



# Lifestyle change, systemic change & climate conversations

---

Originally presented to Pledgeball  
20 Dec 2021

Part of the Climate Engagement Lab



#TalkingClimate



@ClimateOutreach



climateoutreach.org

Robin Webster



# Structure

---

1. The link between individual action and systemic change: theoretical underpinning
2. Talking Climate principles and how they may apply
3. What people need to take action and how that applies



# Making the link between individual and systemic change: theoretical underpinning



# Individual change leads to systemic change: the theory

---

- **Lifestyle:** ~2/3 emissions connected to household
- **Sectors:** Mobility, residential and food each ~20%
- **The upper 10% -**
  - Use around 45% transport energy & 75% aviation
  - Net worth of \$93k = top 10% globally
- 1.5C - Richest 1% reduce per capita emissions by 30x, poorest incr by 3x



# We are influenced by the people around us

---

- **Peer influence** eg prevalence of solar panels - 'people like me'
- **Social and cultural norms** slow to change, but once they are established help to lock in new lifestyle.
- Committed minority of people can comprise a '**critical mass**' -> 'social tipping points' (unpredictable)





# Individual change → policy change

---

- Politicians need evidence of **social consent** to introduce radical policy change
- **Eg smoking** - changes in public attitudes and social norms → transcended self interest → smaller scale changes in policy.



# Climate conversations - #TalkingClimate

# The #TalkingClimate Handbook

HOW TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT  
CLIMATE CHANGE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE



climate  
outreach

et Climate-KIC  
Climate-KIC is a joint venture of the  
European Union and the German government

2019

# #TalkingClimate workshop

THE TRAINERS' GUIDE



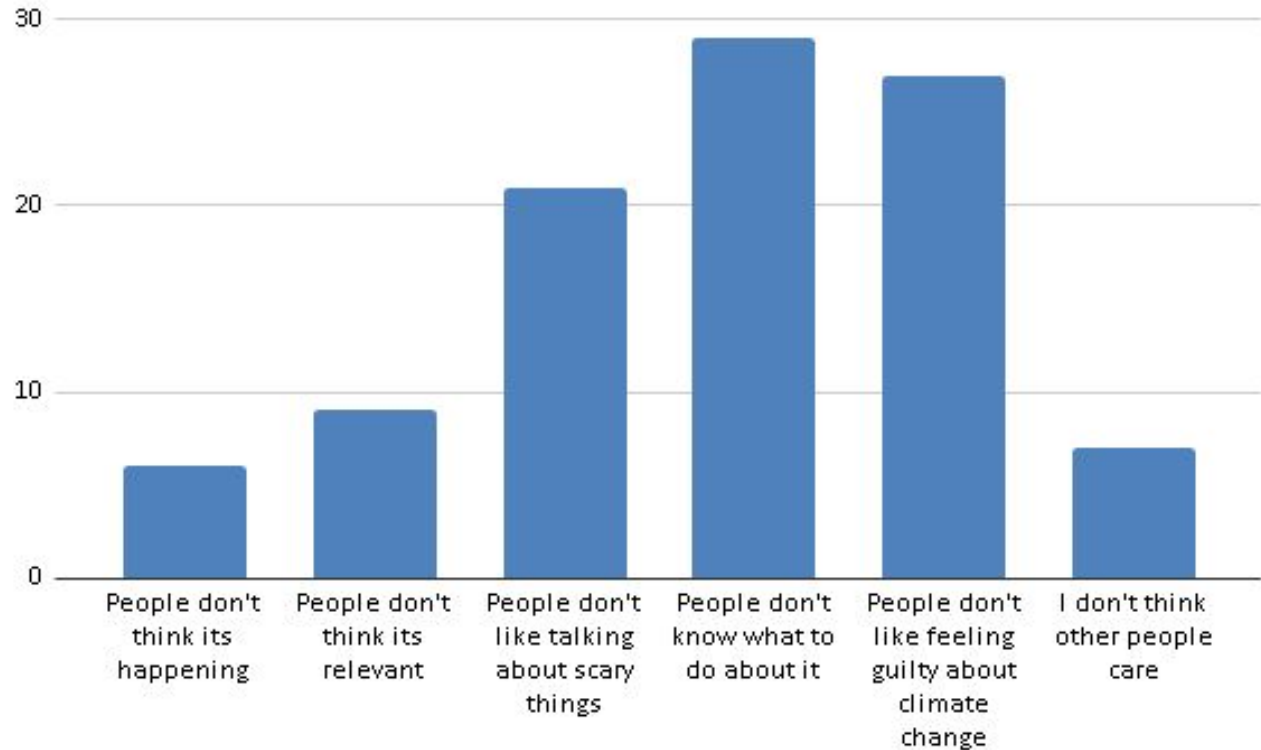
climate  
outreach

et Climate-KIC  
Climate-KIC is a joint venture of the  
European Union and the German government

