

Accelerate Climate Action with Behavior Change

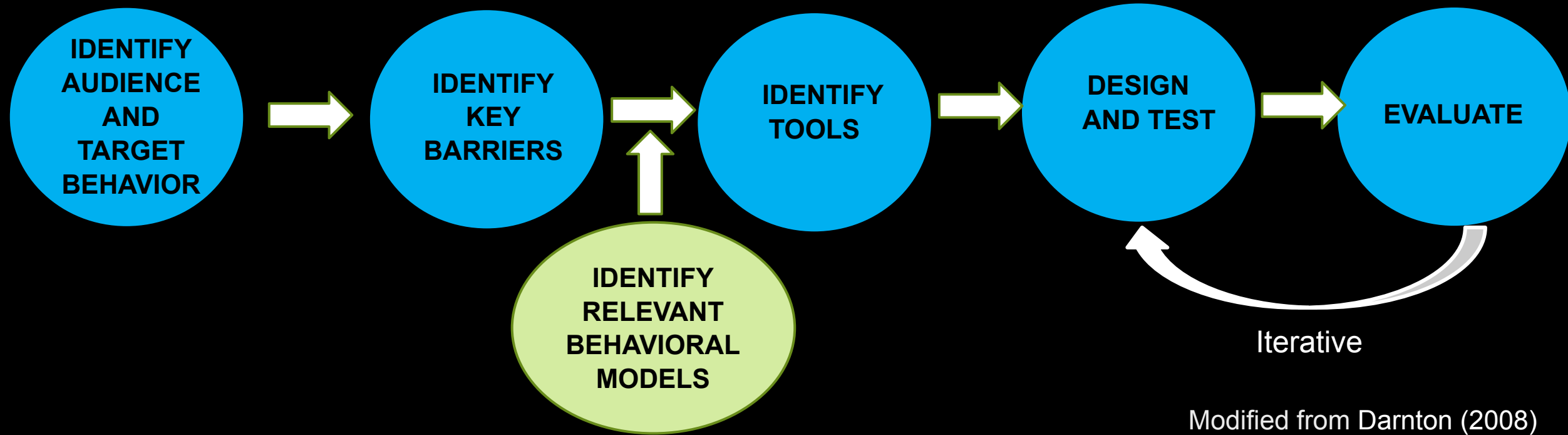


Agenda

- ▶ The Behavior Change Process
- ▶ Accelerate Collective Action with Behavior Change Tools
- ▶ Examples of Behavior Change Tools in Action
- ▶ Health: A Powerful Motivator for Behavior Change

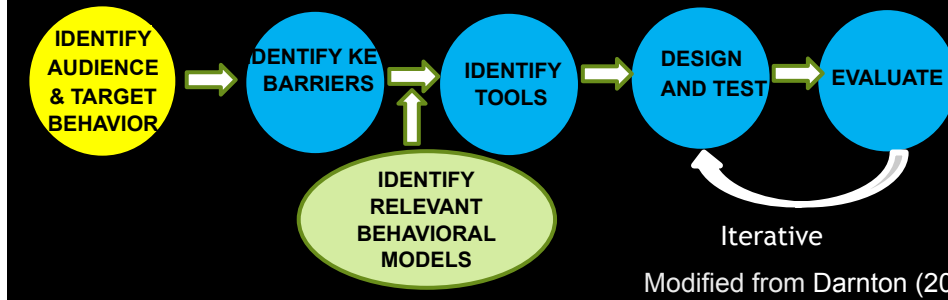


The Behavior Change Process



Modified from Darnton (2008)

Identify your Audience



Enthusiastic
Conservationist



Fort Collins Utility
Survey Results

Receptive but Busy



Cost-Driven Users



5 Perspectives

Neutral Users



Unmotivated to Conserve



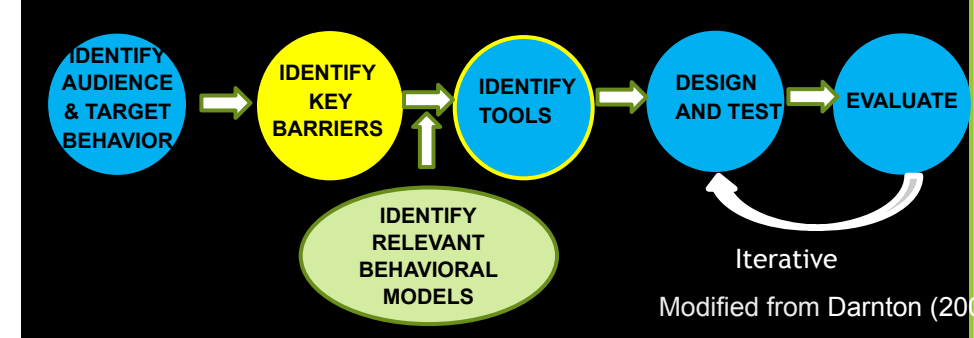
Credit: City of Fort Collins' Project SHIFT,
2020



The Center for
Behavior and Climate®



Identify Barriers



My family/friends don't do this.

