

COMMUNICATING CLIMATE CHANGE IN MEDIA

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American Meteorological Society Annual Meeting 2024



Communication Goal & Objectives:

Goal: Identify best practices for communicating climate change to a non-scientific audience.

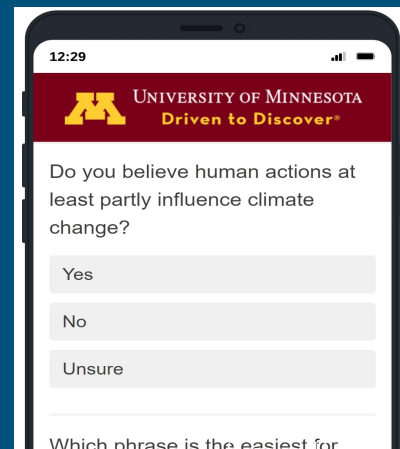
Objectives:

1. Determine topics that matter most to viewers.
2. Discover topics most confusing to viewers.
3. Obtain suggestions for climate reporting stories.
4. Establish if there is an audience for long-form climate change stories on digital platforms.

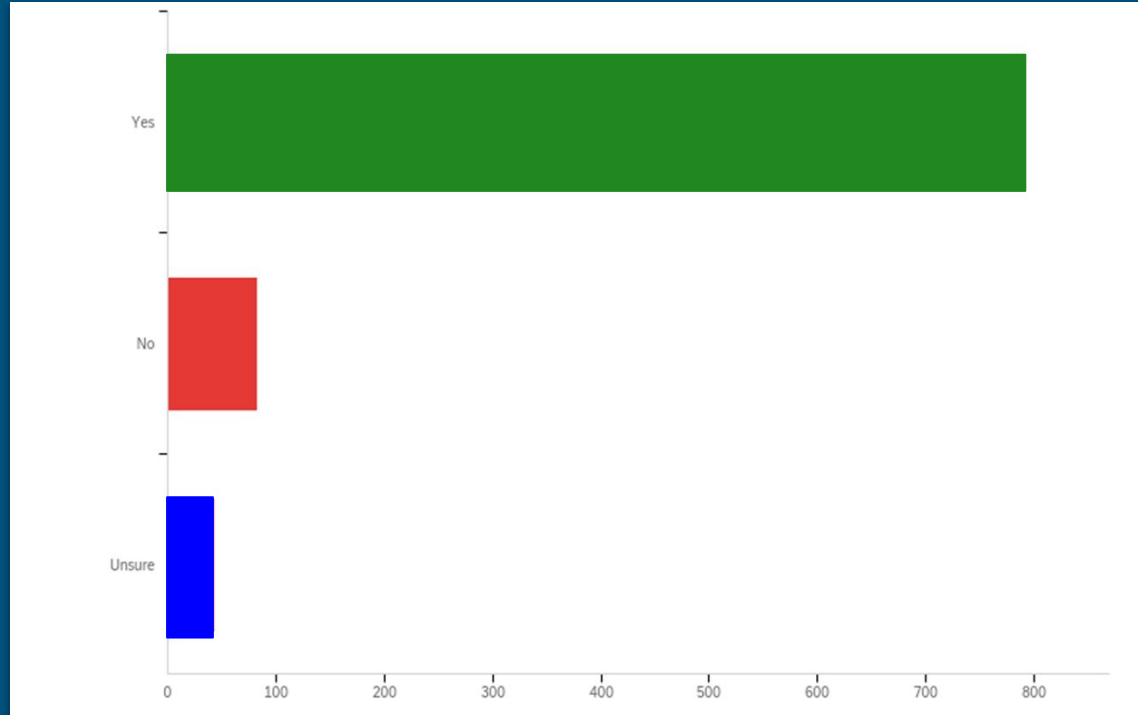
U of M Capstone: Communicating Climate Change with CBS

Research Approach:

- Qualtrics climate change survey.
- 10 multiple choice (unsure option) & two fill-in blank.
- Posted on professional Facebook & Twitter.
- ~1K respondents.