2020



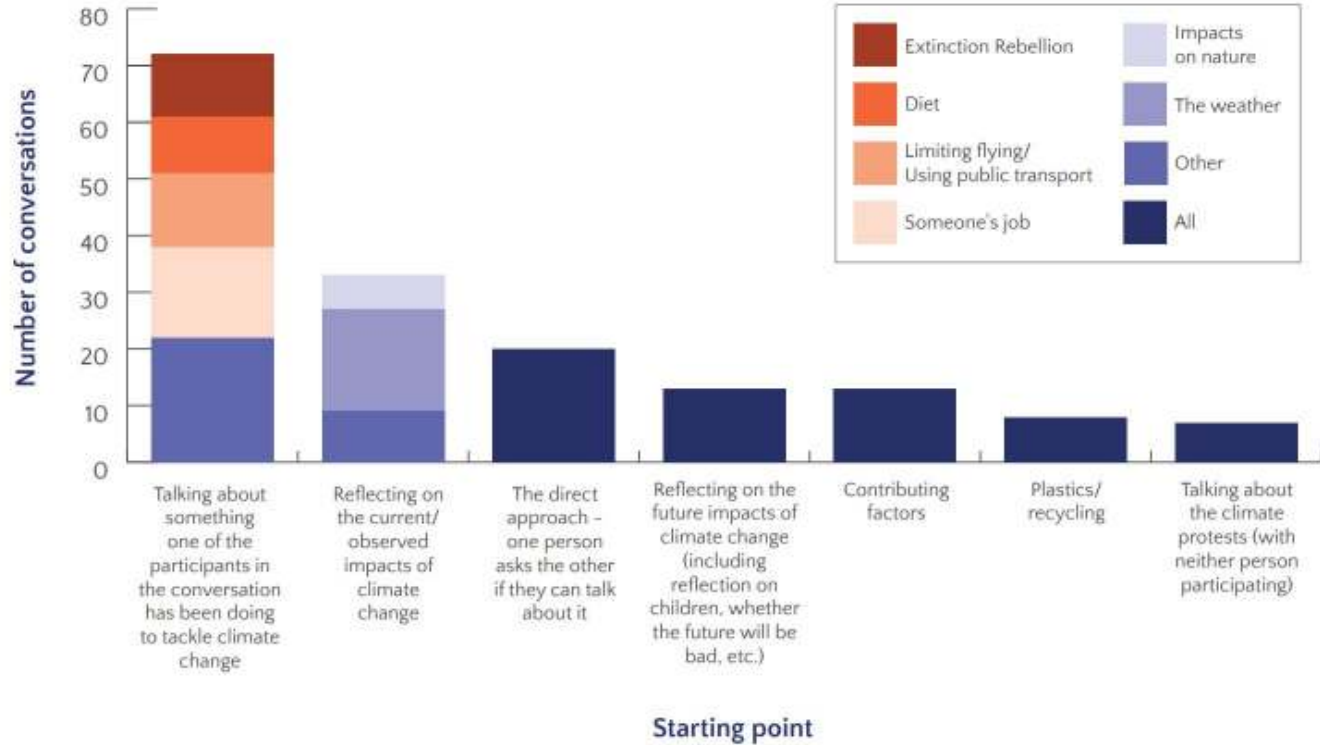
# Why is it hard to start a conversation about climate change



[#TalkingClimate](#)  
experiment, August 2019

So in prompting action we are countering: confusion, guilt, fear....

# How conversations started



[#TalkingClimate](#)  
experiment, August 2019

**Taking action** really helps!



# Exercise: Telling your story

---

When did you start caring about climate change?

Was there a particular moment that you can remember?

What action are you taking on climate change now?

How do you feel about that?



# Core skill: encouraging storytelling

---

Research shows that humans aren't motivated by statistics. We are motivated by stories.

A **personal story** is a powerful tool of communication, whoever you are talking to and however much technical information you know.

It can bring the issue of climate change, which can often feel distant from day to day concerns, closer to home.



## Core skill: Listening

---

Rather than lecturing your conversational partner about your views, ask about what climate change means to them.

Ask about personal experiences.

Reflect what you hear, show that you've heard.

Don't interrupt.

Learn from them.

Give them space to reflect on their own story.





**R**espect your conversational partner and  
find common ground

**E**njoy the conversation

**A**sk questions

**L**isten, and show you've heard

**T**ell your story

**A**ction makes it easier (but doesn't fix it)

**L**earn from the conversation

**K**eep going!

See ['Talking Climate' handbook](#) (Climate Outreach, 2019)





Getting people to take action



# Actions

---

- People are more inclined to take **relatively insignificant actions** (ie turning lights off rather than eating less meat)...
- And believe they are more significant than they are
- Widespread confusion about what's most useful to do



# Actions

---

- Some **knowledge** helps (e.g., the most impactful changes, and ones that are *not* impactful)
- The biggest gains are:
  - Long haul flights, particularly the richest 10%
  - Shifting to vegetarian options (individual level and systemic level)
  - Improving efficiency of vehicles, renewable energy in homes



# Doing one significant thing may lead to another significant thing

---

- If someone adopts a more impactful behaviour, they are **more likely** to adopt other significant behaviour (*'spill over' effect*)
- Behaviours based on free choice and align with internal worldview **more likely** to spill over
- Advocates are more convincing if they adopt low-carbon lifestyles - **people strongly dislike perceived hypocrisy**



# Factors needed for people to take action

---

- **Identity** (values, peers)
- **Community** (collective action, support, social conventions, peers)
- **Capacity** (infrastructure, finance, timing)
- **Motivation** (efficacy, rules, link to systemic change)





# Sample exercise: a way of inspiring action?

---

Name one action that you know of that is being taken to address climate change that has inspired you.

Then name one action on climate change that you would like to take, but haven't managed to do yet.





# Thank you

---

Sign up to our monthly newsletter at  
[www.climateoutreach.org](http://www.climateoutreach.org)

Follow us on social media [@ClimateOutreach](https://twitter.com/ClimateOutreach)

Contact us at [info@climateoutreach.org](mailto:info@climateoutreach.org)



#TalkingClimate



@ClimateOutreach



[climateoutreach.org](http://climateoutreach.org)