



What people think,
feel and do

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PRCA / Opinium

Climate Crisis Misinformation 2022: Industry Report



Key findings

1 June 2022

Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	OP19431
PROJECT NAME	Climate Crisis Misinformation 2022: Industry Report
CLIENT COMPANY NAME	PRCA / Opinium
PROJECT MANAGER NAME	Izzy Colledge
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SAMPLE	226 members of the PR industry
FIELDWORK DATES	6 th – 26 th May 2022

Please note that there has been a slight change in the sample methodology this year. In 2021 we reached 180 PR professionals through an open link shared with PRCA's network. This year we reached 49 PR professionals through an open link shared with PRCA's network and gathered the remaining 177 responses through a fieldwork supplier's database. Screening questions were shown to the supplier's sample to ensure that respondents either worked in a PR / communications agency, or in the PR / communications department of a company working in another industry. All questions which include comparisons between last year's data and this year's were tracked, with question wording and answer options remaining the same to ensure comparability.

Advising clients and organisations

Four in five PR professionals advise their clients on the climate crisis

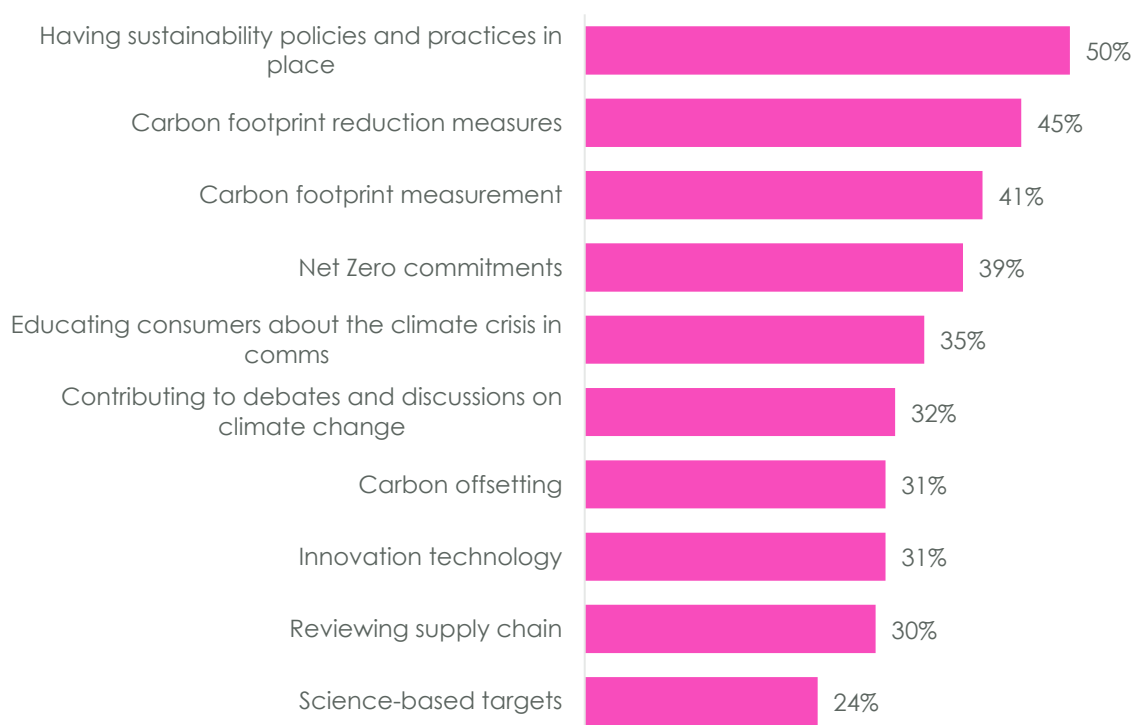
More than nine in ten (96%) PR professionals advise and help their clients and colleagues to understand about the climate crisis and how they can effectively communicate the part they play, up from 82% last year. Two thirds (68%) advising most or almost all of their clients or colleagues, up from 38% last year.

The recent increase in the salience of climate issues is clear, with three quarters (75%) saying that this is more frequently now, compared to a year ago. Meanwhile almost nine in ten (87%) say that they give this advice more frequently now than they did five years ago, up from 71% last year.

When asked to rate their clients' or organisation's knowledge of the climate crisis, three in five (59%) say they have quite a lot or extensive knowledge, up from 48% last year. Meanwhile only a fraction are unaware or not sure, with 98% saying they have any knowledge at all.

Nine in ten (92%) say that their clients/organisation are taking some form of action on the climate crisis, with the most common measures including having sustainability policies and practices in place (50%), having carbon footprint reduction measures (45%), measuring their carbon footprint (41%), and Net Zero commitments (39%).

Most common actions taken by clients / organisations to address the climate crisis



Half of PR professionals feel nervous about clients entering the climate change discussion

When thinking more broadly about their feelings about clients' communications around the climate crisis, seven in ten (71%) agree that often clients or organisations want to jump on the bandwagon of talking about climate change, but don't actually act, up from 60% last year. Meanwhile, half (50%) say that they often find that their clients' knowledge of climate change is incorrect or misinformed.

