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Know your audience

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This is the third worksheet in our Framing Climate Justice series, and has been adapted from PIRC's Framing Equality Toolkit. For more guidance on audience, including practical examples of how to do some of these activities, check out the full guide at: publicinterest.org.uk/FramingEqualityToolkit.pdf

In order to develop effective messaging, we need to better understand who our audience is and how they think and feel about climate justice. Too often, activists and movement communicators spend time figuring out our demands and beaming them out into the world, without stopping to think through the landscape of different values, beliefs and narratives that exist beyond our immediate community.

In this worksheet, we'll explore audience research practises, which use methods like surveys and focus groups to understand how groups of people think, feel and behave. Research is an excellent way to understand your audience, but it shouldn't be a substitute for movement building. If you are working to mobilise and organise in a particular community then you will also need to understand people through building relationships and partnerships.

1. Identify your audience

Who you are talking to is a big strategic question.

Generate a long list of ideas for your potential audience

Who supports your issue?

Who is affected by your issue?
Who aren't you talking to currently?

Who influences or shapes the issue?

Decide where to focus your energy

We've found it can help to think about audiences in the following groups, inspired by Anat Shenker-Osorio:

- **Your base:** People who are already (broadly) supportive of the issue: activists, campaigners, supportive parliamentarians.
- **Your moveable middle:** People who can be persuaded. These may be people who are undecided or haven't engaged with your issue.
- **Your target:** People (or institutions) whose behaviour you want to shift, usually by leveraging your base or moveable middle.
- **Your opponents:** People who are strongly opposed to your issue. They are unlikely to ever be supportive of your message.

Have a go at expanding on your long-list above into these 4 categories, to help you decide where to focus your energy:

Our base	Our moveable middle	Our target	Our opponents
People who are already (broadly) supportive of the issue: activists, campaigners, supportive parliamentarians.	*People who can be persuaded. These may be people who are undecided or haven't engaged with your issue.*	*People (or institutions) whose behaviour you want to shift, usually by leveraging your base or moveable middle.*	*People who are strongly opposed to your issue. They are unlikely to ever be supportive of your message.*

With this approach, history has often taught us that it makes sense to focus our energy on the 'moveable' audience: people who we can shift in some way. Moveable audiences will generally have a number of competing frames they could use to think about your issue. Your task is to encourage them to think through a frame that is aligned with your vision (Worksheet 2). While many people may be moveable or persuadable in this way, some people already feel so strongly about an issue—such as human rights or equality—that however you frame the issue, you may find it difficult to change their minds.

Sometimes, the best move is to target your base, and strengthen the movement by increasing the active members of the community, before moving on to wider public campaigning. We should always consider our base in the framing process, because they need to be motivated enough by the message to want to share it with others.

And there are times when it's absolutely critical to undermine and alienate our opposition. Just be careful not to get bogged down by this, as it can be all too tempting to throw everything we have at our opposition, whilst losing connection to those that are ready to act for climate justice.

Read more about **audience segmentation**, including advice for when and how to use it.

So, which audience will you focus your energy on, and why?

2. Find out how your audience thinks and feels about Climate Justice

We can identify our communication challenges and opportunities when we have a deeper understanding of how our audiences think and feel.

What questions do you have about your audience?

In the Framing Climate Justice project we were exploring the intersection of social, racial, economic and environmental struggles. So we put the spotlight on questions like:

- **Who** is historically responsible for the climate crisis?
- **Who** is disproportionately impacted and why?
- **Who** has a duty to act?
- **What** would a just response to climate change look like?

For a full list of our research questions from Framing Climate Justice, drop us a line at: framingclimatejustice.org/contact

What do you want to know about how people think about climate justice?

Draw a mind-map over the page, to see how far your questions stretch out!

How will you find out what people think, feel and value?

People are complex, and we hold many conflicting views, beliefs, and values within ourselves, driving how we act day-to-day and what we care about. In order to create effective framing, we need to better understand the current 'cognitive landscape'.

Here's some ways you can start to do that:

- **Desk research on zero/low budget:** As a place to start, take some time to explore the research findings from the Framing Climate Justice project. We compiled existing published research and carried out our own research into common beliefs connected to climate justice. We identified some common ground between the climate movement and the wider public in the UK, and some disagreement: see framingclimatejustice.org/findings and our full research write-up.

  And you can do your own desk research! Search for academic papers via Google Scholar; stats from market research agencies such as YouGov or IpsosMORI; or international datasets like Eurobarometer, the European Social Survey or the World Values Survey.

- **Pool your common knowledge:** Get together with other activists, supporters or allies and pool your common knowledge of what people think about your issue.

- **Basic media framing analysis:** Create a media diary, or pick a few examples of print or online media that you think are representative of common understanding. Carry out a framing analysis with your colleagues: see p16-21 of PIRC's *Framing Equality Toolkit* for tips on how to do this.

3. Organise your findings

What are some of your audience and narrative findings so far?

Are there any key themes emerging?

To support you with making sense of your findings so far, check out Section 5 of our final worksheet in this series (Worksheet 6: Frame Testing).

What beliefs, attitudes and ideas are likely to influence people's thinking on climate justice?

What values underpin these attitudes and beliefs?

What deep shared narratives can be found in mainstream media and culture, which drive how people think about climate justice? Are any of these especially helpful or unhelpful to us?

Now, take some time to sort your findings into two key areas: The differences and commonalities that exist between your group's vision for climate justice (Worksheet 2), and the way your audience thinks and feels about climate justice. Here's a link to our summary findings from the Framing Climate Justice project, for reference.

Fault Lines / Blocking beliefs:

What values, emotions, beliefs and cultural narratives are standing in the way of your audience acting in the way that is needed for your vision of climate justice?

Common Ground / Enabling Beliefs:

And where are there opportunities for connection that you could build on with your communications?

4. Carry out further audience research

As you'll see from our FCJ project findings, there are still some chunky gaps in what we know about how the UK public thinks about climate justice, and intersecting issues of colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy. (See p.17 of our research write-up).

Do you have enough understanding of your audience's beliefs to go on, or are there gaps that you could explore with some DIY research? If so, here's some ideas for low-cost research you could carry out with your co-conspirators:

- **Street interviews**: Head out with a group onto the street and ask members of the public a few on the spot questions. Take a clipboard so it looks official!
- **Low-cost focus groups**: Invite a group of friends-of-friends-of-friends, or university students, to take part in a small 'focus group' in which you ask a number of questions to provoke conversation.

Got more budget? You could commission **in-depth interviews, focus groups or surveys** with the help of a research agency. (See p.18-28 of PIRC's *Testing Guide* for more detail on these methods).

So, what do you need to know more about? And how will you do that?

Once you've carried out any further research activities that you planned, you will again need to make sense of the results. Take a moment to go back through the activities in Section 3 above, and add new information to your original findings.

Next up:

Set your communication objectives!

Jump to the next worksheet at: framingclimatejustice.org/process

For more resources for all your strategic comms conundrums, check out the PIRC website at: publicinterest.org.uk or get in touch: hello@publicinterest.org.uk and we'll do our best to help.