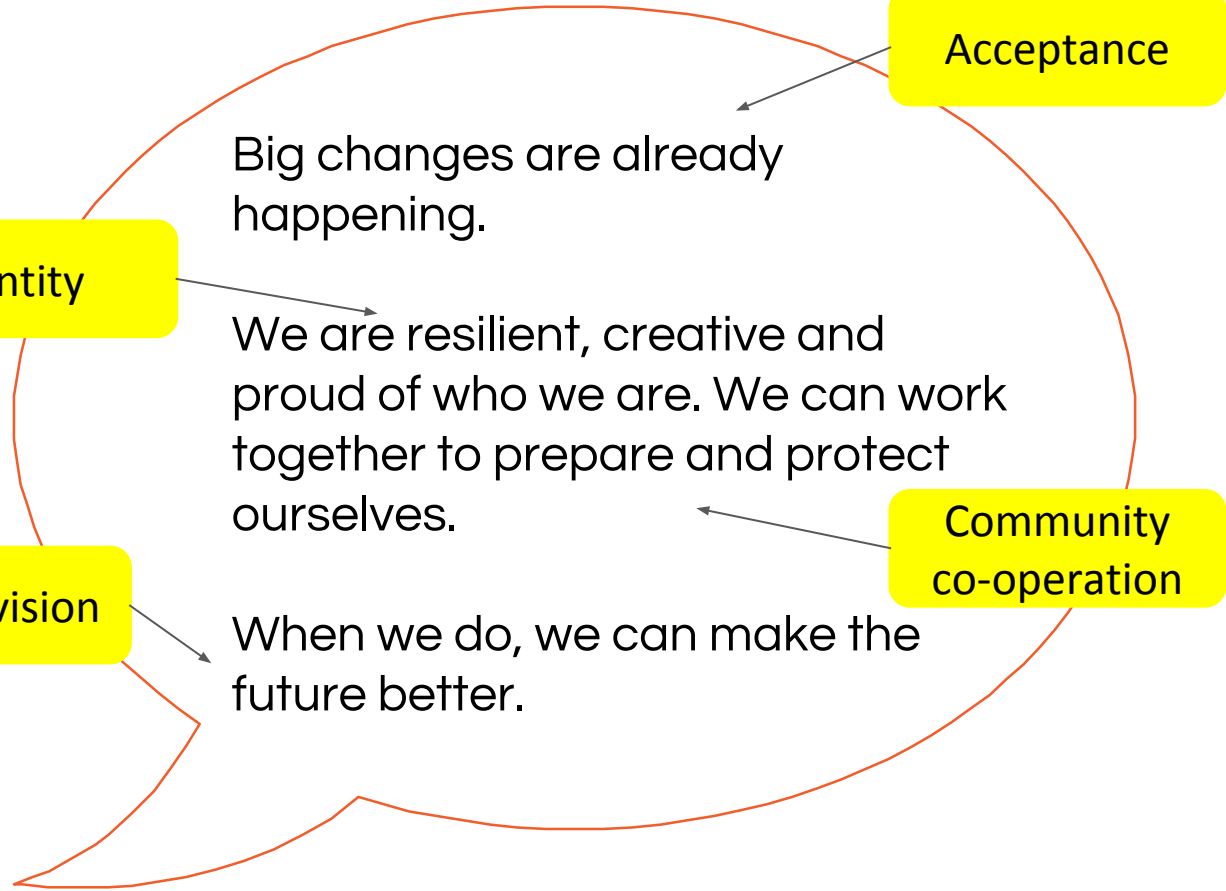
Acceptance

We are resilient, creative and
proud of who we are. We can work
together to prepare and protect
ourselves.

Positive vision

When we do, we can make the
future better.

Community
co-operation



Trusted communicators

But messages
cannot be
delivered with
clever words

They have to be
delivered with
authenticity

By someone we
trust



Authentic and
trustworthy?





What makes communicators trustworthy?

Visible

Like us –using our language and values

Concerned about us

Knowledgeable

Accountable

Honest

Without personal ego or interest

Not who you would expect – (crossing sides)

Shared values and identity and the joy of belonging



For the love of.....





