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# Navigating Climate Change in Europe: The Choices Ahead



More in  
Common

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## Methodology

In partnerships with YouGov, Kantar, Ipsos, IMOP and Public First, More in Common interviewed more than 26,000 adults in six countries – France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom – as part of More in Common's Navigating Uncertainty project (2021-2022).

Survey fieldwork took place in two waves: the first was conducted online with sample sizes of 2,000 per country as a comparative study in November and December 2021 by international research firm YouGov. The margin of error for the national samples is +/- 2% for national averages, and higher for subgroups. All multi-country findings throughout the key findings and body of the report refer to wave 1 survey data.

The second wave was conducted from late April through June 2022 with nationally tailored surveys focused on communications strategies and which were conducted in independent partnerships with Ipsos, IMOP, Kantar, Public First, and YouGov. The fieldwork methods, sample sizes, and margins of error for each study can be found in the appendix. The recommendations section draws evidence from our wave 2 surveys.

The surveys were conducted with quotas along variables of gender, age, region and additional variables in some cases to achieve representivity of each country's adult population.

To further the analysis of the quantitative data, we also conducted more than 50 focus groups in the same countries on a host of topical issues but with a focus on climate change dynamics and policies. With the exception of those conducted in the UK, focus groups have been translated from national languages and all quotes have been edited lightly for brevity and clarity.

## Acknowledgements

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## About More in Common

More in Common is an international initiative set up in 2017 to build societies and communities that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarisation and social division. Our teams in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States work in partnership with a wide range of civil society groups, as well as philanthropy, business, faith, education, media, and government to connect people across lines of division.

## About Navigating Climate Change in Europe: The Choices Ahead

In addition to being concerned about the effects of climate change, More in Common's work in Europe has identified climate as one of the few issues that has the potential to unite across lines of division. Public concern and a desire to act is currently high, but we know consensus can be fragile and implementing solutions is complex. We hope this paper will help environmental policymakers, civil society organisations and the climate movement to understand where the obstacles lie and how to best build on public consensus to advance much needed climate solutions.



# Introduction

Addressing climate change is a major subject of conversation and preoccupation for people in Europe and around the world. Dire reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predict calamitous outcomes for the natural world and humanity if dramatic measures are not urgently taken to curtail carbon emissions and transition to cleaner, sustainable practices.

But climate change efforts face major obstacles. First, there is a disconnect between the widespread recognition of the problem and the comparatively scarce confidence in the processes seeking to address it. While nearly eight in ten Europeans are worried about climate change, just one in ten has confidence that international efforts to address climate change are succeeding. Furthermore, Europeans say other issues, especially the conflict in Ukraine and the rapid rise in cost of living, are foremost on their minds for governments to address. Finally, the general political environment is defined by division. In our study, fewer than 1 in 5 Europeans said they feel their country is united and the word “divided” was the top ranked description for five of six countries we studied.

In this report, we make observations and recommendations that we hope will aid civil society organisations, the Green movement, and those in policymaking roles to elevate the prioritisation of climate change in Europe and successfully advance climate solutions. In addition to using standard demographic analyses, we also draw on our segmentation studies in Germany, France, and the UK to examine the relevance of the psychology and values of key subgroups as they relate to climate change. Our recommendations draw on points of broad agreement that we hope will work not only to advance climate change policies, but also diffuse political division and deepen a sense of common cause.

# Key Findings

## 1 Climate change is not (just) a youth issue

- Despite how it may appear from media coverage and high profile protests, concern about climate change is not unique to younger Europeans.
- While those under 30 are twice as likely to attend a protest or become a vegan as those over 55, those behaviours are generally rare. Across Europe, only 4% have attended a climate protest, for example. And older Europeans are much *more* likely than younger ones to take other measures, such as recycling or conserving electricity and heating.
- With few exceptions, older generations in each country match or exceed younger generations' levels of concern about climate change, sense of personal responsibility to address it, and desire for a future that is green.

## 2 Few are convinced of climate change solutions

- Efforts to raise public concern about global warming appear to have largely succeeded. Fully 2 in 3 across Europe believe governments “should act to address climate change, regardless of what others are doing” and similar numbers believe their governments are “not doing enough” on environmental issues.
- But the public lacks confidence in the value and efficacy of the policies that will transition societies towards a greener, healthier future.
- A mere 13% believe that international efforts to address climate change are succeeding, and most citizens do not expect any personal benefit of environmental policies; just 27% expect they will make their lives better.

## 3 Climate scepticism is part of a larger phenomenon of distrust

- Distrust in institutions is high across Europe. This reality may be a driving reason why most citizens prefer a gradual pace of change to a radical one. Low trust therefore complicates efforts to effect needed and urgent policy changes.
- Citizens characterised by the highest levels of distrust in major institutions and alienation from broader society appear to be the most likely to be sceptical of human-driven climate change.
- This suggests that climate opposition may be driven less by the particulars of the issue and more by an underlying phenomenon of distrust. For instance, those who have chosen not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 are markedly less likely to be concerned about climate change.

# Climate change is not (just) a youth issue

*“Taking care of the environment is taking care of the future. The natural world is amazing, I want my grandchildren to see it.”*

Ewa, 50, Bydgoszcz, Poland

Fighting climate change is often seen as a young person’s crusade. Our news feeds are often filled with images of young people marching to demand climate action or of speeches by Greta Thunberg, who has become the face of a movement pleading with world leaders of older generations to take the problem seriously. This is not only an impression: Green political parties in many countries do show higher affiliation and garner more votes from young people.<sup>1</sup>

And yet much of this picture is either incomplete or misleading. In an extensive survey of six European countries, we find substantial evidence that there are minimal differences between generations in belief in climate change, concern about its effects, conviction that more needs to be done about it or even in commitment to environmentally-conscious behaviours in daily life. In fact, in many cases it is young people who are slightly less engaged on the issue.

