



Connecting to Climate through Stories

Biophilia: Pittsburgh
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“Biophilia is the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms.”

E.O. Wilson



We all have a climate story to tell.



GAS RUSH STORIES

Short documentaries on natural gas drilling by Kirsi Jansa

[www.gasrushstories.co](http://www.gasrushstories.com)

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Climate change

- Huge changes in global precipitation and temperature patterns
- New and diverse risks to public health
- Ocean acidification and effects on fisheries
- Strong evidence for 6th extinction
- Big impacts on water and food security
- Significant sea level rise - increased likelihood of disastrous events
- The worst impacts felt by the world's poorest
- Surge of climate refugees
- Increased political instability, radicalism, governmental takeovers
- All this while world's population grows from 7 billion to 9.5 billion by 2050

An aerial photograph taken from an airplane, showing the wing and tail fin in the upper left corner. The view below shows a coastline with a large body of water, a sandy beach, and some vegetation. The sun is low on the horizon to the right, creating a bright, hazy glow and casting long shadows. The sky is a mix of blue and orange hues.

Public & climate

- Public awareness and engagement with climate change has remained very low in the US.
- Two-thirds of Americans say they accept the concept of climate change.
- Vast majority say human activities cause it.
- Yet people are not very worried.

US news

Almost 40% of Americans 'not too worried' about climate change

In a recent poll, two-thirds of Americans say they accept climate change, and the vast majority say human activities cause it - but they aren't very worried

- SOURCE: The Guardian 11/3/2015

Q9. How worried, if at all, are you about global warming?

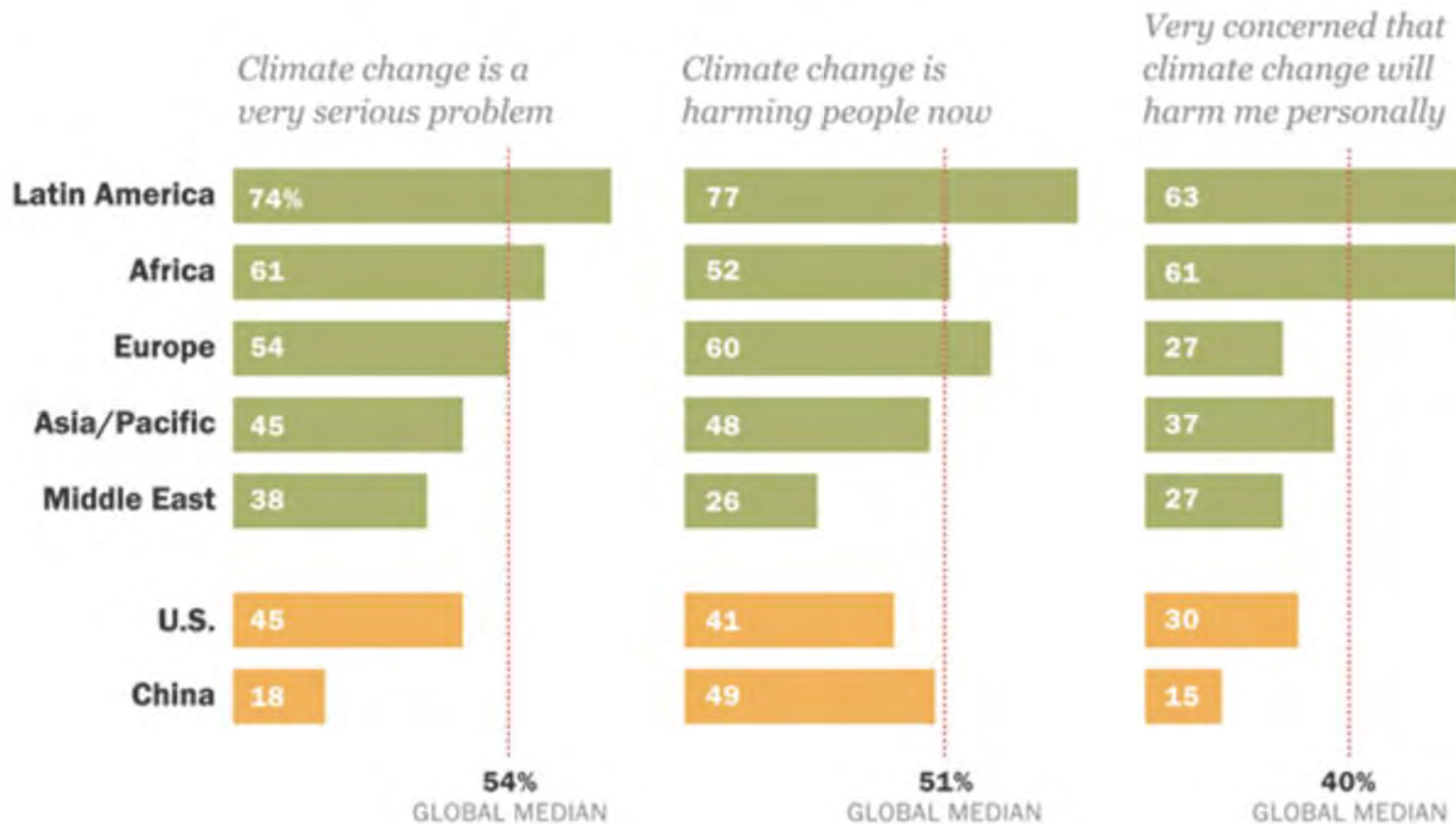
[HALF SAMPLE ASKED OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]

