

# How We Follow Climate Change: Climate News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries

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Waqas Ejaz, Mitali Mukherjee, Richard Fletcher,  
and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen



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Published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism with the support of the European Climate Foundation (ECF).

## Executive Summary

In this report, we use online survey data collected in August and September 2022 to document and understand how people in eight countries – Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA – access news and information about climate change. A large majority of our respondents across these countries recognise that almost all climate scientists believe that climate change is caused by humans and are worried about the impact, but above and beyond basic understanding of the scientific consensus and recognition of the climate crisis, it is important to understand people’s attitudes towards climate change news, including who they trust as sources of information, how climate news makes them feel, and how well they think news media are performing covering it. Finally, we take some preliminary steps in understanding how each of these are correlated with climate change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

We are especially interested in how all of this varies in different parts of the world. As such, we analyse data from a range of countries. Some of these – France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA – are in the Global North, where patterns of news use and attitudes towards climate are relatively well mapped out. However, in others – like Brazil, India, and Pakistan – we know very little about how people access climate news and what they think about it, despite the fact that they are home to very large numbers of people and are exposed to greater climate risks (Eckstein et al. 2021; World Bank Group 2021). On this basis, we have made a special effort to collect data from these countries. However, this is an online survey and the data from India and Pakistan especially are thus subject to important limitations due to limited internet access (which we discuss in the methodology section) and should be treated as, at best, representative of the online, English-speaking populations (respondents in Pakistan could choose to complete the survey in Urdu but the vast majority selected an English survey).

We find that:

- About half of our respondents say they have engaged with climate change news or information in the past week, with about one in seven having seen some in the past two weeks. A large minority of less engaged users say they have come across climate change news or information less frequently than that. But only a tiny proportion say they never see any news or information about climate change.
- When we look at where people are getting news and information about climate change, the news media are clearly playing an important role. The single most important medium is television, identified by almost a third of our respondents as something they have used. About the same share say they have used various online news sources, including news sites as well as platforms including social media or messaging apps.
- In most of the countries covered, there is a significantly smaller share of younger people who have engaged with climate change news and information in the past week compared with older age groups. (While at first glance perhaps surprising, this is in line with extensive research documenting much lower levels of news use generally among younger age groups.)

- Asked about what sources respondents have seen featured in news and information about climate change, scientists and/or environmental activists are the most prominent, with governments and politicians or political parties not far behind. A smaller number recall hearing from international institutions such as the United Nations (UN), along with energy companies, followed by a number of less prominent types of sources.
- Overall, about half of respondents say they trust the news media as a source of news and information about climate change. People have very different levels of trust in the various sources they see featured in news coverage, ranging from high and broad-based trust in scientists to generally low levels of trust in energy companies and in politicians or political parties. Trust in environmental activists varies significantly from country to country.
- Trust in different sources varies by country as well as by political orientation, with those on the political right in many countries expressing less trust in both environmental activists and scientists. Despite these differences, in almost every country covered, a clear majority of those on the political right say they trust scientists as sources of climate change news and information.
- Selective news avoidance, where people actively try to avoid news often, even if they also continue to follow it at least some of the time, is almost as widespread for news on climate change as it is for news in general, ranging from 10% in Japan to 41% in India.
- Beyond reasons that seem tied to politics (e.g. perceptions of bias), several of the most frequently mentioned reasons for selective avoidance of climate change news and information have to do with exhaustion (e.g. ‘worn out’, ‘too much’), limited value (‘nothing new’, ‘nothing I can do’), and anxiety (‘a negative effect on my mood’).
- When it comes to misinformation, large majorities of respondents in every country covered are at least somewhat concerned about whether climate news and information they come across (whether online or offline) is false or misleading, and many say they themselves have come across climate change news or information they believe is false or misleading (though it is a minority who say that they see such content all the time or often).
- Asked about the media they suspect carry misinformation, television and online (including on social media or using messaging apps) are the most frequently mentioned, and among sources of suspected misinformation the most frequently mentioned are politicians, political parties, and governments. Whereas people in some countries rely more on television for news about climate change, people generally are slightly more likely to associate false information with online use, and within that, social media use.
- Those who consume climate change news more frequently are more likely to agree that they find it empowering in some way, either because it helps them know what to do in response, prompts them to consume more information, or gives them more accurate information. Frequent climate change news users are also less likely to feel that climate news contains conflicted views, leaves them confused, or is not relevant to them.



- People who consume climate change news or information on a weekly basis are more likely to think they know the basics of climate science, including for example the link between climate change and rising temperatures. However, we also see that only around 40% say that they know at least a moderate amount about ‘global policy initiatives to tackle climate change’ and their ‘government’s key policies on climate change’. This 40% figure is roughly the same for both infrequent climate news users and those who consume it on a weekly basis. This highlights that people think they know relatively little about domestic and international climate policy, and that more frequent news users feel no more well informed about climate policy.
- A large majority of respondents, ranging between 75% in the USA and 89% in India, say that they are either ‘somewhat’, ‘very’, or ‘extremely’ worried about the impact of climate change on people all over the world.
- Typically, those on the left are more likely to say they are worried about the impacts of climate change. However, it is equally important to note that, regardless of political leaning, more than half of our respondents in all countries said that they are worried about climate impacts.
- Across all eight countries, people who use climate news on a weekly basis are slightly more likely to say they will take some of the more popular actions in response, like recycling, throwing away less food, and using less energy. However, for the less popular actions, like flying less, switching to renewables for household energy, or eating less meat, there are no real differences by climate change news use.
- Results at the aggregate level show that the proportion who agree that their government ‘is paying enough attention to climate change’, ‘is acting in line with climate science’, ‘is doing everything it can to protect the planet for future generations’, and ‘is doing enough to help avoid a “climate catastrophe”’ range from 20% to 40% in most countries covered. Across all eight countries, people who use climate news on a weekly basis are even less likely to agree that their governments are doing enough to address climate change.

# Introduction

Newsrooms across the world will increasingly play a vital role around climate change. At the COP27 climate change summit, held in November 2022, the UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, did not pull any punches when he warned participating nations that ‘We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator’.<sup>1</sup> Journalists and news media have an important role to play in communicating about climate change, and they can help people all over the world understand the developments involved, the choices we make, and the implications they have. In 2022 alone climate news has been prominent as journalists reported on events like the devastating floods in Pakistan, acute crop failure in countries such as Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, frequent episodes of extreme heat in many parts of Europe, and a severe hurricane, named Ian, wreaking havoc across Cuba and southwest Florida. These ranged from eye-catching events to slow-burn developments, including an increase in the use of coal in many countries to reduce reliance on gas from Russia.

Climate change coverage is no longer limited to one genre or beat; journalists now report, inform about, and highlight wide-ranging issues, including decarbonisation and a transition to cleaner fuels, scrutinising policies, corporate strategies, and new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and discussing consumer behaviour and its consequences for climate. Climate change also carries an economic and social cost for audiences that journalists can draw attention to. In a statement released in November 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress; the direct costs to health are estimated to rise by as much as \$4 billion per year by the end of this decade (World Health Organization 2022).

While news reportage pivots to climate change conversations around calamitous events like flash floods, hurricanes, and extreme heat, and heaps attention on individual summits and key reports, journalists can also document two crucial climate metrics: policy action and inaction. These two filters can help keep the wider public informed about not just what organisations, nations, and communities say about climate, but also what they do, and whether their track record bears through.

The challenges posed by climate change have led to a rapidly growing academic literature on how to communicate to the public that it is happening, that it is human-caused, and that it requires personal and political action in response (Goldberg et al. 2019). News media can play a key role in this (Moser 2010), as shown by empirical evidence confirming that media coverage influences the policy agenda on climate change (Carmichael and Brulle 2016; Weingart et al. 2016), public discourse (Carvalho 2010), as well as people’s perceptions and behavioural intention regarding climate change (e.g. Arlt et al. 2011).

In this report, we use online survey data collected in August and September 2022 to document and understand how people in eight countries – Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27-delivered-scroll-down-for-all-english-version>

the UK, and the USA – access news and information about climate change. We also explore people's attitudes towards climate change news, including whom they trust as sources of information, how climate news makes them feel, and how well they think news media are performing. Finally, we take some preliminary steps in understanding how each of these are correlated with climate change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

Across all eight countries, people rely on a wide range of different media for news and information about climate, they hear from a diverse range of sources on the topic, and they will often interpret what they see differently depending on their own lived experience, personal background, and political sympathies. Importantly, however, across all these differences, a large majority of our respondents across all eight countries recognise that almost all climate scientists believe that climate change is caused by humans, and an even larger majority say they are worried about the impact climate change is having on people all over the world. (It is worth highlighting, both in research and in news coverage, the widespread public recognition of both the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change and the severe impact climate change is having, to avoid contributing to what media researchers call 'pluralistic ignorance' (see e.g. Geiger and Swim 2016), where people come to hold inaccurate beliefs about others' opinions and attitudes, erroneously thinking, for example, that others do not recognise climate change or its implications.)

In this report, we document and analyse the media people rely on for news and information, the sources they come across, and what they make of what they see.

## Methodology

The report is based on a survey conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network (OCJN) of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. Our purpose is to understand how people access and rate news and information about climate change. Data were collected by Ipsos using an online questionnaire fielded between 26 August and 21 September 2022 across Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA.

Ipsos was responsible for the fieldwork and provision of weighted data and tables only, and RISJ was responsible for the design, reporting, and interpretation of the results.

Samples in each country were assembled using nationally representative quotas for age group, gender, and region. The data were weighted to targets based on census or industry-accepted data for the same variables. The age range of the sample is 18–75. It is important to note that online samples will tend to under-represent the news consumption habits of people who are older and less affluent, meaning online use is typically over-represented and traditional offline use under-represented. In this sense, it is better to think of results as representative of the online population.

**Table 1. Countries and sample sizes**

Country	Sample size	Fieldwork dates	Internet penetration*
Brazil	1,000	6th–16th Sept 2022	81%
France	1,100	2nd–5th Sept 2022	85%
Germany	1,100	2nd–5th Sept 2022	90%
India	1,006	1st–8th Sept 2022	43%
Japan	1,000	7th–15th Sept 2022	90%
Pakistan	1,000	9th–21st Sept 2022	25%
UK	1,126	26th–29th Aug 2022	95%
USA	1,209	30th Aug–1st Sept 2022	91%

\*Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database

In Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA, where internet penetration is relatively high, the differences between the online population and national population will be small, but in India and Pakistan, where internet penetration is lower, the differences between the online population and the national population will be large due to profound structural inequalities in terms of internet access. In addition, it is worth noting that we fielded an English survey in India; however, respondents in Pakistan could choose to complete the survey in Urdu but the vast majority selected an English survey. Consequently, the data from India and Pakistan are

representative of younger English speakers and not the national population because it is not possible to reach other groups in a representative way using an online survey. Hence, in these two countries, the data are, at best, representative of the online, English-speaking populations.

It is also important to note that online surveys rely on recall, which is often imperfect or subject to biases. For example, the research on measuring public attitudes related to climate change using surveys has cautioned about the issue of social desirability bias, which fails to fully reveal the true attitudes of citizens (Beiser-McGrath and Bernauer 2021) and even inflate self-reported green attitudes (Larson and Kinsey 2019). Additionally, with regard to misinformation-related questions, we acknowledge that they provide only information on people's perception of the problem and are therefore not an objective measure of how much false information they have (perhaps unwillingly) engaged with. However, following the recommendations of past research, we have tried to mitigate these risks through careful questionnaire design and testing.

