

# Climate Visuals

Seven principles for visual climate change communication (based on international social research)



UMassAmherst

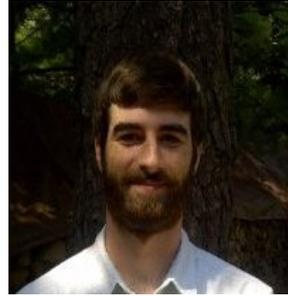


# The Climate Visuals project team

- Robin Webster, Researcher, Climate Outreach
- Christian Teriete, Network Director, European Climate Foundation
- Ezra Markowitz, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Conservation, UMass Amherst



- Daniel Chapman, Graduate Student, Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, UMass Amherst



- Tim Isaksson, Research Intern, Climate Outreach; Lund University, Sweden



- Robert van Waarden, van Waarden Photo



# Why Climate Visuals?

A pressing need and a lack of research

‘Which image should I choose’ is a decision taken every day by thousands of bloggers, campaigners & journalists

There are only a handful of papers on visual communication

Very little practical guidance

Plenty of advice about what **NOT** to do

Nothing to link the research evidence to real images

# The iconography of climate change: can we tell a new story?



# Interviews & discussion groups

- Interviews with key stakeholders
- 4 structured discussion groups (London and Berlin)
- Sets of images, capturing key factors:

*Causes vs Impacts vs Solutions*

*People vs no people*

*'Distant' vs 'local'*





An international online survey of 3000 people

**3000 participants from the UK, Germany and US**

Each participant:

*Answered questions about themselves*

*Viewed a series of six images (causes/impacts/solutions) –  
including one 'local' image*

*Answered questions about the images*

1

Show 'real people' not staged photo-ops

## Authenticity & credibility matter



*“I think that family needs to get out a little more.”*

© Transition



*“It looks like real work is going on”*

Simon Williams (CC BY NC-ND-



*“Makes me almost vomit.”*

© Andrew Parsons/PA/Pool/Reuters/Corbis

2

Tell new stories



© Unknown

UN Women/Gaganjit Singh (CC BY-NC-ND © Francis R  
2.0)

Malaisg/ena/Corbis

# 3

## Show climate causes at scale

In our discussion groups, the link between individual behaviours & climate change was not well understood



*“[this] is not climate change because that’s normal to drive a car. We can’t stop that. It’s normal.”*

In the survey, images of highways were easily understood



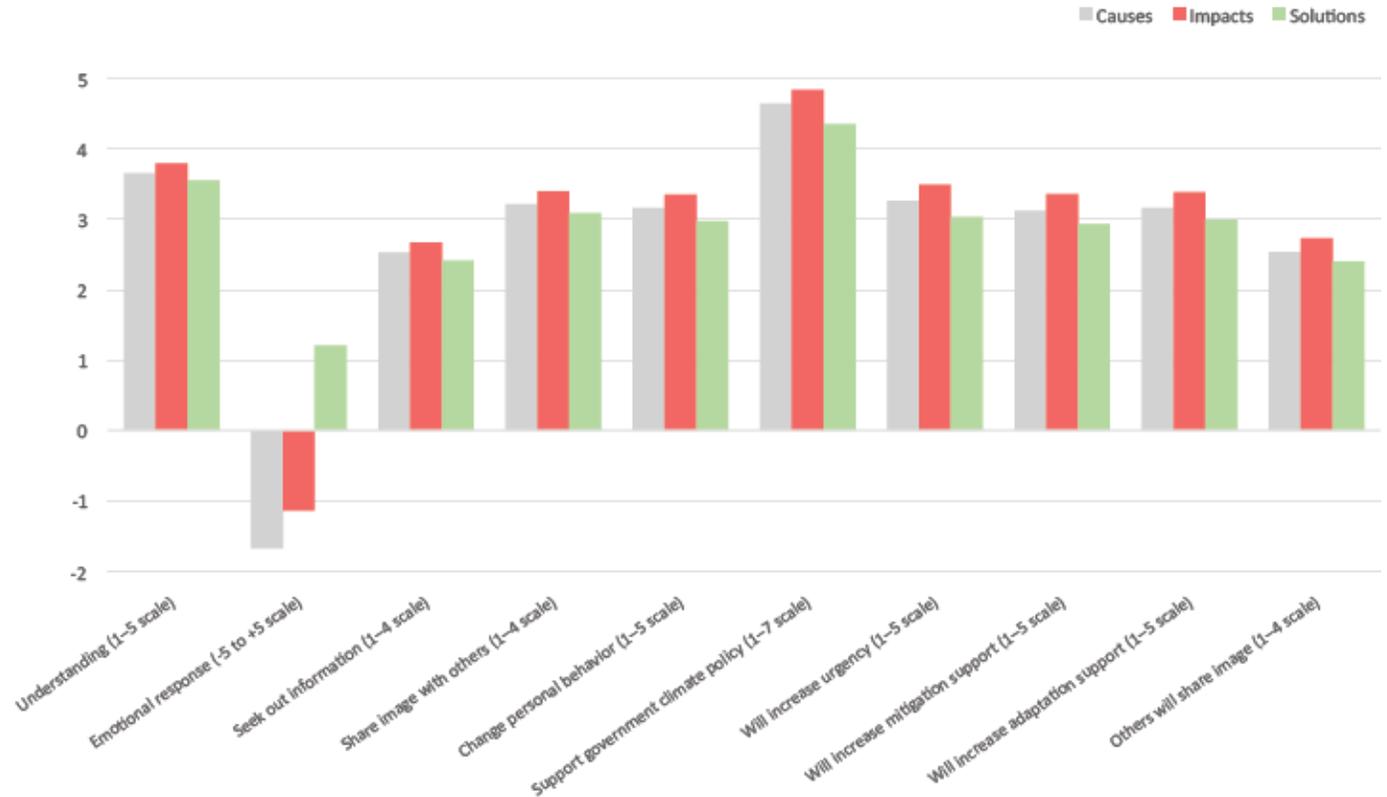
They produced strong negative emotions, and scored well on desire to change behaviour across the political spectrum

