

Britain Talks COP26

New insights on what the UK public want
from the UN climate summit



About Climate Outreach

Climate Outreach is a team of social scientists and communication specialists passionate about building a social mandate for climate action. Through our research, practical guides and consultancy services, we help organisations communicate about climate change in ways that resonate with the values of their audiences. We have over 15 years of experience widening and deepening public engagement with climate change, working with a wide range of international partners including government, international bodies, academic institutions, charities, businesses, faith organisations and youth groups.

About the European Climate Foundation

This research was funded and commissioned by the **European Climate Foundation** (ECF). ECF is a major philanthropic initiative working to help tackle the climate crisis by fostering the development of a net-zero emission society at the national, European and global level. We support over 500 partner organisations to carry out activities that drive urgent and ambitious policy in support of the objectives of the Paris Agreement, contribute to the public debate on climate action and help deliver a socially responsible transition to a net-zero economy and sustainable society in Europe and around the world.

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YouGov undertook the field research and collaborated with More in Common and Climate Outreach in the data analysis. Britain Talks Climate follows the release of [More in Common's Britain's Choice report](#) in October 2020.



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Cover: Storm Desmond caused the River Cocker to break its banks, flooding the homes and businesses of Cockermouth, England.

Photo: © [Toby Smith](#)

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Executive summary



Executive summary

This new research applies Britain Talks Climate to the challenges and opportunities of communicating about COP26. [Britain Talks Climate](#)¹ – a major study on public perceptions of climate change – made clear that, even with the deep political divisions in UK society today, there is plenty of common ground for conversations about climate action.* Most of us are actively worried about climate change, regardless of our age or ethnicity, where we live or how we vote, and we feel that acting on it could help bring us together. We also agree on many of the principles that should guide us towards a low-carbon economy (e.g. political and regulatory leadership, and fairness) and some of the benefits of doing so (e.g. the protection of nature and new green industries and jobs).

Turning to the international arena, the vast majority of Britons understand that the threat of climate change demands a joined-up global response. There is wide recognition that the UK has a role to play in championing global unity. Most also agree that the UK should be one of the most ambitious countries in the world in tackling climate change, regardless of what others are doing.

However, it matters how we talk about Britain's role in the world on climate, given the heightened political distrust and/or scepticism of multilateralism among some groups. With COP26 on our doorstep, there are exciting opportunities to engage the UK public on climate change; to earn their trust and to incite positive action. But there are risks, too. If COP26 is perceived as a failure, those who prioritise the climate crisis above all other issues may be tipped over into despair, and those who have the potential to be more engaged on climate action may feel disincentivised. Others may see COP26 as representing elite interests, further reinforcing their political pessimism and inflaming homegrown debates over who pays for decarbonisation. This new project is designed to equip communicators and campaigners with a framework for engaging the public around COP26, in a way that extends beyond the summit and supports the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions and expenditure on [International Climate Finance](#).

This project focused on two Britain Talks Climate segments – Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals. These segments are crucial to achieving a broad-reaching narrative around COP26 that minimises communications risks. We ran four focus groups, two with Loyal Nationals and two with Civic Pragmatists, and used the focus group results to develop four narratives: Nature, Global Cooperation, Green Investment and Transparency. These narratives were then tested alongside a control narrative in a randomised control trial (RCT) with all seven Britain Talks Climate segments.

The findings from this research reveal positive foundations for public communication about the United Nations climate change conference (COP26). The UK public are more than ready for global leaders to agree ambitious policies at COP26. Engaging with climate change through the lens of a natural world that is in need of protection, the UK public recognise that we are all in this together, and see COP26 as an opportunity for the UK to lead a global response to climate change.

* See also, the [Britain's Choice](#) report published in October 2020. Britain Talks Climate was grounded in More in Common's Core Beliefs model.

Key insights and recommendations

1. We should be confident in framing climate change as a global crisis

INSIGHTS

This research confirms findings from our recent studies that, in the wake of Covid-19, the public have an improved understanding of our interdependence.² As a result, a more global mindset is emerging among the public. This is also rooted in the knowledge that we all depend on the natural world and are all suffering from extreme weather brought on by global warming. In our research, the two sentences that people responded to most positively were: “We all share the same planet, so we must all do what we can to fix climate change” (Global Cooperation) and “If we don’t protect nature, it can’t protect us” (Nature). This is the case even among segments that are naturally more sceptical of multilateral cooperation: Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications should be confident in framing climate change as a shared global crisis and a shared global responsibility. There is no need to overly explain the global context or cater to a misplaced sense of isolationism.

2. Messages should lead with value-based framing about protecting people and nature from the effects of the global climate crisis

INSIGHTS

British people across the political spectrum largely engage with climate change through the lens of extreme weather events and other tangible changes they see in the world. This is especially resonant within a frame of destruction of nature: for example, floods in the UK, wildfires in Australia and California, and reports of species on the brink of extinction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Climate communications still need to shift away from talking about climate change in a more abstract and distant sense, instead leading with emotive, values-based frames about the need for action. Messages should emphasise the need to “restore our balance with nature” and “protect everyone from climate change”. They should draw attention to what is at stake, such as worsening wildfires and flooding, loss of habitats and species, and threats to lives and livelihoods.

3. But communications should then move on quickly to concrete actions

INSIGHTS

People are concerned about the changes to the natural world they see unfolding around them and feel angry and frustrated at the lack of action by leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications should provide clear and repeated descriptions of tangible responses to climate change. Global aims, such as ending deforestation, conserving more of the world's lands and waters, keeping the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, and ending fossil fuels in favour of 100% renewable power are well-supported across society. Aims that command less overall support – ending coal use for electricity, ending public financing of fossil fuels, providing financial aid to developing and vulnerable countries – can be shifted significantly using the right values-based messaging. Our research found increased support for these policy goals among those who read the Nature narrative.

4. It is important to explain what COP26 is, why this year is so important, and why global leaders need to meet in person

INSIGHTS

Few Britons have heard of COP26 but, once the purpose of the conference is explained, people are likely to express support for the meeting. They understand its significance and expect to be kept up to date on what is happening. Significant numbers of Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists would also like to be involved in some way. However, the '26' of COP26 may raise concern among those who were previously unfamiliar with the process. They are likely to wonder: why have the previous 25 conferences failed to solve the problem? In addition, political leaders flying into Glasgow from all over the world is a communications risk, with 47% of respondents believing it is unacceptable for global leaders to fly to international talks because video conferencing is available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications about COP26 can induce cynicism, but can also reduce it. It is important to explain why this year and the coming decade are so crucial in the history of action on climate, and how devastating climate impacts in recent months are focusing the minds of global leaders. Some commentators may choose to fixate on the flying. Communications need to emphasise why meeting in person is critical to achieving the right outcomes at COP26, particularly for some of the most vulnerable countries, whose leaders have emphasised that being in Glasgow is the only way their voice can be effectively heard.

5.

UK ambition on climate is important but claims of leadership must be sensitive to the global context, and well-evidenced

INSIGHTS

People recognise that the US, China and other big polluters must “do more” to tackle the climate crisis, but this is not seen as a reason for the UK to “slow down” or “do less”. People think that the climate crisis is too urgent to play politics with, and see sense in the UK providing examples to other countries on how to build a low-carbon economy. This, in turn, is borne out of a belief that green investment will not only cut our carbon emissions but will boost jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communications should recognise the UK’s role in championing the climate transition, but should not overstate what the UK is doing domestically or internationally. Rather, messages should balance demonstrating what the UK is already doing – especially around investing in future livelihoods and environmental protection – and what is still to be done. Communicators should also show where examples of success in the UK context can be replicated internationally.

6.

In some cases, the messenger is as important as the substance of the message itself, and must be carefully chosen

INSIGHTS

There is a well-established literature attesting to the importance trust plays in receptivity to climate messages.³ People make decisions about their behaviour partly based on what others whom they respect and trust are doing and saying. Participants were asked to rank a list of public figures according to whom they would most trust on the issue of climate change. Principled advocates for strong action to protect nature (David Attenborough, Chris Packham, Prince William and Greta Thunberg) were among the most trusted voices. British people have little awareness of key actors at COP26: 68% don’t know who Alok Sharma is, and 78% don’t know who António Guterres is.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to communicating somewhat technical policies, messages should come from familiar faces and articulate the need for rapid action in accessible, down-to-earth and emotive language. In previous Climate Outreach research into perceptions of the net zero greenhouse gas emissions ambition among the centre-right UK public,⁴ ‘folk heroes’ such as Gareth Southgate were named as trusted messengers. Messengers must meet people where they are, rather than trying to bring people into a technocratic and unfamiliar discourse.

7.

These insights can be used to inform communications into 2022 and beyond

INSIGHTS

The insights provided in this report are relevant beyond COP26. The UK's COP Presidency lasts until COP27, in late 2022. As such, there are vast opportunities to turn the insights and advice contained in this report into UK efforts to both maintain international momentum and speed up national commitments next year. In addition, these results offer guidance on how to relate the long-term global net zero by 2050 agenda to the hopes and fears of people in the UK today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Communicators should use these insights, and Britain Talks Climate, to develop strategies up to and throughout 2022, to take key segments on a journey from climate concern into climate action. They should be well-positioned to develop messages that speak to these audiences and bring them in, without alienating those who are already deeply engaged. These results should be used as the basis for an ongoing programme of research into the verbal and visual vocabulary that can most effectively support public engagement with the net zero agenda through the profound changes that lie ahead, in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

8.

Despite much common ground among the seven Britain Talks Climate segments, some notable differences exist in how the narratives influenced responses to questions on COP26 and UK climate action

INSIGHTS

Civic Pragmatists in particular expressed a desire to be more personally involved in COP26 and other efforts on climate change. Overall, they showed a higher level of understanding of the global politics of climate change than Loyal Nationals, and higher than average support for all global aims that may be discussed at COP26.

Like Civic Pragmatists, Loyal Nationals recognised the need for global cooperation on climate, and were on a par with Civic Pragmatists in their support for ending deforestation, conserving the world's lands and waters, and forcing businesses to publicly state their impact on the environment. However, they were more sceptical that global leaders would genuinely work together to achieve progress, and were more likely to perceive flying to COP26 as unnecessary or hypocritical. This group showed the most positive movement in response to narratives in terms of low-carbon personal behaviours, including reducing meat consumption and choosing sustainable travel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results show that communicators and campaigners can use these narratives to activate or mobilise Civic Pragmatists around COP26 and encourage more political or civic engagement over time. The same narratives have the potential to connect with Loyal Nationals on everyday choices related to diet and travel. These results can be used as a foundation for further exploration of how narratives can affect the attitudes and behaviours of the different Britain Talks Climate segments.

How Britain Talks Climate was used in this research



How Britain Talks Climate was used in this research

Britain Talks Climate is a large-scale national study that segments the British population into seven groups based on their **Core Beliefs**.⁵ It allows for a deeper understanding of different responses to climate change and identifies ways to engage across the whole of society. We designed this project with a strategic focus on two segments — **Civic Pragmatists** and **Loyal Nationals** — because we believe they are crucial to achieving a broad-reaching narrative around COP26 that minimises communications risks.

Why Civic Pragmatists?

Civic Pragmatists (13% of the British public) are anxious about the future, with climate change in large part contributing to that fear. They try to follow a low-carbon lifestyle, but they feel demotivated by political inaction on climate change, and lack confidence in their ability to make a difference. They are likely to look past their opinion of the government of the day and to support progressive climate policies when they see them.



Civic Pragmatists are, in many ways, the most unifying segment. Highly engaged in their community, inclusive and tolerant, they look for common ground with others and are the most open to compromise. They are proud to be British but also globally minded. They expect bold action on climate but do not tend to see themselves as activists. By optimising narratives for this segment, we can tell a story about COP26 that helps mobilise Civic Pragmatists politically and personally.

Why Loyal Nationals?

Traditional and proud to be British, Loyal Nationals (17% of the British public) feel threatened and are galvanised by issues such as crime, immigration and terrorism. They are also highly concerned about climate change, and believe the UK is already suffering from its effects, but they tend to talk about it as a local issue (e.g. fly tipping or air pollution), linking it to local — rather than global — inequality. Their relatively high political participation is driven by moral outrage about a system that they believe supports corporate greed over hard-working individuals.



Loyal Nationals believe many institutions and companies do not “play by the rules”, shirking their responsibility to “pay up” and letting the burden fall unfairly on ordinary people. By optimising narratives for this segment, we can minimise the risk that they see global leaders and countries as acting in their own self-interest.