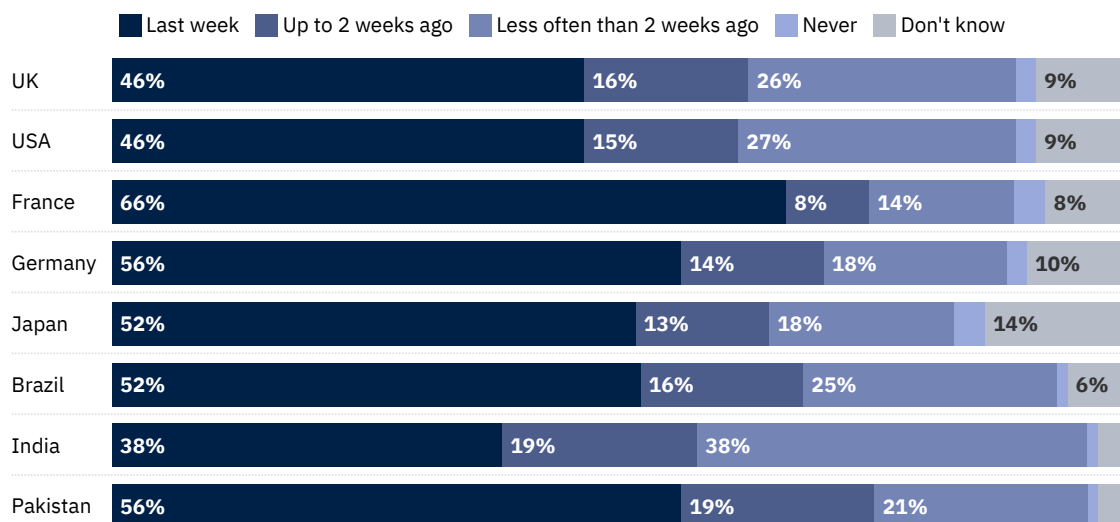
Some figures in this report do not display all of the percentages. All percentages can be viewed in the interactive figures at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/climate-change-news-use-attitudes-and-behaviour-eight-countries>.

# 1. Climate Change and News

About half of our respondents say they have engaged with climate change news or information in the past week, with about one in seven having seen some in the past two weeks. A large minority of less engaged users say they have come across climate change news or information less frequently than that but only a tiny proportion say they never see any news or information about climate change.

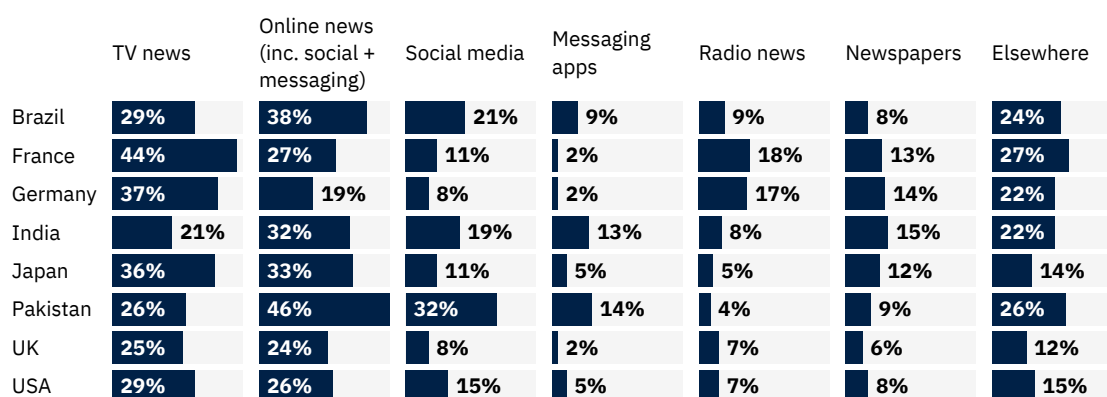
As Figure 1 shows, there is some variation across countries, with the percentage of respondents who have engaged at least weekly ranging from a low of 38% in India to a high of 66% in France. At the other end of the spectrum, the percentage of respondents who say they have come across climate change news or information less often than in the past two weeks, on average about one in four, ranges from a low of 14% in France to a high of 38% in India. In every country, only a small percentage say they never engage with climate change news or information.

**Figure 1. Proportion who say when they last saw/heard climate change news or information**



**Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source?  
*Base: Total sample in each country.*

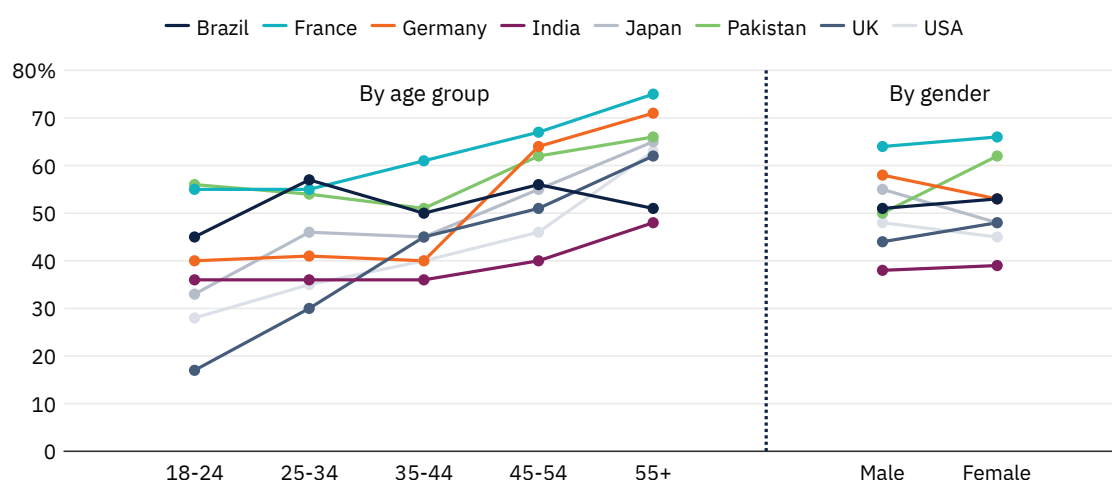
When we look at where people are getting news and information about climate change, the news media are clearly playing an important role. The single most important medium is television, identified by almost a third of our respondents as something they have used. About the same share say they have used one or more online news sources, including the websites of various kinds of news organisations as well as platforms including social media or messaging apps. As Figure 2 shows, there is some variation across countries, and in India and Pakistan, where our online sample is not representative of the wider public but generally more privileged parts of the population with access to the internet, online media are the most widely used.

**Figure 2. Proportion who saw/heard climate change news or information from each in the last week**

**Q5.** Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read or heard within the last week. Where did you see, read or hear this? *Base: Total sample in each country. Note: Elsewhere includes 'Documentaries', 'Magazines, blogs, reports, etc. specialising in environmental/climate issues', 'Face-to-face or telephone/video conversations with people I know', and 'Academic journals'.*

A significant minority across all eight countries say that they are getting news and information about climate change from other sources (grouped together as 'Elsewhere' in Figure 2.) This category includes 'Documentaries', 'Magazines, blogs, reports, etc. specialising in environmental/climate issues', 'Face-to-face or telephone/video conversations with people I know', and 'Academic journals'. As we highlighted in our 2022 *Digital News Report* (Newman et al. 2022), documentaries about climate change are a key source of information for some people, accessed by around 10% in the past week. Between 5% and 10% said that they accessed climate change news and information from specialist magazines, blogs, and reports, with less than 5% saying they accessed it through academic journals (articles from which can sometimes be widely shared through Twitter). Around 10% said that they heard climate change news from face-to-face conversations, reminding us of the importance of interpersonal communication when it comes to news. Across all eight countries, among those who have used climate change news and information in the past week, the median number of different media they have relied on to access it is two.

Breaking down respondents by age and gender we can get a more fine-grained understanding of how different groups engage with climate change news and information. As Figure 3 shows, if we look only at those who have consumed climate change news within the past week, we see large variations across age in most countries but less so when it comes to gender.

**Figure 3. Proportion who saw/heard climate change news or information in the last week – by age group and gender**

**Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source?

Base: 18–24/25–34/35–44/45–54 and Male/Female in each country. Brazil = 166/217/261/191/165 and 461/539, France = 160/177/189/203/371 and 538/562, Germany = 141/184/178/211/386 and 553/547, India = 234/277/230/168/97 and 521/485, Japan = 86/198/229/256/233 and 523/477, Pakistan = 273/315/226/128/58 and 505/495, UK = 171/208/198/215/334 and 553/566, USA = 240/215/199/194/361 and 536/673.

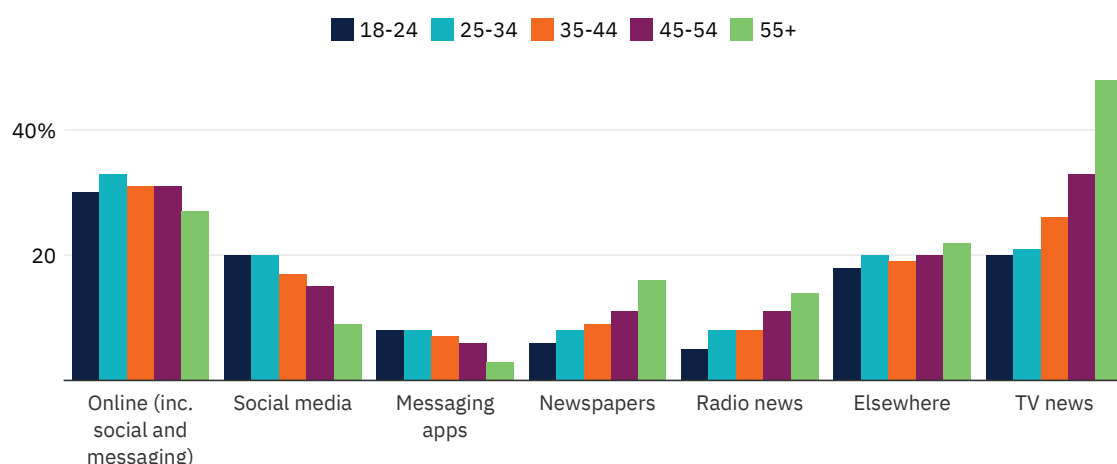
In most of the countries covered, there is a significantly smaller share of younger people who have engaged with climate change news and information in the past week compared with older age groups. It is only in Pakistan and France that more than half of our respondents between 18 and 24 have consumed climate change news within the past week, whereas, at the lower end, only 17% of people in the same age group from the UK have accessed climate news. In contrast, the percentage of our respondents aged 55 or over who reported consuming climate change news within the past week ranges from 48–75%. Given how concerned many younger people are about climate change, this may at first seem like a surprising finding, but it is in fact in line with extensive research documenting much lower levels of news use among younger groups than older groups (see e.g. Newman et al. 2022). Some younger people are clearly very active both in terms of keeping across news and information about climate change and in terms of driving public debate and activist engagement on the issue. But many of their peers are not nearly as engaged.

In terms of gender, we find relatively small differences between men and women in seven of the eight countries, with the exception being Pakistan, where 62% of women compared with 50% of men from our sample reported having come across climate change news in the past week.

Not just the frequency of use but also the media people rely on varies by age. As Figure 4 shows, the use of these media for accessing news and information about climate change varies considerably with age. Television news is much more widely used by the over 55s, with nearly half (48%) across all eight countries saying that they used it for news and information about climate change in the past week. Newspapers and radio are also more widely used among the older age groups, whereas social media and messaging apps are more popular with those aged under 35. Accessing climate news online is equally popular among all age groups.



