

# ADDRESSING RAMPANT CLIMATE DISINFORMATION

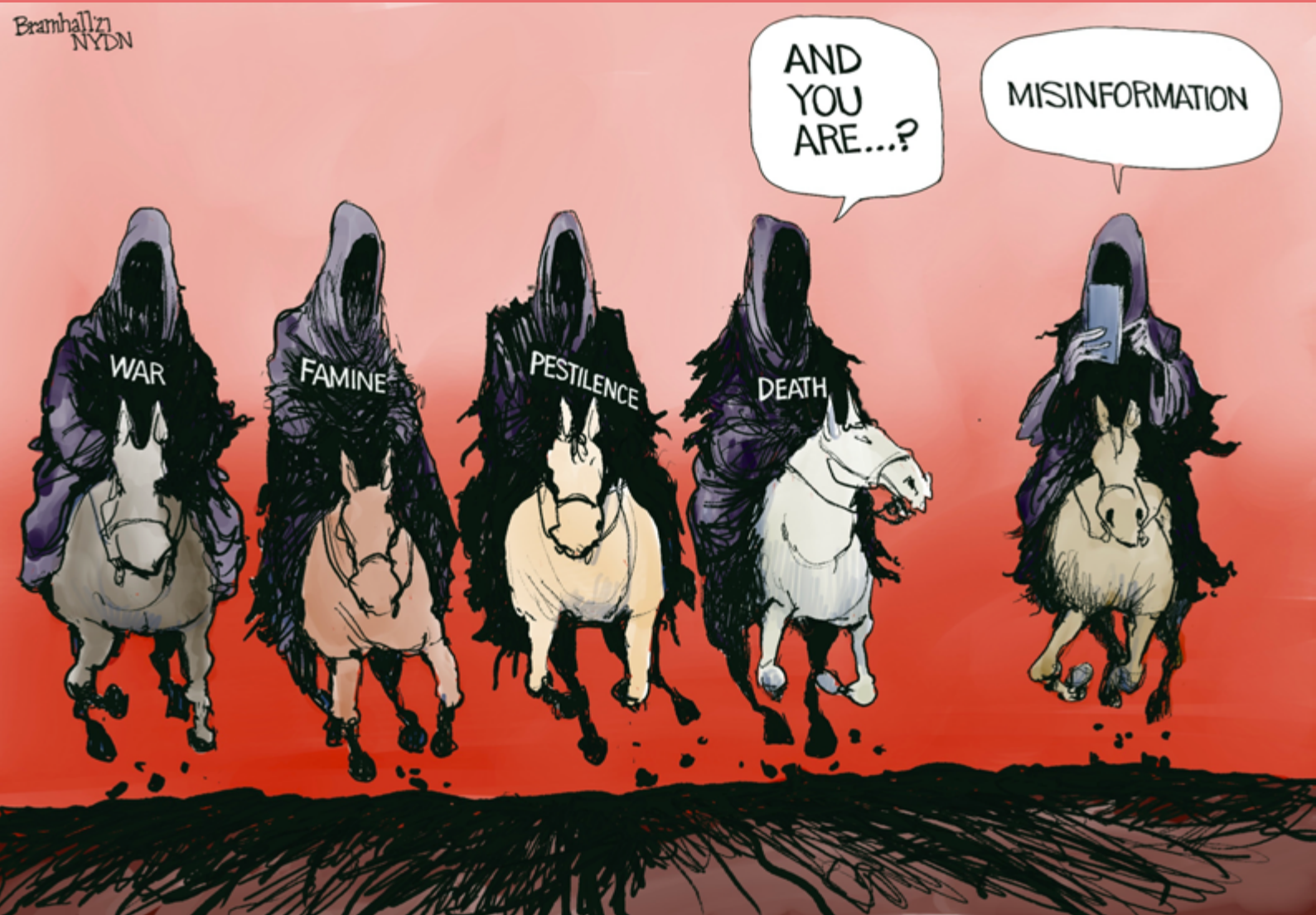


GLOBAL COVENANT  
of MAYORS for  
CLIMATE & ENERGY

# Summary

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Climate disinformation and misinformation have turned into major challenges for city officials engaged in climate action by undermining trust in institutions and leaders. Falsehoods and lies undermine public support for action, discredit efforts for change, create confusion, and sow mistrust for climate solutions. The aim of disinformation is to erode public support for change at a time when climate impacts are becoming increasingly visible and people are calling for government actions and stronger policies. At the request of its Board Members, the Global Covenant of Mayors is taking a closer look at how to respond to disinformation. This paper explores current narratives of climate denial, explores best practices and proposes proactive strategies to counter misinformation by informing, engaging, inspiring, and empowering constituents expand public understanding and support for climate action.



Source: William Bramhall, *New York Daily News*, 2021.

# Responding to a crisis of trust powered by disinformation

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Cities are on the front-row of the climate emergency. Through their actions, they can have real impacts on the lives of their residents. But while the effects of climate change are becoming more visible efforts to address the climate emergency are increasingly under attack, often by vested interest groups and their political allies opposed to climate policies.

Disinformation erodes public trust in elected officials, institutions, media, academia, and scientists. It aims for confusion, anxiety, and apathy among the public. Climate disinformation, specifically, undermines the ability of mayors and public officials to implement climate policies by spreading false narratives or lies. This fuels a crisis of trust that underlines the current polarized political debate, a rise in populism, and the “post-truth” era.