First, concern about climate change is near universal. Across Europe, an average of eight in ten people (79%) say they are either “somewhat” or “very worried” about climate change. While differences are rather modest, in five of six countries those under 30 are less worried than those over 55 years of age.

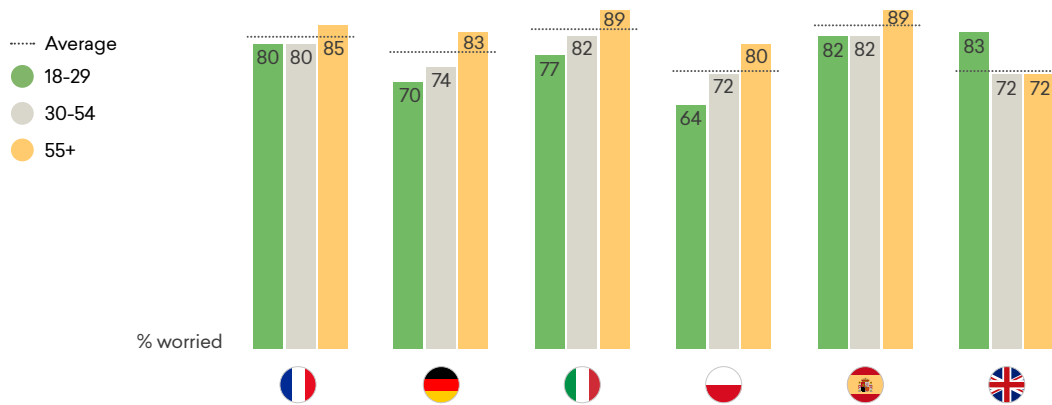
*“I think that **young people in particular perhaps don’t think so much about it**. I always see such big cars in Cologne and far too many of them...and it’s sometimes catastrophic how much rubbish is lying around everywhere. Especially from young people, who simply throw it out of the car when people aren’t looking.”*

Daniel, 22, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

<sup>1</sup> For example, a briefing paper on Membership of UK Political Parties in 2019 showed that Greens had the highest share of 18-39s, and joint highest share with the Liberal Democrats of 18-24s: Lukas Audickas, Noel Dempsey, Philip Loft, *Membership of UK Political Parties* (House of Commons Library, 2019) <<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05125/SN05125.pdf>>; In the 2021 German elections, the Greens gained the biggest share of votes from under 25s: Tagesschau, *Wen wählten Jüngere und Ältere?*, 2021 <<https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2021-09-26-BT-DE/umfrage-alter.shtml>>.

## Figure 1 — Concern about climate change spans generations

### Worried about climate change

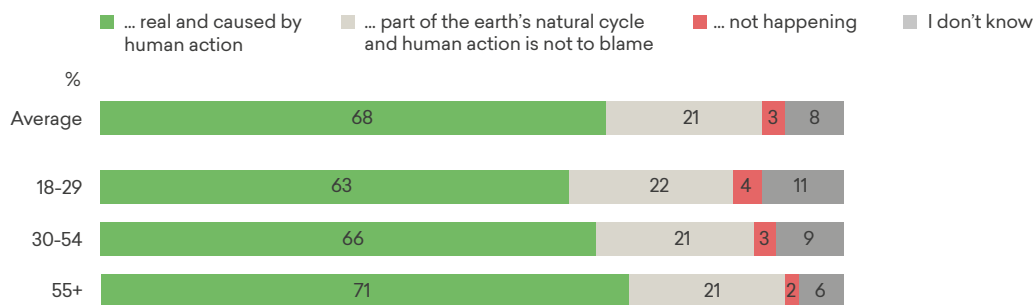


How worried are you about the environment?  
Showing sum of Very + Somewhat worried.  
Source: More in Common (2021)

But while concern about climate change is rather high, there is slightly less consensus about its causes. Across the countries in the study, majorities everywhere believe climate change is “real and caused by human action,” averaging to 68 percent. Fully 21 percent responded that climate change is “part of the earth’s natural cycle and human action is not to blame” and a further 8 percent say that they “don’t know”—a response which is considerably higher among young people.

## Figure 2 — Majorities believe in human-driven climate change

### Climate change is...



Which of the following statements do you agree with the most? Climate change is real and caused by human action; Climate change is part of the earth’s natural cycle and human action is not to blame; Climate change is not happening; I don’t know  
Source: More in Common (2021)

The aspiration to live in an environmentally responsible, “green” society is also common and widely shared across generations. There is intergenerational consensus that European countries are *not* green today, but when asked to describe their ideal society, both young and old across Europe desire a future that is “honest,” “fair,” and “green.”

## Figure 3 Young and old alike want to build a green future<sup>2</sup>

### Ideal society for 18-29s



Qualities in common with 55+

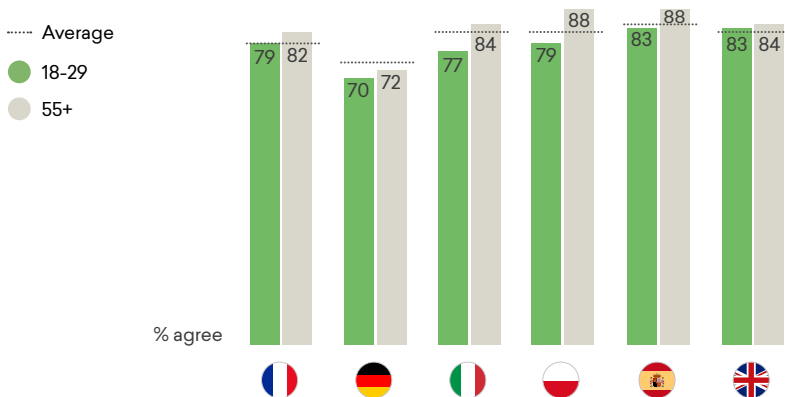
Qualities specific to 18-29s

See appendix for further information.  
Thinking about 10 years into the future, imagine your ideal [COUNTRY] society. What should it be like? Please select up to four qualities.  
Source: More in Common (2021)

Creating those green futures would require commitment from the whole of society, something that Europeans clearly acknowledge. On average, eight in 10 Europeans (80%) feel they should make choices to protect the environment when they can in their daily lives. This sentiment spans the six countries in the study, not appearing below 70 percent anywhere.

## Figure 4 Personal responsibility to be environmentally conscious is high everywhere

### In my day to day life, I feel that I should make choices to help protect the environment when I can



Which of the following statements do you agree with more? In my day to day life, I feel that I should make choices to help protect the environment when I can (showing sum of 1+2 on scale); I do not feel that protecting the environment is a responsibility I should carry in my day to day life.  
Source: More in Common (2021)

<sup>2</sup> See Figure B in the appendix for further information.

*“I just think that there is stuff that we need to do to help the planet. We’re causing all this waste. We’re going to have to get rid of plastic. **We’ve got to look after each other. Something’s got to be done.**”*

Bill, 48, Tyneside, United Kingdom

*“I do think that **it is good that there are rules for everyone in order to create awareness.** So people have become a bit more vigilant and if they use plastic bags, they reuse them. I think it’s good for awareness.”*

Anna, 33, Berlin, Germany

While there’s alignment across generations to take personal actions to fight climate change, the approaches differ widely. Young people are more likely to become vegan or vegetarian or to join in protests, while older people are more likely to recycle, to improve their home insulation, or to intentionally reduce their electricity use.

*“I think that **there’s a whole roster of changes from what we can do individually through to what we can do as communities and on a national level** as well. It could be anything — food waste, product packaging. The more packaging we use, the more container ships we’ve got to get in... **I think we’ve just become lazy and just used to having things easy.** I’m not saying things should become difficult, but we need to look after the environment and just work a bit harder”*

Lenny, 37, Leeds, United Kingdom

## Figure 5 — Generations undertake green behaviours in distinct ways

Do you do, or have you done any of the following?

%	Average	18-29	30-54	55+
Recycle and reduce plastic use	66	53	62	75
Reduce my electricity use by, for example, using lower-energy products	51	36	48	61
Buy local foods and cut down on food waste	47	35	42	58
Walk, cycle and use public transport instead of driving	44	44	43	45
Consciously reduce my meat and dairy consumption	27	28	24	29
Choose environmentally-friendly brands over unsustainable brands	27	27	25	29
Improve my home insulation	21	11	20	26
Go on holiday closer to home to avoid flying	20	15	18	23
Switch to a renewable energy provider	15	11	15	18
Vote for a political party because of its climate change policy	12	19	11	10
Sign a petition or contact a politician about climate change	11	16	10	10
Become a vegetarian or vegan	8	12	8	5
Drive an electric car instead of a petrol / diesel car	7	7	7	6
Attend a climate change protest	4	8	4	3

Do you do, or have you done any of the following? Select all that apply.  
Source: More in Common (2021)



In summary, we find intergenerational agreement that climate change is worrying, that it's human driven, and that it requires that individuals take personal responsibility. There's a shared desire among generations to build a green future, and most are taking at least some steps towards building it. We believe this broad intergenerational consensus provides some of the crucial conditions for policymakers to advance climate policies.

# Few are Convinced of Climate Change Solutions

*“I am disappointed with the climate change [policies] we have now. Especially here in this region, fields are no longer cultivated. I know someone who works in the sector and he says **it’s actually sad that we don’t cultivate in the country any more**, that subsidies for sugar beet are no longer available and that’s why no one cultivates sugar beet any more. And we are becoming more and more dependent on other nations, although we could grow it in our own country... For me, **this is politically the wrong way to go about it.**”*

Bastian, 31, Sachsen, Germany

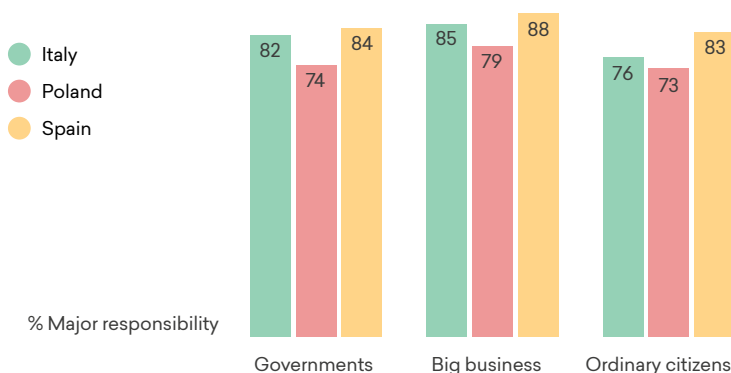
How do citizens perceive the government's role in addressing climate change? There is widespread agreement that governments are not doing enough to fight it. In Italy, Poland, Spain, and France citizens believe governments and big businesses are about as responsible for bringing about change as citizens are, if not more. (The question was not asked in the UK and Germany.)

*“I think that waste separation should have been made compulsory. That’s not the case everywhere. It’s been so slow with the bags, that you are no longer allowed to use plastic. It’s a very slow process. **But I think it’s necessary. It’s been necessary for a long time.**”*

Diane, 46, Hamburg, Germany

## Figure 6 Climate change is a shared responsibility across sectors<sup>3</sup>

**How much responsibility should the following institutions have in the fight against climate change?**



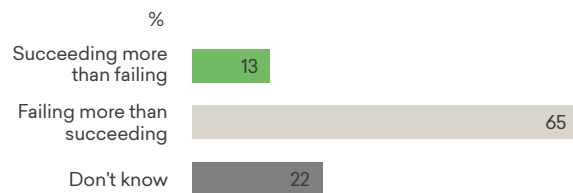
How much responsibility should the following institutions have in the fight against climate change? Showing sum of A lot of responsibility + Some responsibility. Source: More in Common (2021)

<sup>3</sup> In France, the question asked was: *Which of the following actors should do more to protect the environment?* From a list of 11, the top 4 selected were: *the government (54%), big business (51%), the European Union (36%) and ordinary citizens (25%).*

But while most surveyed say they want more government leadership on the issue of climate change, they do not appear optimistic. For instance, a large majority across countries believes international efforts, such as those undertaken in the annual COP meetings hosted by the United Nations, are not having an effect. A mere 13 percent of Europeans believe diplomatic efforts are succeeding more than failing.

## Figure 7 Widespread pessimism about diplomatic climate change efforts

Would you say that international efforts to address climate change are...?



Would you say that international efforts to address climate change are...?  
Source: More in Common (2021)

Nor do citizens appear motivated to support climate policies for their personal benefit. Asked about the effect they think environmental policies will have on their lives, in no country does a majority express confidence that policies will make their lives better.

*"I'm worried electricity and heating will become a luxury. That it is becoming too expensive, that we will have made ourselves too dependent on others."*

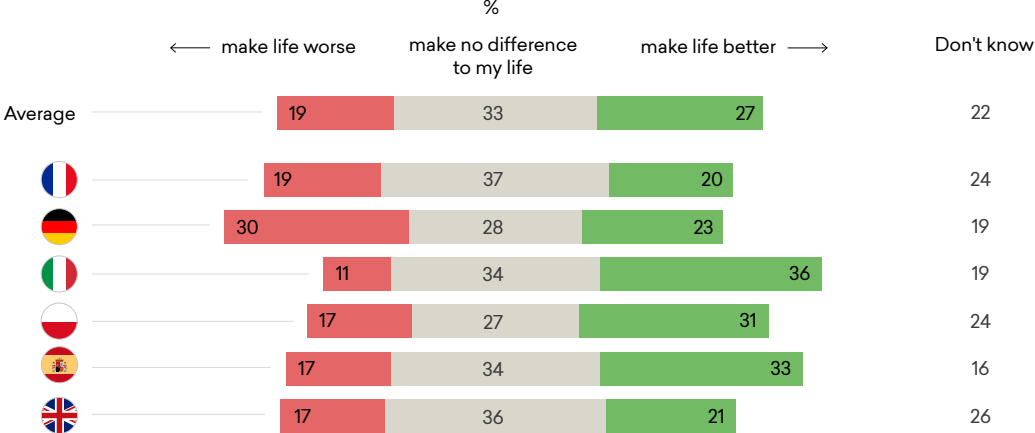
Lea, 43, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

*"It's that being ecological and the changes that are taking place, or are requested or demanded or I don't know what, for climate change, are very expensive..."*

Pedro, 41, Seville, Spain

# Figure 8 — Few see personal benefit from climate policies

## Government policies to protect the environment will...



In general, what effect do you think government policies to protect the environment will have on your life?  
 Source: More in Common (2021)

Therefore, explaining policy benefits, rather than raising awareness or elevating concern, may well be the main challenge for those in government and civil society seeking support for climate change solutions. Policymakers and advocates need to continue to invest the time and resources to explain to citizens how their plans to address climate change will make lives better, not worse.

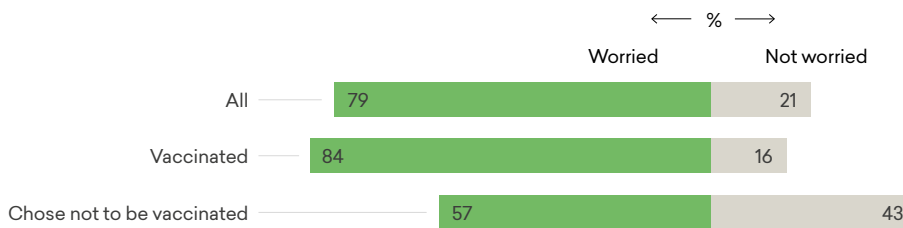
# Climate Scepticism is part of a larger Phenomenon of Distrust

While majorities are concerned and motivated for action on climate change, what can be learned about the 21% who doubt that climate change is caused by human actions?

The data suggests that doubt seems to be linked to a distrustful worldview and political disengagement among Europeans, rather than an outright rejection of specific climate change claims. For instance, we found that those who completely distrust the safety of COVID-19 vaccines are about twice as likely (30%) to also believe human action is not the driver of climate change, compared to those who completely trust vaccine efficacy (14%). Compared to the overall average, those who have chosen not to be vaccinated are also much more likely to think that government climate policies will make their lives worse, twice as likely to think that the government is currently doing too much for the environment, and only half as likely to say they are “worried” about climate change.

**Figure 9** — The vaccine sceptical are much less concerned about climate change

**How worried are you about climate change?**



Which of the following describes your vaccination status for Covid-19?  
How worried are you about climate change? (Showing sum of Very + Somewhat worried).  
Source: More in Common (2021)

Similarly, those who are convinced that the truth about COVID-19 is being “hidden” from the public are nearly twice as likely as those who are sure the truth is being shared to reject human actions as the cause of climate change. Those who think the truth isn’t being shared are much less likely to be worried about climate change.

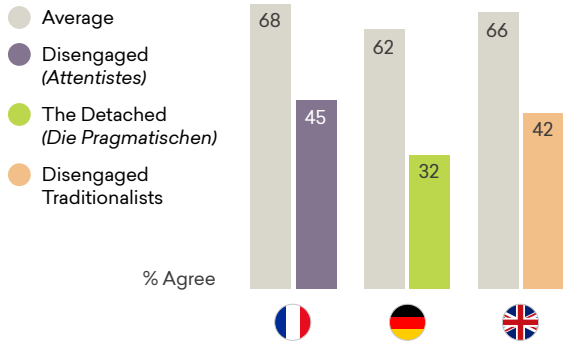
More in Common’s previous research has found that ‘disengaged’ groups tend to comprise between 30 and 40 percent of national populations. These groups are often the most hidden and least represented in public and political discourse as they are less inclined to follow the news or to vote or to participate in protests. Their levels of climate scepticism far exceed other groups in our study.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For further information on More in Common’s segmentation studies, please see *Fault Lines* (2019), *Finding France* (2020), and *Britain’s Choice* (2020). More in Common segments map populations based on their political participation and features of social psychology that shape orientations towards society. Each country’s typology can also be found in the Appendix.



## Figure 10 Climate scepticism is highest among Disengaged groups<sup>5</sup>

### Climate change is real and caused by human action



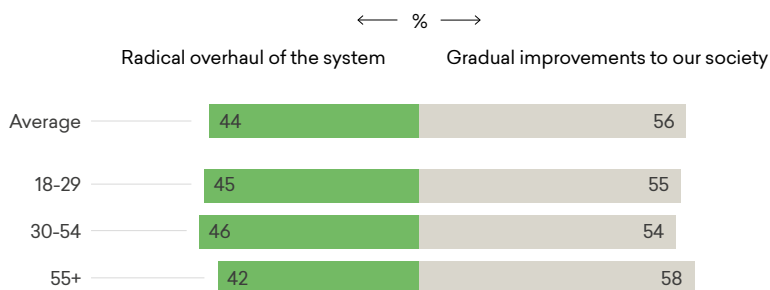
Which of the following statements do you agree with the most? Climate change is real and caused by human action; Climate change is part of the earth's natural cycle and human action is not to blame; Climate change is not happening; I don't know. Source: More in Common (2021)

But while a minority of the population distrusts information around COVID-19 and climate change, institutional distrust is common to everyone; it's the norm. In no country in our study does a majority trust its government or head of government. Similarly, trust in journalists is worryingly low. In many countries, more than three quarters of the population have no faith in these leading institutions.<sup>6</sup>

Low public trust makes it more challenging for leaders and policymakers to gain support for the changes needed to address climate change, which might include higher taxes on petrol or carbon, changes to consumer behaviour, and greater regulation of industry. Indeed, with current levels of institutional trust as low as they are across countries and generations, it is perhaps unsurprising that citizens prefer a slower approach to change. More than half believe societal changes should be made through gradual improvements, rather than through radical overhauls. But as policy makers and civil society seek to advance climate change policies, they should not mistake hesitation around the pace of change for disinterest in resolving the problem.

## Figure 11 Generations agree on pace of change

### When you think about what is needed to achieve your ideal society, which do you agree with more?



When you think about what is needed to achieve your ideal society, which do you agree with more? Source: More in Common (2021)

<sup>5</sup> Disengaged groups refer to the 'Disengaged' (Attentistes) in France, 'The Detached' (Die Pragmatischen) in Germany, and the 'Disengaged Traditionalists' in the UK.

<sup>6</sup> See More in Common's *Navigating Uncertainty* comparative report for specific figures and related information: <https://www.moreincommon.com/navigatinguncertainty/>

It is certainly useful to policymakers that European majorities across genders, generations, and countries are convinced of the reality and urgency of climate change, but the distrust in institutions and disaffection from society that manifests in scepticism about climate change is a profound and stubborn challenge. Addressing it will require policymakers to make creatively designed, intentionally communicated and well executed efforts. They will need to reassure the public that building a green future holds opportunity, not just disruptive changes and painful costs. In the recommendations that follow, we suggest several approaches to meet that challenge.

# Recommendations to Advance Climate Change Solutions

## 1 Advance climate solutions by pairing them with policies that are popular or urgent, rather than with social change issues that are controversial or obscure

Our findings indicate that advocates and policymakers in Europe should not advance climate change solutions as isolated issues, but rather pair them with popular or urgent policies, especially ones that address economic and national security concerns. In contrast, we see little evidence that integrating climate change with broader social justice efforts will raise support for the issue.

We make this recommendation because climate change needs to become a higher priority. While climate change is among the leading concerns in many European countries, it is not the *top* concern anywhere.<sup>7</sup> In fact, at the end of 2021, in the six countries in our study, climate change was only among the top three issues in Germany.

In addition, we have found that many of the issues that are top of mind to Europeans do have connections to climate change, such as cost of living, health and unemployment. These issues connect to the general wellbeing of society in visible ways. Other types of popular policies, such as protecting wildlife, may also help climate efforts, so long as their support is well distributed across demographic groups and, ideally, party lines. Integrating climate policies with popular goals allows policymakers to minimise controversy while overcoming the obstacle of climate sceptics who might have otherwise been unwilling to support solutions that only served to reduce emissions.

Conversely, social issues that pertain to particular groups, such as women's or minority rights, are often low in overall salience and are either polarising or uneven in their support across the population. For instance, in five of the six countries we studied, women's issues are considered a top three priority by 7% or less of the population (the exception is Poland, where advancing women's rights is a priority to 22%). This support is also concentrated in small pockets of the population, rather than held widely. Pairing climate change with lower salience and politically controversial social policies therefore complicates the task of persuasion, rather than simplifying it. While progressing towards social justice is vital and urgent, our findings suggest that these fights appear to be better fought separately from climate and require different strategies.

### Selected evidence:

- In Poland, 63% believe climate change is real and caused by human action, but nearly 9 in 10 Poles (87%) agree that **Poland should invest in renewables to allow the country to become more independent**. Nearly 9 in 10 Poles (86%) are also willing to accept higher prices if it means departing from Russian energy sources.

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix for full list of issue priorities by country.

- In **Germany**, 62% believe climate change is real and caused by human action, but nearly two thirds (64%) agree that we can only **overcome the rising energy prices** of oil and gas by investing in renewable energies and 72% of Germans also support investing in renewables if it would mean **energy independence from countries like Russia**.
- In **France**, three in four (75%) agree that everyone should be contributing to the fight against climate change equally, regardless of their income. But when forced to choose between dealing with the cost of living and protecting the environment, nearly half (45%) favour addressing the cost of living, while **only one third (33%) prioritise protecting the environment** and 22% “don’t know.”
- While 66% of people in the **UK** believe climate change is real and caused by human action, we found that 74% agree with **pursuing climate change policies to protect endangered animals and wildlife** which might otherwise go extinct.

### In their own words:

*“Climate change is important, but it is only one of the evils that must be cured.”*

Gianna, 37, Milan, Italy

*“The problem with the environment is that it is a very long-term challenge [...] **What concerns us now is the here and now:** eating, paying bills, that our children have clothes and a roof over their heads...”*

Javier, 51, town in Coruña, Spain

*“There are so many things that have to be done; **climate protection is no way to win me over at the polling station.**”*

Alina, 36, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Poland

*“**Environmental issues are interrelated problems that must be addressed jointly to try to find joint solutions**, that is the great difficulty, and unfortunately our politicians do not seem to be up to the job.”*

Antonio, 57, town in the province of Toledo, Spain

*“**I think of my wallet first**, before I think of Putin”*

Michel, 47, Lyon, France

## 2 Emphasise, reiterate, and underscore the practical benefits that a green transition will have for society and especially for younger generations

A majority of Europeans want governments to do more to address climate change and build a green future. But the transition cannot be built only on sacrifices that improve life in faraway places. In focus groups across Europe we heard people voice their expectations for environmental solutions that make visible, tangible improvements to their daily lives. There is still a long way to go to convince the public that this will be the case. On average, across the six countries studied, just 27% expect that “government policies to protect the environment will make my life better.”

We therefore see the importance of framing the green transition as also bringing benefits that improve the quality of people’s experiences in areas such as commuting, shopping and dining. Investing in local initiatives that make it easier to buy local products and separate waste, increase green spaces, and improve public transport and roads could help convey the benefits of a green transition to people’s everyday lives. Better still, involving citizens in the process of these transitions can help them take pride and ownership over these changes.

This dynamic of scepticism about climate policy coexists alongside a general consensus that governments are “not doing enough” to assist people under 25. In particular, young and old agree that younger people need help tackling their financial difficulties and need easier access to jobs and housing. We see potential in framing climate change action as a responsibility to young generations and an opportunity to help them with material needs. This approach is logical, as younger generations are indeed expected to face the worst outcomes from climate change. Other research by More in Common has shown that most see parenthood as central to their identities. By articulating how climate change policy benefits will help younger generations in families by, for instance, creating jobs, reducing costs, enhancing security, and improving physical health, policy advocates can speak to multiple major concerns concurrently.

### Selected evidence:

- In **Germany**, over three-quarters (76%) say it would be a **good thing** if in ten years, most **food came from regional production**.
- In the **UK**, while 66% believe in human-caused climate change, more than 8 in 10 agree we must do our bit in order to “**safeguard the lives and livelihoods of our children and grandchildren**” and to give them “the same chances we’ve all had.”
- In **France**, 68% said they would be willing to stop buying products (or continue not buying products) made in distant countries – even if they were cheaper – to fight climate change. But across our study’s results, the most motivating reason to consider the environment was to protect the lives **and health of children**.



**In their own words:**

*"I wanted to buy an electric car, but my municipality didn't install a charging terminal. **We have to be assisted in order to make our own efforts.**"*

Sara, 29, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, France

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*"They tell me I have to buy organic food, but the costs are prohibitive. They tell me I have to put in solar panels, but that's paid off over 20 years. **They tell me to not to use the car, but there is no public transport. It seems a bit too much.**"*

Giovanni, 48, Messina, Italy

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*"In Rome, they made cycle paths, but that made car traffic worse ... **I think we should incentivise local food production...Increase greenery in cities...Every place has different problems, they should start by understanding the specific needs of individual cities.**"*

Maria, 44, Roma, Italy

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*"Thinking soberly, we are all ready for changes, but within reason. For some people, the price of fuel is acceptable, while for others it is horrendous. **But something has to be done so that our children don't have to live in the middle of a pile of garbage.**"*

Tomasz, 55, Kielce, Poland

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*"In the end, **the measures we take now are not for us**, they are for our children, for our grandchildren, for the other generations that will have to try to enjoy this planet."*

Antonio, 57, town in the province of Toledo, Spain

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### 3 Commit to building and holding trust in the pursuit of climate change policies

The general distrust in major institutions, from government to media, is the context in which lethargy and scepticism towards climate policy solutions grow. This low trust makes it harder to pursue the necessary and transformative climate change policies at a swift pace, leading a majority of Europeans to prefer a gradual pace of change.

It is essential for policymakers and advocates to understand these dynamics in order to be effective in communicating climate goals to the public and credibly offering solutions. Furthermore, transparently and effectively pursuing effective climate change policies could have a restorative effect of rebuilding trust in national and European society's capacity to understand challenges, develop solutions, and bring them into reality.

#### Selected evidence:

- Trust is higher in **local governments and institutions** than in national ones. Trust in government is lower than 25% in all countries except Germany (where it is only at 39%). In **France, trust in local mayors is twice as high** as trust in the national government. Similarly, trust in **town halls is much higher in Spain**, compared to trust in the national government.
- Europeans also show greater faith in civic actors that they might interact with more closely day to day. Majorities place their trust in **teachers, doctors, police and small businesses**.
- Most Europeans, including the younger generations, believe that a **gradual transition** is preferable to radical change.

#### In their own words:

*"I have **completely lost faith in politicians**. Apart from being corrupt, they are above all incompetent."*

Roberto, 43, Naples, Italy

*"I just think it's another way the **government is trying to control us** all again... We're being asked to pay for everything. They're trying to make out that they're going to be doing us a favour, but they won't be. We're going to pay for it... The government, whatever they say, it just goes over my head because they're just there out to get us, really."*

Allison, 55, Shropshire, UK

*"It's almost like we are **just going around in circles trying to please the government** in some respects. They're pushing us towards electric cars and now in some ways, if we do manage to get on that particular ladder, you're going to be penalised anyway."*

Ayesha, 42, Shropshire, UK

*"From what we see, **politicians don't do their job**, no matter what party."*

Luis, 57, town in Toledo, Spain

### Putting it into practice:

There is no single method for rebuilding trust, but there is substantial evidence to support a diversity of approaches. Most notably, locally-driven approaches to project leadership and communications tend to be more trusted than national efforts. Decentralising efforts and asking local authorities and community leaders to lead green transitions towards sustainable practices may be met with more trust.

The creation of citizen assemblies, government commissions on trust, transparency initiatives, and programmes to counter misinformation may have a positive spillover effect that counteracts climate scepticism and encourages the actions needed to curb climate change.

Rewarding citizens for the actions they're already taking, such as recycling or composting, may help maintain morale and a sense of agency against a daunting global challenge. Encouraging smaller daily actions that people already feel proud of taking may encourage them to make the wider and more difficult changes that may be needed in the years ahead.

# Conclusion: the Choices Facing the Climate Movement

The climate change movement, the scientific community, government leaders and related allies have been successful in raising awareness and highlighting the urgency of the issue. Concern in Europe about climate change spans generations. It is clear that citizens want action, and many understand the far-reaching connections between climate change and other issues. But advancing the issue will require successfully navigating a maze of obstacles.

Climate change is not the top priority for Europeans, particularly in a moment of rising cost of living. Confidence in international climate efforts is desperately low, and few expect their government's solutions to make their lives better. Appealing for change and sacrifices is also undermined by low trust in leading institutions, a problem that spans the Continent.

The resulting picture for climate change efforts is precarious. Climate solutions risk being stalled to address more immediate concerns or delayed by an opposition that feels threatened by a movement it sees as changing society, rather than protecting the planet.

In light of this vulnerability to continued setbacks, climate advocates and policymakers should seize opportunities for pragmatic solutions to make policies more compelling to voters. Pairing climate with demonstrably popular and urgent policies is one such choice. Another is to bring the benefits of policies close to the homes and daily lives of citizens, emphasising their value for children and grandchildren. A third is to create campaigns and communications strategies that build on relationships of trust. Such choices will help keep climate change from becoming polarising or painful, and will build from a place of consensus.

While the obstacles are formidable, climate change action is also an opportunity to overcome divisions. Success on climate change could serve as a major step toward restoring confidence in Europe's collective capacity to build a better future by tackling problems with creative solutions.

# Appendix

## Figure A Fieldwork







Phase 1				
Country	Fieldwork Dates	N-Size	Vendor	Margin of Error
France	7 - 15 December 2021	2,000	YouGov	2%
Germany	7 - 17 December 2021			
Italy	7 - 21 December 2021			
Poland	6 - 17 December 2021			
Spain	7 - 12 December 2021			
United Kingdom	19 November - 1 December 2021			
Overall Average	-	12,000	-	1%

Phase 2				
Country	Fieldwork Dates	N-Size	Vendor	Margin of Error
France	14 - 25 March 2022	4,000	Kantar	2%
Germany	6 - 12 May 2022	2,000	YouGov	2%
Italy	2 - 14 June 2022	2,000	Ipsos	2%
Poland	4 - 7 May 2022	1,000	Ipsos	3%
Spain	12 - 30 May 2022	2,000	IMOP	2%
United Kingdom	13 - 21 April 2022	3,000	Public First	2%









# Figure B — Ideal society

## Ideal society for 18-29s

						
1	Respectful of environment 39%	Environmentally friendly 41%	Respectful of environment 40%	United 40%	Hard working 33%	Green 49%
2	Hard-working 32%	Democratic 37%	Educated 26%	Tolerant 39%	Educated 33%	Fair 39%
3	Human 31%	Fair 36%	Honest 21%	Honest 35%	Solidarity 32%	Honest 33%
4	Educated 29%	Secure 29%	Fair 21%	Fair 35%	Tolerant 29%	Compassionate 32%
5	Tolerant 22%	Cosmopolitan 27%	Tolerant 21%	Ecological 26%	Respectful of environment 28%	Democratic 28%
6	Fair 21%	Successful 22%	Democratic 18%	Educated 24%	Diverse 25%	Tolerant 25%
7	United 20%	Responsible 21%	European 16%	Hard-working 22%	Fair 24%	United 24%
8	Honest 18%	European 18%	United 16%	Creative 19%	United 19%	Hard-working 22%

Thinking about 10 years into the future, imagine your ideal [COUNTRY] society. What should it be like? Please select up to four qualities.  
Source: More in Common (2021)

## Ideal society for those who are 55+

						
1	Respectful of environment 38%	Democratic 63%	Respectful of environment 48%	Honest 40%	Respectful of environment 39%	Honest 43%
2	Human 32%	Environmentally friendly 58%	Honest 32%	Fair 40%	Solidarity 37%	Hard-working 41%
3	Educated 26%	Responsible 45%	European 23%	Lawful 40%	Hard-working 36%	Tolerant 39%
4	Hard-working 26%	Fair 40%	Democratic 23%	United 37%	Tolerant 34%	Compassionate 37%
5	Honest 24%	Secure 33%	Competitive 19%	Tolerant 36%	Educated 31%	Democratic 35%
6	Tolerant 22%	Cosmopolitan 29%	Tolerant 18%	Educated 28%	Fair 29%	Fair 35%
7	Fair 19%	European 23%	Educated 17%	Ecological 27%	United 27%	United 28%
8	Patriotic 18%	Independent 18%	Fair 17%	Creative/ Hard-working (joint 8th) 22%	Honest 26%	Green 22%