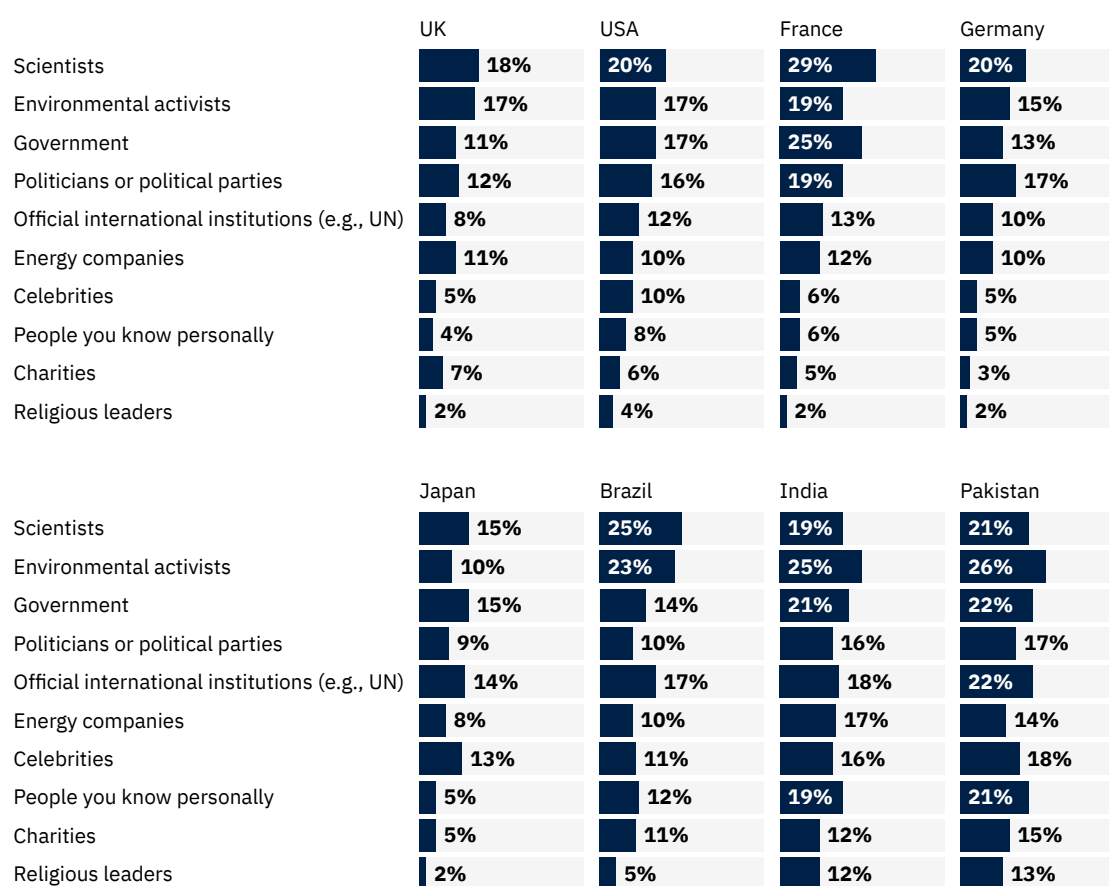
**Figure 4. Proportion who saw/heard climate change news and information from each in the last week – by age group – all countries**



**Q5.** Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read or heard within the last week. Where did you see, read or hear this? Base: 18–24 = 1471, 25–34 = 1789, 35–44 = 1710, 45–54 = 1566, 55+ = 2005. Note: Elsewhere includes 'Documentaries', 'Magazines, blogs, reports, etc. specialising in environmental/climate issues', 'Face-to-face or telephone/video conversations with people I know', and 'Academic journals'.

As with overall use, these patterns largely mirror those for news in general that we see in the *Digital News Report*, where, for news in general, as for news and information about climate change specifically, young people consume less, and have a greater preference for online sources, than older age groups.

Many different sources, including scientists, activists, politicians, and energy companies, feature in climate change news and information. To better understand their relative prominence, and what people think of them, we asked respondents who said they had seen climate change news and information in the past week whom they had seen commenting or were used as a source, reported in Figure 5. In all eight countries, scientists and/or environmental activists are the most prominent, with governments and politicians or political parties not far behind. A smaller number recall hearing from international institutions like the UN, along with energy companies and charities. In Brazil, India, and Pakistan the greater influence of social media and messaging apps is clear, as respondents are more likely to recall seeing celebrities and people they know personally commenting on news, something that is less likely to be part of mainstream media coverage. Although marginal in most countries, commenting by religious leaders is more prominent in India and Pakistan.

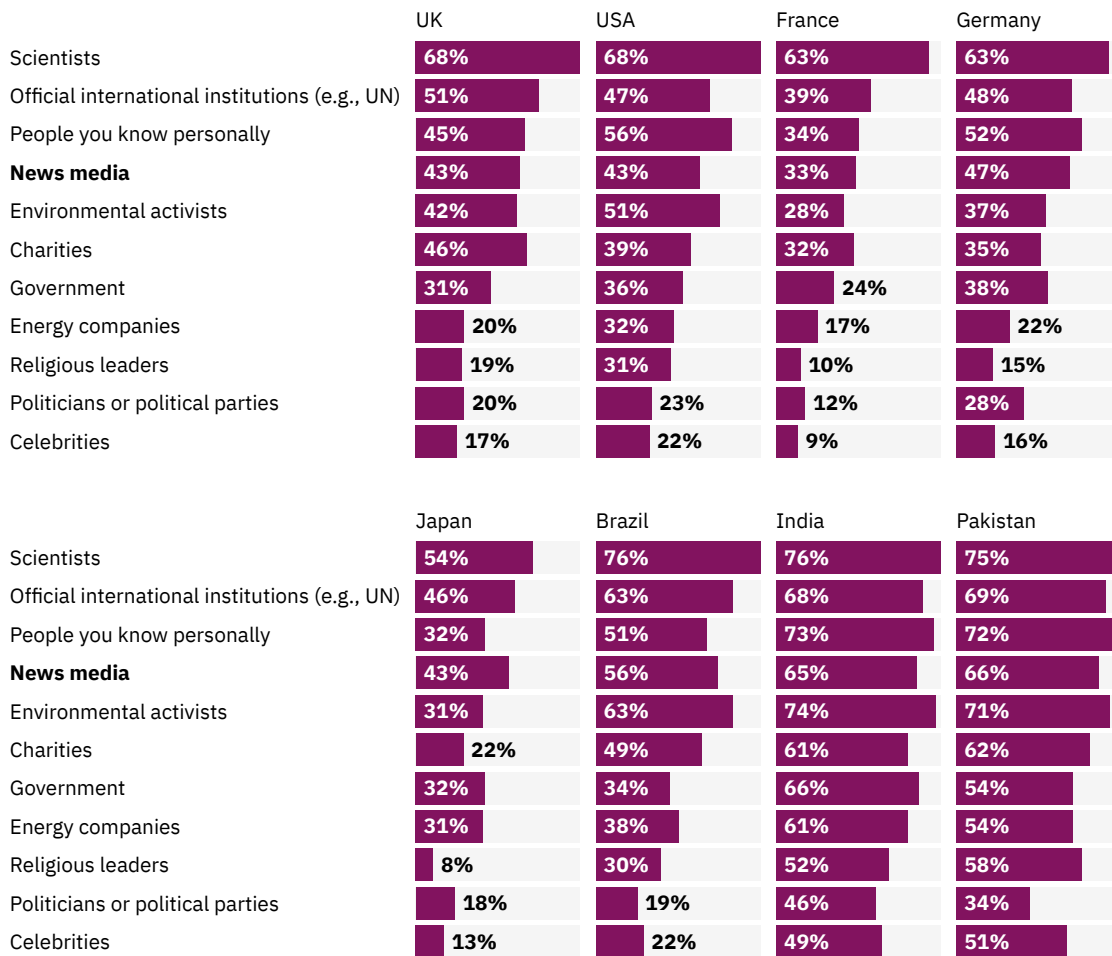
**Figure 5. Proportion who saw/heard each commenting or used as a source in climate change news in the last week**

**Q6.** Thinking about the news or information you saw, read or heard about climate change within the last week in the following places ... aside from any journalists, reporters, presenters, etc. that may have delivered the news or information, which types of organisations or individuals do you recall commenting or being mentioned as the source? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

The relative prominence of different sources is one factor, and another is which sources people trust. This is important in part because trust, especially in scientists, experts, and environmental groups, is found to be associated with uptake of climate-friendly behaviour (Cologna and Siegrist 2020).

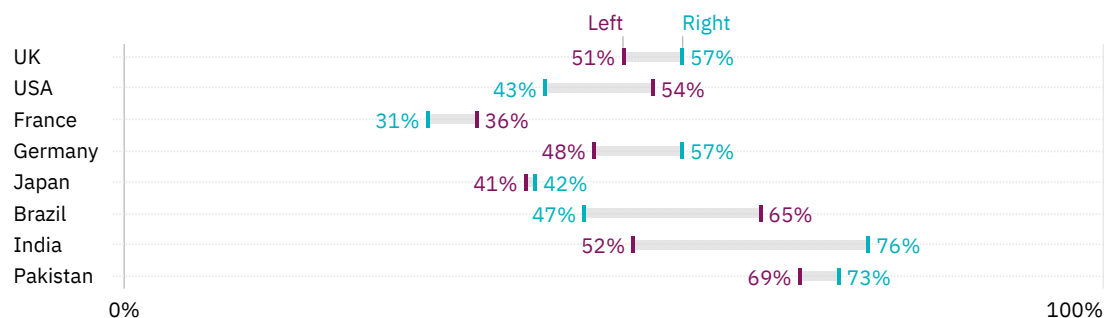
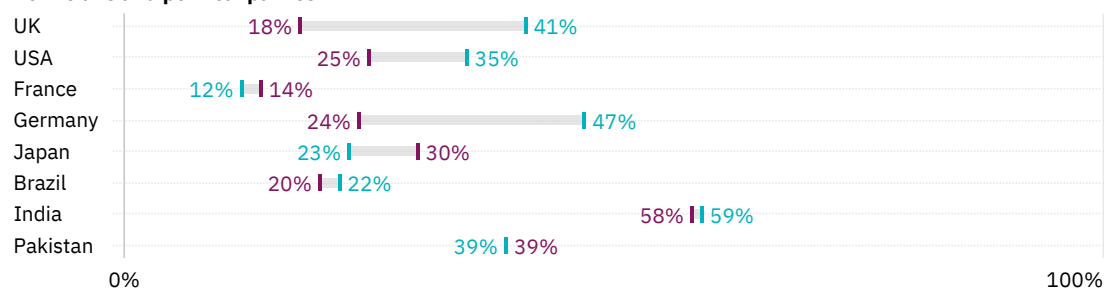
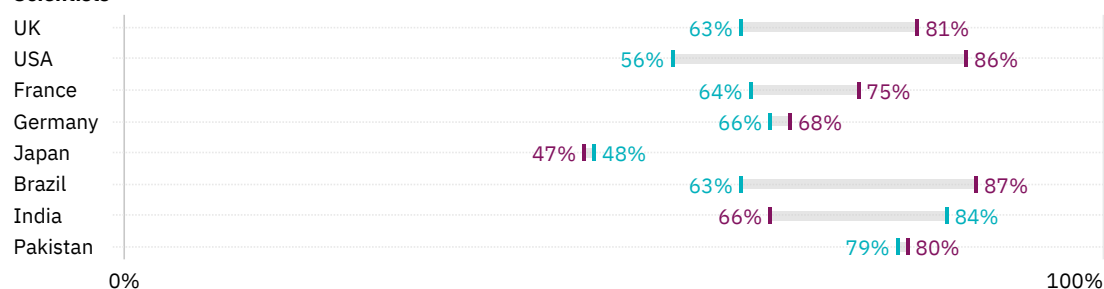
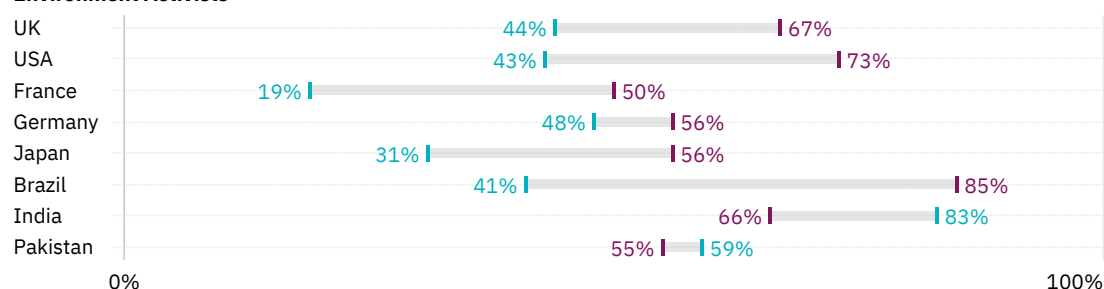
News media are generally in the middle of the range of sources we ask people to rate. They are more trusted than energy companies and politicians, but less so than scientists, and in many cases less so than international institutions such as the UN. On average across the eight countries covered, about half of respondents say they trust news media as a source of news and information about climate change.

Across all the eight countries covered, a clear majority of respondents trust scientists, often large majorities. While there is some variation (see Figure 6), in almost every country scientists are the most highly and broadly trusted source to feature in climate change news and information. At the other end are energy companies and politicians or political parties, which few say they trust. The pattern is less clear for environmental activists, who are not seen as a very trusted source in France (28%), Japan (31%), Germany (37%), and the UK (42%), although 50% or more of respondents in the USA, Brazil, India, and Pakistan say they tend to trust environmental activists.

**Figure 6. Proportion who trust each as a source of news or information about climate change**

**Q7.** Please look at the groups below and indicate the extent to which you would generally trust or distrust each one as a source of news or information about climate change. *Base: Total sample in each country.*

Breaking down respondents by their self-reported political orientation (left versus right), we see not only some differences but also some important commonalities when it comes to trust. Figure 7 offers key insights for select sources. First, political differences in how much respondents trust the news media and political actors vary across countries, with no uniform pattern. Second, in most cases, fewer on the political right say they trust environmental activists and scientists. Third, importantly, despite these differences, in almost every country, of those on the political right, a clear majority say they trust scientists as sources of climate change news and information. The exception is Japan, where scientists are trusted by about half of those on the right and the left. Also, close to half of those on the right in the US trust scientists for news and information about climate change – but trust on the left is much higher.

**Figure 7. Proportion who trust each for news and information about climate change – by political leaning****News media****Politicians and political parties****Scientists****Environment Activists**

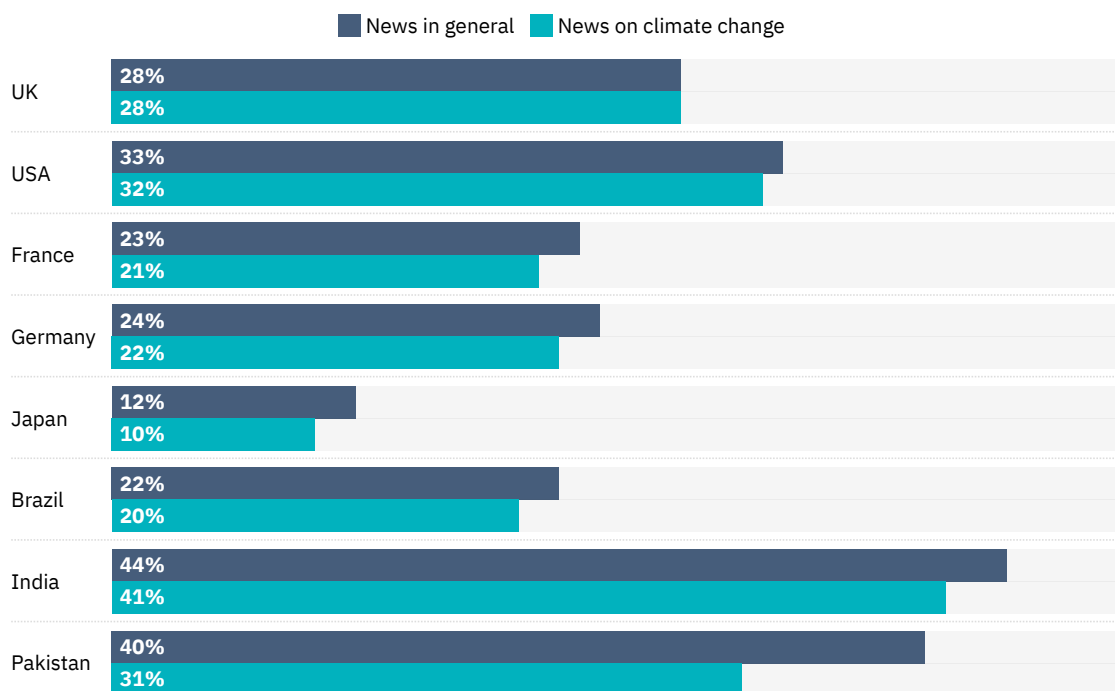
**Q7.** Please look at the groups below and indicate the extent to which you would generally trust or distrust each one as a source of news or information about climate change. **Q29.** Thinking more generally about your own views. Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale?  
 Base: Left/Centre/Right: UK = 181/563/139, USA = 217/554/282, France = 256/352/266, Germany = 129/717/83, Japan = 36/593/61, Brazil = 201/356/224, India = 82/438/364, Pakistan = 122/439/208. Note: Percentages for 'Right' in Germany and Japan and 'Left' in India and Japan have a high degree of uncertainty due to the small numbers of respondents that selected these options.

## 2. News Avoidance

Despite widespread public recognition of how climate change is a threat to people all over the planet, our research documents how respondents sometimes actively avoid news and information about climate change and helps shed light on why.

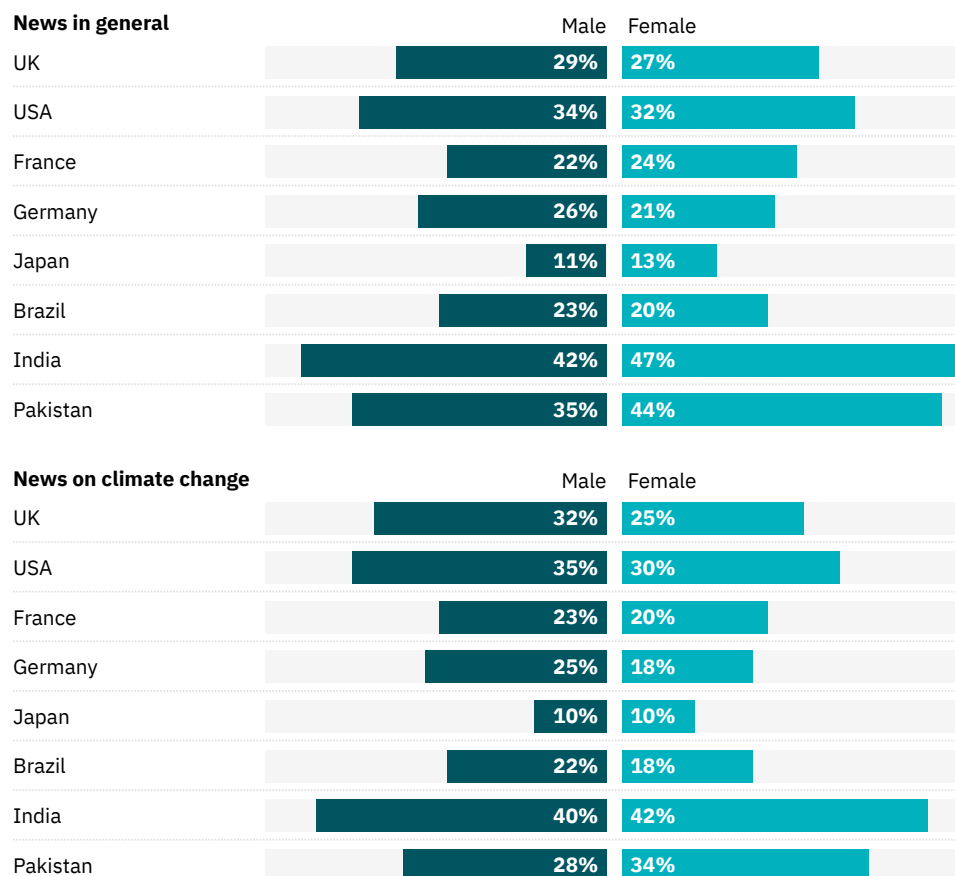
As Figure 8 shows, selective news avoidance, where people actively try to avoid news often, even if they also continue to follow it at least some of the time, is almost as widespread for news on climate change as it is for news in general. The figures range from 10% in Japan to 41% in India. We can also see that there are almost no differences in the extent of general news avoidance and climate change news avoidance, except in Pakistan, where the difference between those who actively avoid news in general and climate change news is 9 percentage points. Elsewhere, the difference is less than 5 percentage points, suggesting that many people who avoid news in general avoid all types of news regardless of topic.

**Figure 8. Proportion who say they always/often actively try to avoid news about each**



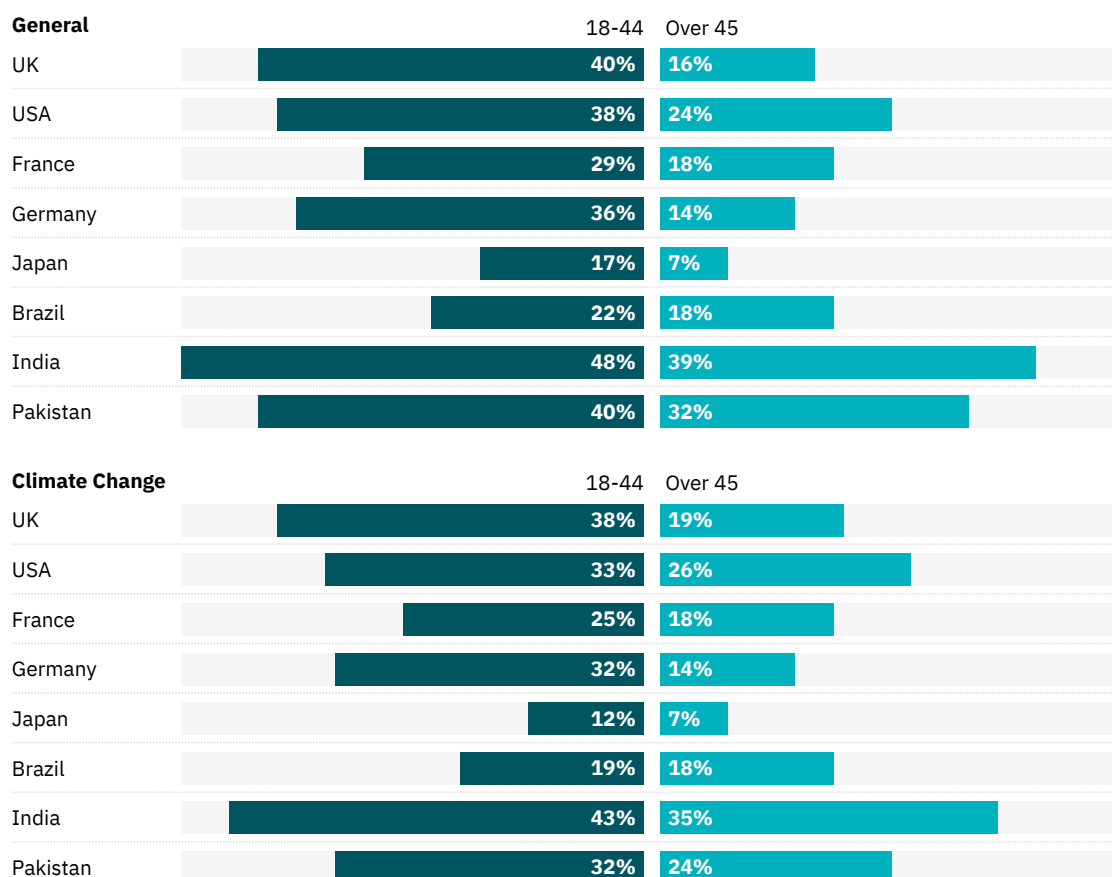
**Q21.** Nowadays, how often, if at all, do you personally actively try to avoid news in general/news on climate change. *Base: Total sample in each country.*

Previous research (e.g. Toff and Palmer 2018) has documented gender differences when it comes to news avoidance, specifically that women are significantly more likely than men to avoid the news. When it comes to climate change news, our data show a mixed picture (see Figure 9). A smaller proportion of female respondents in India, Pakistan, France, and Japan said they avoid news in general compared to men, but the differences are too small to be statistically significant. However, with regard to climate change news avoidance, we can see in the corresponding figure that women are less likely to say they avoid it in the UK, USA, and Germany.

**Figure 9. Proportion who say they always/often actively avoid news about each – by gender**

**Q21.** Nowadays, how often, if at all, do you personally actively try to avoid news in general/news on climate change. *Base: Male ≈ 500, Female ≈ 500 in each country.*

In addition to gender, we have also compared news avoidance between younger and older respondents. Similar to the findings highlighted in our 2022 *Digital News Report*, the current study also shows that a higher percentage of young respondents in our sample tend to avoid both news in general and climate change news. However, there are variations for each type of news between countries, as can be seen in Figure 10. Across all countries, the average difference between young and old for avoiding news in general is 13 percentage points, whereas for climate change it is 9 percentage points. Moreover, in Brazil and Japan, the difference between younger and older respondents is small (5 percentage points or less), indicating that age is not a hugely important factor in these countries.

**Figure 10. Proportion who say they always/often actively avoid news about each – by age group**

**Q21.** Nowadays, how often, if at all, do you personally actively try to avoid news in general/news on climate change. *Base: 18–44/ Over 45: Brazil = 644/356, France = 526/574, Germany = 503/597, India = 741/265, Japan = 511/489, Pakistan = 814/186, UK = 577/549, USA = 654/555.*

When those respondents who do so are asked *why* they actively avoid climate change news, the most commonly named reasons are that news related to climate change is seen as untrustworthy (27%), that respondents feel there is nothing new in the news related to climate change (27%), that people feel climate change news negatively affects their mood (26%), and that they feel worn out by the amount of climate change news (25%) (see Figure 11). There are different motivations for selective news avoidance, and no one editorial change or new journalistic approach can address all of them in one go. But it is worth noting that, beyond those that seem tied to politics (e.g. perceptions of bias), several of the most frequently mentioned reasons have to do with exhaustion (e.g. ‘worn out’, ‘too much’), limited value (‘nothing new’, ‘nothing I can do’), and anxiety (‘a negative effect on my mood’). The similar percentages for different reasons in all markets denote that people express a mix of complex and diverse motives for avoiding climate change news. Moreover, the national context matters. For example, in the USA, where climate change is a highly partisan and contentious issue (Tyson and Kennedy 2021), 39% of respondents – more than in any other country – say they avoid climate change news because they find it to be untrustworthy.

**Figure 11. Proportion who avoid climate change news for each reason –all countries**

The news related to climate change is untrustworthy or biased

27%

I feel like there is nothing really new in the news related to climate change

27%

The news related to climate change has a negative effect on my mood

26%

I am worn out by the amount of news related to climate change there is these days

25%

There is too much news coverage related to climate change

22%

I don't feel like there is anything I can do with the information

22%

The news related to climate change leads me to having arguments that I'd rather avoid

16%

The news related to climate change is hard for me to follow or understand

16%

I don't have the time for news related to climate change

13%

**Q22.** You said you actively try to avoid news on climate change. Why is this? Base: All that always/often avoid news on climate change = 2183.



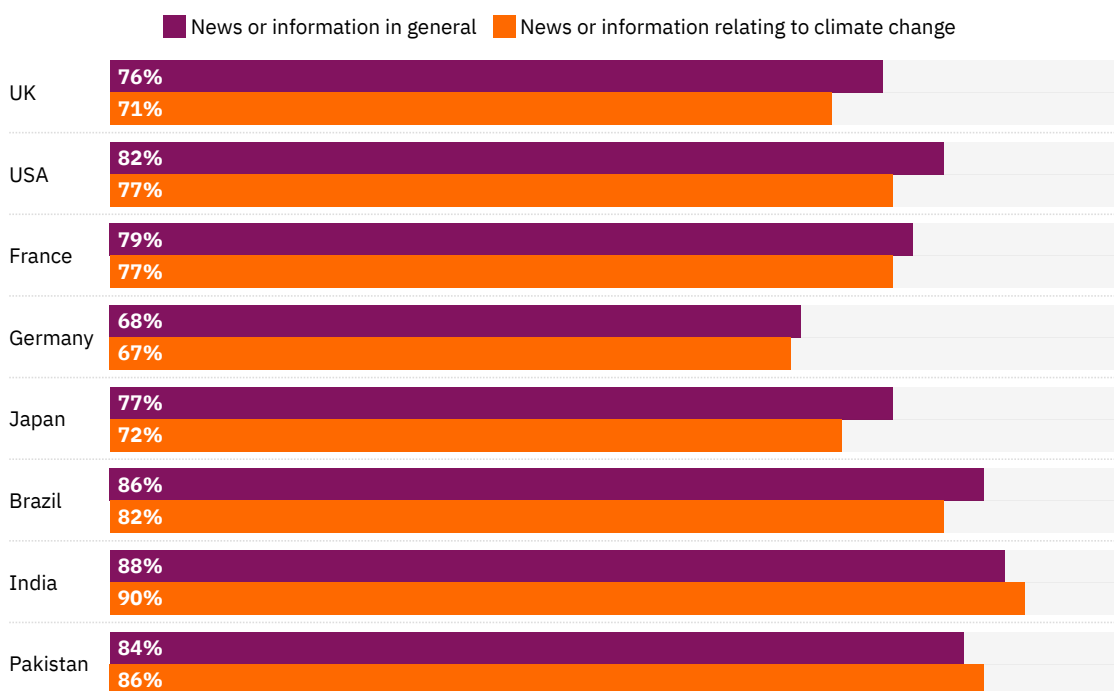
### 3. Misinformation on Climate Change

Obviously, not all the news and information that people come across is credible and trustworthy, and some of it might be misleading or outright false. Despite a clear scientific consensus, climate change misinformation persists, and research suggests its spread continues to undermine public support for climate action (Biddlestone et al. 2022; Zhou and Shen 2021).

To better understand public perception of this problem, we have collected data on public concern regarding climate change misinformation, people's perception of it, and the frequency with which they come across it from different sources and across both online and offline platforms. It is important to reiterate here that this is based on survey data, so it (a) relies on people's own perception of what they see as misinformation, and (b) their recollection of examples of such. It does not provide an objective measure of actual exposure to demonstrably false and misleading identified examples of misinformation.

As Figure 12 shows, overall, large majorities of our respondents in every country covered are at least somewhat concerned about whether the information they come across (whether online or offline) is false or misleading, both for news in general and for news and information about climate change. In every other country except in India and Pakistan, more people are concerned about misinformation related to news in general, though the difference between the two proportions is small, at less than or equal to 5 percentage points across eight countries.

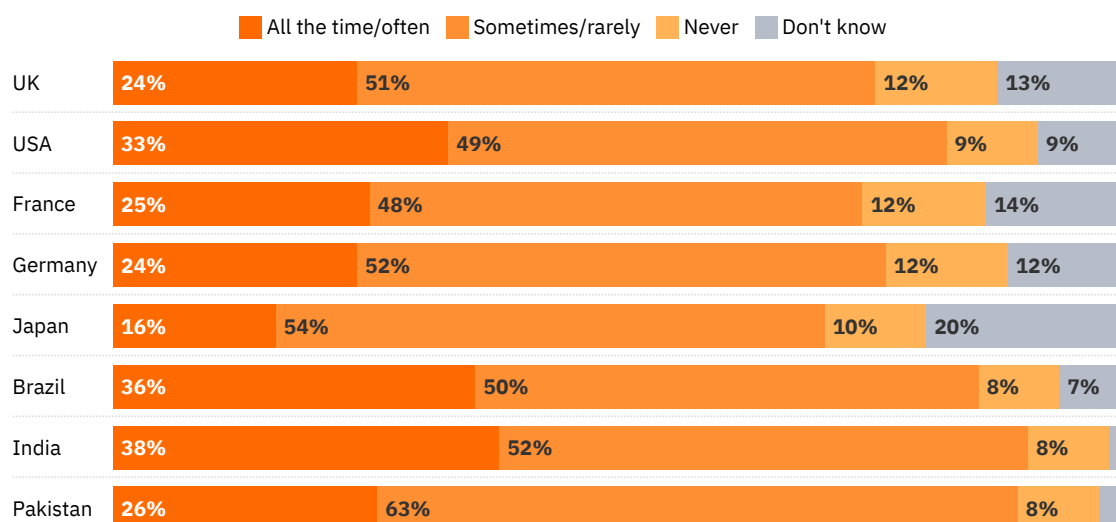
**Figure 12. Proportion who are extremely/very/somewhat concerned about false or misleading information about each**



**Q15.** For each of the following, to what extent are you concerned, or not, that some news or information you see, read or hear may be false or misleading? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

Beyond general concern, large numbers of respondents also say they have come across climate change news or information they believe is false or misleading, though it is a minority who say that they see such content all the time or often. As Figure 13 shows, there are some differences across countries. For example, around one-third of respondents in India (38%), Brazil (36%), and the USA (33%) reported coming across climate change misinformation all the time or often. In contrast, only 16% of people in Japan reported seeing misinformation on climate change all the time or often.

**Figure 13. Proportion who see/hear news or information about climate change they believe to be false or misleading**



**Q19.** How often, if at all, do you personally come across news or information about climate change that you believe to be false or misleading? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

When it comes to where people are encountering news and information about climate change that they believe to be false, to some extent we see a similar picture to where people get news and information about climate change generally. Television and online (including on social media or using messaging apps) are the most frequently mentioned. Whereas people in some countries rely more on television for news about climate change, people are slightly more likely to associate false information with online use, and within that, social media use. However, the figures vary by country. As Figure 14 shows, whilst just 12–14% say they saw news and information about climate change they believe to be false while online (including on social media or using messaging apps) in France, Germany, Japan, and the UK, self-reported exposure was much higher in Brazil (23%), India (37%), Pakistan (24%), and the USA (24%). Newspapers and radio are much less commonly cited than other sources everywhere.

**Figure 14. Proportion who saw/heard news or information about climate change they believed to be false on each in the last week**

	Online news (inc. social + messaging)	TV news	Social media	Messaging apps	Newspapers	Radio news	Elsewhere
Brazil	23%	11%	14%	9%	5%	5%	14%
France	13%	10%	8%	3%	3%	4%	8%
Germany	14%	12%	7%	4%	7%	5%	11%
India	37%	19%	25%	20%	15%	10%	29%
Japan	12%	9%	6%	3%	3%	1%	6%
Pakistan	24%	11%	15%	8%	5%	3%	15%
UK	14%	8%	8%	3%	4%	4%	7%
USA	25%	16%	16%	6%	7%	5%	15%

**Q18.** Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read or heard within the last week that you believe to be false or misleading. Where did you see, read or hear this? *Base: Total sample in each country. Note: Elsewhere includes 'Documentaries', 'Magazines, blogs, reports, etc. specialising in environmental/climate issues', 'Face-to-face or telephone/video conversations with people I know', and 'Academic journals'.*

If we split the data by age, we see that younger people are slightly more likely to think they see false information about climate change online, and older people think they are more likely to see it on television. However, this probably tells us less about people's perceptions of misinformation than it does about more general patterns of media use among different age groups.

For those who say they saw false or misleading information about climate change in news media, social media, or messaging apps in the past week, we also asked them who was used as the source (Figure 15). In most countries, people most frequently mentioned politicians, political parties, and governments. However, the differences between these and most of the other sources on the list are not statistically significant. In most countries, fewer respondents mentioned religious leaders, but this is because they are rarely used as sources in some countries. Despite being used relatively frequently by the news media as sources of information about climate change, in most countries people did not see charities as a particularly common source of false or misleading information.

