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Climate Change Communication

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Planning for coastal hazards, climate change, and sea level rise in Washington State

Jamie Mooney, Washington Sea Grant
Rachel Aronson, Department of Ecology
Nicole Faghin, Washington Sea Grant
Jennie Hoffman, Adaptation Insight
Mike Hogan, Port of Bellingham
Zhaoqing Yang, Pacific Northwest
National Laboratory



Session Goal

Highlight multitude of ways climate change can be incorporated into community planning processes

- Effective communication
- Network development
- Regulatory tools
- Building considerations into decision making
- Getting the right data

Communicating Climate Change

Making the case for action and
overcoming common misconceptions

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May 1, 2013

Salish Sea Conference

Why learn to communicate effectively?

- Build and maintain support
- Create shared understanding
- Overcome various hurdles



3 Step Process: Communication Strategy



1. Develop
Communication
Goal

1. Know Your
Audience

1. Frame Your
Message

Step 1: Developing Communication Goals

- Examples of goals:
 - Shape attitudes
 - Raise awareness
 - Foster a climate for change
 - Educate on an issue
 - Model behavior
 - Trigger community action
 - Hear what others think
 - Empower audience and enable to act

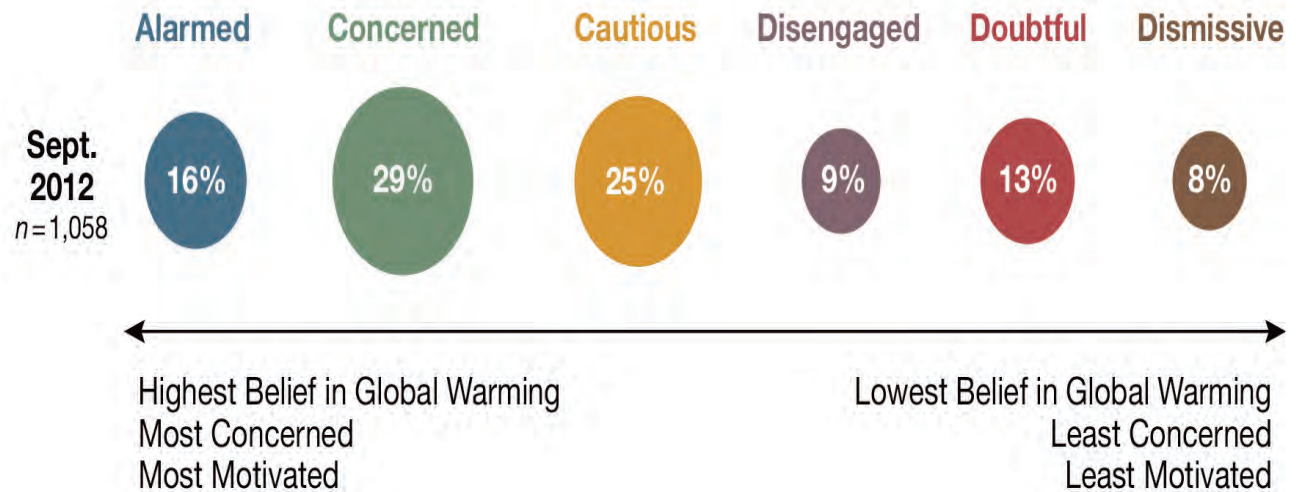
How are you going to say it?

Internal Communication	External Communication	Both
Brown-bag seminars	Public meetings	Newsletters, fact sheets, brochures
Department Meetings	Press releases and public statements	Websites and online media
Scientific briefings to decision makers	Media training events	
	Special business and nongovernmental group events	

Step 2: Get to know your audience

- Concerns/priorities
- Level of interest
- Current knowledge
- Attitudes toward climate change
- One to two key values held by this audience
- Trusted messengers

Who are you talking to?



Proportion represented by area

Source: Yale / George Mason University

Alarmed



16% of American adults

Concerned



29% of American adults

Cautious



25% of American adults

Disengaged



9% of American adults

Doubtful



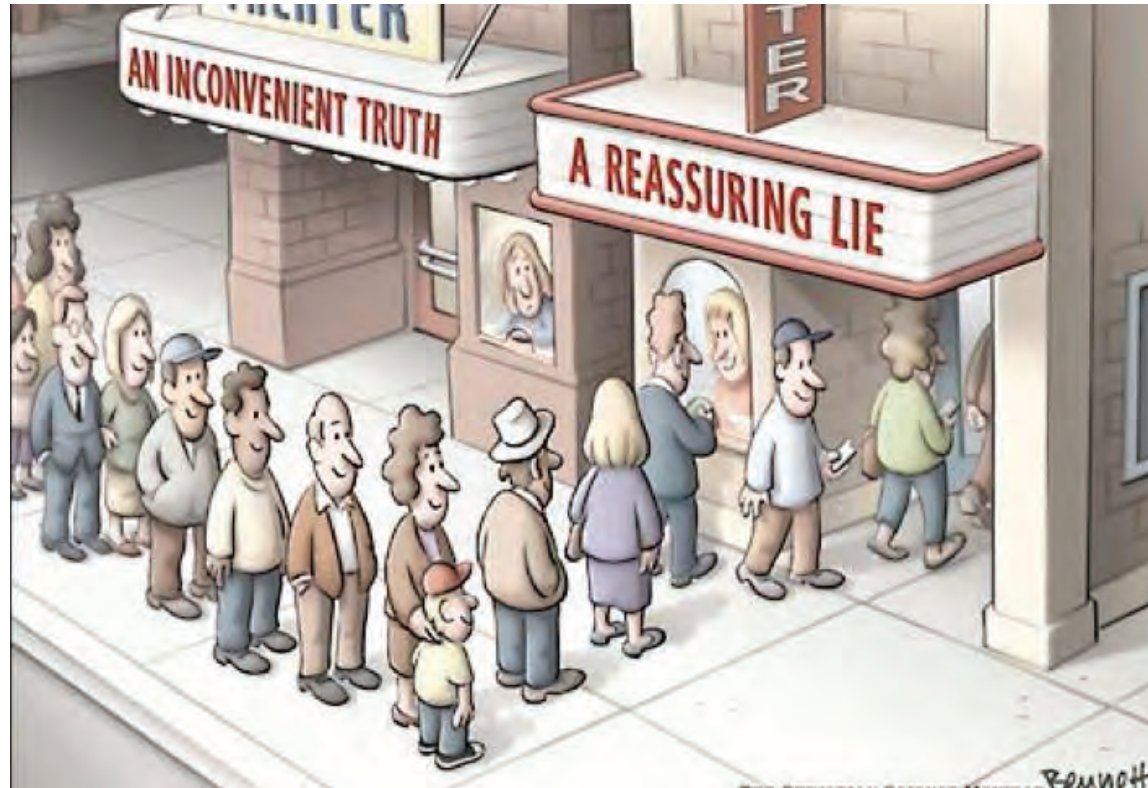
13% of American adults

Dismissive

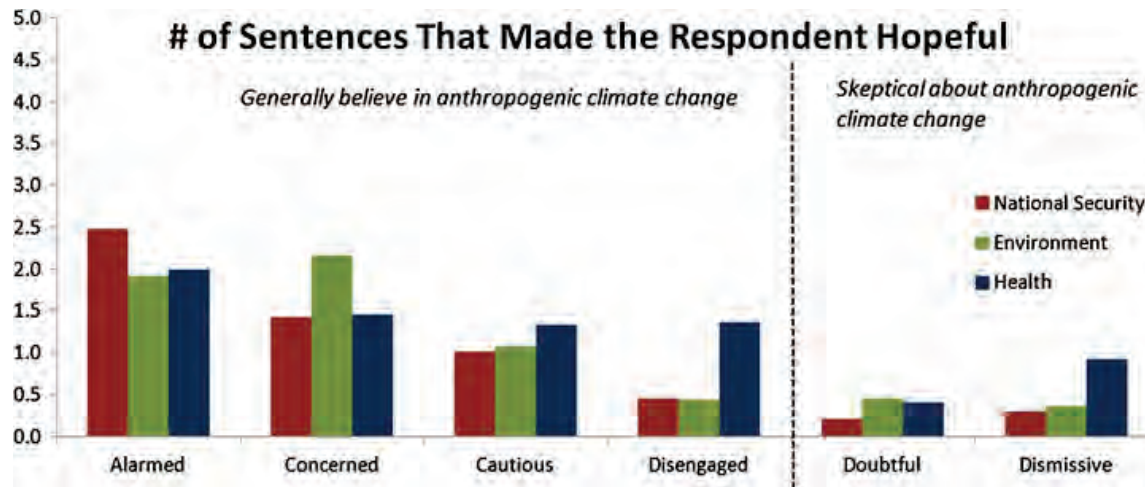


8% of American adults

Step 3: Frame the Message



Framing Example



Different frames for adaptation:
Public health, environment, national security, saving money,
getting out of the floodplain

Step 3: Frame the Message

- Talk more about local impacts happening now
 - Connect to drought or severe forest fire occurring but don't attribute a specific event to climate change
 - Connect it to the identification of vulnerabilities

Example: During the recent King Tide event, the Puget Sound inundated our local road. In the future, this might be a regular occurrence.

Frame the Message

- Connect the dots between climate change and current experiences, like increases in extreme weather
- Craft messages that are simple and memorable; repeat often
- Use imagery, metaphor, and narrative
 - Example: Melting ice caps contribute to sea level rise just as melting snows raise the level of a nearby lake or pond.

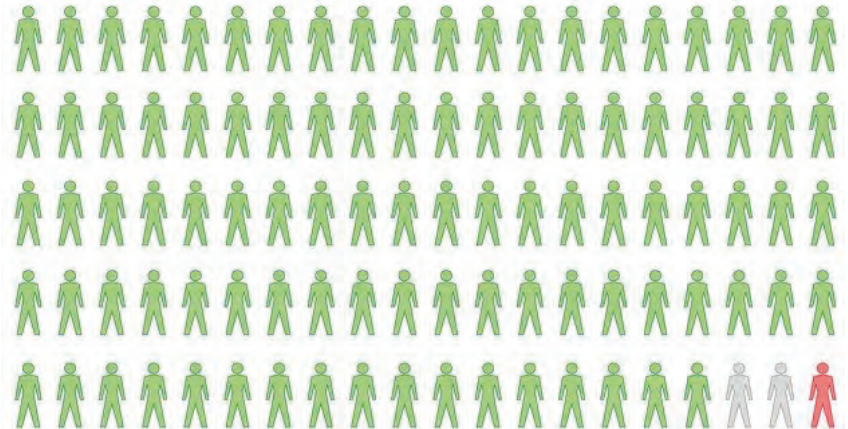
Frame the Message

- Speak to confidences vs. uncertainty.
 - We don't know how much sea level rise will rise by 2100. The range is from 6" to 18".
 - Better: The rate of sea level rise is increasing and our wastewater treatment plant is **vulnerable** in the low-lying coastal floodplain.

Frame the Message

- Compare to other scientific discoveries
 - “as certain as scientists are that smoking causes lung disease”
- Acknowledge the consensus of the field

97 out of 100 climate experts agree humans are causing global warming



Doran et al 2009, Anderegg et al 2010

<http://sks.to/consensus>

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