

# Outreach Training, Guidance and Research

- [Outreach Workshops](#)
- [Talking about the Crisis on the Street](#)
- [Responding to difficult questions and hostile encounters](#)
- [Barriers to Climate Activism](#)

# Outreach Workshops

## Growing the movement is a key task

**Join our workshops** to learn how to use outreach skills to engage and inspire the public into action. You don't need any experience or skills to participate in the workshops. If you've done outreach before and want to brush up and refine your methods, then you're welcome to join too.

**Learn about different approaches** for speaking with the public about the climate and ecological crisis:

- We look at research that tells us what messages seem to resonate better with different UK demographics.
- Share stories to inspire and counteract the 'business as usual' narratives that dominate in the media.
- Learn about the importance of listening and connecting with people.

## Online Workshops

To empower you with knowledge, simple skills, and top tips you need to become an outreach hero and help our rebellion to flourish!

- [Register for an online workshop](#)
- [Watch a recording of the workshop](#)

## Book an in-person workshop

We'd like to support local groups that would benefit from an injection of outreach energy to help them grow. We are mobilizing outreach volunteers to visit a local group for a day of outreach. We will also offer remote and in person outreach support for example, training for speaking with the public, [flyer design](#) etc.

The idea is that on the day of outreach, we are inviting people to take part in an upcoming local event, this could be a social or an upcoming action. This is why we need local person/people who have the capacity to follow up and contact new sign ups once the day of outreach is over. We can also offer advice on ways of doing these follow ups.

Contact UK Outreach team via our [Mattermost reception](#) or by email

[actions.outreach@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:actions.outreach@extinctionrebellion.uk).

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More guidance and support [on the next page](#).

# Talking about the Crisis on the Street

When Nonviolent Civil Disobedience has been most effective, it has taken place on a foundation of connected and organised communities. Actions are our primary way to get into the public eye but our actions alone are not enough. We need to use these actions to start conversations, to tell the truth and to open our arms to all who wish to join us.

## Talking to Passers By

Part of our purpose as rebels is to Tell the Truth, so engaging with the general public during actions is vital. Some might be a bit annoyed with you/Extinction Rebellion, so it may be useful to have some de-escalation training under your belt, but most are simply curious!

Aim To:

- Listen to them.
- Share the facts but don't overwhelm them.
- Shift their frustrations and anger from XR to the system as a whole.
- Invite them to take a step with a small ask or an invitation (leaflets are great too!).

Remember:

- Introduce yourself, be open and honest.
- It's a conversation, after the first 2 mins listen more than you talk.
- People rarely change their stance in a single moment, you are planting seeds!
- If someone is looking for an argument just step back and "agree to disagree" – there are plenty of other people to talk to!
- For more detailed advice and some answers to the difficult questions have a look at **Talking about the Crisis on the Street** and **Responding to difficult questions and hostile encounters**.

## 'ALLESHA'

- A : Ask a question.
- L : Listen.
- L : **LISTEN** twice as long as you usually do! We often want to interrupt and give facts too soon.
- E : Empathise. Say "I understand that you are concerned about..." or "You seem to be feeling a bit hopeless".

- S : Share your personal story of why you are involved.
- H : Hope. Talk about historical / current examples, e.g. Suffragettes, Gay rights, Civil Rights Movement / Acquittals of activists, successful prosecution of the government.
- A : Inviting them to **ACT**. Take them to the Sign-up / Info table. Ask them to join the mailing list, take a leaflet, come to this event, take a photo of the activity and share it on Social Media, etc. Better still, have a clipboard in your hand to sign up now for the mailing list and take their phone number. Start at the bottom of the ladder with simple actions.

## Street Outreach Skills **HANDOUT** with further linked resources

### The Crisis Quiz

One way of starting conversations with people is by using the **crisis quiz**. Its short, and only takes a minute or two, but most people are surprised by the answers and want to know more.

### Starting Conversations

Some examples of open questions:

- What worries do you have about climate breakdown?
- How do you feel about the future of our food security?
- How well do you think Britain is prepared for the effects of Climate Breakdown?
- Why do you think our government has spent millions on oil and gas bailouts?

Bring the conversation to the fact that our government is negligent by not fulfilling its duty to the people. **And then listen to the answers, really listen.**

Introduce the Demands and Citizen's Assemblies – wouldn't it be great to hear what people actually want? Mention France's recent Citizen Assembly's outcome, i.e. wanting to make Ecocide a crime under national and international law.

