



Connecting community and climate

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About the project

- Goal

- Get up to speed with existing research into the public's knowledge and attitudes about climate change

- 60+ sources reviewed

- Sections

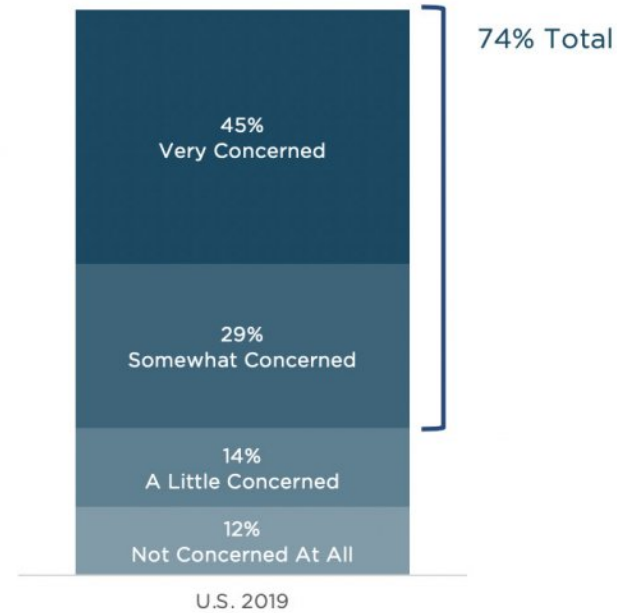
- Attitudes
- Understanding your audience
- Barriers
- Motivations
- Behaviors to focus on
- Messaging

Attitudes about climate change

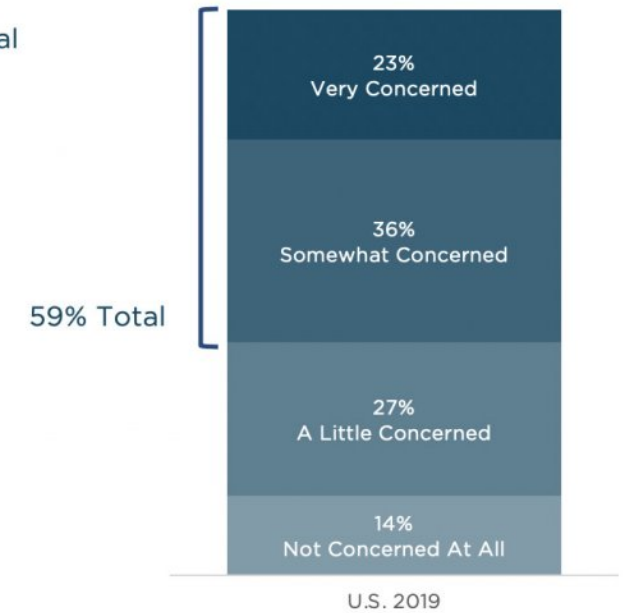
Attitudes: Concern

- Most people are concerned about the reality of climate change
- People underestimate how much others agree

How **personally concerned** are you about climate change?
1,000 respondents nationally



How concerned **do you think other people around you** are about climate change?
1,000 respondents nationally



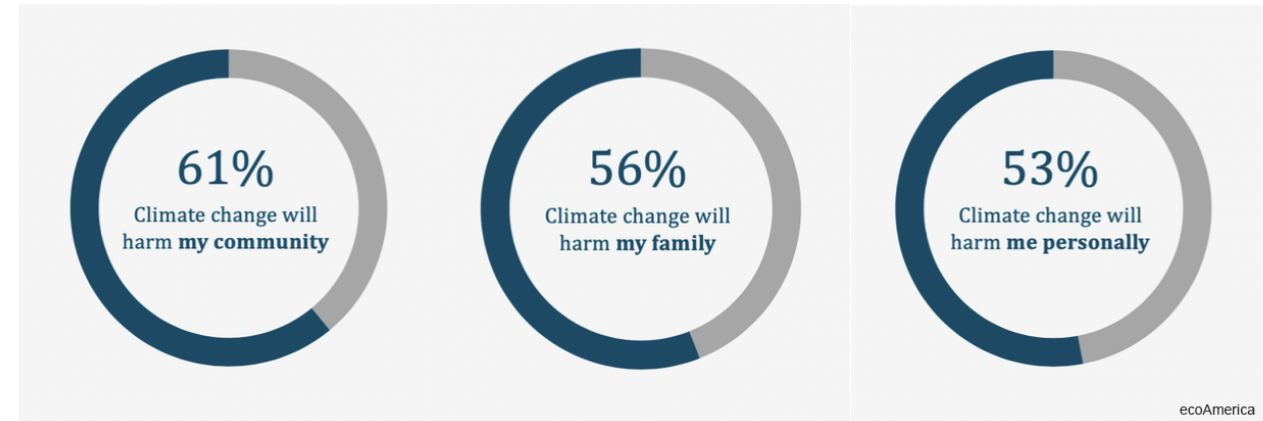
ecoAmerica



Attitudes: Impact and emotions

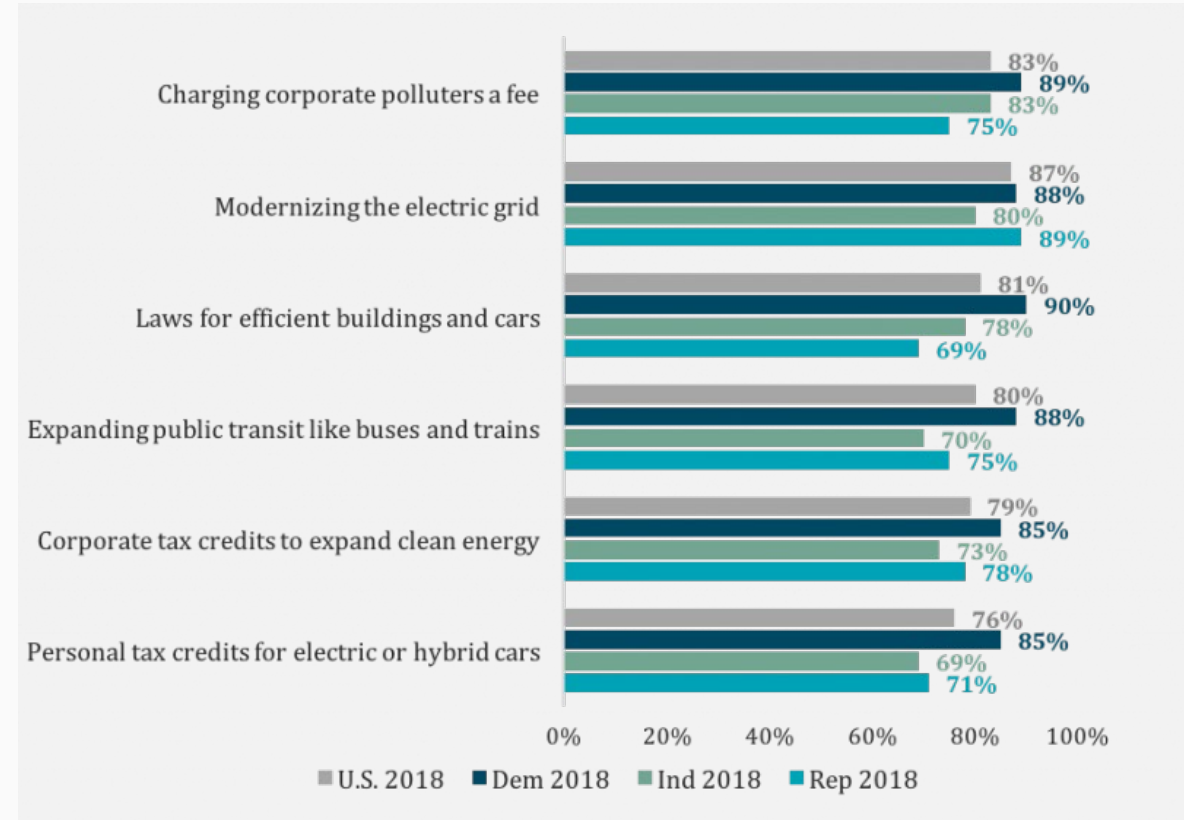
- People increasingly say climate change will impact them or their communities
- People feel a mix of hopeful, resilient, disgusted, angry, outraged, and helpless

How much do you think climate change will harm the following? 800 national respondents, % "A great deal" and "A moderate amount"



Attitudes: Desire for action

Over time, Americans are becoming more worried, more engaged, and more supportive of climate solutions



