



Energy
Transitions
Commission

State of the climate debate in early 2025

*ETC Representatives Meeting
20th February 2025*

Agenda

2025 and the rising challenge to Net Zero

Guest speaker Tim Gould, Chief Energy Economist, IEA

COP29 Key reflections and plans for COP30

Growth of disinformation in the climate space

How the ETC plans to counter these growing challenges



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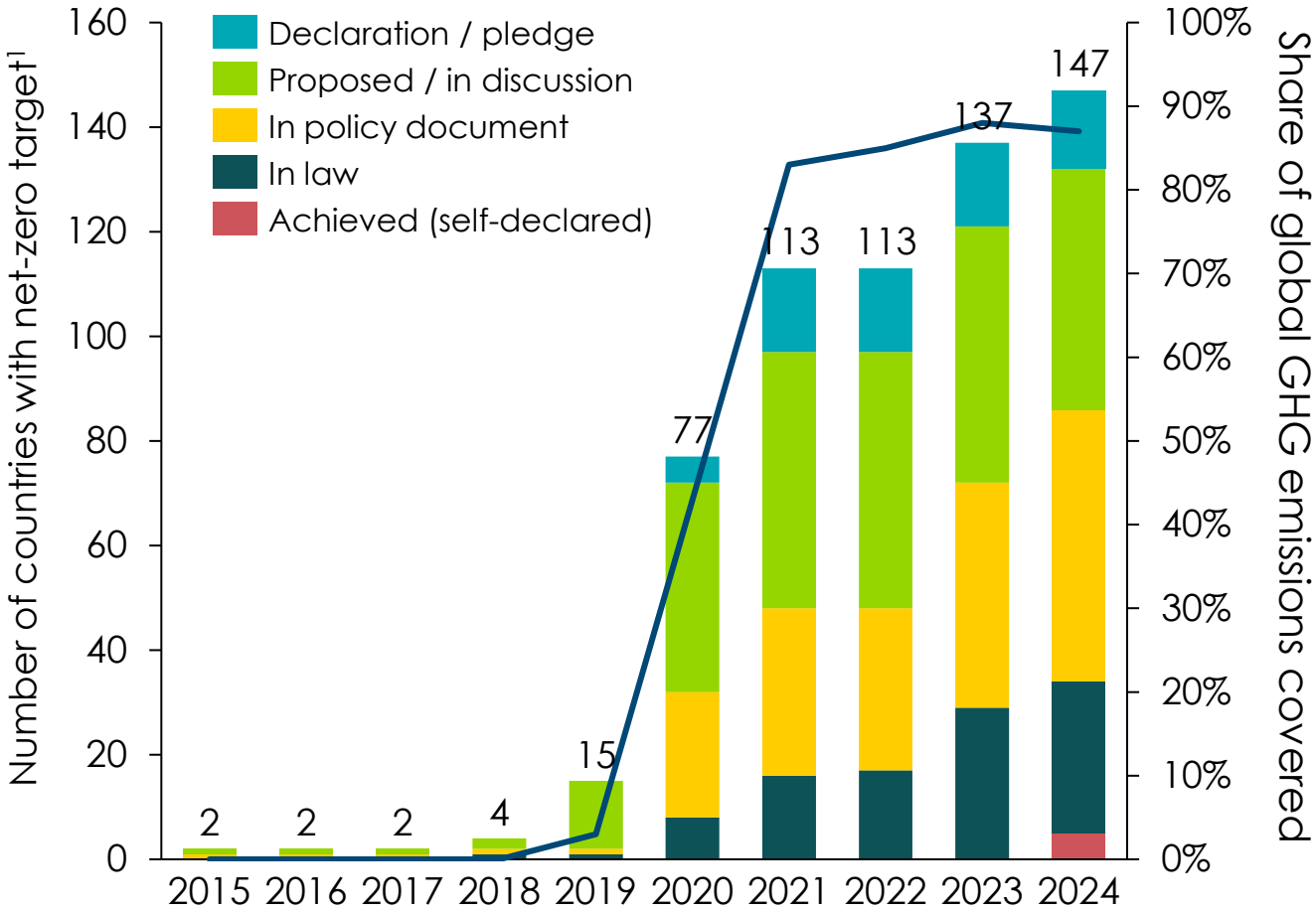
How the ETC plans to counter these growing challenges



Recent years have seen significant progress in net zero commitments

A growing number of countries are committed to net-zero

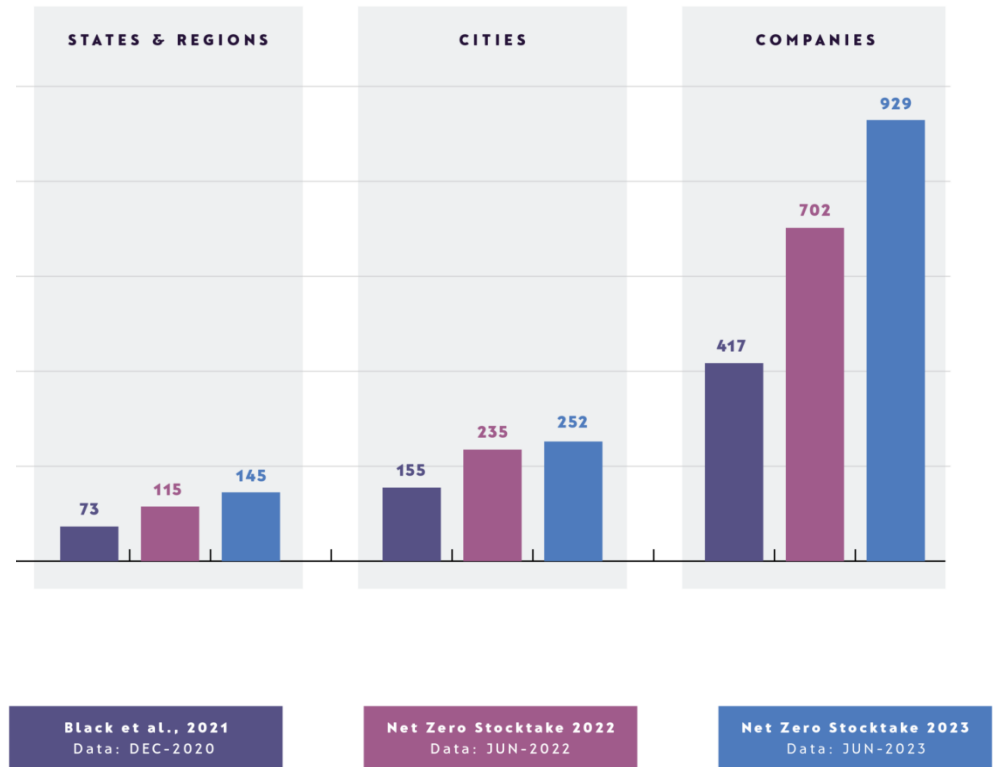
2015-2024



Note: Figures for 2023 estimated.
Source: Data from Net Zero Tracker (zerotracker.net) accessed on 13/02/2025

A growing number of entities have set net-zero targets

2021-2023

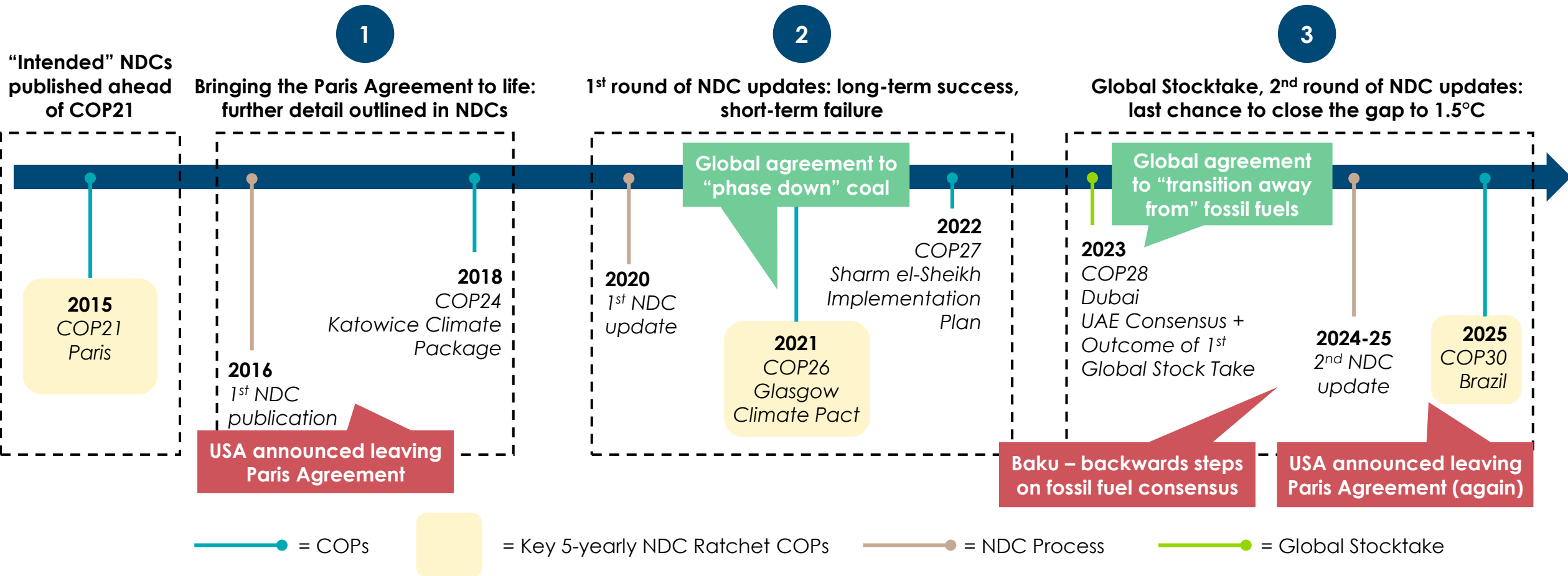


Source: Net Zero Climate (Accessed 2025); Global Net Zero Progress

Recent COPs, up to COP28 have been a driver of positive change

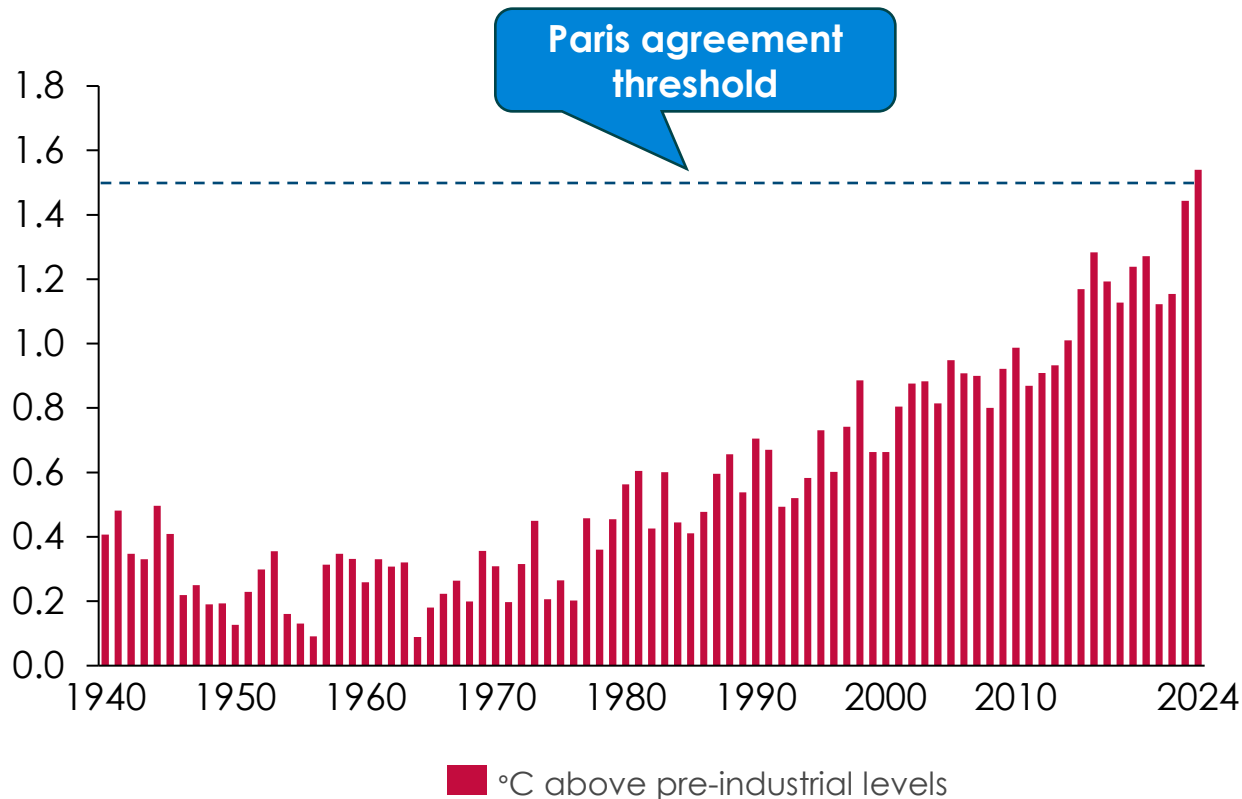
Timeline of UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs)

2015-2025



However, 2024 saw the Paris agreement threshold breached for the first time, accompanied with many catastrophic weather events

Global surface air temperature anomalies with reference to pre-industrial period (1850-1900)



Catastrophic weather events continue to occur

BBC

More than 200 killed in Valencia floods as torrential rain hits another Spain region

The Guardian

Greek officials evacuate residents as wildfire moves 'like lightning' | Greece

Sky News

California firefighters battling wildfire sweeping exclusive Los Angeles hillside dotted with celebrity homes

Mongabay

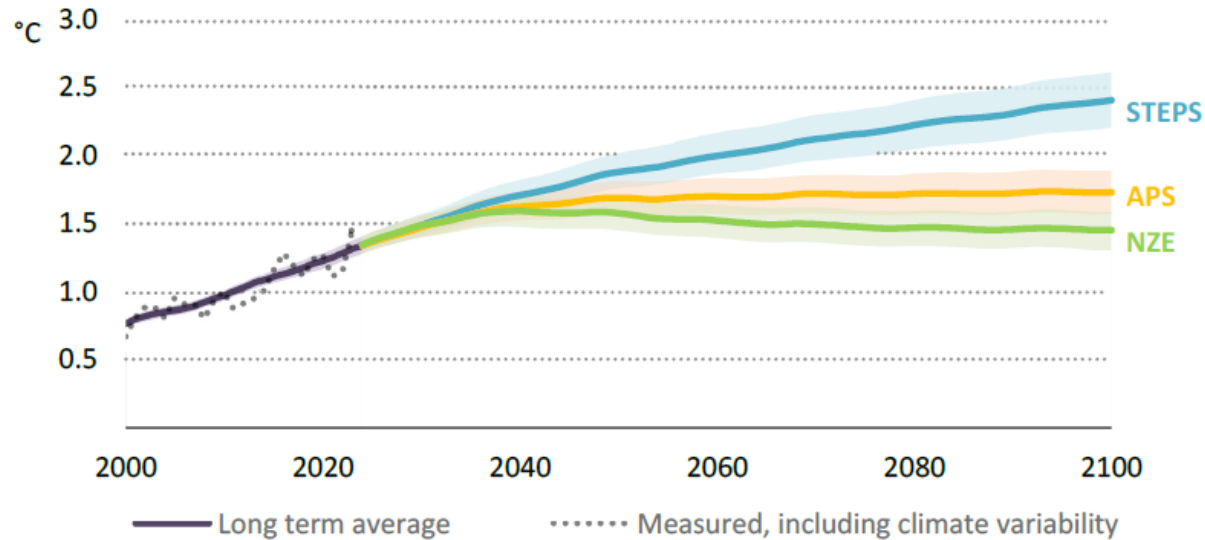
At least 11,500 deaths linked to extreme weather in 2024



The latest IEA STEPS temperature was +2.4°C, before election of Trump

Global average temperature rise including natural variability

Degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900)



IEA. CC BY 4.0.

- Transition from stated policies (STEPS) to announced pledges (APS) **not occurring**
- Latest STEPS temperature +2.4°C and has **not come down in recent years**
- **The world is heading for more warming**

In the STEPS, the temperature rise reaches 2.4 °C in 2100; in the APS it reaches 1.7 °C, and in the NZE scenario it peaks below 1.6 °C and then falls to below 1.5 °C in 2100



Notes: Solid line is median warming; shaded area is 33-67% confidence interval. Temperature rise above pre-industrial levels is the combined land and marine near-surface annual temperature compared with the 1850-1900 average.

Source: International Energy Agency (2024), *World Energy Outlook 2024*.

The climate debate is highly **politicised and polarised** as we move from ambition to action. **Disinformation** remains rife and fuels the **anti-net-zero narrative and back-tracking on commitments**.

Trump vows to leave Paris climate agreement and 'drill, baby, drill'



German minister threatens
'indefinite driving bans' on
weekends **POLITICO**

New Zealand to push through law to reverse ban
on oil and gas exploration 

Japan Must Curb Clean Power
Reliance, Warns Leadership
Candidate **Bloomberg UK**



Trump elected in November 2024 – wider climate consensus challenged

US rolling back climate initiatives

- **Pulled out of Paris Agreement** (again)
- **Paused renewables permitting**
- **Paused Green New Deal investments/subsidies**
- **“National Energy Emergency”**
- **Lifted freeze on LNG permitting**
- **Republican senators criticize ‘woke capital’ & challenge IEA**

Climate coalitions unravelling

- **GFANZ** (Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero)
 - Restructure: dropped requirement to be Paris aligned & publish targets and progress; new CEO-led focus on mobilising capital in EMDCs
 - Over 700 members in 2024, members leaving sub-alliances (i.e. NZBA)
- **NZBA** (Net Zero Banking Alliance – over 140 members in 2025)
 - 11 banks have left: 6 largest U.S. banks, 4 Canadian & 1 Australian
- **NZAMI** (Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative – 325 signatories as of Jan '24)
 - Major companies have left e.g., Blackrock in 2025, Vanguard in 2022
 - Suspended activities to track signatory implementation and reporting in January 25
- **Oil and gas companies revising transition targets**

Additional factors

- **Erosion of trust in media** contributes to heightened risk of disinformation
- **Musk’s** takeover of X
- **Zuckerberg’s** removal of Meta fact-checking



Potential new global order: US Petrostate vs Chinese Electrostade

USA – the dominant petrostate?



- **Expanding oil and gas production** past record levels
- **Largest exporter of gas**, 4th highest oil exporter
- **Rolling back renewable support**
- **Disbanded USAID** & continuous **threats to invade allies**

VS

China – the emerging Electrostade?



- **Expanding renewable production** past record levels
- **Largest exporter of green tech** & moving into **new markets** (offshore wind in Europe)
- **2024 coal imports hit record high**
- **China emissions plateaued in 12 months to Feb 2025** (could this finally be peak Chinese emissions?)



Source: The Guardian (2024), *How the US became the world's biggest fossil fuel state*; Reuters (2025); *China's coal imports hit record high in 2024*; Carbon Brief (2025);
Analysis: *Record surge of clean energy in 2024 halts China's CO2 rise*

Where are we now in Europe – signals are uncertain



Launch of simplification plan & competitiveness compass; climate initiatives (e.g., Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive & Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) under review

- Continued commitment to **phasing out new ICE vehicles by 2035** with vehicles running exclusively on carbon-neutral e-fuels exempt & working towards **full implementation of ETS2**
- However, there have been some setbacks...
 - **Lack of focus on implementation**, some feeling new commission need to “redefine the rules”
 - Sep 2024 - several member **states failed to transpose necessary legislation for ETS2 into national law**



- **Clean power grid:** 50% from clean sources in 2024
- **Coal phase out planned:** 2025 targeted
- **Fossil expansion targeted:** Meloni seeking to be Europe's southern “gas hub”



- **High renewable share:** 43% of energy from wind and solar in 2024
- **Ambitious targets:** 81% renewables by 2030
- **Committed to transition:** net zero 2050 target



Front running CDU **committed to net zero by 2045** but:

- Would abolish **Buildings Energy Act** (renewable heat) and **reverse ban on combustion engines**
- Maintain **coal phaseout date** of **2038**



- Government committed to net zero with **very clean grid** (68% nuclear, 12% wind and solar)
- **Rising opposition from RN** which aim to **exit European energy rules** that “set prices and weaken French competitiveness”.

In sum: Europe still committed to net zero, but pushback on pace prevalent. Transition progress speed is at risk, with large space for ETC to influence.



Climate cooperation needed amidst geopolitical uncertainty

Climate change

FINANCIAL TIMES

China, Europe and UK should form climate coalition apart from US, energy expert says

Lord Adair Turner advocates for 'pull together' of rest of the world to accelerate shift to green energy

A role for India in South-South climate cooperation

India can position itself as a leader in the global transition to a low carbon pathway, through transparent processes and equitable partnerships

An agenda for UK-China climate cooperation

Why joint action can and should transcend political challenges



European Union

Baltic states leave Russian power grid in closer EU integration

The Guardian



- **China stepping up climate finance at COP 29** – were willing to offer more if other western countries did (but they did not). The US withdrawal from Paris may compound this effect.
- **China's carbon price reached a high** of almost \$15/tonne in October 2024. This is still some distance from the EU price of ~\$85/tonne.



- **India made good renewable progress in 2024**, added ~30 GW of renewable energy capacity, bringing total installed renewable capacity to 210 GW.
- **However, India dismayed by lack of progress on finance at COP29; a lowball NDC may be put forward** to “reflect the disappointment of COP29 outcome on climate finance in Baku”.



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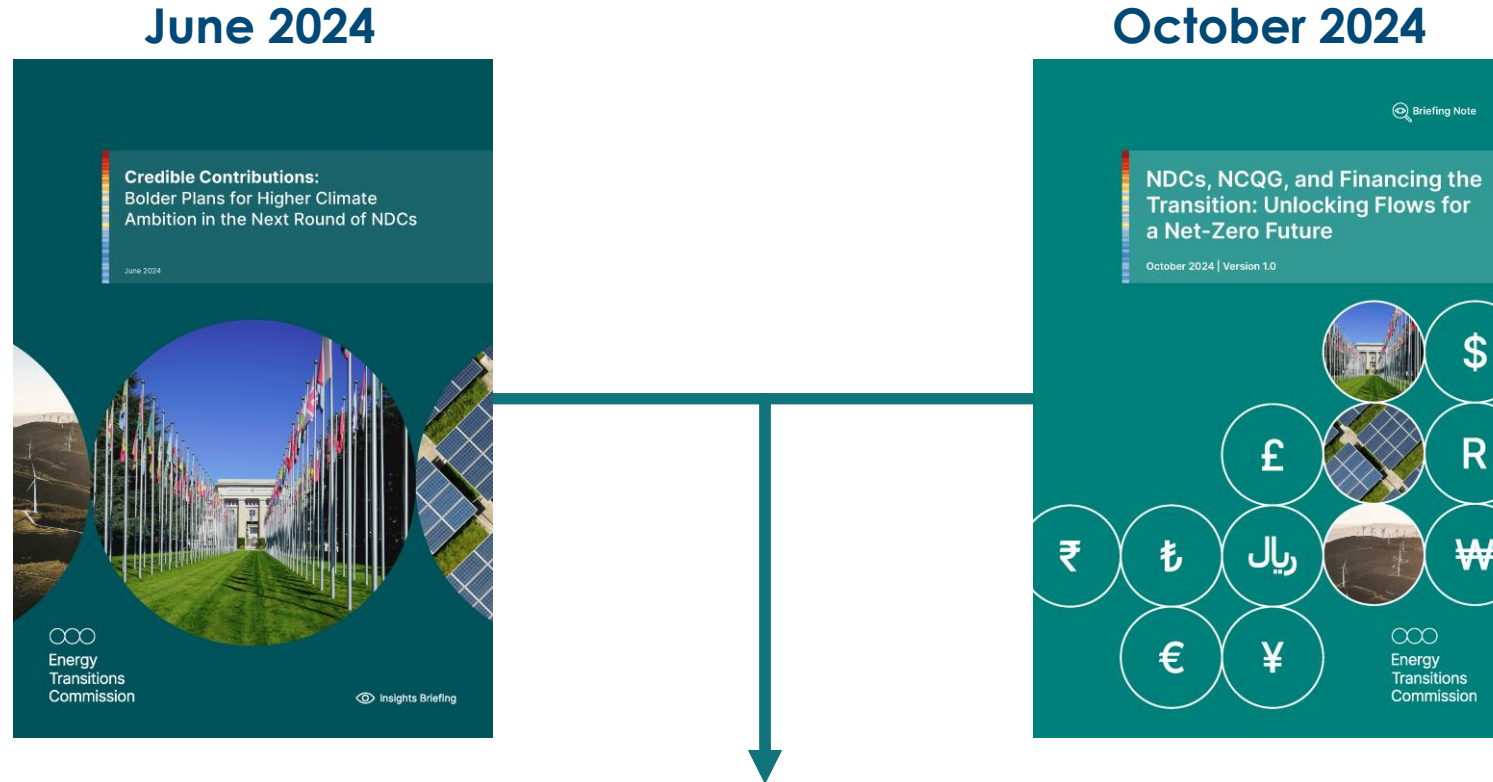
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ETC released 2 COP focused Insights Briefings in 2024



- Clear checklist for NDCs: **more ambitious targets**, **define links between targets and policy**, contain **absolute or equivalent emissions targets**, and to **identify the investments required**
- New 2035 targets reflecting policy commitments and tech progress **could almost triple ambition**
- **Greater clarity required from NCQG** required for funds to flow

Source: ETC (2024), *Credible Contributions: Bolder Plans for Higher Climate Ambition in the Next Round of NDCs*; ETC (2024), *NDCs, NCQG, and Financing the Transition: Unlocking Flows for a Net-Zero Future*

Other COP29 outcomes: lack of substantial progress

Grids and storage pledge – official recognition of need, but lacking detail on how

- **Commitment to deploying 1,500 GW of energy storage by 2030** – a 6-fold increase from 2022
- Commitment to add or refurbish 25 million km of grids by 2030 → although **target will need to accelerate** to meet IEA's projections of 65 million km by 2040
- **Lacking in detail** on how these targets will be met (e.g., no formal investment target)

Article 6 – operationalised but challenges remain

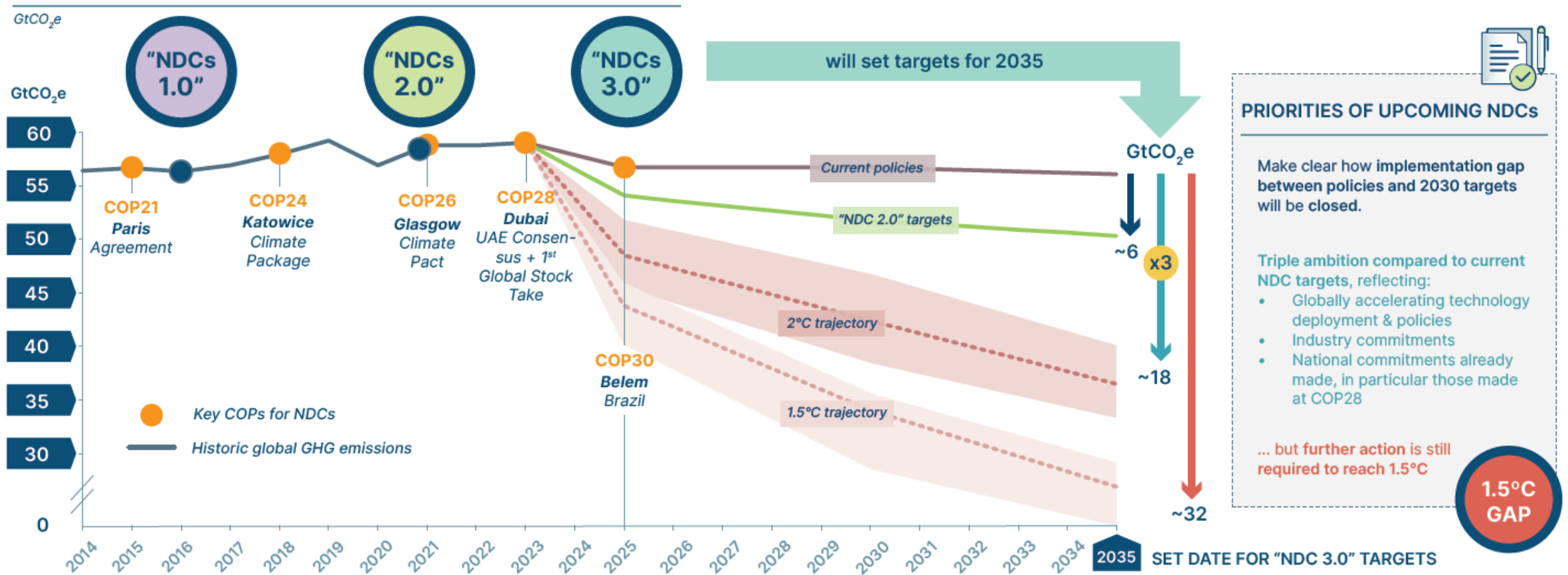
- After a decade of negotiations, Article 6 was operationalised, **allowing countries to transfer carbon credits** to meet NDCs
- **Weak consequences** for “inconsistencies”
- Messy compromise on the registry to track trade in credits – “dual layer” international + national system

No further commitment/reinforcement of reduction in fossil fuels



NDCs must be much more ambitious to put the world on track for 2°C

HISTORY AND PROJECTIONS OF NDCs AND GLOBAL GHG EMISSIONS



Source: ETC (2024), *Credible Contributions: Bolder Plans for Higher Climate Ambition in the Next Round of NDCs*

But countries are still off-track to meet 2030 NDCs, creating an even more challenging global context for 2035 NDCs

Country	2030 NDC	1.5C compatible?	Expected to meet this?
US	50-52% reduction Below 2005 levels	No	No – expected to fall 23-37% short
China	28% above 2010	No	Mostly yes – Will overachieve renewables targets and peak emissions before 2030, not likely to meet carbon intensity target
EU	55% reduction Below 1990 levels	No	No – expected to fall 3-9% short
India	103% above 2010	No	On track to meet some elements (e.g., non-fossil capacity)



The road to Belem, COP30

Priorities for COP30 have yet to be announced. However, there are many emerging agendas:

1. **NDCs 3.0:** Delivery of new ratchet of national climate targets
2. **Climate Adaptation:** Develop a collective vision and prioritisation for adaptation based on NDCs and National Adaptation Plans.
3. **Just Transition:** Develop inclusive economic models that prioritise equity, ensuring fairness in the energy transition.
4. **Climate and Nature Finance:** Agree on the roadmap to unleash 1.3 trillion dollars per year as set out in the NCQG. Address gaps by mobilising financial resources through governments and private sector partnerships.
5. **Deforestation and Forest Protection:** Shift from traditional approaches to investment-driven solutions, with the **Tropical Forest Finance Facility (TFFF)** as a flagship initiative.
6. **Energy Transition:** Accelerate financing for critical energy transitions, positioning Brazil's clean energy matrix as a global model for sustainable development



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Without broader political buy-in the transition is starting to falter

2015-2022 → **Rising acceptance** of technical and economic feasibility



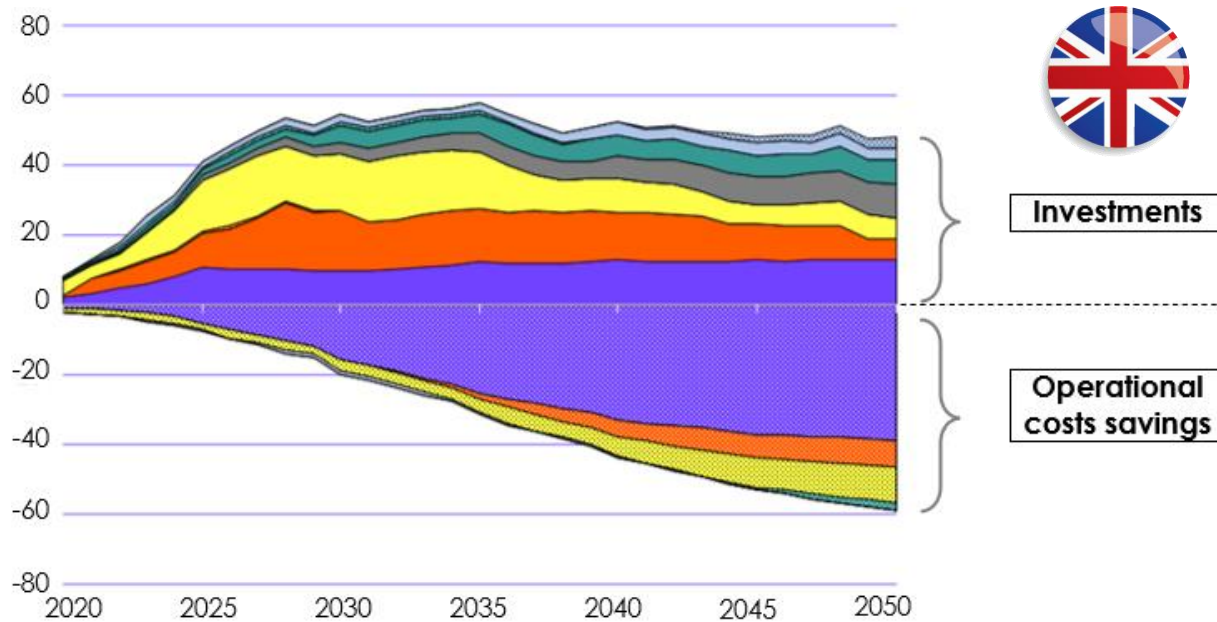
2023-Present → **Increasing pushback** on political support



Some groups have overemphasised short-term benefits while not accounting for upfront investment

Capital and investment costs and savings, net zero pathway

Billion GBP per year, UK



Surface transport Electricity supply
Buildings Networks

Green new deal narrative overstated?

- Well paid green jobs
- Lower bills now
- Reduced price volatility

While benefits accrue in long-term, **near-term investments outweigh cost savings**

The critical reason for the energy transition is that the **costs of inaction are massive**

Question: Have we understated short-term monetary costs?

“Mis- and disinformation are delaying urgent action” – IPCC

“Despite scientific certainty of the anthropogenic influence on climate change, misinformation and politicisation of climate-change science has created **polarisation in public and policy domains...limiting climate action.**

Vested interests have generated rhetoric and misinformation that **undermines climate science and disregards risk and urgency.** Resultant public misperception of climate risks and polarised public support for climate actions is **delaying urgent adaptation planning and implementation”**



Coordinated actors stall the transition through three channels



DENIALISM:
RESURGENT

1. Undermines the existence or impacts of climate change



DELAYISM:
DOMINANT

2. Misrepresents scientific data



GREENWASH:
ON THE RISE

3. Falsely promotes 'solutions' that are ineffective or counterproductive

Disinformation continually outperforms verified science online, even when the latter is actively supported by platforms



7 climate-sceptic pages → 12 times more engagement than Facebook's Climate Science Center

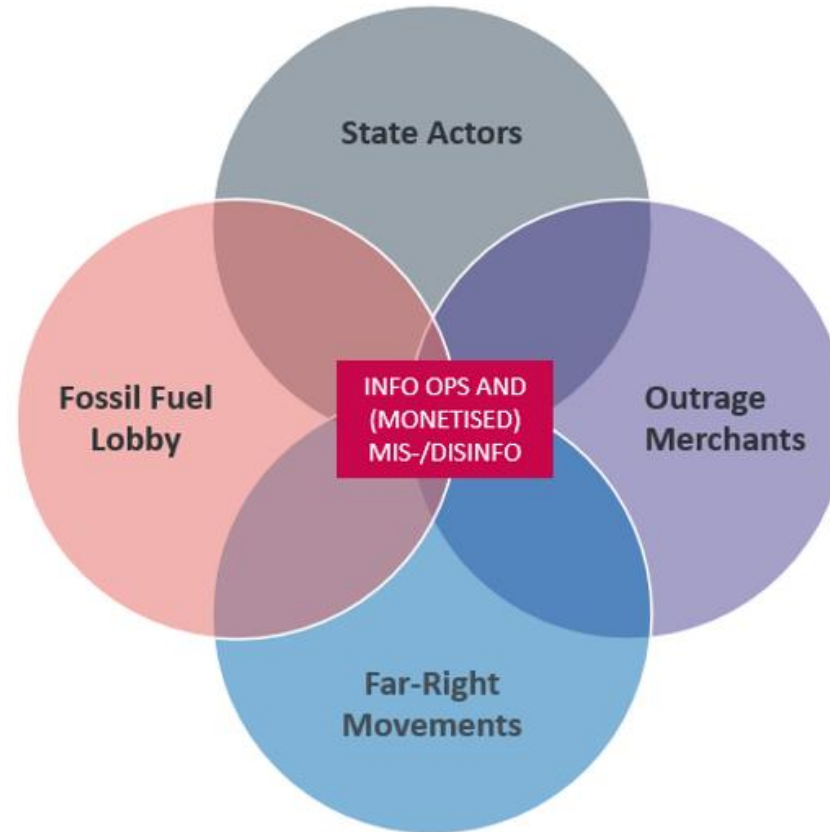


Source: ISD (2022-23), *Deny Deceive Delay*

Four sets of key actors, driven by growth in platform or business profits

- *Professionalised StratComms*
- *Reliant on proxy networks*
- *Unmatched investment*
- *Carefully honed tactical playbook*
- *Focused objectives*

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE CARBON ECONOMY



- *'Trial and error' approach to messaging*
- *Reliant on (dis)influencers and digital outlets*
- *Opportunistic and reactive to news cycle*
- *Ambiguous or diverse objectives (profit, status etc.)*

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ATTENTION ECONOMY



Playbook for anti-climate comms: attack from all angles

Non-traditional gatekeepers

Millions of people exposed to climate mis/disinformation when browsing. This includes:

- The Manosphere
- Anti-vaxx groups
- Wellness influencers
- 'Intellectual Dark Web'
- Far-right pundits
- Conspiracy movements



Harassment of climate scientists

Counter-narrative paints climate scientists as villains to be blamed and attacked.



Climate lockdown: new conspiracy

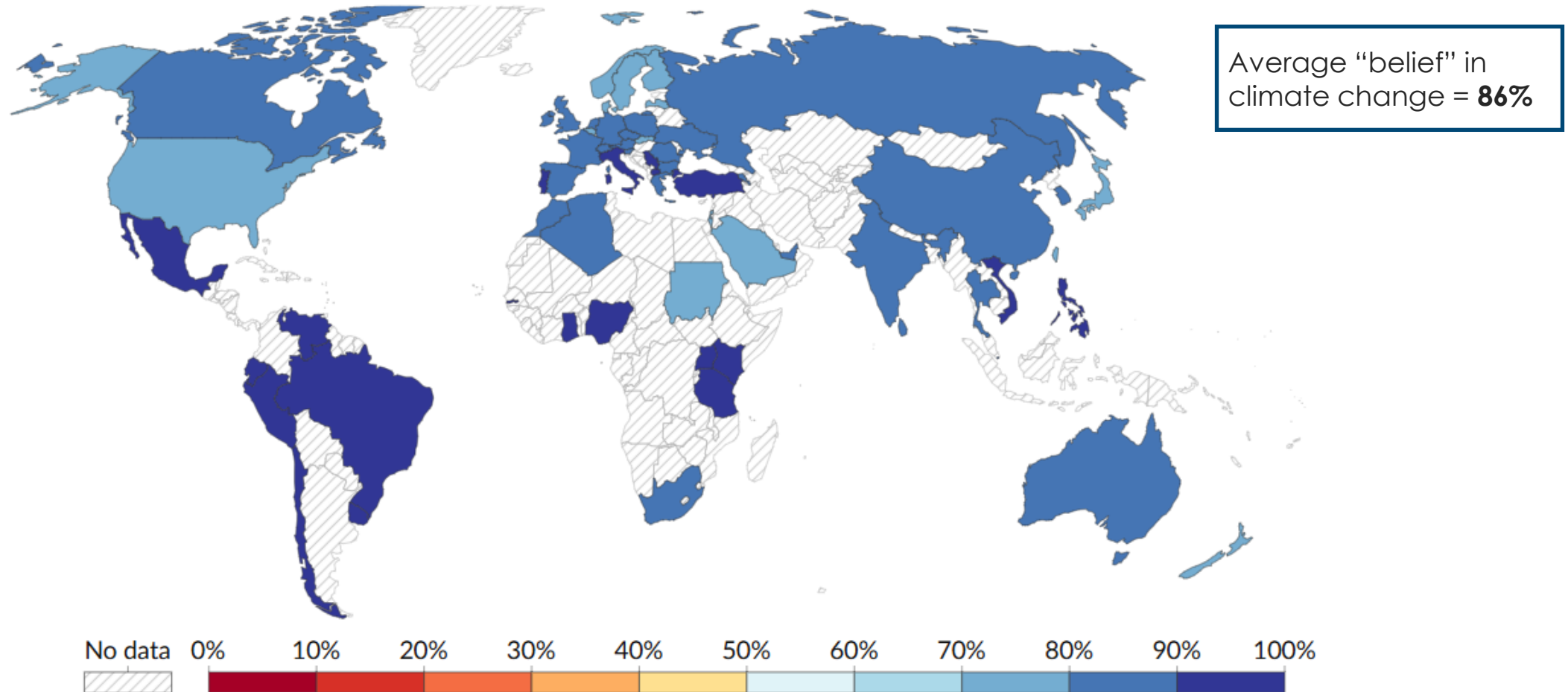
False dramatized policies created to drum up anger against 'woke climate lobby'



Despite misinformation, the global majority still believe in climate change

Share of people who believe in climate change and think it's a serious threat to humanity

Average score of beliefs on climate change on a scale of 0 to 100, 2023



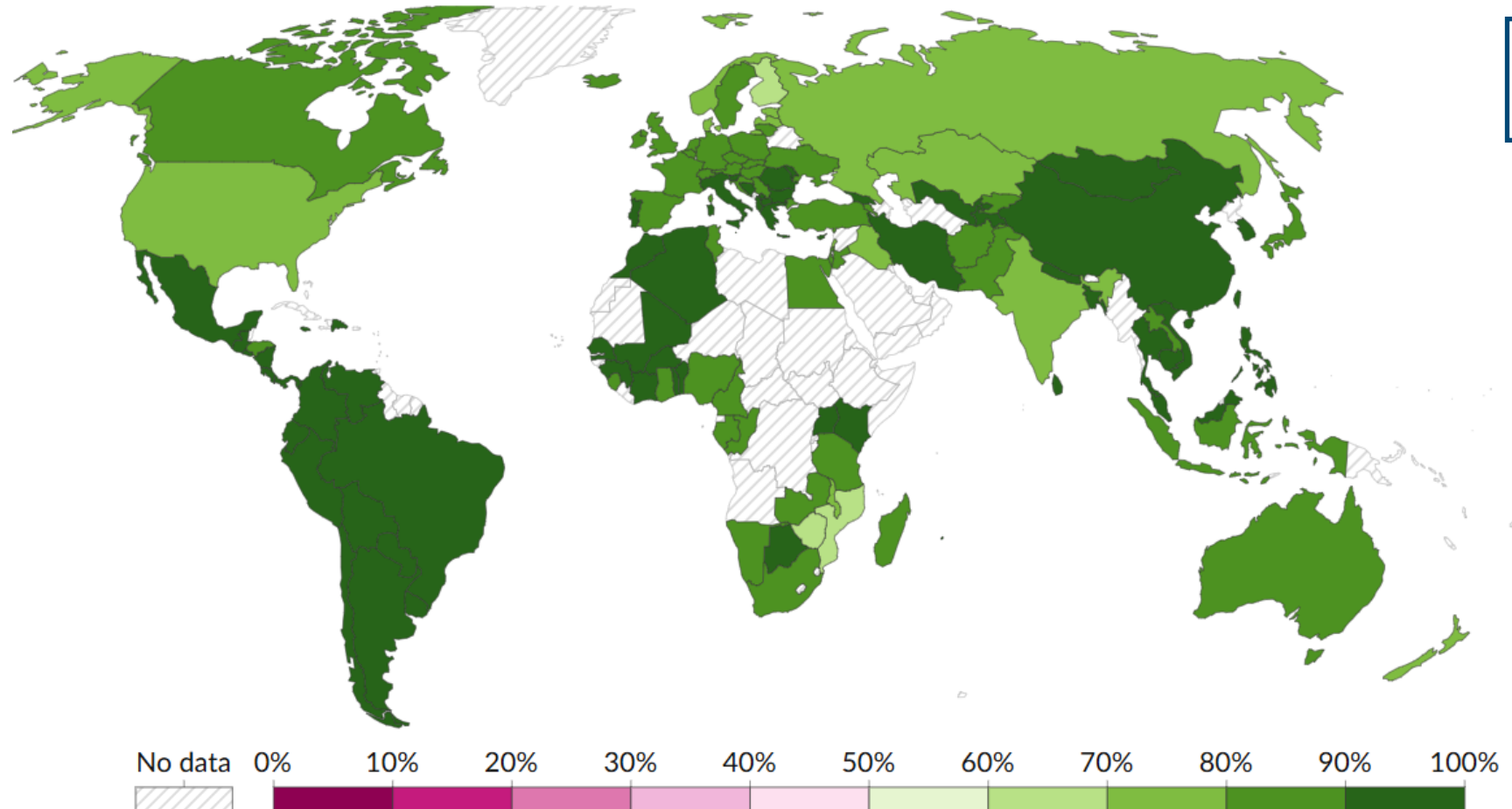
Notes: Survey data across 60,000 participants from 63 countries. The four questions asked were: Whether action was necessary to avoid a global catastrophe? Are humans causing climate change? Is it a serious threat to humanity? Is it a global emergency?
Source: Vlasceanu et al. (2024), *Addressing climate change with behavioural science: A global intervention tournament in 63 countries.*



Most people also believe their government should do more to fight it

Share of people who say their government should do more to tackle climate change

Average score from 0 to 100 to "Do you think the national government should do more to fight global warming, 2024"



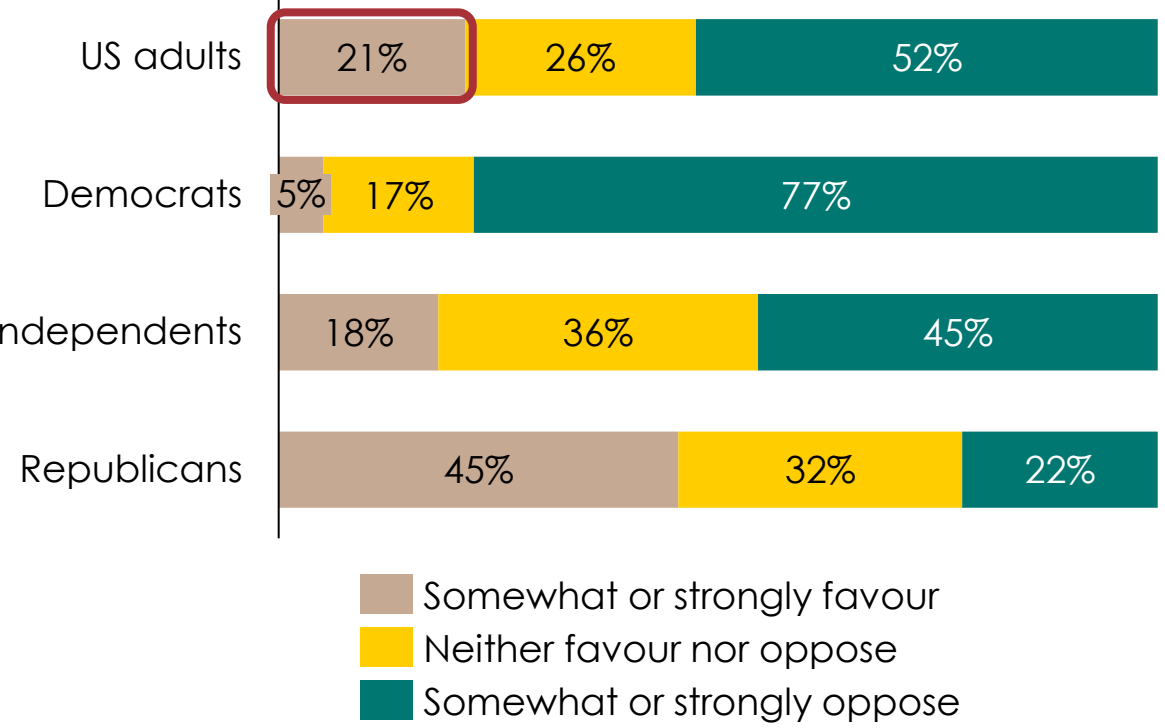
Notes: Survey data across 130,000 participants from 125 countries.
Source: Andre et al. (2024), *Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action*

Small proportion of voters have outsized influence

Over half US adults oppose leaving Paris treaty

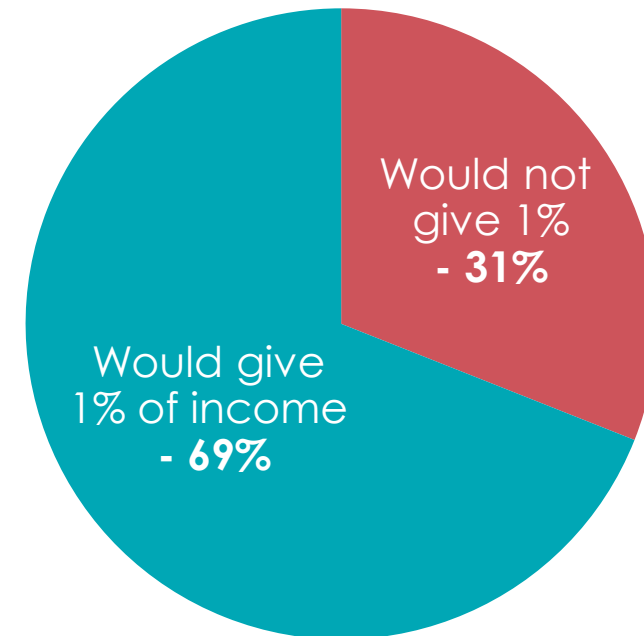
Percent who would ___ withdrawing from Paris Agreement

Only **21%** of US adults wanted to leave the treaty!



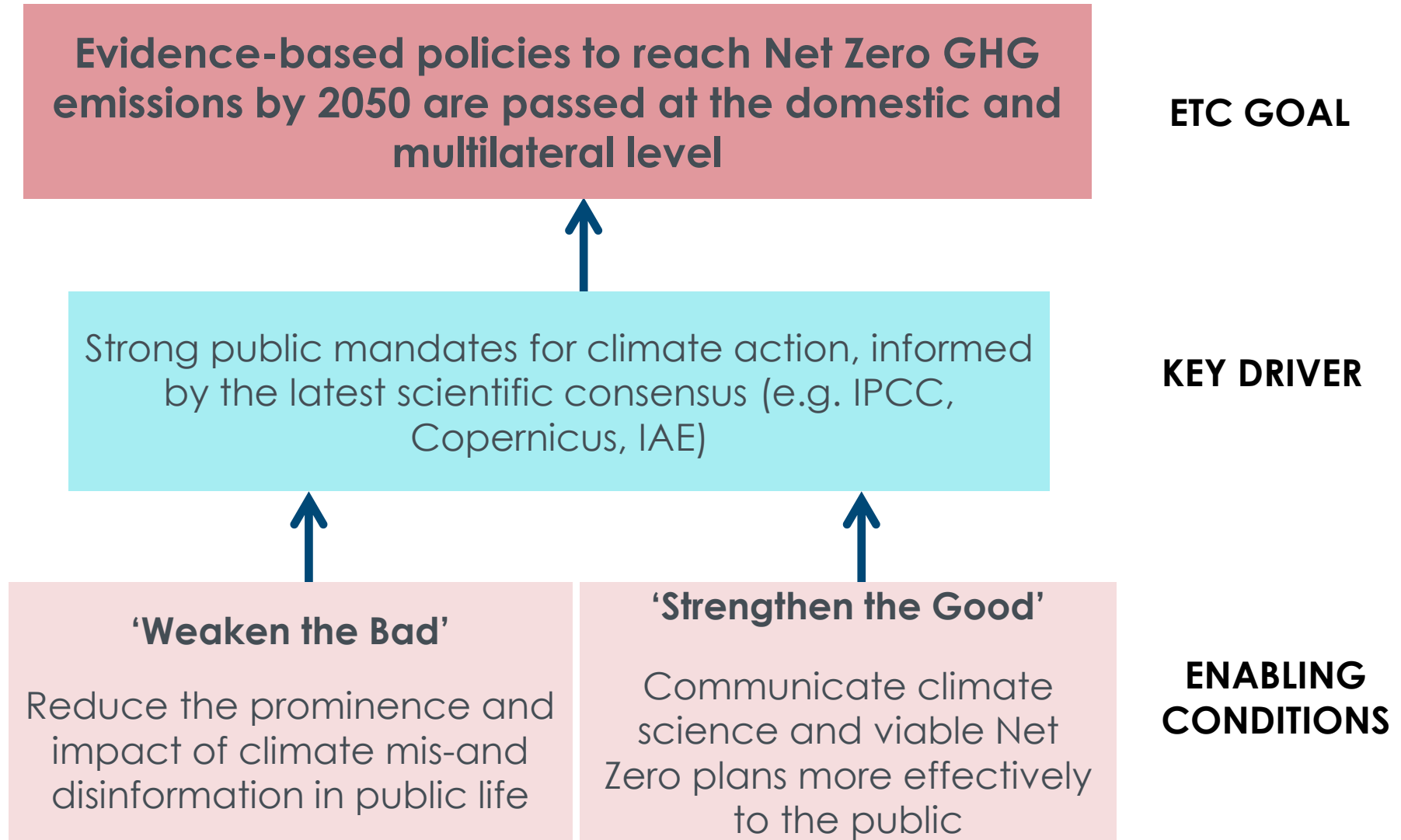
Large global majority willing to pay

Percentage that would give 1% of income to tackle climate change



Notes: US results based on interviews with 1,150 US adults conducted Jan 9-13 2025. Margin of error is +/- 3.9 percentage points for full sample. Global survey data across 130,000 participants from 125 countries. Source: The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research; Andre et al. (2024), *Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action*

ETC can foster greater change by moving from information to action



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ETC successfully laid out the energy transition globally and built credibility

Phase 1

2018-2020

Establishing the feasibility of Net Zero



From 80% decarbonisation to 100% = Net Zero

Demonstrated that clean energy (incl. hydrogen) can decarbonise the last 20% of emissions, with manageable costs

Phase 2

2020-2023

Describing the path to achieve Net Zero



The clean energy system will be dominated by **electrification**, with supplementary roles for bio, H2, CCUS and CDR

Full detail on the required technologies, shape of the system, what needs to happen to scale up, costs, and implications for policymakers and businesses

Phase 3

2023-

Implementation bottlenecks



Permitting, grids, supply chains, resources

Insights briefings and Solutions Toolkits for policymakers, developers, business and civil society

Selected achievements

- ✓ Net-zero by mid-century now the accepted goal.
- ✓ Visions for role of clean electricity consistently increasing.
- ✓ Pathways for the hard-to-abate sectors now clear, projects taking off.

Greater outreach will be required to reach wider audiences

Direct Outreach

- For example: universities, climate youth groups, green faith groups, business schools, political/green parties

Erasmus
University
Rotterdam



Keele
UNIVERSITY



Global Climate Innovation Coalition



Increased collaboration with key groups

- Partnerships
 - Mission 2025: On steering group "Hero programme"
 - WMB: FF demand taskforce

MISSION 2025

WE MEAN
BUSINESS
COALITION



Energy & Climate
INTELLIGENCE UNIT



Global
Strategic
Communications
Council GSCC

Greater focus on new media

- How far should we embrace new audiences for broader appeal? (via podcasts and YouTube)

Current audiences (safe)



New middle ground



Entirely new audiences
(higher risk)



ETC Communications 2-year Programme:

Pillar 1: Disseminating ETC reports

To expand the evidence-base: helping to win ongoing debates

- **Broadening ETC presence, focusing on:**
 - Tier 1 media and non-English international media.
 - Social media
 - Key sectoral and regional events.
- **Direct engagements** through:
 - Targeted outreach campaigns
 - ETC Matters newsletter

Pillar 2: Repackaging existing insights

To inform and explain: dispelling myths, correcting misinformation, and explaining and re-explaining complex ideas

- **Through shorter, more digestible forms. E.g.,**
 - Op-eds and articles
 - Speaking at events
 - Videos
 - Blogs
 - Infographics
 - Short explainers

Pillar 3: Informing influencers and reaching new audiences

To educate and convince: audiences previously unaware or unconvinced

- **Through audience specific** tailored content.
 - Podcasts
 - Digital story-telling
 - Social media
- Collaboration with **other communications partners** (e.g, Global Optimism, GSCC).
- **Direct outreach** with high impact interest groups (Youth/faith groups, Universities, etc.)

Towards COP30

Where should ETC place our focus/where is the real challenge?

Denialism

1) Combatting denialism – demonstrate climate change is real and a threat

- + Denialism is rising, if people don't believe there will be strong resistance to change
- Less than 15% of people don't believe, many entrenched, limited gains, high pushback

Salience

2) Ensuring salience – move climate change up voter's agenda

- + Climate change often not top priority, costs discounted, benefits seem unattainable
- Hard to make people more focused without being overly 'Doomer'

Education

3) Providing education – climate conscious voter to recognise effective policy

- + Many "green" parties don't have effective policies (nuke closure, onerous P&P)
- Highly localised issue, may require many resources and partners on the ground

Economic Impacts

4) Explaining economic impacts – illustrate aggregate costs and distributional effects

- + Many unaware of wider picture (cost curves, scaling benefits, access to tech)
- Competing citizen priorities (increased cost of living and low income growth)

Progress

5) Outlining progress – explaining where positive progress is being made

- + ETC's traditional expertise, can counter adverse narratives by sharing good stories wider
- Positive progress often discounted, not as popular with media as negative stories