If conversation moves to solutions, this is a great opportunity to invite them to a Community Assembly – we are trying to start the direct democracy process off in our local area! If people have experience of what real democracy looks and feels like, the closer we come to creating popular support for our 3rd demand.

### Small Asks

At the end of each meaningful interaction ask people to do one thing to help (judge the right scale for the individual you've just spoken to) here are some examples:

- **Sign up on [extinctionrebellion.uk](http://extinctionrebellion.uk)** – Paper forms get lost, takes time to input and isn't the most secure!
- If you're outreaching at a local action, point them to **[joinxr.uk/localgroupname](http://joinxr.uk/localgroupname)**, to sign up to their local group - for example [joinxr.uk/birmingham](http://joinxr.uk/birmingham). Check your local link works first! - [more information about these sign up links here](#).

- **Monthly Donation to help us.**
- Bring a care package the next day! This could contain Food, tea or blankets!
- Come to our Community Assembly to have your voice heard.
- Check out your Local Group, here is their email address.
- Come join us on site!

## On-the-Ground Signposting & Recruiting

Don't be afraid to recruit people on site!

People will often come along to check out an Action/Rebellion site if they are passing by, or if they are in a Local Group but haven't taken a role and just want to help out. We don't turn people away! Make sure they don't move into arrestable positions without having done an NVDA training, but don't hesitate to give them something to do. The best thing you can possibly do is be friendly and welcoming. Be someone they want to keep talking to.

- Have they signed up on [Extinctionrebellion.uk](https://extinctionrebellion.uk)?
- If they want to help in an ongoing capacity, point them towards the Volunteer Website at **[Volunteer.Extinctionrebellion.uk](https://volunteer.extinctionrebellion.uk)**, introduce them to their Local Group, or introduce them to a working group on site.
- Make sure to have a list of things people can do to help out that require minimal instruction!

For Example:

1. Flyers – handing out or flyposting
2. Sustenance – give out tea & snacks on site
3. Talking to the Public – have 10 min trainings ready so they can learn and practice!

# Responding to difficult questions and hostile encounters

Talking to people on the street can be difficult!

As well as asking some questions you don't know the answer to, sometimes people can be angry towards activists/XR.

This page should help you deal with these encounters more easily.

## Remember to BREATHE

**B**reathe - ground yourself, look at the support around you

**R**emember - the humanity of all, even those on the other side are human!

**E**mpathy - before education, empathise, be calm, drop their guard

**A**sk first - is the other person ready to hear your view? Are they still angry?

**THE** reason - remember why you are there, & ground yourself in that

## How to win a climate argument

People are not rational. Confirmation bias and denial mean that people will argue ridiculous arguments even when presented with clear evidence because their defences are up. The key to success is dropping these defences. Being logical often doesn't help. Try these instead....

1. **Ask how!** - A basic grasp of something leads many of us to believe we are experts. Instead of pushing more evidence at people listen to their argument and then ask them to go further into depth. They will eventually talk themselves to a point they realise they don't really know what they're talking about! Their defences will drop and they will be more receptive to reasoned argument.
2. **Alter their subjectivity** - asking someone to step into someone else's shoes can remove the blinkering of blind political allegiance. Eg. 'I don't believe in climate change'.....'ok, well imagine you are a farmer living in Chennai right now, there are hundreds of ghost villages where the water has dried up due to failing monsoons and higher than average

temperatures....how do you think that would alter your view about the impact of climate change'

3. **Reframing** - climate denialist / conspiracy theorist / right wing politics / free market capitalist - all of these are inextricable. Using science of climate breakdown basically tells these people everything they believe is wrong. Reframing it to align with their own beliefs can be useful. Eg. 'there are some innovative breakthroughs in the green revolution that could lead to huge economic growth' Obviously this isn't necessarily in line with the actual solutions!! But it can drop defences as a start.
4. **Know the deception!** - Again, through confirmation bias, people latch onto any bit of evidence to support their world view, no matter how ridiculous. If you are confident on the story and history of climate science, and can fill in how fake 'evidence' came into being, you can replace their false narrative with a more convincing and compelling alternative. Eg 'global warming is a hoax'....
5. **Be calm** - people arguing - particularly from a point of weak knowledge - are often overly aggressive and rude. Remain calm and kind, be empathetic, and they will usually calm down and start listening. It is much easier to win someone over by being empathetic and calm to lower their defenses.