- **Social Pressures**

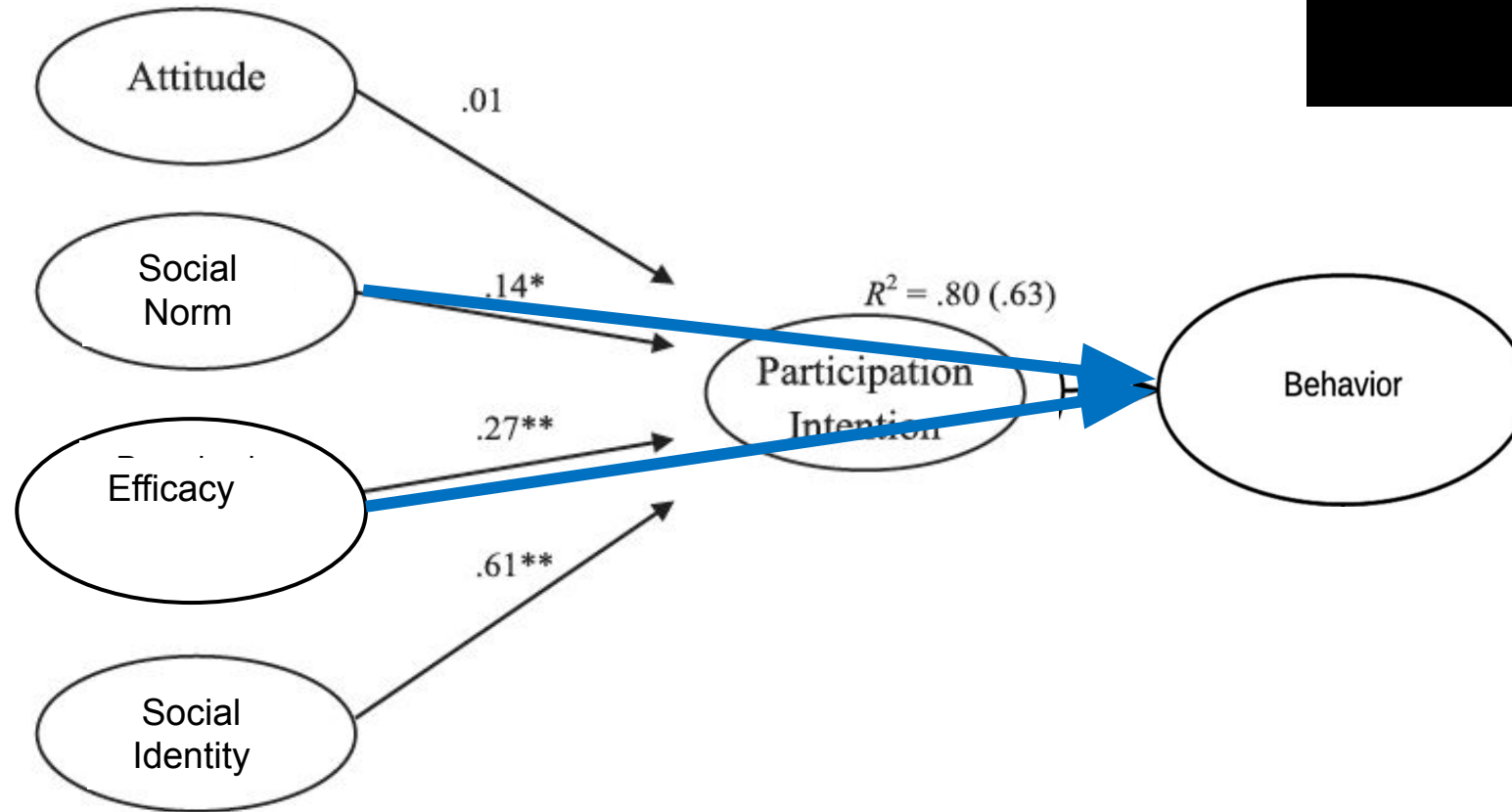
My actions don't matter anyway. And others don't care.

- **Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control or Response Efficacy**
- **Pluralistic Ignorance**

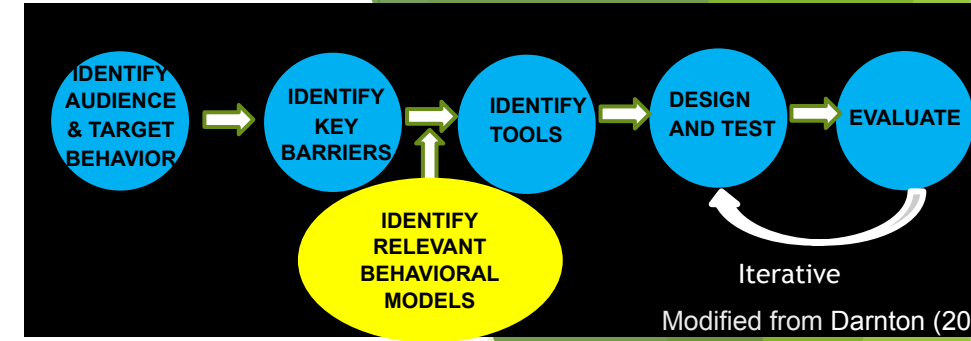
I don't have to worry about it yet. Other things are more important.

- **Present Bias/Future Discounting**

Theory Of Behavior Change For Collective Action



Note. PBC = perceived behavioral control; standardized coefficients, * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$.



Bamberg et al. (2015); also see Doherty and Webler (2016)

Identify Tools

Barriers

My family/friends don't do this.

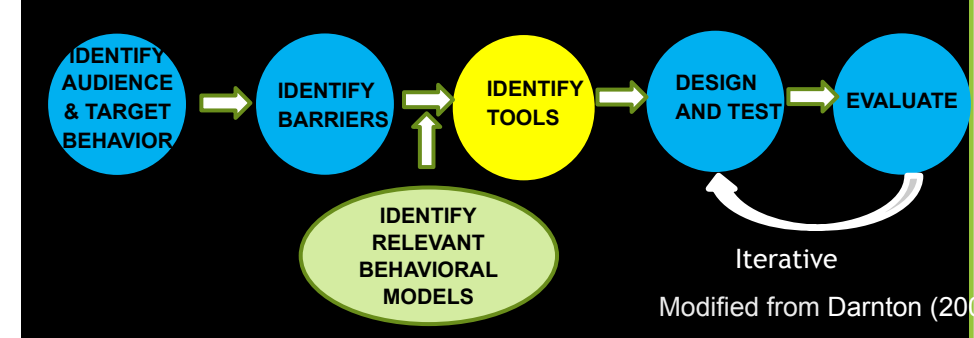
- **Social Pressures**

My actions don't matter anyway. And others don't care.

- **Lack of Perceived Behavioral Control & Response Efficacy**
- **Pluralistic Ignorance**

I don't have to worry about it yet. Other things are more important.

