

Politics



Elected Leaders often Fail to Lead

In western developed nations, political leaders are often poorly informed about or not interested in science or complex issues, and are often influenced by fossil fuel lobbyists and think-tanks hostile to climate action.

Politics



Dominant Free-market Economic Policies delay Action

The ideology of small government and free markets rejects most effective environmental action as undesirable interference. It believes business should not be should not be inhibited by government regulation.

Media



Corporate Info-war seeks to delay energy transition

For 40 years, the fossil fuel industry and its allies have delayed progress towards a clean energy future. They influence public opinion via greenwashing, denial, sowing doubt, disinformation, delay, distraction and doom-mongering. They have been prosecuted for their worst attacks.

Media



Social Media Algorithms promote Climate Denial Because It Sells

Social media promotes emotions regardless of facts, suppresses unexciting information and creates echo chambers in order to serve their users more adverts and earn more advertising revenue. This is exploited by bad actors to spread climate denial and other anti-social ideas.

Media



Media Barons promote their own Interests

Newspaper and TV editors manufacture narratives in the press, using headlines, news stories and editorials which reflect the views and interests of their owners. The majority of media corporations are owned by the mega-rich who profit from business-as-usual.

Media



Mainstream Media reports Sensation more than Reality

Journalists want to report on events which catch attention and invoke emotion. They tend to ignore complex, on-going situations like climate change.

Economy



Economic Forecasts Don't Factor in Global Warming Impacts

Governments accept mainstream economic assessments that climate change is inconsequential for economic growth. This is despite current economic models consistently failing to predict economic crises.

This has been the case since the 1970s and the Limits to Growth report which led to the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs have never been prioritised over economic growth.

Economy



Economics is not a Rigorous Discipline

Economic research relies on assumptions, but some assumptions in the economic study of climate change have been strongly criticised. Reviews of the economics of climate change by academics from other disciplines such as insurers, actuaries and climatologists highlight that many assumptions cannot be taken seriously, making the research unreliable. This occurs at UN IPCC level.



Economy

Mainstream Economics cannot criticise Free Markets

Economics schools are compromised by donations from the super-rich who will not fund criticism of free-market ideology. So it dominates economic teaching, is hostile to any other approach, holds the purse-strings for research funding and acts as a gatekeeper against alternative paradigms at influential universities.



Business

Immense Inertia of Business-as-usual

The global economy operates by rules that prioritise profits at all times. Many organisations, e.g. fossil fuel corporations, are too inflexible to change and refuse to adapt voluntarily. Many actively resist change. All will need to change their business culture completely to adapt successfully to the energy transition.



Business

Legal Requirements Force Corporations to Optimise Profits

Public company directors have a fiduciary duty to maximise profits or risk being challenged by shareholders. Only when the costs of environmental damage impact the bottom line is there an incentive to take effective action.

Business



The Growth of Inequality

CO₂ emissions are inequitably distributed across the population. The super-rich emit the most. They are protected from climate impacts by their wealth and rarely feel the need for change. They consider their CO₂ emissions an entitlement or “must-have”, are in a position of influence to maintain the status quo and act as role models.

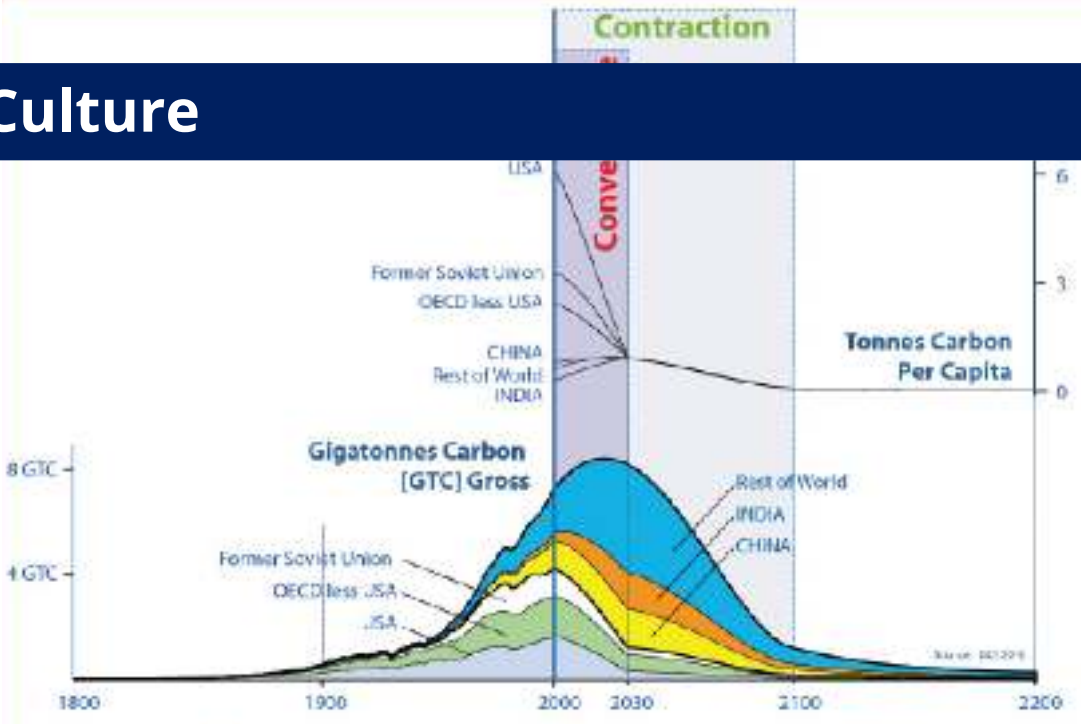
Culture



Individualism

Consumerism, prioritisation of self-interest and the loss of a sense of national, cultural or community pride all lead to rejection of personal responsibility in what individuals can do to combat climate change and other environmental issues.

Culture



How Scientists Communicate

Scientists give "conservative" warnings, where risks and probabilities are stated rather than illustrated and dry statistics fail to cause alarm unless the reader or listener is already well-informed. Severe risks should be communicated using examples or metaphors, if the scientists believe the message is important to wider society.



Culture

The Desirability of Economic Growth is Never Questioned

The growth paradigm directly challenges all planetary boundaries but itself is very difficult to challenge in a society that has benefited so much from that growth. Concepts like sustainability or sufficiency are difficult to grasp and make people think of loss or disadvantage.



Culture

Decline of Religions Means Fewer People Reject Consumerism

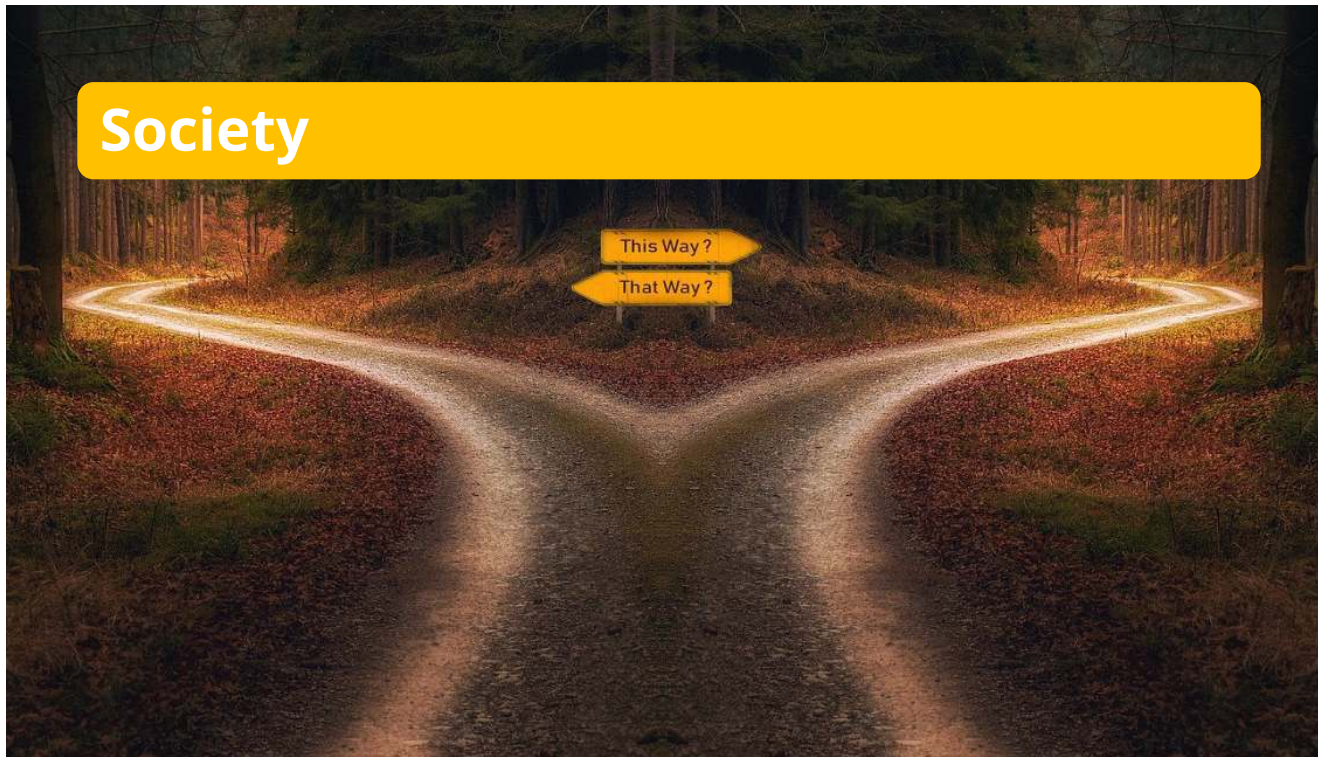
Without any structured religion, people tend to be more neglectful of principles like altruism, acting for a higher purpose or the common good. Consumerism and self-gratification tend to dominate more.



Climate Activism is Divided into Silos

Activists frequently don't collaborate, don't understand and sometimes even oppose each other. Climate activists are divided by the huge number of original social issues which gave rise to their activism. Those against the climate are united by a single common interest - money - and find collaboration straightforward.

Society



Making Low Emissions Choices is Hard, Slowing Down Change

It's difficult to find out the carbon footprint of products and services. Carbon labelling is in its infancy. Investigating the footprint of just one thing can take hours on the internet.

Society



The Triangle of Inertia: Citizens, Business & the State

People won't act strongly to protect the climate if they believe that government and business should act first. The same unwillingness to lead first can be seen in our politicians and business leaders.

Society



Destruction of Nature is a Feedback Loop

Our road to recovery is twice as long because of the damage we do to the planet's productive capacity. Fish stocks, forests, watersheds, pollinators, soils, genetic repositories and other such natural systems that society benefits from are all being damaged in ways that threaten to create a vicious circle or domino effect.

Society



Overpopulation

To be sustainable at our current economic and extractive capacity on the planet - our “bio-capacity” - humanity actually requires 1.7 Earths, according to the Global Footprint Network.

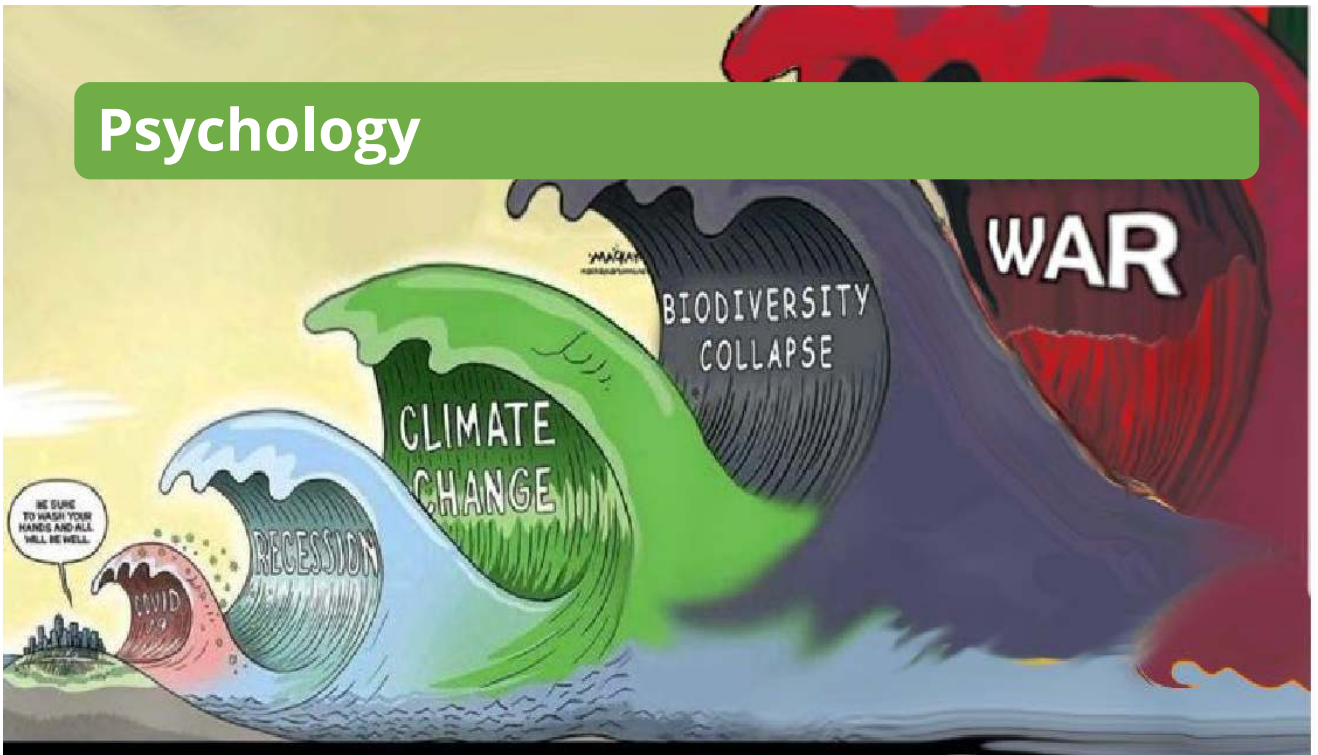


Psychology

Sufferers of Climate Anxiety often Ignore the Crisis

A common coping strategy for people suffering from overwhelming climate anxiety is to completely ignore the climate crisis by avoiding the news and other sources of information which they make them feel anxious. As a result they often do nothing.

Psychology



Climate Doomers Deny the Point of Taking Action

Climate doomers believe the climate is already broken and that action to ameliorate the effects of climate change is futile. There are two camps: the first use their “doom” as a reason to do nothing, while the second feel the need to build a collapse-oriented future.

Psychology



Human Beings are Very Optimistic

The optimism bias is strong. Even in the face of disaster, we assume we will survive and ignore huge risks.

Psychology



We Are Blind to the Changes caused by Global Warming

Shifting baseline syndrome is a cognitive bias that affects most people. We don't connect day-to-day changes with the long-term trends. Only old people with long memories tend to notice the changes.

Psychology



We don't Perceive Climate Risk

We only feel risk at a visceral level if it:

- is visible
- has historical precedence
- is immediate
- has direct personal impact
- has simple causality
- is caused by an enemy

Climate change is few or none of these.



Evaluating Risks

Several cognitive biases in our basic psychology conspire to prevent us thinking rationally about risks. We simplify probabilities and numbers to make them easier to think about. We latch onto a preferred possible outcome, regardless of whether it has the highest probability or the smallest. This often stops us acting together effectively in the fight against climate change.