	AP-NORC 10/15-18/2015	AP-NORC 7/17-19/2015
Extremely/very worried NET	23	26
Extremely worried	8	9
Very worried	14	17
Moderately worried	34	37
Not too/not at all worried NET	38	34
Not too worried	22	20
Not worried at all	17	15
Not sure	4	3
SKIP/REFUSED	1	-
<i>N=</i>	<i>1,058</i>	<i>1,030</i>

- SOURCE: The Associated Press - - NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and researchers from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies survey 10/2015

Latin America, Africa More Concerned about Climate Change Compared with Other Regions

Regional medians



Note: Russia and Ukraine not included in Europe median. Asia-Pacific median includes China.

Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q32, Q41 & Q42.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

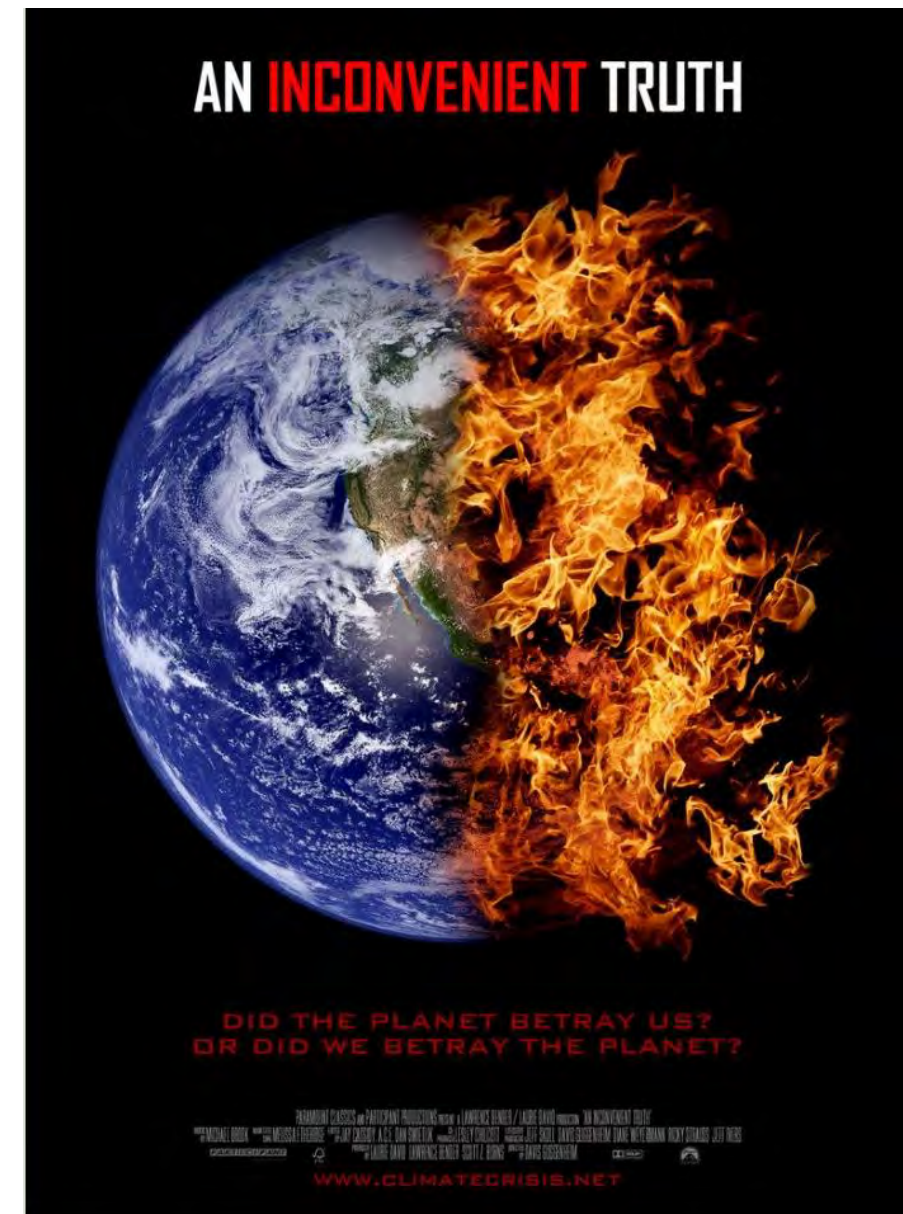
- SOURCE: PEW 5/2015

“Despite being one of the most important societal challenges of the 21st century, public engagement with climate change currently remains low in the United