

# Our Story

Strategic communications  
guidance for Extinction Rebellion  
UK

April 2025

XRUK Strategy Team



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# Foreword

## Who is this document for?

This document has been written for any circles that communicate publicly, which sit within Extinction Rebellion UK and are tasked with successfully delivering the [XRUK 2025-26 Strategy](#) to its fullest extent. The key stakeholders are UK Media and Messaging (and its sub circles), Fundraising, Pathways (especially Email and Website), and Operations. It may be of interest to other spaces as well.

## Why does this document exist?

XRUK has never had the resources or capacity to do the depth of strategic work in order to truly understand the impact our communications have and the image the public has of us. This has led to assumptions taking the place of strategic direction. The movement and the landscape we are in has shifted and many UK circles have struggled to keep pace. As a result, the public has a confused idea of who we are, with a low level of trust that we are driven by good intentions.

This iteration of the Strategy Team commissioned an in depth strategic comms research project from an independent consultant. The results of this study have informed the work done by strategy, but it was also looked at through the lens of other work and research done by that team. It also utilised projects done by Data Analysis and Insights Circle, such as the [2021 Barriers to Engagement](#) and what followed as well as the work done by [Forward Action for The Big One](#).

This document is the answer to the question of **what job do we want our comms to do?** What is the objective? XRUK, and our public communications are here to get results and make change happen. Our strategy defines our direction, while our messaging serves as a method by which we bring it to life.

## What does this document cover?

This document focuses on key information related to our public communications, specifically addressing:

1. What has informed the strategic comms work.
2. The work done during this phase and what it tells us.
3. How these insights can be leveraged moving forwards.





What this document is **not**:

- Telling M&M what to say!

## What approach was used?

This work involved analysis and contextualising the Strategic Comms Research results, reviewing XRUK's social media during November 2024, and drawing insights from work with the UK Media and Messaging team, along with other operational teams, over the past two years. Additionally, conversations with the Strategy Team and an understanding of the broader strategic context informed the development of this work, as part of the XRUK Strategy 2025-26.

## How to use this document

This document presents the strategic comms work done by the Strategy Team. It outlines parameters for voice and tone, delves into the details of our desired audience, and gives some direction on message and content. It is the overview within which all the public communications work of Extinction Rebellion UK is taking place. It breaks the key areas down as **topic, target and tone** - all of which are essential for **trust**.

It should be used as a foundational piece by UK M&M, and to ensure alignment with other circles that might be creating publicly facing content, such as Fundraising, Pathways, Outreach and Creative. The work of those circles is to then build on that foundation.

## The importance of alignment

The XRUK Strategy recognises that difficulty with strategic and tactical alignment is an issue that prevents us from achieving our potential. Our public communications are such a visible area of our work, and messaging is by its very nature intended to be evocative. However where there is a lack of alignment internally, or understanding of what the job of circles such as M&M is to try and achieve, this can be divisive. Considerable time is taken up by responding to internal opinions, rather than taking a balanced and objective evaluation of if the work is doing the job required, which in turn creates a considerable barrier to success.. This creates an unregenerative working environment and reduces the opportunity for creativity and progress.

“Research on successful social movements tells us coherence and alignment on **strategy, tactical plans and messaging** are necessary. Holding the organisational



discipline to present a coherent image of ourselves to the public is vital if we want **our story** to be the one that is told.” - XRUK 2025-26 Strategy

Managing decentralised comms is a challenge that XRUK has always struggled with. There are a number of mandates that exist within Operations which, while distinct, all rely on cooperation and collaboration in order to deliver the best work they have to offer. Tensions arise when mandates are not respected, and when there is a lack of clear, foundational guidelines to rely on to guide the work. This document is a tool to be used in building what sits on top of it, and the words we give to the world.

## Recommendations

### Strategy

- Hold the line on messaging empowerment. It's the uniqueness of our voice versus that of others which defines us. We're here to model how you, whoever you are, can resist, can step into the enormous power you already hold but simply aren't exercising.
- Tell XRUK's own story, not other groups or individuals.
- Lead with the climate to connect to other issues that resonate with people - it's okay to not talk about everything
- Expand audience beyond traditional activist circles into creating a wider spectrum of support
- Use experts, scientist and other credible voices to strengthen XRUK's messaging and build public trust
- Amplify voice from the global south and diaspora communities to highlight the global nature of the crisis and display genuine solidarity
- Explore and adopt emerging platforms and formats to engage new and diverse audiences

### Trust

- Let's take a moment to introduce ourselves – we've shared a lot about what we want, but not who we are. Building trust starts with knowing each other.
- Public communications must clearly express XRUK's identity and goals - and empowerment is at the heart of that.
- Messaging should seek to reduce barrier and better connect the climate and ecological emergency to a wider audience
- Teams must focus on:
  - consistent, identity-rooted messaging
  - clarity about XRUK's values and missions



- openness to engage new and diverse voices authentically

## Target

- Developing messaging that places a wider spectrum of support at the heart of our approach - people not already activated, from all backgrounds, beyond activism, campaign or political circles
- Establish a consistent, integrated system for gathering and analysing engagement data across teams to better track real impact

## Topic

- Create a central, easy-to understand story that leads all communications back to XRUKs mission - and stick to it.
- Build collective learning and resources to embed this work and learning within comms teams
- Establish strict guidelines for fact-checking, and safe and transparent feedback channel to maintain XRUKs credibility.

## Tone

- XRUK must define a consistent and distinctive tone resource that is used across platforms - this work needs to be done collaboratively, and made accessible to all.

Find a separate document with just this in [here](#).

## Hard and Fast Rules

### Strategy

- Our voice must align with our strategic direction.



## Trust

- Communicate clearly and consistently to build public trust.

## Target

- Broaden appeal across a wider spectrum of society.

## Topic

- Tell a compelling, unified XRUK story that starts with the climate and ecological emergency.

## Tone

- XRUK must define a consistent and distinctive tone that is used across platforms



# Vision and Mission 2025

XRUK is determined to realise the promise encapsulated from the start in our three demands - of Extinction Rebellion as a **mass movement to create transformational, systemic change**. Our **vision** represents the future ahead, the ultimate destination that guides the journey. Our **mission** is the strategic steps we must take in the present to bring us closer to that future.

Our messaging must hold true to who we are as a movement. We have an identity to be proud of, and we should be unapologetic about the fact that we are Extinction Rebellion. At every stage of our comms we should be asking ourselves if this is something that is helping move us closer to **achieving our demands** as a movement.

## Vision

A society transformed to be compassionate, inclusive, regenerative, equitable and deeply connected, and in which the impacts of the climate and nature crises are mitigated and humanity thrives in harmony with the natural world.

## Mission

To spark and sustain a spirit of creative, nonviolent rebellion to disrupt and pressure the perpetrators of climate and ecological injustice and drive systemic change through equal participation in power.



# Strategic direction

Our story is an integral part of the DNA of Extinction Rebellion. In 2018 the purpose of the movement was to sound the alarm. Our messaging pulled no punches on what governments, institutions and corporations were doing their best to ignore. Since then outright denial has become untenable, and now we are challenged to be heard over greenwashing, conspiracy theorists and doomers.

Globally 80% of the public want more action from governments on the climate,<sup>1</sup> which is reflected within the UK with the same percentage expressing they had some concern about climate change.<sup>2</sup> 46% of respondents to a YouGov survey in the UK believe that climate change will be one of the most likely causes of human extinction.<sup>3</sup> Over three quarters of people believe climate change is a serious threat to the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> The most common ways adults reported climate change had affected them in the last 12 months were strong winds (40%), floods (35%) and heatwaves (30%).<sup>5</sup>

The public is broadly supportive of the need for climate action, but remains uncertain on what will drive this. While 66% of people supported taking direct action to protect nature,<sup>6</sup> nearly three-quarters of the public (73%) say they think protests rarely, if ever, make a difference, including 13% who believe they never do.<sup>7</sup>

The XRUK 2025-26 Strategy recognises the potential of our voice within this landscape, and how this has evolved since we began this work. Instead of messaging alarm, we should be messaging empowerment, agency and hope. It's the heart of the uniqueness of our voice versus that of others. We don't beg, we're not victims - we're here to model how you, whoever you are, can resist, can step into the enormous power you already hold but simply aren't exercising.

Extinction Rebellion holds a unique space within the wider ecology of movements to reach a wider spectrum of support, but that comes with a number of challenges which we must seek to overcome. It is important to remember when crafting our public comms that we are not speaking as ourselves, we are speaking as Extinction Rebellion UK - we're looking at the big picture. It is vital to hold true to the mission we are on, and the level of change we are determined to bring about.

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<sup>1</sup> [The world's largest survey on climate change is out - here's what the results show](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK: concern about climate change 2024 | Statista](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Likely Cause of Human Extinction | YouGov Survey Results 250121](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Public wants UK to prepare and protect against effects of climate change | University of Leeds](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change, Great Britain: 2024](#)

<sup>6</sup> [VI-5 Environment | Omnisis](#)

<sup>7</sup> [The majority of the public believe protests rarely, if ever, make a difference | YouGov](#)



XRUK should channel trusted messengers and scientific developments, centre diaspora communities, and provide a platform for stories from the global south. Through creating and sharing content that is authentic and brings a meaningful contribution to the conversation XRUK should lean into how to use new platforms and inspire audiences that currently do not hear us. We must ensure that we are speaking to people outside the left-leaning activist bubble. At all times we must **lead with the climate** in order to connect the dots to other issues in a way that is genuine and consistent.

### Strategy summary

- Our voice is a vital part of our identity as a movement, and one we must remain true to.
- Our core proposition as a movement is steeping into our power - this underpins everything else we do and say
- XRUK must reach a wider audience while remaining committed to our mission and vision for transformational systemic change.

### Recommendations

- Hold the line on messaging empowerment. It's the uniqueness of our voice versus that of others which defines us. We're here to model how you, whoever you are, can resist, can step into the enormous power you already hold but simply aren't exercising.
- Tell XRUK's own story, not other groups or individuals.
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## Research

In July 2024, a study of 2179n respondents was carried out via BPC certified online panel company Obsurvant. Data was cleaned for speeders, flatliners, attention check fails, and free text flags. An ethnicity booster group of 200n was recruited to ensure increased



representation of ethnic minorities in the UK. The final cleaned dataset was weighted to nat-rep proportions based on the most recent UK census to ensure representation.<sup>8 9</sup>

The study was fielded soft launched from the 8th and 9th of July, with fielding running 11th to the 21st. After cleaning, some responses were refiled from the 24th to the 27th. The data was processed into tables for use within the UK Strategy Team.


This research produced audience segmentation in preparation for message testing, but that work has not yet been completed.


## Key findings

The key findings of the strategic comms research were:

- **Increased Public Engagement in Climate Activism:** Overall willingness to join climate activism groups, including XR, has increased since 2021. Specifically, willingness to join XR has risen from 4% to 20%, indicating a growing public inclination towards active involvement in climate-related causes.
- **Increased Awareness but Declining Trust:** Awareness of Extinction Rebellion (XR) has significantly increased since 2021, with a threefold rise in active familiarity. However, this has been accompanied by a decline in overall trust, as fewer people believe XR is driven by good reasons.
- **JSO's Media Influence:** The presence of Just Stop Oil (JSO) in the news during the survey period positively impacted public support and awareness for XR, suggesting a potential halo effect. This led to an increase in XR support, particularly among those who were previously opposed.
- **Segmented Perceptions:** Younger demographics and those actively involved in climate activism can distinguish between XR and JSO. However, the broader public, particularly those less involved in climate issues, tends to conflate the two groups.
- **Unexpectedly Low Support from Progressive Segments:** Despite alignment with XR's goals, Progressive segments show lower-than-expected support, with many preferring other climate activism groups. This suggests a potential strategic misalignment or unmet expectations within this key segment.

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<sup>8</sup>  Strategic Comms Research Findings - Aug 2024 Share

<sup>9</sup>  Strategic Comms Presentation | Sept 2024





- **Familiarity Breeds Reluctance:** Those less familiar with XR are paradoxically more willing to join than those who are more familiar, indicating that deeper knowledge of the group might dissuade potential members, possibly due to concerns about XR's methods or motives.
- **Mission Statement and Action Recognition Gaps:** XR has the lowest mission statement recognition among climate groups, with significant public misunderstanding of its goals. Additionally, XR's key actions are less recognized compared to JSO's more high-profile activities.
- **Youth Awareness Gap:** Awareness of XR is notably lower among 18-25-year-olds, a crucial demographic, compared to JSO. This suggests a need for targeted efforts to engage younger audiences who show higher support but lower awareness of XR's mission.

## Perceptions of XR and the Role of Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA)

### Support for NVDA

**47% AGREE**

**33% DISAGREE**

*"NVDA is necessary to achieve social change".*

### Cultural Tipping Point

**53%** believe *"social change is driven more by people than governments"*.

### Climate Change Beliefs

**77%** feel the effects of climate change

**76%** believe action is still possible

**77%** support climate-related causes

### XR Key Metrics

*Despite XR's small membership, awareness is high*

**84%** Passive Recall

**47%** Active Recall

**22%** Support

**2%** Know a member

**1%** Are a member

***An opportunity to convert recognition into deeper engagement and support.***

"Non-Violent Direct Action is necessary to achieve social change" | "Historically, social change has been driven more by the mobilisation of the people than by the independent actions of the governments and institutions" | "The effects of climate change are already here/The effects of climate change are far in the future" | "We can still act now to prevent the most catastrophic consequences of climate change/It's too late to act on climate change - the worst effects will happen regardless of what we do"

N = 2179 UK population, July 2024, nat rep weighted.

13



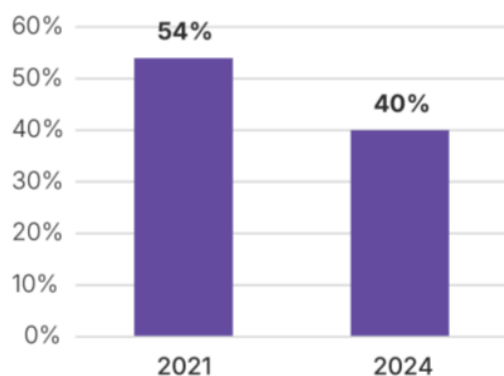
# What does this mean for XRUK?

## Trust

One of the first notable results to come out of the strategic comms research is what it has to say about public perception of trust in the movement. In comparison to data gathered in the [Barriers to Engagement](#) study in 2021, it was found that trust in XR's motives has dropped, reflecting a significant decline in perceived legitimacy.

Legitimacy is a constant challenge for climate movements, as generally we are removed from the cause that we are speaking out about - we are speaking and acting on behalf of

### XR - Driven by Good Reasons



### Trust in XR's Good Reasons Drops to 40

Trust in XR's motives has dropped from **54% to 40%**, reflecting a significant decline in perceived legitimacy

"To what extent do you agree that the actions taken by the following groups are driven by good reasons?"  
N = 1707 UK population, July 2024, nat rep weighted

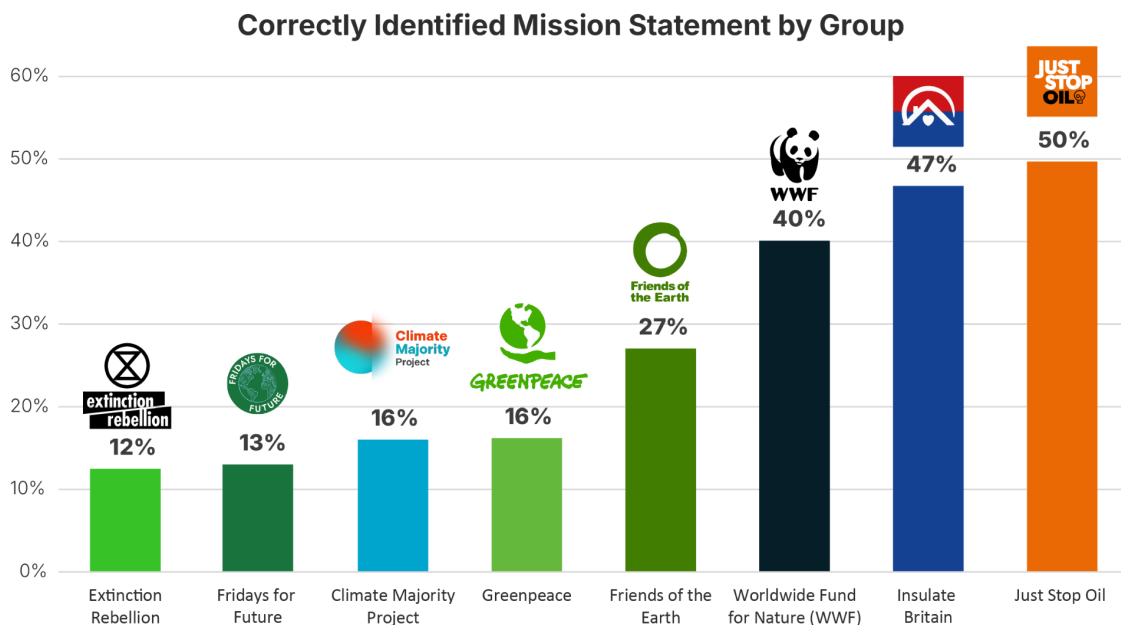
There are a number of factors that will have contributed to this, both internal and external. The media certainly has a role to play, with studies finding that conservative publications cover climate actions more unfavorably and more inaccurately than other publications.<sup>10</sup> Public misunderstanding or confusion due to complex language or an unclear mission, and a misalignment between how the movement sees itself and how it is perceived is also a risk. Internal factors include mixed messages or shifting narratives and inconsistent tone or style across spokespeople of platforms. A lack of representation or inclusivity also harms trust, as does not reflecting the diversity of the community, tokenism or sidelining of marginalised voices. People who are more politically engaged assume that groups like ours subscribe to a certain ideology - we need to be crystal clear in all our comms that our only agenda is our three demands, despite what other personal perspectives we may have as a group of largely progressive people. If we fall into -sims and left-coded language, that gives large groups of people permission to disengage from what we're saying - writing us off as "one of those groups" We welcome everyone and every part of everyone is not just words, it is part of what sets us apart from other groups.

<sup>10</sup> [The power of protest in the media: examining portrayals of climate activism in UK news | Humanities and Social Sciences Communications](#)



If our opponents can credibly portray a demand as only being made by one specific group or type of group, it becomes easy to take any increase in public awareness and convert key audiences to distrust of the demand by marginalising those making it.

## A Barrier to Success



"Below are different mission statements that belong to various groups. Please drag the mission statement to the correct group."  
N = 2179 UK population, July 2024, nat rep weighed

This research certainly gives us a deeper insight into the role of mission in public perception. Extinction Rebellion was the most misunderstood group from a mission statement perspective, with only 12% of respondents correctly identifying the mission of mobilising 3.5% of the population. This is significantly below the average correct identification rate of 28% across all groups. The 3.5% mission statement was just as commonly misattributed to the Climate Majority Project as it was to Extinction Rebellion.

The mission statement used in this research is drawn from our Principles and Values, #2 'We Set Our Mission on What is Necessary'<sup>11</sup> and centred the 3.5% For a movement with Three Demands, and Immediate Demands and a set of principles and values, being able to clearly define a single mission is something that has always been a challenge. Everyone who is a part of Extinction Rebellion holds their own truth in their heart about what the movement is - which is a significant challenge in order to bring about change. Our ways of organising are designed to mitigate that, by empowering teams to deliver within their mandate, and embrace consent over consensus.

<sup>11</sup> [Principles and Values | Rebel Toolkit](#)



Our public communications should present a clear and unambiguous impression of who XRUK are, and what we are trying to do. They should break down barriers to new audiences, and make connection to the climate and ecological emergency clearer. XRUK should be adding something genuine and authentic to the conversation.

In order to achieve a wider spectrum of support, it is vital to build **trust**. Without it, XRUK cannot grow meaningful connections, expand our reach, or build the collective power needed to drive change. To address this, our communications will focus on **consistent messaging rooted in our identity**, with the aim of **engaging a wider segment of the public**. This means being clear about who we are, what we stand for, and how we communicate - while making space for new audiences to connect with our values and vision.

This document will break this down into three key areas - **target, topic and tone**.

### Trust Summary

- Public trust in XRUK's motives has declined due to both internal and external factors, including negative media coverage and inconsistent messaging.
- Public confusion about our mission is high, reflecting a broader issue of unclear or fragmented communication
- Shifting narratives, inconsistent tone, and perceived lack of inclusivity contribute to weakened trust and misalignment between XR's intentions and public perception.
- Clear, consistent, and inclusive communication is essential to rebuild trust, connect with wider audiences, and grow the collective power needed for meaningful change.

### Trust Recommendations

- Let's take a moment to introduce ourselves – we've shared a lot about what we want, but not who we are. Building trust starts with knowing each other.
- Public communications must clearly express XRUK's identity and goals - and empowerment is at the heart of that.
- Messaging should seek to reduce barrier and better connect the climate and ecological emergency to a wider audience
- Teams must focus on:
  - consistent, identity-rooted messaging
  - clarity about XRUK's values and missions
  - openness to engage new and diverse voices authentically



# Target

## Intro

Our 2023-24 strategy highlighted a vital audience: **ordinary people, who don't identify with politics, and are not involved in campaigning.** Here Comes Everyone called them the “silent majority,” a term that unhelpfully distracted from who that audience actually is, and why they matter.<sup>12</sup>

Two years later, and this isn't just our opinion - making people aware that their pro-climate view is, in fact, by far the majority could unlock a social tipping point and push leaders into the climate action so urgently needed, experts say.<sup>1314</sup>



### The 89% project

## Activate climate's 'silent majority' to supercharge action, experts say

Making concerned people aware their views are far from alone could unlock the change so urgently needed

- 'Spiral of silence': climate action is very popular, so why don't people realise it?

But who are these people, and how do we translate this into meaningful tactics? That is the precise point of the strategic comms research. The work carried out for this iteration of the strategy sought to gain greater insight into perception of XR, NVDA and, crucially, to begin to develop segmentation for us to use in order to meet our strategic goals. Strat comms is an undeniably useful tool - and you can bet that it is one that the forces we are up against are using. We want to learn not just how to reach more people, but how to better talk to ourselves as rebels and those already engaged in the struggle with other groups. This is essential information for M&M to be able to build their strategies on.

XRUK will never create the level of transformational systemic change promised in its demands if it only appeals to the left-wing activist base, something recognised in our DNA from the start with our principle that we welcome everyone and every part of

<sup>12</sup> [Here Comes Everyone | XR UK Strategy 2023-24](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Activate climate's 'silent majority' to supercharge action, experts say | Green politics | The Guardian](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action | Nature Climate Change](#)



everyone. The Community Life Survey commissioned by the government showed that in 2021/22 only 7% of respondents in the UK took part in civic activism.<sup>15</sup> The definition of civic activism given in the survey was much broader than most of us would consider activism to be, which shows just how much of the population we have the potential to engage.<sup>16</sup>

At present our target audience is ill-defined, and the stats on our social media reflect this - the majority of our content is only viewed by those who are already following us.<sup>17</sup> It is vital that we are seeking quality of engagement, not quantity of engagement - this requires some trust in the process and what we are delivering in order to drive a different interaction and audience, and explore different ways of measuring and evaluating this. We primarily rely on organic reach rather than utilising paid services, which introduces an extra challenge - but one that if used in collaboration with a compelling message and story has the ability to reap powerful rewards. Generating content that resonates and so is shared and seen outside our bubble is a low cost, high-impact method of tapping into new audiences. This then provides a solid foundation on which to potentially leverage paid services to best effect.

## Audiences

Using latent class analysis, 5 segments were created for strategic targeting purposes. Latent class analysis is a mixed method clustering algorithm that factors in a wide range of variables of interest to create groups of people with similar beliefs and attitudes.

The variables that went into the latent class analysis were:

- Beliefs on the effectiveness of activism to help the planet\*
- Contributions to causes within the past 12 months (eg marching, donations, writing to MP, talking to friends and families)\*
- Attitudes on whether attempts to support a variety of issues including climate have gone far enough\*
- Support for causes including climate change
- Donation frequency
- Beliefs around non-violent direct action
- Perspectives on climate change
- XR familiarity and support
- Willingness to join XR, JSO, another climate group, or a non-activist group

The five segments that were identified were named **Progressive Pioneers, Moderate Contributors, Concerned Critics, Disengaged Spectators** and **Defiant Rejectors**. It is important not to get too hung up on the names, but instead understand who these groups are, and how we can leverage them in our public communications.

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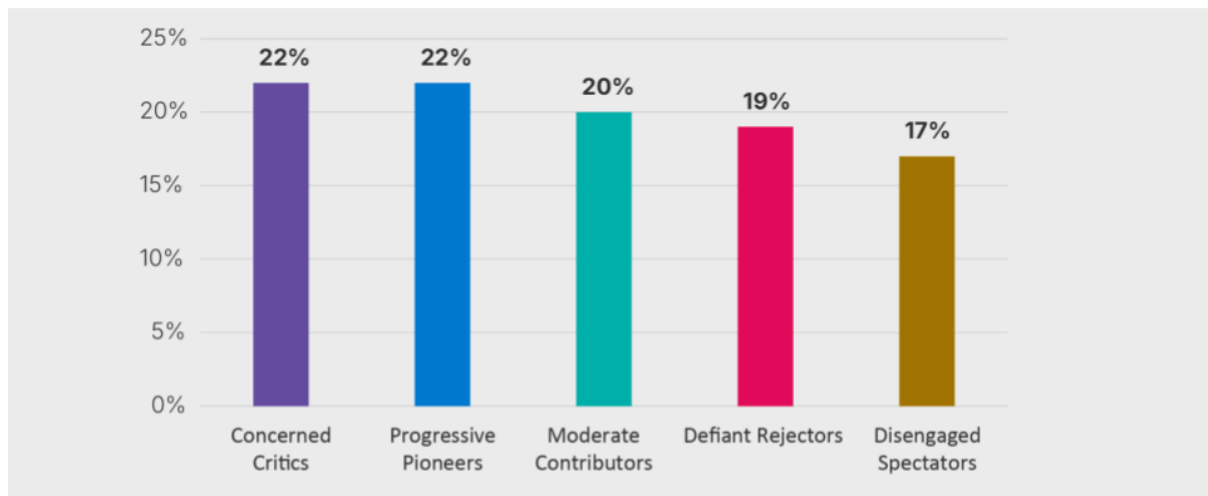
<sup>15</sup> [Community Life Survey - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Community Life Survey 2021/22: Civic engagement and social action - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Public Comms Reflection | November 2024](#)



## Segment Distribution



Segmentation breakdown by group.  
N = 2179 UK population; effective sample size = 2088 (96%); July 2024, nat rep weighted

Although the most important part of this is to gain a greater understanding of who the ultimate audience is, that is not to say that the others do not matter. Some of these are valuable in terms of moving towards that broader spectrum of support, and so that should form part of the work of comms teams - but always keeping in mind why we are engaging them, and what it is moving us towards - the job our comms should be doing.

## Who are the silent majority?

Of the segments identified, the one that mostly closely tracks to the definition of the audience we need to reach are the Disengaged Spectators.

They are generally indifferent to personal involvement in climate activism and political engagement. While they acknowledge the reality of climate change and believe it needs addressing, they don't feel a personal responsibility to take action, often leaving it to others to drive change. People who view themselves as politically neutral, they avoid active support for any causes, including climate action. Though not deeply informed or politically active, they do recognise that broader efforts to address climate change haven't gone far enough, even if they don't see resolving this gap as their personal responsibility.





## DISENGAGED SPECTATORS

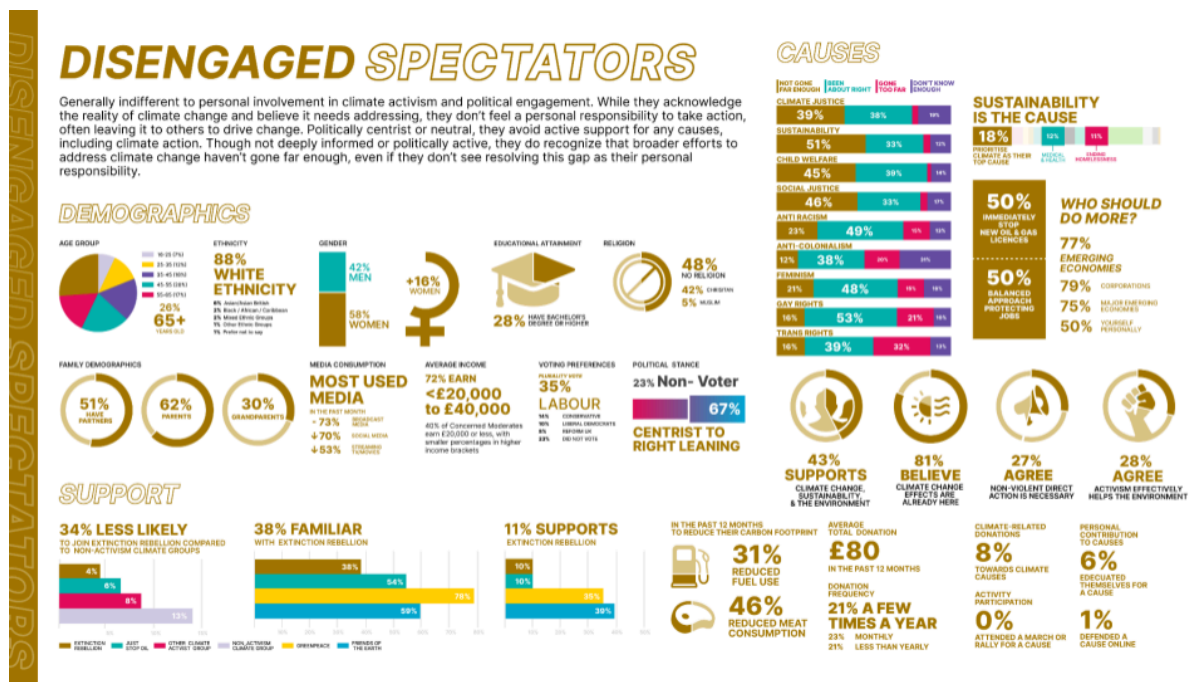
76% active recall, 10% support, 4% willing to join XR, 13% willing to join a climate group that does not focus on activism.

“ I just don't like the way they deal with their protests, can cause major public disruption but I do get what they are trying to do. ”

“ They go too far with their actions but I totally understand what they trying to do, and one day other people will understand them more ”

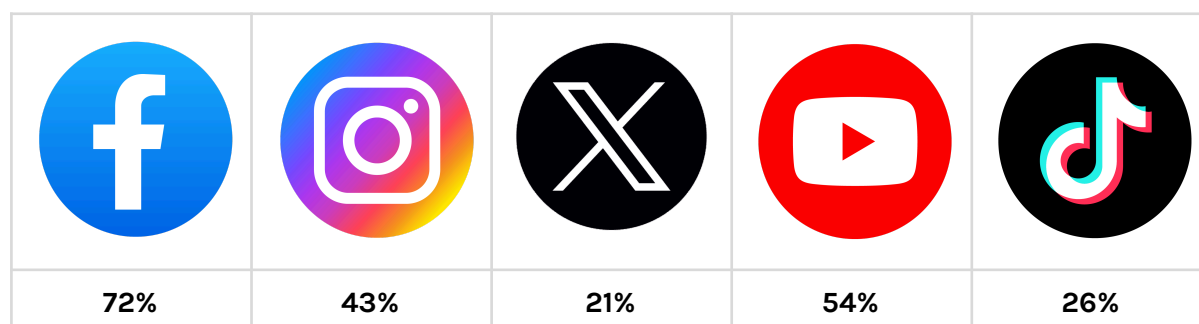
“ Don't hear much from them these days. They were always popping up marching somewhere, but have been very quiet. Perhaps they've joined JSO. ”

Beyond this, there is more that we can learn about this group. They have 76% active recall for Extinction Rebellion, 10% support, 4% willing to join XR and 13% willing to join a climate group that does not focus on activism. 26% are over 65 years old, but they are fairly evenly divided between age ranges. 42% are men, 58% are women. 51% have partners, 62% are parents and 30% are grandparents. Their political stance is defined as non-voter, though they appear centrist to right-leaning. 18% prioritised the climate as their top cause, with 39% believing that climate justice has not gone far enough. Medical and health, and homelessness are the next two causes that mean the most to them.





This group does not consume a large amount of traditional media, with 56% having read BBC News and 17% The Sun in the past month. Their social media habits show that Facebook and YouTube are their most used platforms.<sup>18</sup>



Data was captured in July 2024 before the rise of BlueSky, so that platform was not included in the range of options fielded.

To engage Disengaged Spectators effectively, we could focus on low-barrier activities that introduce them to climate activism without overwhelming them. These individuals could be swayed in various directions—towards stronger climate support, scepticism, or even outright rejection. The goal is to gently guide them towards becoming more active supporters by associating XR with positive, accessible actions. By gradually involving them in discussions and activities where they interact with more radical activists, without requiring them to engage in radical actions themselves, we aim to shift their perspective favourably without pushing them towards becoming Defiant Rejectors, ultimately strengthening their commitment to the cause.

## Learning and evaluating

Vanity metrics are seductive - the number of likes, the total of the mailing list, the reach of a post. Although these can give us important insights, they are not the reason for messaging in itself - instead, they should be part of how we build a picture of the impact we are having. It is necessary to continue to improve data gathering, understanding, reflection and learning to feed back into this process, and to share transparently between key teams. The landscape of public comms, especially social media, can change quickly and so it is vital to be able to make informed decisions about how to react to emerging situations to make the best decision

At present data collection is inconsistent and siloed, which makes it difficult to build a complete picture of the landscape, and understand what factors are at play and how to leverage it.

<sup>18</sup> [X MG - Extinction Rebellion - Tables with Segments V3 XR.xlsx](#) [Request access]

### Target summary

- Messaging should offer positive, accessible climate actions to gently involve them, avoiding overwhelming or radical demands that could push them away.
- Using latent class analysis, five segments have been created to guide targeted communications.
- A key audience for XRUK is ordinary, politically neutral people who believe in climate change but don't feel personally responsible for action.
- XR needs to continue to develop better, less siloed data gathering to go beyond vanity metrics (likes, followers) and enable agile, informed decision-making in a fast-changing communication environment.

### Target Recommendations

- Developing messaging that places a wider spectrum of support at the heart of our approach - people not already activated, from all backgrounds, beyond activism, campaign or political circles
- Establish a consistent, integrated system for gathering and analysing engagement data across teams to better track real impact



# Topic

## Intro

"You're talking about all of those things - food security, business opportunities, political failures - but then climate change will always be the second order thing by which time very often you've lost people in terms of their attention." - Lewis Goodall, LBC, 6 Feb 2024

Our story is the most important thing that we can share as a movement. It is what elevates actions, cuts through barriers, and moves hearts and minds. XRUK has a lot to say that is rooted in its own identity, and it is vital that we are able to give ourselves the breathing room away from a reactive actions cycle to define and deliver this. Our story has to be better than the current one.

The story we tell is imperative to generate momentum, to bring people into action, to present a compelling narrative to funders - it is the outward manifestation of everything that Extinction Rebellion UK is. We must ensure that it is a story that is moving us closer to achieving our demands.

"The golden rule for everything is 'what is in it for me/my cause?' Every item of news you issue must further your cause in some way. Do not mistake news for publicity, because unless you are in advertising, just "raising aware-ness" will not do. You want to achieve some change, so always consider how the news you are issuing will be likely to lead to the change you want in the group of people you are speaking to." - XRUK Media and Messaging Guidance, Aug 2020<sup>19</sup>

At present our public communications are very dependent on external activities to deliver content, and we need to flip this. We need to set our own narrative, and then use what is going on around us to reinforce and elevate that story. This will ensure consistency and clarity, which is vital when building trust with our audiences.

Enormous thought and care went into the foundations of XRUK's messaging - it was not something arrived at by chance. A reflection on this journey in the 2022 DNA workshop<sup>20</sup> spoke to the development of our messaging and comms and the different elements that were included in framing, and what should be avoided. That same year UK M&M was deliberately moving away from talking about "the problem" to a public that was no longer resonating with that approach. Impossible Rebellion and Come To the Table messaging was all based on that shift - from what the problem is to what can happen next to be done

<sup>19</sup> [M&M Toolkit How To Know Whats News | Pics.io](#)

<sup>20</sup> [DNA: Story](#) [Messaging and Comms starts at 46:45]



about it - to uphold the integrity of calling for a CA to decide solutions.

We are offering a story of empowerment as opposed to disempowerment and victim positioning. We are not victims of corrupted powers that be; yes the world is suffering, yes the gazillionaires, fossil fuel giants and politicians are screwing us, but that is not the same as choosing to frame ourselves as victims. Because we have agency. We can get empowered. We can rise up. We can take responsibility for building alternatives. That is a whole new world, a new vision.

This original framework remains largely valid for the work we need to do, but must with some refreshment. Our story has evolved, just as our strategy and the landscape around us has.

<b>IN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• climate and ecological justice</li><li>• nonviolence</li><li>• protecting nature</li><li>• respectful and bold</li><li>• emotional resonance</li><li>• system change</li><li>• equal participation in power</li><li>• community values</li></ul>
<b>OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• left or right leaning language</li><li>• -isms</li><li>• solutioneering</li><li>• individual lifestyle changes</li><li>• blaming and shaming</li><li>• bandwagons</li><li>• sloganeering</li><li>• victim messaging</li></ul>

XRUK must lead with the climate and ecological emergency into interconnected issues and topics. It must craft a coherent narrative about who we are as a movement, and what we want in order to move us closer to achieving it. It's okay to not talk about everything. It isn't our job to talk about everything, it blurs what we're actually trying to say. Holding the focus on climate helps the wider public into the conversation. Get them first, then talk to them about the rest. It's OK to choose, for tactical reasons, to focus, to be unambiguous and unequivocal. In fact the best comms are the simplest, most repetitive and that are just hammered over and over (albeit with fresh content all the time) - good comms do not meander and they do not seek to cover all ground



## What do we want?

Over the years XRUK has used hundreds of different topline messages - each campaign, or action, comes with its own plethora of messages contained within its own, isolated messaging document<sup>21</sup>. Attempts were made in 2024<sup>22</sup> to identify the key strands of messaging in order to build greater cohesion, but it was still very easy to find ourselves as a movement pulled along with the tide, rather than setting our own course. Such an enormous range of messages makes it very difficult for our audience to understand who we are, and what it is we actually want. It also creates a massive resource burden for the movement in needing to constantly create new materials, both physical and digital. It feels like this serves those within the movement more than engaging a wider audience, and developing that relationship.

When we connect the climate to other issues, we take responsibility for learning and making informed judgments. We know some topics are complex and require expertise, so we balance this by acknowledging our limits, doing the work to learn, and listening to those with experience. We don't claim to be policy experts – we speak as part of grassroots resistance, a cultural movement, and a growing community. We make space for marginalised voices, and we prioritise platforming those who are often excluded


It is important that we don't forget the fundamental elements that form our identity, and slip into accidentally solutioneering when it is so easy to feel tempted to add #TaxTheRich onto a post. XRUK has a particular job to do, and our words need to bring us closer to that goal. It is necessary to separate our own passions from the job we are seeking to do with our public communications. Do not mistake a moment of perceived energy around a topic or theme as reason to jump on board at the expense of our own story - that is an easy way to lose trust, credibility and find the movement becoming the mouthpiece of others. It reduces the uniqueness of our own voice and identity. If we're talking about what everyone's talking about, it only works with our unique take on it or we are just diluting our own brand. Extinction Rebellion exists to lead conversations, not follow them.

### Elements of our shared story

Needs to be added here

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<sup>21</sup> [Messaging Packs | Rebel Toolkit](#)

<sup>22</sup>  UK M&M Messaging 2024






What do we want? Everything!<sup>23</sup>


## Our words count

While defining our story is vital, the language we use to tell it will make or break it. Along with our tone, the words we use on our public platforms speak volumes about who we are. Jargon, slogans and acronyms all put up barriers between us and our audience. We run the risk of speaking into the left-wing activist bubble, who are used to certain words and themes - but our desired audience is one that is far broader, and needs different language.

Defining our own story, our own narrative - and then sticking to it - is vital to be able to talk about interconnected topics and injustices in a meaningful way. It is widely known that jargon prevents effective communication - academia-based terms and language like capitalism, colonialism and imperialism are off-putting to a large proportion of the public. If these are not words that they are used to using, or concepts they feel like they have a grasp on, then they are exclusionary and off-putting. They mark XRUK out as a space that is not for them - the opposite of “we welcome everyone and every part of everyone.” Similarly, when using words like genocide, the conversation becomes about the word itself, rather than the message you are trying to convey.<sup>24</sup>

In our messaging, we reject slogans and language that oversimplify complex issues. We don't believe one idea, theory, or story can explain all the problems across different

<sup>23</sup>  What Do We Want?

<sup>24</sup>  Genocide



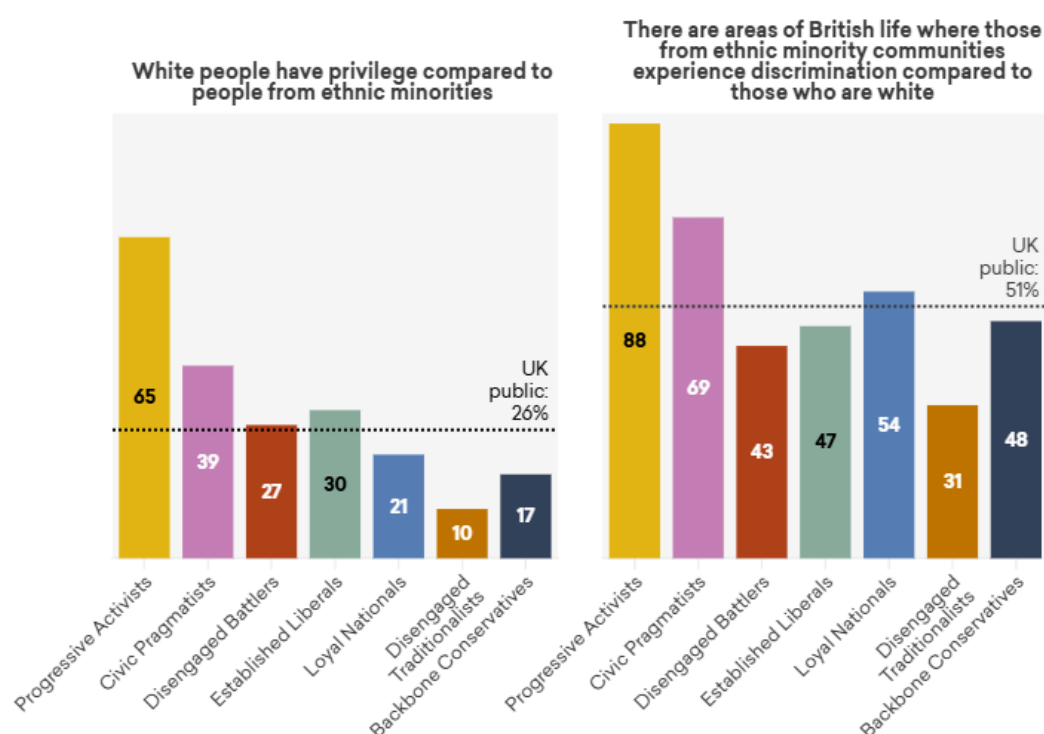


regions and histories. XR stands for a deep belief in our shared humanity and collective wisdom. We reject rigid ideas that shut down real, open conversations.

As an example, Research by More In Common shows how using a “white privilege” framing drives far lower engagement across audience segments than the same message phrased in different language.<sup>25</sup>

**“Much of the language used by Progressive Activists is popular with other Progressive Activists and effective at mobilising their support, but falls flat with other segments. The persistence of racial discrimination is recognised across society, but the concept of white privilege is not. Using framings which reinforce ‘us versus them’ dynamics undermines” support for progressive causes.”**

## 'White privilege' language commands less broad support



Source: More in Common • Fieldwork: September 2024

<sup>25</sup> [Progressive Activists | More In Common](#)



## Messenger

In rebuilding trust, XRUK must place integrity and reliability at the heart of its communications. The messenger is a vital part of this. Every message we send out must be rooted in verifiable sources and backed by evidence. Fact-checking is not optional; it is essential. In an age where trust in social media has fallen so low that even oil and gas companies are seen as more trustworthy,<sup>26</sup> our commitment to truth must be visible and consistent.

Within XR, we are fortunate to have access to deep pools of expertise - scientists, health professionals, academics, frontline activists, and indigenous voices. We must fully utilise this wealth of knowledge. Fronting them and prioritising them, arranging their spokes appearances in advance to coincide with actions, events, even key policy moments when we anticipate being called on for reaction. Internally we don't have the credentials, become proactive about having scientists or others with high profiles ready standing by or willing to lend their names to quotes for moments we know we want to contribute to.

By building up the collaborative Messaging space to hold better connections and leaning into the advice process, we make communications decisions inclusively, drawing on expertise while staying agile.<sup>27</sup> Safe processes for feedback are vital. We should actively seek out engagement, both within XRUK and externally, through channels that are safe and free from blame. This feedback is a tool for growth, not punishment, and it helps to maintain the integrity of our messaging over time.

When working alongside other movements, we build on the ethos of *The Big One* – seeking to find common ground while retaining our independence. XR does not have to adopt the language or frameworks of other organisations. Instead, we find points of connection through our own analysis and on our own terms, preserving our distinct voice and identity. In November 2024, we saw that most organisations and individuals we amplified did not amplify us in return, and when we shared their content we were sharing their messaging - their story.<sup>28</sup>

As a global movement, we must also take seriously the need to platform marginalised voices - not as a token gesture, but as a core part of who we are. Amplifying these voices from within our own identity strengthens XR's role in the global climate justice movement. There are people acting in the name of Extinction Rebellion around the world, we should seek to amplify their voices before those of other groups like us.

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<sup>26</sup> [Trust in Social Media | Ipsos](#)

<sup>27</sup> [The Advice Process | Rebel Toolkit](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Public Comms Reflection | November 2024](#)





We must avoid the risks of AI. AI-generated content, especially images and videos, can spread misinformation, and public trust in it is extremely low.<sup>29</sup> To maintain credibility, XR must only use authentic, verifiable content created by real people.<sup>30</sup>

We must be careful to avoid the risks associated with artificial intelligence. AI-generated content, especially images and videos, can contribute to misinformation – intentionally or not. Research shows that public trust in AI content is extremely low. To maintain credibility, XR must steer clear of AI-generated imagery and ensure that everything we publish is authentic and traceable to real people and real events.

- ✓ Fact-check every claim.
- ✓ Use expert voices already inside XR.
- ✓ Publish reliable, sourced, non-sensationalist content.
- ✓ Avoid AI-generated images or unverified visual material.
- ✓ Invite feedback and critique through open, respectful channels.
- ✓ Build authentic, solidarity-based relationships with other movements.
- ✓ Uphold XR's independent voice within coalitions and collaborations.
- ✓ Platform and prioritise marginalised voices thoughtfully and authentically.

By following these principles, we can rebuild and maintain trust in XRUK as a messenger - not through slogans, but through actions, transparency, and unwavering commitment to the truth.

## Platform

Many of our posts tend to run long, which is especially noticeable on Facebook. Shorter posts generally perform better on this platform, as they are quicker to consume and more likely to encourage users to stop, read, comment, or share. Longer posts often get truncated with a “See more” link, meaning a significant portion of our content remains hidden unless users actively choose to expand it—potentially causing casual scrollers to miss key information. A reflection on XRUK Public Comms in November 2023 showed that 62% of what we are saying across platforms is hidden as default.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, while Instagram captions can extend up to 2,200 characters, they are visually cut off at around 125 characters. This makes it important to capture attention quickly. However, evidence on Instagram engagement is mixed: some studies suggest shorter captions perform better, while others indicate that longer, more detailed captions can drive higher engagement.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [Can you trust your social media feed? UK public concerned about AI content and misinformation](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Indigenous data stewardship stands against extractivist AI - Faculty of Arts](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Public Comms Reflection | November 2024](#)

<sup>32</sup> [What Is The Optimal Social Media Post Length In 2024?](#)



To optimise our approach, XRUK should experiment with a combination of shorter, punchier posts and longer, more informative ones where appropriate. Testing this mix will allow us to analyse engagement metrics and better understand what resonates most with our audiences. By making informed choices about post length based on this data, we can refine our strategy and maximise the impact of our messaging.

Hootsuite has created a useful reference guide outlining the ideal post lengths for various platforms, tailored to maximise organic engagement versus paid content performance.<sup>33</sup> Continue to evaluate the platforms and purpose for the work we are doing in order to unlock their potential.

## Design

Our visual identity is a huge part of who we are as a movement, and it is a strong one. The challenge remains keeping it fresh and engaging after six years, which requires creativity and originality, within an existing framework.<sup>34</sup>

Extinction Rebellion originated with a fantastic ethos about sharing access to resources - be they physical items, or digital assets - a “do it together” movement. However in years since, there has not been a consistent approach to sharing creative and artistic resources in and around the movement. This means that beautiful work is not able to shine, and much needed rejuvenation of our style can be missed. It is vital that circles collaborate and share, and remember they are in service to the movement.

There is a lot that we have learned as a movement about accessible design - from losing the italics and drop-shadows, to being mindful with colour contrast and layering. Ensuring we continue to embed these principles makes our content available and enjoyable to far more people! Ensuring that images are not only striking but also accessible is an important part of our content engaging a wider audience. Accessibility is not just down to visuals, but making sure that the content we produce

Checking colour contrast and adding alt. text to images are small improvements which, when used consistently, can have a big impact on individuals engaging with our content.

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<sup>33</sup> [Ideal Length of Social Media Posts | Hootsuite](#)

<sup>34</sup> [What is the Design Programme? | Rebel Toolkit](#)

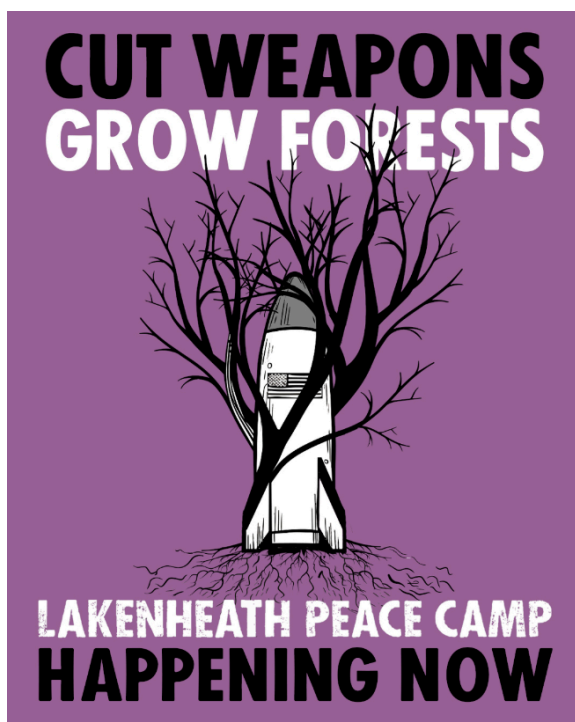




✗ Drop shadows and jarring colours hinder readability, especially for those with visual impairments or dyslexia



✗ Texture, overlapping elements, and non-XR colours reduce readability. Underlined text also affects accessibility



✓ Strong, distinctive, and clearly XR; minimal overlap enhances the message without distraction.



✓ Text remains clear over the image, with good balance that reinforces the message



### Topic summary

- XRUK must define a clear, consistent narrative rooted in climate and ecological justice community and nonviolence, rather than reacting to external events
- Communications must avoid jargon, slogans, -isms and divisive terms that alienate a broader audience - messaging should resonate emotionally, and be focused on collective humanity and system change
- Must uphold the integrity of our messaging to build trust
- Our visual communication is as important as our written output, and needs the same level of thought and care, especially round accessibility.
- Need to develop platform-specific strategies to optimise reach and impact

### Topic Recommendations

- Create a central, easy-to understand story that leads all communications back to XRUKs mission - and stick to it
- Build collective learning and resources to embed this work and learning within comms teams
- Establish strict guidelines for fact-checking, and a safe and transparent feedback channel to maintain XRUKs credibility.



## Tone



2018<sup>35</sup>

## Intro

When Extinction Rebellion announced our arrival on the scene in 2018 by dropping a massive banner off Westminster Bridge that said: CLIMATE CHANGE: WE'RE FUCKED our voice was one of the first things that caught public attention. Our voice is one that is unique and original, speaking something that is not often heard in public discourse - it's not about THEM, it's about US. Our unique proposition, of stepping into power that we already have, is something different to what other groups are offering. To rebel is not a teenage phase, it is about getting results. In a culture where we are taught to value conformity we are offering a different path. Step into your power, try it out, see what might be on the other side.

Emergency messaging<sup>36</sup> was a hallmark of the movement, one that was more than a little controversial.<sup>37</sup> It was intentionally counterintuitive, flying in the face of the accepted communications strategies. The messaging, combined with visuals that were strongly dominated by skulls, were an intentional provocation to shake people out of the status quo. Emotion is a powerful motivator, and a necessary one - facts alone have not caused people to make the changes that are necessary. Rage can only motivate so many people, and for so long, and by 2020 a shift had already begun - recognition that to do justice to the interconnected crisis, we need to tap into myriad motivators: kindness, outrage, and urgency; empathy, care, and unity.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> [The 'new' climate politics of Extinction Rebellion? | openDemocracy](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Don't Mention the Emergency](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Guest blog: Hope, Fear and the Extinction Rebellion - Climate Outreach](#)

<sup>38</sup> [We Want to Live - Rebellion Messaging and Design, Aug 2020](#)





As the movement has evolved, and our attention increasingly pulled by the polycrisis, it is more important than ever that we hold a distinctive and consistent tone that unites our messaging. The current strategy broadly defines it as “punk, irreverent and authentic (with some humility!)”<sup>39</sup>

The key concept that has travelled with our strategic direction<sup>40</sup> is that of resonance and invitation. We don't seek to use slogans and tropes to resonate, we look to experiences we all understand - how we feel, what we value - to resonate with all kinds of audiences.

Shared values are incredibly important, but it doesn't work if you're only interested in the values of your own 'people'. We have to look beyond that to more universal values, and at a level that is more first principle than specific examples - care, empathy, kindness, wanting better for your kids, being courteous, feeling a need to act responsibly for others' sakes. Resonance and invitation is inviting people in, not creating tests for whether we are the right place for them. Not speaking over them or making them feel that we know better than they do what the answers are. We invite everyone to come and problem solve together.

Creativity and humour smash barriers - if you ask yourself how on earth are we meant to attract the wider public if we can't even get more of the progressive left - well we can! That's exactly what we did in 2019 when we broke out of the dull predictability of climate action, the whole look and feel of Extinction Rebellion was something new. You don't just use topics and words to reach a wider audience, you use things that are far more visceral, and you build trust alongside it.

## Why tone matters

Tone is a strategic tool for the moment because it actively shapes how people feel, connect and act. It's not just “style” it's part of building power.

People aren't won by facts alone - they're won by feeling. Tone helps create emotions like hope, outrage, belonging or urgency that move people to action. Tone also creates - or breaks - trust. The way you sound signals if you're relatable or credible. Trust is a strategic asset - tone builds or erodes it every time we speak. It is part of what defines us as a movement, and distinguishes us from others.

Audiences decide “Are these my people?” partly based on tone. The right tone invites people in and shows them that they belong - the wrong tone does the opposite. In a contested media space, tone helps define how we are seen - visionary? angry? joyful? bitter? The way we sound becomes part of our public story.

## How we sound

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<sup>39</sup> XRUK Strategy 2025-26

<sup>40</sup> Here Comes Everyone | XR UK Strategy 2023-24



XRUK is not here to politely ask for change. We're here to demand it. Humor keeps us grounded, connected, and just sane enough to keep going. We take the work seriously - but never ourselves. We're punk at heart - irreverent, rule-breaking, and not above a dad joke if it helps someone *get it*. We're not perfect, not preachy, and not here for bland, boring save-the-world energy.

The strategy tells us that "Our voice is one that is bold and unapologetic, balanced with irreverence and wit [...] Rooted in our Three Demands and our identity as a climate movement"<sup>41</sup>

## Core themes

### Punky

We are disruptive, but never destructive. We question everything – including ourselves. Our boldness doesn't bulldoze; our loudness never crosses into obnoxiousness. Being punk doesn't mean being a jerk.

### Irreverent

We say no to jargon and yes to calling out nonsense – with style. We meme responsibly, knowing the difference between clever and careless. Self-deprecation isn't just a tactic; it's our default setting.

### Humorous & Humble

We punch up, never down. We use humor to break down barriers, not build them. We're the first to admit when we're winging it – always choosing eco over ego.

These aren't "rules" to box us in - they are anchors to help keep our voice true to our purpose. Our tone isn't polished or corporate. It's bold, rebellious and creative - and full of love for life.

#### 1. Don't Panic

We are clear about the climate and ecological crisis - but grounded, not frantic. Urgency inspires action; panic paralyzes.

#### 2. Fierce Compassion

We challenge injustice boldly and hold compassion for everyone, even those we oppose.


#### 3. Punky, Playful, and Irreverent

We disrupt with creativity, wit, and a refusal to be polite when politeness upholds harm. We can be cheeky- rebellion can be joyful.

#### 4. Here Comes Everyone

Our voice is inclusive, relatable, and rooted in ordinary people's experiences - not academic, elitist, or detached. We don't preach. We share, we listen, we acknowledge when we don't have all the answers. We invite people in, not talk down to them.

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<sup>41</sup>  XRUK Strategy 2025-26



## 5. Demonstrate Regeneration.

We model the future we want through our tone: respectful, nourishing, and life-affirming. We face the full grief of the crisis, but we still believe in people, in repair, in life. We speak to the possibility of something better.

Taking the next step to build a consistent tone of voice foundation based on these principles must be a true collaborative effort between Strategy and Media and Messaging, drawing on the expertise and perspectives of other key teams like Fundraising and Pathways. This piece of work will help ensure consistency across all platforms, so that our voice is always recognisable and aligned with who we are as a movement - regardless of who is creating content.

### Tone summary

- We need a distinct and recognisable tone across platforms that is punky, irreverent and authentic (with some humility!)
- Avoid language and jargon that is off-putting to a broader audience - it marks XR as a club that is not for them. We are not just speaking to left-wing activists.
- The work that must be collaborative between Strategy and Media and Messaging, but needs input and engagement from other key teams such as Fundraising and Pathways

### Tone Recommendations

- XRUK must define a consistent and distinctive tone resource that is used across platforms - this work needs to be done collaboratively, and made accessible to all.





# What Next?

## Message Testing

Message testing still needs to be undertaken, whether through a formal consultation process or in a more informal, homegrown manner using the limited tools available on social media platforms. This is an ongoing area of work for the Strategy, Media, and Messaging teams. The more collaboration, shared understanding, and opportunities for co-creation we foster, the more effective and impactful our messaging will be.

## Success Criteria

Our communications succeed when they inspire mass engagement and shift the public narrative toward urgent, systemic climate action

1. **Message Resonance and Public Engagement**

Success is achieved if XRUK's messages consistently resonate with a broad audience, leading to measurable increases in public support, participation in actions, and positive media coverage. This can be tracked through polling, social media analytics, and attendance at events.

2. **Narrative Shift and Agenda Setting**

XRUK's communications are successful if they contribute to a clear shift in public discourse – pushing climate and ecological emergencies higher up political, media, and cultural agendas, and framing them in ways that align with XR's values (e.g., urgency, justice, systemic change).



# Appendix

Link to documentation relevant to this work

-  XRUK Strategy 2025-26
-  Here Comes Everyone | XR UK Strategy 2023-24
-  XR Narratives Shareable
-  Building on paid social: proposal
-  Barriers to Engagement - Presentation
-  Strategic Comms Presentation | Sept 2024
-  StratComms-reordered-2024-12-19.pptx
-  Disengaged Spectators | Strat Comms
-  MG - Extinction Rebellion - Tables with Segments V3 XR.xlsx [Access required]
-  Strategic Comms Research Findings - Aug 2024 Share
-  Messaging principles Dec 1st 2023
-  UK M&M Messaging 2024
-  XRUK + Climate and Ecological Justice
-  Public Comms Reflection | November 2024
-  Trump, climate and genocide
-  What Do We Want?
-  Strat Comms | Recommendations



[Last edit 26 April 2025]



“Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen.

To shame it. To mock it.

With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to **tell our own stories.**

Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe.

- Arundhati Roy