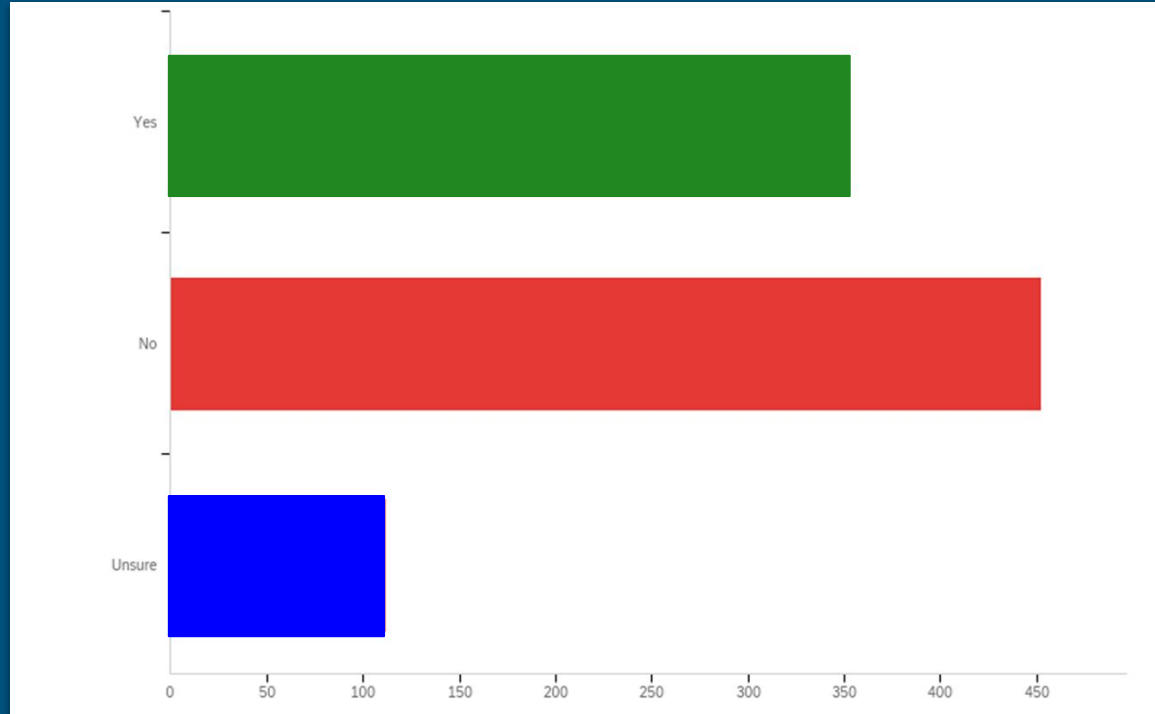


Do you believe human actions at least partly influence climate change?



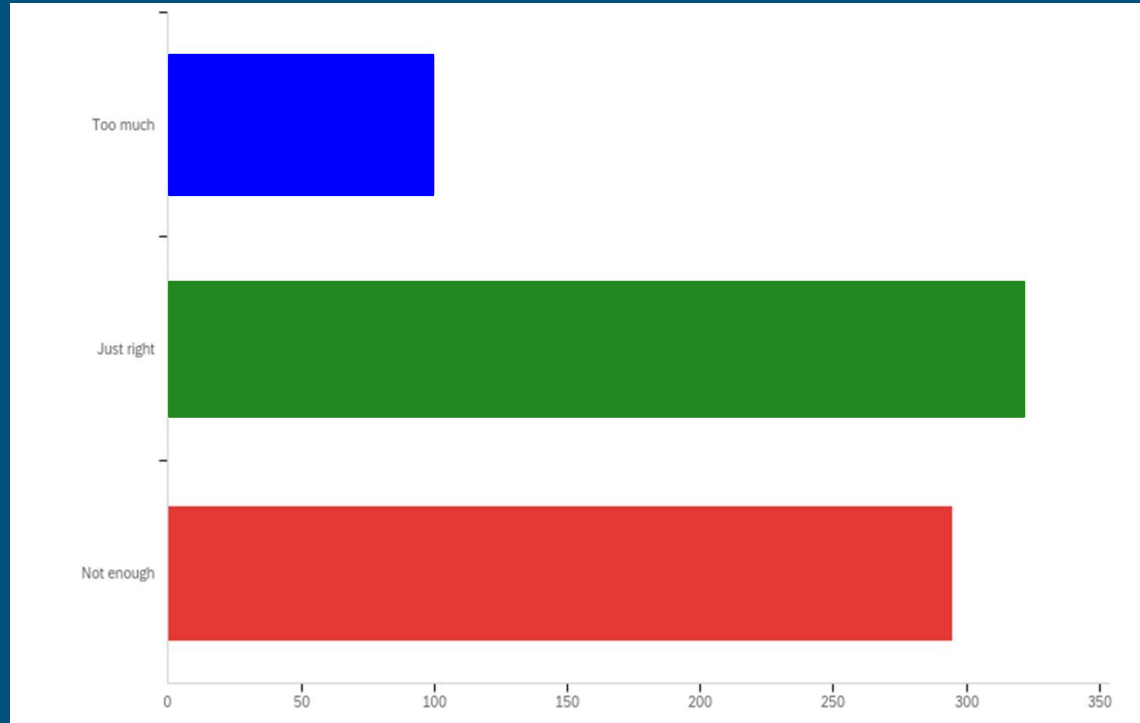
Yes: 86%
No: 9%
Unsure: 5%

Do you feel local news stations do enough coverage of climate change?