- **Present Bias/Future Discounting**



Tools

Social norms
Social identity

Increase efficacy

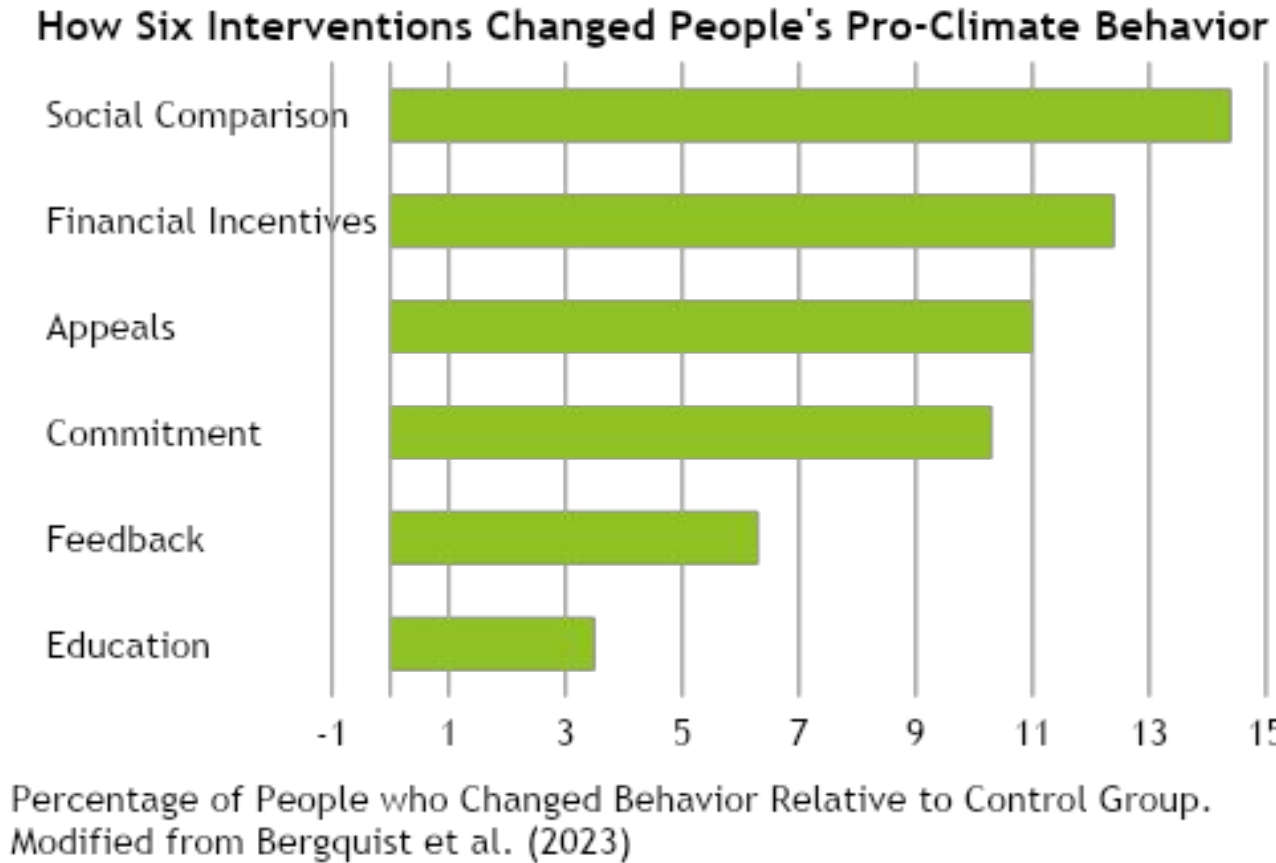
Legacy motivation



Tool: Social Norms



Social Comparisons: Most Effective Intervention



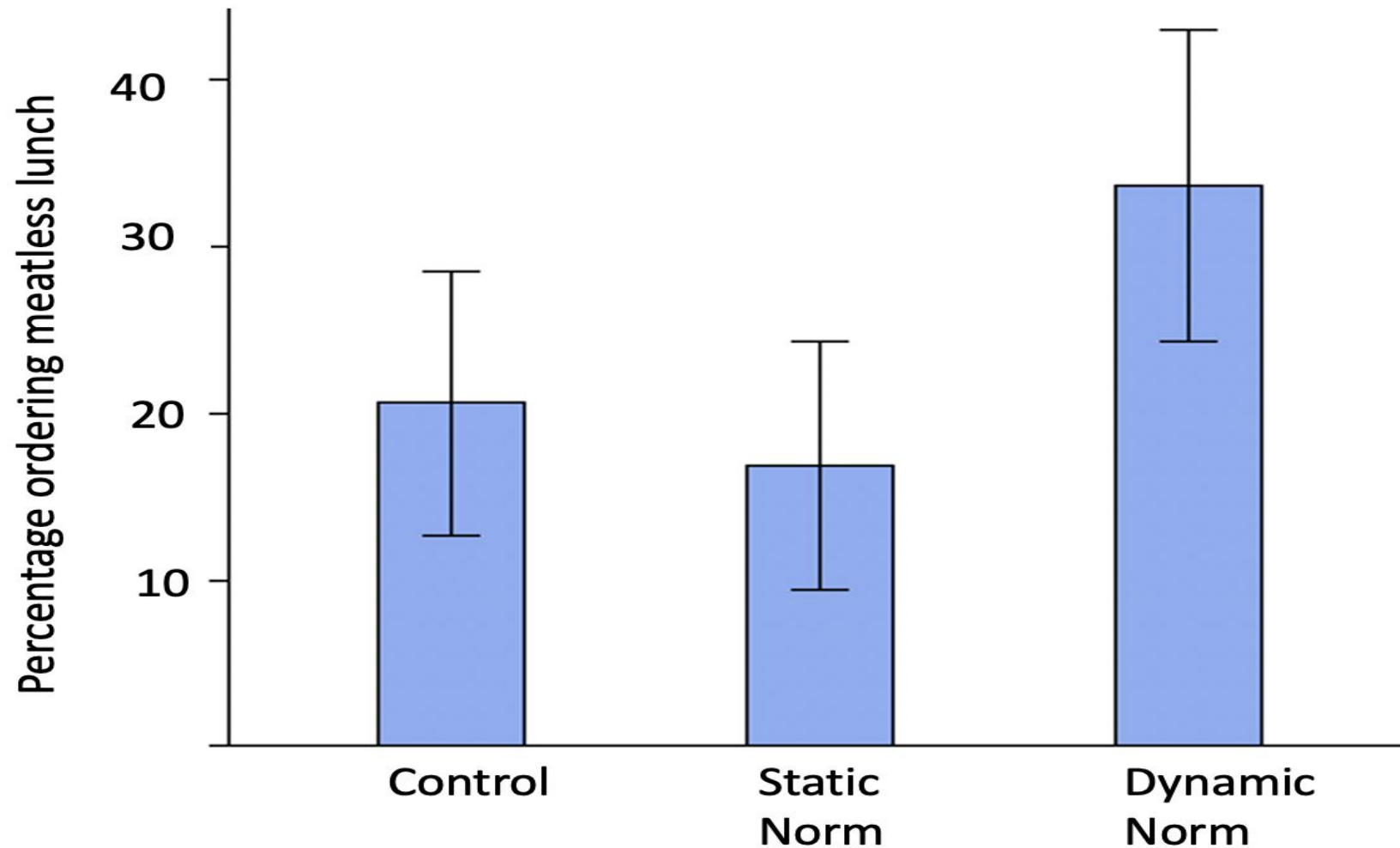
Bergquist et al. (2023); Waters et al. (2024)