Half (52%) feel some hesitancy over advising clients to contribute to the discussion, as it feels like they need to be an expert to be able to contribute to the debate, up from 39% last year. Meanwhile two in five (38%) say that having their clients contribute to the discussion on the climate crisis makes them feel nervous, up from a fifth (18%) last year.

When asked to elaborate on what about this makes them feel nervous, some highlighted the risk of being accused of 'greenwashing', while others said that they felt that climate change is a sensitive topic, and that they were worried their clients just don't have enough expertise.

PR professionals are split as to whether they are concerned (38%), or not concerned (38%) that their client will be perceived negatively if they focus on the climate crisis in their communications, this is down from a consensus of 72% who were not concerned about this last year. Similarly, 64% disagreed last year, that communications from their clients around the climate crisis are often negative in nature, whereas this year, only 29% disagreed, with 45% agreeing.

Organisations taking action

Three in five PR professionals do not feel that their organisation is doing enough to tackle the climate crisis

Three in five (59%) PR professionals do not feel that the organisation they work for is doing enough to tackle the climate crisis. Meanwhile two fifths (38%) say that their organisation already does a lot. Both of these results are in line with last year.

Leadership from management and senior staff is key for organisations taking climate action, with almost half (44%) of those who feel that their organisation is not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis say that this is because it's not a priority for management right now, and a further one in eight (17%) saying that their leadership team feel that it's not their responsibility.

Lack of information is also an issue, with a third (32%) saying that their organisation is not doing enough because there's not enough information out there, and a fifth (20%) because their leadership team doesn't understand the topic.

Three quarters (76%) say that they have encountered any challenges from their clients or bosses in relation to the climate crisis. The most common challenges encountered were requirements for team members to travel for meetings that could take place online (37%), ideas for PR / communications

work with significant negative environmental impacts (28%), and proposals to work with / for industries with negative environmental impacts (23%).

Beyond this, around a fifth faced attempts at greenwashing (23%), clients / bosses not believing their organisation needs to address the climate crisis (23%), and clients / bosses not believing in the climate crisis in general (20%).

Challenges PR professionals face from clients/bosses in relation to the climate crisis



Nine in ten (92%) PR professionals say that their organisation is taking any measures to address the climate crisis, up from 85% last year. The most common measures including having sustainability policies and practices in place (42%), educating consumers about the climate crisis in their comms, and having carbon footprint reduction measures (both 36%), and implementing Net Zero commitments (32%).

PR professionals' attitudes

Nine in ten PR professionals are concerned about the climate crisis

Nine in ten (92%) PR professionals say they are concerned about the climate crisis, with three fifths (58%) saying they are 'very concerned' about the issue. Over four in five (84%) believe the planet faces an existential threat due to the man-made climate crisis, with less than one in ten (9%) tending to disagree with this.

Thinking about what they can do **as a PR professional** to help address the climate crisis, almost all (97%) have taken action, with the most common actions being taken including educating themselves

on the climate crisis (55%), checking their own carbon footprint (48%), opting for a green energy supplier (44%), and taking public transport more often (41%). Two in five (40%) say they have also helped to educate their clients on climate change.

Nine in ten (95%) say that they would be willing to take further action, including driving an electric or hybrid vehicle (33%), taking part in a work electric vehicle scheme (25%), educating their clients on climate change (23%), or taking part in a 'Bike2Work' scheme (22%).

Thinking about what action they have taken **as part of their personal lives**, almost all (98%) have taken any action, with the most common actions including researching the topic (61%), watching documentaries (57%), opening discussions with family/friends (49%), or at work (46%), and following climate experts/activists (44%).

Two in five (42%) say that their boss having a better understanding of the importance of addressing the climate crisis would help them to prioritise it in relation to their work, while slightly fewer say that defined environmental targets in their organisation would help, or access to a bank of information to help with education (both 37%). Just over a third (34%) say that advocates within the organisation to stress the importance of the issue would help.

Four in five PR professionals say the industry must do more to tackle climate misinformation

Thinking about how the PR industry as a whole relates to the climate crisis, over four in five (84%) say that it needs to do more to tackle misinformation around the climate crisis. A similar proportion agree that the industry has a responsibility to stop misinformation about the climate crisis, and that it has a responsibility to educate clients about the climate crisis (both 83%).

Two thirds (67%) say that their support for their organisation implementing renewable energy sources has increased over the last year, while three in five (57%) say that their support for their organisation implementing net zero targets has increased over the same period.

When asked to explain why their views have changed, some cite more information and awareness now, while others cite support and pressure from clients and other stakeholders.

Just under half (45%) have noticed attempts by their client/organisation to greenwash, among these, 89% said that they pushed back against this attempt, including 57% who managed to change the approach as a result.



About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think**, **feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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