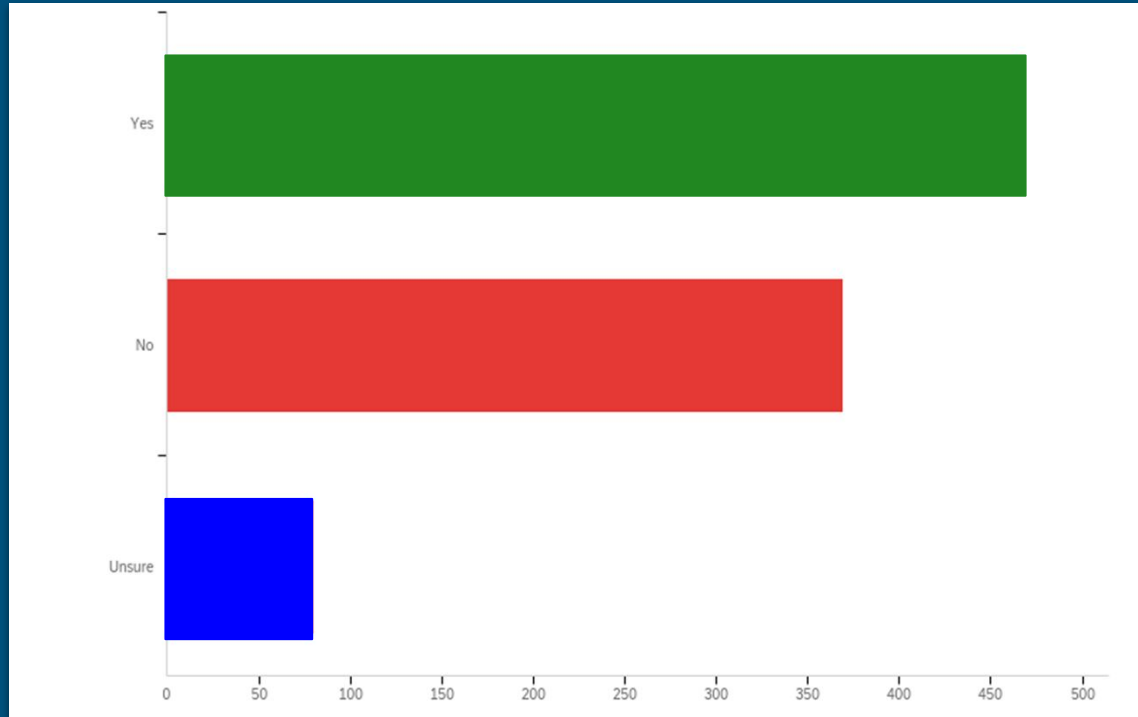
No: 49%
Yes: 39%
Unsure: 12%

How do you feel WCCO CBS News Minnesota covers climate change?



Just right 320
Not enough 295
Too much 100

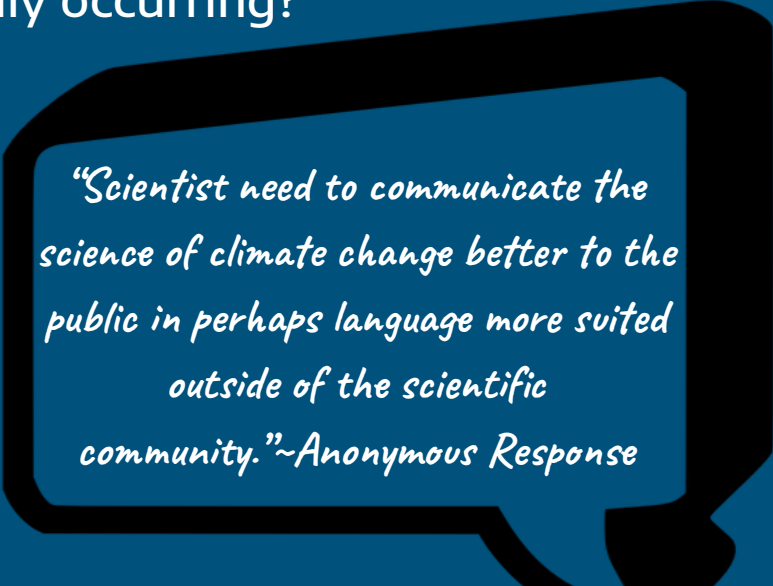
Do you feel the information the media provides about climate change is confusing?