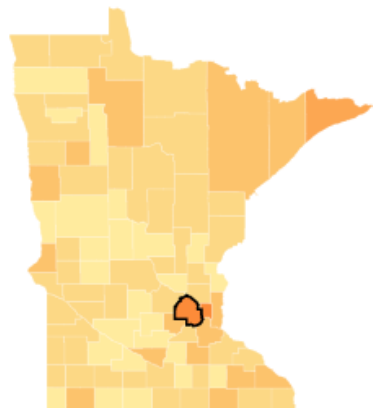
Hennepin County residents

- Believe more strongly than Minnesota and the U.S. overall that climate change is happening and is caused by human activities
- Gap in knowledge about the causes of global warming and scientific consensus
- Highest concerns are for plants and animals and future generations; lowest concern is for them personally
- High support for policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and extremely high support for global warming to be taught in schools.
- 75% say they value environmental protection over economic growth.
- 60% say local officials should do more to address climate change, 71% think individuals need to do more

Worried about global warming



Hennepin County,
Minnesota



Minnesota average (62%)

Global warming will harm future generations

81%

Global warming will harm people in the developing countries

74%

Global warming will harm people in the US

67%

Global warming will harm me personally

46%

Understanding your audience

Understanding your audience

Americans tend to agree that climate change is not a good thing and we have a responsibility to do something about it.

People differ more on values, political ideology, and religious views than demographics.

Despite differences, there is a strong foundation of public support for climate action.

Audience trends based on demographics

- People who are younger, female, racial minorities, more highly educated, and politically liberal tend to be more concerned
- White men tend to be less concerned about environmental issues



Source: Interfaith Power and Light

Geography

- People in urban areas are more concerned about climate change and feel the most empowered to do something about it
- People in communities already facing the highest disparities most likely to be impacted by climate change
- People in prosperous suburbs have the highest per-capita carbon emissions.



Segmenting based on attitudes, values,
concern, engagement

Audience groups based on attitudes, values, concern, engagement

1. Actively engaged champions and leaders (about 20%)
2. Concerned but not very active (about 30%)
3. Unsure, disengaged, difficult to reach (about 40%)
4. Actively opposed (about 10%)

Actively engaged champions and leaders

Know it's
happening and
human-caused

Understand
scientific consensus

Think it's an urgent,
personal threat

Moderate to liberal
Democrats

More likely women,
middle-aged,
upper-income,
highly educated

Live in urban and
suburban areas

Eager for
immediate action

Support aggressive
national response

Likely to be taking
action and want to
do more

Focus on motivating political action, encourage them to be opinion leaders, provide tools to do more, and offer positive reinforcement and feedback to keep them motivated.



Concerned but not very active

Think it's a serious threat, but see it as distant in space and time

Somewhat understand causes and consensus

Broad diversity

Moderate Democrats with average civic involvement

Greater proportion of people of color

Focused on family and community

May be creating a plan to act

May feel overwhelmed and unsure where to start

Support strong national response

Many campaigns miss this group by being either too simplistic or too advanced. Provide emotional inspiration and information about solutions. Connect to benefits and what they care about to get over fear of change.



Unsure, disengaged, difficult to reach

Don't think it's personally important or urgent

Only somewhat aware of causes, consequences, and solutions

Think there is scientific disagreement

Broad diversity

Divided among Democrats and Republicans

Low levels of civic engagement

Traditional religious beliefs

Range of sub-groups

Modest support for action, may think we're doing enough

Don't seek out information

May easily change their minds

Interested in clean energy and green jobs

Use channels that have broad, mass appeal and incorporate narratives, visual imagery, humor, and attractive and highly credible sources. Use positive social norms and peer-to-peer outreach. Promote small and measurable actions.



Actively opposed

Certain it's not happening or human-caused

Believe they are well-informed

Think there is a lot of scientific disagreement

Well-educated, conservative, higher income, white, male

Traditional religious beliefs

Live in small towns or rural areas

Value freedom, self-reliance, economic growth

Oppose government intervention

Concerned about limits on economic growth and impacts of climate policies

Decide if it's worth investing in this group. May be interested in clean energy for self-sufficiency. Emphasizing scientific consensus may resonate.

Biggest opportunity to reach

- Large group in the middle who is or could be generally supportive of climate action
 - Focused on family and community
 - Focused on moral responsibility to protect God's creation
- Big opportunity doesn't mean it's easy
 - Only 40% of this group believe climate change is primarily caused by human activities
 - 83% believe that climate change is not a hoax



An aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with a blue overlay. The image shows several tall skyscrapers and a dense urban environment. The text is centered over the middle of the image.