The research consisted of focus groups with Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals, followed by a randomised control trial (RCT) with all seven Britain Talks Climate segments. The focus groups discussions informed the development of the RCT, which tested how exposure to four different narratives affected responses to subsequent survey questions. See the [methodology](#) section for more details.

Focus groups: Loyal Nationals and Civic Pragmatists on COP26



Focus groups: Loyal Nationals and Civic Pragmatists on COP26

Starting point on climate change and climate action

Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals were quick to refer to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events (flooding, wildfires), as well as the wider dangers of climate change (global warming, melting ice caps, rising sea levels), and the near- and long-term impacts on people and their livelihoods. Both also demonstrably used a language of crisis and urgency, describing it as “absolutely terrifying” and “frightening”. It is worth noting that these workshops were run before the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its sixth report in August 2021⁶, which highlights the growing frequency and intensity of such events.

Both segments shared the belief that climate action is important to politicians only if it is seen as a vote winner. Generally, they find it hard to trust the UK government on this issue, believing it will always put money and economic growth before anything else.

“I like to think there are some politicians that have a conscience and are concerned about our climate... but I’m not convinced. I think votes mean more to them, money means more to them. I’m a bit cynical when it comes to that.” – Loyal National

“... a lot of the measures which are spoken about by the government are five, 10, 15, 20 years away when none of the politicians will be in power and will take responsibility for the promises that have been broken.” – Civic Pragmatist

However, there were clear differences in their responses to the issue. Loyal Nationals were more vocal in blaming big business, with reference to forms of “greenwashing”, and were more easily sidetracked by their negative personal experiences of, for example, poor recycling facilities. Civic Pragmatists, on the other hand, cited some of the global politics on climate change and were more up to date on domestic policies.

“I think big businesses contribute a lot more than general human activity, us living our lives. I think they use it [climate change] a lot for showing how great the things are that they’re doing for the environment.” – Loyal National

“I have to read every plastic pack to know whether to put it in my recycle bin or to put it in the waste bin, and I get really frustrated about that ... Sometimes I dump everything in the plastic recycle bin and I say, ‘Well, go and sort it out yourself, this is a bit too much hard work.’” – Loyal National

“Biden has got a programme and I think even the Chinese are beginning to understand what their pollution is doing to the planet.” – Civic Pragmatist

“Phasing gas boilers out ... electric cars, insulation. But they change, don’t they? They make these promises and then they pull the plug on the schemes.” – Civic Pragmatist

Understanding of, and interest in, COP26

There was a low level of understanding about COP26 among both segments, although Civic Pragmatists were slightly more aware overall.

"I don't know what [COP26] means. I've heard of it but I don't know what it means."
– **Loyal National**

"I know it's a meeting between some of the nations in the world, where they go to discuss climate change and see what action's going to be taken. It's being held in Glasgow... And that's about all I know about it." – **Civic Pragmatist**

Both segments felt somewhat incredulous that they hadn't heard of it or did not know more about it. In line with findings from previous research,¹ Loyal Nationals felt left behind and called for greater transparency. Civic Pragmatists shared this sentiment, but some went a step further, expressing their desire to be more personally involved.

"The UK government should mail the whole of the UK, just to explain why they're hosting this and what they're hoping to achieve from it, because it doesn't seem to be something that many people have got their head around." – **Loyal National**

"As it's something that is so important, I would have expected it to have much more publicity, so that everyone in the country knows what it is and when it is and where it is." – **Civic Pragmatist**

"We don't have a chance to take part in it?" – **Civic Pragmatist**

After reading a neutral definition of COP26,⁷ Civic Pragmatists were more forthcoming in their agreement with the basic concept. While some emphasised the need for big emitters (such as the US and China) to take emissions reduction seriously, they generally disagreed with the idea that the UK should wait for other countries to catch up, or work with a smaller number, arguing it "might send the message that the other countries don't have as big a responsibility. That's not fair". Some Civic Pragmatists recognised improving efforts in China and the US as a cautious reason for hope.

"... if it was done right, I think it would work and it would be very good."
– **Loyal National**

"If it's the world coming together, that's what can make a difference." – **Civic Pragmatist**

"China and the United States will be there as well this time, because they pulled out of the Paris agreement a long time ago, but now they've just rejoined, so hopefully an agreement to work together." – **Civic Pragmatist**

However, like Loyal Nationals, Civic Pragmatists raised concerns about the effectiveness of COP negotiations, and how leaders and countries are held to account. Both segments also questioned the need for world leaders to fly to a conference that is designed to reduce global emissions, although this was not a primary focus.

"... it's 26 years in and things aren't really improving. So, you know, personally, I think what difference is another year going to make?" – **Civic Pragmatist**

"... that's 26 years and things have just got worse and worse and worse. So, what on earth are they doing? What are they talking about? Are they just sat there drinking tea?"
– **Loyal National**

“Who is going to sit there and say, ‘That target isn’t good enough’? Who’s going to police this? Really, it’s just all rhetoric, it doesn’t mean anything ... Yes, they’ll set targets ... But, in reality, big business will win out.” – Loyal National

“I don’t see why they need a meeting, quite honestly. I mean, modern technology, they should be able to communicate all this stuff without people flying in from all over the place.” – Civic Pragmatist

“I’m guessing Biden will fly in and Merkel will fly in. They’re not going to be doing it on a Teams call... They’re going to be going, ‘How can we just offset what we did to all get here?’” – Loyal National

Loyal Nationals were more instinctively distrustful of multilateralism and of government, with one suggesting Boris Johnson has ulterior motives, and another citing COP26 as a chance to pick on ordinary people while giving big business a free pass.

*“I mean, Scotland, Boris going to Scotland to do that, I find it a little bit suspicious.”
– Loyal National*

“They’ll pick on things like motorists and they’ll pick on some things that it’s easy to get rid of, but big businesses and that, they won’t touch...” – Loyal National

Responses to test narratives

Using Britain Talks Climate and other research, we tested six narratives during the focus group discussions. These centred on Nature, Global Cooperation, Green Investment, UK Leadership, Fairness, and Future Generations.

The table below shows how focus group findings informed the RCT. It presents each narrative, followed by comments on how the participants responded, and then explains how we used these reflections to select and amend the narratives for the RCT.

Recycled christmas trees are used to reinforce river banks, preventing bank erosion and helping mitigate against flooding.
Photo: © [Toby Smith](#)



Table 1: Results of focus group narrative testing

“NATURE” – Nature as protection against climate change

NARRATIVE: “The damage we’ve done to nature has led to loss of habitats and species all over the world. If we don’t protect our natural landscapes, we’ll be even less capable of fixing climate change. COP26 is an opportunity to restore the balance of nature and show that we appreciate and respect our planet.”

COMMENT: Nature received high support from both segments, particularly around “restoring the balance of nature”. It inspired them on a personal level and made them feel included.

“The way that last sentence talks about restoring the balance, it’s helping us to see that if we do something about it, things can change. It’s a positive message.” – Civic Pragmatist

“Yes, it is an opportunity to balance it out, and respect our planet. I couldn’t agree more, but it doesn’t say how or what.” – Loyal National

“It’s a message to rally ... I feel spoken to, not spoken down to.” – Civic Pragmatist

“Preventing habitats and protecting species from becoming extinct is the most important and most motivating factor for me to lead a sustainable lifestyle.” – Loyal National

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: The narrative was adapted for the RCT to contain specific actions to repair the damage done to nature.

“GLOBAL COOPERATION” – A shared crisis and shared responsibility

NARRATIVE: “Climate change doesn’t respect borders. It’s a global problem that can only be solved with cooperation among countries and communities. We all share the same planet, so we must all do what we can to fix climate change. COP26 is a chance for world leaders to come together and prove that they care about people and the planet.”

COMMENT: Global Cooperation was a clear favourite for Civic Pragmatists, aligning with their belief that we are stronger when working together to resolve all crises. For them, it also prompted recognition that poorer and more vulnerable countries are in a worse situation. Loyal Nationals also emphasised the need for global cooperation, but were more sceptical about the idea that leaders would genuinely cooperate or represent the people.

“It’s inclusive and we’re not trying to push our own agenda here.” – Civic Pragmatist

“...it’s the poorer countries that are suffering and will suffer more from climate change than countries like us.” – Civic Pragmatist

“We all have to agree on the same targets and we all have to work together.” – Loyal National

“The assumption is that they’ll speak our voice, you know, in the forum ... that almost sounds like la la land to me.” – Loyal National

“I see red, because ... the world has never ever, in all of its history, managed to work together.” – Loyal National

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: This narrative was adapted for the RCT to give more specific examples of effective policies for building global cooperation.

“GREEN INVESTMENT” – Opportunities for new green industries and jobs

NARRATIVE: “As polluting industries like coal wind down, we don’t want to depend on other countries for energy or lose our young people to better jobs abroad. Instead, we should create more jobs in UK industries like electric cars and renewable energy. This is decent, secure work that people can be proud of and that will make us more self-reliant as a country. COP26 is an opportunity to show that we are investing in British jobs and products, which can be exported around the world.”

COMMENT: Green Investment was among the preferred narratives for Loyal Nationals. Civic Pragmatists responded positively to the emphasis on green jobs and industry, but reacted poorly to what they perceived as a “nationalistic” overtone, arguing that it would not make the UK look good on the international stage.

“Let’s let the UK become a producing country again, because we used to be, but we are not that much anymore.” – Loyal National

“The language is good, I think it’s quite easy to buy into.” – Loyal National

“It’s a very poor reflection of what COP26 should be about.” – Civic Pragmatist

“We should be focusing on creating new jobs that are sustainable for the future and investing in them, funding it properly. But it reads a little bit like we’re not willing to work with other people.” – Civic Pragmatist

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: This narrative was adapted for the RCT to be less UK-focused.

“UK LEADERSHIP” – The UK as a global leader on climate

NARRATIVE: “The UK still has a great deal of influence around the world. COP26 is a chance to lead by example and promote British values. We have already taken big steps forward in acting on climate change, but there is much more to do. We need to deliver on our own climate change commitments before we can stand on the global stage and say it can be done. It’s a matter of walking the walk, not just talking the talk.”

COMMENT: The segments had mixed views about the UK as host of COP26. Loyal Nationals were keen for the UK to look good on the global stage, to “prove to the world” it can lead, but felt it had yet to live up to this claim. Although Civic Pragmatists supported the UK setting an example, they wanted to see leadership that promotes global cooperation, not just national interests.

“We’ve got to prove to the rest of the world that we are capable of doing it. Then I think we deserve to stand at the top... But if we’re just going to come up with vacuous statements, and it doesn’t actually amount to anything, then we’re wasting our time.” – Loyal National

“... if we take a stance and show what can and should be done, then I’m sure others will follow on and I think they already are.” – Civic Pragmatist

“It cannot be done by a country on their own ... again, the Union Jack flying a bit too high.” – Civic Pragmatist

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: This narrative was not taken forward for the RCT but elements were incorporated into a new narrative, **Transparency**, to reflect a recurring theme: both segments were tired of “words and no action” and wanted governments to be held accountable for tackling climate change.

“FAIRNESS” – Acting on climate in a fair way

NARRATIVE: “COP26 can bring about a cleaner future, but also a fairer one. The UK government needs to make sure our policies to cut emissions don’t hit some people worse than others. The same is true globally, where governments must give special consideration to poorer countries and those most vulnerable to climate change. Climate action needs to help everyone.”

COMMENT: Both segments welcomed messages about fairness but found this narrative less compelling overall. Civic Pragmatists stressed the need to support the world’s most vulnerable. Loyal Nationals liked the idea of differentiating between people with different needs, but were less sure about the UK stepping forward and offering support to poorer countries on its own.

“You need to provide the support to the countries who can’t afford to do that as well.”

– Civic Pragmatist

“If poorer countries feel that they’re not getting help or a good chance to help themselves, they’re not going to bother, are they? They’re going to say ‘Well, you don’t care about us, so why should we bother?’” – Civic Pragmatist

“... it’s going to be differentiating, so that people who are vulnerable, people who are worse off, are going to be looked after a lot better, or looked after differently.” – Loyal National

“I know it’s harder for the poorer countries, but I mean we do a lot of, you know, sending money to these poorer countries. But I mean, are we in the minority there, or is it lots of other countries helping them?” – Loyal National

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: This narrative was not included in the RCT but the need to support vulnerable countries facing climate impacts was incorporated into Global Cooperation.