Yes: 51%
No: 40%
Unsure: 9%

What part of climate change is most confusing to you?

1. Extreme cold and snow with global warming?
2. What can humans do?
3. How much is human-influenced vs naturally occurring?



"Scientists need to communicate the science of climate change better to the public in perhaps language more suited outside of the scientific community." ~Anonymous Response

What matters the most to you when it comes to climate change?

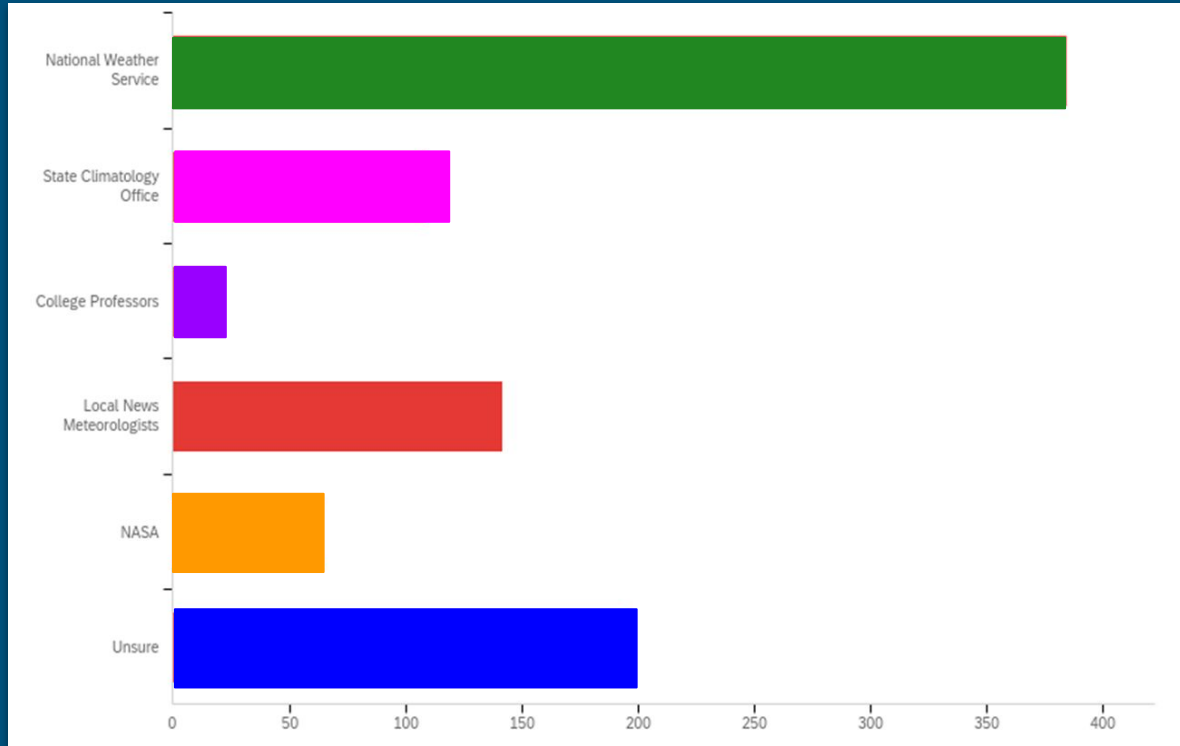
1. The impact on humans.
2. What humans can do, especially locally.
3. The impact on the Earth/animals.