## Common difficult questions

### **What are you/we doing?**

We are part of an international movement which seeks to push the climate and ecological crisis to the top of the political agenda and minimise the impact of climate breakdown.

### **Why are you disrupting normal people?**

It's not our intention to ruin anybody's day, but the government is allowing a few corporations to pollute our air, destroy our planet, and endanger our future. They have ignored us for years, and have left us no choice but to take to the streets

### **What's your problem- in a nutshell?**

The United Nations has warned us that a global temperature rise above 1.5°C may trigger a series of events that cause climate change to be irreversible. This would threaten our water supply, our food supplies, and the air we breathe, as well as causing the death of millions of people. Currently, we sit at 1.1 degrees warming, and the government is not acting.

### **The government is already committed to change / carbon neutrality / Labour will fix it**

The government is not meeting its own target. It's own Committee For Climate Change has said it falls far short of the necessary ambition, and has highlighted ministers fiddling carbon budgets. The

UK's target falls short of the UN's warning that we must be carbon neutral by 2040. Despite these promises, the govt perseveres with airport expansion, subsidising fossil fuel companies, scrapping laws for carbon neutral housing etc. They are not acting in line with the emergency we face.

### **It'll never work**

Analysis of historical movements - like the suffragettes, civil rights etc - show that non-violent protest has been hugely successful. In fact all movements that used peaceful protest alongside disruption, were successful in bringing system change by the time they had 3.5% of the population on the street.

## Climate FAQs

### **Why does CO2 cause global warming?**

Solar radiation (which is short-wave radiation) from the sun is partly absorbed by earth's surface, and the rest is reflected as heat energy (which is long-wave radiation). CO2, as well as other greenhouse gases, act in a similar way to a pane of glass in a garden greenhouse. The gases (or glass) allow short wave radiation through, but trap long wave radiation at a much greater rate. So heat energy is retained by the blanket of greenhouse gases, leading to warming of the planet.

## Common arguments

### **Surely you should focus on China!**

1. We started the industrial revolution. We have a moral obligation to lead the fight against climate breakdown.
2. China is enormous, so you can't compare total emissions. Per person, UK emits 7.8 tonnes of Co2, China emits 5.6 tons. Even worse are historic emissions per capita, which put us 2nd, behind only Luxembourg.
3. Most importantly a huge portion of goods are made in China, the UK's emissions do not include imported emissions, so China's emission levels are inaccurately high. Far more accurate is to compare the carbon average carbon footprint per person. In is measure we are nearly 3 times more culpable for climate breakdown than China. (11.5T vs 4.3T)
4. We don't live in China!!! China uses centralised planning, so they don't need to write climate breakdown laws, they can simply enact new strategies, WHICH THEY ARE.

### **Renewables are too expensive**

Onshore wind and solar are now the cheapest forms of energy in over 60 countries, including the UK! And this is despite the UK government's immoral policy to cut subsidies for renewables whilst continuing to subsidize fossil fuels at a higher rate than any EU member state.

### **You'll leave people in fuel poverty by switching off fossil fuels**

There are multiple transition reports from various institutions which detail exactly how we can move away from fossil fuels. In fact, fuel poverty in the UK is a result of austerity by the government and the privatisation and lax regulations imposed by the government on the energy industry.

**We could all stop eating meat / driving / flying / (insert defeatist argument here) and it would make no difference**

And that's a very valid point! We do all have a responsibility to assess our own impact on climate breakdown, and mitigate that impact as much as possible, but your point is exactly why Extinction Rebellion is demanding system change which does have an impact on our future.

**It will damage the economy**

There are loads of great plans to transition to low carbon infrastructure and technology which will generate massive numbers of jobs. Whats more, the cost of not adressing climate breakdown - in infrastructure damage, health care, human life - will be many, many, many times greater than taking action.