“FUTURE GENERATIONS” – A legacy for our children and grandchildren

NARRATIVE: “COP26 is the best chance we have to do right by future generations and protect them from the threat of climate change. We all want our children and grandchildren to have the same opportunities that we had and to live in a safe and healthy world. COP26 can help ensure that the world we leave behind is as good, if not better, than the one we grew up in.”

COMMENT: Both segments’ frustration with a general lack of concrete actions was particularly acute in response to this narrative, which was the lowest performing overall. They found it “wishy-washy” and “vague”, and felt it was unhelpful to hark back to the past when the world has moved on so much. Those without children or grandchildren felt excluded.

“I think the time is now, that the urgency needs to be what we’re doing now.”

– Civic Pragmatist






“You’re trying to sell me something pretty and that makes me very suspicious.”

– Loyal National

“We live in a different world now, we have access to different things. There are more people on the planet. There are different tensions.” – Civic Pragmatist

HOW THE RESULTS INFORMED THE RCT: This narrative was not taken forward to the RCT.

Figure 1. Final narratives used in the randomised control trial

Nature	Global Cooperation	Green Investment	Transparency
<p>The damage done to nature has led to loss of habitats and species all over the world. One million wildlife species are threatened with extinction, and ocean life is dying out everywhere because of pollution. If we don't protect the natural world, we will be even less capable of fixing climate change. A healthy environment soaks up pollutants and acts as a buffer against extreme weather like flooding.</p> <p>At COP26, political leaders must take decisions that restore our balance with nature, giving everyone the chance to live in a beautiful and healthy world. This means ending deforestation, and protecting and restoring land and ocean that is so vital to the survival of our planet. If we don't protect nature, it can't protect us.</p>	<p>Climate change doesn't respect borders. Rising sea levels and more extreme weather is going to affect all of us, no matter where we live on the planet. It is an urgent global crisis that can only be solved if countries cooperate and share ideas. We all share the same planet, so we must all do what we can to fix climate change.</p> <p>COP26 is a chance for world leaders to put aside their differences and agree on a plan of action. We need better targets that keep the global temperature rise to a level agreed by scientists. And we need real and immediate action to end fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy, as well as financial support for poorer countries and vulnerable communities. Climate action must help everyone.</p>	<p>Britain was at the heart of the first industrial revolution. These days, it can be hard to find employment, and young people are having to leave where they grew up to look for work. As we move away from polluting industries, we have the chance to create a new generation of decent, stable jobs in clean industries like electric cars and renewable energy. This will once again give workers pride in what they do, especially in parts of the country that need it most.</p> <p>COP26 is an opportunity to show it's possible to create better jobs that will help our economy and our environment. We are already the largest producer of offshore wind energy in the world. Let's show what else can be done through a green industrial revolution.</p>	<p>Some governments and politicians are letting people down by dodging meaningful action on climate change. They say the right things, but don't deliver policies to cut pollution and protect us from global warming. They are too short-sighted, caring more about getting votes than making a difference.</p> <p>We want to be proven wrong. We want to see a green recovery from Covid-19.</p> <p>At COP26, world leaders need to agree on bold and sensible ways to limit our carbon emissions. They should clearly spell out what they're going to do to tackle climate change, and how quickly they're going to do it. They should communicate those plans to the public, so we can hold our governments to account if they don't deliver. It's time to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.</p>
<p> Retained text from Nature narrative</p>	<p> Retained text from Global Cooperation narrative</p> <p> Retained text from Fairness narrative</p>	<p> Retained text from Green Investment narrative</p>	<p> Retained text from UK Leadership narrative</p>

Randomised control trial results



Randomised control trial results

This section details how different narratives changed how people answered the survey questions. We provide explanations for the whole sample, alongside breakdowns for Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals. We have also included responses from other Britain Talks Climate segments where the differences are reliably supported by the data and are important for our communications advice.

All participants first read a neutral description of COP26. They were then split into five groups: four saw a different narrative each (the ‘treatment groups’), and the fifth saw nothing (the ‘control group’). After this, all five groups answered a series of questions.

Overall, the narratives that had the greatest positive impact on attitudes matched those from the focus groups: **Nature** (restoring our balance with nature and protecting the environment so that it can protect us) and **Global Cooperation** (we all share the same planet and must all do what we can to fix climate change). These tap into a powerful global mindset in relation to climate change, in part emerging from the pandemic. In comparison, **Green Investment** is likely to be perceived as overly focused on national issues and **Transparency** may ignite feelings of political cynicism and inefficacy.

Initial reaction to the narratives

The Nature narrative (highest agreement) increased people’s interest in COP26 by 12% relative to Green Investment (lowest agreement). Nature also increased people’s desire to do more to protect the environment by 22% relative to Green Investment (lowest agreement). Nature was judged to be the most reflective of people’s opinions, with 20% higher agreement relative to Green Investment (lowest agreement).

The first three questions focused on participants’ immediate reactions to the four narratives and, as such, were not answered by the control group. The average responses from all three questions are summarised in Figure 2. In general, average agreement was highest for people who read Nature, followed by Global Cooperation.

A clear majority (77%) ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Nature “reflected their opinion”. Agreement was lower for those who read Global Cooperation (66%), Transparency (59%) and Green Investment (51%).

The majority of people (67%) who read Nature said it made them “want to do more to protect the environment”. These figures were again lower for Global Cooperation (55%), Transparency (46%) and Green Investment (44%).

Over half of those who read Nature (54%) felt that they “wanted to hear more about COP26”. Almost as many who read Global Cooperation (48%) felt this way, too, falling slightly for Transparency (46%) and Green Investment (42%).

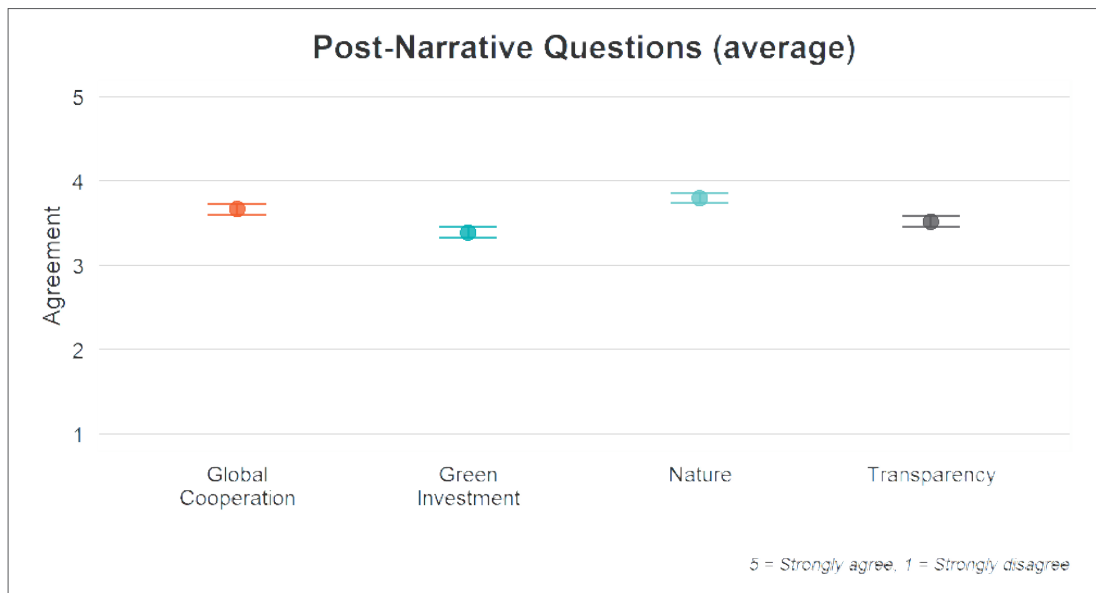


Figure 2. Combined data from three questions: level of agreement with the statements “This message makes me want to hear more about COP26”, “This message makes me want to do more to protect the environment”, and “This message reflects my opinion.”

How to interpret this graph: The circles represent the average of *all* responses to this question, by condition. All responses, from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1) were averaged together. The horizontal lines around the circle represent the amount of error associated with that average – the wider this is, the more variation there was in responses. This can also vary depending on the sample size. As the sample size is quite large, the error in this case is quite small. If the lines and circles from one condition overlap with another along the y-axis (e.g. Green Investment and Transparency both sit between 3 and 4 on the “Agreement” scale, at the same level), they are not likely to be meaningfully different from one another. Nature and Global Cooperation, on the other hand, sit substantially higher. This data is reflected in the percentage of people who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement in each condition reported in the text (i.e. 54% for Nature, 48% for Global Cooperation), but takes into account the entire distribution of responses (including “neither”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree” responses).

A group of friends dig manure into a community allotment at Waddesdon, England. Photo: © [Toby Smith](#)



Attitudes towards UK climate action

Nature increased people’s support for the UK government prioritising climate change by 14% relative to the control group.

In the control group, most people (61%) ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that “the UK government should prioritise tackling climate change”. This increased across all narratives by: +14% for Nature, +8% for Global Cooperation, +8% for Green Investment and +7% for Transparency (Figure 3).

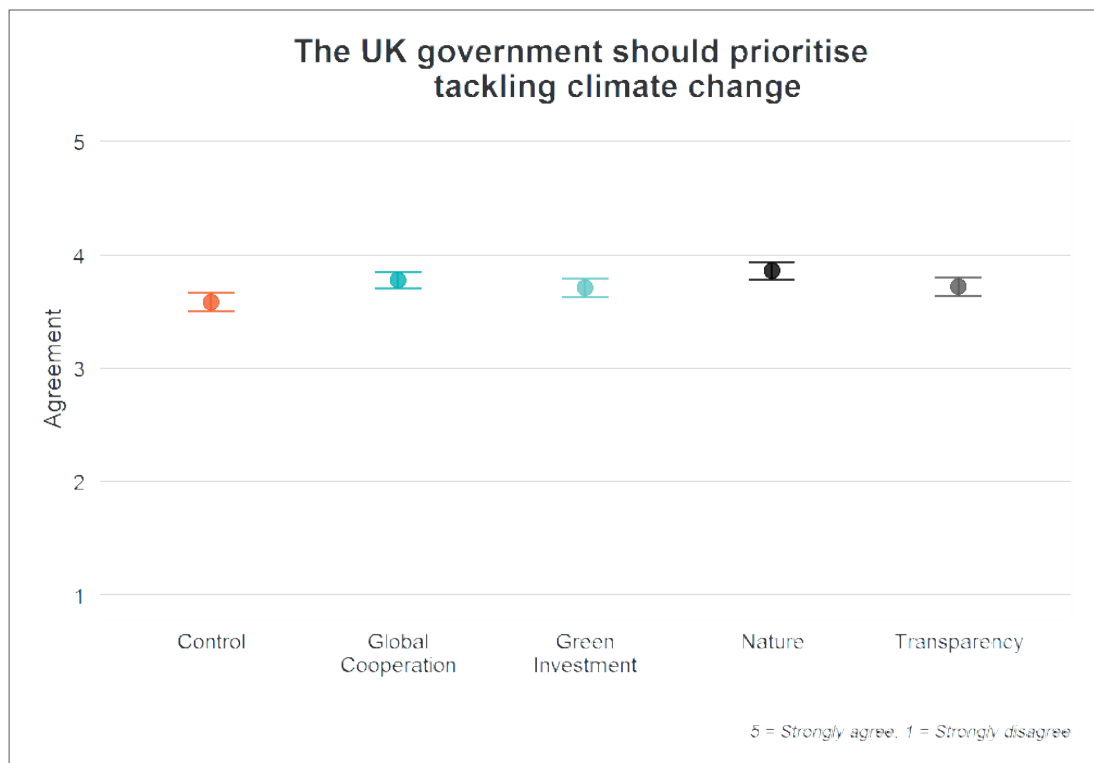


Figure 3. Level of agreement with the statement “The UK government should prioritise tackling climate change.”

Nature increased people’s support for taking action to cut emissions as quickly as possible, even if it causes inconvenience and expense to ordinary people, by 12% relative to the control group (Figure 4).

In the control group, most people (57%) believed “the UK government should cut carbon emissions but should not cause inconvenience and expense to ordinary people, even if that means cutting emissions more slowly”. Three narratives increased people’s willingness to accept this cost to ordinary people in order to cut emissions as quickly as possible: +12% for Nature, +6% for Transparency and +5% for Global Cooperation.