*"Minnesota's North Country-
it defines our state and we must
preserve it."*

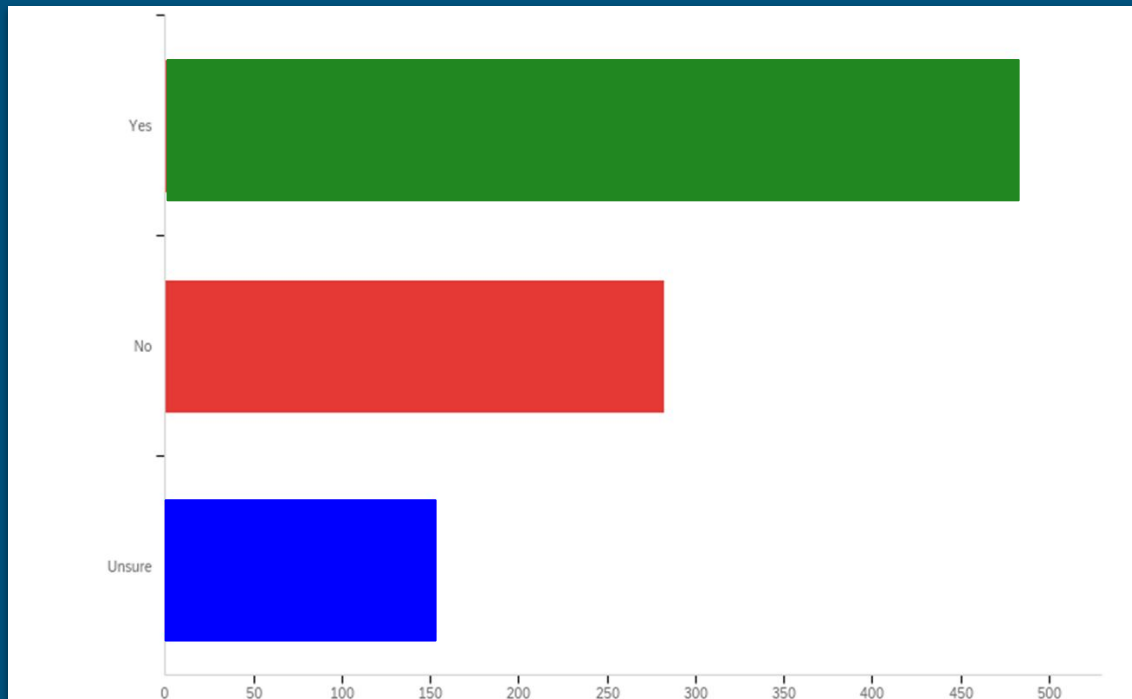
~Anonymous Response

Who do you trust the most to give you climate change information?



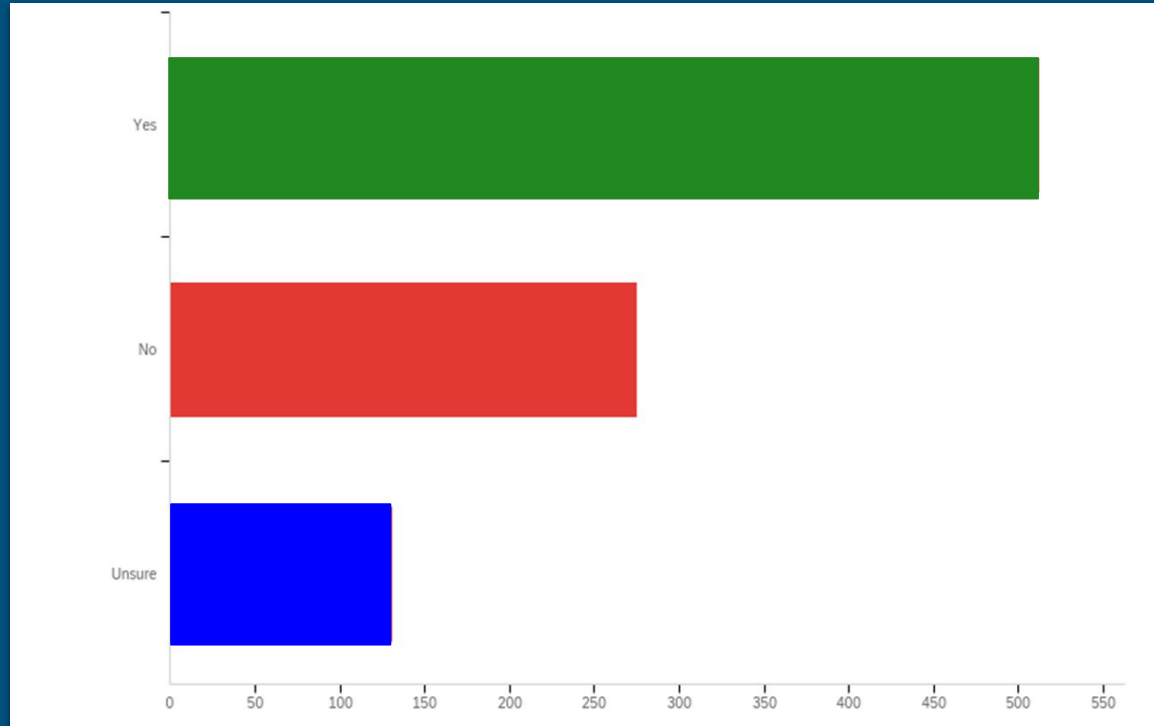
NWS: 42%
Unsure: 21%
Local News
Meteorologists: 15%
State Climatology
Office: 12%
NASA: 7%
College Professors: 3%

Would you go to your local news station's online news stream to watch an expanded climate change story you saw on the news?



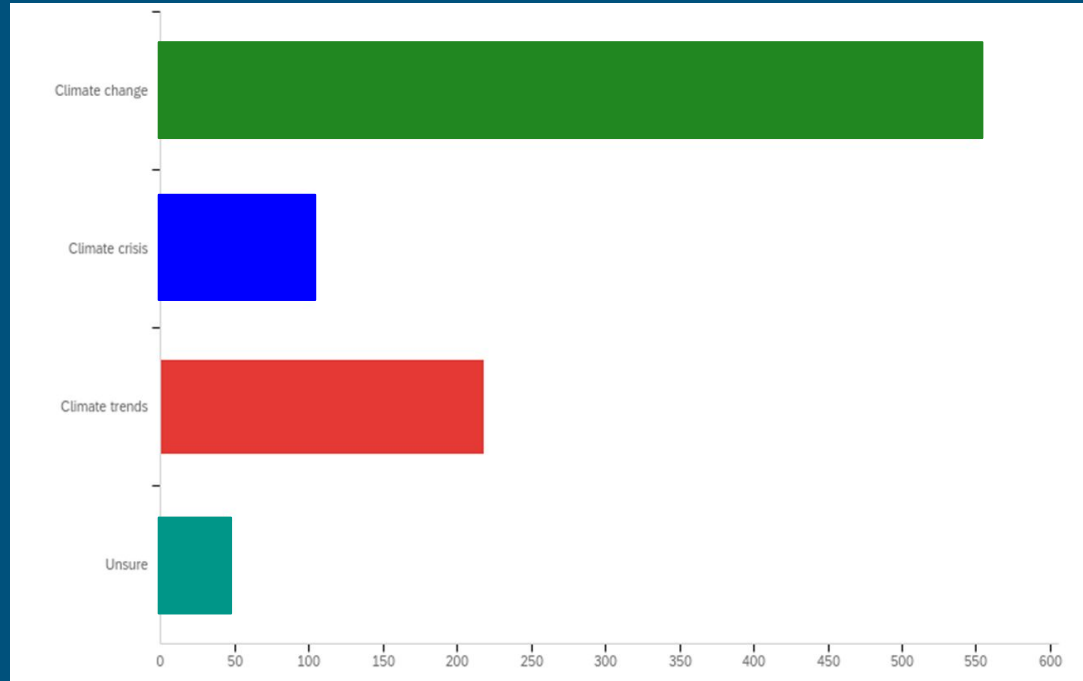
Yes: 52%
No: 31%
Unsure: 17%

Would you go to your local news station's website to read more about a climate change story you heard on the news?



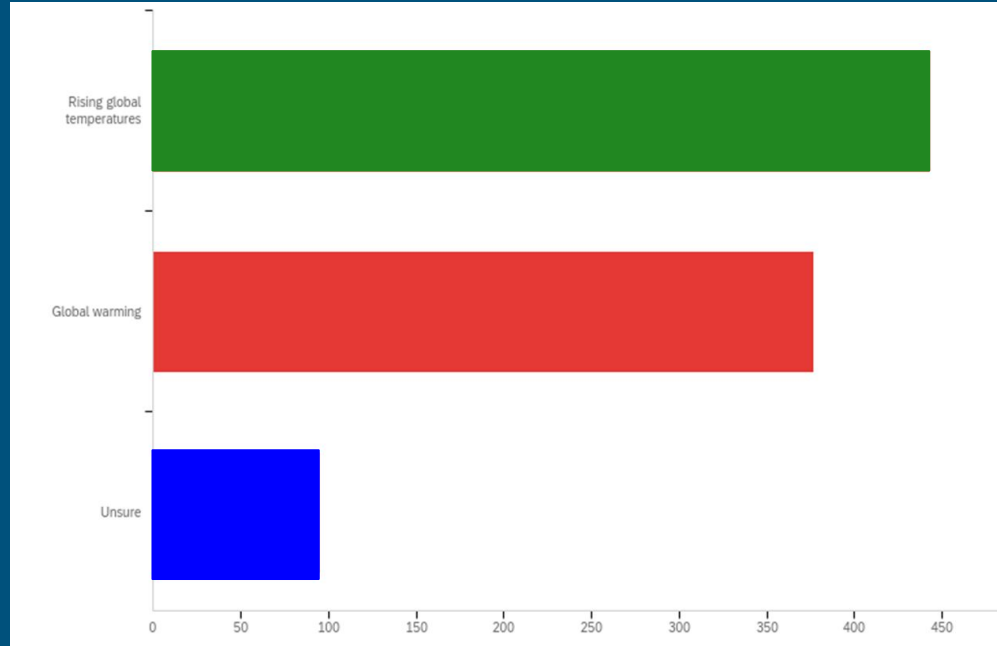
Yes: 56%
No: 30%
Unsure: 14%

Which phrase is easiest for you to understand?



Climate c
Climate tr
Climate c
Unsure: 5%

Which phrase is easiest for you to understand regarding climate change?

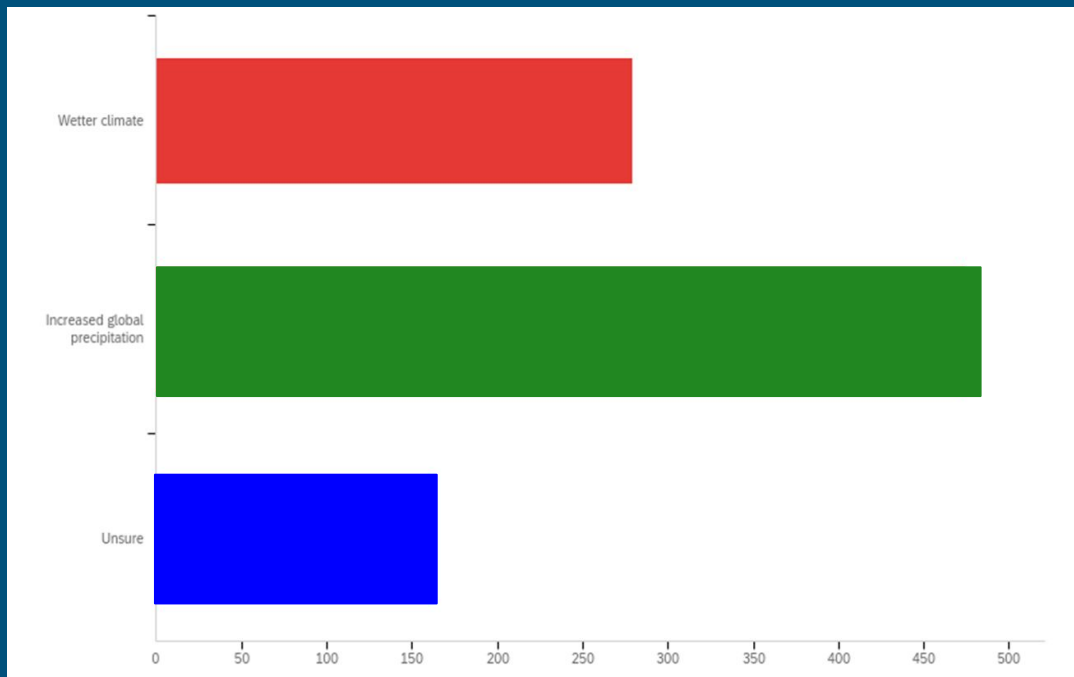


Rising global temperatures: 48%

Global warming: 41%

Unsure: 11%

regarding climate change?



