OXFORD CLIMATE JOURNALISM NETWORK

DECEMBER 2025

Climate Change News Audience Report 2025: Analysis of News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries

Waqas Ejaz, Mitali Mukherjee, and Richard Fletcher

REUTERS INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Climate Change News Audience Report 2025: Analysis of News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries

Waqas Ejaz, Mitali Mukherjee, and Richard Fletcher

Published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford with the support of the Laudes Foundation and the European Climate Foundation (ECF)

Contents

About the Authors 2
Acknowledgements 2

Executive Summary 3
Introduction 6
Methodology 8
Chapter 1: Climate Change News Use Trends 10
Chapter 2: Public Views Towards Political Leadership on Climate 17
Chapter 3: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Media, and Climate Change 24
Chapter 4: User Needs Model of Climate News 28
Chapter 5: Audience Perceptions of Climate Journalists' Roles 33
Conclusion 38

References 40

DOI: 10.60625/risj-ndd7-hh09

About the Authors

Dr Waqas Ejaz is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. His research interests include studying comparative journalism practices, climate change communication, and the use and effects of digital media.

Mitali Mukherjee is Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. She is a political economy journalist with more than two decades of experience in TV, print, and digital journalism. Mitali was Consulting Business Editor at The Wire and Mint in India. Prior to that she was Markets Editor at CNBC TV 18 and Prime Time Anchor at TV Today and Doordarshan.

Dr Richard Fletcher is Director of Research and the Deputy Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. He is primarily interested in global trends in digital news consumption, comparative media research, the use of social media by journalists and news organisations, and, more broadly, the relationship between technology and journalism.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Claire Preston, Daniel Marshall, Clare Yetton, and Amrit Syan at Ipsos for their assistance in conducting this research. We also extend our appreciation to Kate Hanneford-Smith, Alex Reid, and Rebecca Edwards for their efforts in advancing this project and ensuring its timely progress. Finally, we acknowledge the research team at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) for their insightful feedback and contributions to this manuscript.

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

Executive Summary

As the world confronts a widening gap between intensifying climate impacts and the slow pace of action to tackle the crisis,[1] this report, now in its fourth edition, continues to examine how people engage with climate change news and information. This analysis draws on four years of comparable data collected in the same eight countries: Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (USA). In addition to tracking trends in climate news consumption over time, this year's report introduces new themes, including public evaluations of political leadership on climate change, audience needs for climate news coverage, and perceptions of the environmental impact of artificial intelligence (AI).

Last year's report identified a pattern of *climate perception inertia* – a stagnation in public views, attitudes, and engagement with climate information over time. This year's findings suggest that the pattern largely persists across many areas, showing continued stability rather than transformation in how audiences interact with climate change news. Yet there are also small and uneven signs of change, with some indicators beginning to shift in different directions.

Findings drawn from survey data across eight countries highlight key patterns in **climate change news and information consumption** this year and over time, including:

- The use of climate news and information is in decline in France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA. It is stable in Brazil, India, and Pakistan.
- Declines in climate news and information use are driven by two overlapping trends: reduced climate news access via television, and reduced climate news use by the over 45s. Climate news use among the younger age groups and via other sources has remained stable.
- Interest in climate news and information remains high and stable in most countries, suggesting that declines in climate news use are partly driven by reduced supply (especially on TV). Interest has declined slightly since 2022 in France and Germany.
- Around half say they trust the news media as a source of climate information, and this has remained stable in most countries since 2022. Trust is highest in Pakistan (72%) and lowest in France (36%).
- Trust in scientists as a source of news and information about climate remains high and has grown slightly since 2022 (68% to 71%). Trust in politicians and political parties remains low (23%). The trust gap between the politicians and scientists has grown by five percentage points (pp) since 2022.

Findings on **political leadership and climate action** highlight how people assess their leaders' priorities, performance, and sense of responsibility in responding to the crisis:

- Confidence in political leadership on climate change is low overall, with only around

[1] https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/slow-climate-adaptation-threatening-lives-and-economies

one in three respondents saying they are confident that their political leaders have their priorities right, are making the right decisions, and are setting a good example for other countries. In contrast, around 55% say they lack confidence.

- Confidence levels are higher in India, but lower in France, Japan, and Germany. In all countries apart from India, larger numbers say they lack confidence than say they are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident.

- The small section of the public who believe that global warming is not happening have slightly more confidence that their political leaders have their priorities right, are making the right decisions, and are setting a good example for other countries than those who believe global warming is happening.

- Patterns of confidence reveal clear generational and political divides. Nearly half of those aged 25–34 express confidence in their leaders' handling of climate change, compared with roughly one in four among those aged 55 and above. Confidence is higher on the political right and lower on the left, while gender differences remain minimal.

- Public views of media coverage of political leaders on climate change are mixed and vary sharply by country. Around one in three thinks the media report well on leaders' actions (33%) or hold them to account (31%). Evaluations are more negative in France, the USA, and the UK, but positive in India and Pakistan, reflecting differing expectations and media environments.

- Those who trust the news or show greater interest in climate issues are more likely to view the media's reporting on political leaders positively, whereas the distrustful and less interested tend to be more sceptical of its quality and fairness.

Results regarding the use of **AI and its impact on climate change:**

- On average across eight countries, around one-third (35%) believe AI will be beneficial in tackling climate change overall, while about a quarter (26%) see it as harmful. However, many are uncertain, with 22% saying AI will be neither harmful nor beneficial, and 17% saying they 'don't know'.

- Optimism about AI's environmental impact differs sharply across countries. It is strongest in India (52%) and Pakistan (49%), where around half predict AI will be beneficial for tackling climate change, while scepticism peaks in France, where 35% see it as harmful and only 23% as beneficial.

- Views of AI's environmental impact differ modestly across demographic groups. Younger people are generally more positive, older respondents more uncertain, and men somewhat more optimistic than women, while political orientation shows little variation.

- Across eight countries, only about one in three respondents thinks the media do a good job in explaining how AI can be used to tackle climate change (35%), investigate its environmental impact (36%), provide balanced coverage of risks and benefits (35%), and highlight solutions to reduce its environmental footprint (35%).

- Across countries, however, perceptions of AI climate coverage vary significantly, with net approval in countries like India and Pakistan contrasting sharply with net disapproval in France, Germany, the UK, and the USA.

Findings related to **user needs** from climate news coverage:

- Audiences place the greatest importance on clear and informative climate coverage. On average across eight countries, people say it is important for climate news to 'Update me' (81%) and 'Educate me' (80%), followed closely by 'Give me perspective' (78%) and 'Help me' (78%).

- Affective needs such as news that is enjoyable (74%) and, in particular, content that helps people feel connected to others (70%) are rated lower, suggesting these social dimensions are seen as less central to effective climate reporting.

- Gaps remain between what audiences expect from climate coverage and how well they think those needs are met. Gaps are largest for news in the categories 'Inspire me' and 'Give me perspective', indicating weaknesses in conveying hope, optimism, and broader context.

- 'Connect me' shows the smallest gap, though it remains an unmet need, suggesting audiences still want stories that make the climate challenge feel more manageable and solutions more visible.

- Older people report larger gaps, especially for *Understanding* and *Knowledge* needs, while younger audiences show smaller gaps overall but a stronger desire for stories that inspire or are easier to follow.

- The widest divide appears along political lines, with those on the left feeling their needs are not being met as effectively as those in the centre or on the right.

- Gaps between expectations and performance on climate coverage are highest in the UK, the USA, Brazil, and France, where audiences report greater shortfalls and see *Understanding* as the weakest area.

Results concerning **public perceptions of the news media's role** in reporting on climate change:

- There is strong agreement that climate news coverage is important. On average across eight countries, over 80% say it is important for the news media to be educators, impartial reporters, curators, watchdogs, or advocates when covering climate change, while slightly fewer emphasise gatekeeping.

- Fewer think that the news media fulfil these roles well. Around four in ten say the media do a good job of explaining causes and offering solutions – but this is nonetheless more than those who say the news media are doing a bad job.

- Gaps between importance and performance are widest in the UK and USA, where expectations are higher, and narrowest in India and Pakistan.

Introduction

This report is set against the backdrop of a world marked by armed conflicts, democratic backsliding, and economic uncertainty – forces that have pushed societies deeper into a state of polycrisis. Yet, even as these immediate crises command attention, they do so in the shadow of another – accelerating climate change. Its scale and consequences arguably exceed every other challenge, a reality underscored by recent data showing that for 21 out of the 24 months between July 2023 and July 2025, global average temperatures remained 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (1850–1900)[2] – a limit established under the Paris Agreement and one recognised by scientists as a tipping point for dangerous and potentially irreversible climate impacts,[3] manifesting in extreme weather events of rising intensity and frequency.

One might assume that such clear warning signs from a rapidly changing climate would galvanise political will and public engagement for decisive action. Yet shifting geopolitical realities, economic instability, and ideological polarisation have instead narrowed the space for consensus and weakened the resolve for collective action. In fact, several of the world's influential economies have made insufficient progress on their climate pledges,[4] and in the United States (USA), recent policy reversals have prioritised short-term political interests over long-term environmental commitments, potentially weakening global momentum (Climate Action Tracker 2025). The result is a widening gulf between what science and the planet demand, and what political systems are prepared to deliver.

As political attention shifts elsewhere, the responsibility to keep climate change visible increasingly falls on the news media. For journalists, this moment brings both urgency and uncertainty. Newsrooms are expected to explain a complex, rapidly evolving crisis while contending with shrinking revenues and ongoing media change, the latest being the disruptive implications of new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) for information integrity and production. The challenge is not only to report on climate change, but to do so in ways that maintain credibility and cut through the noise of competing agendas. As the boundaries between politics, media, and technology blur, the public's understanding of climate change increasingly depends on how well journalism adapts to these pressures.

This year's *Climate Change News Audiences Report* examines the changing relationship between the public, the media, and the climate crisis. Now in its fourth year, the report reflects our effort to track how people engage with climate change news and information across eight countries: Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom (UK), and the USA. Using new survey data from 2025, the study updates our understanding of climate news consumption and traces emerging trends across four years. This year, it also offers new insights into public perceptions of political leadership, evaluations of journalists' performance in covering climate change, and views on whether AI will help or hinder efforts to address the crisis.

---

[2] https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-third-warmest-july-marks-slight-respite-record-global-temperatures

[3] https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/degrees-matter

[4] https://climateactiontracker.org/cat-data-explorer/country-ratings

In this year's report, we observe notable shifts in how people access and engage with climate change news, particularly across France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the USA. While public interest in climate information remains broadly stable, weekly news consumption has gradually declined – a trend driven largely by falling engagement among older audiences and reduced climate coverage on television, previously a primary source for this demographic.

Trust in sources of climate information remains relatively stable across most countries, with scientists, environmental activists, the news media, and international institutions continuing to rank far ahead of other actors. However, when it comes to political leadership, confidence remains far more divided. Many recognise the need for stronger action on climate change, yet far fewer believe their governments are delivering on their commitments.

Views on AI reveal a similar ambivalence. While there is cautious optimism about its potential to contribute to climate action, uncertainty remains about its environmental impact and about how well the media explain its role. This uncertainty mirrors a broader tension in climate journalism itself, where audiences continue to value reporting that informs, explains, and holds power to account, yet many feel these expectations are not being met.

Together, these findings show that, while concern about climate change remains high, public engagement, at least with the news and information about it, is shifting in subtle but significant ways. The relationship between audiences, political leaders, technology, and the media is becoming more complex, shaped by competing priorities and uneven visibility. This report builds on four years of data to map those changes and to examine how information, leadership, and communication continue to influence what people know, trust, and expect in a fast-changing climate landscape.

Methodology

This report draws on survey data gathered through an online study carried out by Ipsos for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) at the University of Oxford. Fieldwork took place between 26 September and 14 October 2025 across eight countries: Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA.

Ipsos managed data collection and weighting, while the Reuters Institute led the questionnaire design, analytical framework, and interpretation of findings.

Samples were structured using nationally representative quotas for age, gender, and region, with data subsequently weighted to match the demographic composition of each country's online population. While this approach enhances cross-country comparability, the findings are representative only of online users. This may exclude older or less affluent groups, particularly in countries such as India and Pakistan, where internet access remains limited and concentrated in urban areas. In addition, online samples tend to over-represent politically engaged individuals, who are more likely to take part in surveys voluntarily.

Table 1. Nationally representative sample sizes

Country	Sample size	Fieldwork dates	Internet penetration
UK	1,082	26–29 September 2025	96%
USA	1,051	26–28 September 2025	93%
France	1,049	1–2 October 2025	87%
Germany	1,038	2–6 October 2025	94%
Japan	1,038	8–10 October 2025	87%
Brazil	1,000	1–11 October 2025	84%
India	1,005	26 September–10 October 2025	56%
Pakistan	1,019	6–14 October 2025	27%

Note: Internet penetration rates are from 2024 for France, Germany and Brazil; 2023 for the UK, US, Japan, and Pakistan; and 2020 for India. Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), via World Bank Data https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS

This year's sample is consistent with previous years but differs slightly from 2022 in terms of the respondents' age range. In 2022, the survey included respondents aged 18–65 across all eight countries. In the subsequent waves, the upper age limit was raised to 75 in France, Germany, the UK, and the USA, and lowered to 55 in India and Pakistan, while remaining at 65 in Japan and Brazil. For more details on the samples from 2022 to 2024, please consult our website.

Each country's sample includes approximately 1,000 respondents, with a margin of error of at least ±4 percentage points (pp). Hence, differences smaller than 5pp, particularly within demographic subgroups, should be interpreted with caution.

In addition, a few contextual factors should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings. For example, in India and Pakistan, fieldwork coincided with periods of severe flooding that dominated national news and may have increased respondents' exposure to climate-related coverage compared with other countries. More broadly, as is often the case with self-reported data, climate-related responses may be shaped by recall errors or social desirability bias (Doughty and Thomas-Walters 2025). Prior research suggests that, when asked about climate change, people sometimes present themselves as more environmentally engaged than they truly are, leading to an inflated picture of public attitudes (Larson and Kinsey 2019). To address these challenges, we followed the established research standards, using careful questionnaire design and extensive testing to minimise bias and strengthen the reliability of responses.

Furthermore, responses to questions about political leadership, AI, and journalistic performance should be viewed as indicators of perception rather than objective assessment. They capture how people interpret and evaluate these issues within their information environments, rather than the actual effectiveness of leadership or the real impacts of AI.