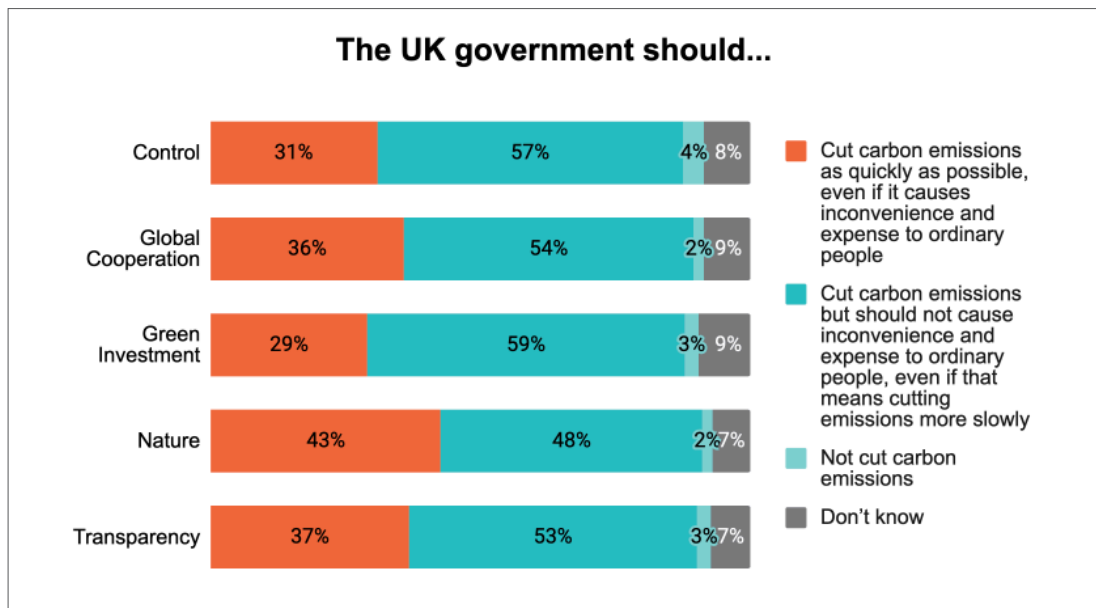


Figure 4. Percentage of people who selected each option about the UK government cutting emissions.

Green Investment and Nature increased people’s support for the UK being one of the most ambitious countries in the world in tackling climate change by 9% and 8%, respectively, relative to the control group.

In the control group, there was majority support (56%) for the UK being “one of the most ambitious countries in the world when it comes to tackling climate change”. All narratives increased support for this statement, although improvements were not significant for Global Cooperation and Transparency (Figure 5). In a relatively rare instance, Green Investment (+8%) performed almost as well as Nature (+9%). There were few differences by segment, with the exception of slightly higher agreement among Disengaged Battlers, particularly after reading the Nature and Green Investment narratives, compared to the control.

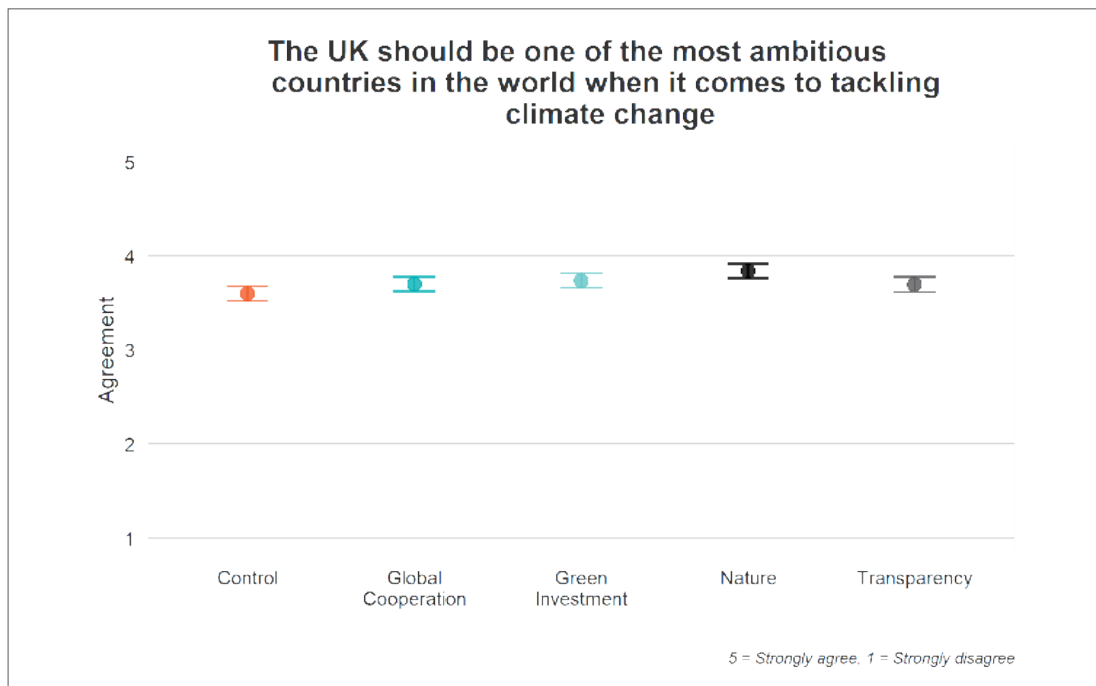


Figure 5. Level of agreement with the statement “The UK government should be one of the most ambitious countries in the world when it comes to tackling climate change.”

Support for United Nations climate change conferences

Nature and Green Investment increased people’s support for multilateral efforts on climate change by 14% and 7%, respectively, relative to the control group.

In the control group, there was marginal majority agreement (51%) that “International institutions like the United Nations (UN) are a good way to make countries accountable for action on climate change because they set a global standard and expose those who are failing to meet it” (Figure 6). This increased for two narratives: +14% for Nature and +7% for Green Investment.

Again, there were few differences by segments, with the exception of Disengaged Battlers who showed higher agreement after reading any of the narratives (Figure 7). This trend could be due to a number of factors, one of which may be that Disengaged Battlers had a low level of awareness or interest in the topic to begin with, and so reading any narrative about COP26 was enough to shift their views slightly in favour.

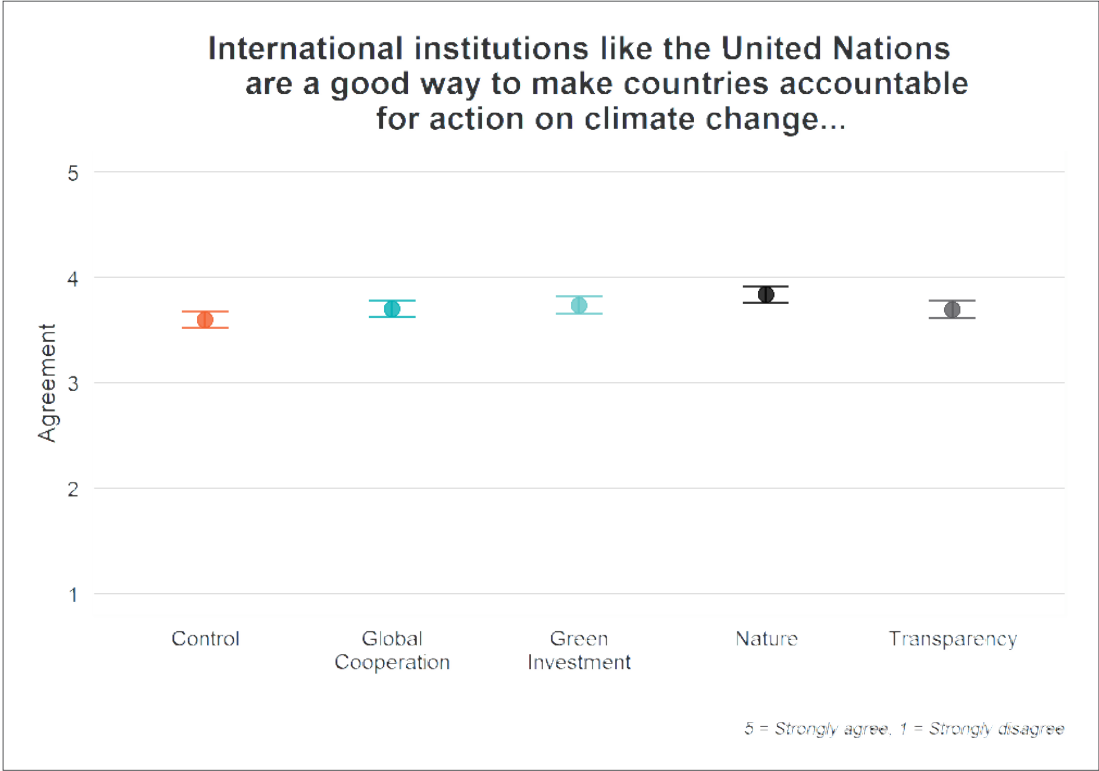


Figure 6. Level of agreement with the statement that “International institutions are a good way to make countries accountable for action on climate change because they set a global standard and expose those who are failing to meet it.”

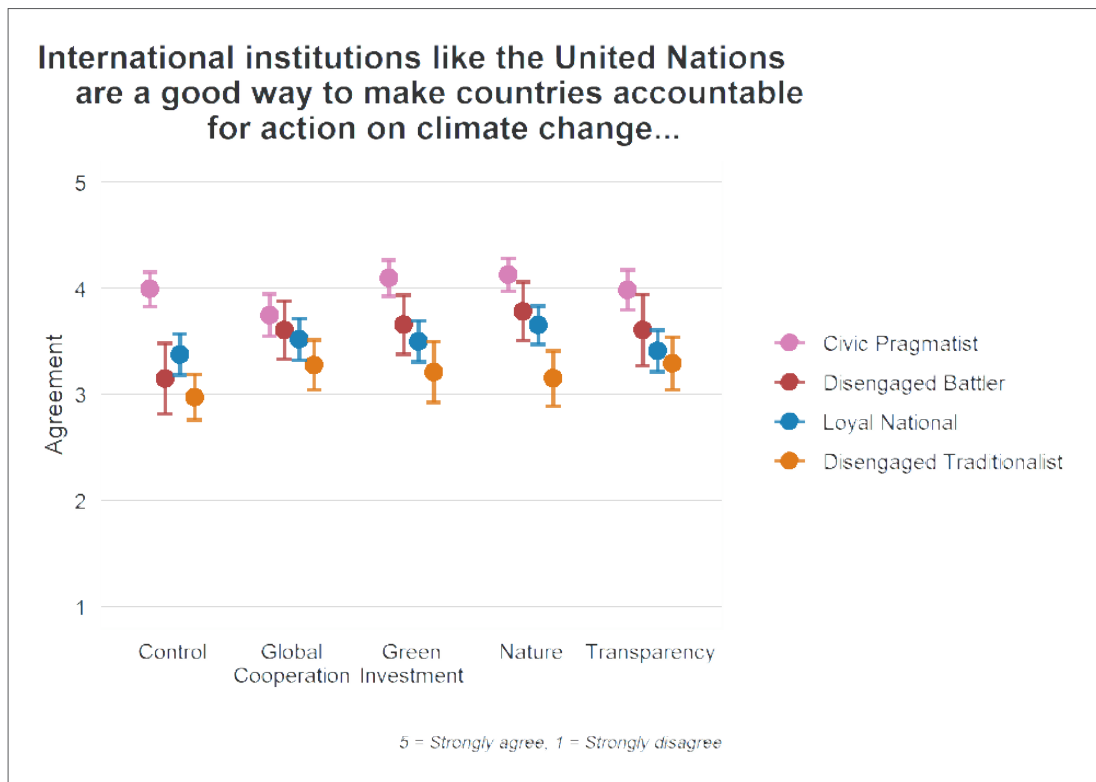


Figure 7. Level of agreement with the statement “International institutions are a good way to make countries accountable for action on climate change because they set a global standard and expose those who are failing to meet it”, for key segments.

With the proliferation of online meetings due to the pandemic, there is a risk that people regard an in-person COP26 as unnecessary or hypocritical. Most people think global climate talks should be conducted online (47%), with only a quarter (24%) recognising that meeting in person is the best way to get things done (Figure 8). The need to justify this is particularly obvious among Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals (Figure 9).