Increased global
precipitation: 50%

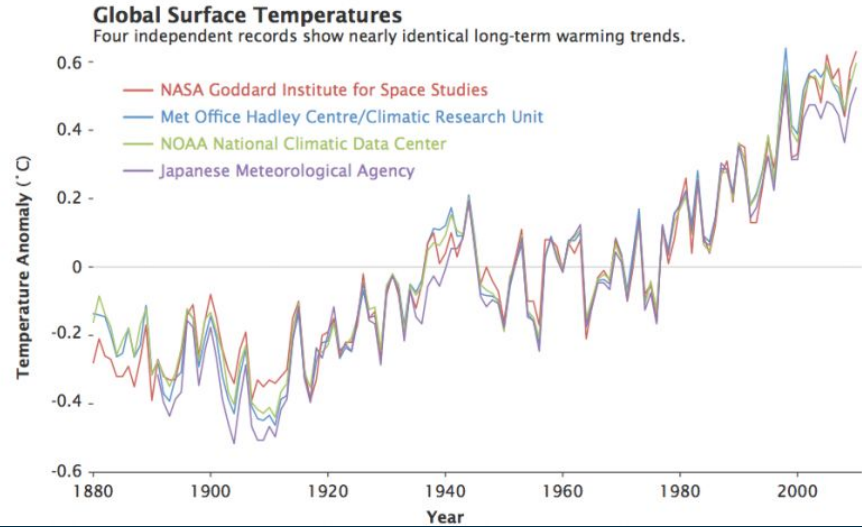
Wetter climate: 28%

Unsure: 18%

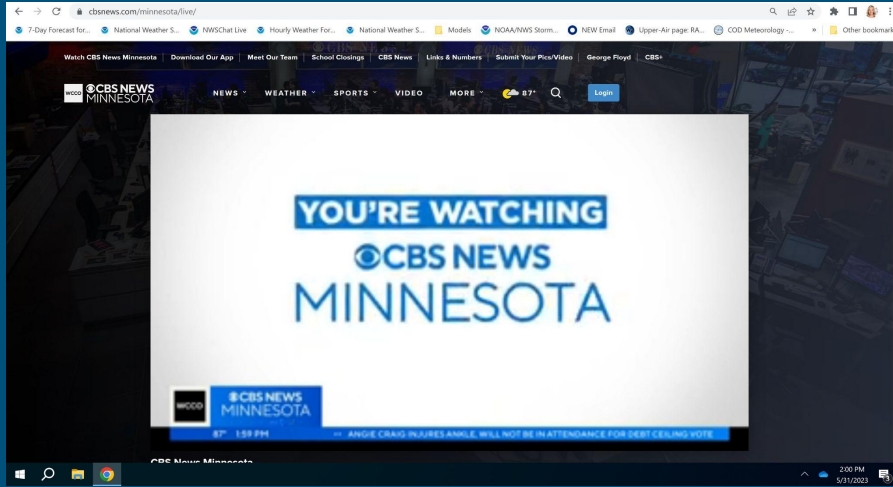
Interview Findings

- Explain variability.
- Rewording could be key.
- Not all doom and gloom.

Source: Climate Central



Key Findings:

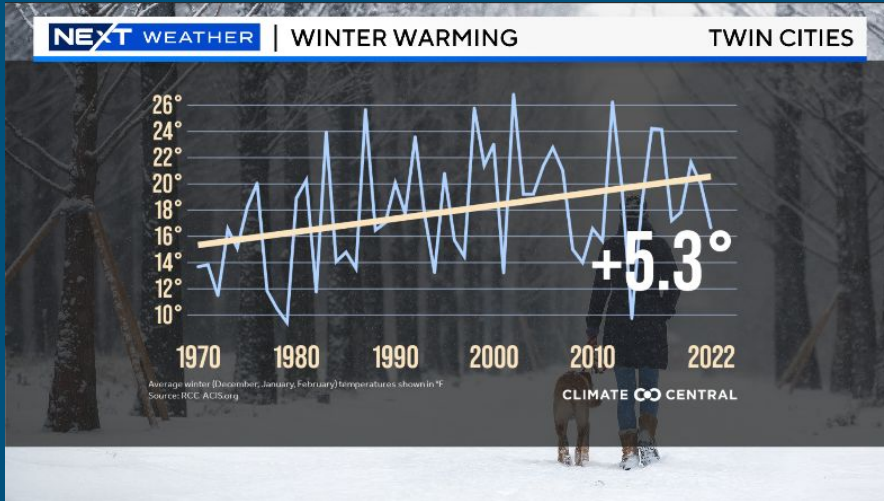


Source: WCCO

Local News Viewers feel...

- not enough climate change coverage on the news.
- climate change coverage is confusing.
- digital mediums should expand upon climate change coverage.
- trust NWS & broadcast mets the most.

Key Findings:



News Viewers...

- want to know what they can do.
- will trust NWS & broadcast mets.
- don't understand cold weather extremes.
- want more info on natural variability vs human influence.
- want human impact stories.
- will utilize digital platforms.

Key Findings:

Vocabulary recommendations:

- Rising global temperatures
- Increased global precipitation
- NOT climate crisis or climate trends

Who do you trust?

1. NWS
2. Unsure
3. Local broadcast meteorologists



Source: NWS



Source: WCCO

Key Findings:

- What they can do about it is key!
- Impact on humans followed by animals & Earth.
- How there is extreme cold on a warming Earth.
- Natural variability vs human influenced.

The Solutions & Recommended Strategy

- Expand climate change coverage to include digital elements.
- Interview NWS and Next Weather Team Meteorologists for stories.
- Build trust in climate scientists, NASA & university researchers.
- Don't just show the problem, give answers.
- Focus on human impact stories.
- Explain cold extremes in a warming climate.
- Explain natural variability.

Sources

- Blumenfeld, K. (unpublished). Communicating Climate Change Interview, (March 14, 2023).
- Boulay, P. (unpublished). Communicating Climate Change Interview, (March 22, 2023).
- Meadows, L. (Unpublished). Capstone Research: Communicating Climate Change with CBS [Dataset: Qualtrics].
- Schechner, David. Communicating Climate Change Interview, (March 18, 2023).

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Climate Central:

