

# Executive summary

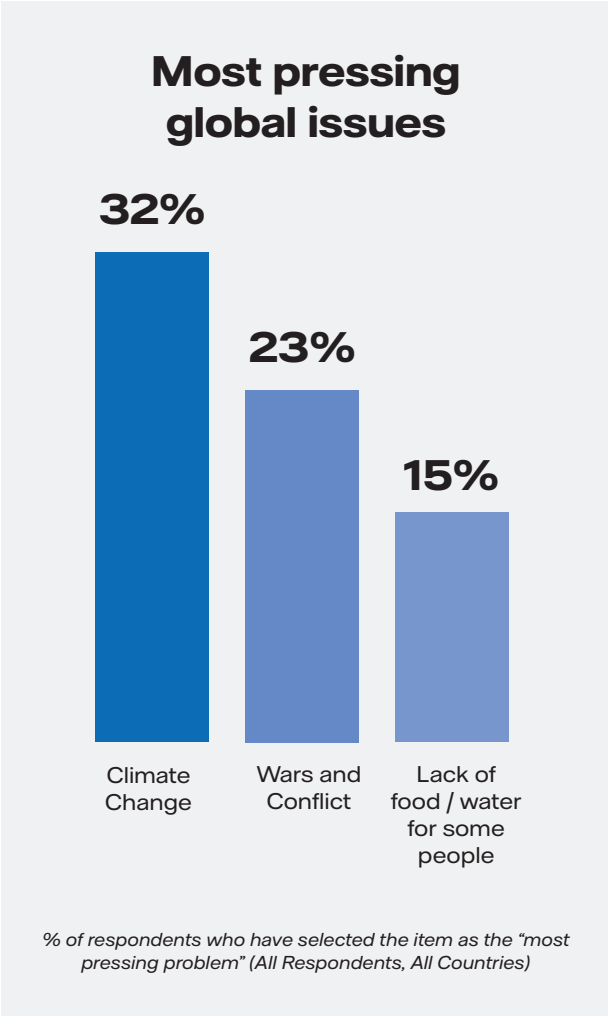


## Attitudes

The climate is becoming people's greatest concern

Climate change is seen not only as being a highly pressing issue: it is seen by the largest proportion of respondents in our study as **being the main challenge of our age, ahead of any other global issue.**

Reflecting this, a majority of citizens say they worry about climate change – and for many this feeling of worry extends into 'eco-anxiety'.



## Coverage

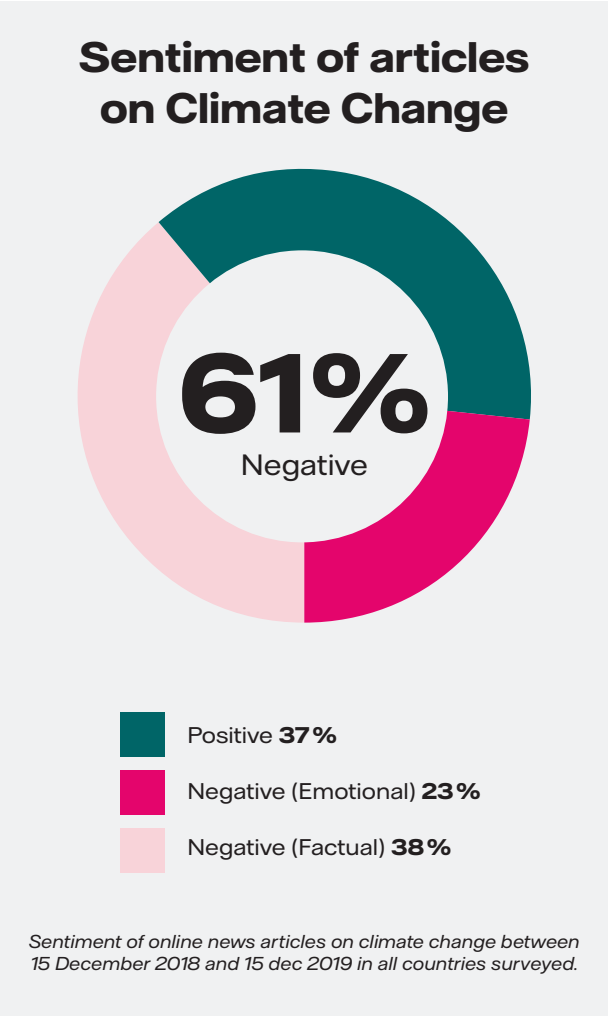
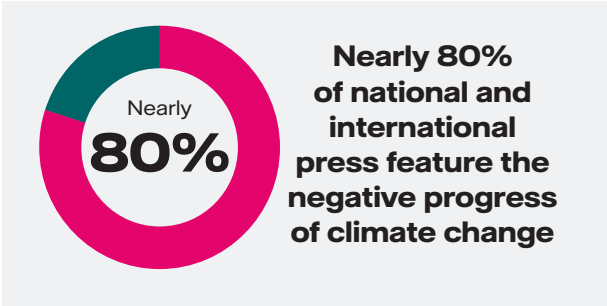
In popular media most climate reporting is despondent

**A large share of media reports on the topic of climate change though factual, focus on the severity of the issue and are negative in tone**, containing news and data about climate change and its adverse consequences more broadly.