Communicating across
boundaries

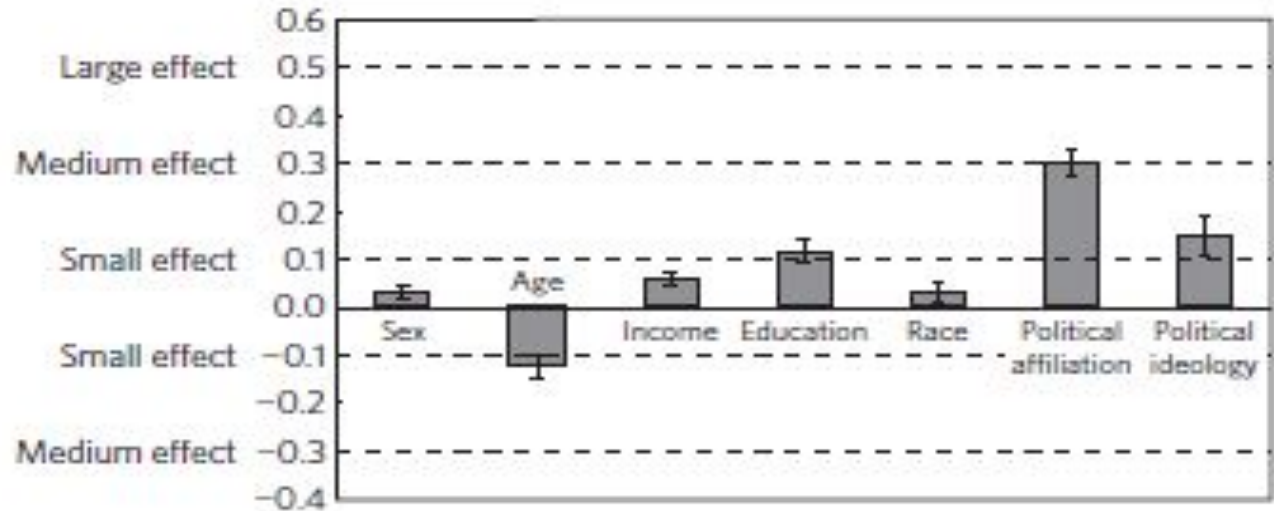


Discussion with (a different) neighbour

What kind of person do you find the most challenging to talk to about climate change in your personal life? Why? What kind of views do they hold?

3 mins

Political
worldview is by
far the greatest
influence on
attitudes to
climate change