# 4

## Climate impacts are emotionally powerful



*I don't see the point why it's a picture for climate change... It causes emotions but not nice ones. I just feel like, I want to go away, I don't want to be confronted with that.* Reuters



# 5

## Show local (but serious) climate impacts

Images of serious 'local' climate impacts connected with people

They produced high ratings of support for Government policies, and desire to change own behaviour in the survey

But people had mixed feels about 'trivialising' the issue in discussion groups:

*"A flood in this country doesn't have the same emotional effect as a flood in other countries, you're not massively inconvenienced in that picture."* [looking at image depicting a UK citizen flooded to knee level]



Wendy North (CC-BY-ND 2.0)

tnsdave CC0 Pixabay

6

Be very careful with protest imagery



*"...probably used the same face paint to paint himself at Glastonbury this weekend, and rubbed out climate and put Kanye West."*

*"either hipsters trying to be cool or... lunatic extremists."*

**Not a polarising image: dislike was not driven by scepticism**

**Authenticity matters...and the 'messenger' matters**

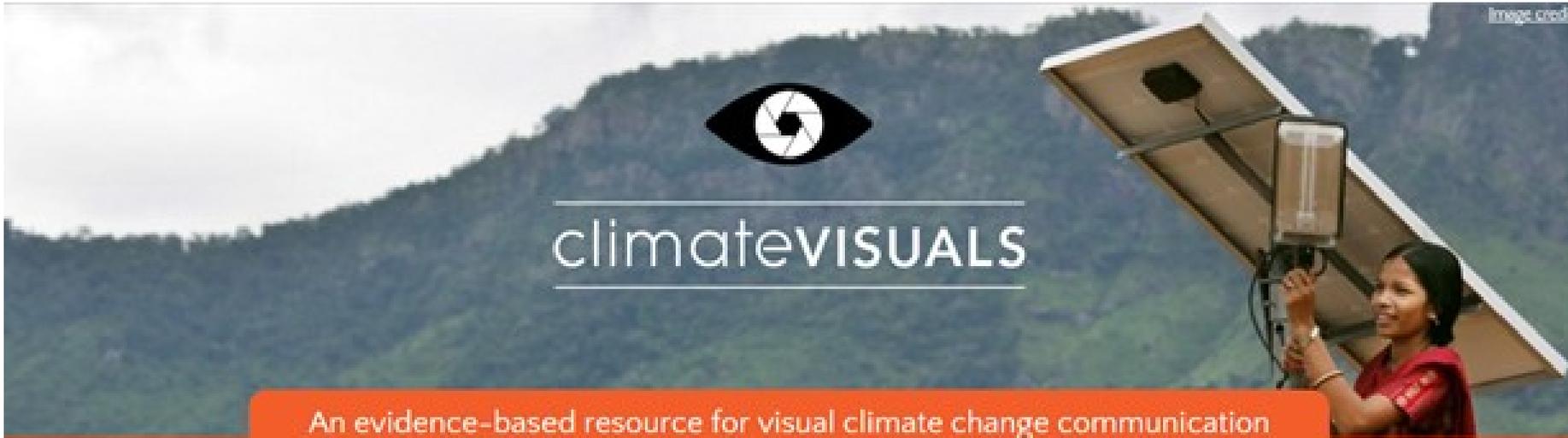


Image credits

climateVISUALS

An evidence-based resource for visual climate change communication

Key finding **1** Show 'real people', not staged photos  
People in images are important – but authenticity and credibility are crucial.

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I want images that...



[www.climatevisuals.org](http://www.climatevisuals.org)



Nearly half a million visits in less than a year

Extremely positive feedback from different sectors

Adding a new gallery for COP22: working with key global influencers in Marrakech

**Where else could Climate Visuals take us?**

# Thanks for listening



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

[www.climatevisuals.org](http://www.climatevisuals.org)

Partners



Lead funder:



**The Minor Foundation**  
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