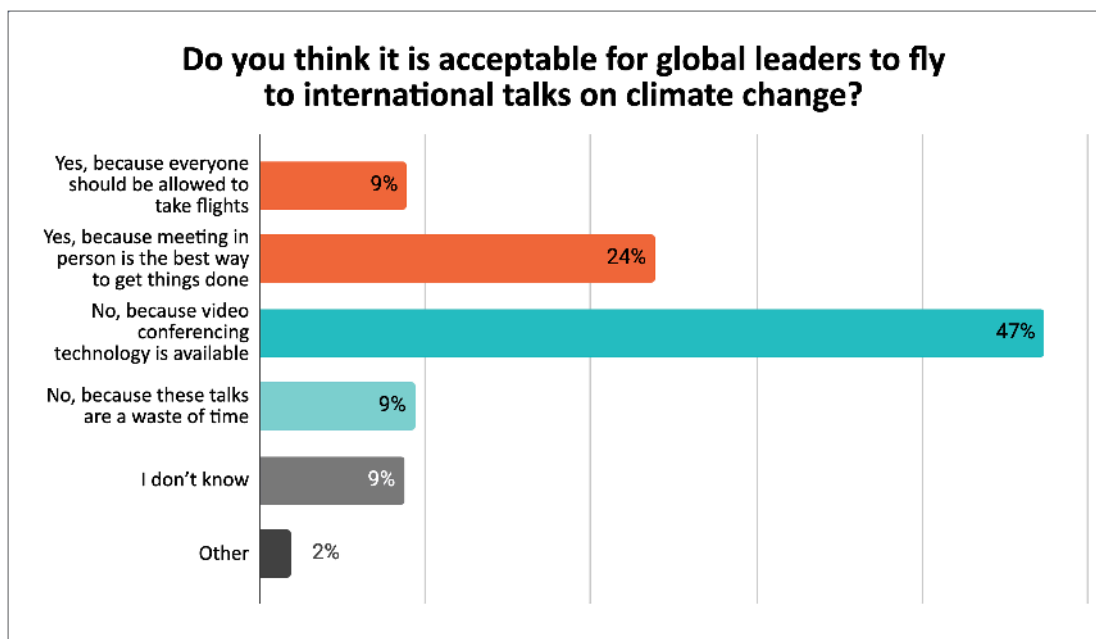


Figure 8. Acceptability of global leaders flying to international talks on climate change.



Figure 9. Acceptability of global leaders flying to international talks on climate by segment.

Support for global climate aims

Only Nature and Global Cooperation increased people’s prioritisation of the global aims that may be discussed at COP26 relative to the control group.

Table 2 shows the percentage of people in the control group who rated the global aims that may be discussed at COP26 as of the “highest” or a “high” priority. It also reveals percentage increases in this prioritisation for participants who read Global Cooperation or Nature. Green Investment and Transparency were not included because they produced no statistically significant changes.

Nature consistently led to the highest increase in the priority-rating for all aims, with the largest rises in support for ensuring 100% renewable power, ending coal use for electricity, ending the public financing of fossil fuels, and providing financial aid to vulnerable countries. Global Cooperation did not produce such noticeable changes, with smaller shifts in the prioritisation of phasing out petrol and diesel cars and ending public financing of fossil fuels, and a marginal increase in ending coal use for electricity.

Table 2. Percentage of people who think each COP26 aim is of the highest or a high priority

COP26 aims	Percentage (control group)	Percentage increase in narrative conditions	
		Global Cooperation	Nature
End deforestation	77%	-	+7%*
Conserve more of the world's lands and waters	70%	-	+5%*
Agree global targets that prevent the global temperature rising above 1.5 degrees (as advised by scientists)	60%	-	+8%
Ensure 100% renewable power	59%	-	+11%
Force businesses to publicly state their impact on the environment and how they plan to reduce their emissions	49%	-	+4%
End coal use for electricity	47%	+8%*	+10%
End public financing of fossil fuels	44%	+4%	+10%
Provide financial aid to developing and vulnerable countries to help them shift to clean energy and protect against extreme weather	39%	-	+9%
Phase out new petrol and diesel cars	33%	+3%	+7%

* indicates marginally statistically significant effects.

A wind turbine engineer monitors a wind farm in Qian'an, China. Photo: © Toby Smith



Nature helped boost support for renewable power among Loyal Nationals. For instance, for the control group and for all other narratives, 100% renewable power was a lower priority for Loyal Nationals than it was for Civic Pragmatists (Figure 10). However, Loyal Nationals who read Nature increased their priority rating such that it equalled that of Civic Pragmatists.

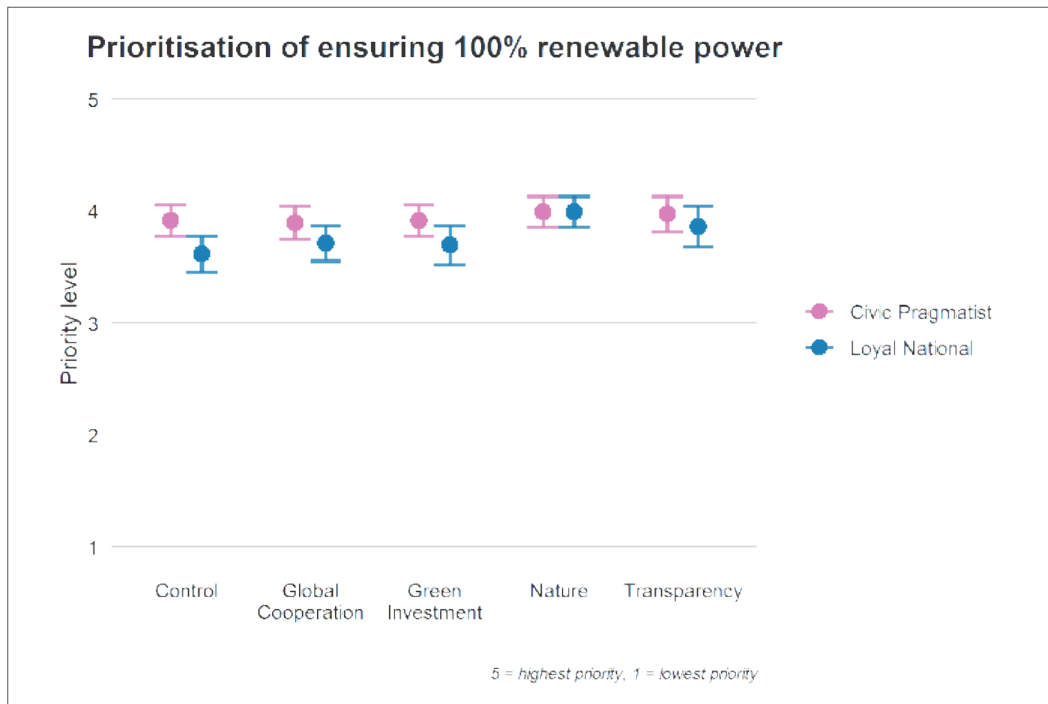


Figure 10. Average priority rating for ensuring 100% renewable power, for key segments.

Strikingly, Nature increased the prioritisation of “providing aid to developing and vulnerable countries to help them shift to clean energy and protect against extreme weather” among Disengaged Battlers and Established Liberals in particular (Figure 11). Both segments generally ranked climate finance as a “medium priority” in the control group and for other narratives, but after reading Nature they rated it as highly as Civic Pragmatists.

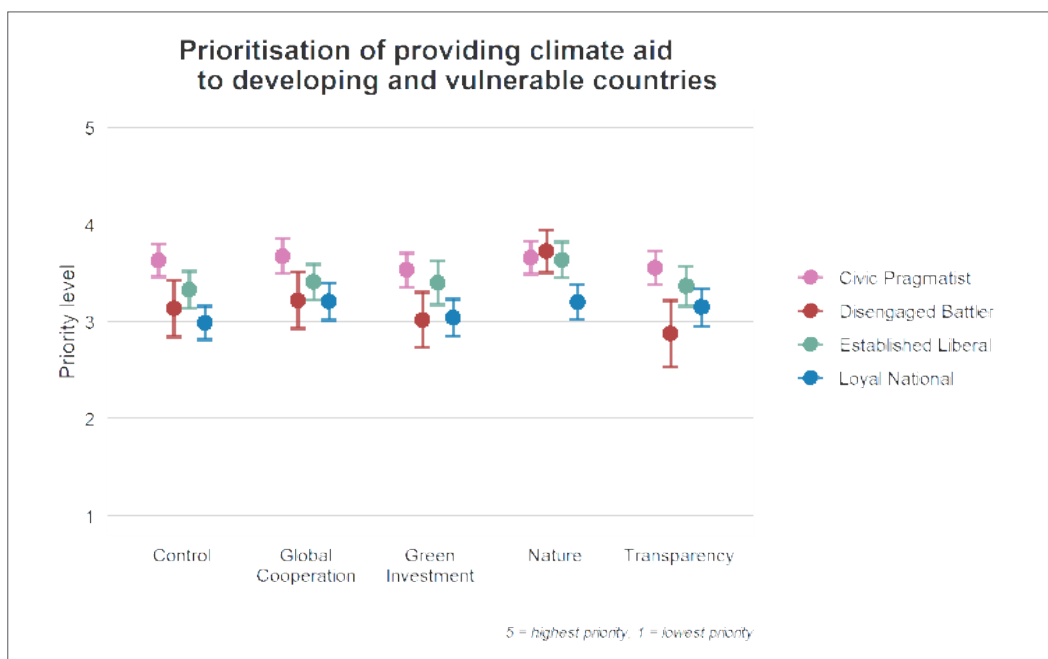


Figure 11. Average priority rating for providing financial aid to developing and vulnerable countries to help them shift to clean energy and protect against extreme weather for key segments.

We decided to further investigate this issue of climate aid, allowing participants to choose from several options. Only one in ten (12%) felt the UK should not provide any support to developing or vulnerable countries to address climate change. The highest proportion (37%) believed we should provide a mixture of financial and technological support. A further 21% agreed with this aim, but only if other countries do the same (Figure 12).

There were no obvious differences in these views by narrative. One possible explanation for this is that participants did not have sufficient knowledge of the kinds of financial and technological support being proposed, and therefore did not have a position that could be shifted. Another explanation is that none of the narratives spoke to this question, and so attitudes remained unchanged.

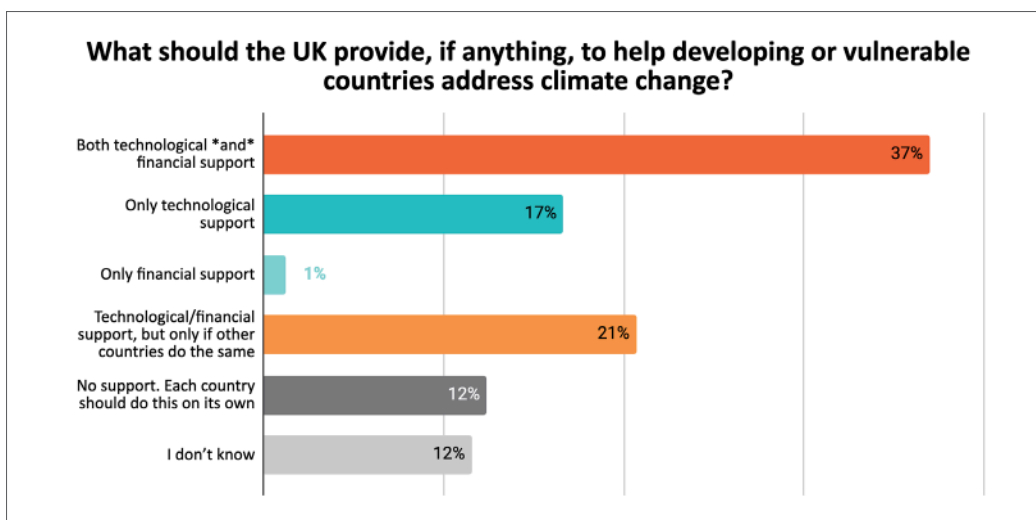


Figure 12. Responses to providing support to developing or vulnerable countries to address climate change. This question did not differ by condition.

In terms of prioritising the 1.5 degrees target, on average, Civic Pragmatists were second most likely to rate this highly, after Progressive Activists. Their rating did not change in response to any of the four narratives, but there were marginal increases in the priority-rating for Disengaged Battlers, Established Liberals and Loyal Nationals, particularly for those who read the Nature narrative, compared to the control (Figure 13).