Social norms can accelerate public support for climate concerns and policies



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Tool: Dynamic Social Norms



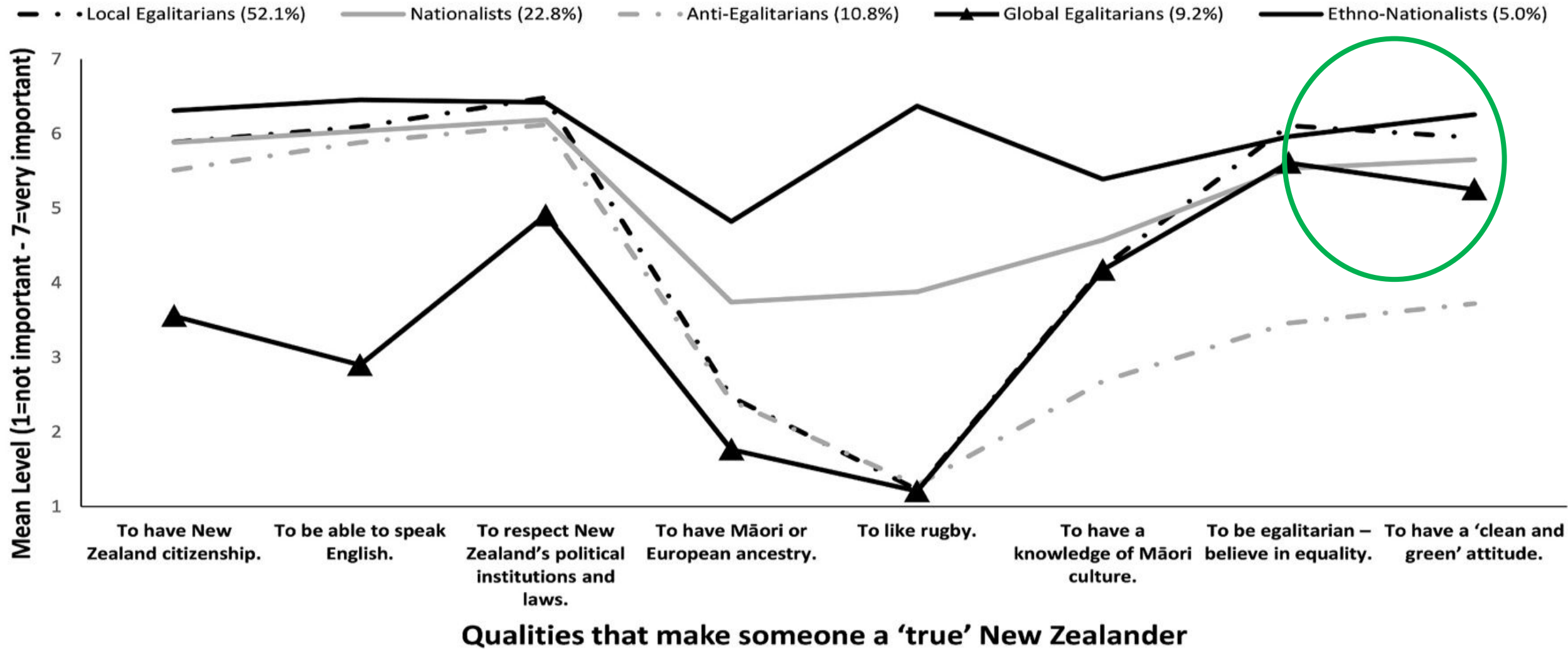
Exercise: Social Norms (Dynamic)

DYNAMIC SOCIAL NORM. Which ONE message uses a dynamic social norm to encourage community solar signups?

- a. I switched to community solar, says a social influencer.
- b. In the last two years, more and more New Yorkers are switching to community solar.
- c. Community solar is the right energy choice right now.



Tool: Social Identity



Milfont et al., 2020

Tool: Increase Efficacy



Doherty and Webler (2016); Lorenzoni et al. (2007);
Waters et al. (2024); Hornsey (2022)

How can you Increase Efficacy?

Increase a person's beliefs that they CAN make a difference.

Promote first-hand experiences in collective action, or share other's success stories.

Highlight importance of individual actions contributing to a **collective** goal.

"It only takes a few to move the needle. If we all work towards..."

Encourage the belief that **working together** we will address or reduce climate risks.

"Together we CAN make a difference."

Help people identify with a particular group already taking action.

"Join the majority and add your support to this climate bill."

Doherty and Webler (2016); Lorenzoni et al. (2007);
Waters et al. (2024); Hornsey (2022)



Exercise: Increasing efficacy

Which TWO messages below increase efficacy?

- a. Pennsylvania is facing increasing climate disasters, like flooding. Will you support this climate bill to help?
- b. Rhonda and her friends wrote their state legislator, urging her to pass the climate bill. The bill passed! Can you do the same?
- c. Studies show 85% of Pennsylvanians support this climate bill. Will you support it too?
- d. For too long, our representatives have ignored our climate crisis. They must pass this climate bill now. Will you help us get it passed?