Some figures in this report do not display all the percentages. All percentages can be viewed in the interactive figures at: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/climate-change-news-audience-report-2025-analysis-news-use-and-attitudes-eight-countries

Chapter 1: Climate Change News Use Trends

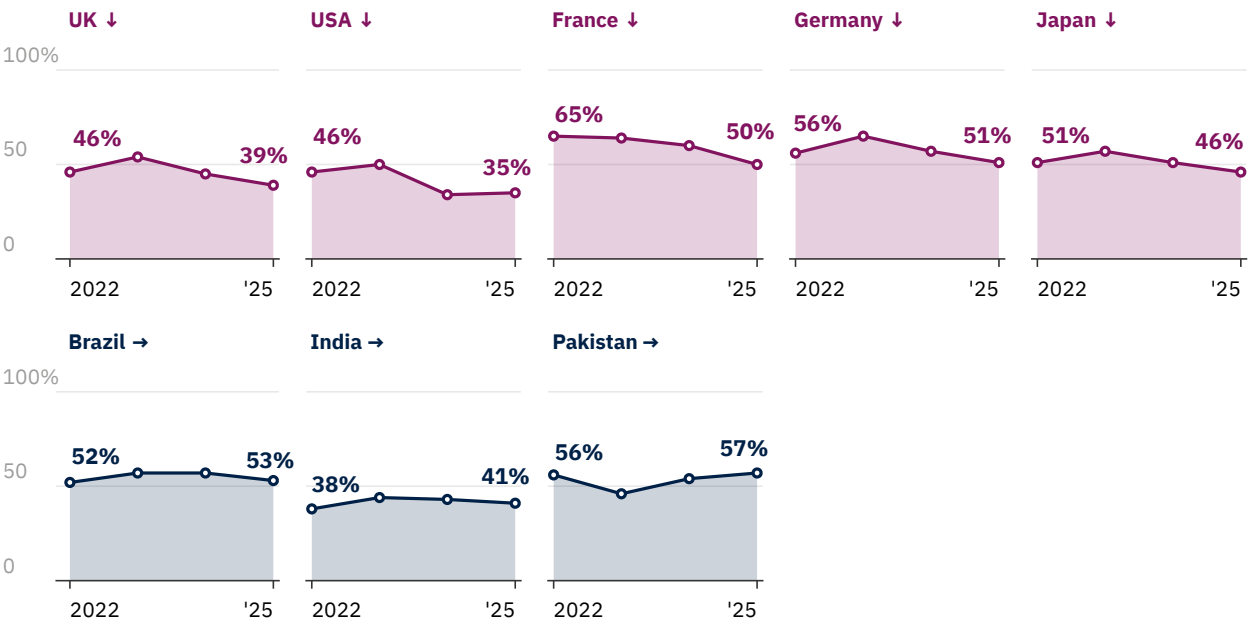
Research consistently shows that people in almost every country express concern about climate change and support stronger policies to address it, reflecting widespread recognition of its risks and urgency (Ritchie 2024). Because the news media remain a primary source of information (Newman et al. 2020), it might be expected that heightened concern would lead to greater consumption of climate-related news – it seems plausible that as the crisis deepens and becomes more visible, the public's need for reliable information would increase. However, our latest data suggest that this relationship is not straightforward.

In 2025, 47% of respondents across the eight countries in our survey say they saw, read, or heard news or information about climate change in the past week. While the year-on-year differences are not large, the data show a gradual decline from the 2023 peak, when 55% said they encountered climate news weekly. Looking at the data by country, we see declines in all of the Global North countries in our sample, with the decline particularly pronounced in the UK (–7pp since 2022), the USA (–11pp), and France (–15pp) (Figure 1). Engagement has held steadier in Brazil, India, and Pakistan – but it has not increased in any of the eight countries studied.

These trends suggest that – at least when it comes to news and information access – the climate perception inertia (Ejaz et al. 2025) we described in our last report may now be giving way to a gradual decline in climate news consumption. Whether this marks the beginning of a longer-term shift or a temporary fluctuation remains to be seen.

Figure 1: Proportion who saw, read, or heard any news or information about climate change in the last week

In countries in the Global North, weekly climate change news and information access has declined, whereas in the Global South countries it has remained stable since 2022.

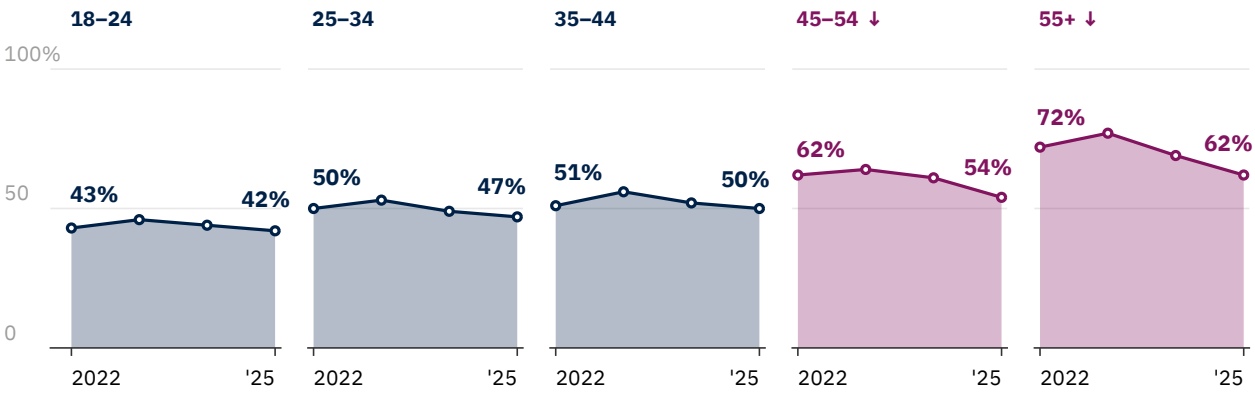


Q5A. When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read, or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source?
Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 1000.

In terms of which groups are consuming climate change news and information less, on average across eight countries, use has decreased among the older age groups – those aged 45 to 54, and especially the over-55s (Figure 2). The proportion of over 55s who consume climate news on a weekly basis has decreased by 10pp from 72% in 2022 to 62% in 2025. Climate news use remained stable among the under-45s (including the 18–24s) during the same time period – though they are still less likely to consume climate news than older people.

Figure 2: Proportion who saw, read, or heard any news or information about climate change in the last week

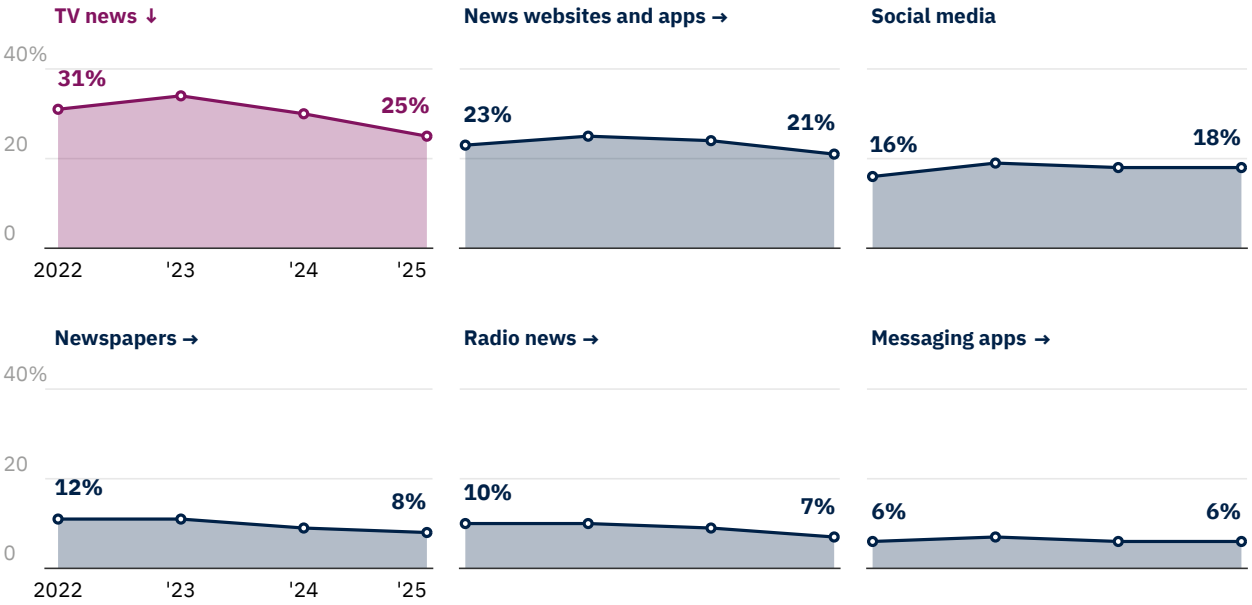
On average across eight countries, weekly climate news use has remained stable among the under 45s, but has decreased in the older age groups – though they are still more likely to consume climate news than the younger groups.



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: All across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA in 2025 aged 18–24 = 1263, 25–34 = 1818, 35–44 = 1725, 45–54 = 1573, 55+ = 1917.

In terms of the sources that people are using to access climate news and information, we see that television – even though it is still the most widely used single source – is the only source to have declined since 2022, from 31% in 2022 to 25% in 2025 (Figure 3). All other sources have changed by ±3pp or fewer. Given that older people are much more likely to consume news on television, this aligns with the data from the previous figure.

Figure 3: Proportion who saw, read, or heard climate change news or information from each in the last week

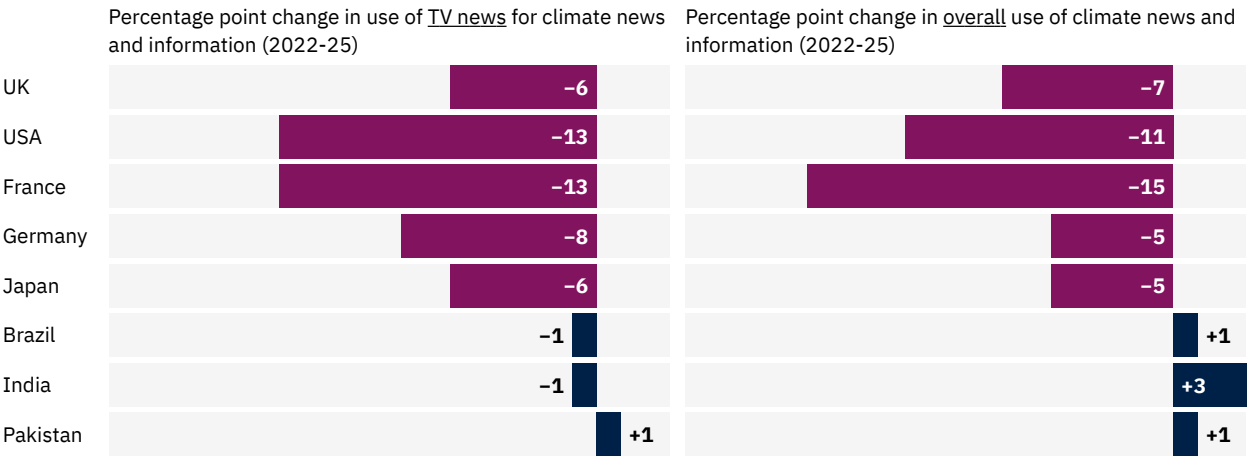


Q5. Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read, or heard within the last week. Where did you see, read, or hear this? *Base: Total sample across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA in each year ≈ 8000.*

Indeed, the decline in the use of television news for climate news and information maps closely onto the overall declines in use of climate news and information (Figure 4). Countries that have seen a decline in weekly television use have seen a roughly equal decline in overall climate news and information. In contrast, in countries where television news use has remained stable, we see no real change in people's overall weekly climate news and information access.

Figure 4: Change in use of TV news for climate news and information and change in overall use of climate news and information

The percentage point decline in the weekly use of TV news for climate news and information maps closely to the decline in overall use of climate news and information.

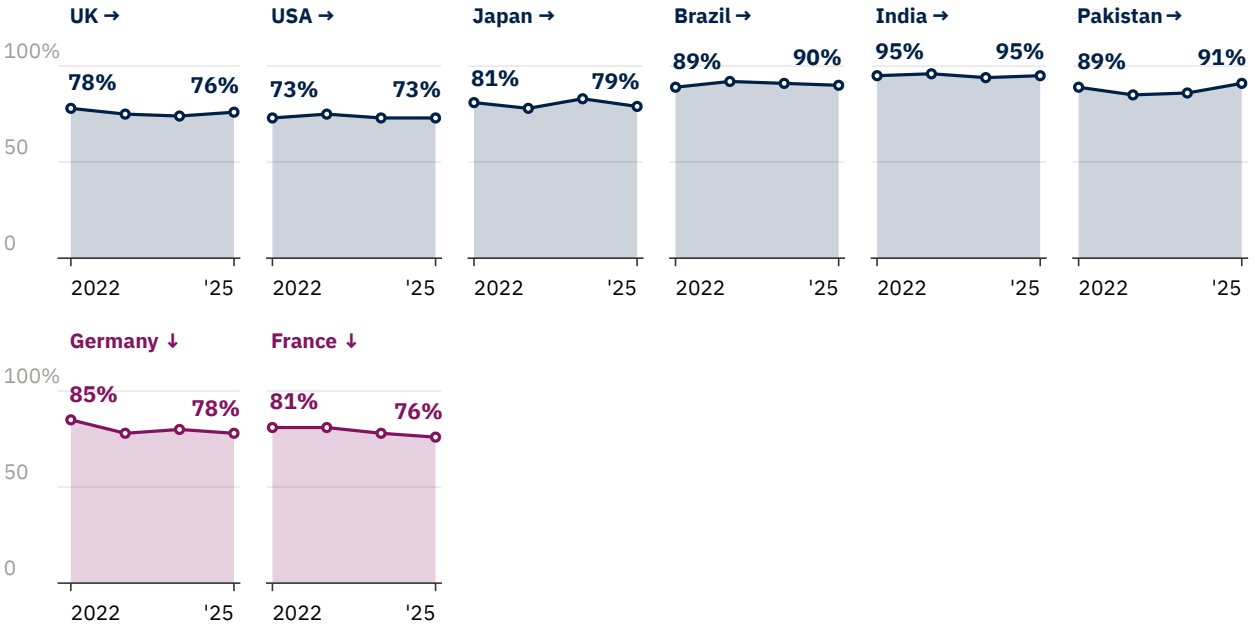


Q5A. When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read, or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source? **Q5.** Thinking specifically about the news or information about climate change you saw, read, or heard within the last week. Where did you see, read, or hear this? *Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 1000.*

We also asked respondents about their level of interest in environmental and climate-related news. As Figure 5 shows, across all countries roughly three-quarters or more say they are 'somewhat', 'very' or 'extremely' interested in such information, and in contrast to news consumption these levels have changed little over the past four years. Both Pakistan and India stand out for their consistently high levels of interest, which is unsurprising given their vulnerability to climate change and the frequent occurrence of extreme weather events – in addition to the more educated sample (see Methodology). In other countries, France (81% down to 76%) and Germany (85% down to 78%) have seen modest declines, while in the UK, USA, and Brazil, interest has remained broadly stable.

Figure 5: Proportion who say they are interested in the environment and climate-related news and information

Interest in climate news and information remains high and stable in most countries. Interest has declined slightly since 2022 in France and Germany.

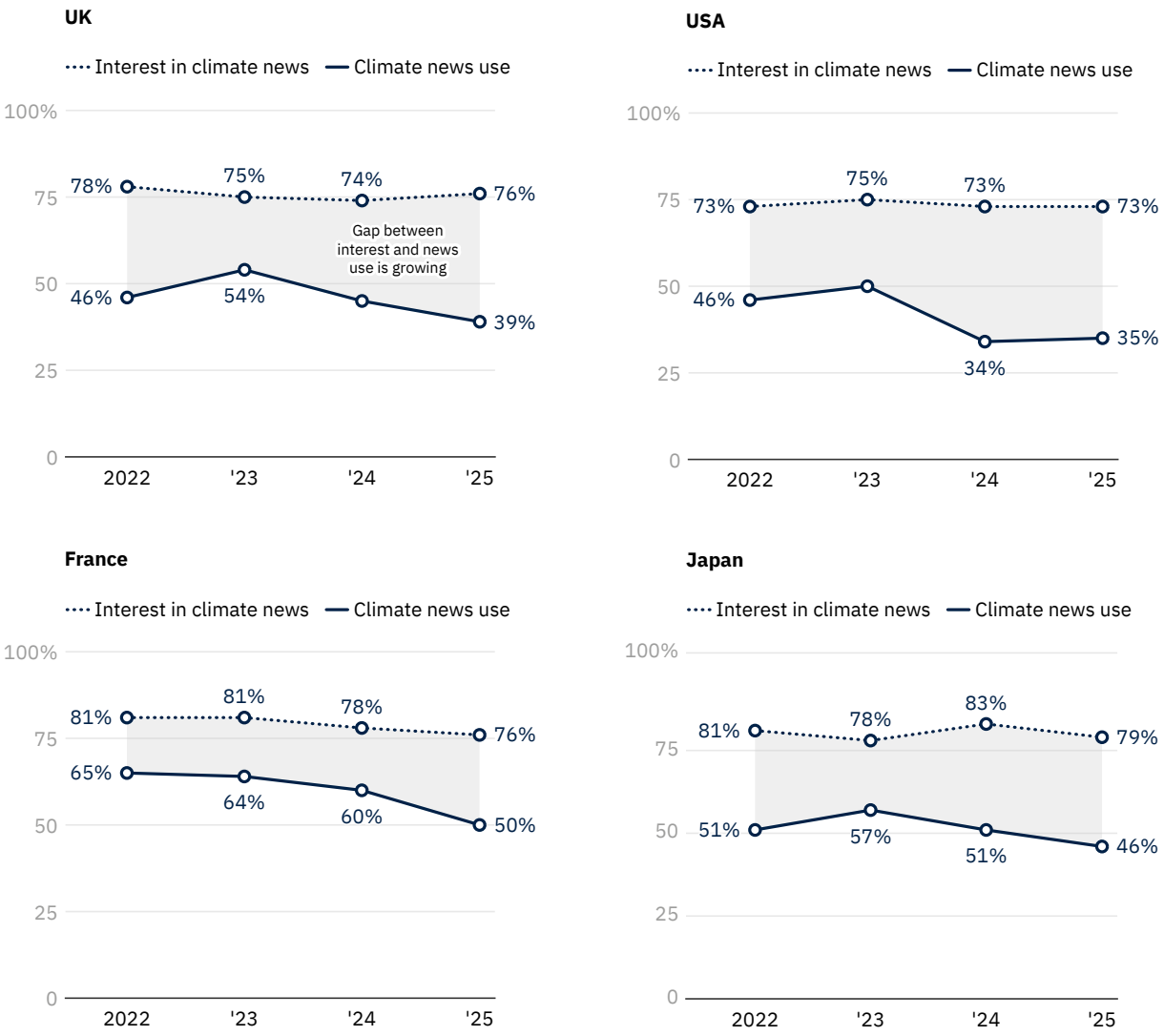


Q2. How interested, or not, are you in the following types of news? *Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 1000.*

If we connect these data with our earlier findings, we see that there are several countries – namely France, Japan, the UK, and the USA – where interest in climate news has remained roughly stable, but weekly climate news and information use has decreased (see Figure 6). There are a number of possible explanations for this. One is that people's news habits (shaped by interest) have not changed, but if the supply of climate news has decreased (especially on TV), they are naturally less likely to encounter it. This is further supported by the fact that overall weekly news use has remained stable at around 90% in every country.

Figure 6: Gap between interest in environment and climate-related news and weekly climate news and information use

In four countries there is a growing gap between the public's interest in climate change news and their climate news use.

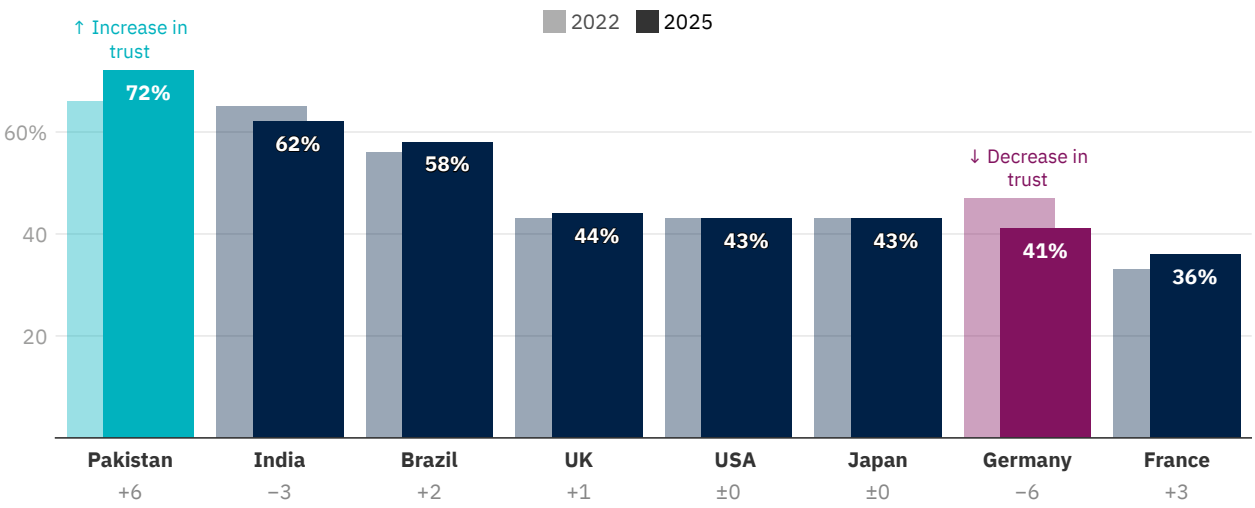


Q2. How interested, or not, are you in environment and climate-related news? **Q5a.** When, if at all, was the last time you saw, read, or heard any news or information about climate change, from any source? *Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 1000.*

Attention, however, is only one dimension of engagement. Sustained connection with climate information also depends on trust – whether people have confidence in the news and those who produce it. Figure 7 shows that trust in the news media as a source of climate information has remained relatively stable across most countries over the past four years. Around four in ten respondents in the UK (44%), USA (43%), Germany (41%), and Japan (43%) say they 'somewhat' or 'strongly' trust the news media as a source of news or information about climate change, with little movement since 2022. In Germany, trust has edged down slightly (–6pp), while in Pakistan it has increased from 66% in 2022 to 72%, the highest level among all eight countries. India (62%) and Brazil (58%) also stand out with comparatively higher trust in the media on climate issues. Trust is lowest in France at 36%. Overall, however, the data point to a continued sense of inertia in how people perceive the credibility of climate news.

Figure 7: Proportion who trust the news media as a source of news and information on climate change

Across all countries, except Pakistan where it increased and Germany where it declined, the level of trust in media remained stable since 2022.

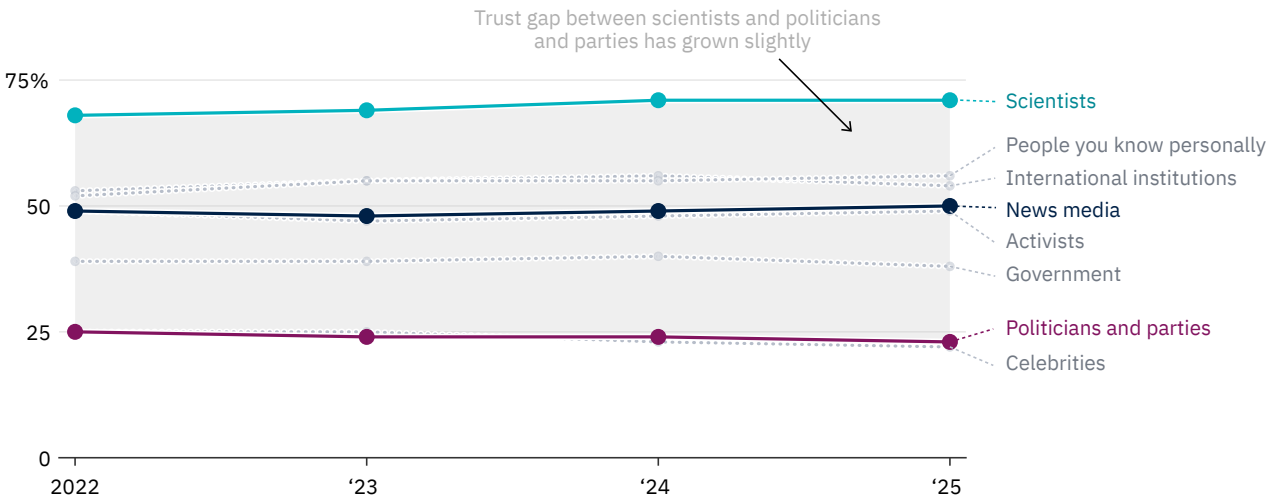


Q7. Please look at the groups below and indicate the extent to which you would generally trust or distrust each one as a source of news or information about climate change. *Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 1000.*

Beyond trust in the news media, it is also important to consider how people rate other sources of climate information. Figure 8 shows that the *hierarchy* of trust has remained remarkably stable over the past four years. Scientists continue to be the most trusted source by a wide margin, with around seven in ten (71% in 2025) people saying they rely on them for accurate information about climate change. At the other end of the spectrum, politicians and parties are among the least trusted (23%) along with celebrities (22%). The news media, international institutions, and environmental activists occupy the middle ground, with little movement in their levels of trust since 2022.

Figure 8: Proportion who trust each of the following as sources of news and information on climate change

On average across eight countries, trust in scientists is highest, and trust in politicians and parties is lowest. The gap between the two has grown slightly since 2022.



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 across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA in each year ≈ 8000.*

Since 2022, trust in scientists has slowly edged up whereas trust in politicians and parties has inched down, meaning that the trust gap between the two has grown from 43pp in 2022 to 48pp in 2025. This suggests that, over time, people are becoming slightly more discerning when it comes to trust in different sources of climate information. However, it is striking that trust in 'people you know personally' remains high (56%) and has grown by 4pp since 2022.

Chapter 2: Public Views Towards Political Leadership on Climate

Leadership plays a decisive role in shaping how societies confront the climate crisis, particularly when addressing complex global challenges hindered by collective action problems, where effective leadership becomes indispensable (Kousser and Tranter 2018). Yet, despite growing public awareness and scientific consensus, political responses to climate change remain fragmented and often constrained by short-term economic or partisan considerations.

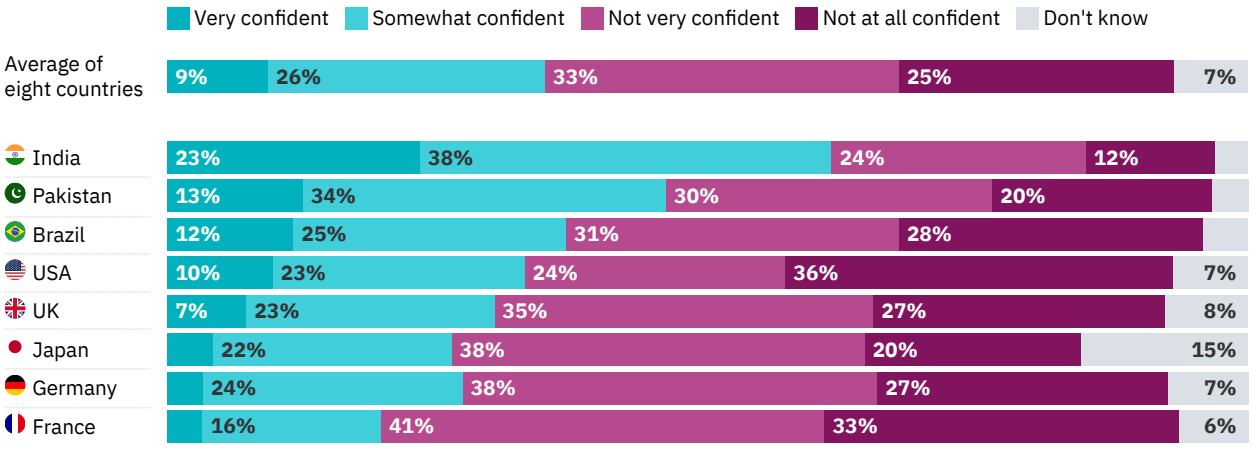
In some countries, this has translated into open dismissal or politicisation of the issue. This was recently exemplified when the US President, Donald Trump, did not join 53 other world leaders at the opening of the COP30 climate summit in Brazil (McDonnell 2025), after previously describing climate change as 'the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world' (CNN 2025). Such rhetoric and actions capture how political divides can undermine global momentum and public confidence in climate leadership.

Thus, given the decisive role of political leadership in mobilising climate action, this chapter probes public perceptions across eight countries. We examine how citizens evaluate their leaders' performance, whether they trust them to take sufficient action, and how this trust compares with other institutions. Finally, we assess how effectively the news media hold these leaders to account on the climate crisis.

Figure 9 provides an overview of how confident people are in their political leaders' ability to address climate change. Across the eight countries, only around one in three respondents (35%) are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident that their leaders have the right priorities, are making sound decisions, or are setting a good example for others – with far higher numbers of around 55% saying that they are 'not very' or 'not at all' confident. In the aggregate, then, people tend to lack confidence in their political leaders when it comes to addressing climate change.

Figure 9: Level of confidence that political leaders their have priorities right in terms of the importance of climate change compared to other issues

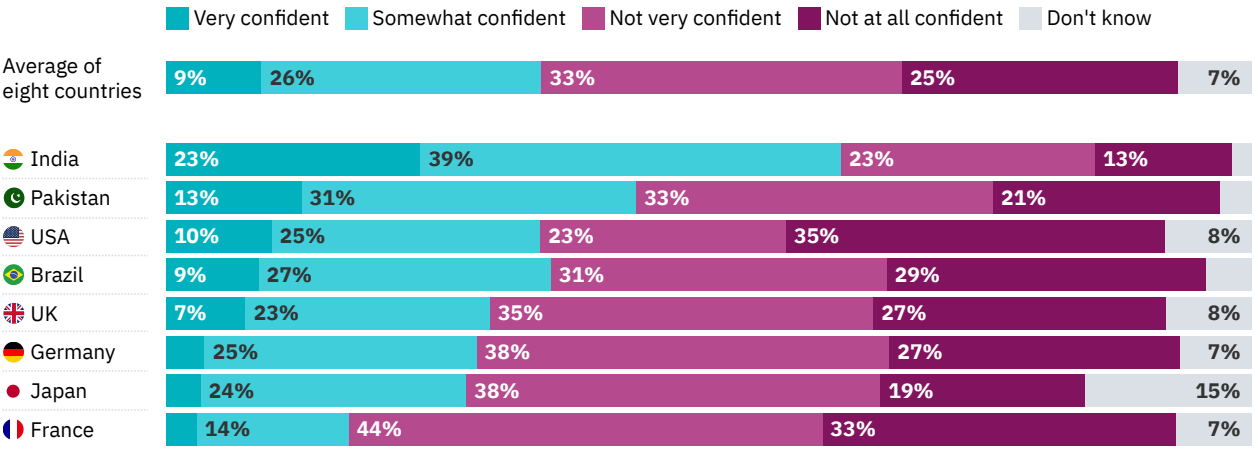
On average across eight countries, only around one in three respondents (35%) are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident that their leaders have the right priorities. Confidence is higher in India.



Q38i. How confident, or not, are you that your country's political leaders have their priorities right in terms of the importance of climate change compared to other issues? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

Level of confidence that political leaders are making the right decisions about how to respond to climate change

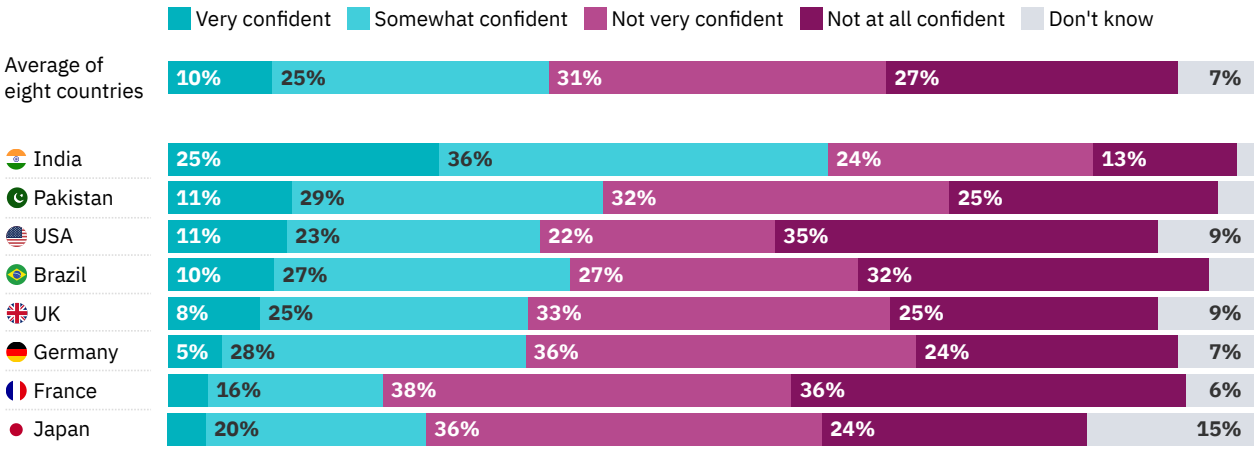
On average across eight countries, only around one in three respondents (35%) are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident that their leaders are making the right decisions in response to climate change. Confidence is higher in India.



Q38ii. How confident, or not, are you that your country's political leaders are making the right decisions about how to respond to climate change? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

Level of confidence that political leaders are setting a good example for other countries on climate change

On average across eight countries, only around one in three respondents (35%) are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident that their leaders are setting a good example for other countries. Confidence is higher in India.



Q38iii. How confident, or not, are you that your country's political leaders are setting a good example for other countries on climate change? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

However, if we look at the data by country, we see marked contrasts in how citizens evaluate their leaders' handling of climate change. Confidence is highest in India and Pakistan, where around 61–62% and 40–46% respectively believe their leaders have their priorities right, are making the right decisions, and are setting good examples for other countries (India is the only country where those who are 'very' or 'somewhat' confident outnumber those who are 'not very' or 'not at all' confident). This confidence, however, may not reflect deep trust in political leadership so much as a combination of other factors. First, public discourse in these highly vulnerable countries often frames climate change as a crisis driven by richer, industrialised nations, reducing the perceived need to hold domestic leaders accountable (Billett 2010; Ejaz et al. 2023). Second, restricted press freedom in these contexts limits journalists' ability to report

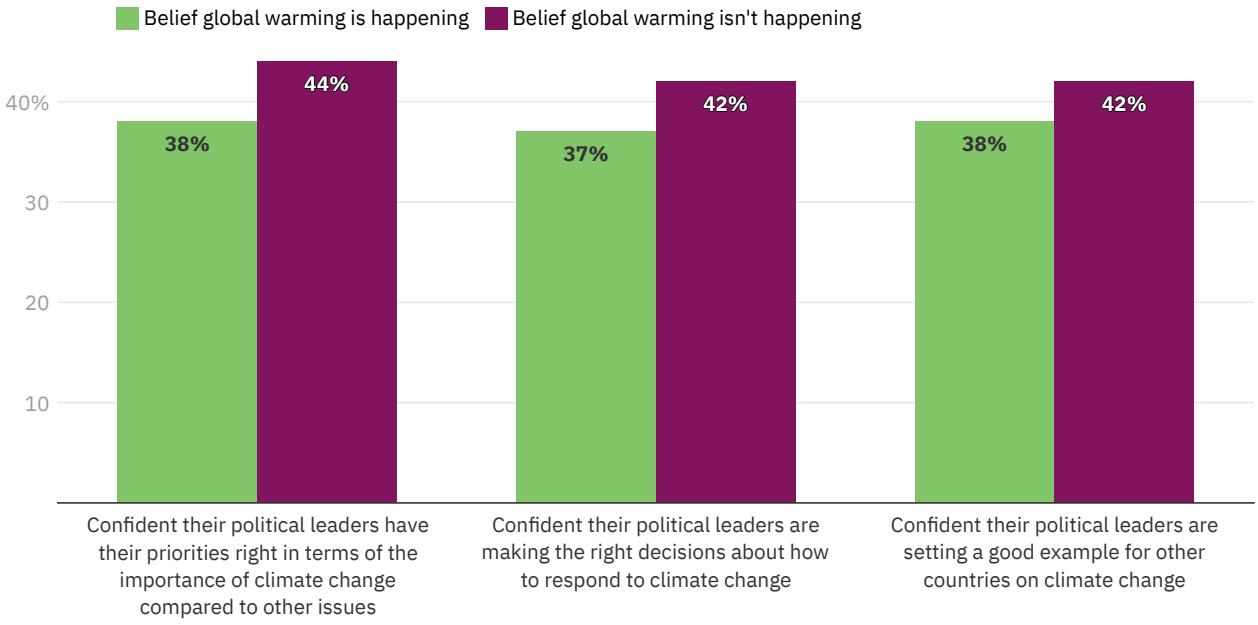
critically on climate policy, leaving citizens with less information to question official claims and potentially contributing to higher confidence levels.

In contrast, confidence across the three metrics is much lower in France (17–20%), Japan (24–28%), and Germany (27–33%), where citizens tend to expect more decisive leadership. Also, the stronger culture of activism and political contestation in these societies likely amplifies dissatisfaction when leaders are perceived to fall short of public expectations.

It is perhaps revealing that the small section of the public who believe that global warming is *not* happening have slightly more confidence that their political leaders have their priorities right, are making the right decisions, and are setting a good example for other countries than those who believe global warming *is* happening (Figure 10). Given that most people do believe in global warming, this suggests that the public tend to perceive inaction from their political leaders.

Figure 10: Proportion who say they are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in their country's political leaders on climate change

On average across eight countries, the small minority who don't believe global warming is happening have slightly more confidence in their political leaders on climate change than those who do believe in global warming.

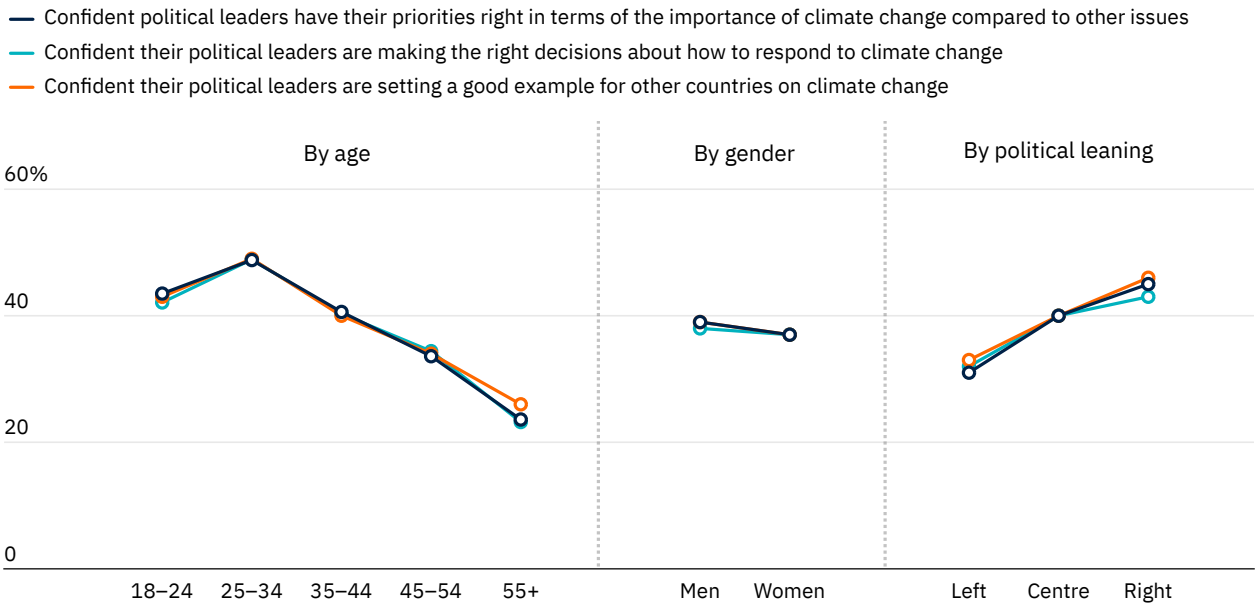


Q38. How confident, or not, are you that your country's political leaders ...? **Q20b.** Which of the following comes closest to your view? (1) Global warming is happening. (2) Global warming is not happening. *Base: Total sample across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA who say global warming is happening/not happening = 7048/684.*

Public confidence in their political leaders also varies meaningfully across demographics and different political leanings (Figure 11). Approval peaks among those aged 25–34, where around half (49%) express confidence in their leaders' handling of climate change, before declining steadily with age, falling to roughly one in four (23–26%) among those aged 55 and over across all three metrics. Gender differences in confidence are minimal. By contrast, political orientation reveals a sharper divide. Confidence is higher on the right (43–46%) than on the left (31–33%), again suggesting that the public perceive inaction from their political leaders.

Figure 11: Proportion who say they are 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in their country's political leaders on climate change

On average across eight countries, confidence declines with age and is lowest among older respondents, while those on the political right express the highest confidence. There is little variation between men and women.

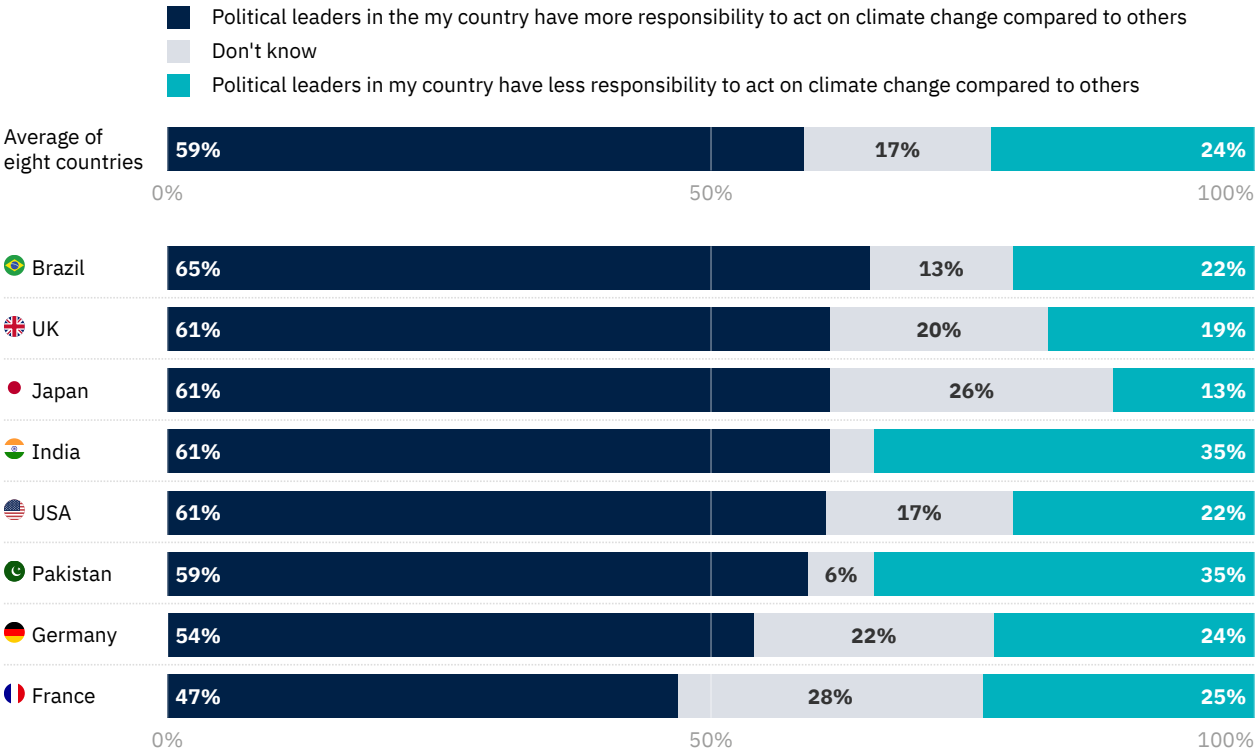


Q38. How confident, or not, are you that your country's political leaders ...? Base: All across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA aged 18–24/25–34/35–44/45–54/55+ = 1263/1818/1725/1573/1917, men/women = 4133/4127, and left/centre/right = 1968/2456/2581.

The question of confidence naturally spills over into perceptions of responsibility – who people believe should take the lead on climate action. Figure 12 illustrates that across the eight countries, six in ten respondents (59%) believe their own political leaders carry more responsibility than others to act on climate change, while only about one in four (24%) think their leaders have less. The aggregate picture does not vary much across countries, with the exception of France, where half (47%) think their leaders bear greater responsibility. In all other countries, majorities hold their political leadership responsible for tackling the climate crisis.

Figure 12: Proportion who think their political leaders have more responsibility than others to act on climate change

Except in France, a majority think that political leaders have more responsibility to act on climate change than others.



Q39. Thinking about the responsibility of political leaders in your country, which of the following comes closer to your view, even if neither of them capture it exactly? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

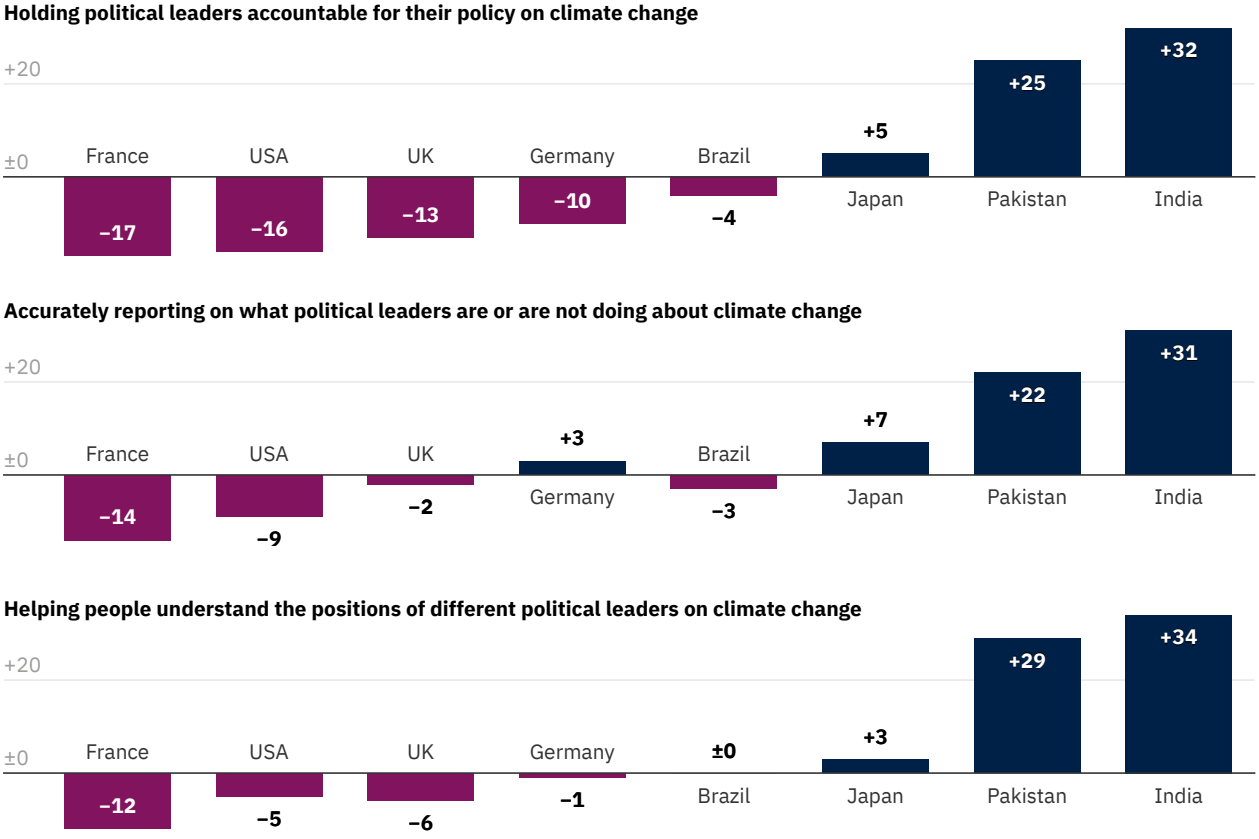
Public perceptions of political leadership are, to a large extent, mediated through the news. Without the media, most people would have little basis for evaluating what their leaders are doing, or failing to do, to deal with the climate crisis. So we asked respondents to assess this news coverage and found that public opinions are divided but slightly more positive than negative. On average across eight countries, around one in three respondents (33%) believe the media do a 'fairly' or 'very' good job reporting on political leaders' actions and positions on climate change (with slightly lower numbers for those who think they do a 'very' or 'fairly' bad job). While equal numbers (31%) say they do a good and bad job in holding them to account, indicating that media are generally viewed as fulfilling an informational role, doubts remain about their capacity to provide sustained scrutiny of those in power.

Beneath these aggregate averages lie sharp national contrasts in how the media's performance is viewed. One way of exploring this is to look at the percentage point difference between those who say the media do a good job and those who think they do a bad job. Figure 13 shows that in most Western countries, including France (−17pp), the USA (−16pp), and the UK (−13pp), more people think the media do a poor job than a good one at holding leaders accountable, reporting accurately, and helping audiences understand political positions. In contrast, assessments are far more favourable in India (+31pp to +34pp) and Pakistan (+22pp to +29pp), where the media are widely viewed as playing an informative and supportive role. Japan also shows a modestly positive balance (+3pp to +7pp), suggesting greater satisfaction with how political communication around climate issues is conveyed. These patterns likely reflect differences in media systems and public expectations, as perhaps in more politicised or polarised

environments, citizens may demand stronger accountability, while in others informative coverage itself is seen as a sign of performance.

Figure 13: Percentage point difference between those who say news media do a good job and a bad job in covering political leaders on climate change

In Japan, Pakistan, and India, people are more likely to say that the news media do a good job of covering political leaders on climate change. Elsewhere, they are more likely to say they do a bad job.

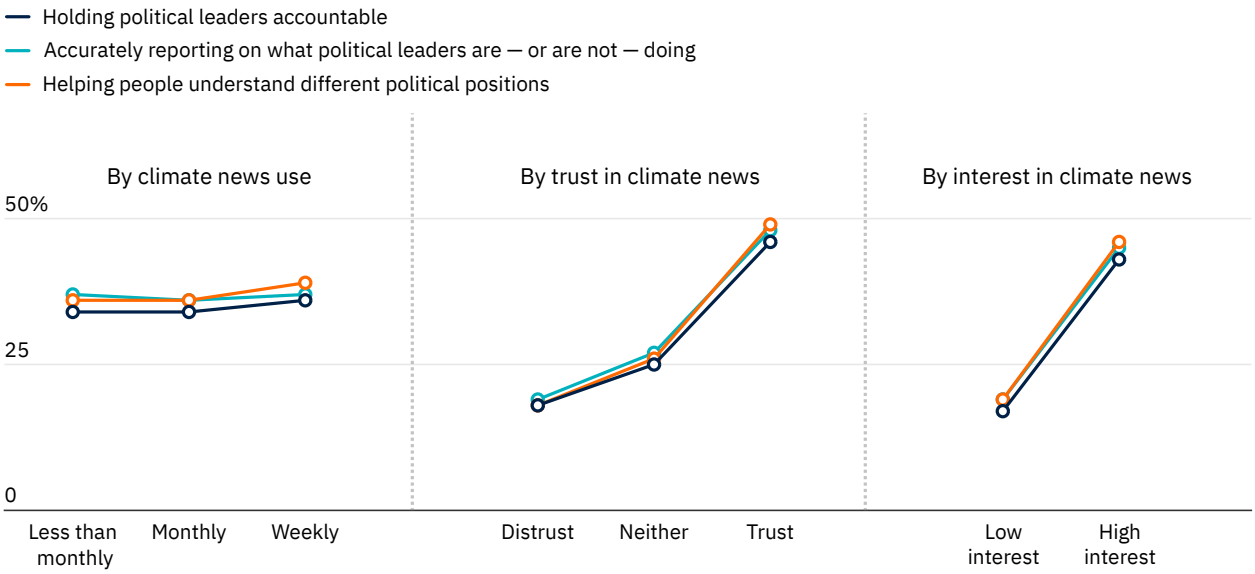


Q40. Thinking now about the coverage of political leaders in the news media, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media do a good job or a bad job of each of the following? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

Perceptions of how well the media cover political leaders also vary by how people relate to news and climate information. When we categorise responses by climate news use, trust in the news media as a source of news and information about climate change, and interest in climate news, some clear patterns emerge. Figure 14 shows that how frequently people come across climate-related news is largely unrelated to their evaluations. Instead, views depend much more on whether they trust the news and are interested in climate coverage. For example, of those who 'somewhat' or 'strongly' trust the media as a source of news and information about climate change, nearly half (46–49%) say they do a good job across the three questions, compared with one in five (18–19%) among those who distrust the media. A similar pattern appears by interest in climate news, with positive evaluations rising from just 17–19% among the uninterested to 43–46% among the most engaged.

Figure 14: Proportion who think news media do a good job covering political leaders on climate change

Those who trust the news and are more interested in climate issues are more likely to rate the news media's coverage of political leaders on climate change positively.



Q40. Thinking now about the coverage of political leaders in the news media, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media do a good job or a bad job of 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? **Q7.** Please indicate the extent to which you would generally trust or distrust news media for news or information about climate change. **Q2.** How interested, or not, are you in the environmental and climate-related news? *Base: Those across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA who use climate news weekly/monthly/less than monthly = 3856/2321/1305; distrust/neither/trust news media = 2045/1865/4117; have low/high interest in climate news = 1464/4043.*

Taken together, the findings show that people tend to lack confidence in their political leaders when it comes to climate change. As for the news media coverage of political leaders on climate change, outside of Japan, India, and Pakistan (where people tend to view the coverage of leaders favourably), people tend to think the media do a poor job of covering them and holding them to account. However, we do see more positive evaluations concentrated among those who trust the news and are interested in climate coverage.

Chapter 3: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Media, and Climate Change

The rapid rise of AI is reshaping how societies approach complex global challenges, including climate change. From potentially optimising renewable energy systems to improving climate modelling and forecasting, AI is increasingly seen as a tool that can accelerate both mitigation and adaptation efforts (Rolnick et al. 2022; Vinuesa et al. 2020). Yet others caution that the rapid growth of AI could place new pressures on energy systems and increase electricity demand from data centres (IEA 2025).

The news media could play an important role in helping the public make sense of competing narratives about AI and climate change. How they frame AI's role in this context shapes whether it is seen as a driver of solutions or a source of new risks. Just as coverage has long influenced public understanding of climate change (Ejaz et al. 2025; Moser 2016), it may now shape how people view AI – highlighting its potential benefits, such as improving efficiency and prediction, alongside concerns about rising energy use and emissions from data centres.

Against this backdrop, public perception becomes crucial. The following section examines these views across eight countries, exploring perceptions of AI's potential role in climate action and evaluations of news media performance in reporting on this issue.

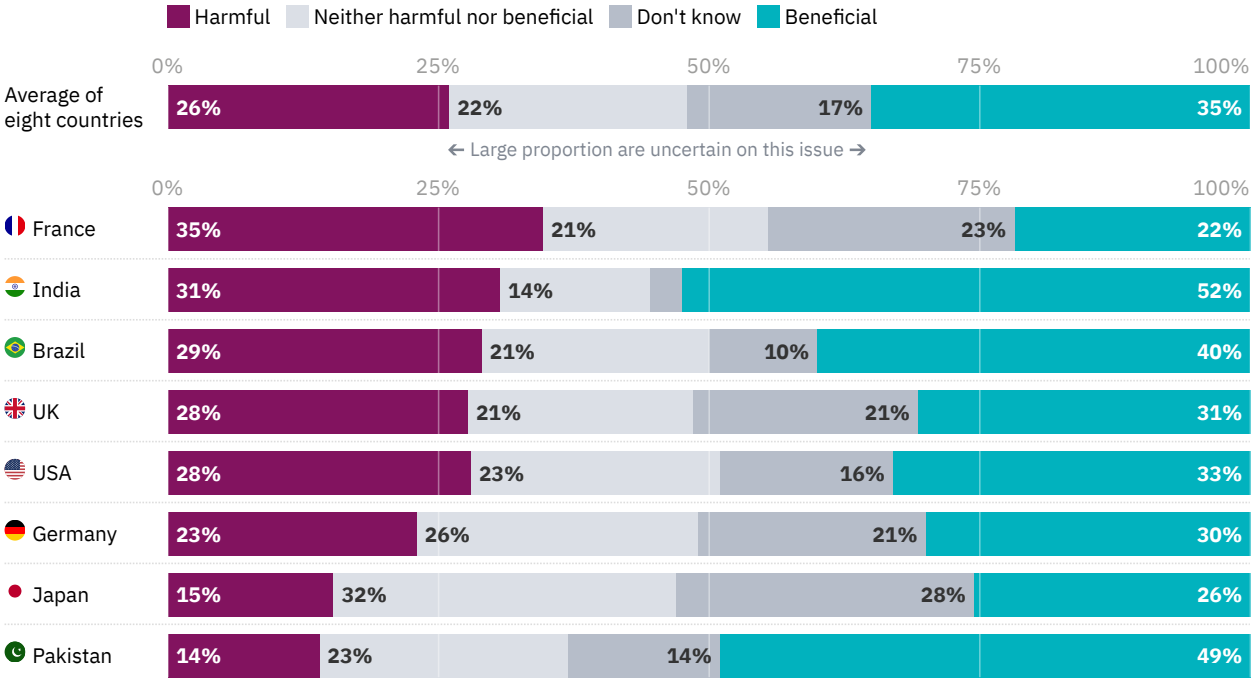
Our first question asked respondents about the impact that generative AI will have on climate change, on a 0–10 scale, ranging from (0) very harmful, through (5) neither harmful nor beneficial, to (10) very beneficial. There is considerable uncertainty on this question, and most respondents cluster around the middle of the scale (5), with a sizeable share (22%) saying AI will be neither harmful nor beneficial, and 17% saying that they 'don't know'. This reflects both the novelty of the technology but potentially also the competing narratives surrounding its potential.

If we group the responses from 0–4 as 'harmful' and 6–10 as 'beneficial' (Figure 15), we can start to see the balance of opinion. Around a third (35%) believe AI will be beneficial in tackling climate change, while about a quarter (26%) see it as harmful.

While overall opinion is cautiously positive, country-level patterns reveal striking differences (Figure 15). Optimism for AI's role in tackling climate change is particularly strong in India and Pakistan, where around one in three respondents (34% and 29%) see it as very beneficial. In contrast, France shows the greatest scepticism, with 35% viewing AI as harmful and only 23% as beneficial. In the UK, views are evenly split, with roughly three in ten (31%) seeing AI as beneficial or very beneficial, while a similar share (28%) see it as harmful or very harmful. In Japan, around six in ten (60%) respondents express neutrality or uncertainty, saying AI will be neither harmful nor beneficial or that they don't know. The USA, Brazil, and Germany show more mixed assessments, with many respondents uncertain.

Figure 15: Proportion who think AI will be harmful or beneficial in tackling climate change

On average, more than a third (35%) believe AI will be beneficial in tackling climate change, while about a quarter (26%) see it as harmful. Optimists outnumber pessimists in every country apart from France, though there is considerable uncertainty in most cases.

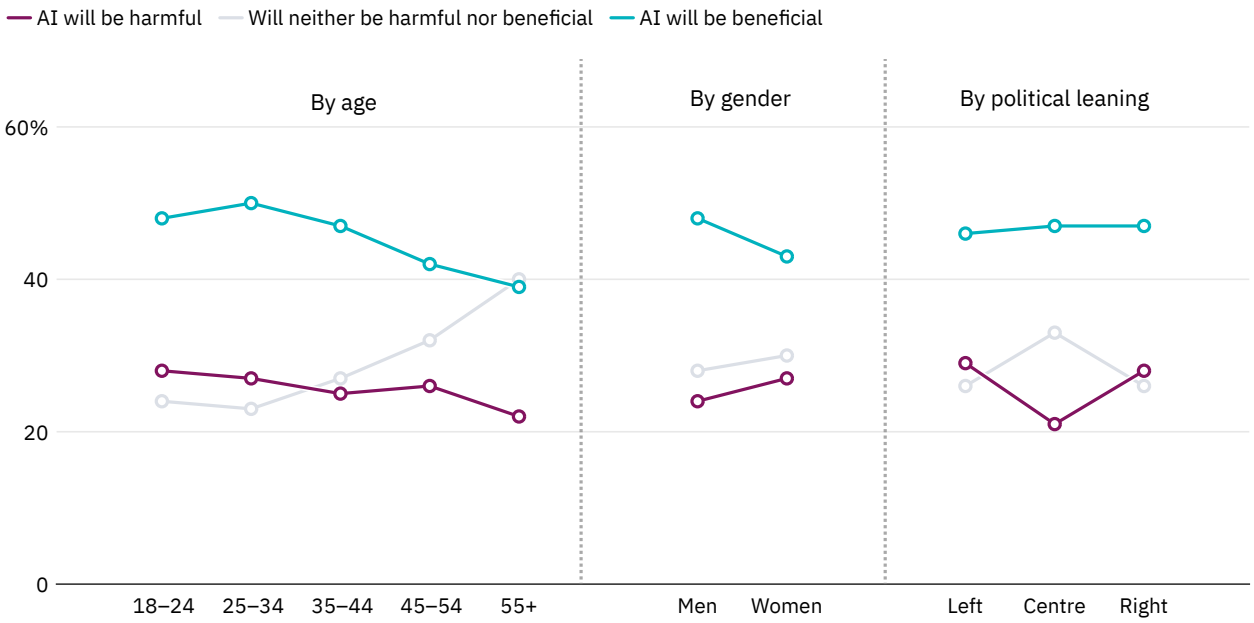


Q47. On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you believe generative AI will be harmful or beneficial to tackling climate change? Please give your answer on a scale of zero to ten where zero means you believe that generative AI will be very harmful to tackling climate change and ten it will be very beneficial to tackling climate change. *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

Figure 16 reveals modest differences in public perception regarding AI's impact in tackling climate change by age, gender, and political orientation. Younger people are more likely to see AI as beneficial for tackling climate change, with around half of those aged 18–34 holding this view compared with 39% among those aged 55 and above. Older respondents, by contrast, are more likely to be uncertain, with neutrality rising from 24% among the youngest group to 40% among the oldest. Regarding gender differences, men are more optimistic (48%) than women (43%) about AI's role in climate action. However, political orientation shows little variation overall, with people on the left (46%), centre (47%), and right (47%) reporting near-identical levels of belief in AI's benefits, indicating that views on this issue do not cut across ideological lines.

Figure 16: Proportion who think AI will be harmful or beneficial in tackling climate change

Across most groups, more people see AI as beneficial than harmful, though the proportion who hold this view varies with age and gender.



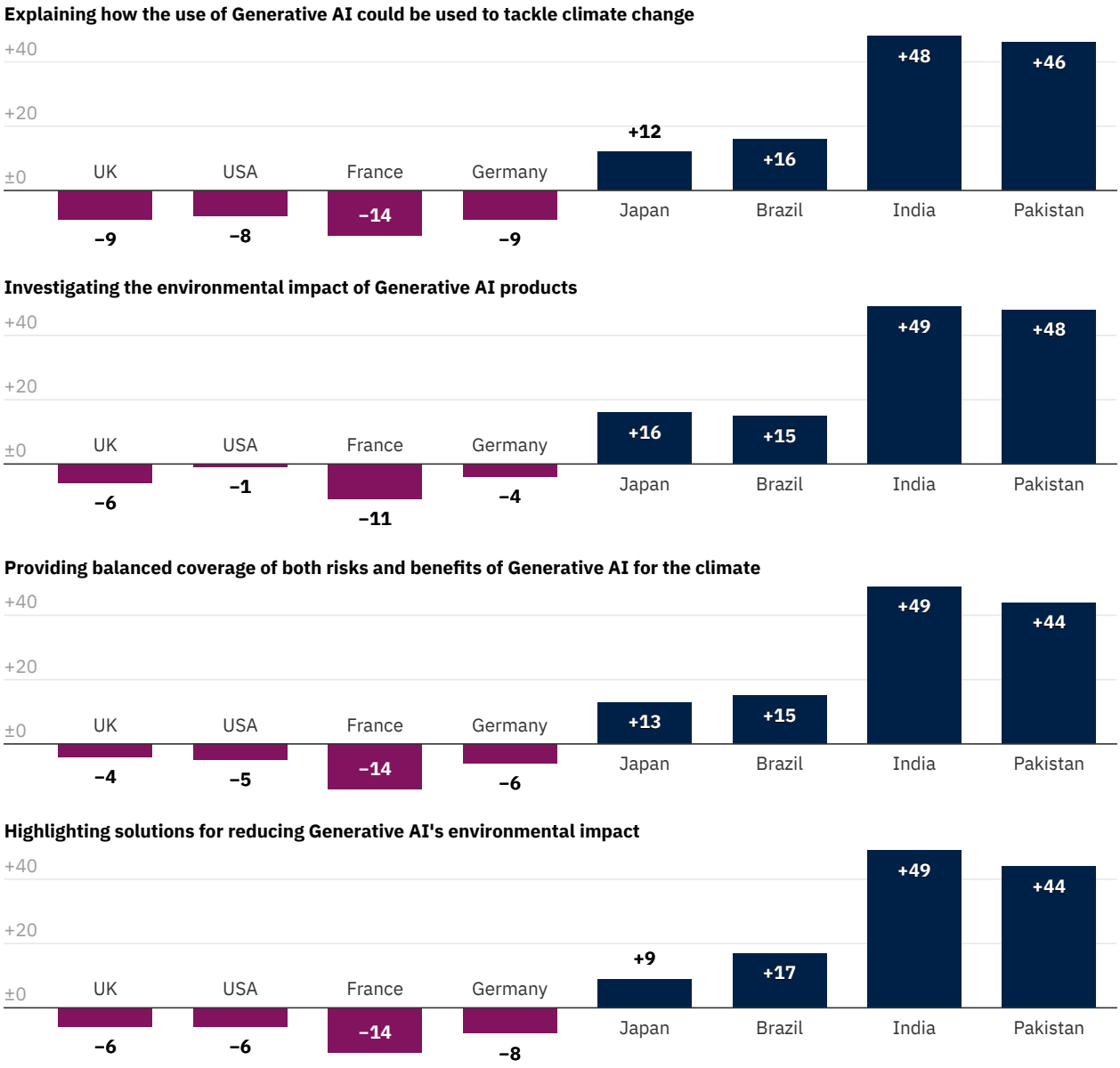
Q47. On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you believe generative AI will be harmful or beneficial to tackling climate change? Please give your answer on a scale of zero to ten where zero means you believe that generative AI will be very harmful to tackling climate change and ten it will be very beneficial to tackling climate change. *Base: All across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA aged 18–24/25–34/35–44/45–54/55+ = 1263/1818/1725/1573/1917; men/women = 4133/4127; left/centre/right = 1968/2456/2581.*

While individual characteristics explain some differences in perceptions of AI's impact on climate change, these views also depend on the news and information people receive about the issue. To explore this, we asked respondents how well they think the news media are covering the relationship between AI and climate change. Across eight countries, only about one in three respondents thinks the media do a good job in explaining how AI can be used to tackle climate change (35%), investigate its environmental impact (36%), provide balanced coverage of risks and benefits (35%), and highlight solutions to reduce its environmental footprint (35%). For each, the proportion who say the media do a good job outnumbers the 25% or so who say a bad job. This means that substantial proportions say that they don't know, or that the coverage is neither particularly good nor particularly bad.

However, the country-level picture reveals sharper contrasts. Figure 17 shows the net difference between those who say the media do a good job and those who say they do a bad job across four aspects of coverage. Respondents in India and Pakistan stand out with strongly positive scores, followed by Brazil and Japan, where views are also favourable towards how news media cover AI in relation to climate change. In contrast, respondents in Europe (France, Germany, the UK) and the USA lean negative, indicating greater dissatisfaction with how news outlets explain or scrutinise AI's climate impact.

Figure 17: Percentage point difference between those who say news media do a good or bad job covering the impact of AI on climate change

In Japan, Brazil, Pakistan, and India more people say that the news media do a good job of covering the impact of AI on climate change, but elsewhere more people say the media do a bad job.



Q48. Now thinking about your country's news media coverage of the impact of generative AI on climate change ... On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media do a good job or a bad job with each of the following? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000.*

Overall, the findings show that, while many people recognise AI's potential to aid climate action, uncertainty remains high and clear understanding is limited. Cross-country variations suggest that the relationship between AI and climate change is still emerging in public discourse, with much coverage focusing on economic opportunity and technological progress rather than environmental consequences (Ittefaq et al. 2025). In many Global South countries, such as India and Pakistan, where scientific topics often receive limited news attention (Nguyen and Tran 2019), the more positive evaluations observed in our data may reflect broader enthusiasm for innovation rather than detailed engagement with the potential risks associated with AI's role in climate change.

Chapter 4: User Needs Model of Climate News

Across the world, news organisations are struggling with growing levels of news avoidance. According to *Digital News Report 2025*, around four in ten people (40%) say they sometimes or often avoid the news (Newman et al. 2025). This pattern also extends to climate coverage, which many find difficult to follow because it is complex, long term, and often emotionally draining. In a world marked by overlapping crises, news fatigue and the need for deeper understanding often rise in tandem, a tension that is particularly visible in the context of climate change.

In response, many newsrooms are exploring ways to make their coverage, including climate reporting, more accessible and meaningful without losing its urgency or complexity. One widely used approach is the User Needs 2.0 model,[5] originally developed at the BBC and extended by others, which encourages journalists to consider what audiences are looking for from specific news articles. We examined this framework in our *Digital News Report 2024* (Newman et al. 2024) to understand user needs among news audiences more broadly, but here we adapt it to assess coverage specifically related to climate change.

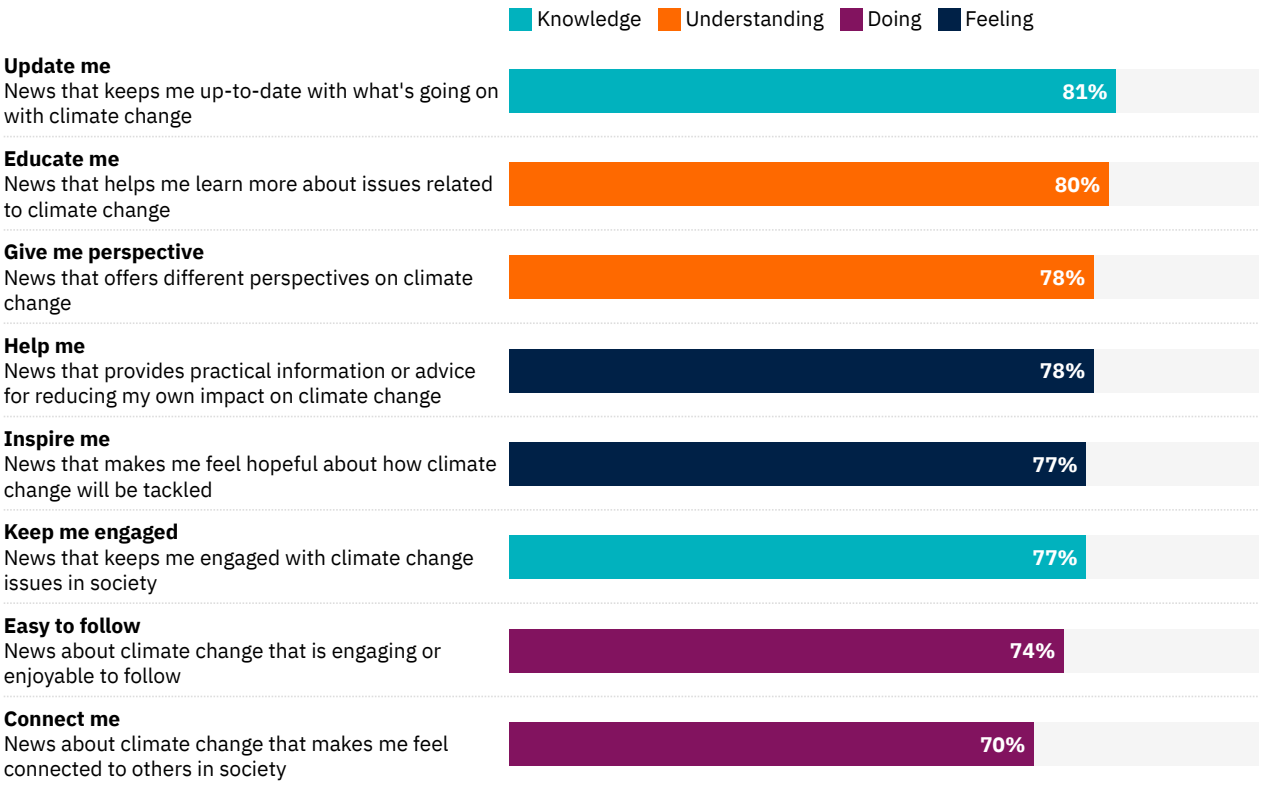
The model suggests that impactful reporting should not only *inform* but also *explain* complex issues, offer *diverse perspectives*, and provide a sense of *hope or agency*. The model consists of eight individual user needs, grouped into four basic needs that journalism should address: to *Know, Understand, Feel*, and *Do*. In this year's survey, we use this framework to explore how audiences across eight countries evaluate these needs specifically in relation to climate coverage, and how well they think the news media meet them.

Figure 18 highlights which user needs people consider most important in climate change coverage. On average across eight countries, results suggest that audiences primarily value news that keeps them informed and helps them make sense of complex issues. 'Update me' (81%) and 'Educate me' (80%) are seen as the most important, indicating a continued demand for clear, factual reporting and contextual explanation. Needs related to *Understanding* and *Doing* – such as 'Give me perspective' (78%) and 'Help me' (78%) – follow closely, underscoring an appetite for coverage that deepens comprehension while offering practical guidance. By contrast, affective needs such as content that is engaging or enjoyable (74%) and news that fosters social connection (70%) are less of a priority – but still considered important by a clear majority.

[5] https://smartocto.com/research/userneeds

Figure 18: Proportion who say each user need is 'fairly' or 'very' important to them for climate change news

On average across eight countries, audiences say news that keeps them updated and informed on climate change is more important than news focused on emotion or engagement – though all have a high level of importance.



Q44. To what extent do you consider the following to be important, if at all, in terms of how news or information about climate change is reported? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000*.

While audiences appear to value information-rich reporting, this does not necessarily mean the media do a good job of serving it – an important distinction when assessing how effectively climate coverage meets user needs. We therefore use the User Needs Priority Index (introduced in the 2024 *Digital News Report*) to identify the gap between what audiences expect from climate coverage and what they consider important. The index is calculated by taking the difference between the proportion who say a need is important and the proportion who think the media do a good job of addressing it, and then multiplying that difference by the level of importance expressed as a decimal to give priority to performance gaps on needs users deem more important.

Figure 19: User Needs Priority Index: Importance of each user need relative to how well the news media fulfils it

On average across eight countries, audiences rate most climate coverage user needs as highly important, yet perceived media performance lags behind, with the largest gap for news that inspires hope and offers diverse perspectives.