States. Mounting evidence from across the behavioral sciences has found that **most people regard climate change as a non-urgent and psychologically distant risk—spatially, temporally, and socially—which has led to deferred public decision making about mitigation and adaptation responses.**”

Van der Linden, Maibach, Leiserowitz: *Improving Public Engagement With Climate Change. Five “Best Practice” Insights From Psychological Science*

Why: Polarization

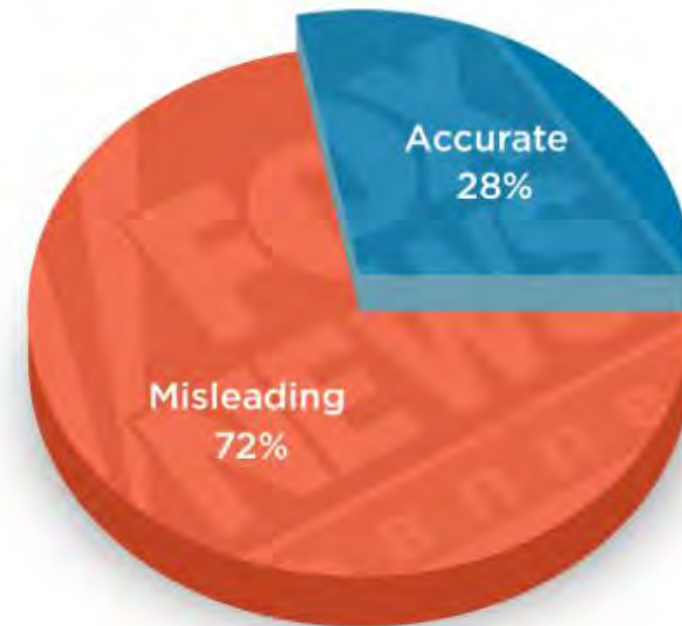
- Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth brought global warming and need for energy transition to public agenda – but it also polarized the issue.
- According to one survey global warming the most polarizing political issue.



Why: Corporate media

- 4 of 10 American adults watch cable news, with Fox News having the largest viewership...

Fox News Channel Coverage of Climate Science



In 2013, 14 Fox News segments referencing climate science were entirely accurate while 36 contained misleading statements.