**Figure 15. Proportion who saw/heard news or information about climate change they believe to be false from each in the last week**

	UK	USA	France	Germany
Politicians or political parties	8%	18%	8%	9%
Government	8%	17%	7%	8%
Environmental activists	7%	14%	7%	7%
Celebrities	6%	12%	5%	5%
Scientists	6%	11%	6%	6%
Energy companies	7%	10%	5%	6%
Official international institutions (e.g., UN)	5%	10%	4%	5%
People you know personally	4%	7%	3%	5%
Religious leaders	5%	7%	3%	3%
Charities	4%	7%	3%	3%

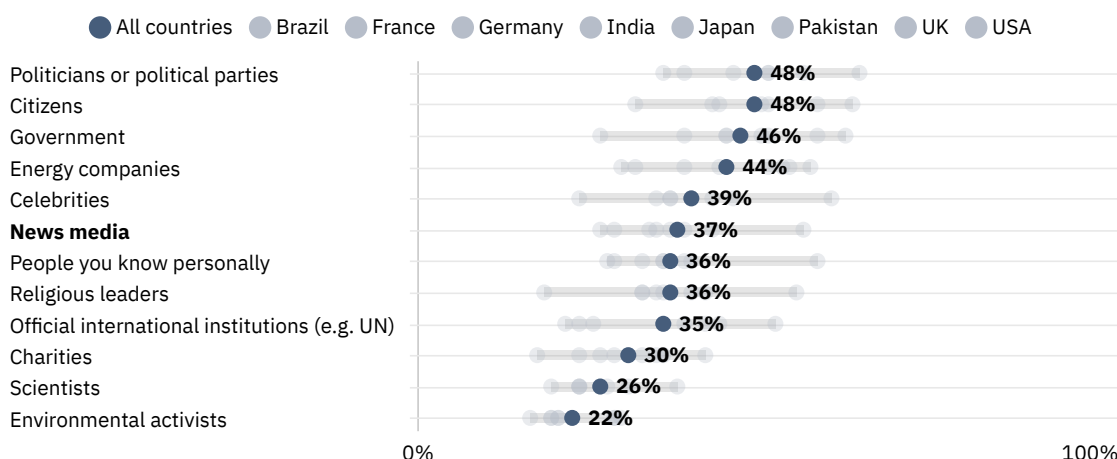
	Japan	Brazil	India	Pakistan
Politicians or political parties	5%	12%	22%	12%
Government	5%	11%	25%	11%
Environmental activists	5%	9%	25%	11%
Celebrities	6%	9%	24%	11%
Scientists	4%	9%	22%	9%
Energy companies	3%	6%	23%	8%
Official international institutions (e.g., UN)	4%	9%	24%	8%
People you know personally	2%	8%	23%	10%
Religious leaders	2%	6%	20%	8%
Charities	2%	6%	20%	9%

**Q17.** Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read or heard within the last week that you believe to be false or misleading ... aside from any journalists, reporters, presenters, etc. that may have delivered the news or information, which types of organisations or individuals do you recall commenting or being mentioned as the source? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

## 4. Public Perceptions on Climate News

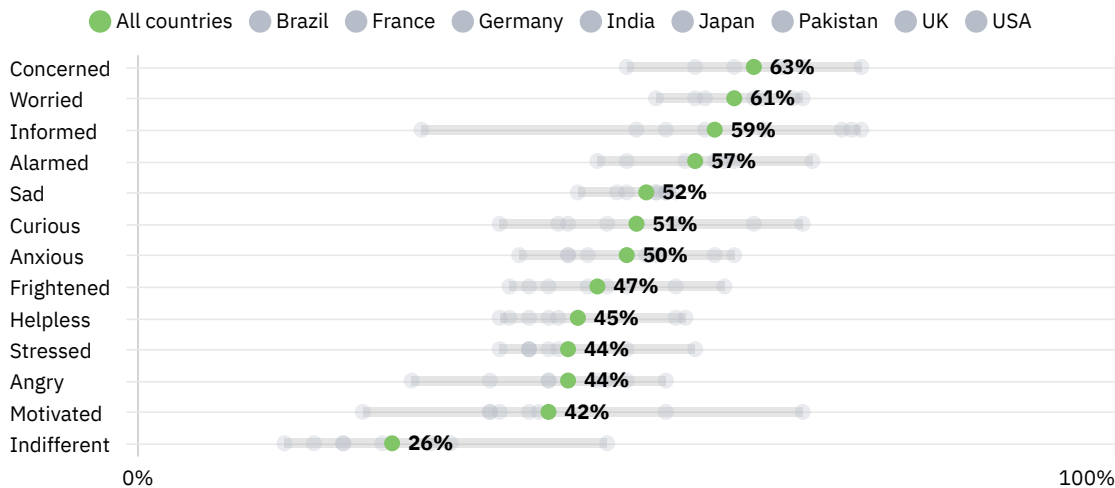
When it comes to assessing the role of news media in addressing climate change, more than one-third from our total sample believe that it is doing too little. This figure is lower than that for politicians or political parties (48%) and citizens (48%), as well as for governments (46%) and energy companies (44%), but not as low as that for environmental activists and scientists, who fare better, as only 22% and 26% of participants believe they are doing too little to address climate change.

**Figure 16. Proportion who think each is doing too little to address climate change**



**Q26.** Thinking now about all the ways climate change could be addressed, both through taking actions and through speaking about it. For each of the following groups, do you believe they are currently doing too little, too much, or about the right amount to address climate change? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

We also asked respondents about how climate change news makes them feel (Figure 17). Of all the emotional responses we listed, across all eight countries respondents most often agreed that consuming climate change news made them feel concerned (63%), worried (61%), informed (59%), or alarmed (57%). Respondents were less likely to say they felt helpless (45%), stressed (44%), angry (44%), or motivated (42%). Just 26% said that consuming climate change news left them feeling indifferent. Climate change news clearly elicits both positive and negative emotions, with broadly similar patterns across countries.

**Figure 17. Proportion who agree that climate change news makes them feel each of the following**

**Q11.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that news or information related to climate change makes you feel each of the following? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

To move beyond topline emotional responses, we asked respondents a series of questions about whether climate change news makes them feel empowered or disempowered (Figure 18). Here, we see more consistent agreement with the idea that consuming climate news helps people feel more empowered in several ways. For example, the percentage of respondents agreeing that news related to climate change prompts them to seek more information about it ranges from 76% in Pakistan and India to 49% in the UK and France. Similar proportions of participants in our study agree that climate change news gives them accurate information and helps them to know what to do about it. By comparison, a relatively lower percentage of people agree that the news on climate change leaves them confused or depressed, contains conflicting views, or feels irrelevant.

**Figure 18. Proportion who agree that climate change news does each of the following****Empowering**

	UK	USA	France	Germany
Prompts me to seek more information about climate change	49%	51%	49%	54%
Gives me accurate information about climate change	45%	51%	45%	51%
Helps me know what I can do about climate change	47%	52%	46%	55%

**Disempowering**

	UK	USA	France	Germany
Leaves me confused	37%	34%	37%	26%
Contains too many conflicting views	45%	49%	44%	39%
Leaves me depressed	50%	41%	45%	50%
Is not relevant to me	23%	28%	25%	30%

**Empowering**

	Japan	Brazil	India	Pakistan
Prompts me to seek more information about climate change	53%	70%	76%	76%
Gives me accurate information about climate change	50%	64%	75%	70%
Helps me know what I can do about climate change	57%	71%	76%	75%

**Disempowering**

	Japan	Brazil	India	Pakistan
Leaves me confused	21%	31%	48%	43%
Contains too many conflicting views	28%	49%	61%	50%
Leaves me depressed	40%	44%	55%	52%
Is not relevant to me	16%	21%	44%	34%

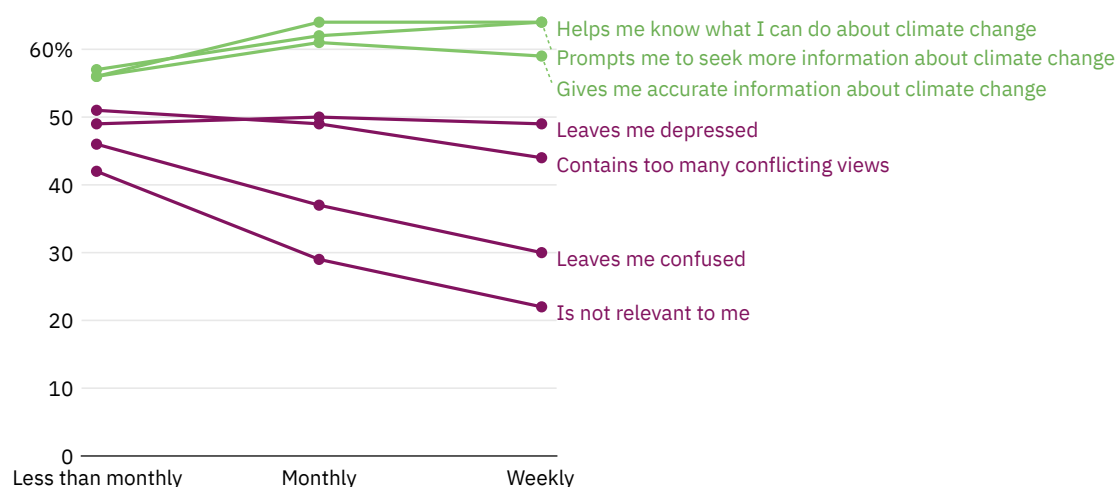
**Q10.** Thinking about news related to climate change, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Base: Total sample in each country.*

We obtained additional insights when classifying these responses according to the frequency with which people consume news about climate change, based on the data from Q5A (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Figure 19 shows that those who consume climate change news more frequently are more likely to agree that they find it empowering in some way, either because it helps them know what to do in response, prompts them to consume more information, or gives them more accurate information. Frequent climate change news users are also less likely to feel that climate news contains conflicted views, leaves them confused, or is not relevant to them.

There are country differences here. Generally speaking, in France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA, there is a weaker association between more frequent climate change news use and a feeling of empowerment, though the association between confusion, conflicting views, and irrelevance is clearer everywhere. Weekly climate change news users are as likely to say it makes them feel depressed as people who encounter it less often than once a month. However, feeling depressed is an understandable reaction, given the emphasis on the societal dimension in climate change coverage, illustrating how humans are affected by it. Finally, we should keep in mind that people might intentionally consume less climate change news precisely because they believe it to be confusing, conflicting, and irrelevant, or consume more of it because they find it empowering. It is not possible to know for sure without data over time.

<sup>2</sup> Q5A asked 'When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source?' We re-coded responses into 'Weekly' ('In the last week'), 'Monthly' ('1 week up to 2 weeks ago', '2 weeks up to 1 month ago') and 'Less than monthly' ('1 month up to 3 months ago', '3 months up to 6 months ago', '6 months up to 1 year ago', '1 year or longer ago', 'Never seen, read or heard any news or information about climate change'). Roughly 87% of those who said they consumed climate news in the past week said that they got climate change news from 'television news', 'radio news', 'printed newspapers and news magazines', 'websites/apps of newspapers and news magazines', 'websites/apps of TV or radio news companies', or 'websites/apps of other news outlets', meaning that the vast majority of weekly users consumed at least some climate change content from the news media. As such, when we use this variable to segment the data, we use it as a proxy for frequency of climate change news use (as opposed to climate change information use more broadly).

**Figure 19. Proportion who agree climate change news does each of the following – by climate change news use – all countries**



**Q10.** Thinking about news related to climate change, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source?

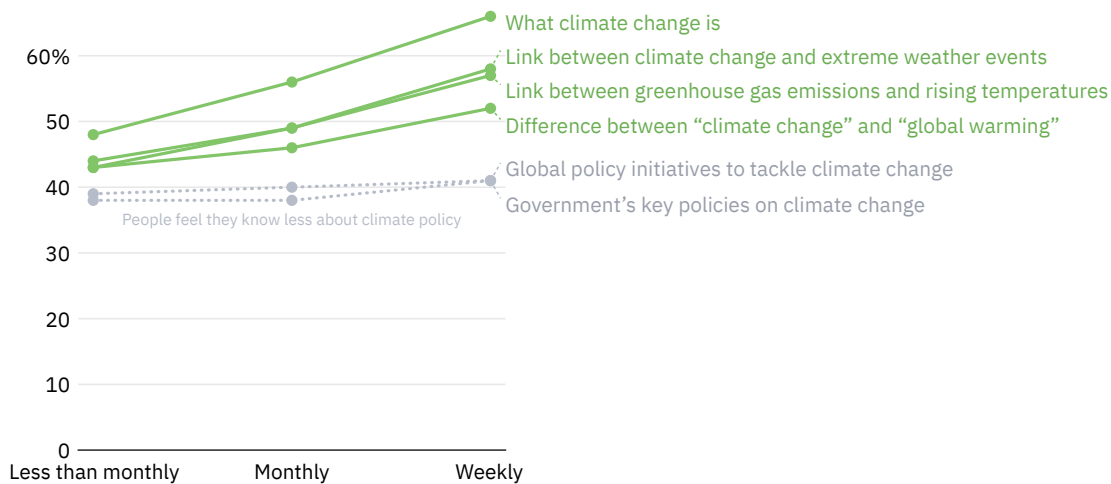
Base: Less than monthly = 2247, monthly = 1301, weekly = 4339.

A recent study regarding climate change attitudes in 192 countries described how people in most of the countries included in our own study (excluding India and Pakistan) tend to have moderate to high knowledge of climate change (Leiserowitz et al. 2022). However, the study does not say whether exposure to climate change news plays any role in making them more aware of climate change.

We explore differences between frequent and infrequent climate change news consumers in terms of whether they think they know a ‘moderate amount’ or ‘a lot’ about various aspects of climate change knowledge (Figure 20). Of course, this does not measure people’s *actual* knowledge of climate change, but rather how much they think they know, and how much confidence they have in that knowledge, something that may be important for understanding their climate change responses.



**Figure 20. Proportion who think they know a lot or a moderate amount about each – by climate change news use – all countries**



**Q24.** Before today, how much, if anything, would you say you knew about each of the following? **Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source? *Base: Less than monthly = 2247, monthly = 1301, weekly = 4339.*

The results of our data analysis indicate that people who consume climate change on a weekly basis are more likely to think they know ‘what climate change is’, ‘the claimed link between climate change and extreme weather events’, ‘the claimed link between greenhouse gas emissions and rising temperatures’, and the ‘difference between climate change and global warming’. Across all eight countries, over half of weekly climate news consumers think they know ‘a moderate amount’ or ‘a lot’ about each of these. However, less than half of those who consume climate news less often than once a month say the same. This lends some additional support to the claim that individuals’ knowledge about climate change is at least in part based on news media coverage (e.g. Schäfer and Painter 2020).

However, we also see that only around 40% say that they know at least a moderate amount about ‘global policy initiatives to tackle climate change’ and their ‘government’s key policies on climate change’. This 40% figure is roughly the same for both infrequent climate news users and those who consume it on a weekly basis. This highlights that people think they know relatively little about domestic and international climate policy, and that more frequent news users feel no more knowledgeable. This could be an opportunity for the news media to educate their readers on climate governance, should they wish to do so. This is a particularly important opportunity to highlight because it goes well beyond conveying the scientific consensus to helping people understand policies, much as news media might aspire to do in other areas of their coverage.

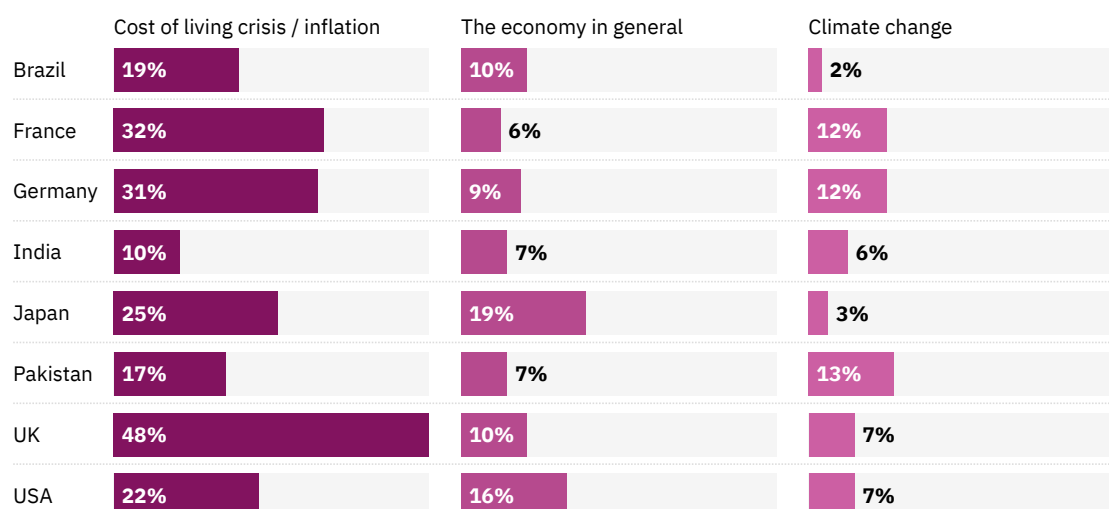
## 5. Public Attitudes Towards Climate Change and Actions

There is extensive literature on public attitudes towards climate change (Poortinga et al. 2019). However, the scholarship on this suffers from imbalances, such as the abundance of studies on the subject originating from the Western nations, which leaves much unknown about the progression of public understanding of climate change beyond the USA and Europe (Capstick et al. 2014).

Since our study includes data from Pakistan, India, and Brazil, countries that seldom become the subject of such empirical inquiry, we have an opportunity to illustrate the similarities and differences in public attitudes related to climate change in these countries compared with Western countries.

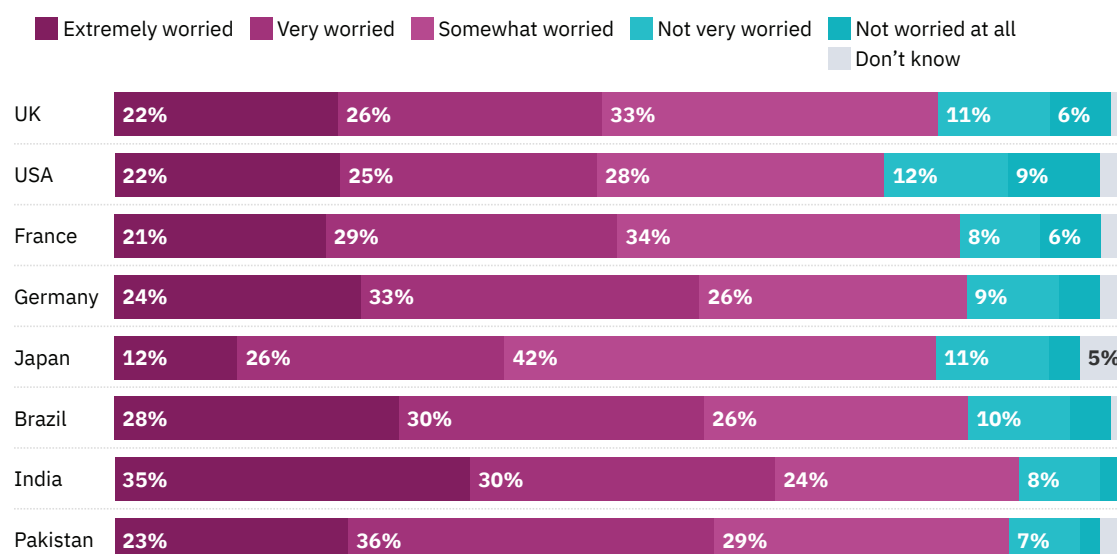
Accordingly, we listed 19 issues and asked respondents to identify the single most important issue they think their country is facing. In all countries it is evident that people regard the cost-of-living crisis and economy as the most important right now (see Figure 21). For about half of the respondents from the UK, cost of living is the most important issue, whereas only 7% felt the same about climate change. Similarly, almost a third of our respondents in Germany (32%) and France (31%) reported cost of living as the most important issue. A somewhat higher percentage of people from France and Germany than other countries think climate change is an important issue their countries are presently facing.

In contrast, 13% of respondents from Pakistan, the highest among the eight countries, consider climate change the most important issue. The high percentage could be the result of recent floods in Pakistan, because the present survey was conducted amid flooding that was frequently attributed in the news media as a consequence of climate change. Also, only 17% of respondents in Pakistan reported cost of living as an issue despite the country going through economic challenges; this could be due to the nature of the sample from Pakistan, which is more affluent and employed with above national average wages. Just 3% in Japan and 2% in Brazil consider climate change to be the most important issue right now. However, in the case of Brazil, this could be because fieldwork took place during the 2022 general election.

**Figure 21. Proportion who said each is the most important issue facing the country right now**

**Q1.** What do you think is the single most important issue that your country is facing at the moment? Base: Total sample in each country. Note: Available options were: 1. The economy in general, 2. Cost of living increases/inflation, 3. Climate change, 4. Threats to the environment, 5. Financial or political corruption, 6. The COVID-19 pandemic, 7. Military conflict between nations, 8. Crime and violence, 9. Healthcare, 10. Education, 11. Poverty, 12. Social inequality, 13. Immigration control, 14. Taxes, 15. Unemployment, 16. Terrorism, 17. Rise of extremism, 18. Social welfare, 19. Moral decline.

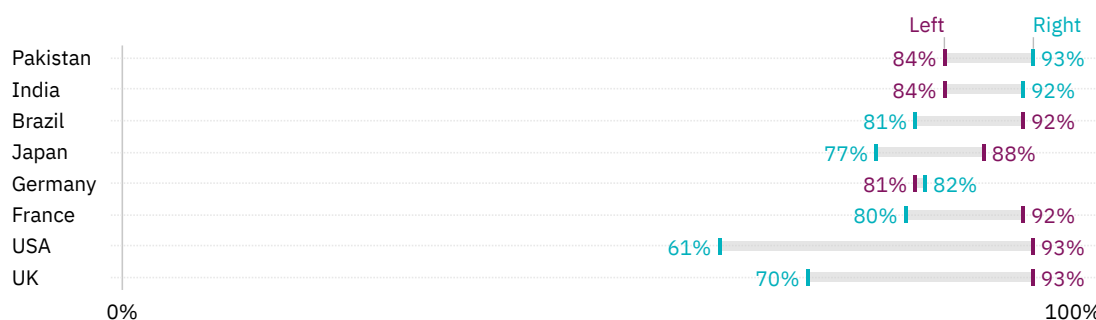
Next, we asked people to express how worried they are about the impact of climate change on people all over the world. In line with various past surveys that recorded similar responses, our study also found that a significant proportion, ranging between 75% in the USA and 89% in India, say that they are either ‘somewhat’, ‘very’, or ‘extremely’ worried about the impact of climate change on people all over the world (see Figure 22). We also asked people how worried they are about the impact of climate change on the planet, which yielded very similar results.

**Figure 22. Proportion who are worried about the impact of climate change on people all over the world**

**Q12.** To what extent are you worried, or not, about the impact of climate change on people all over the world. Base: Total sample in each country.

When we split the responses by political leaning in Figure 23, we observe differences in some countries regarding people's level of concern. Typically, those on the left are more likely to say they are worried about the impacts of climate change – by as much as 32 percentage points in the USA. However, it is equally important to note that, regardless of political leaning, more than half of our respondents in all countries said that they are worried about climate impacts. Climate change is clearly a polarising issue, particularly in some countries, but, at least in our data, a majority of those on the right are worried about the threat.

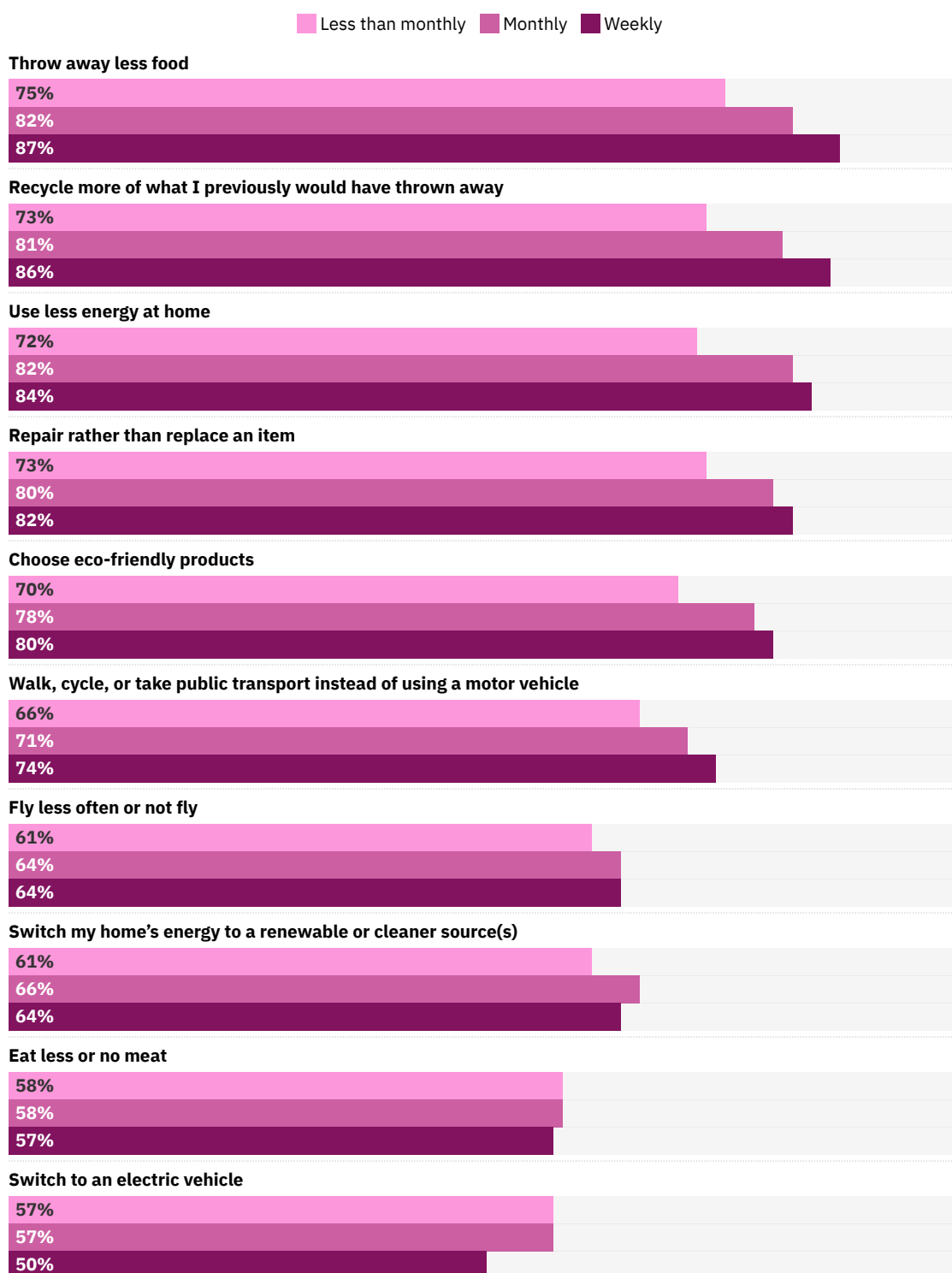
**Figure 23. Proportion who are at least somewhat worried about the impact of climate change on people all over the world – by political leaning**



**Q12.** To what extent are you worried, or not, about the impact of climate change on people all over the world? **Q29.** Thinking more generally about your own views. Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale? *Base: Left/Centre/Right: UK = 181/563/139, USA = 217/554/282, France = 256/352/266, Germany = 129/717/83, Japan = 36/593/61, Brazil = 201/356/224, India = 82/438/364, Pakistan = 122/439/208. Note: Showing data for 'somewhat', 'very', or 'extremely' worried. Percentages for 'Right' in Germany and Japan and 'Left' in India and Japan have a high degree of uncertainty due to the small numbers of respondents that selected these options.*

Since tackling climate change is a collective responsibility, we asked respondents about their willingness to take various actions, specifically aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The results indicate, across countries, that most people express at least some willingness to take certain actions (or think they are already doing as much as they can). But, as Figure 24 shows, people are willing to do some things more than others. Large majorities say they are willing to throw away less food, recycle, and use less energy. There are lower levels of willingness to fly less, eat less meat, and switch to an electric vehicle. And all of this varies by country.

However, we do find a reasonably consistent relationship between frequency of climate change news use and willingness to take steps to mitigate climate change. Across all eight countries, people who use climate news on a weekly basis are slightly more likely to say they will take some of the more popular actions, like recycling, throwing away less food, and using less energy. However, for the less popular actions, like flying less, switching to renewables for household energy, or eating less meat, there are no real differences by climate change news use. It may be that frequent news users are aware of these steps, and understand the benefits, but have decided against it for other reasons. For some people in some countries, some actions we listed are simply not possible.

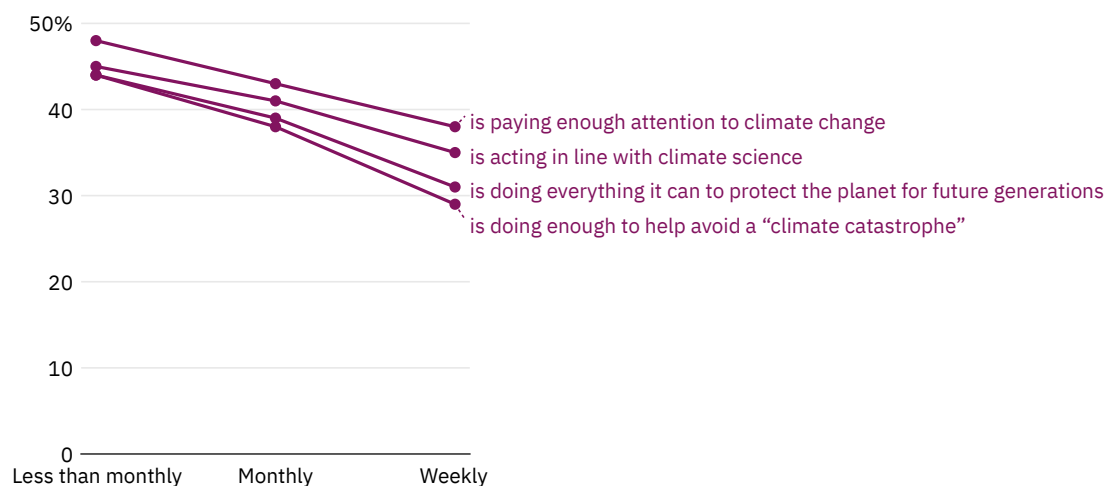
**Figure 24. Proportion who think they are likely to do (or are already doing) each of the following – by climate change news use – all countries**

**Q25.** Thinking now about things people might do in order to help tackle climate change. How likely or unlikely would you be personally to make the following changes within the next year, specifically to help tackle climate change? **Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source? *Base: Less than monthly = 2247, monthly = 1301, weekly = 4339.*

The scope of climate change impacts is so widespread that changing people's habits alone will not be sufficient. Therefore, unless governments take the necessary steps, humanity will not be able to avert the impending climate catastrophe. Thus, we attempted to gauge public

opinion around government action (Figure 25). Results at the aggregate level show that the proportion who agree that their government ‘is paying enough attention to climate change’, ‘is acting in line with climate science’, ‘is doing everything it can to protect the planet for future generations’, and ‘is doing enough to help avoid a “climate catastrophe”’ range from 20% to 40% in most of the countries covered. In India, 60% to 70% of respondents say they agree with their government’s actions, but elsewhere it is clear that many people think that their governments could and should be doing more.

**Figure 25. Proportion who agree that the government is doing each – by climate change news use – all countries**



**Q27.** To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements? Overall, when thinking about climate change, I believe that the government ... **Q5A.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source? *Base: Less than monthly = 2247, monthly = 1301, weekly = 4339.*

When we split the responses by news use (Figure 25), we see that, across all eight countries, people who use climate news on a weekly basis are even less likely to agree that their governments are doing enough. In many countries, journalists see it as their job to hold governments to account over their record on key issues, and there is evidence here that people who engage with climate news more frequently adopt a more critical view of those in power. Whether this in turn results in swifter climate action is a separate question.

## Conclusion

Our research suggests that across eight very different countries, on average about half the respondents in the countries covered feel reasonably well served by how news media deal with climate. They follow the coverage regularly, many of them trust news coverage of the topic (certainly more than they trust energy companies and politicians), and they feel that the coverage empowers them in many ways.

A large majority of our respondents across all eight countries recognise that almost all climate scientists believe that climate change is caused by humans, and an even larger majority say they are worried about the impact climate change is having on people all over the world. This is true both for those who follow climate change news and information on a regular basis and for the wider public.

Overall, those who follow climate change come across a wide variety of different sources featured in the coverage, including scientists, political actors, energy companies, and environmental activists. It is important, however, to recognise that respondents do not see all these different sources as equally credible. Across all countries, scientists are highly and broadly trusted, whereas political actors and energy companies are regarded with considerable scepticism. In terms of trust, news media themselves are generally in the middle of the range of sources we asked people to rate; they are more trusted than energy companies and politicians, but less so than scientists, and in many cases less so than international institutions such as the UN.

Beyond these overall patterns, we also find important variations. Some are expected, such as that young people rely more on online media, older people more on television, and people on the political right often approach climate change differently from those on the left. Others are, at first glance, surprising. Fewer young people engage with climate change news and information than older people, and a clear majority on the political right trust scientists and are concerned about the impact climate change is having on people all over the world.

Among those who follow climate change news and information less frequently, or say they actively try to avoid it, the reasons are multiple and complex. Some of the most frequently mentioned reasons for avoiding climate news have to do with exhaustion (e.g. ‘worn out’, ‘too much’), limited value (‘nothing new’, ‘nothing I can do’), and anxiety (‘a negative effect on my mood’). Many respondents, including those who do not engage with it on a regular basis, say that news helps give them accurate information about climate change and helps them to know what to do about it, but among those who engage less frequently, a significantly larger share say that they find climate change news and information confusing and irrelevant.

If news media can address or overcome these concerns, they have a chance to stand out against a dark backdrop of widespread concern over whether the information people come across (whether online or offline) is false or misleading, especially as many are sceptical of political actors. Reaching beyond the already well-served parts of the public is an important

opportunity to help a wider range of people build a better understanding of where we are with climate change, the implications, and what we can do in response, most importantly in terms of domestic and international policy.

Here, the findings are mixed. On the one hand, it is not clear that current climate change coverage helps people to feel they have a better understanding of their own government's policy responses to climate change, or of global policy initiatives to tackle climate change. At least we see no difference across frequency of news use. Given how profoundly political the issue is, and how essential policy is to an effective response, editors and journalists may want to consider how to respond to this finding. On the other hand, it is clear that news coverage, with its imperfections, plays an important accountability function. At least those who follow climate change news more closely tend to judge current political responses more harshly (as many experts do when assessing policy responses against stated goals) and are more likely to reject the idea that their governments are doing enough to help avoid a climate catastrophe.



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