	Proportion that say this is important	Proportion that say news does a good job	User Needs Priority Index	Type
Inspire me News that makes me feel hopeful about how climate change will be tackled	77%	38%	30.0	Feeling
Give me perspective News that offers different perspectives on climate change	78%	40%	29.6	Understanding
Update me News that keeps me up-to-date with what's going on with climate change	81%	46%	28.4	Knowledge
Help me News that provides practical information or advice for reducing my own impact on climate change	78%	42%	28.1	Doing
Educate me News that helps me learn more about issues related to climate change	80%	45%	28.0	Understanding
Keep me engaged News that keeps me engaged with climate change issues in society	77%	43%	26.2	Knowledge
Easy to follow News about climate change that is engaging or enjoyable to follow	74%	39%	25.9	Feeling
Connect me News about climate change that makes me feel connected to others in society	70%	39%	21.7	Doing

Q43. On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media in your country do a good job or a bad job in terms of how they provide the following types of news relating to climate change? **Q44.** To what extent do you consider the following to be important, if at all, in terms of how news or information about climate change is reported? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000. Note: User Needs Priority Index is the percentage point gap between the proportion who think a particular need is important and the proportion who think the news media do a good job of fulfilling it multiplied by importance as a decimal. Higher scores indicate larger unmet audience needs. The four categories group related needs: Feeling (inspire, enjoyable), Understanding (perspective, educate), Knowledge (update, engaged), and Doing (help, connect).*

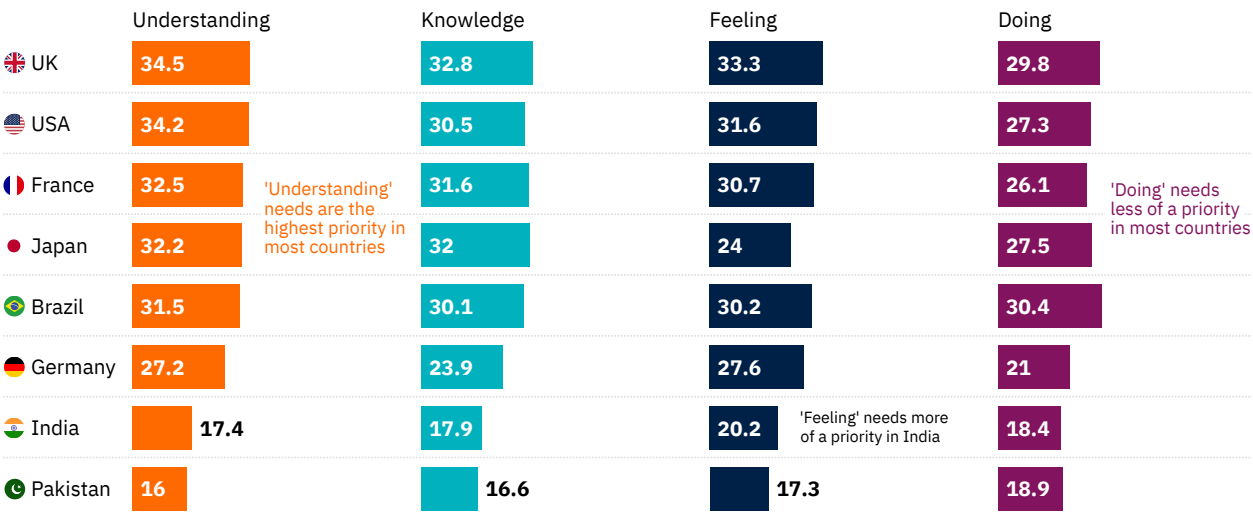
The resulting index (Figure 19) reveals notable gaps across nearly all user needs, suggesting that many respondents feel climate coverage still falls short of their needs. The largest disparities appear for 'Inspire me' and 'Give me perspective', pointing to potential weaknesses around offering hope, optimism, and broader context. In contrast, 'Connect me' shows the smallest – though still meaningful – difference, suggesting that news fostering a sense of community is a somewhat less urgent but still an unmet need for some. These patterns indicate that what audiences most miss are stories that make the challenge of climate change feel surmountable –

coverage that conveys hope, highlights progress, and reflects diverse viewpoints rather than constant crisis.

Figure 20 shows that, when comparing countries, the User Priority Needs Index reveals distinct patterns in how people perceive the performance of climate news. Gaps are widest in countries such as the UK, the USA, Brazil, and France, where audiences often have higher expectations of the media and, in some cases, where climate change receives greater attention in public and political debate (Hase et al. 2021). In these markets, *Understanding* stands out as the greatest area of need, suggesting that audiences want coverage that goes beyond breaking news to help them interpret complex developments and assess progress. Elsewhere, other needs take precedence. In India and Germany, the largest gap lies in *Feeling*, reflecting a desire for coverage that resonates emotionally or inspires confidence, while in Pakistan, *Doing* stories that offer practical relevance and help people feel more connected to others emerges as the area where audiences feel least served. These cross-country differences highlight how audience expectations are shaped not only by media systems but also by levels of climate salience and everyday experience of its impacts.

Figure 20: User Needs Priority Index: Importance of each basic user need relative to how well the news media fulfil it

People in the UK, US, Brazil, and France report the biggest differences between importance and performance, while gaps are smaller in India and Pakistan, where media expectations and climate salience differ.

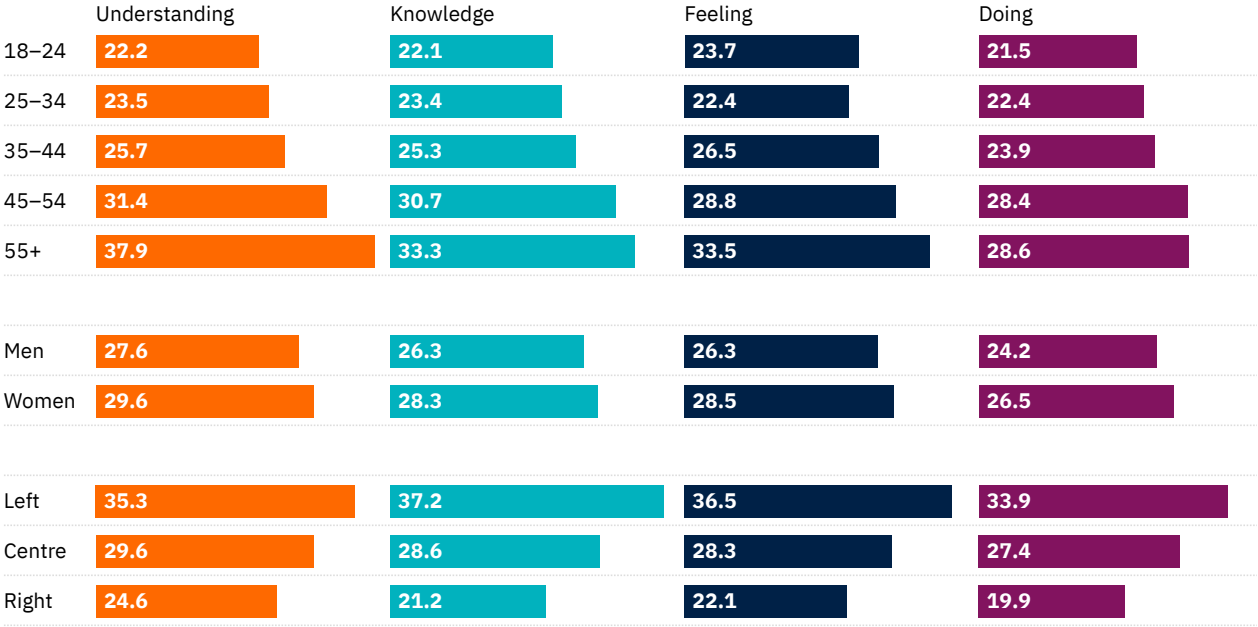


Q43. On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media in your country do a good job or a bad job in terms of how they provide the following types of news relating to climate change? **Q44.** To what extent do you consider the following to be important, if at all, in terms of how news or information about climate change is reported? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000. Note: User Needs Priority Index is the percentage point gap between the proportion who think a particular need is important and the proportion who think the news media do a good job of providing it multiplied by importance as a decimal. Higher scores indicate larger unmet audience needs. The four categories group related needs: Feeling (inspire, enjoyable), Understanding (perspective, educate), Knowledge (update, engaged), and Doing (help, connect).*

Breaking this down further by age, gender, and political orientation shows where these gaps are most pronounced (Figure 21). Older audiences show consistently higher scores across all dimensions, particularly for *Understanding* and *Knowledge*, suggesting they feel that news coverage of climate change does not make it easy for them to make sense of complex information. Younger people, by contrast, report smaller gaps overall, though Feeling remains relatively elevated, indicating an ongoing appetite for stories that provide inspiration or are easy to follow.

Figure 21: User Needs Priority Index: Importance of each basic user need relative to how well the news media fulfil it

For older audiences, the largest gaps between importance and media performance are for understanding and knowledge, while left-leaning respondents have larger gaps for all basic needs.



Q43. On balance, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media in your country do a good job or a bad job in terms of how they provide the following types of news relating to climate change? **Q44.** To what extent do you consider the following to be important, if at all, in terms of how news or information about climate change is reported? *Base: All across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA aged 18–24/25–34/35–44/45–54/55+ = 1263/1818/1725/1573/1917; men/women = 4133/4127; left/centre/right = 1968/2456/2581. Note: User Needs Priority Index is the percentage point gap between the proportion who think a particular need is important and the proportion who think the news media do a good job of providing it multiplied by importance as a decimal. Higher scores indicate larger unmet audience needs. The four categories group related needs: Feeling (inspire, enjoyable), Understanding (perspective, educate), Knowledge (update, engaged), and Doing (help, connect).*

Gender differences are modest, with women showing slightly higher scores across most categories. The strongest contrast appears along political lines, where respondents on the left score much higher across all dimensions compared with those in the centre or on the right. This pattern likely reflects differing levels of concern about climate change and varying expectations of how thoroughly and urgently it should be covered.

This data highlights where audiences perceive larger gaps between what they feel it is important for climate change news to offer and what the news media provide. This may give some indication of where journalists in different countries could concentrate their efforts. But this is only one consideration of many when it comes to what to cover and how. In the end, climate journalists themselves must use their own judgement and balance this against all other competing concerns and priorities.

Chapter 5: Audience Perceptions of Climate Journalists' Roles

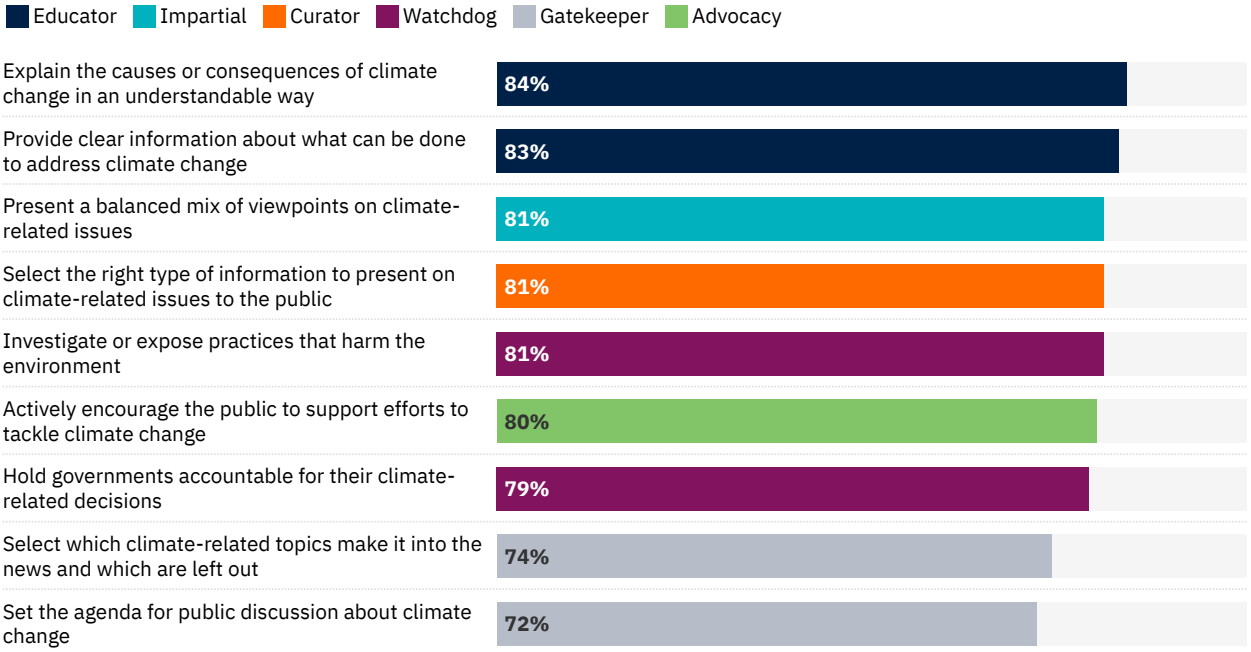
While the previous chapter explored what audiences *need* from climate coverage, this section turns to the related issue of how people view the *role* of journalists in reporting on the issue. As the main source of information about climate change, news media carry significant responsibility for shaping how people understand and respond to it. With this responsibility comes high public expectation as audiences look to journalism not only to inform and explain, but also to investigate, hold power to account, and provide direction in an increasingly uncertain world (Ejaz et al. 2023).

Previous research has shown that journalists themselves often view their role in different ways, such as educators, curators, explainers, or advocates, depending on context and outlet (Brüggemann and Engesser 2014; Fahy and Nisbet 2011; Strauss et al. 2022). Less is known, however, about how the public perceives these roles and how they evaluate the media's performance in fulfilling them, especially in a comparative context. This chapter contributes to that understanding by examining how audiences across eight countries attribute importance to the roles that climate journalists play and how effectively they believe the media perform these roles.

We begin by examining how important the public consider different journalistic roles when it comes to reporting on climate change. As Figure 22 shows, it is clear that a large majority of the public thinks that climate journalism is important. More than eight in ten respondents regard the news media's functions as *educators, impartial reporters, curators, watchdogs,* and *advocates* as important when it comes to climate change, with slightly fewer emphasising gatekeeping roles. In other words, the public expect journalists to explain and contextualise complex issues while also scrutinising those in power and highlighting possible solutions. This broad consensus provides a useful baseline for understanding how well audiences think the news media actually perform these functions.

Figure 22: Proportion who think it is 'fairly' or 'very' important for the news media to do each journalistic role

Over eight in ten respondents consider the educator, impartial, curator, watchdog, and advocacy roles of journalists important in reporting on climate change.

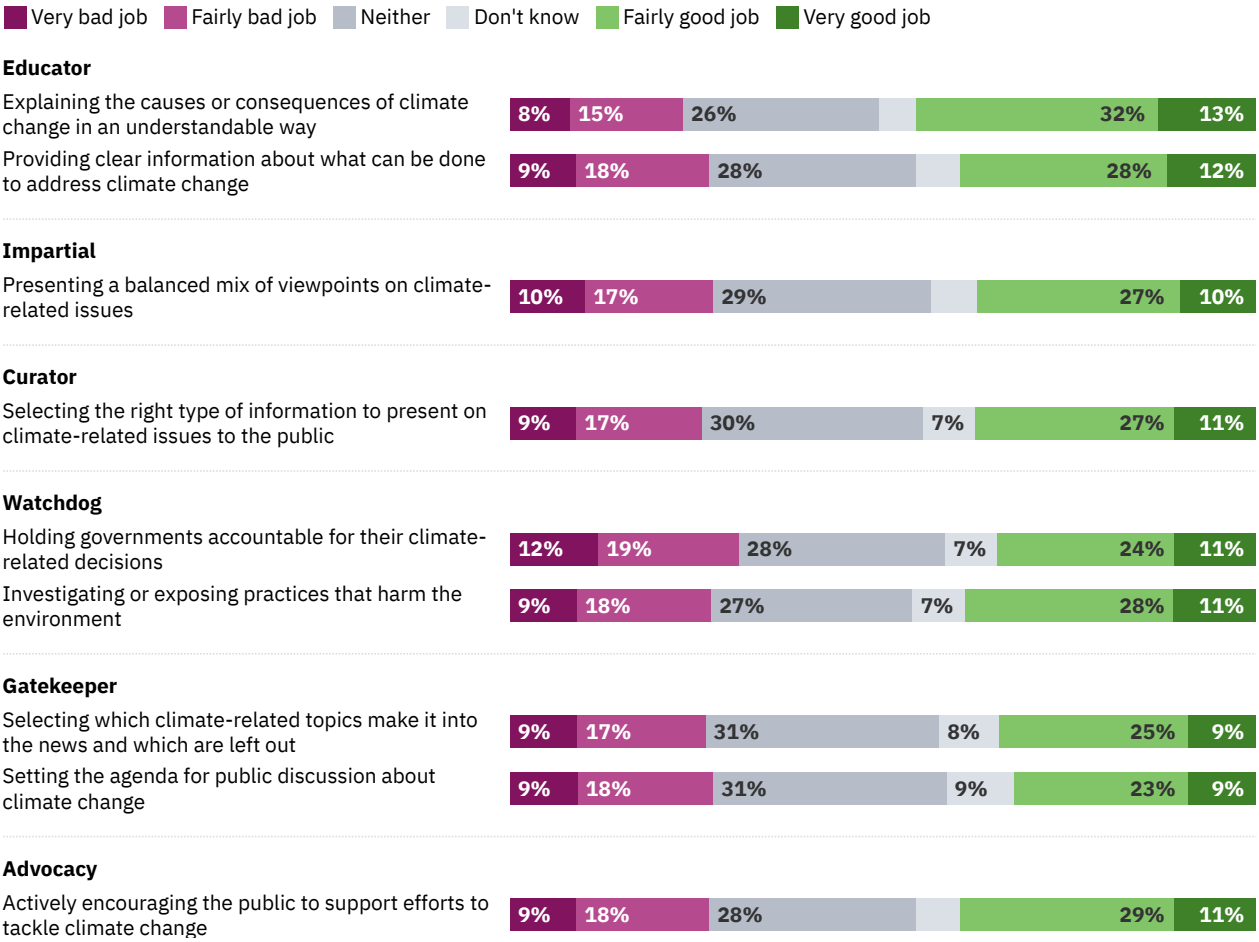


Q42. In your opinion, how important, if at all, is it for the news media to do each of the following? *Base: Total sample across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA ≈ 8000.*

While most people agree that climate journalism is important, far fewer think the media are performing their journalistic roles well. As Figure 23 shows, assessments of performance are far more mixed. Around four in ten respondents say journalists do a 'fairly' or 'very' good job explaining the causes or consequences of climate change (45%) or providing clear information about solutions (40%) – making the *educator* role one of the better-rated areas. However, fewer believe the media are effective at presenting a balanced mix of viewpoints (37%) or holding power to account (35%). Similarly weak evaluations are found for *watchdog* roles, particularly scrutinising government action (35%), where only about a third of respondents rate performance positively. However, it is important to point out that in most cases the proportion who think the news media are doing a good job is larger than those who say they do a bad job – even if there is plenty of room for improvement.