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www.ucsusa.org/scienceorspin

CNN Coverage of Climate Science

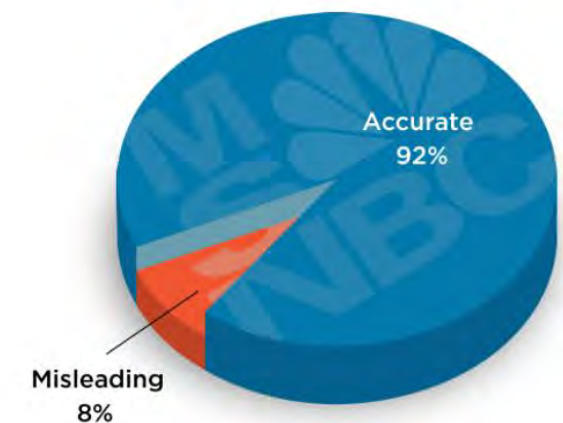


In 2013, 30 CNN segments referencing climate science were entirely accurate while 13 contained misleading statements.

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MSNBC Coverage of Climate Science



In 2013, 121 MSNBC segments referencing climate science were entirely accurate while 11 contained misleading statements.

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Why: Human mind

- **Very complex and science-based problem**
- **Inadequate comprehension** - *“Yet, more information, national, international reports have not improved people’s climate awareness.”* Climate scientist Kathrerine Hayhoe
- **Intentional denial** - “My Cup is Already Full” -syndrome
- **Environmental melancholia** - a concept by psychosocial researcher Renee Lertzman, Ph.D:
- *“It’s not just because people don’t care. Rather, our emotional response to the issue, which for many people is a deep but unprocessed sense of anxiety and loss, can leave us feeling powerless and paralyzed.”* - RL in Huffington Post 1/18/16
- *“In the climate change field, we see that those working on the front lines of engagement, advocacy, and education tend to skip acknowledgement of people’s fears, and focus instead on “solutions.” From a psychotherapeutic perspective, this doesn’t make a lot of sense.”* - RL

Another way: Effective climate communication

- People like to read about individuals fighting to change the system.
- People are more likely to engage with stories about people and ecosystems that are close to where they are.
- People are more likely to enjoy stories about people who are already engaging in climate politics than they are stories that tell them, “You should get more involved in climate politics!”
- Journalism about climate change should put as much emphasis on explaining political realities as it does on explaining science.
- SOURCE: The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



“Reluctant cynicism is at its most fragile
when faced with news about civic
engagement and political action.”

”

–The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



Sustainability Pioneers

Short documentaries on climate change
and energy transition

www.sustainabilitypioneers.com

SP 7: From Paris to New York



SP distribution channels

- Web page & social media
- PublicSource, Allegheny Front
- Screenings and community conversations
- Club presentations
- Home screenings
- College presentations
- SP Educational Kit
- Phipps Fair Child Challenge: My Climate Future videos
- Post Paris Project

Victories & Challenges

- Vibrant community conversations
- ECS 8th graders interviewing Mayor Peduto
- Reaching “people who would care if they only knew”
- Engaging people in climate action despite environmental melancholia
- Speaking “Pittsburghese” - speaking to people in the language they understand





Beyond Pioneers

Author, environmentalist, journalist Paul
Hawken advises that we ask ourselves:

Is this happening TO us or FOR us?

My Climate Legacy, part 1

- What is happening with our climate and the future of the world?
- What am I saying to myself about global warming and my role in it?
- How does this make me feel?
- Based on how I feel - what am I doing about the crisis?
- How does this impact global warming?
- What kind of a legacy am I leaving behind with this way of thinking and acting?

My Climate Legacy, part 2

- What else could I tell myself about global warming? And about my role in it?
- How would that make me feel?
- What would I do in that case, how would I respond to the situation?
- What kind of impact would that behavior have?
- What would my climate legacy look like in this case?



Connecting to Climate - conversation topics

- What is your climate story?
- Who's job is it to educate citizens?
- How can we co-create a new climate reality?

Biophilia & climate

The individual actions we take can both help climate and preserve biodiversity:

- Growing trees
- Preserving and building fertile soil to sequester carbon
- Reducing use of fossil fuels immediately