A second tier of coverage is particularly negative in nature and highlights in particularly emotive terms the already visible catastrophic consequences of climate change.

We also see a substantial amount of positive news in reports on corporate initiatives to slow down climate change or political developments that strengthen the framework that governs the climate.

When looking at the sentiment split across different types of publications, we see that negative sentiment of both emotional and factual nature is most prominent in national and international media outlets. In contrast positive stories can be mostly found in trade, research and local publications. This imbalance is highly important, given the wider readership of national and international publications, and their role in setting the media agenda.





## Perception and emotion

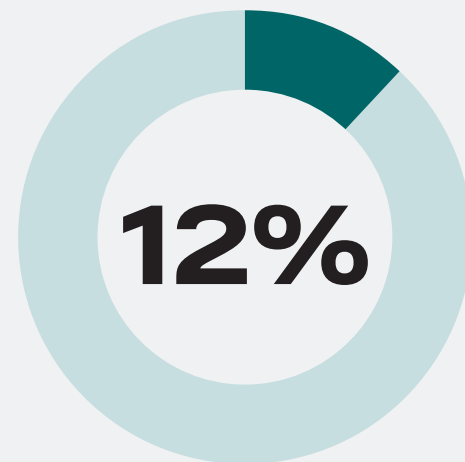
Negative perceptions are taking hold

Our findings show that people recall a larger volume of negative or pessimistic reporting on climate change than is actually present in the media landscape as a whole.

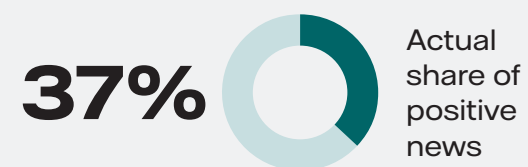
Several factors are possibly at play to explain this disparity between the actual news landscape and the perception of it, such as the fact that positive news can be found mostly in media less commonly accessed by the general public (e.g. trade and research news outlets) and humans' natural tendency to retain negative information outlets) and humans' natural tendency to retain negative information.



**This low recall of positive stories can be harmful when it leads to people feeling and behaving differently than they would do if they had more meaningful examples of progress being made to tackle climate change.**



**Only 12% of all respondents recall seeing positive climate news in the media**



Actual share of positive news



## Discussion

Social media supplements the cycle of negative stories

Social media, by design, amplifies the content that we find most engaging and thus the cycle of negative media reporting – both through the way alarming coverage is shared widely through social media networks, and the way in which the topic is further discussed online.



**With negative media coverage being more likely to be remembered than positive coverage, we would expect to see it being shared at a much greater rate online.**