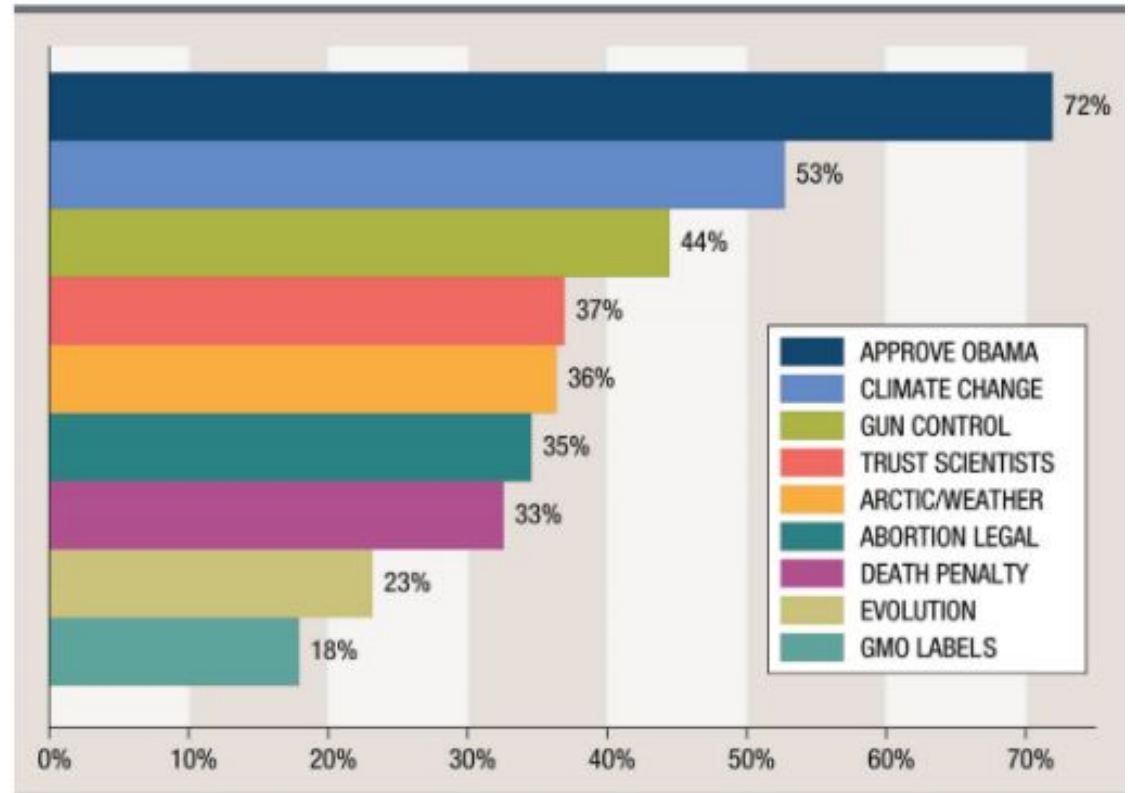


Hornsey M. et al., 2016, Meta-analyses of the determinants and outcomes of belief in climate change, 25 polls, 171 studies over 56 nations

In the US,
climate change
is more
polarised than
any other issue

*Do You Trust Scientists
About the Environment?*
2014, Carsey Institute,
University of New
Hampshire

FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEMOCRAT AND REPUBLICAN RESPONSES





Reasons for the polarisation

Climate change is challenging for conservatives (and everyone)

The dominant communicators, language and narratives are often liberal (out-group)

There is no compelling and distinct conservative narrative for accepting and acting on climate change - but there is for rejecting it

Concerned conservatives misread peer group values and suppress their concerns.

Identity of env movement alienates conservatives



Climate march, New York,
September 2014

4 key centre-right values



DOs and DON'Ts for engaging the centre-right

Avoid 'big claims', use personal testimony, be honest & authentic

Avoiding waste, keeping things in balance, continuity with the past are all key frames

Co-benefits are good (but don't call them that!) - health, wellbeing...and climate change doesn't need to lead (but shouldn't be lost)



Discussion - questions/
thoughts?



Examples of climate change communication



Case study 1: Defra act on CO2 - bedtime stories

Audience - general public

Message - it will affect your children

Messenger - voiceover (ad agency)

Medium - TV ad (also on youtube)

Action - go to website



Case study 2: What would Jesus drive?

From the Evangelical Environmental Network

A conversation within conservative churches about climate change and lifestyles



Group discussion

What did you think about these videos?

Did they affect you?

Do you think think they would affect someone else?

Do they follow good principles of climate change communication?



**What does this mean for
your projects?**



Project group discussions

Which of the principles we've discussed are relevant to your project? In what ways?

Do they challenge any aspect of your project?

Do they give you any ideas for new approaches or work?



Lunch



Mainstreaming low-carbon lifestyles



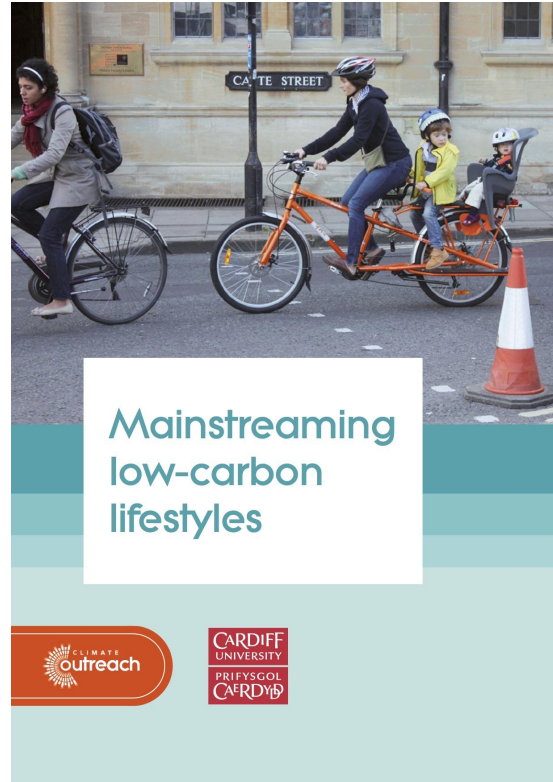
Why does behavioural change matter?

1.5C = lifestyle change

Governments in democratic countries will not run significantly ahead of where they perceive public opinion to be

Even win-win solutions won't be taken up if they are viewed as unpopular or irrelevant

Report



Based on Cardiff University's Low Carbon Lifestyles & Behavioural Spillover (CASPI) programme

What low-carbon behaviours do you regularly take part in? (UK data)



Shifting course





Behavioural spillover?