**Technology will save us!!**

We have all the technology we need to become carbon neutral. What we lack is the political will and urgency to transition. Whilst some technology might be helpful, there are huge problems with this mindset. First, it encourages inaction, assuming that someone will come along and save us. Second, this does not stop the exploitation of our planets resources. Third, introducing geoengineering solutions can have huge unkown knock-on effects that we can't predict. And most importantly, relying on technology does absolutely nothing to address the reason the underlying cause of climate breakdown - a system which uses natural resources and people as commodities to focus only on growth, and funnels money upward whilst impoverishing the natural world and the vast majority of its citizens.

## Countering Climate Change Denial

Some of this is more ridiculous than others. Ultimately, if you engage someone, and they are hostile or talking gibberish, there is little point in wasting your energy. Remember we only need 3.5%!

A lot of people use vague climate science denial as a defensive mechanism because they can't face the truth. You can sway these people with empathy, good knowledge, and a tight story. **If you're getting nowhere just move on.**

**Thousands of scientists agree it's a hoax**

Nope. what you're referring to is a petition from 1998 authored by the Marshall Institute which is funded by Exxon Mobil. The author is not a climate scientist, and the definiton used for eligible

'scientists' qualified to sign was anyone with a bachelor of science degree, meaning that vets, dentists etc were all free to weigh in on this so called 'climate paper'. There is no mention of a hoax in this petition. It is framed as 'insignificant data to conclude man-made global warming is a threat'. In a cross-section of the people who signed it most did not remember signing it, and virtually every signatoree said they would not sign it now.

### **The Antarctic ice sheet is growing**

No it's not. It's decreasing at an accelerating rate, and poses a serious threat to sea level rise. Antarctic sea ice was growing, (different to ice sheet) but this was in spite of the southern ocean warming more than any other ocean. This is due to a number of complex interactions, (including oceans currents creating gaps within the sea ice, and warmer seas leading to increased evaporation and rainfall, which fills these gaps as it falls, creating new sea ice.) However, since 2018 sea ice levels have been lower than the historical average and recently decreasing at an alarming rate.

### **Science is split on climate change**

Over 97% of climate scientists agree that climate change is real and predominantly caused by human activity. Of the remaining 3%, a quick internet search is likely to reveal funding by the heritage foundation or another institute funded by the fossil fuel lobby. (predominant = over 50% of driving factor)

### **It's changes in solar activity**

In the last 35 yrs, during the period of most intense global warming, there have been no significant changes in solar activity, and in fact solar activity is now weakening

**'Urban heat island'** (that urban areas where most measuring equipment is based record hotter temperatures because of reflection from urban surfaces)

Totally untrue. Urban and rural areas show exactly the same warming trends

### **It's a green technology scam**

Green tech has spent less than 1% of the total lobbying amount that the fossil fuel industry has spent on preventing climate change mitigation laws.

### **Human produced CO2 is a fraction of overall CO2**

That's totally irrelevant to climate change. The world's climatic and ecological systems have a fine balance controlled by positive and negative feedback loops to regulate climatic stability. Small increases in these - or large in the case of our CO2 contribution - can have a profound effect on destabilising climate systems.

### **Climate change is alarmist scaremongering**

Science, by its nature, is conservative, due to the nature of peer reviewing. IPCC papers are widely accepted to be understating the consequences of climate breakdown.

### **It's cold today**

You're confusing weather with climate, and depending on what part of the world you live in (INCL the UK, due to shifting ocean currents) our cold days will get colder, whilst heatwaves get more intense

### **Climate models are unreliable**

Climate models accurately predicted what we've seen happen over the last 100 years to high levels, in the oceans, atmosphere, and on land. This means that their projections for the future are likely to be just as accurate. The only uncertainty in climate models is the human response, and whether we commit to carbon neutrality to minimise the impacts of climate breakdown.

### **It's the troposphere cooling**

The author of the paper that posited this claim, John Christy, admitted in 2005 his figures were incorrect. This paper is still widely quoted by deniers as a counter to man-made global warming

**Water vapour is a worse greenhouse gas than CO2** (ie. small increases in CO2 are fine and we can keep burning fossil fuels) Yes there's way more water vapour in the air than CO2, but this argument is totally irrelevant to climate science as it completely ignores the interaction between water vapour and CO2. WV creates a positive feedback loop. So increasing CO2 increases temperature, causing more evaporation & thus water vapour, leading to further warming & more evaporation. Water vapour in itself is part of the naturally regulated water cycle.