**Negative discussions on social media outweigh positive ones with a ratio of almost 3:1 (31% vs 12%)**



# Action

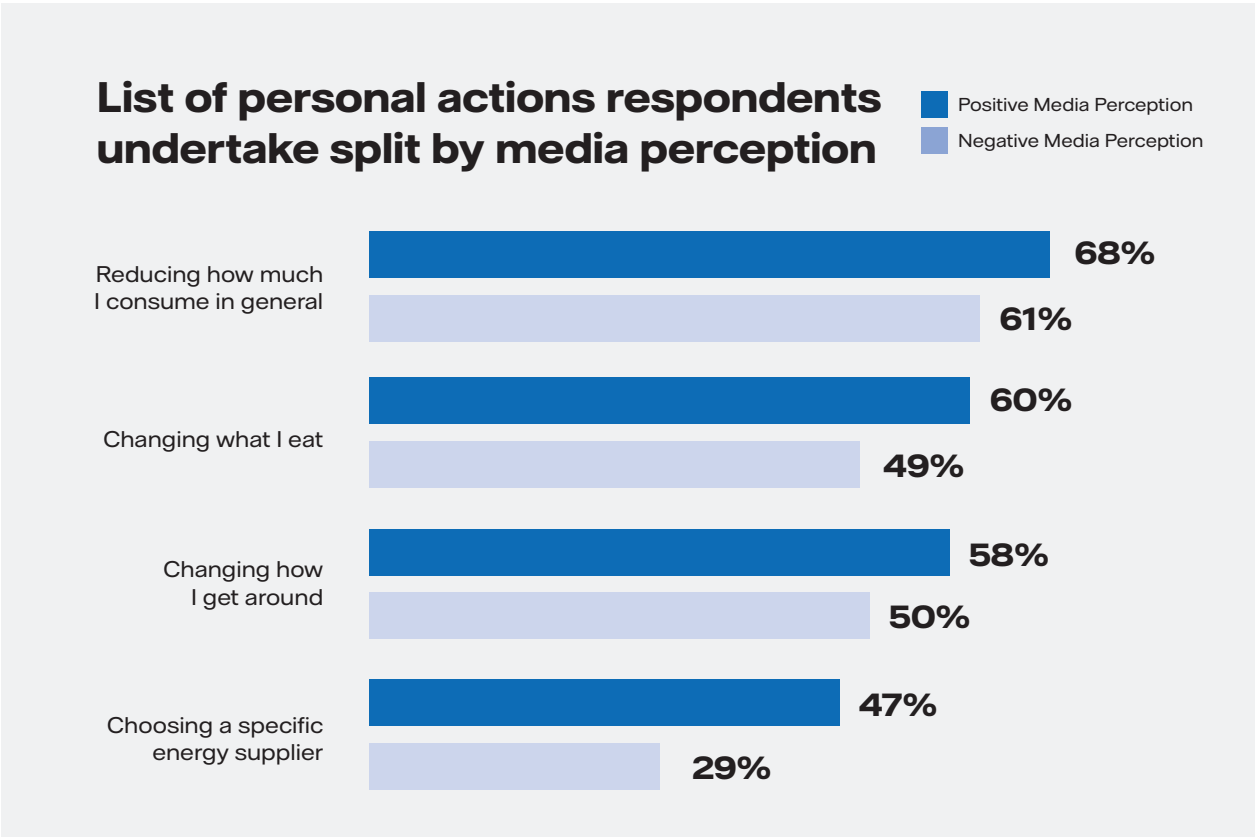
Coverage and conversation affect our willingness to act

Business and governments are rightly expected to lead on climate change as they are seen as most able to slow it down – but individuals also have an important role to play. This lies not only in the cumulative impact of their action on the climate, but in how consumer choices signal to businesses that more is expected of them.

Many consumers are already making modifications to their daily lives, and the purchasing decisions they make, specifically with the aim of improving their climate footprint. However, there remains a large untapped segment of the population who say they are not yet doing so but would like to.



**“Our findings show that those who see news coverage and social media content that are mostly positive in tone are significantly more likely to engage in a range of climate-friendly behaviours.”**



List of personal actions respondents undertake to reduce impact on climate split by the perception of the conversation on climate change in media. Respondents base: n=2084 (negative perception); n=772 (positive perception)

**The barriers for action can be practical - the availability and cost of climate-friendly options - but can also stem from the media and social media environment they are exposed to. In particular, negative reporting induces a feeling of individual powerlessness to stop the problem. This is a significant inhibitor of action and of the belief that positive progress is actually possible.**

**However, when coverage highlights examples of leadership on climate change - from businesses, governments and individuals - this often has the opposite effect: to encourage action.**

**The emotive impact of predominantly positive coverage is especially high, specifically in the way it leads to individuals feeling inspired to act by the examples they see from others.**

It is important to remember that more negative and emotive reporting can also stimulate action on climate – especially when it leads to a feeling of anger at what we are collectively doing to the planet.

Balanced reporting is essential – particularly given the way we tend to respond to media coverage. It is important to highlight the seriousness of climate change, but also to ensure that people can see that efforts are being made to address it – often with success.





## Key takeaways

What do the findings of this report mean for the different groups involved in the fight against climate change?

### Businesses

Businesses who are responding to societal expectations of leadership on climate change and have taken decisive action to adapt their operations and plan long-term when it comes to the possibly dramatic consequences of climate change should spend time and resources communicating the changes they are making, and not being afraid to promote this through the media: this will help people to see what is being done and inspire them to take action.

### Politicians

Countries who have been able to develop and implement successful climate-friendly policies, should not be reluctant to trumpet their actions on the wider international stage and in the media, as this can help demonstrate that a genuine determination to act can have an impact on slowing down climate change.

### Media

Climate change is the problem of our age, and as such it is crucial that media reports on it in a way that conveys the full scale of its impact. Our findings suggest that, when shaping their reporting, it would be helpful for media to consider two key dimensions. Firstly, there is a risk that some reports can present climate change as an intractable problem that is now so far advanced it cannot be solved. Secondly, and linked to this, reporting of the progress that is being made matters – it is indeed critical that the scale of the problem and the need for action is appropriately emphasised, and we know that this action is most likely to happen when people have examples of leadership to look to.

### Individuals

When it comes to the role of individuals, we believe climate change is a problem for all of us, but it is incumbent in particular on business and government to create the conditions in which citizens are able to take the choices that express the value they place on the climate. However, our findings suggest that more reporting of the way consumer preference is changing will bring this to the attention of businesses, and prompt them to respond by changing what they offer.