Doesn't happen automatically

- Motivations matter: needs to be based on intrinsic motivations
- Behaviours need to be seen as similar
- Better to start with harder behaviours?



mainstreaming
low-carbon
lifestyles

Engaging the public in behavioural change requires...

Targeting audience values and identity

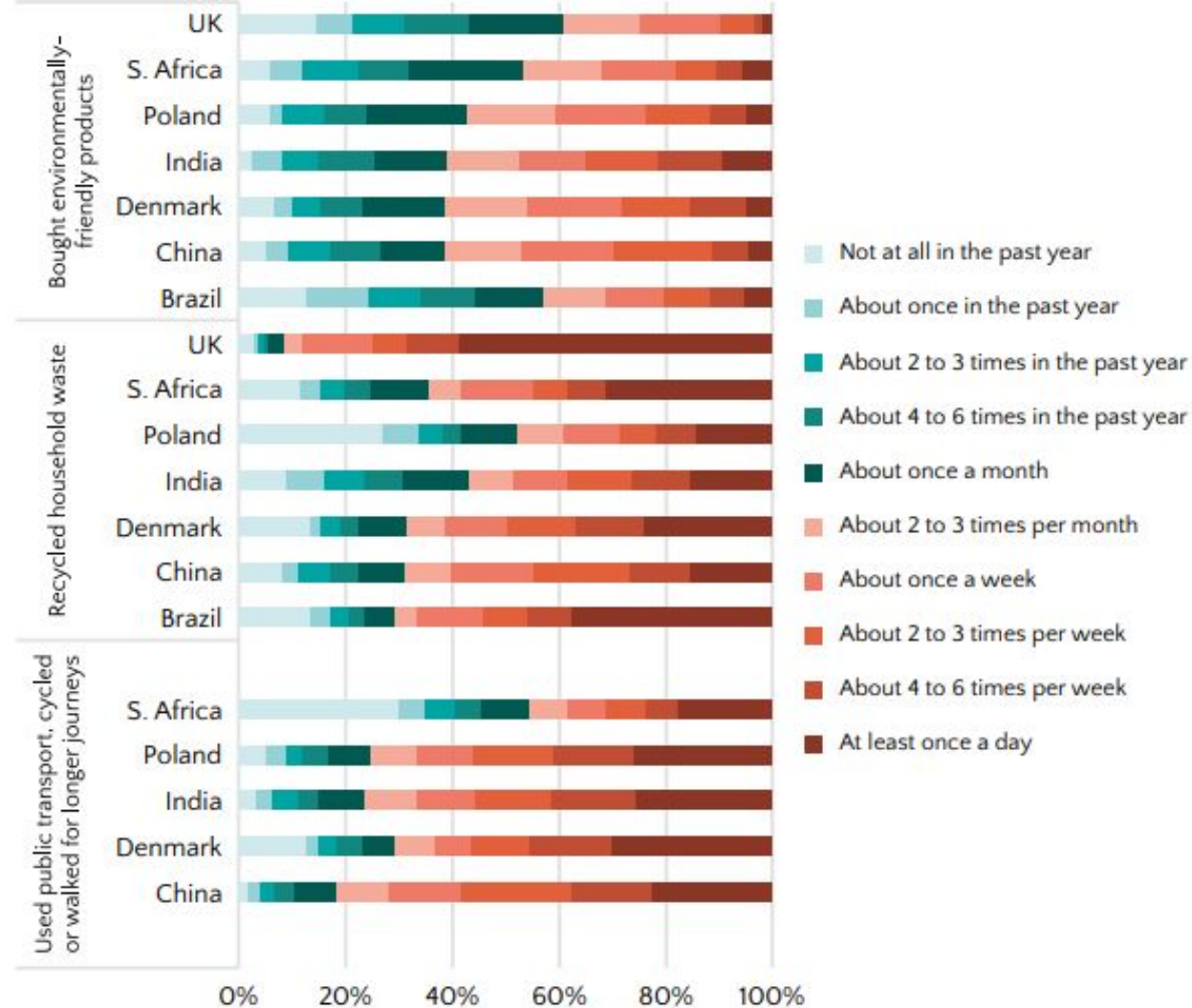
Changing (and using) social norms

Creating positive narratives and building people's belief they can make a difference

Focusing on behaviours that matter

Getting the timing right

Variations in low-carbon behaviours across seven countries (social norms)





Wellbeing and taking action

People engaging in 'green' behaviours report higher wellbeing (including in Brazil, China, Poland)

