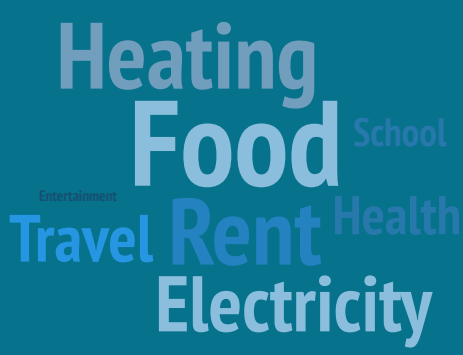


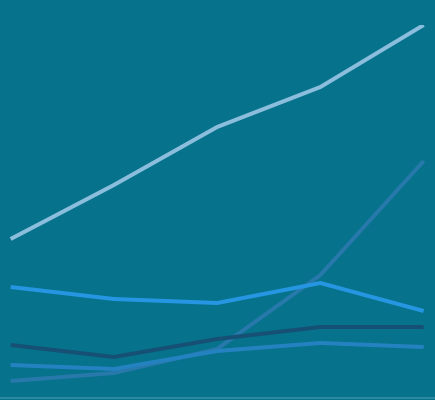
Who has time for climate action?

The progress of climate action suffers from human perception biases. The impacts of climate change are often intangible, not immediate, and far away. A changing climate is increasingly being credited as raising the likelihood of natural disasters, but it is impossible to say that it is responsible for a specific event. With many other immediate worries and challenges in our personal lives it can be difficult to prioritise changing our behaviour and lifestyle for something that isn't currently directly affecting us, particularly in the western world.

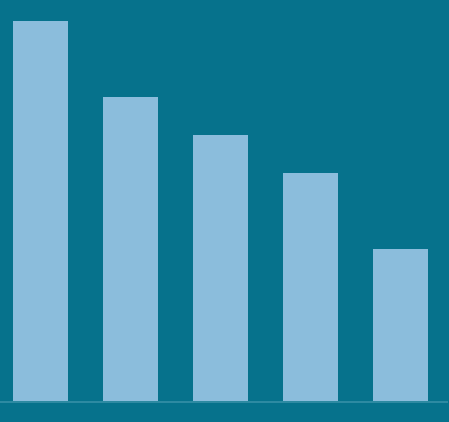
There is no defined end-game that we can point to and say if we do x, y, and z, by year 20xx, we will "save the world". Climate models look to the 100-year time horizon. This makes it easy to delay taking action. This is compounded by the disconnected timeframes of planning and acting across different groups of society.



The effect of short-term political election cycles on progressing climate action cannot be understated. Climate policies are not (yet) generally seen as a vote winner, with incumbent governments delaying or cancelling policies in the pre-election period. Democratic countries were found to be less likely to ratify international accords, such as the Paris Agreement, if elections are impending. With voters having other priorities, it is tempting to leave it to the next government to sort out. Even when climate policies have clear benefits, they may not be immediate, and can be a harder sell. Frequent changes in the political parties in government can mean big swings in ambition for climate action and the reversal of previous policies, meaning a lack of certainty for industry.



Infrastructure investments are often on a 10 – 20 year timeframe. This can lock in previous decisions that may be incompatible with the 1.5C efforts. For example, many UK local authorities have declared climate emergencies and set net zero targets for their estates and their boroughs, many with a 2030 deadline. A common action is to move their road fleets to electric vehicles. One of the influence levers that they have is their procurement power. However, some contracts, such as those for waste collection vehicles, can be in the 10-year range, making it difficult for councils to push for the change that they have committed to.



Climate models run on a 100-year time horizon. Scenarios come with uncertainties that can be difficult to communicate to non-scientific groups. The models are only as good as the data that is put into them.

Individuals may have long-term financial plans, but the focus is often on a monthly or yearly budget. Investments to increase the energy efficiency of your house or switch to low carbon heating will save money in the long-term, but requires up front capital which in the current cost-of-living crisis is likely to be prioritised elsewhere.



Businesses will have annual targets but typically work to 5-year strategies. Corporate organisations need to deliver to shareholders and plan for opportunities and challenges in their financial forecasts. If climate action cannot deliver a return on investment in these timescales it can be hard to justify their inclusion in their business plans.



The UK has set a net zero target for 2050, but other organisations and local governments have set earlier dates. Early targets can drive action with their immediacy, and more distant targets can encourage long-term planning, but risk being delayed.



These disconnects in timeframes make coordinating and implementing climate action challenging. Increasing the understanding and awareness of the wider impacts of climate policies and their co-benefits can be a strong tool for driving action for those with other priorities. Many climate actions will deliver other benefits such as fuel bill savings, health improvements, savings to the NHS and job creation. Breaking down siloed working and ensuring engagement from all groups of society is needed to deliver the just transition to a better world.