### **CO2 increases are natural**

There are hundreds of studies showing the correlation of human activity since the industrial revolution correlating with increasing CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere. The hockey stick graph is the most vivid representation of CO2 concentration against fossil fuel activity

### **CO2 doesn't trap heat**

This is as fundamental a denial of science as saying we don't experience gravity. The heat trapping effect of CO2 was demonstrated in the lab 150 yrs ago, and confirmed countless times since. In addition, spectral satellites confirm CO2 to behave identically in the atmosphere as it does in lab results.

**The whole solar system is warming** - (ie. it's not human activity)

Mars & Venus aren't, and solar activity is decreasing.

**Volcanoes are to blame for high CO**

Human activity produces roughly 100x more Co2 than volcanoes

## **Warming lags behind CO2 increases proving CO2 is not responsible**

This is called climate lag and is basic physics. Imagine putting a pan over a flame. The atmosphere around the flame is instantly hot, but the water takes time to boil. Climate lag is around 40 yrs, due to the thermal inertia of the oceans.

# The Denial Funders

Any person or 'scientist' associated with one of these (these are just a few of the worst) has been paid by the fossil fuel lobby to confound the science and confuse the public

- The Global Warming Policy Foundation
- Techcentralstation
- The Cate Institute
- The Heritage Foundation
- American Enterprise Institute
- The George C Marshall Institute
- The Reason Foundation
- The Manhattan Institute
- Americans for Prosperity

# Lobbying

In the UK, one of our worst climate denying institutes is Members of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, which was set up by Lord Lawson, a well-known climate denier, peer in the house of lords, and father of chef Nigella. His name is Nigel. He called his daughter Nigella.

The problem is much worse in the US. In 2012 alone, fossil fuel companies donated over \$70m dollars DIRECTLY to US political candidates and parties. They spent another \$150m on lobbyists to Washington. This is on top of enormous amounts of dark money funnelled through foundations, think tanks, and universities which are used to confound climate science.

The practice of dark money donations to stop environmental protections was pioneered by the Koch Brothers. The list of right wing and free market groups they have used their vast fortune to support is endless but it includes the Cato Institute which Charles cofounded in 1977, the American Enterprise Institute, the George C Marshall Institute, the Reason Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, the Manhattan Institute and Americans for Prosperity, founded by David Koch himself and which spent \$40million for the 2010 Congressional elections alone.

James Inhofe, a senator & previous chair (!!!) on the the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, has frequently called climate change “the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people”. He has also compared environmentalists to Nazis. To date, he has received

\$1,587,596 from the oil and gas industry.

# Barriers to Climate Activism

## Summary

### Encouraging involvement

Recommendations from a 2024 study to bring people in to a climate movement were:

- ask people directly to get involved
- make it easy and show people how to do it
- provide options and describe their benefits
- strengthen perceptions of collective efficacy
- encourage talking about climate change and provide guidance
- amplify pro-climate social norms and diverse public voices

### Barriers to involvement

Barriers are individual, social, or organisational mechanisms that prevent engagement, make it more difficult, or leaving more likely.

Overall, the main barriers to engagement in climate activism appear to be:

- not having been asked to get involved
- not knowing how to get involved
- other people being better at it
- lack of training/knowledge
- not having enough time