Benefits for health, equity, family etc - rather than sacrifices



'Nudge' vs citizen's engagement

Limiting temp rise to 1.5C means profound transformation of societies

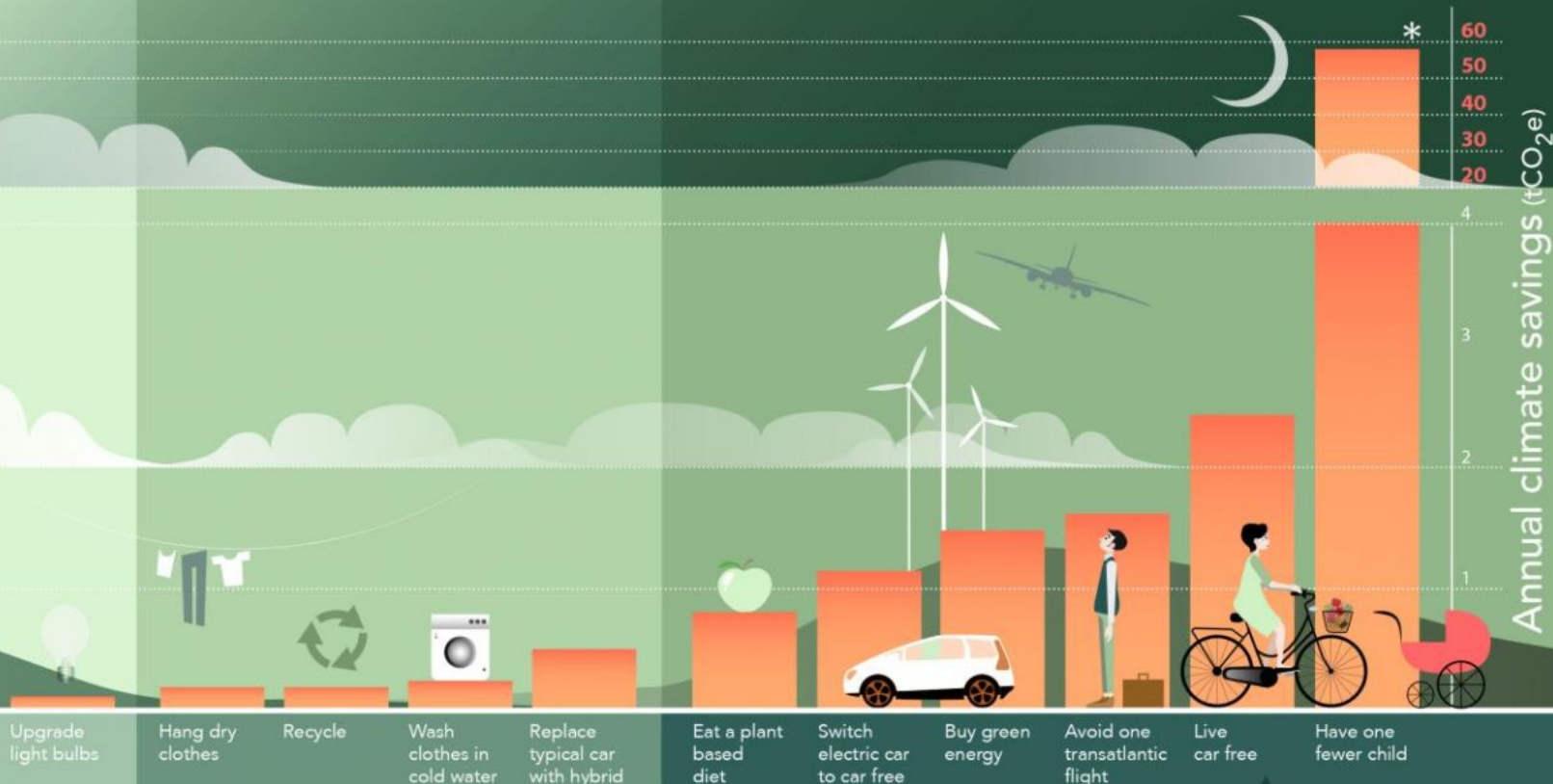
We need citizen's engagement for this level of radical change - rather than 'nudge' techniques

Citizens panels could also help build political mandate?

Personal choices to reduce your contribution to climate change

* Cumulative emissions from descendants; decreases substantially if national emissions decrease.

Average values for developed countries, based on current emissions.



Low Impact

< 0.2 tCO₂e

Moderate Impact

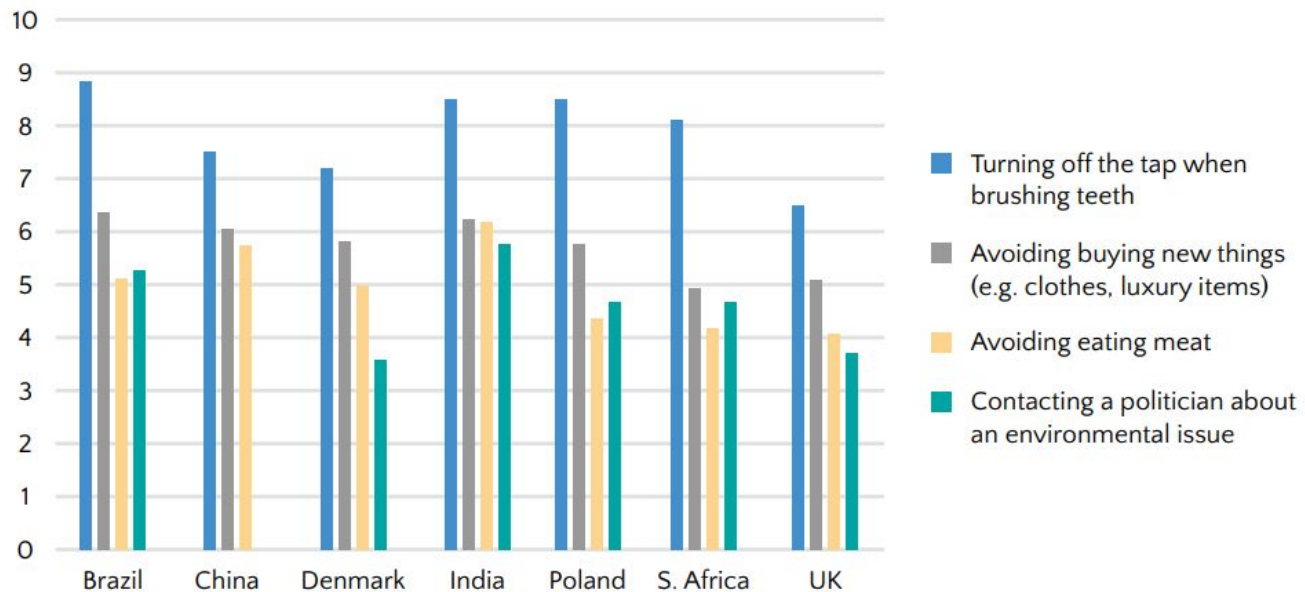
0.8-0.2 tCO₂e

High Impact

> 0.8 tCO₂e

What people think makes a difference

Responses across seven countries to the question: "To what extent do you feel that the following actions have an impact in terms of protecting the environment?"





Choosing the moment

A lot of behaviour is habitual - and therefore resistant to change

A 'moment of change' can destabilise habits eg having a baby, moving house, political/social disruption etc.



Discussion / thoughts?



Catalysing a new visual
language for climate change

A restricted visual vocabulary



Climate visuals

Climate Visuals

Seven principles for visual climate change communication (based on International social research)



[About](#) [Images](#) [Evidence](#) [Blog](#) [Events](#)

Climate Visuals is an evidence-based image library to catalyse public engagement



Read more

climatevisuals.org

Chapman, DA.; Corner, A; Markowitz, E; Webster, R. (2016). Climate visuals: A mixed methods investigation of public perceptions of climate images in three countries Global Environmental Change 41, 172–182

Show real
people...



"I think that family needs
to get out a little more"



"It looks like real work is
going on"



"A feelgood factor"...but
also "gimmicky" and
"staged"

....interacting
with real
solutions



Tell new and
powerful stories

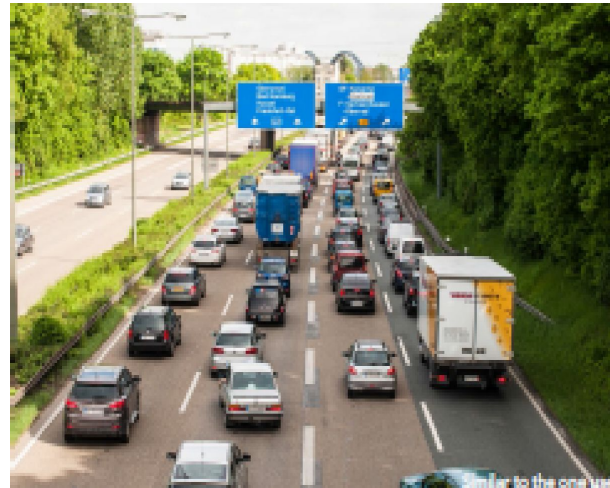


climatevisuals.org

Show climate causes at scale



"[this] is not climate change because that's normal to drive a car. We can't stop that. It's normal."



Images of highways were well understood, and prompted a desire to change behaviour.

Pictures of
climate
impacts affect
people



...but can be
overwhelming.

Pair with
solutions



Show local, but
serious,
impacts



Be careful with protest imagery



“...probably used the same face paint to paint himself at the Glastonbury music festival this weekend, and rubbed out climate and put Kanye West.”

Protest from
impacted
communities hit
harder





Discussion / thoughts?

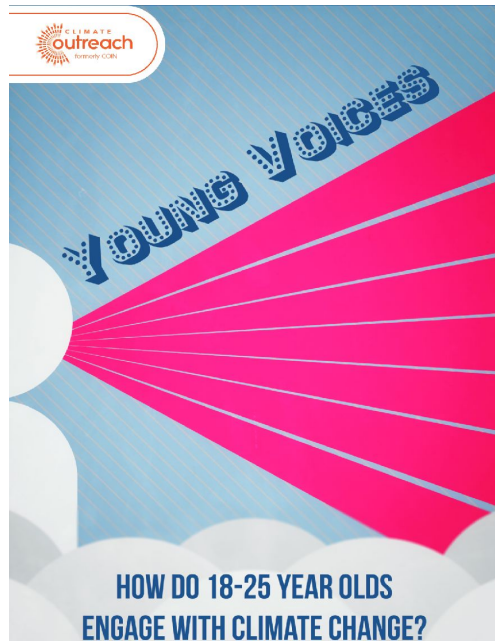


Mainstreaming climate action among young adults

The climate generation?



Young voices & CLIMATES



How do young people engage with climate change?

Focus Article

How do young people engage with climate change? The role of knowledge, values, message framing, and trusted communicators

Adam Corner,^{1*} Olga Roberts,¹ Sybille Chiari,² Sonja Völler,³ Elisabeth S. Mayrhuber,¹ Sylvia Mandl¹ and Kate Monson¹

How to cite this article
WIREs Clim Change 2013, 6:523–534. doi: 10.1002/wcc.153



CLIMATES - Support work with a network of over 50 youth activists over the last two years

- Increase number of young adults involved
- Broaden the appeal of campaigns



Awareness vs engagement

90% of European young people aged 18-25
see climate change as a serious problem
(Eurobarometer, 2015)

But - only 5% engaged in environment NGOs
In comparison, 13% are involved in local
community NGOs

**Reflects findings elsewhere - high levels
awareness, lower levels of concern &
engagement**



Are young people's perceptions of climate change different?

- Concern – high, but rarely the 'top priority...
- Distance – happening 'now', but still 'not here' and probably 'not to them'
- Negative emotion/affect – but somewhat less fatalistic?
- Low levels of 'scepticism' – but not necessarily high levels of knowledge
- Government has primary responsibility for climate change



Disengagement from mainstream politics

- 1983 - 73% of 18–24 year olds voted in the UK general election. 2010 - 42% voted
- Scepticism about mainstream politics
- A result of job insecurity, individualisation and neoliberal ideology?
- 'Cause oriented' politics vs 'voting politics'



Seeking a sense of agency

'Self-efficacy' is the belief that:

- a. It is possible to make meaningful change if you act
- b. You have the capacity to act

Both a cause & effect of performance

The **key determinant** of YP engagement



Broadening the appeal of campaigns aimed at young adults (1)

- Move beyond activist identities: activism as the 'new normal'
- Make use of moments of transition (eg a move to university)
- Focus on the here and now - and short-term wins



Broadening the appeal of campaigns aimed at young adults (2)

- Values and emotions are just as important as facts (same as everyone else!)
- Consider cultural context
- Financial and career context is important



Living action on climate change - no just online

Need to engage directly & experientially -
education, outreach, social activity

Peer to peer

Tailored to social and geographical
context

Ownership of action



Shifts

Need a shift from individual -> collective action (social norms, peer imitation and group efficacy)

Future -> now

Support -> challenge politicians

Theory -> experience

Low carbon jargon -> relevance



Discussion / thoughts?



Exploring the implications -
group discussions of each
theme



**What does it mean for your
project?**



Thank you

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Communication is complex

**Rational (analytic)
reasoning**

Numbers
Data
Symbols
Logic



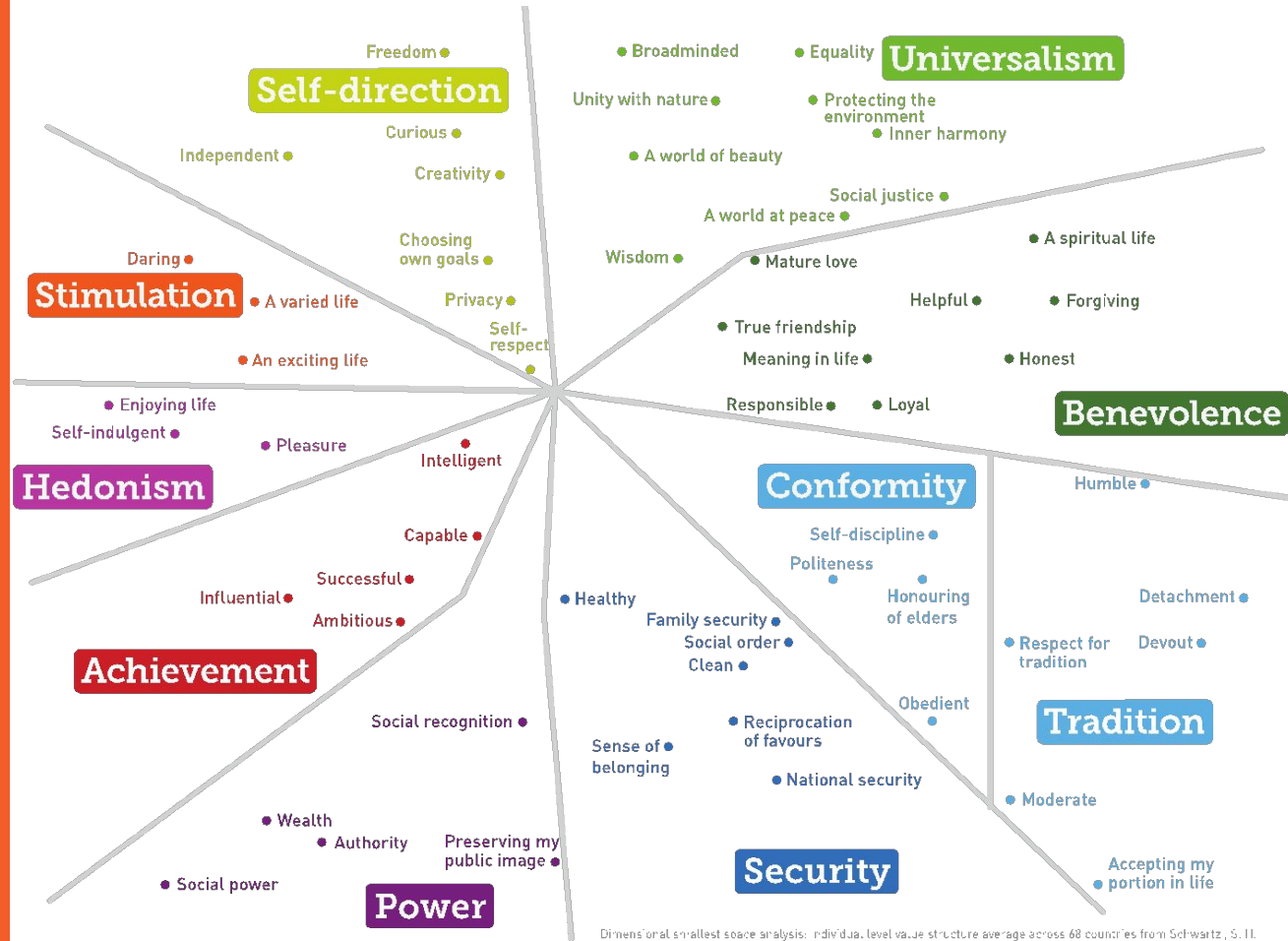
**Emotional (affective)
reasoning**

Proximity
Experience
Metaphor
Social signals
Story

Evaluation of Risk

Prioritisation of Threat

Schwartz values map



Dimensional smallest space analysis: individual level value structure average across 68 countries from Schwartz, S.H. (2006). Basic human values: theory, measurement, and applications. *Revue française de sociologie*, 42, 249-288.