There are many examples of disinformation targeting mayors and cities engaged in climate action, which are often politically motivated and aim to derail solutions or discrediting elected officials. Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski was wrongly accused by opposition politicians of trying to force people to reduce meat consumption and replace their diets with insects, an accusation that spread through social media and the Polish press and was used by political opponents to discredit climate policies. In London, negative attacks were orchestrated against the city's ultra-low emission zone programme championed by Mayor Sadiq Khan in a failed attempt to derail his re-election campaign. More recently, organisers of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games were forced to refute a disinformation campaign that the games would be cancelled this summer because of political uncertainty.

Disinformation isn't new, but digital platforms with opaque algorithms have weaponized it on a massive scale to increase their user engagement with little to no oversight or accountability for spreading falsehoods, hate speech or other forms of disinformation. Social media and dominant digital platforms help connect people globally but have also intensified the disinformation challenge.



# What is disinformation and why should we care?

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Disinformation and misinformation are often used interchangeably but they are different. Disinformation is deliberately spreading false information to manipulate opinions and actions, while misinformation is false information spread without malicious intent but that can still be harmful. Disinformation stirs strong emotions like anger and fear, overriding rational thinking and usually serving political motives. *[While noting the differences, we will be using disinformation in this paper to mean both terms interchangeably].*

The issue has suddenly vaulted at the top of the agenda. The World Economic Forum's latest Global Risk Survey ranks "Misinformation and disinformation" as the number one short-term concern for decision-makers in 2024 (it wasn't even a top 10 concern in 2023). The survey also identified extreme weather events and environmental crises as the top long-term risks. This combination of short and long term risks underscores the urgency understand and address the impact of disinformation on the climate emergency.

Traditional methods alone are not enough to combat disinformation on digital platforms that often give a premium to divisive content. Addressing this will require regulatory and policy responses from all levels of government and society. But it is urgent to understand the scale and scope of the challenge, and find tools to respond to these attacks and lies. More than ever, open and transparent communications remains a key to restoring public understanding and trust in climate action.

## Key points to remember about disinformation

- Undermines trust in government, public institutions, and weakens democratic societies.
- Creates an alternative reality, overwhelming people and causing disengagement from reality.
- Increases societal polarization, reducing space for informed debate and consensual solutions.
- Creates tensions around scientific realities, poisoning our ability to make sound decisions, based on scientific consensus.
- Undermines faith in traditional media and other public news forums and promotes fringe or conspiracy opinions without counterweights.

## Can you recognize disinformation when you see it?

- **Check the source:** Who has published and shared the information? Is it a credible and trustworthy news source? A reliable authority on the topic? Is it a bot?
- **Check the tone:** Is the content trying to trigger a strong emotional response, which disinformation is often designed to do?
- **Check the story:** Is the story covered by a legitimate source? Has it been debunked? Do other news organizations confirm it?
- **Check the images:** Do the images show what they claim? Have they been altered or doctored?
- **Check your own biases:** Are you sharing something because it is true, or just because you agree with it?

## Climate disinformation: deny, deflect, delay...

Disinformation about the climate emergency is particularly rampant. According to the United Nations, widespread online climate disinformation distorts the dangers of the climate emergency and delays climate action. At the city level, this disinformation raises doubts about the benefits of real action and policies aimed at improving efficiency, establishing low-emissions zones, or creating 15-minute cities.

*The Climate Action Against Disinformation Coalition* defines climate disinformation and misinformation as deceptive or misleading content that:

- Undermines the existence or impacts of climate change, human influence on it, and the urgent need for action, according to IPCC scientific consensus and the Paris Climate Agreement goals.
- Misrepresents scientific data by omitting or cherry-picking information to erode trust in climate science, institutions, experts, and solutions.
- Falsely promotes efforts as supportive of climate goals when they actually contribute to warming or contradict scientific consensus on mitigation or adaptation.



Illustration by pch.vector on Freepik

While outright climate denial is fading, it is being replaced by discourses of climate delay that accept the reality of climate change but seek to justify inaction or inadequate efforts. These arguments push for minimal action, downplay the urgency, or minimize solutions. They highlight the negative social effects of climate policies and cast doubt on the possibility of effective mitigation, and ultimately undermine public and political support for climate policies:

- **Redirect responsibility:** Shifting the blame away from systemic issues and onto individuals or other countries. By suggesting that individual actions (like recycling or reducing personal energy use) or efforts from developing nations should take precedence, they divert attention from the need for comprehensive policy and industrial change. This tactic creates a perception that the responsibility lies elsewhere, thereby reducing the pressure on policymakers and corporations to act.
- **Push non-transformative solutions:** Promotes solutions that do not require significant changes to the status quo. These include technological fixes or market-based approaches that do not disrupt existing economic and social systems. For instance, focusing on carbon offsets rather than reducing emissions directly. These solutions give the appearance of action without addressing the root causes of climate change.
- **Emphasize the downsides of climate policies:** This line of argument emphasizes the potential negative impacts of climate policies, such as economic costs, job losses, or reduced individual freedoms. By highlighting these downsides, it aims to create fear and resistance among the public and policymakers. For example, arguing that transitioning away from fossil fuels will devastate industries and lead to widespread unemployment, or that carbon taxes will disproportionately affect low-income populations.
- **Surrender to climate change:** This fatalistic approach suggests that climate change is inevitable and that efforts to mitigate it are futile. It promotes adaptation over mitigation, arguing that resources should be focused on preparing for the impacts of climate change rather than trying to prevent it. This discourse can lead to a sense of hopelessness and resignation, reducing the motivation to pursue meaningful climate action.