TOOL: Legacy Motivation





Credit: Prince Ea and [The Nature Conservancy](#)

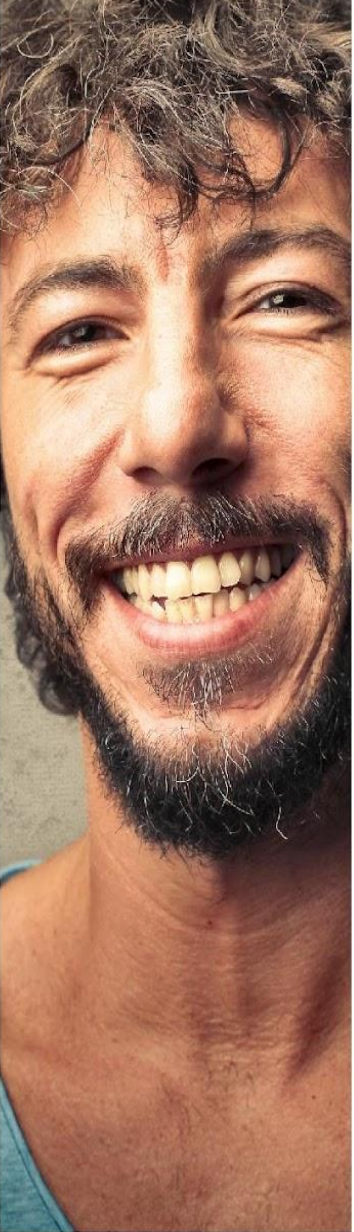
Exercise: Legacy Motivation

Which ONE message ending below uses legacy motivation?

Will you send this letter supporting the 100% Renewable by 2035 Act to your politician.....

- a. ... to protect our town from climate disasters?
- b. ... to reduce taxpayer cost of climate disasters?
- c.to ensure a better tomorrow for our children?

Reaching Different Audiences



Tool: Frame with Values: Freedom (of Choice)

Americans should have the freedom to afford electric.

Figure 5. Lift in support by political affiliation

EV program support lift vs control group

	National	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Reduce pollution	+13.4%	+14.6%	+15.5%	+6.7%
Increase affordability	+13.3%	+12.2%	+18.1%	+10.7%
Tackle climate change	+11.1%	+14.6%	+11.1%	+6.9%
Build charging infrastructure	+10.4%	+8.3%	+19.8%	+5.3%
Fight rising gas prices	+9.1%	+9.8%	+5.9%	+7.0%
Create energy independence	+7.8%	+10.3%	+11.4%	+3.7%
Support auto industry / jobs	+5.3%	+10.5%	+6.6%	-0.2%

Potential Energy, 2024



Frame with Freedom of Choice



Jeep® | Big Game | Harrison Ford x Jeep | Owner's Manual (2025)

Exercise: Frame with Values: Freedom of Choice

Which message best taps into the conservative value of freedom of choice?

- a. Your energy choice can reduce the climate crisis AND save money!
- b. Responsible families reduce energy costs to save money for what matters.
- c. How will you choose to reduce your energy bill? Consider...

More on These Behavioral Tools



Justin Rolfe-Redding

He/him



Social Scientist at the Lab
(and many other things...)



The Climate Advocacy Lab

The Lab equips the US climate movement with the evidence-based insights, skills, and connections needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions



CLIMATE ADVOCACY LAB

The Climate Advocacy Lab

Community



Insights



Training



Research



CLIMATE ADVOCACY LAB

What tool is this?





LOWER FACEBOOK AD COSTS



Desktop News Feed ▼

 **Oil Change International**
Sponsored · Paid for by Oil Change International · 

You're not alone. A growing number of Texans (now 71%!) agree we should do more to fight climate change, including a majority of Texas Republicans.

Our new report explains why we need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and move forward on 100% renewable energy and a Green New Deal.





Leverage **social norms** (“Peer Pressure”)

LOWER FACEBOOK AD COSTS



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 **Oil Change International**
Sponsored · Paid for by Oil Change International · 

Climate change is a serious issue that demands serious action. However, U.S. oil and gas production is poised for an expansion that will be unparalleled in history, precisely at a time when we know we must quickly curtail our extraction and use of fossil fuels.

Our new report explains why we need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and move forward on 100% renewable energy and a Green New Deal.



Desktop News Feed ▼ >

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Social norm techniques

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2 of 8



Oil Change International

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Dynamic norm!

Similarity!

Descriptive norm!

You're not alone. A growing number of Texans (now 71%!) agree we should do more to fight climate change, including a majority of Texas Republicans.

Surprise!

The Emperor Wears No Clothes: A story



”Pluralistic Ignorance”...

“Preference falsification”...

A “Spiral of Silence”...

Norm reveal!

Say "the emperor wears no clothes"

SPIRAL OF SILENCE

Those who (incorrectly) **underestimated other** students' concern about climate change were **less willing** to discuss it



PUNCTURING PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE

When told the **truth** about **other** students, they then were **more willing** to discuss climate change

What tool is this?



Latina mother **identity** boosts activism



“We, more than anyone, are concerned about the environment and we know that we have to take care of it.”



“Fight for the planet with the passion of being Latina”



Audience: Florida Latinas with young children and high activist scores

50% higher click-through-rate, and lower cost-per-click than two other frames



Reinforce supporter's *identities as activists*

Dear [INSERT NAME]---As an adviser to the National Association of Doctors, I've appreciated how you've shared your thoughts on the health system with us in the past. I thought of you when I saw this email that the National Association of Doctors sent earlier in the week. Signing this pledge gives you the chance to **stand up for your values that you expressed when you wrote that:**

you want reform that "provides a basic level of coverage for all Americans and those in need without discrimination on basis of race, socioeconomic status, ability to pay, etc."

Whether or not you agree with how health reform has progressed, signing this pledge gives us the chance to recommit to our values and reclaim our role as physicians. Will you do it?

This personalized "goals" message almost **tripled actions** vs. the standard message.



What tool is this?



The Save EPA “Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda”

Self Efficacy
+
Response
Efficacy

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR RESISTING THE TRUMP DE-REGULATORY AGENDA

*Former agency staffers reveal best practices
for “making agencies listen”*



Greenpeace Photo - Used by Permission

Save EPA - <http://www.saveepaolums.info/>
2nd Edition, July 23, 2017

- Basic information about how regulations are made
- Advice on participating **effectively** in the rulemaking process
 - So agencies listen
 - “You will learn how to be an effective advocate”
- How-to’s on calls, LTEs, social media

Efficacy deficit among the Alarmed



1-in-4
in US



Highest belief in global warming
Most concerned
Most motivated

Only 27% of the Alarmed are "very confident" in their ability to take the steps necessary to contact policymakers about climate change

What tool is this?



Legacy motivation (broad audiences)

“We owe it to our children and grandchildren to leave them a healthy planet and clean environment. We should invest in clean energy sources to reduce the damage we are causing so we can pass on a livable Earth to future generations.”

Clearly top performing
among 8 messages
(including climate costs)

As rationale for **climate**
action

National survey of **likely**
voters



Legacy (rural audiences)

“It is essential that we have conservation laws so that future generations can enjoy the outdoors and have clean air and water. Our lands, waters, and wildlife are part of America’s heritage. We have a moral obligation to our children and grandchildren to pass along a safe, clean, and healthy natural world.”



Top performing among
8 messages

As justification for
**environmental
regulation**

National survey of **rural**
voters

A 'future generations' prime

Participants were asked to write a short passage

- How would they have a positive impact on future generations?
- What do they want to be remembered for by future generations?

(For example, “think about skills or knowledge you will teach others”)

Increased environmental **donations** and **behavior** intentions, and climate **beliefs**

They wrote for 6.5 min on average

Online panel (MTurk)



Use tests to pick among tools

Legacy

Allianza Center
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The love for our children is powerful. ¿Qué mundo le vamos a dejar? Cuidemos lo nuestro. Take action today.

Luchamos por los Niños LA Tierra
Confirmed organization

FORM ON FACEBOOK
❤ Mis Niños ❤ My Planet

[Learn more](#)

Efficacy

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Together we can help mother earth against global warming. ¡Vamos con todo!

¡UNIDAS PODEMOS LUCHAR POR LA TIERRA!
Confirmed organization

FORM ON FACEBOOK
Unidas for our 🌍

[Learn more](#)

Identity

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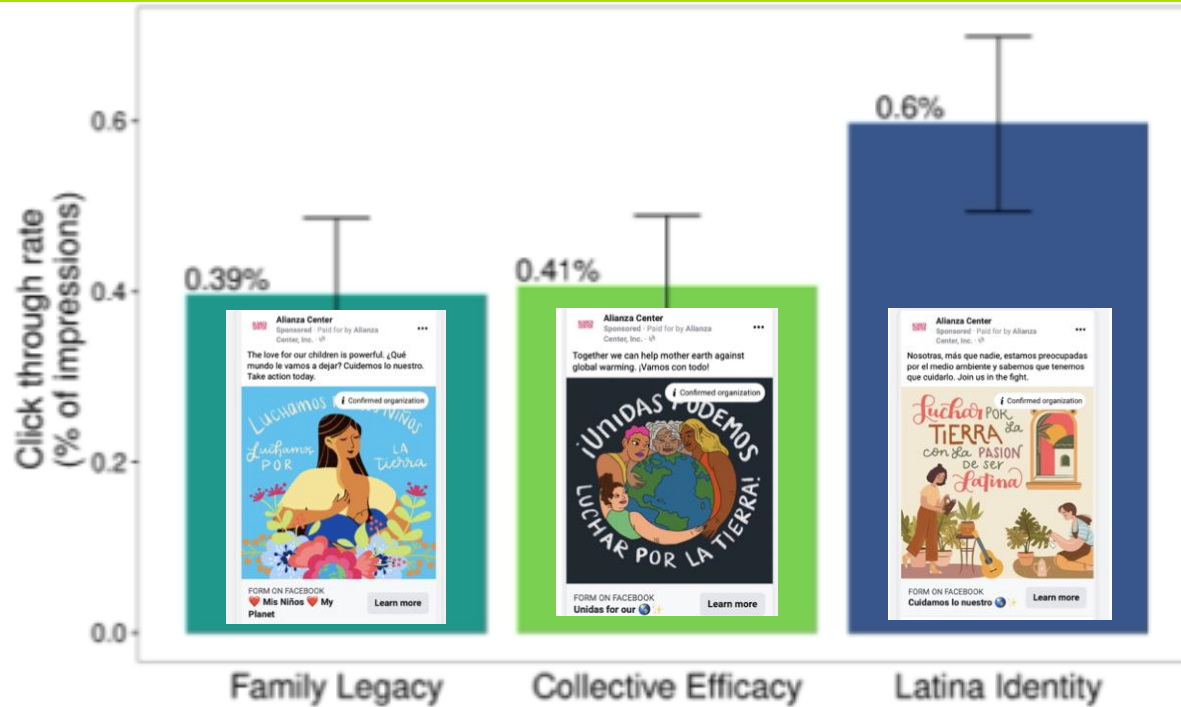
Nosotras, más que nadie, estamos preocupadas por el medio ambiente y sabemos que tenemos que cuidarlo. Join us in the fight.

Luchar por la Tierra con la PASION de ser Latina
Confirmed organization

FORM ON FACEBOOK
Cuidamos lo nuestro 🌍

[Learn more](#)

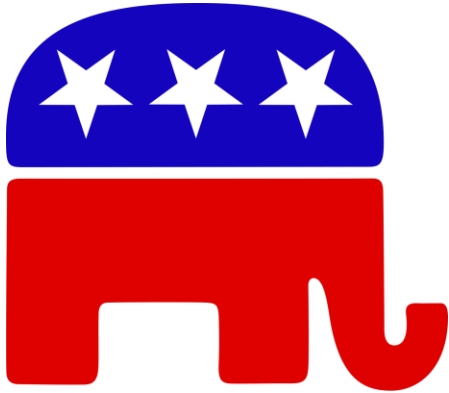
We have a winner!



Synergy of Identity & Legacy

When Republicans were prompted to either think of themselves....

...as Republicans



...as Parents



Most likely to
express concern for
the climate and
intention to act

...not prompted



Hello!

Jo Bjorgaard, DNP, RN, PHN,
CSSBB

Senior Climate + Health Manager,
Climate Advocacy Lab

Based in St. Paul, MN



PLANETARY
HEALTH
NORTH
AMERICA
REGIONAL HUB

Health: A Powerful Motivator for Behavior Change



CLIMATE ADVOCACY LAB

Objectives



Introduce the connection between climate change and health as a driver of behavior change.

Highlight real-world examples where health benefits have accelerated climate action.

Inspire participants to consider health framing in their own climate engagement efforts.



Discuss

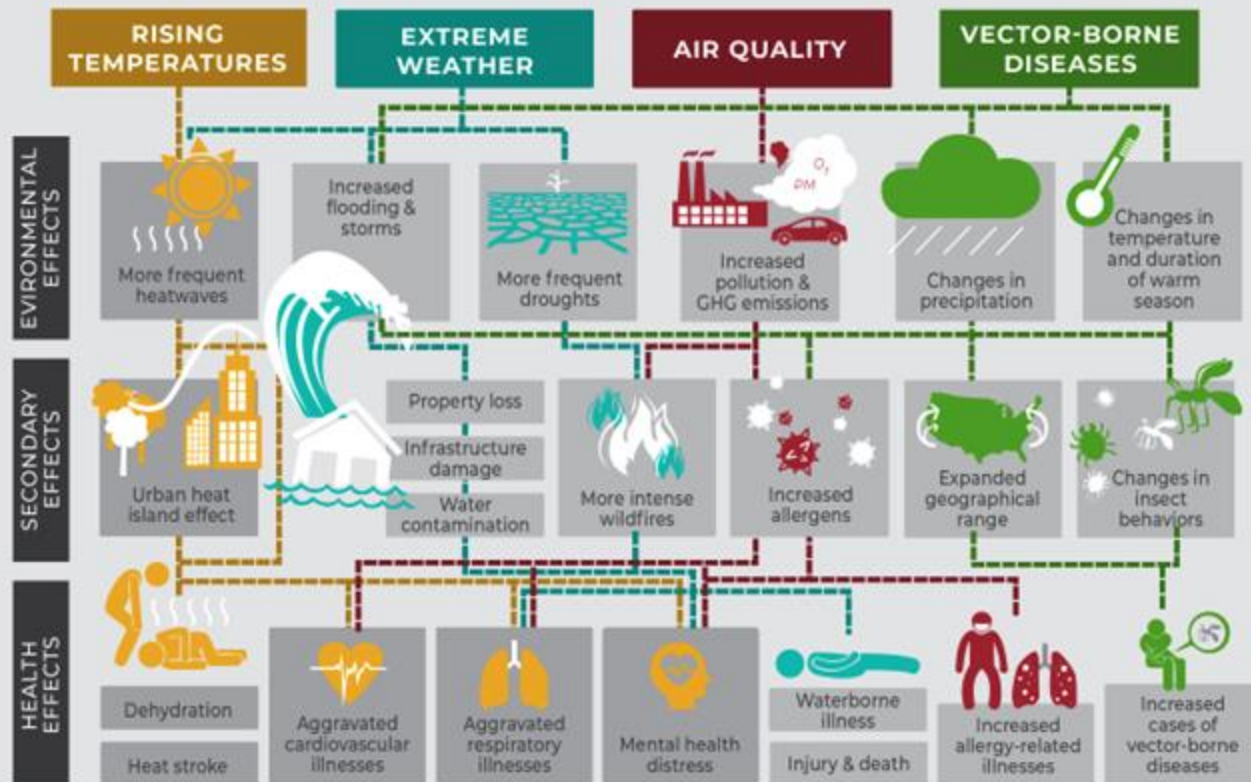
When you think about climate change,
what health impacts come to mind?

Health Impacts of Climate Change

Source: APHA, 2025

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH

climatenexus
APHA



CLIMATE
ADVOCACY
LAB

The Evidence: Health Drives Behavior Change

Climate change often feels distant or abstract. **Health makes it local, personal, and urgent.**

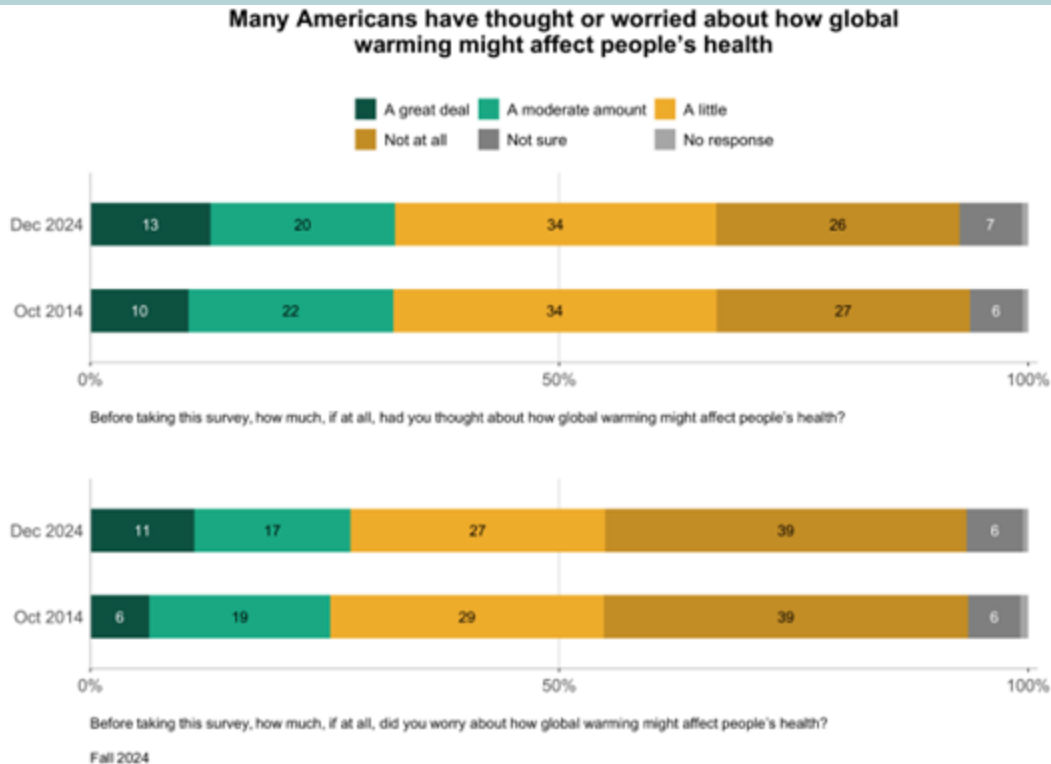
Research shows that **health framing consistently increases engagement across political divides** (Maibach et al., 2010, *Am J Prev Med*).