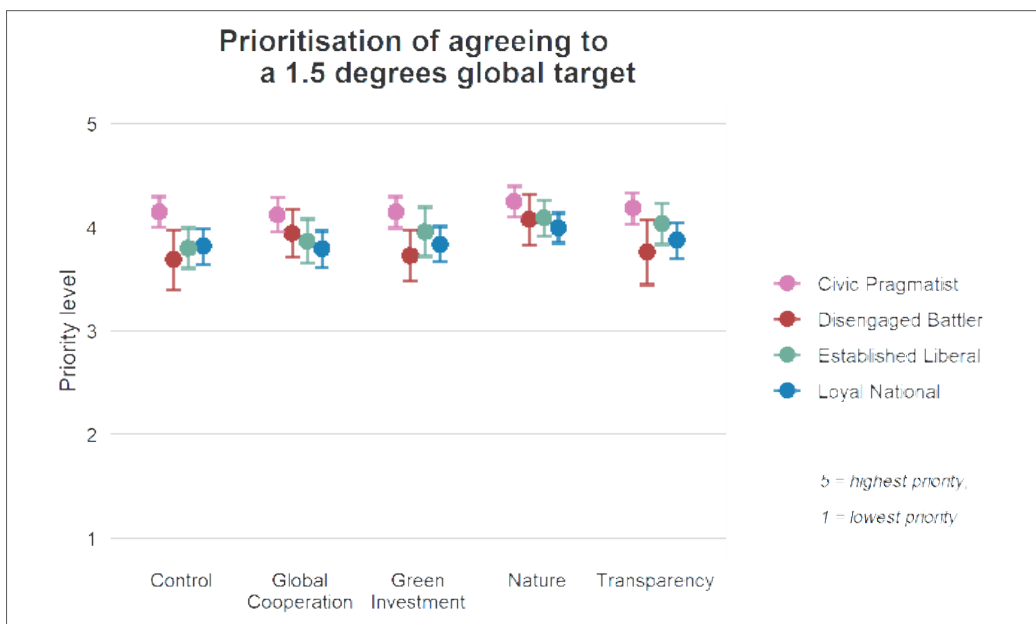


Figure 13. Average priority rating for agreeing global targets that prevent the global temperature rising above 1.5 degree.

Shifts in political and civic behaviours

All four narratives increased people’s likelihood of engaging in political and civic behaviours related to climate action relative to the control group – but, again, Nature and Global Cooperation were most effective.

In the control group, just over a third (34%) indicated they were likely to “sign a petition or contact a politician about climate change”. This increased across all four narratives: +10% for Nature, +8% for Global Cooperation, +7% for Transparency and +7% for Green Investment.

Similarly, in the control group, 33% indicated a likelihood to “vote for a political party because of its climate change policy”, increasing across all four narratives by: +10% for Nature, +8% for Transparency, +7% for Global Cooperation and +7% for Green Investment.

On average, a large proportion of Progressive Activists (67%) and Civic Pragmatists (48%) who read any of the four narratives were “very” or “somewhat” likely to vote for a political party based on its climate change policies. However, we also saw a trend among majority Conservative-voting segments (Figure 14). When averaged across all narratives, there were marginally significant increases in their likelihood of voting based on climate policy: +11% for Established Liberals (to 45%), +9% for Loyal Nationals (to 32%), +6% for Backbone Conservatives (to 26%), and +12% for Disengaged Traditionalists (to 21%). Given that these segments voted on this basis in small numbers at the last election – between 4% and 16%¹ – this suggests that climate could take on a growing role for these voters.

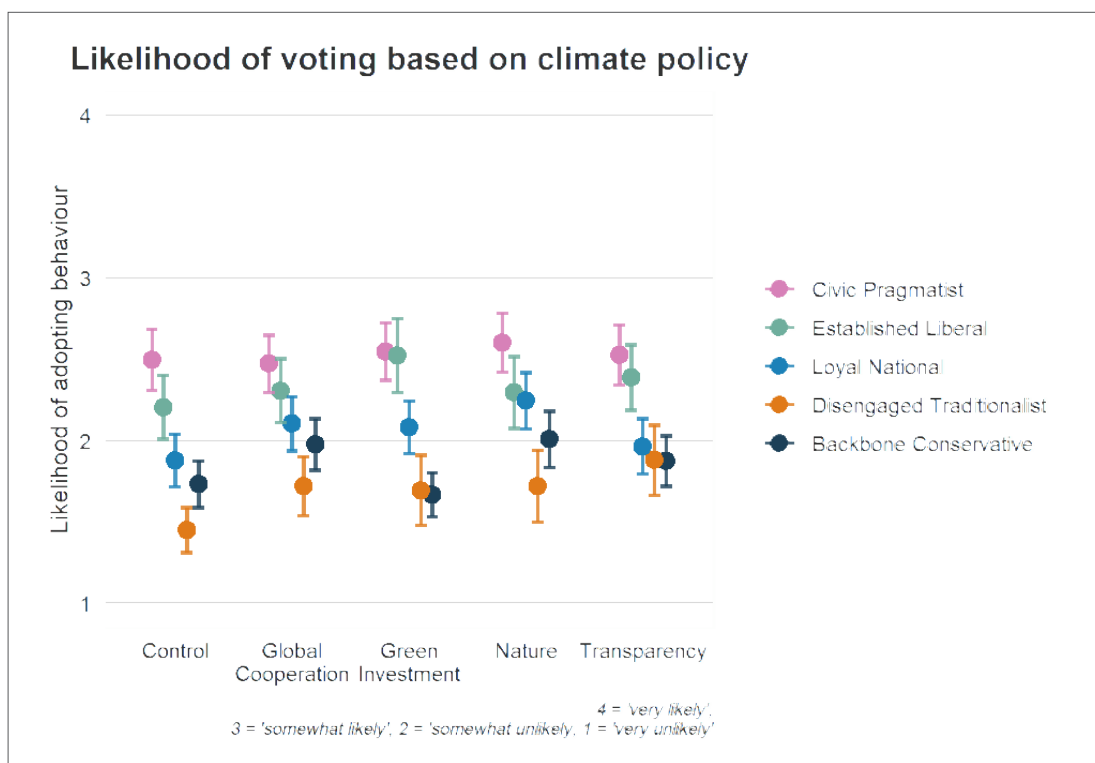


Figure 14. Self-reported likelihood of voting for a political party based on its climate policy for Civic Pragmatists as well as majority Conservative voting segments.

Even “attending a climate demonstration”, a behaviour common only to Progressive Activists, increased slightly in three narrative conditions. One in ten people (10%) indicated they were likely to attend a climate change demonstration in the control group, rising by +4% for Nature, +3% for Global Cooperation and +2% for Transparency.

Overall, people’s likelihood of “donating money to an environmental charity” rose from 30% in the control group to: +8% for Nature, +6% for Global Cooperation, +3% for Green Investment and +2% for Transparency. Progressive Activists (56%), Civic Pragmatists (44%) and Established Liberals (36%) in the control group were most likely to donate money in this way.

Civic Pragmatists who read the Nature narrative significantly increased their likelihood of donating by +12% compared to the control (Figure 15). There were also marginally significant shifts from those who were initially unlikely to donate. After reading any of the four narratives, Disengaged Traditionalists increased their reported likelihood on average by 10% (to 24%) and Disengaged Battlers increased their likelihood by +6% (to 23%) compared to the control.

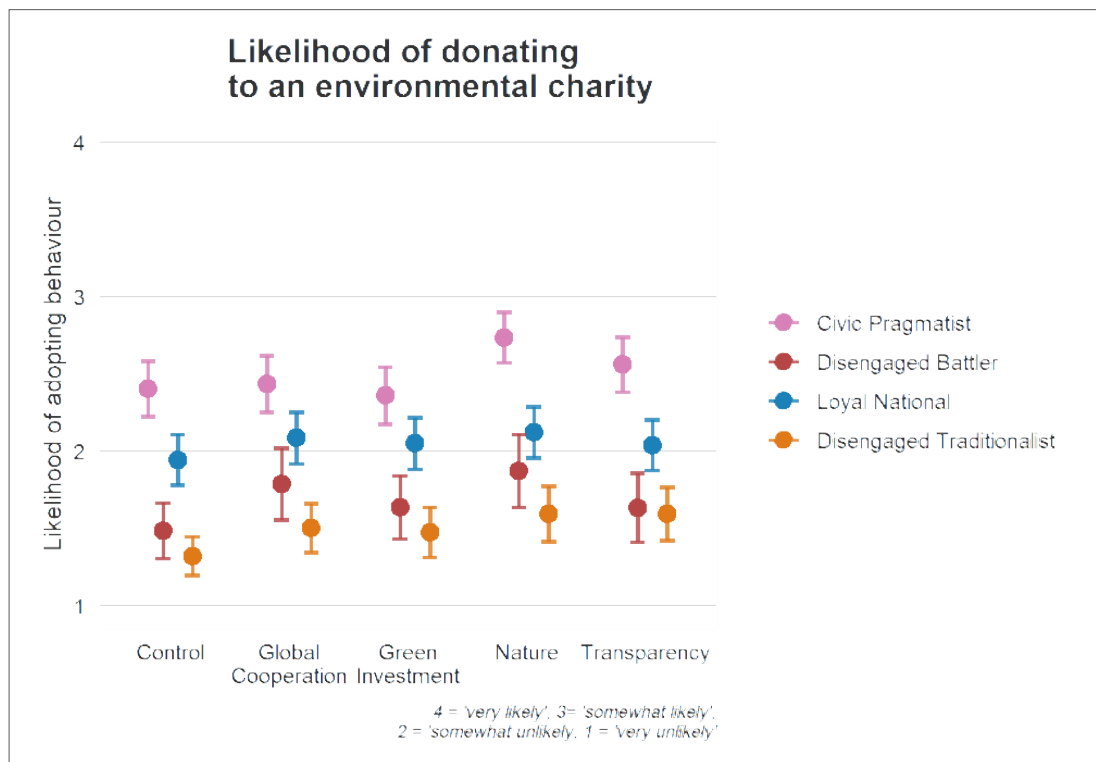


Figure 15. Self-reported likelihood of donating to an environmental charity for key segments.

The narratives also affected people’s desire to be “involved in campaigns or other efforts to show the UK government how much I care about action on climate change”. Nature led to a marginally significant increase in agreement with this statement among Civic Pragmatists (+11%, to 37%; Figure 16).

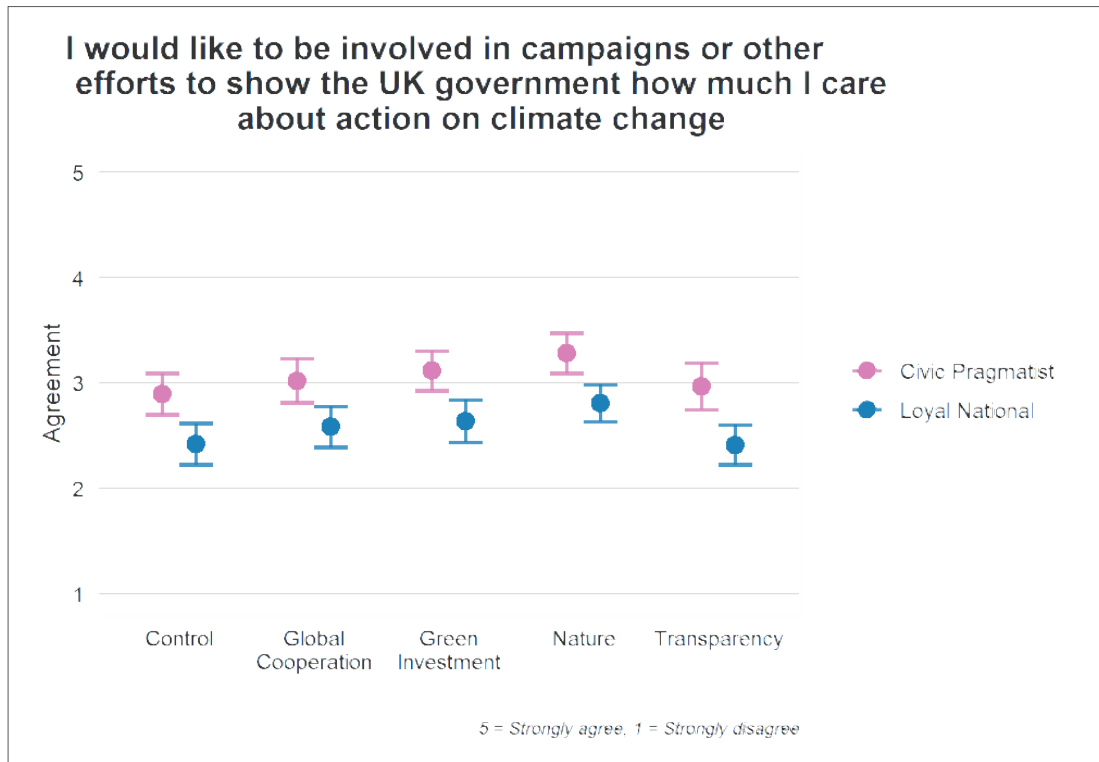


Figure 16. Average level of agreement with the statement “I would like to be involved in campaigns or other efforts to show the UK government how much I care about action on climate change.”

