



What people think,  
feel and do

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PRCA / Opinium

# Climate Crisis Misinformation: Industry Report



## Key findings

17 March 2021

## Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	OP16248
PROJECT NAME	Climate Crisis Misinformation: Industry Report
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SAMPLE	180 members of the PR industry
FIELDWORK DATES	17 <sup>th</sup> February – 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2021

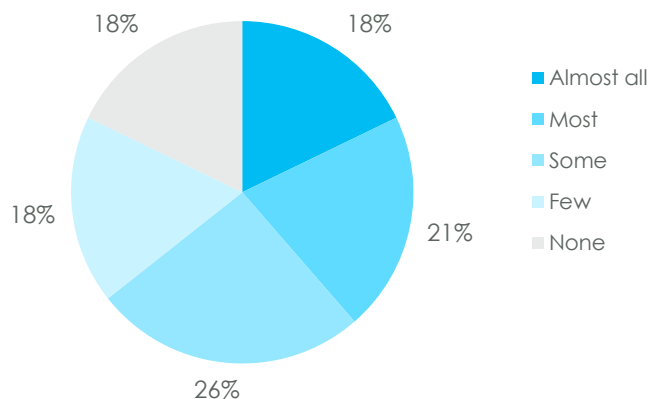
## Advising clients and organisations

### Four in five PR professionals advise their clients on the climate crisis

Four in five (82%) PR professionals advise and help their clients and colleagues to understand about the climate crisis and how they can effectively communicate the part they play, with two in five (38%) advising most or almost all of their clients or colleagues. The recent increase in the salience of climate issues is clear, with seven in ten (71%) say that they give this advice more frequently now than they did five years ago, with 42% saying this is a lot more frequent now.

When asked to rate their clients' or organisation's knowledge of the climate crisis, half (48%) say they have quite a lot or extensive knowledge, while only a fraction are unaware or not sure, with 96% saying they have any knowledge at all.

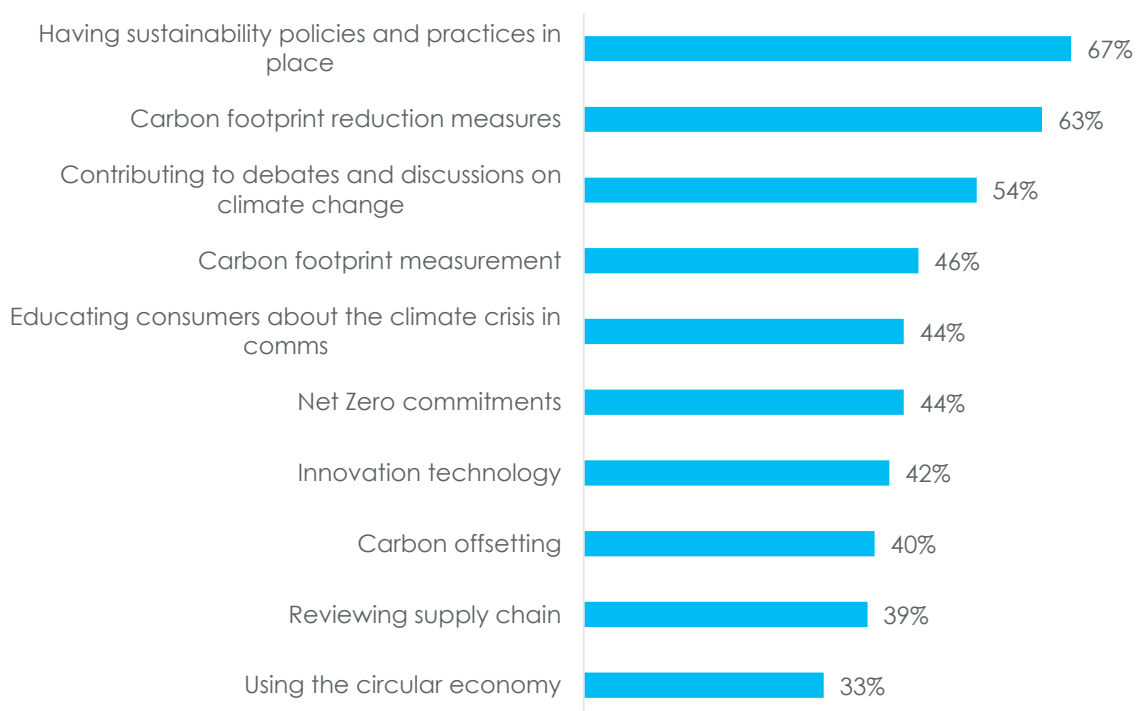
**% of clients advised on climate crisis**



## Nine in ten PR professionals say their clients/organisation is taking climate action

Nine in ten (91%) say that their clients/organisation are taking some form of action on the climate crisis, with the most common measures including having sustainability policies and practices in place (67%), having carbon footprint reduction measures (63%), contributing to debates and discussions on climate change (54%), and measuring their carbon footprint (46%).

### Most common actions taken by clients / organisations to address the climate crisis



## A fifth of PR professionals feel nervous about clients entering the climate change discussion

When thinking more broadly about their feelings about clients' communications around the climate crisis, three in five (60%) agree that often clients or organisations want to jump on the bandwagon of talking about climate change, but don't actually act. Meanwhile, a fifth (17%) say that they often find that their clients' knowledge of climate change is incorrect or misinformed.

Two in five (39%) feel some hesitancy over advising clients to contribute to the discussion, as it feels like they need to be an expert to be able to contribute to the debate, while a fifth (18%) say that having their clients contribute to the discussion on the climate crisis makes them feel nervous.

When asked to elaborate on what about this makes them feel nervous, some highlighted the risk of being accused of 'greenwashing', while others said that until sustainable practices were embedded throughout the organisation, they felt it was unwise to comment.

On a more positive note, however, three quarters of PR professionals (72%) say that they are not concerned that their client will be perceived negatively if they focus on the climate crisis in their communications, and two thirds (64%) disagree that communications from their clients around the climate crisis are often negative in nature.

## Organisations taking action

### Three in five PR professionals do not feel that their organisation is doing enough to tackle the climate crisis

Three in five (59%) PR professionals do not feel that the organisation they work for is doing enough to tackle the climate crisis, rising to two thirds (67%) of those who work in agencies. Meanwhile a third (34%) say that their organisation already does a lot.

Leadership from management and senior staff is key for organisations taking climate action, with half (50%) of those who feel that their organisation is not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis say that this is because it's not a priority for management right now, and a further one in eight (12%) saying that their leadership team feel that it's not their responsibility.

Over four fifths (85%) of PR professionals say that their organisation is taking any measures to address the climate crisis, with the most common measures including having sustainability policies and practices in place (62%), having carbon footprint reduction measures (49%), and contributing to debates and discussions on climate change (48%).

#### ACTIONS TAKEN BY PR ORGANISATIONS

1. Sustainability policies and practices	62%
2. Carbon footprint reduction measures	49%
3. Contributing to climate change discussion	48%
4. Educating consumers in client comms	38%

## PR professionals' attitudes

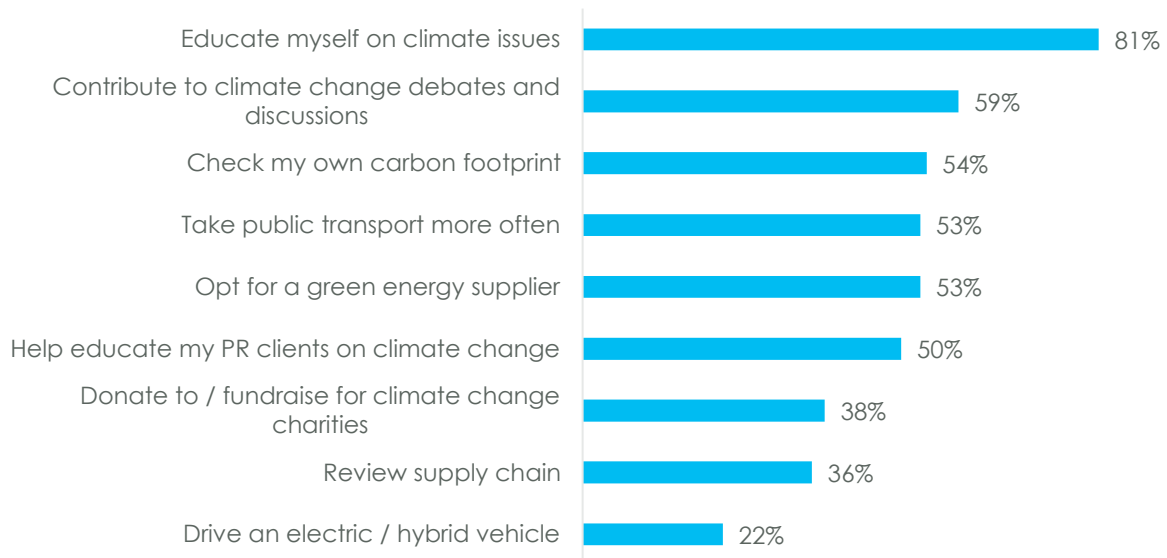
### Nine in ten PR professionals are concerned about the climate crisis

Nine in ten (89%) PR professionals say they are concerned about the climate crisis, with two thirds (66%) saying they are 'very concerned' about the issue. Over four in five (83%) believe the planet faces an existential threat due to the man-made climate crisis, with only one in ten (11%) tending to disagree with this.

Thinking about what they can do as a PR professional to help address the climate crisis, more than nine in ten (93%) have taken action, with the most common actions being taken including educating

themselves on the climate crisis (81%), contributing to climate change debates and discussions (59%), checking their own carbon footprint (54%), and taking public transport more often (53%).

### Personal actions taken by PR professionals to address the climate crisis



Nine in ten (90%) say that they would be willing to take further action, including driving an electric or hybrid vehicle (48%), opting for a green energy supplier (29%), helping to educate their PR clients on climate change (28%), or reviewing their supply chain (27%).

### Four in five PR professionals say the industry must do more to tackle climate misinformation

Thinking about how the PR industry as a whole relates to the climate crisis, almost four in five (78%) say that it needs to do more to tackle misinformation around the climate crisis. Four in five (81%) agree that the industry has a responsibility to stop misinformation about the climate crisis, while three quarters (73%) agree that it has a responsibility to educate clients about the climate crisis.

More than four in five (83%) say they know what COP26 is.

# About Opinium

**OPINIUM** is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think, feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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