- **Trusted messengers matter:** Health professionals—especially nurses, the largest cadre worldwide—are consistently ranked among the most trusted voices in society (Gallup Poll, 2024: Nurses #1 in honesty and ethics).
- When people hear that climate action improves the health of their children, families, and communities *today*, they are more motivated to change behavior.

The Evidence

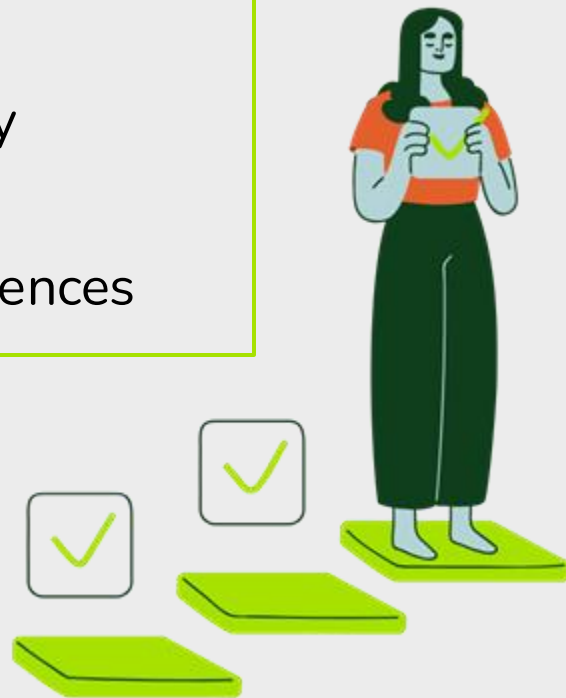
- About 75% of the sample population are thinking about how climate change might affect people's health.
- And about 60% of people are beyond thinking, but are worrying about this.



Source: Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication; George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

What Works in Health & Climate Messaging

- Focus on **health benefits**, not just harms
- Pair messages with **solutions** that spark efficacy
- Share **people-centered stories** and lived experiences



Behavior Change in Practice

Nurses Climate Challenge

Health Framing: Emphasizes that healthcare is both a frontline responder to climate impacts and a significant contributor to climate change,

Co-Benefit Message: Highlights that taking action now can prevent the worst effects of climate change on patients and community health.

Behavior Change Outcome: Thousands of nurses engaged across the U.S., mobilizing colleagues and communities to act on climate.

“As the most trusted professionals and making up 40% of the health-care workforce, nurses have the potential to impact behavior change and launch a movement around climate solutions.”

Reference: Demorest, S., et al. (2019)



Behavior Change in Practice

NYC H+H Plant-Based by Default

Health Framing: Plant-based meals improve diet & prevent chronic disease.

Co-Benefit Message: Reduces greenhouse gas emissions + promotes healthier eating.

Behavior Change Outcome: Increased adoption of plant-based meals; high patient satisfaction; measurable environmental impact.

Impacts



Over 2 million

plant-based meals served since March 2022



98%

patient satisfaction



36%

reduction in food-related carbon emissions



59¢

saved per tray (\$500,000 in the first year of implementation)

Reference: NYC Health + Hospitals (2022)

Health Benefits of Scratch-Cooked Plant-Based Eating

Lowers risk of...

- Cardiovascular disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain cancers
- Obesity

Helps with...

- Weight management
- Hypertension
- Hyperlipidemia



Behavior Change in Practice

Cleaner air, safer streets, longer life expectancies, less congested roads, improved public health, substantial cost savings, and even fewer potholes — it all starts with a bike and a safe place on the streets to ride it. (Transportation Alternatives, 2025)



NYC Protected Bike Lanes

Health Framing: Cycling improves cardiovascular & mental health.

Co-Benefit Message: Reduces air pollution + increases physical activity.

Behavior Change Outcome: More residents biking; safer streets; improved air quality.

Reference: Rosales, D. W. (2025); NYCDOT (2025)

Make Health a Driver for Climate Action

Make climate action **personal, urgent, and equitable** by highlighting **health benefits**

Key questions:

- What's the climate action?
- What's the health benefit?
- Who benefits most?



Image Credit: Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate

Thank You!



jo@climateadvocacylab.org



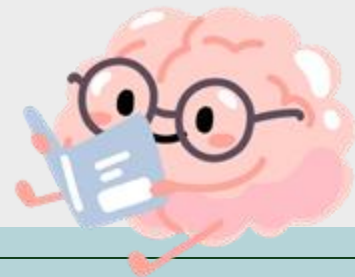
www.riseclimatehealth.org



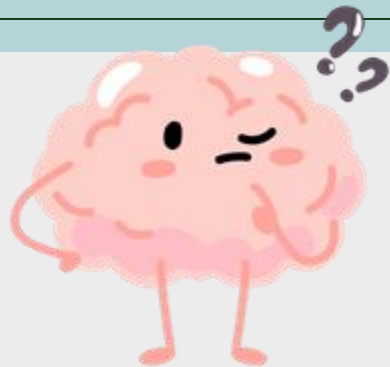
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jo-bjorgaard-dnp-rn-phn-cssbb-349584222/>



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Questions?



Summary

Behavior Change Process

ID audience, target behavior, barriers, tools, test/evaluate

Tools to increase collective action

1. Social norms
2. Social identity
3. Increase efficacy
4. Legacy motivation
5. Framing for different audiences