Thinking about 10 years into the future, imagine your ideal [COUNTRY] society. What should it be like? Please select up to four qualities.  
Source: More in Common (2021)

Figure C Finding France segments

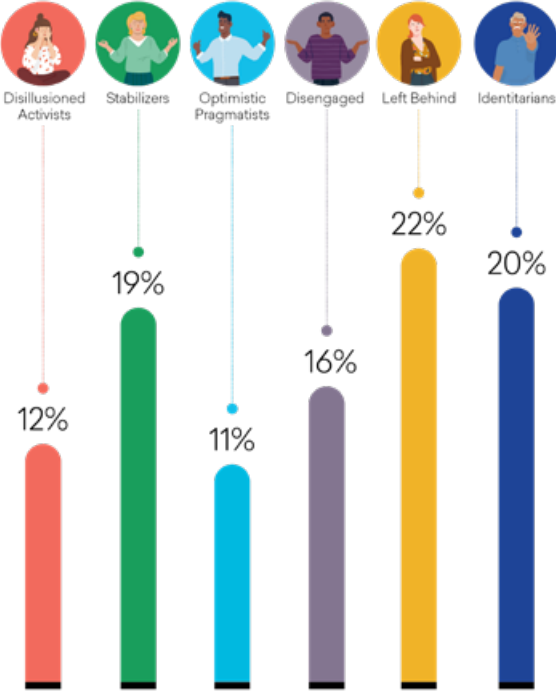
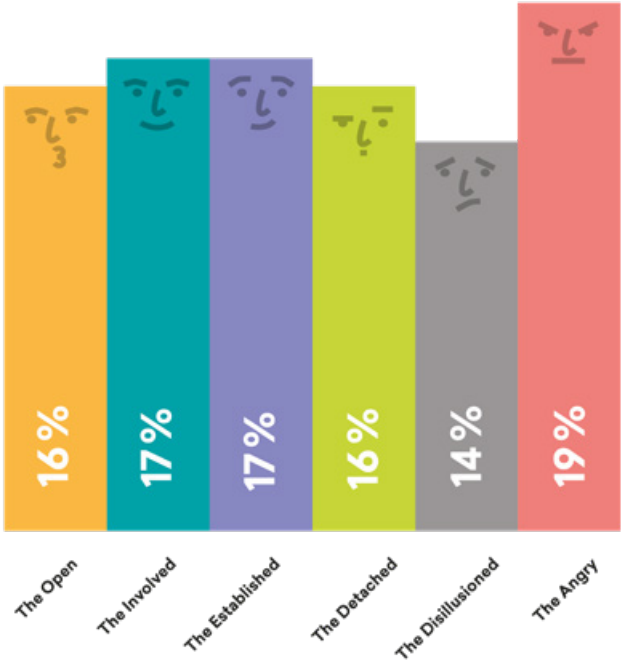


Figure D Fault Lines Segments (Germany)



**Figure E** Britain's Choice Segments



**Figure F** National Priorities from Phase 1

France		Germany	
Issue	All	Issue	All
Poverty and Inequality	35%	Covid-19	46%
COVID-19	34%	Climate change and the environment	37%
Immigration and refugees	32%	Ensuring affordable housing	29%
Crime and security	30%	Improving old-age security	26%
Economy and unemployment	29%	Improving the health system	24%
Climate change and the environment	29%	Reduce immigration and refugee intake	23%
Health	26%	Reduce social inequality	20%
Terrorism	22%	Keep energy prices stable	17%
Education	17%	Improve education system	16%
Racism	11%	Fight crime and violence	15%
Housing	9%	Strengthen the economy	13%
Women's rights	7%	Combating racism and discrimination	9%
Religious separatism	5%	Supporting families with children	8%
Opportunities for young people	5%	Strengthening European Unity	6%
Ageing population	4%	Fighting unemployment	6%
Discrimination against LGBT people	3%	Working towards gender equality	4%
Other	1%	Other	1%

<b>Italy</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>All</b>
Jobs and unemployment	45%
Healthcare	37%
COVID-19	34%
Taxes	34%
Immigration	23%
Climate change and environment	23%
Poverty and inequality	22%
Political class corruption	19%
Organised crime / mafia	13%
Judicial system	11%
Education	11%
Ageing population and social security	9%
Gender equality	5%
Division of society	5%
LGBTQI+ issues	4%
Relations with the European Union	3%
Other	2%

<b>Spain</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>All</b>
Work and unemployment	47%
Covid-19	41%
Rising energy prices	37%
Health	26%
Poverty and inequality	24%
Political corruption	23%
Ageing population, pensions and social welfare	18%
Immigration	15%
Climate change and environment	13%
Education	13%
The Catalan conflict	12%
Citizen security	10%
Division and lack of collaboration	9%
Depopulation and the demographic challenge	4%
LGBTQI+ issues	4%
Gender equality	4%
Other	1%

<b>Poland</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>All</b>
Inflation and rising prices	49%
COVID-19	44%
Crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border	36%
Health protection	29%
Relations with the European Union	27%
Women's rights	22%
Rule of Law	20%
Social divisions	14%
Pensions and social benefits	12%
Jobs and unemployment	11%
Climate change and the environment	10%
Education and childcare	10%
LGBT issues	8%
Housing policy	5%
Public transport	3%
Cultural heritage protection	2%
Other option	1%

<b>UK</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>All</b>
Covid-19	41%
Supporting the NHS	38%
Cost of living	36%
Climate change and the environment	34%
Asylum seekers crossing the channel	28%
Brexit	19%
Social care for the elderly	17%
Affordable housing	17%
Crime	17%
Gap between haves and have nots	15%
Jobs and unemployment	10%
Racism in society	8%
School standards	5%
Division	5%
Shortage of migrant workers	4%
Other	3%
Gender based violence	3%