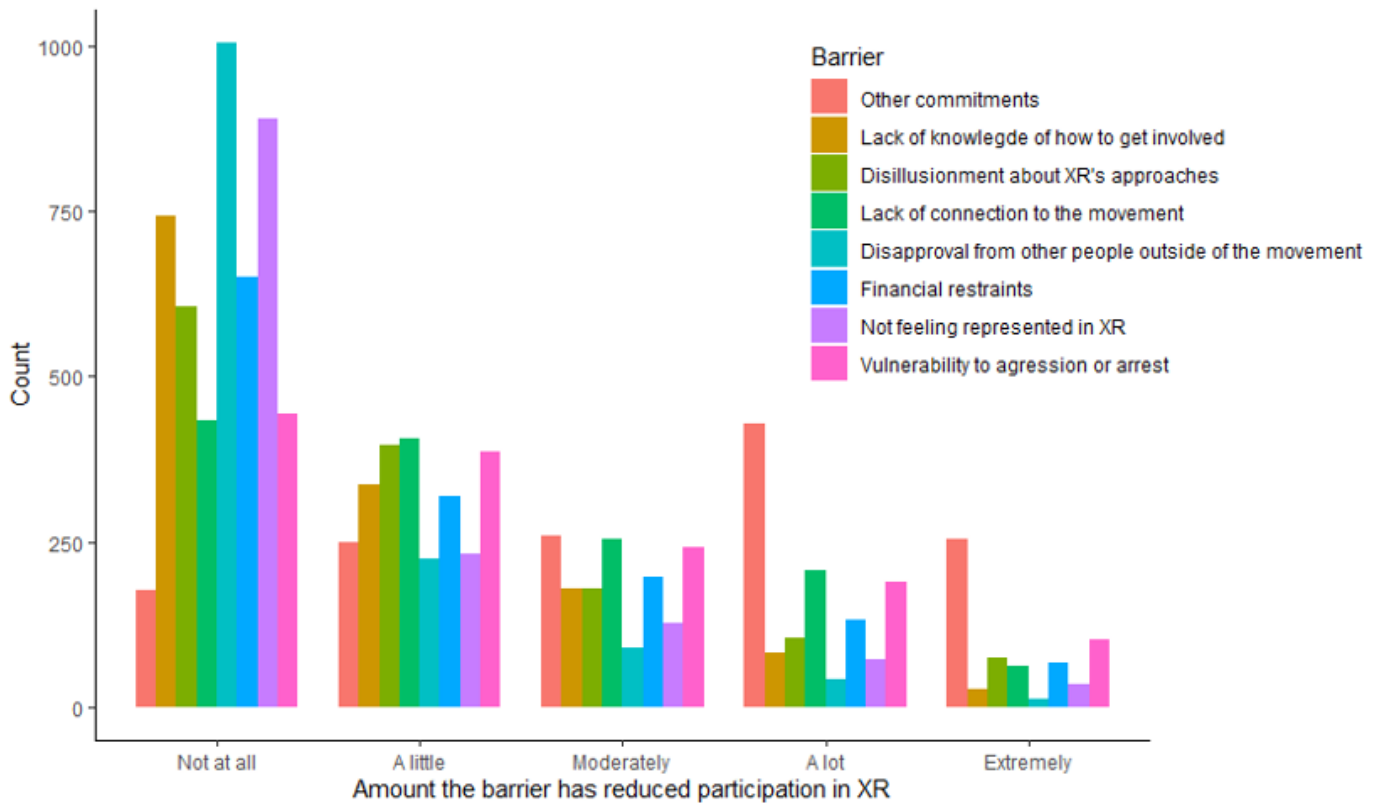
In addition, and specifically to XR, a 2021 study found that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and working-class communities were put off by:

- the demographics of XR
- personal capacity issues and lack of understanding of these by XR
- failure to address the root cause of climate change—the economic system

In XRUK email list subscribers who completed the last Movement Survey, **the barrier that by far most reduces their participation was other commitments**. Vulnerability to aggression or arrest was also seen as a barrier.

## XR email list subscribers

In the [December 2024 Movement Survey](#), we asked respondents specifically about the extent to which a series of barriers have reduced their participation in XR.



### Barriers

The barrier that the most respondents cited as reducing their involvement in the movement was **other commitments**. Only 13% of respondents said that this did not reduce their involvement at all. Vulnerability to aggression or arrest was seen as reducing participation by a lot and extremely by 14% and 7% of respondents respectively.

### Not barriers

Lack of knowledge about the movement, disapproval from other people outside the movement and not feeling represented in XR were not seen by most (over 50%) as barriers to participation.

*More in-depth research from this survey is being prepared (ready to share around the end of August).*

## BAME / Working Class

In 2021 there was a [specific study](#) [1] looking at “the extent to which Extinction Rebellion speaks to, and for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and working-class communities”.

Although a lot has changed in the past four years, it’s still very relevant research. Some of the main barriers to involvement in XR were:

- lack of information about how to get involved

- the perceived demographic make-up of XR
- problems with the group's culture
- XR's tactics (it's important to note that this study was in 2021 and may have been addressed by the shift away from NVDA in 2023, but it's also possible that XR is still associated with this type of action)

A further barrier to involvement were the limitations of the participants' own lives which undermined their time, finances, energy and emotional capacity for campaigning and protesting, and the fact that some of the XR representatives and activists did not seem to recognise these constraints. In addition, some research participants considered XR to be ineffective because it fails to address the root cause of climate change—the economic system.

In the United Kingdom, activists of color reported that it was harder for them to enter and belong to the existing climate movements [2]. Additionally, they were more concerned about being targeted by police or racist attacks, which hindered them from joining actions. Thus, inequalities affect who joins climate activism and how they experience it.

## 'Concerned' public

Although not specific to XR, academic research has been done to look at barriers to involvement in climate change activism in general.

The main three types of personal barriers described in the literature are:

- **Psychological barriers** include low efficacy beliefs (i.e. not believing that you can make a change) and feeling distant to climate change or climate activism [3] [4]
- **Lack of knowledge**
- **Not having enough time and energy** [3] [5]

Social barriers include:

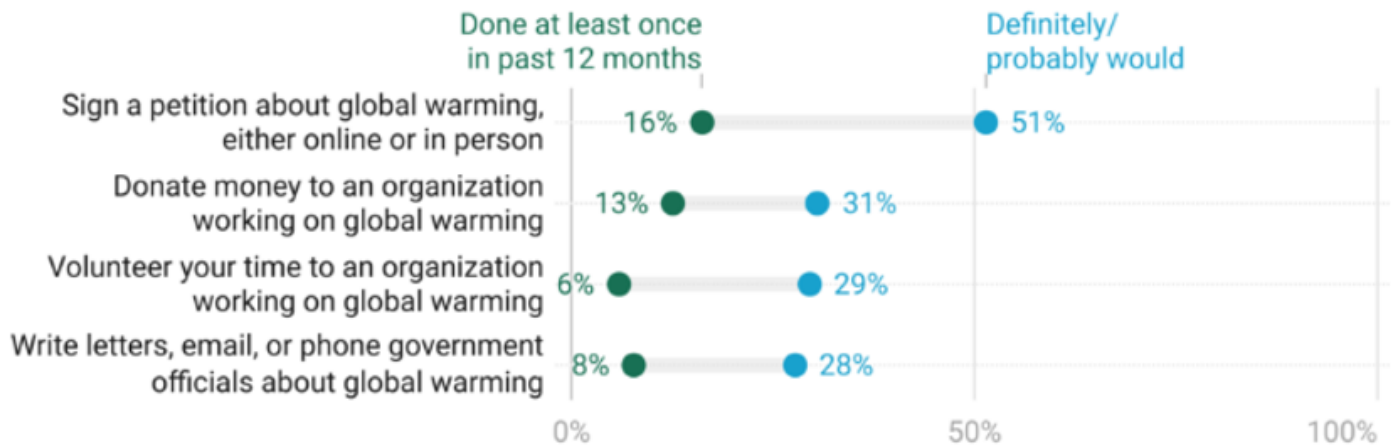
- Not knowing any activists
- Concerns about outside rejection
- Difficulties orienting in a new social environment

A study in 2022 showed that for people who are highly concerned about climate change, the most frequent reasons for lack of involvement in activism were:

- other people are better at it (57%)
- hadn't been trained (57%)
- hadn't been asked (51%)
- not knowing how to get involved (50%)
- activities like letter writing not appealing (50%)
- organizations would ask them for money (40%)
- too busy (39%)
- not encouraged to become involved (38%)

In Australians alarmed by the climate crisis, 'no experience' and 'time poor' were cited as barriers to engagement with climate-focused activism.[6]

A study in 2024 [7] in the US found that the majority of people who said they would definitely/probably undertake climate activism haven't done so in the last 12 months. This was also reflected in the XR Membership Survey.



**The main barrier to activism found in this study was that no one has ever asked them to do it.** In addition, many say that it wouldn't make any difference, they are not activists, they don't know who to contact, or they wouldn't know what to say.

The article provides the advice listed in the summary at the top of this page.

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## References

[1] Bell and Bevan, 'Beyond Inclusion?'

[2] Wong et al., 2024

[3] Castiglione et al., 2022

[4] Fine, 2024

[5] Latkin et al., 'Perceived Barriers to Climate Change Activism Behaviors in the United States Among Individuals Highly Concerned about Climate Change'.

[6] Whitson et al., 'Three Profiles of Australian Climate Change Activism Have Both Unique and Overlapping Motivators and Barriers'.

[7] Ballew et al., 'The Attitude-Behavior Gap on Climate Action'.