Tomato seedlings are transplanted into poly-tunnels to improve growing conditions and reduce pests without the need for chemicals. Wash Farm, Riverford Organic Farms, England. Photo: © Toby Smith / Good Energy



Willingness to make low-carbon lifestyle changes

Food, diet and meat consumption

Most Britons are not vegetarian or vegan, and dietary habits can be hard to shift. Around one in five people in the control group said they were “very” or “somewhat” likely to become vegetarian (12%) or vegan (8%), excluding those who already are. This increased slightly only among those who read Nature: +4% vegetarian, and +3% vegan.

However, there was a wider willingness among the control group (26%) to “consciously reduce my meat consumption”, with significant shifts after reading the narratives: +10% for Nature, +8% for Global Cooperation, and +6% for Transparency. Nature had a particularly obvious effect on Loyal Nationals compared to the control group (+25%), despite the fact that they are among the least likely to make voluntary changes to their diet (Figure 17).

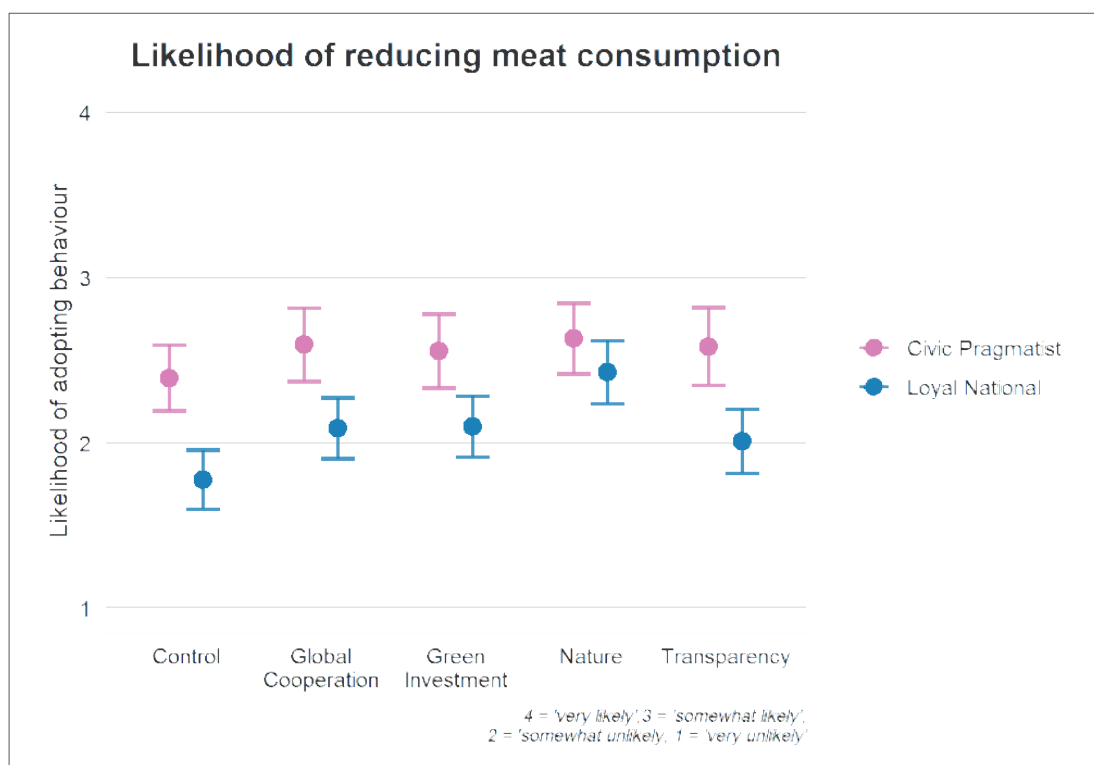


Figure 17. Self-reported likelihood of consciously reducing their meat consumption for key segments.



Butchers at Borough Market prepare and retail cuts of high quality British meat, England. Photo: © [Toby Smith](#)

PEN PORTRAITS – Changes in food and meat consumption

Dennis*, 59, a **Loyal National** from the West of England does not see meat reduction as a logical or natural thing for people to do: *“People have been eating meat for years and years, why are we suddenly deciding that we’re going to get rid of meat? I can’t see the logic behind that. Some people also need different nutrients.”*

However, he does admit that perhaps we eat too much meat – more than humans may have done a long time ago: *“We eat maybe too much meat... and we grow meat in an unnatural way, like in crowded chicken farms. Maybe that can be done better, and maybe we can eat more seasonally and go back to basics a little bit.”*

Felicity, a 33-year-old **Civic Pragmatist** from the North West already enjoys ‘meat-free days’, saying: *“I try to buy vegan stuff from the supermarkets rather than meat”*. She doesn’t follow a strict vegetarian or vegan diet but is open to significant change: *“I don’t choose meat, but if I’m given it, I’ll eat it. I’d be quite happy to eat plant-based meals if meat is phased out.”*

Felicity is slightly worried about the farmers who make their living from these industries, and how they might cope with changes in dietary habits around the world, and hopes that something can be done to make the transition easier for them.

** These portraits have been constructed from the contributions of several different focus group participants. They do not represent a single person and all names are fictional.*

Home energy choices

A quarter of participants (24%) had already “improved my home insulation” and around a third of people (35%) in the control group said they were “very” or “somewhat” likely to do so in future. This figure increased by +7% for Nature and +5% for Global Cooperation, meaning that certain messages have the potential to activate this decision, at least for those with this option (i.e. house-owners).

Even more promisingly, perhaps, three narratives increased people’s likelihood of “replacing my gas boiler with a cleaner alternative”, from 26% in the control group, rising by: +8% for Nature, +8% for Global Cooperation, and +5% for Transparency. However, this is likely to be an unfamiliar option for most, with only 6% indicating they have already done this, and around 20% of people saying this option did not apply to them.

The most popular home energy behaviour was “switching to a renewable energy provider”, with 21% saying they had already done this, and nearly half (48%) in the control group indicating they were “very” or “somewhat” likely to do so in future. As a result, perhaps, only Nature (+7%) had a significant positive effect (Figure 18).

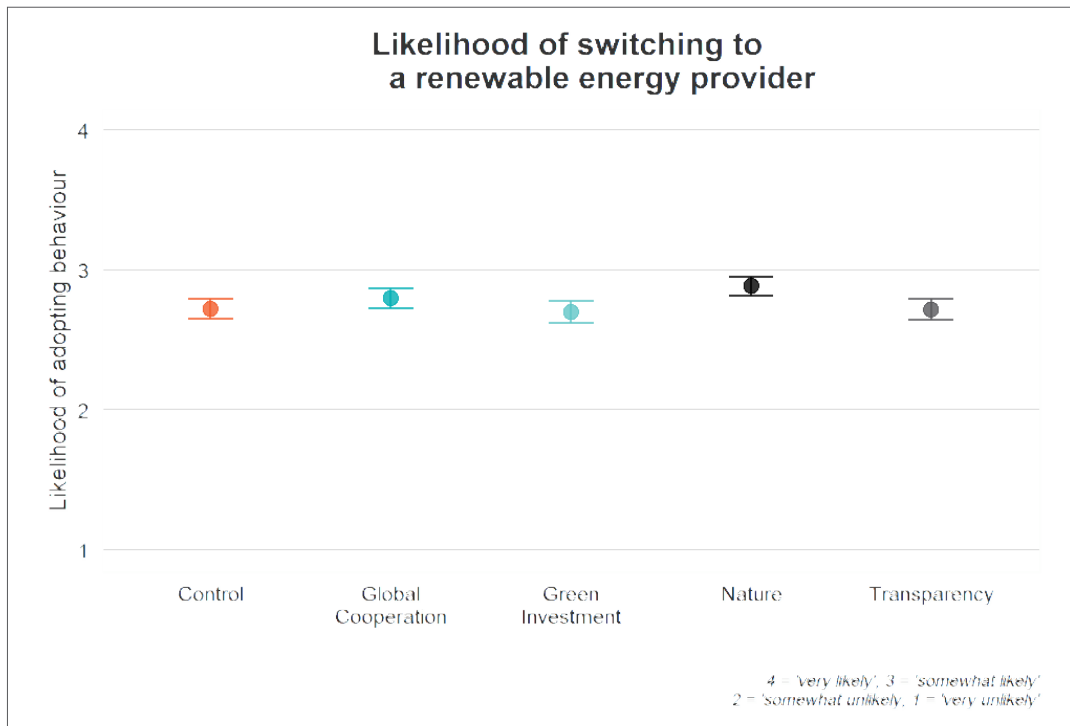


Figure 18. Self-reported likelihood of switching to a renewable energy provider.

PEN PORTRAITS - Changes in residential energy use

Hina, 62, a pensioner and **Loyal National** from Wales, is keen to improve her home energy use, but feels uncertain. She is not sure what the new, cleaner technologies are, or whether they will work for her home, and is worried about how much it will cost: “Our boiler broke a couple of years ago and it cost us a good part of a grand to replace it. So, there’s no way that I can do that again. How are people going to be able to afford it? [...] You know, it’s far too expensive, especially for pensioners. The government needs to do more.”

She is also concerned that these decisions are outside some people’s control: “My daughter lives in a park home estate and her electric is delivered centrally, so they pay a bill, it’s all divided up between all of them. We can’t change their electricity supplier; they have to go with what the park says.”

Mae, a 45-year-old **Civic Pragmatist** from the South East of England, already has solar panels on her home, but she shares Hina’s concerns and questions about heat pumps: “How are we going to heat our homes? I’ve heard of heat pumps, but I don’t know much about them. I would support banning gas if that’s the answer, but the electricity has to be produced and rolled out in a fair way. Who’s expected to cover the cost? I can’t afford it.”

Transport and mobility

Only 1% said they currently drive an electric vehicle. However, over a third of people (35%) in the control group indicated they would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to “drive an electric car instead of a diesel/petrol car”, suggesting a future surge in ownership. Nature led to a significant increase in this response (+11%).

When it comes to active travel, 23% already “walk, cycle, and use public transport instead of driving, wherever possible”, with over a third (37%) in the control group indicating that they would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to do so in future. There were positive shifts by +5% for Nature and +4% for Transparency. This was particularly noticeable among Loyal Nationals who read Nature (+13%) and Disengaged Traditionalists who read Transparency (+7%; Figure 19).

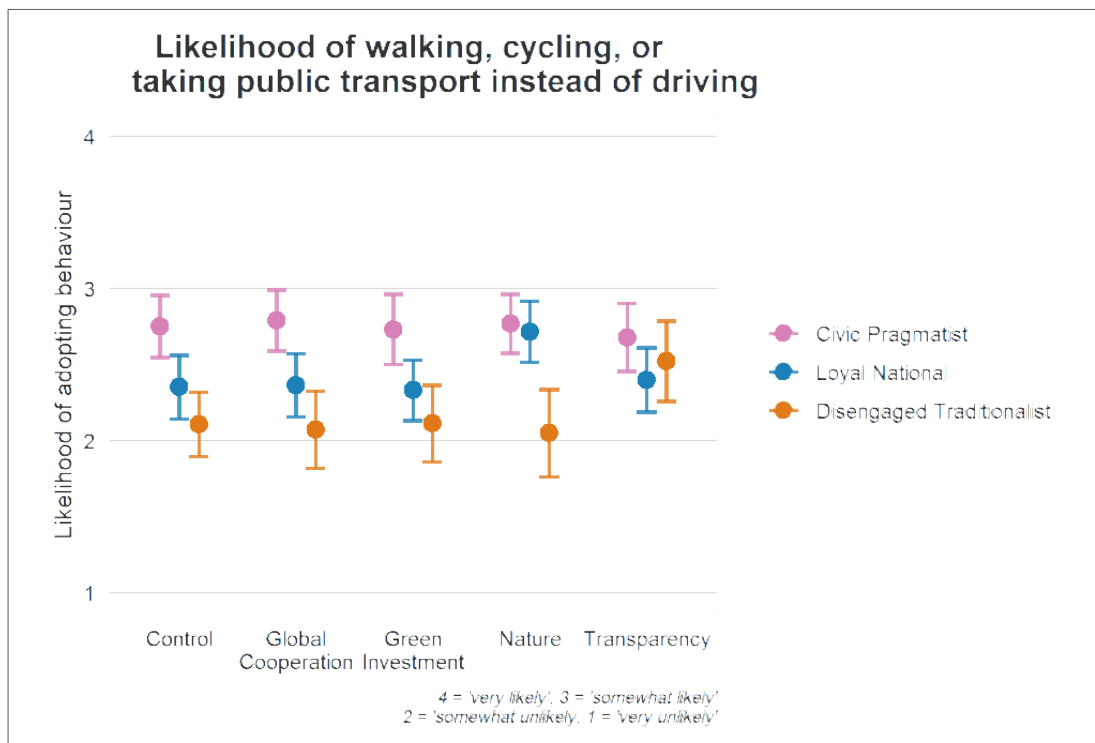


Figure 19. Self-reported likelihood of choosing sustainable travel options instead of driving for key segments.

However, when it came to air travel, none of the narratives produced statistically significant changes in people’s likelihood of “choosing to fly abroad only once or twice a year” or “stop[ping] taking flights altogether”. One reason for this is that around 50% of people fly only a couple of times a year anyway, or felt the behaviour was not applicable to them (12% indicated they have already stopped taking flights altogether). As the majority of flights are taken by those in the highest income brackets, this behaviour change may not apply to most of the British public.

PEN PORTRAITS – Changes in mobility and transport

Greg, 63, a **Loyal National** from the West Midlands, wants to travel sustainably to protect the environment, but feels some actions are out of reach for him and his family: *“We cannot afford an electric car, you know? I would get one if the government paid for it. ... What will happen to people like myself, and others, when petrol cars are banned? We’ll drive them until they are done and dusted, and then we’ll make coffee tables out of them...I’m stuffed here, because I’m still one of the dinosaurs because I use a petrol car.”*

Ursula, a 34-year-old **Civic Pragmatist** from Wales, sees a shift to green transport as inevitable. However, public transport is not an option for her, and she sometimes worries about how rural areas will stay connected. She feels lucky to work for a company that makes it easier for her: *“You have to go with the times... My company added them [electric vehicles] to the car scheme recently and I love it.”*

She realises that many aren’t in a position to make the transition now, but hopes the infrastructure will be in place in time: *“I think technology will improve in nine years, won’t it? And the effect will trickle down, presumably, where a second-hand market will be more realistic and a cheaper option for people.”*

Trust in climate messengers

In focus groups, it was clear that the perceived messenger was as important as the content when it came to people's trust in the messages. Green Investment was assumed by some to be a "party-political broadcast", and therefore drew scepticism and distrust. Similarly, trust in UK Leadership depended on the source:

If David Attenborough read it out, you'd accept it ... If somebody well-respected like that said 'This is my point of view', you would think, 'Brilliant, yes, I'm on board.' But, if our Prime Minister said it, I think it would be less welcome." – Civic Pragmatist

By comparison, Global Cooperation and Nature were thought to come from the United Nations or an environmental charity or advocate: in other words, an organisation or individual acting more in the global interest.

In the RCT, participants were asked to rank a list of public figures according to who they most trust on the issue of climate change. Our analysis showed that trust in UK-based and other public figures to talk about climate change varied widely (Figure 20).

British people have little awareness of key actors at COP26: 68% don't know Alok Sharma, and 78% don't know António Guterres.

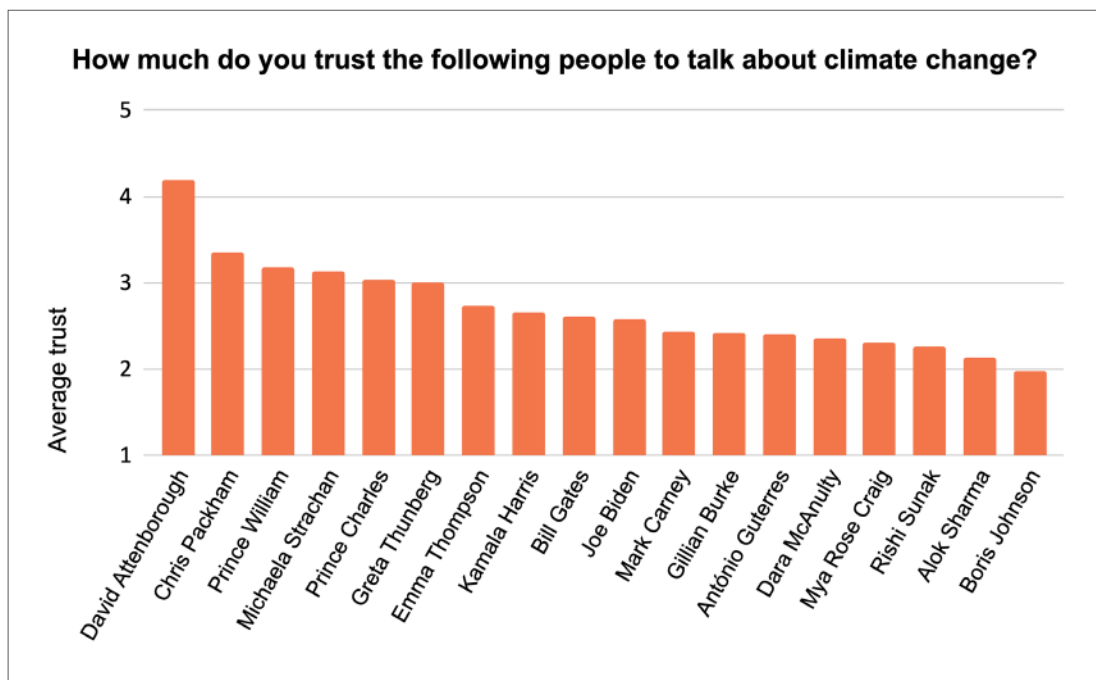









Figure 20. Level of trust in messengers to talk about climate change. Responses did not differ by condition. 1 = Do not trust at all, 5 = trust completely.

Table 3. Top 5 trusted messengers for each British segment, alongside the average trust in each messenger (1 = do no trust at all, to 5 = trust completely)

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
 Progressive Activist	David Attenborough 4.47	Greta Thunberg 3.87	Chris Packham 3.72	Michaela Strachan 3.36	Emma Thompson 3.10
 Civic Pragmatist	David Attenborough 4.42	Chris Packham 3.63	Greta Thunberg 3.42	Michaela Strachan 3.33	Prince William 3.28
 Disengaged Battler	David Attenborough 4.00	Chris Packham 3.06	Michaela Strachan 2.88	Prince William 2.79	Greta Thunberg 2.78
 Established Liberal	David Attenborough 4.21	Chris Packham 3.45	Prince William 3.27	Prince Charles 3.24	Michaela Strachan 3.19
 Loyal National	David Attenborough 4.22	Prince William 3.45	Chris Packham 3.34	Prince Charles 3.25	Michaela Strachan 3.11
 Disengaged Traditionalist	David Attenborough 3.73	Prince William 3.18	Prince Charles 2.96	Chris Packham 2.85	Michaela Strachan 2.81
 Backbone Conservative	David Attenborough 3.98	Prince William 3.54	Prince Charles 3.40	Chris Packham 3.05	Michaela Strachan 2.98

Methodology



Methodology

This project is based on Britain Talks Climate, which was developed in collaboration with our lead research partner More in Common, ECF and YouGov. Britain Talks Climate builds on the seven 'segments' of the British population identified through **More in Common's Core Beliefs model**. This uses a range of psychological and ideological factors, including threat perceptions, social identity and belief in meritocracy, to go beyond analyses that position public opinion along a single dimension, such as 'left/right' or 'leave/remain'. As an outcome of the collaboration, YouGov developed a set of 'golden questions' to classify people into the seven segments. These segments were used in both stages of this new piece of research, and the 'golden questions' were used in the Randomised Control Trial to classify the sample into each segment.

1) Focus group discussions

Two focus group discussions of two hours each were conducted with both Loyal Nationals and Civic Pragmatists, with between six and ten participants per group (n = 30). Participants were recruited from the existing sample from Britain Talks Climate, and represented a spread in terms of age (26–79 years), gender (n= 18 female, n=12 male) and ethnic representation (n=4 ethnic minority backgrounds). They were drawn from regions across Great Britain, and from a range of social grades.

The discussions explored participants' awareness of COP26 and UK climate policies. We also tested six short narratives designed to frame COP26 in different ways. The aim was to understand how these segments see the COP process, as well as a net zero future, and to generate insights and ideas for unifying narratives.

All narratives were shown to all members of the focus group, who discussed them together sequentially. The order of the narratives was randomised for each group.

The qualitative data was analysed separately by two analysts, who each reviewed two transcripts (one Loyal Nationals group and one Civic Pragmatist group). The analysts then compared and synthesised the findings for each segment, across all focus groups.

2) Randomised control trial

We used insights from the focus group discussions to design narratives and questions for testing with all seven segments. The total sample size was 4,318 and was obtained using quotas for age, gender, ethnicity and region (the latter shown in Table 4). It contained 56.7% women, 42.1% men, 0.3% who preferred to self-describe their gender, and 0.6% who preferred not to say. The sample included all ages (18–24 years = 7.4%, 25–49 years = 37.2%, 50–64 years = 27.3%, 65+ years = 28%). Ethnicity was deliberately oversampled in order to account for under-representation in the original research, and to allow for meaningful representation of smaller groups (White = 76.6%, Mixed = 2.5%, Asian = 12.9%, Black = 4.3%, Other = 2.1%, Prefer not to say = 1.6%). All percentages in this report are based on weighted data matched to a representative sample of the British population.

Table 4. Regional representation in sample

Region	Percentage in sample	Region	Percentage in sample
North East	4.3%	London	11.7%
North West	11.1%	South East	14.4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.6%	South West	9.2%
East Midlands	7.6%	Wales	4.9%
West Midlands	8.7%	Scotland	8.5%
East of England	10.5%		

Message testing was conducted on all segments using an RCT (Table 5). Participants were split into five groups, with a mixture of segments in each one. All five were shown a neutral definition of COP26:

“Each year, the United Nations runs a global climate change conference called the Conference of the Parties (COP). The UK won the bid to host the 26th COP – known as COP26 – in Glasgow in November 2021. Nearly every country in the world will come together to discuss how to tackle climate change. This year, for the first time in five years, countries are expected to commit to more ambitious targets for reducing their emissions.”

Four groups were then shown different narratives (“treatment groups”) and one group was shown nothing (“control group”). This enabled us to explore which treatment group showed the biggest shift in views towards the UK’s climate action, global climate priorities, and low-carbon personal behaviours compared to the control group.

Table 5. RCT design

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed consent • Screening questions (demographics) • Issue salience (top three issues in order of importance for the UK) • Britain Talks Climate Golden Questions (live segmentation) • Definition of COP26 				
<p><u>Narrative 1</u></p> <p>Global Cooperation</p> <p>(n=873)</p>	<p><u>Narrative 2</u></p> <p>Green Investment</p> <p>(n=852)</p>	<p><u>Narrative 3</u></p> <p>Nature</p> <p>(n=846)</p>	<p><u>Narrative 4</u></p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>(n=863)</p>	<p><u>Control</u></p> <p>No narrative</p> <p>(n=884)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-narrative questions – evaluation of stimuli • Attention check • Outcome variables (UK climate approach and leadership, global climate priorities, low-carbon personal behaviours) • Trust in messengers to talk about climate change • Support to vulnerable or developing countries on climate change • Acceptability of flying to COP26 				

Results were analysed in R Studio,⁸ based on R version 4.1.0, and differences between conditions were calculated using linear model functions from the ‘stats’ package. The ‘data.table’, ‘psych’, ‘ggplot2’, ‘dplyr’ and ‘emmeans’ packages were also used.

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7. See the methodology at the end of this report for the control narrative.
8. RStudio Team (2020). RStudio: Integrated Development for R. RStudio, PBC, Boston, MA. <http://www.rstudio.com/>

Images and icons

Page 4: Trees are planted on marginal land to capture carbon, increase biodiversity and help reduce flooding. Wash Farm, Riverford Organic Farms, England. *Photo:* © [Toby Smith / Good Energy](#)

Page 10: Four generations of the same family enjoy a community allotment, England. *Photo:* [Getty Images](#)

Page 20: Social scientists from the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and University of Cambridge conduct field research in Tamil Nadu, India. *Photo:* © [Toby Smith / TIGR2ESS](#)

Page 40: International researchers convene at the David Attenborough Building to collaborate on conservation and climate change solutions, England. *Photo:* © [Toby Smith / CCI](#)

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