Barriers, motivation, and behaviors to prioritize

Barriers to climate action

- Climate change is complex and overwhelming
- Misinformation increases confusion and polarization
- Talking about climate change is not a social norm
- Environmentalism perceived as elite, wealthy, and white
- Lack of urgency and competing priorities



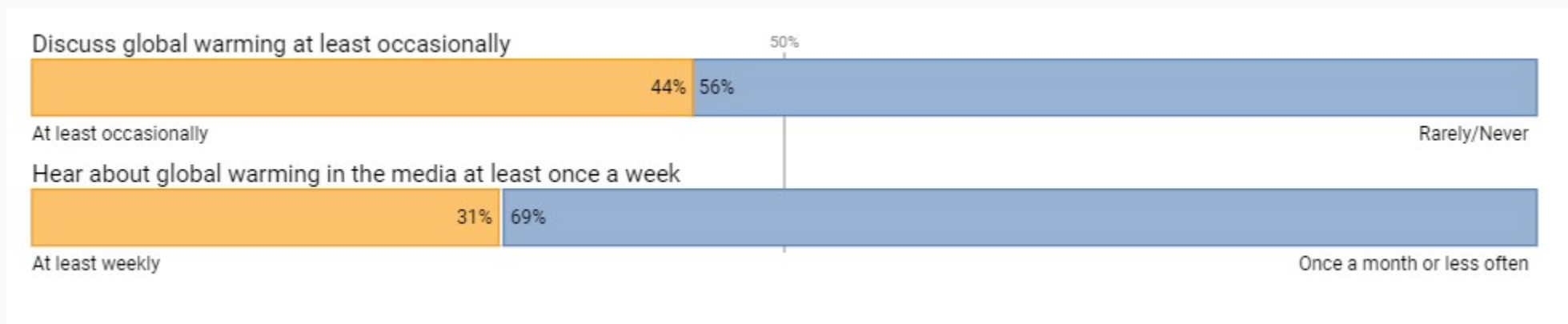
Motivation to care about and act on climate

What motivates us...	Why it motivates...
Positive social norms	Seeing the issue fits with our identity and values and knowing that people like me care about this makes the issue relevant
Self-transcendent values	Evoking care for others, community, environment, and future increases our intrinsic motivation to act
Positive or productive emotions	Feeling a sense of worry, which balances concern with interest and hope, increases urgency
Building confidence and capacity	Knowing what actions to take, feeling capable of taking those actions, and understanding how the actions are impactful makes us more likely to act

Key behavior: Talking about climate change

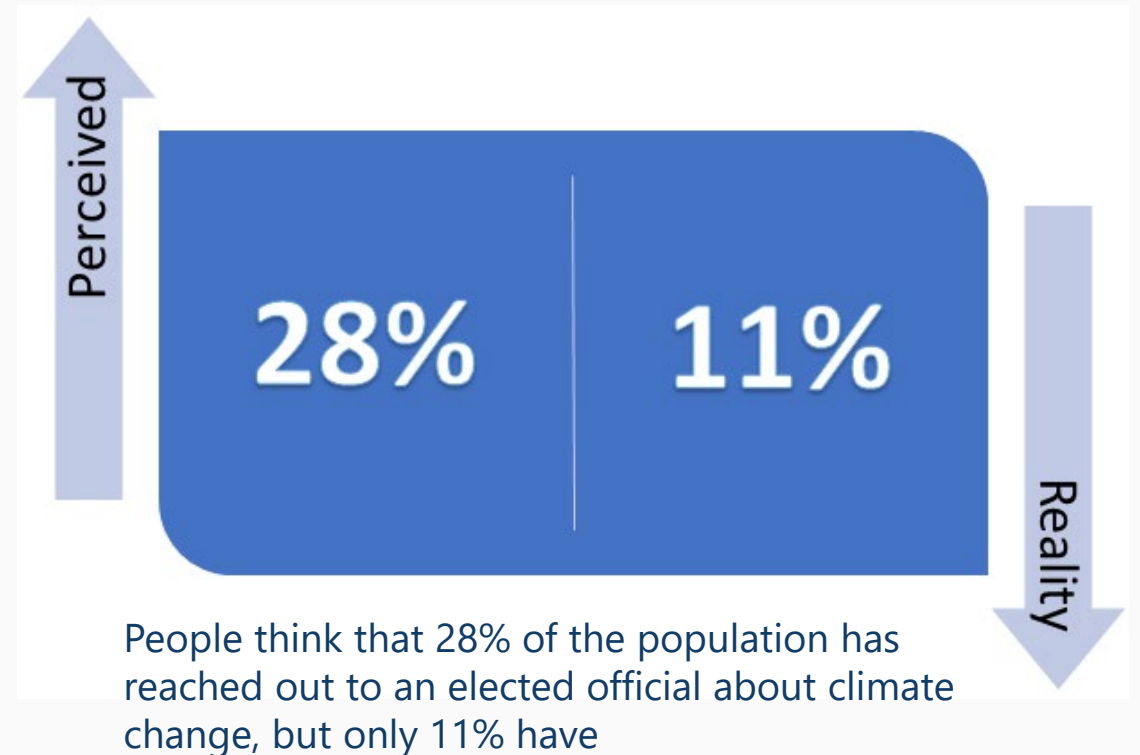
- Helps build social norms and promote social change
- Helps overcome the false assumptions we make of others
- Ample opportunity to increase dialogue

Climate conversations in Hennepin County (Yale Climate Opinion Maps, 2020)



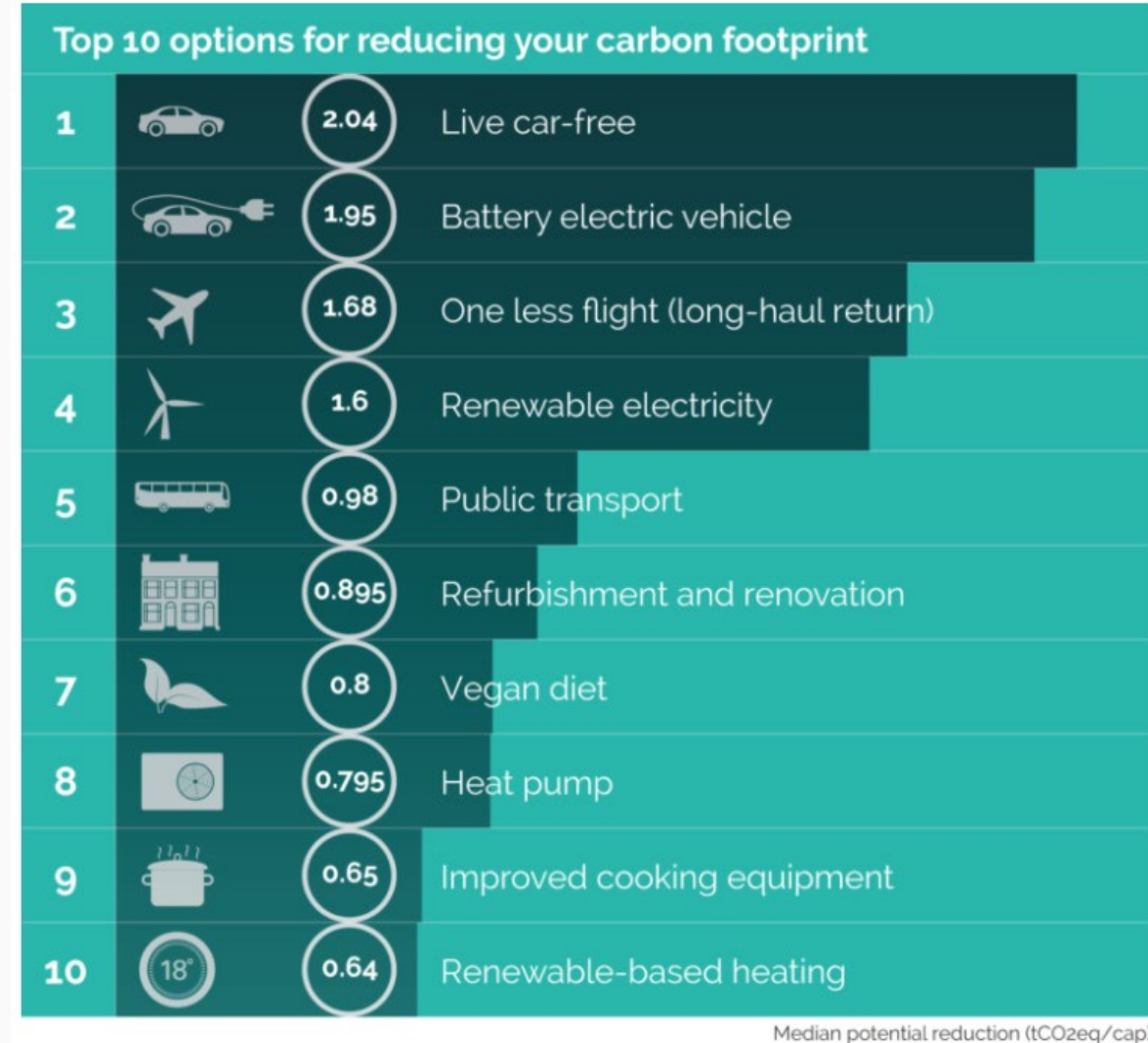
Key behavior: Becoming politically and civically engaged

- Increases political support for systems change
- People support climate policies and climate education and would generally be interested in taking some political action
- May think others are doing it or that people like them don't take these types of actions



Key behavior: Focusing on highest impact actions

- Individual actions:
 - Pressure government and businesses to make policy reforms
 - Make it more likely that individuals will advocate for larger changes
- Connect to collective actions
 - Encourage people to use their actions to communicate and advocate for larger change



Messaging

What do we call the problem?

Term	Rationale
Climate change	More scientifically accurate but polarizing and too gentle and passive
Global warming	More emotional engagement
Climate crisis, failure, shock, disruption, breakdown, emergency	Communicate urgency and create tension (our deeply held goals and values don't align with our current actions)
Damage to the climate	Implies something we've chosen and can prevent
Environmental destruction	Resonates more with conservative audiences

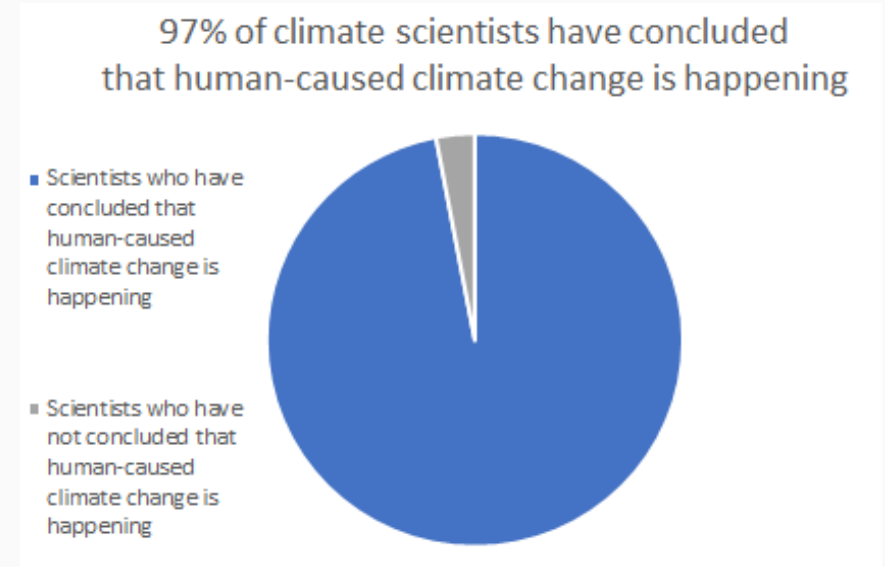
Explaining the science



Heat-trapping
blanket



Regular vs.
rampant CO2



Scientific
consensus and
misinformation

Framing: Connect climate to our lives

- Climate as the foundation of our lives
- Energy-climate connection
- Clean, homegrown energy vs. dirty, outdated fuels



Framing: Make it personal and local

- Move beyond an “environmental issue”
- Focus on local impacts and local solutions
- Speak to tangible benefits
 - Attract new businesses rather than improve economy
 - Build strong communities rather than being resilient



Framing: Avoid negative emotions and guilt

- Evoke positive solutions and a vision for a better future
- Focus on messages of empathy, freedom, and choice
- Acknowledge people are being asked to make difficult decisions



Framing: Future full of opportunity and innovation

- Position climate solutions as the next big thing that align with the American dream
- Express a can-do attitude to evoke values of opportunity, fairness, hard work, patriotism
- Present an aspirational choice to invest in a better future
- Talk about how solutions are here and available to us now
- Explain how home-grown and local sources of energy ensure economic prosperity, heighten national security, create jobs, and improve our quality of life



Framing: Moral responsibility to future generations

- Emphasize we are facing a moment of choice
- Describe how the practical steps we take today are in the best interest of future generations
- Focus on the need to act now



Framing: Health impacts and benefits

- Connect to personal and family health and public health
- Elevate connections to higher quality of life, personal well-being, and increased sense of community from a low-carbon lifestyle



Framing: Avoiding wastefulness, risk, future losses

- Evoke need to protect people and places we care for
- Frame actions as a way to avoid risks and avoid future losses
- Explain the consequences for polluters



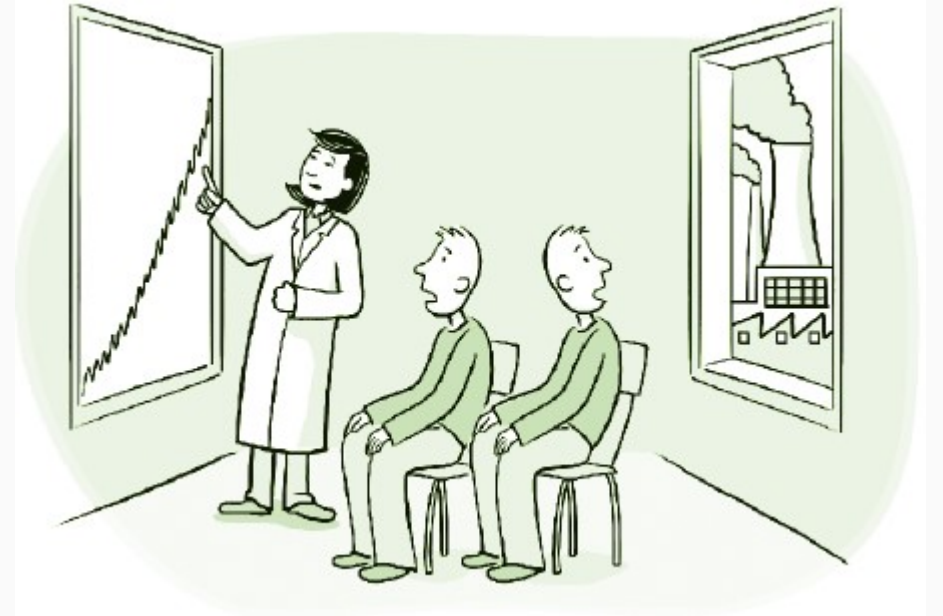
Delivering your message: Visuals

- Use real images of people showing emotion and taking action
- Show solutions on a societal scale when focusing on individual behaviors
- Use less familiar images to tell a new and thought-provoking story
- Show local impacts and solutions



Delivering your message: Include both data and emotional stories

- Emotional stories inspire urgency and creates connections
- Data increases knowledge and informs decision-making
- The messenger just as important as the message



Source: Center for Environmental Decisions, Columbia University

Tell a story about

- Your vision, and the urgency to act now, collectively, toward creating that vision
- How the world is not keeping up with our values and aspirations
- The benefits beyond ourselves
 - Sense of purpose
 - Connection to others
 - Belonging to something greater
- Collective, systemic actions
 - People are more likely to believe that we can make a difference, rather than I can make a difference



So, what can I do?

Ask yourself:



Source: Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, *How to Save a Planet* podcast

And also:

- What can we do?
 - What organizations are you involved with?
 - What systems can you influence?
 - Who is your team?


Resources

- hennepin.us/climate-action
 - Tips for talking about climate change
 - Figuring out where to focus your climate action
 - Climate education resources
 - Explaining the science of climate change (*coming soon*)
- Connecting community and climate summary

What we can do: Community solutions and individual actions

We all have a shared responsibility to do more to combat climate change and protect our local environment. These articles provide tips and resources for taking action at home and in your community. There are so many ways to take action on climate change, and additional articles and resources will be added regularly.

Choose a category

Engaging and encouraging others 

So, what can I do? Where to focus your climate action

When thinking about climate



Tips for talking about climate change

Having more conversations about climate change is important for



Teaching about climate change

Teaching about climate change can be complicated, but educators

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