In addition, new forms of climate denial have also emerged, attacking climate impacts, solutions, and advocates. According to the Center to Counter Digital Hate, these tactics are used because the consequences of climate change are now evident to the public. The focus is on claims that climate solutions won't work or that climate science and the climate movement are unreliable:

- **Attacking climate impacts:** Denying the severity or immediacy of climate change impacts, suggesting that the effects are exaggerated or that they will not be as catastrophic as predicted. This includes downplaying the evidence of extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss.
- **Undermining climate solutions:** Criticizing and casting doubt on the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed climate solutions. This includes arguing that renewable energy is unreliable, that electric vehicles are impractical, or that proposed policies are too expensive and will not achieve the desired results.

→ **Discrediting climate advocates:** Attacking the credibility and motivations of climate scientists, activists, and organizations. This can involve ad hominem attacks, suggesting that climate advocates are driven by financial gain, political agendas, or are hypocritical in their personal lives. The goal is to undermine trust in those who are calling for climate action.

These discourses and forms of denial collectively serve to delay meaningful climate action and maintain the status quo, despite growing public awareness and concern about climate change.

## Understanding public perceptions about climate policies

- **Citizens are feeling the impacts of climate change:** More than two thirds of Americans, 80% of European, and 91% of Chinese said they are witnessing the impact of climate change in their daily lives. *[Source: EIB Climate Survey 2022-2023]*
- **Citizens want their governments to act:** 87% of people surveyed in the European Union, 76% in China and 74% in the United States say that their governments have been too slow to act in averting climate change. *[Source: EIB Climate Survey 2022-2023]*
- **Climate action is popular:** In the UK, a recent survey showed that more than 60% of the public wanted to speed up or keep the current pace on net zero efforts; only 15% of participants wanted a slowdown. *[Source: More in Common, January 2024]*
- **Clean energy should be a priority for government:** In the United States, 63% of registered voters think developing sources of clean energy should be a high or very high priority for the president and Congress. *[Source: Climate Change in the American Mind, Spring 2024]*
- **More people care about climate change action than you think:** Support for climate action is high in most countries but most people underestimate popular support for it. *[Source: Our World in Data, March 2024]*

## How can you counter disinformation?

Disinformation is often deliberately sensational and provocative, trying to increase its reach by triggering a response that will amplify its falsehoods. As such, in some cases, the best way to deal with disinformation is not to engage with it to avoid propagating the lies. Still, there are various proactive strategies to counter disinformation.

### ✓ Inform Citizens:

Provide clear, accurate information about climate policies and solutions.

### ✓ Engage the public:

Involve communities in climate discussions and decisions.

### ✓ Inspire Action:

Highlight successful climate initiatives and their positive impacts.

### ✓ Empower People:

Equip individuals with the knowledge and tools to advocate for action.

Strategy	Approach	Example
<b>Informing Citizens</b>	<b>Provide clear, accurate information about climate policies and solutions.</b>	
Multimedia Information Campaigns	Develop campaigns using social media, TV, radio, and print media to disseminate information.	<b>Despenaderos, Argentina:</b> Used Instagram to publicize youth engagement strategies and motivations behind climate actions, with Mayor Carolina Basualdo amplifying messages on her channel.
Transparent Data Sharing	Create an online portal for real-time data on local climate conditions and initiatives.	<b>Global Covenant for Mayors:</b> Publishes an annual report for 13,000 signatory cities to showcase city-level actions and emissions reduction targets.
<b>Engaging the Public</b>	<b>Involve communities in climate discussions and decisions.</b>	
Community Workshops and Forums	Organize workshops and public forums for citizens to discuss climate issues and provide input.	<b>Paris, France:</b> Established a "Climate Academy" for public engagement through workshops, conferences, debates, films, and exhibits.
Citizen Advisory Panels	Establish advisory panels with diverse community members for ongoing feedback on climate initiatives.	<b>Hobart, Australia:</b> Created the "Hobart Climate Assembly" with 33 community members to inform the town's climate strategy, featured in Mayor Anna Reynold's newsletter to combat disinformation.
<b>Inspiring Action</b>	<b>Highlight successful climate initiatives and their positive impacts.</b>	
Case Studies and Success Stories	Share stories of successful climate initiatives to demonstrate benefits like air quality improvement.	<b>Guelph, Canada:</b> Highlights youth engagement in climate action to mobilize the community and motivate sustainable action.
Awards and Recognition Programs	Establish programs to recognize contributions to climate action.	<b>The Earthshot Prize:</b> Recognizes and celebrates climate action on local, municipal, and national levels.
<b>Empowering People</b>	<b>Equip individuals with knowledge and tools for climate advocacy.</b>	
Educational Programs and Resources	Offer educational programs and toolkits in schools, community centers, and online platforms.	<b>C40 Cities Knowledge Hub:</b> Empowers communities, especially youth, to tackle climate disinformation and promote sustainable practices, enhancing public understanding and participation in climate action.
Partnerships with Local Organizations	Collaborate with local NGOs, universities, and community groups to extend educational efforts.	<b>Menjez, Lebanon:</b> Partnered with local universities and environmental groups to support energy and environmental programs, exemplifying the power of partnerships in climate action.



# Principles of effective communications





As with most topics, effective communications about climate action is critical to counter disinformation in the media or online. But talking about climate solutions can sometimes prove tricky. However some of the same notions of effective communications also apply to this context. Here are some key principles to keep in mind when addressing this topic and countering false or negative narratives:

- **Stay positive:** Make sure you frame the issue around a positive narrative to counter the perception that climate action is all about restrictions or imposing solutions that people don't want.
- **Focus on benefits:** Ensure that the messages explain the benefits of the proposed actions in ways that most people can grasp (for instance on public health, energy savings or lower costs, etc.)
- **Be specific:** Make sure to talk about specific issues and not general trends. Facts and figures are more important than long-term objectives or vague principles.
- **It's about people:** Ultimately the most important constituents are people and the most effective communications is about people and for people. Remember not to talk down at people and meet them where they are.
- **Be creative, visual, engaging and fun...** There is no reason to be boring even when addressing this topic, which can be overwhelming to some. The same tools of effective marketing and communications should also be used to communicate effectively about climate action.

## Depending on their resources and needs, cities can employ various strategies in response to disinformation campaigns

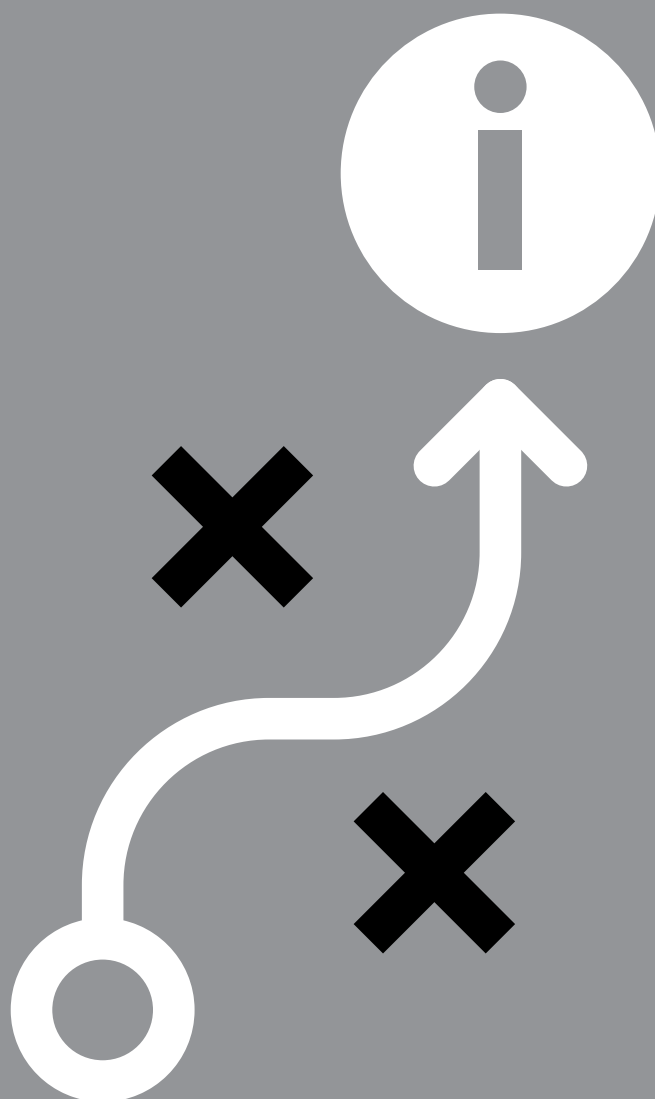
Strategy	Actions	Resources needed
<b>Transparency</b>	Cities have focused on increasing transparency in governance, project implementations, and public health measures. This helped counter mistrust and correct the record.	→ Low
<b>Social Media</b>	Utilizing social media platforms for real-time updates and fact-checking to reach a wide audience.	→ Low
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Municipal leaders often engage directly with residents through town halls, community meetings, and collaborations with local organizations. This ensures that leaders remain available and listen to concerns from their communities.	→ Medium
<b>Media Collaboration</b>	Partnerships with local and national media outlets help to quickly identify and counter false information.	→ Medium
<b>Education Campaigns</b>	Public information campaigns to educate residents about how to identify and avoid disinformation.	→ High

## Examples of recent disinformation campaigns and how cities responded to them

City	Disinformation Examples	Response
<b>Barcelona, Spain</b> 	<p>During the Catalanian independence movement, disinformation campaigns spread false claims about violent protests, exaggerated police brutality, and fabricated government actions. Campaigns aimed at creating fear and mistrust among residents.</p>	<p>Barcelona's city government increased transparency by providing real-time updates through official channels. They collaborated with local media to fact-check and debunk false information and engaged in public outreach to inform residents about the realities of the situation.</p>
<b>Cape Town, South Africa</b> 	<p>During the severe drought and water crisis in Cape Town, disinformation campaigns spread false information about the city running out of water entirely, the quality and safety of the remaining water supply, and the effectiveness of the city's water conservation measures.</p>	<p>Cape Town's government implemented a comprehensive communication strategy that included regular updates on water levels and usage guidelines. They engaged directly with residents through community meetings, social media, and collaborations with local NGOs to provide accurate information and dispel myths.</p>
<b>Nairobi, Kenya</b> 	<p>Disinformation campaigns related to urban development projects and election-related violence. False claims about land grabs, corruption in infrastructure projects. Exaggerated reports of post-election unrest aimed to destabilize public trust.</p>	<p>Nairobi's municipal leaders responded by enhancing transparency around development projects, including publishing detailed project plans and budgets. During election periods, they worked with independent observers and civil society groups to monitor and report on the situation accurately, using media and community outreach to correct false narratives.</p>
<b>Lagos, Nigeria</b> 	<p>Disinformation around security issues, particularly during the #EndSARS protests against police brutality. False claims about protester activities, government responses, and the extent of violence were prevalent.</p>	<p>The Lagos State government used social media and partnerships with reputable media outlets to provide live updates and factual information. They held press conferences and released official statements to counteract the disinformation and engaged with community leaders to ensure accurate information reached a broader audience.</p>

Fighting disinformation is complex and can often seem like an impossible task. Updating the words of Mark Twain for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and journalist Maria Ressa said, "lies travel faster than truth, especially online." This will become even more true with the wider use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), which will make it harder to know the difference between fakes and facts. This is why it will be critical to **build strategies to explain the benefits of climate actions, frame them in a positive narrative, and push back on disinformation and misinformation** to break through the wall of lies that are being promoted by opponents of change. These narratives will be key — they must focus on solutions and benefits to our citizens, ensuring they see the value and benefits in their lives, and understand how they will provide jobs, prosperity and a better future for their communities.

# ANNEX



# Glossary

<b>Astroturfing</b>	Organized activity that is intended to create a false impression of a widespread, spontaneously arising, grassroots movement in support of or in opposition to something but that is in reality initiated and controlled by a concealed group or organization.
<b>Cherry-picking</b>	Carefully selecting data that appear to confirm one position while ignoring other data that contradicts that position.
<b>Climate change counter-movement</b>	The coordinated network of actors obstructing political action on climate change, also known as climate change denial.
<b>Climate change denial</b>	The argument or belief that climate change is not happening, or is not caused by human activity such as burning fossil fuels.
<b>Climate mis-/disinformation</b>	Deceptive or misleading content that undermines the existence or impacts of climate change, the unequivocal human influence on climate change, and the need for corresponding urgent action according to the IPCC scientific consensus and in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.
<b>Debunking</b>	The practice of clearly refuting mis-/disinformation after people have encountered it.
<b>Discourses of climate delay</b>	Policy-focused discourses that accept the existence of climate change but justify inaction or inadequate efforts and exploit contemporary discussions on what action should be taken, how fast, who bears responsibility and where costs and benefits should be allocated.
<b>Disinfluencer</b>	A term that is short for 'disinformation influencer' and refers to individuals who publicly, routinely, and often intentionally persuade others to believe false claims on social media, sometimes for profit, with the specific goal of confusing or deceiving others.
<b>Disinformation</b>	False or inaccurate information deliberately aimed to confuse or deceive.
<b>Greenwashing</b>	The act or practice of making a product, policy, activity, etc., appear to be more environmentally friendly or less environmentally damaging than it really is.
<b>Hate speech</b>	Offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race, religion or gender) and that may threaten social peace.
<b>Inoculation/prebunking</b>	Pre-emptively protecting public attitudes about climate change against real-world misinformation.
<b>Lobbying</b>	Activities aimed at influencing public officials and especially members of a legislative body on legislation.
<b>Misinfluencer</b>	A term that is short for 'misinformation influencer' and refers to individuals who publicly, routinely, and often intentionally persuade others to believe false claims on social media, sometimes for profit, without the specific goal of confusing or deceiving others.
<b>Woke-washing</b>	The performative appropriation of social justice terminology and progressive values to bolster the reputation of a company, industry, or other entity.

# Climate Disinformation Resource Guide

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GCOM has compiled a **resource guide** that pulls together useful and up-to-date resources on misinformation/disinformation.

## General Resources on Disinformation

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace — Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-Based Policy Guide

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/countering-disinformation-effectively-an-evidence-based-policy-guide?lang=en>

CCDH — Center for Countering Digital Hate

<https://counterhate.com/topic/climate-change-misinformation/>

One Climate Action

<https://www.oneclimateaction.com/talkclimate>

Climate Fact Checks

<https://climatefacts.efcsn.com/reports/3760d048-299e-4ee9-9b0b-bedb524584d8>

International Panel on the Information Environment

<https://www.ipie.info/>

Climate Action Against Disinformation

<https://caad.info/>

GSCC — Global Strategic Communications Council

<https://gscnetwork.org/>

## Governments & International Organisations

United Nations — Countering Disinformation

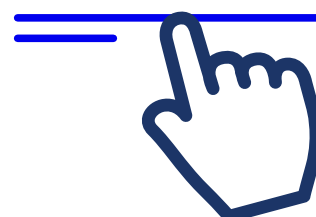
<https://www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation>

European Commission — Tackling Online Disinformation

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/online-disinformation>

European Commission — Climate Disinformation

[https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-disinformation\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-disinformation_en)



**United States — Global Engagement Center**

<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-public-diplomacy-and-public-affairs/global-engagement-center/>

**NATO — Countering Disinformation**

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_219728.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_219728.htm?selectedLocale=en)

**OECD — Facts Not Fakes**

<https://www.oecd.org/gov/facts-not-fakes-tackling-disinformation-strengthening-information-integrity-d909ff7a-en.htm>

## **Climate Misinformation & Disinformation**

**CAAD — Climate Disinformation Backgrounder**

<https://caad.info/analysis/briefings/climate-mis-disinformation-backgrounder/>

**CCDH — New Climate Denial report**

<https://counterhate.com/research/new-climate-denial/>

**Institute for Strategic Dialogue**

<https://www.isdglobal.org/disinformation/climate-disinformation/>

**Stockholm Resilience Center**

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/climate-misinformation.html>

**LSE/Grantham Institute — Understanding the role of social media in climate disinformation**

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/news/how-can-we-better-understand-the-role-of-social-media-in-spreading-climate-misinformation/>

**LSE/Grantham Institute — What are climate misinformation?**

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-are-climate-misinformation-and-disinformation/>

**Discourses of Climate Delay**

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/global-sustainability/article/discourses-of-climate-delay/7B11B722E3E3454BB6212378E32985A7>

## **Public Perceptions & Surveys on Climate Change**

**European Investment Bank — Climate Survey, 2022-2023**

<https://www.eib.org/en/surveys/climate-survey/5th-climate-survey/index.htm>

**Yale Center on Climate Communications — Climate Change in the American Mind, Spring 2024**

<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-spring-2024/>

**OECD — International Attitudes Towards Climate Policies, 2022**

<https://www.oecd.org/climate-change/international-attitudes-toward-climate-policies/>

**Our World in Data — More people care about climate change than you think, March 2024**

<https://ourworldindata.org/climate-change-support>

**Jacques Delors Center — Debunking the Backlash: Uncovering European Voters' Climate Preferences, March 2024**

<https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/debunking-the-backlash-uncovering-european-voters-climate-preferences>

**More in Common — Public perceptions about social media in the US and Europe**

<https://www.moreincommon.com/social-media-24/>

**IMF Climate Change Survey — 02/2023**

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2023/02/07/Public-Perceptions-of-Climate-Mitigation-Policies-Evidence-from-Cross-Country-Surveys-528057?cid=bl-com-SDNEA2023002>

## Articles of Interest

**American Psychological Association — How and why misinformation spreads?**

<https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/how-why-misinformation-spreads>

**Nature — Harassment against scientists is surging; institutions aren't sure how to respond**

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-01468-9>

**United Nations — Rampant climate disinformation online is distorting dangers, delaying climate action**

<https://medium.com/we-the-peoples/rampant-climate-disinformation-online-is-distorting-dangers-delaying-climate-action-375b5b11cf9b>

**United Nations — Tackling climate mis/disinformation: 'An urgent frontier for action'**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142972>

**Nature — Misinformation poses a bigger threat to democracy than you might think**

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-01587-3>

**The Atlantic — We're all being manipulated in the same way**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/04/maria-ressa-disinformation-manipulation/629483/>

**National Academies — Nobel Prize Summit Fuels Initiatives to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation and Build Trust in Science**

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2023/06/nobel-prize-summit-fuels-initiatives-to-combat-misinformation-and-disinformation-and-build-trust-in-science>

# Examples of City Responses to Disinformation

These city initiatives highlight the active role municipalities can play in combating disinformation through community engagement, partnerships with local organizations, and the use of digital platforms to disseminate accurate information.

City	Initiative name	Description
<b>Bengaluru, India</b>	Namma Bengaluru Digital Literacy Campaign	The Namma Bengaluru Foundation, in collaboration with the city government, launched a digital literacy campaign targeting urban and peri-urban communities. The campaign focuses on educating citizens about the dangers of fake news and providing tools to verify information.
<b>Mumbai, India</b>	COVID-19 Misinformation Helpline	During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCGM set up a dedicated helpline and digital platforms to disseminate accurate information and debunk myths about the virus. They collaborated with local NGOs to reach a wider audience and ensure the spread of reliable information.
<b>Hyderabad, India</b>	Cyber Crime Awareness Campaigns	The Cyberabad Police in Hyderabad have been proactive in running awareness campaigns about cyber crimes, including disinformation and fake news. They conduct workshops in schools, colleges, and community centers, educating citizens on identifying and reporting fake news.
<b>Chennai, India</b>	Digital Literacy Drives	The Greater Chennai Corporation has launched digital literacy drives in collaboration with local NGOs to help residents, especially in low-income neighborhoods, recognize and counter disinformation. These drives include hands-on training sessions and distribution of educational materials.
<b>Cape Town, South Africa</b>	Cape Town Digital Inclusion and Literacy Programme	The city of Cape Town has implemented a digital literacy program aimed at increasing awareness and skills among residents to identify and combat disinformation. This includes workshops and online resources designed to educate the public on media literacy and critical thinking.
<b>Johannesburg, South Africa</b>	Community Workshops	The City of Johannesburg has partnered with Africa Check to conduct community workshops focused on fact-checking and identifying fake news. These workshops are part of broader efforts to improve public access to accurate information and enhance civic engagement.



City	Initiative name	Description
<b>Durban, South Africa</b>	Anti-Misinformation Campaign	The eThekweni Municipality in Durban has implemented an Anti-Misinformation Campaign that leverages local radio stations, community centers, and social media to disseminate accurate information and debunk false claims. They also host public forums and discussions to engage with residents directly.
<b>Pretoria, South Africa</b>	Information Literacy Programs	The City of Tshwane has rolled out information literacy programs targeting youth and adults. These programs are conducted in collaboration with libraries and educational institutions to provide workshops and resources on critical thinking and media literacy.
<b>Jakarta, Indonesia</b>	Anti-Hoax Campaign	Jakarta's Smart City initiative includes an Anti-Hoax Campaign, which uses social media and digital platforms to educate residents about the importance of verifying information. The city collaborates with local tech startups and NGOs to create content that helps citizens identify and report false information.
<b>Quezon City, Philippines</b>	#FightFakeNews Campaign	The Quezon City government launched the #FightFakeNews campaign in partnership with local universities and media organizations. The campaign involves community seminars, online educational materials, and a dedicated website where residents can report suspicious information and get it verified.
<b>Bangkok, Thailand</b>	Bangkok Anti-Fake News Center	The BMA has set up an Anti-Fake News Center to monitor and counteract disinformation. This center works closely with local media, tech companies, and civil society organizations to identify and address false information, particularly on social media platforms.
<b>Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam</b>	Public Information Campaigns	The Ho Chi Minh City Department of Information and Communications has launched public information campaigns to combat fake news, particularly related to health and safety. They utilize local media, social media, and community outreach programs to spread accurate information and educate citizens on how to verify sources.
<b>Seattle, Washington, USA</b>	Seattle Media Literacy Project	The City of Seattle has partnered with the University of Washington to educate residents on how to critically evaluate information they encounter online. The project involves workshops and community events that teach participants about identifying credible sources and recognizing misinformation.
<b>Austin, Texas, USA</b>	Disinformation Defense Program	Launched by the Austin Public Library in collaboration with local universities, this program offers free public workshops and resources focused on media literacy, critical thinking skills, and strategies to identify and counteract disinformation.
<b>Los Angeles, California, USA</b>	Digital Information Literacy Initiative	This initiative by the Los Angeles Public Library provides educational resources and workshops aimed at improving digital literacy and helping residents discern accurate information from falsehoods.

City	Initiative name	Description
<b>New York, NY, USA</b>	NYC Digital Safety: Disinformation Edition	Led by the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, this program includes webinars, informational campaigns, and educational materials to help New Yorkers identify and avoid misinformation online.
<b>San Francisco, California, USA</b>	Info-Truth: Combating Misinformation	The San Francisco Public Library's program includes a series of workshops and resources focused on teaching residents how to critically evaluate news sources and understand the mechanisms of misinformation.
<b>Philadelphia, PA, USA</b>	Media Literacy Project	Run by the Free Library of Philadelphia, this project provides tools and training to help Philadelphians critically assess the information they encounter and recognize disinformation.

# Discourses of Climate Delay

These city initiatives highlight the active role municipalities can play in combating disinformation through community engagement, partnerships with local organizations, and the use of digital platforms to disseminate accurate information.



Source: "Discourses of climate delay" Cambridge University Press, 2020.

# New Forms of Climate Denial

## 4 Climate deniers are moving from the Old Denial of global warming and its causes...



### 1 Global warming is not happening

#### 1.1 Ice isn't melting or snow coverage isn't vanishing

"Greenland's surface has gained more than 400 billion tons of ice and snow [...] more than 50 billion tons above average."<sup>8</sup>

Reality: Greenland is losing 270 billion tons of ice per year on average<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.2 We're heading into an ice age or a period of global cooling

"We're in an ice age, them's are the facts. And the facts are where it's going to be getting colder as the sun shuts down into Grand Solar Minimum."<sup>10</sup>

Reality: Even if the next solar cycle is less active it will not cause an ice age<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.3 Weather is too cold for global warming to be true

"Winters have been so cold in the Midwest and Northeast in recent years the climate alarmists have started blaming all the cold weather on global warming."<sup>12</sup>

Reality: Global warming can actually contribute to severe winter weather<sup>13</sup>

#### 1.4 The climate hasn't warmed or changed in recent decades

"Satellite temperature records indicate that the planet is no warmer today than it was in 2003."<sup>14</sup>

Reality: Evidence shows warming from 1998 to the present<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.6 Sea level rise is exaggerated or is not accelerating

"Sea level at this location has risen about 28 centimeters or 11 inches in the past 100 years. There's no curve upward in the last 50 years as most news reports would have us believe."<sup>16</sup>

Reality: Sea levels have risen by 3.98 inches since 1992, an unprecedented trend<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.7 Extreme weather isn't increasing, has happened before or isn't linked to climate change

"The alarmists say hurricanes and other storms are getting worse: it's getting stronger and stronger, the winds are getting harder and harder.' No they aren't!"<sup>18</sup>

Reality: Climate change makes extreme weather including storms more common<sup>19</sup>



### 2 Human-generated greenhouse gases are not causing global warming

#### 2.1 Global warming is actually natural cycles or variation

"Solar activity is linked to warming over the past 300 years."<sup>23</sup>

Reality: The warming in recent decades is too great to be caused by solar activity<sup>24</sup>

#### 2.3 There's no evidence for greenhouse effect

"Greenhouse gasses cannot physically cause the observed global warming, especially if we're talking about CO<sub>2</sub>, which is .04 percent of the atmosphere."<sup>25</sup>

Reality: CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere warms the planet, causing climate change<sup>26</sup>

# OLD N

Source: "The New Climate Denial." Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2024.

## ...to a New Denial of climate impacts, solutions and the climate movement



### 3 The impacts of global warming are beneficial or harmless

#### 3.1 The climate's sensitivity is low or negative feedbacks are reducing warming

*"The global surface temperature is relatively insensitive to very high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> because otherwise you wouldn't have entered a glaciation."*<sup>27</sup>

**Reality: Research suggests the climate is highly sensitive to human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**<sup>28</sup>

#### 3.2 Plants, animals or reefs are benefiting from climate impacts or are unaffected

*"If sea level rises the coral says thank you very much and it just grows and grows."*<sup>29</sup>

**Reality: Coral reefs are losing the ability to keep pace with sea-level rise**<sup>30</sup>

#### 3.3 CO<sub>2</sub> is beneficial or is not a harmful pollutant

*"Life on Earth has benefited from the increase in carbon dioxide over the past 35 years. Earth has gotten much greener."*<sup>31</sup>

**Reality: The negative effects of CO<sub>2</sub> far outweigh benefits to plant growth**<sup>32</sup>



### 4 Climate solutions won't work

#### 4.1 Climate policies aiming to mitigate or adapt to warming are harmful

*"We're going to build thousands of new solar panels and wind farms, requiring the government to tear up tens of thousands or maybe even hundreds of thousands of acres of land [...] destroying the economy and destroying the environment."*<sup>33</sup>

**Reality: Renewables need the same or less space than fossil fuel infrastructure**<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.2 Climate policies are ineffective or flawed

*"Governments have been doing this for years, they've been subsidizing energy efficiency and imposing energy efficiency measures and the thing is it doesn't even affect energy use."*<sup>35</sup>

**Reality: Energy efficiency reduces the energy needed for a range of services**<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.4 Clean energy technology or biofuels won't work

*"They're replacing [fossil fuels] with solar energy and wind energy but then they realize that in the wintertime the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't really blow that much, so their energy costs have gone through the roof."*<sup>37</sup>

**Reality: All sources of power are not available 24/7, 365 days a year**<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.5 People need energy from sources such as fossil fuels or nuclear power

*"If we try to go without fossil fuels in our lifetime, you are going to see the standard of living plummet."*<sup>39</sup>

**Reality: It is possible to shift to renewables and away from other energy sources**<sup>40</sup>



### 5 Climate science and the climate movement are unreliable

#### 5.1 Climate science is unreliable, uncertain or unsound

*"The underlying cloud forcing relates to what has been almost unanimously identified in the last two years of literature to be the single greatest source of uncertainty in climate models, also bias and error in those climate models."*<sup>41</sup>

**Reality: Climate models are getting future warming projections right**<sup>42</sup>











#### 5.2 The climate movement is unreliable, alarmist or corrupt

*"There is a 97% consensus among scientists that the IPCC is a fraud."*<sup>43</sup>

**Reality: IPCC predictions are more likely to underestimate the climate response**<sup>44</sup>

# NEW

# Countering Disinformation – Overview of Case Studies

Type	Intervention	How much is known?	How effective does it seem?	How easily does it scale?
	1. <b>Supporting local journalism</b>	Modest	Significant	Difficult
	2. <b>Media literacy education</b>	Significant	Significant	Difficult
	3. <b>Fact-checking</b>	Significant	Modest	Modest
	4. <b>Labeling social media content</b>	Modest	Modest	Easy
	5. <b>Counter-messaging strategies</b>	Modest	Modest	Difficult
	6. <b>Cybersecurity for elections and campaigns</b>	Modest	Modest	Modest
	7. <b>Statecraft, deterrence, and disruption</b>	Modest	Limited	Modest
	8. <b>Removing inauthentic asset networks</b>	Limited	Modest	Modest
	9. <b>Reducing data collection and targeted ads</b>	Modest	Limited	Difficult
	10. <b>Changing recommendation algorithms</b>	Limited	Significant	Modest



**Public information**



**Government action**

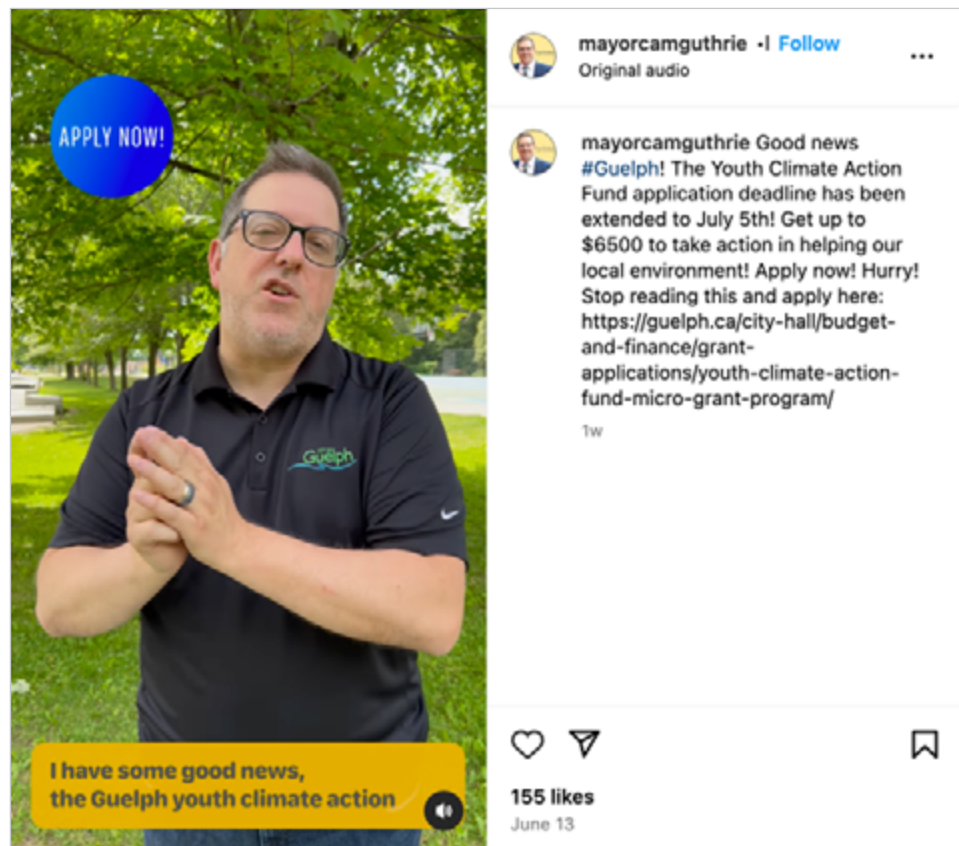


**Platform action**

Source: “Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-based Policy Guide.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024.



Source: [link](#)



Source: [link](#)



***Hello everyone,***

This edition of my newsletter is a dive into some of my recent work and thinking on climate change.

Climate change is upon us and every tonne of carbon we save now, will save lives in the future. We all need to scale up our efforts and do more to reduce carbon emissions wherever we are - whether as a Mayor, a national leader, a company or as a citizen.

One of the things I've chosen to do is to be part of the movement organising the city governments across the world that are leading the charge on climate action. I serve on the board of the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#), of which more than 12,000 towns and cities are members.



Source: [link](#)







[www.globalcovenantofmayors.org](http://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org)