Figure 23: Proportion who think the news media do a good job of each journalistic role

On average across eight countries, around four in ten say the news media do a good job of explaining causes and offering solutions – but this is nonetheless more than say the news media are doing a bad job.

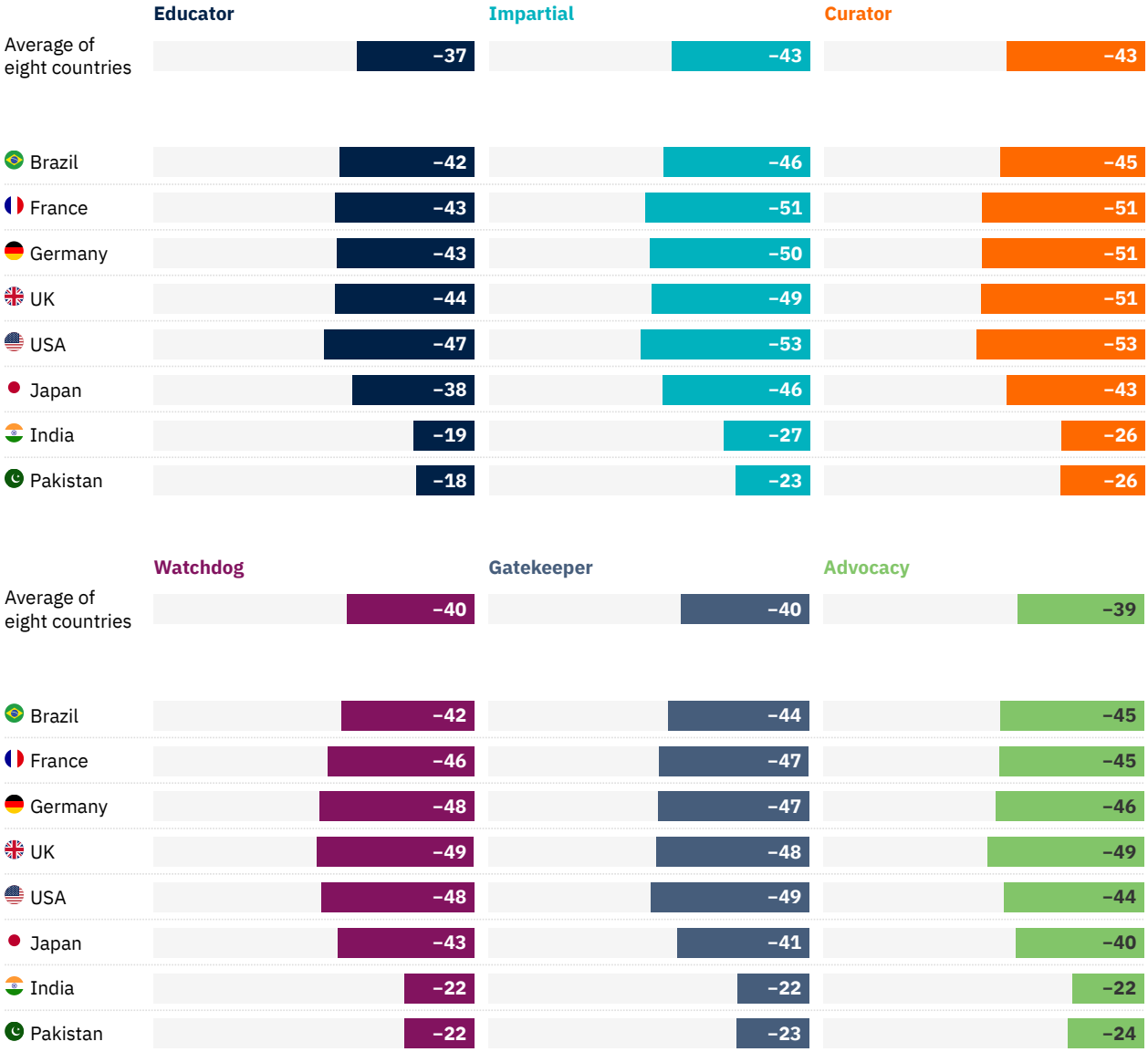


Q41. On balance, when it comes to the news media reporting on climate change, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media do a good job or a bad job of each of the following? *Base: Total sample across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, India, Pakistan, UK, USA ≈ 8000.*

We can also break down the data by country, and compare how important people consider each journalistic role category to be with how well they think the media fulfil it (we took the average if a role category had more than one role or question associated with it). As Figure 24 shows, gaps between perceived importance and perceived performance are smallest in India and Pakistan, suggesting that audiences there may hold more modest expectations of what climate journalism can achieve, or are simply more satisfied with the media. By contrast, the widest gaps appear in the UK and the USA, where expectations of the media's role tend to be higher. Furthermore, across most countries, the gaps are smallest for the *educator* role, while differences among the other roles are relatively limited, suggesting a broadly consistent perception of underperformance across functions.

Figure 24: Percentage point difference between the proportion who say each journalistic role is important and the proportion who say the media do a good job fulfilling it

Gaps between perceived importance and performance are smallest in India and Pakistan, and largest in the UK and US, indicating differing audience expectations and media environments.



Q41. On balance, when it comes to the news media reporting on climate change, to what extent, if at all, do you think the news media do a good job or a bad job of each of the following? **Q42.** In your opinion, how important, if at all, is it for the news media to do each of the following? *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 1000. Note: We took the average if a role category had more than one role/question associated with it.*

Perceptions of journalistic performance are closely linked to broader attitudes towards climate news. Among those who *trust* climate coverage, the difference between the importance and evaluation of journalists' roles is consistently smaller across all functions. The biggest shift is seen in the *educator* role, where the perceived shortfall falls from −51pp among the distrustful to −27pp among those who trust the media, a reduction of almost half. Similar though slightly smaller improvements are evident for *watchdog* and *impartial* roles.

On the one hand these gaps highlight that, in the eyes of the public, there is lots of room for improvement around climate coverage. But this is probably less about the quality of the coverage itself (which people tend to rate more positively than negatively) and is more to do with the fact that the public considers climate journalism to be very important.

Conclusion

In this fourth wave of our ongoing project, we continue to track how people across eight countries – Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, the UK, and the USA – access, evaluate, and relate to news and information about climate change. With regard to climate news use, this year's findings suggest that the decline first observed in the USA in 2024 has now extended to several other countries in the Global North. Since then, exposure to climate news has fallen most noticeably in Germany, Japan, France, the USA, and the UK, while remaining steadier in other countries.

Looking across the four survey waves, the data point to a gradual but consistent decrease in the share of people who regularly encounter climate information. The signs of *climate perception inertia* identified in our 2024 report on news use seem to have shifted rather than subsided, giving way to a slow and uneven downward trend. Part of this change appears linked to demographic shifts and the declining use of television, particularly among older audiences, who have traditionally been regular news consumers and relied on legacy sources such as TV. Whether this reflects a temporary slump or marks the beginning of a longer-term decline remains uncertain, but the pattern underscores the challenge of sustaining public attention as the crisis grows more complex and enduring.

Despite declining use, there is some good news for media organisations covering climate change. As we saw in the previous chapter, a clear majority think that climate news coverage is important. Across four years of data, interest in climate news has remained consistently high, and while trust in the media has not increased, it has at least held steady. Similarly, given how central political leadership is to advancing climate action and how important the media are in informing the public about leaders' positions, people continue to see value in this coverage, with many viewing it cautiously positively and recognising the media's role in shaping public understanding of political responses to climate change.

Yet these positive indicators co-exist with mounting challenges for the news media, some new and some familiar. Among the newer ones is the task of covering AI, which is viewed neither positively nor negatively, reflecting widespread uncertainty about both the technology itself and its connection to climate change. This ambivalence likely stems from the novelty of the issue as well as the difficulty of explaining its environmental implications clearly and accessibly. More familiar challenges persist around meeting audience needs and expectations. People continue to value coverage that informs and explains, but they see less focus on stories that inspire, offer perspective, or highlight progress. A similar imbalance appears in perceptions of journalists' roles – while audiences see the roles of educator, curator, and watchdog as essential, relatively few believe these responsibilities are being fulfilled in practice.

Finally, this year's findings portray a media landscape that remains trusted and relevant but is struggling to keep pace with the scale and urgency of the climate crisis. Audiences continue to look to journalism for clarity, context, and accountability, yet their attention

is drifting and their expectations are rising faster than the coverage evolves. As new technologies reshape both the story of climate change and the ways it is told, the question for the news media is no longer whether people are paying attention but whether journalism itself is adapting quickly enough to hold that attention and to turn awareness into understanding, and understanding into action – a question we will continue to return to as this work evolves in the years ahead.

References

Billett, S. 2010. 'Dividing Climate Change: Global Warming in the Indian Mass Media', *Climatic Change* 99(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-009-9605-3

Brüggemann, M., Engesser, S. 2014. 'Between Consensus and Denial: Climate Journalists as Interpretive Community', *Science Communication* 36(4), 399–427. https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547014533662

Climate Action Tracker. 2025. *'CAT Downgrades US to "Critically insufficient"'*, Climate Action Tracker, 22 September. https://climateactiontracker.org/press/release-cat-downgrades-us-to-critically-insufficient

CNN. 2025. 'September 23, 2025: Trump Takes Shots at UN, Climate Change and Immigration Policies in Speech', CNN, 23 September. https://edition.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-presidency-unga-speech-09-23-25

Doughty, H., Thomas-Walters, L. 2025. 'Measuring Pro-Environmental Behavioural Determinants Using Closed-Answer Surveys', *Oryx* 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605324001194

Ejaz, W., Ittefaq, M., Jamil, S. 2023. 'Politics Triumphs: A Topic Modeling Approach of Analyzing News Media Coverage of Climate Change in Pakistan', *Journal of Science Communication* 22(01), A02. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.22010202

Ejaz, W., Mukherjee, M., Fletcher, R. 2023. *Climate Change News Audiences: Analysis of News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://doi.org/10.60625/RISJ-DT2T-DM19

Ejaz, W., Mukherjee, M., Fletcher, R. 2025. *Climate Change and News Audiences Report 2024: Analysis of News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-vsjy-zm64

Fahy, D., Nisbet, M. C. 2011. 'The Science Journalist Online: Shifting Roles and Emerging Practices', *Journalism* 12(7), 778–793. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911412697

Hase, V., Mahl, D., Schäfer, M. S., Keller, T. R. 2021. 'Climate Change in News Media Across the Globe: An Automated Analysis of Issue Attention and Themes in Climate Change Coverage in 10 Countries (2006–2018)', *Global Environmental Change* 70, 102353. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102353

IEA. 2025. *Energy and AI*. https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai

Ittefaq, M., Zain, A., Arif, R., Ala-Uddin, M., Ahmad, T., Iqbal, A. 2025. 'Global News Media Coverage of Artificial Intelligence (AI): A Comparative Analysis of Frames, Sentiments, and Trends Across 12 Countries', *Telematics and Informatics* 96, 102223. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102223

Kousser, T., Tranter, B. 2018. 'The Influence of Political Leaders on Climate Change Attitudes', *Global Environmental Change* 50, 100–109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.03.005

Larson, R. B., Kinsey, J. 2019. 'Culture and Sampling Issues With "Green" Attitude Research', *Social Marketing Quarterly* 25(2), 91–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524500419838989

McDonnell, T. 2025. 'Semafor Energy: John Kerry's Vision for True Energy Sovereignty', Semafor, 6 November. https://www.semafor.com/newsletter/11/06/2025/semafor-energy-john-kerrys-vision-for-true-energy-sovereignty

Moser, S. C. 2016. 'Reflections on Climate Change Communication Research and Practice in the Second Decade of the 21st Century: What More is There to Say?' *WIREs Climate Change* 7(3), 345–369. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.403

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andı, S., Nielsen, R. K. 2020. *Digital News Report 2020*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR_2020_FINAL.pdf

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C. T., Arguedas, A. R., Nielsen, R. K. (2024). *Digital News Report 2024*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024

Newman, N., Arguedas, A. R., Robertson, C. T., Nielsen, R. K., Fletcher, R. (2025). *Digital News Report 2025*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025

Nguyen, A., Tran, M. 2019. 'Science Journalism for Development in the Global South: A Systematic Literature Review of Issues and Challenges', *Public Understanding of Science* 28(8), 973–990. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662519875447

Ritchie, H. 2024. *More People Care About Climate Change Than You Think*. Our World in Data. 25 March. https://ourworldindata.org/climate-change-support

Rolnick, D. et al. 2022. 'Tackling Climate Change with Machine Learning', *ACM Comput. Surv*. 55(2), 42:1–42:96. https://doi.org/10.1145/3485128

Strauss, N., Painter, J., Ettinger, J., Doutreix, M.-N., Wonneberger, A., Walton, P. 2022. 'Reporting on the 2019 European Heatwaves and Climate Change: Journalists' Attitudes, Motivations and Role Perceptions', *Journalism Practice* 16(2–3), 462–485. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1969988

Vinuesa, R. et al. 2020. 'The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals', *Nature Communications* 11(1), 233. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-019-14108-y

European
Climate
Foundation

Laudes
Foundation

ISBN 978-1-914566-27-1

https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk