

COP27 Survival Kit

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Every year climate change information peaks around COP, but so does climate misinformation.

This survival kit contains the fundamentals on how to get ahead of and respond to misinformation, as well as supercharge your climate communications during this crucial period.

This briefing has been prepared for [ACT Climate Labs](#) and the [Climate Action Against Disinformation Coalition](#) (CAAD).

COP27 – What to expect?

[Climate change denial has gradually decreased since 2000](#). Instead, misinformation that questions climate solutions, messengers or the general reliability of science has been rising. Because of this, some recent studies now focus on [discourses of climate delay](#) as their own phenomenon.

This was seen in COP26, where the majority of English language climate misinformation was entrenched in the culture wars. This content can be more effective than outright denial of climate science as it reinforces identity and grievance politics.

The landmark study [“Deny, Deceive, Delay”](#), developed by ISD, found the top three climate misinformation narratives during COP26 were:

- Hypocrisy and elitism (“why are world leaders flying to a climate conference?”)
- “Absolutionism” (“our tiny country’s emissions are nothing compared to China’s”)
- Criticising clean energy (“renewables are intermittent and unreliable”)

Plus, unlike climate science, these arguments are simple and effective. This is why decontextualized or manipulated images went viral during the conference, such as the one below. Images can transcend language and “meme-ify” misinformation – reducing

the need for substantive engagement and reducing the complex issue of climate change to pithy one-liners.



This image posted by Young Americans for Liberty gained nearly 40,000 likes and 40,000 shares on Facebook. It was one of several viral posts that recycled decontextualised images of planes.

If this year's information ecosystem is anything like last year's, we should also expect to see a disproportionate amount of engagement on climate misinformation narratives from a handful of "repeat offenders". [Deny, Deceive, Delay](#) found that 16 Twitter accounts amassed more likes and retweets on anti-climate content than 148 well-known climate sceptic and denial accounts over the same period.

With all this in mind, what can we do about climate misinformation and wider climate adversarial narratives during COP27?

Countering COP27 disinformation before it happens

Rebuttals are an intuitive, even human, way of thinking about countering disinformation. There are now plenty of articles, websites and even entire organisations that dedicate themselves to fact checking and debunking.

While rebuttal is an important element in combating disinformation, research has shown that it is more effective to [“inoculate” against adversarial narratives](#) before people see them. This is also known as “pre-bunking”.

People tend to stick with the information they hear first, so presenting compelling and correct information about climate change issues ahead of time creates knowledge that makes people sceptical of future misinformation.

Anyone creating climate content should leverage pre-bunking campaigns. Here are three broad guidelines on what to do:

1. Target the right audience: [69% of the UK population don't have strong opinions on climate action](#). ACT Climate Labs calls these people “Persuadables”, based on the [ground-breaking Britain Talks Climate segmentation from November 2020](#). While this study found some good news – namely that the culture war on climate change has yet to take root – it also exposed weaknesses in traditional climate communications. The frames and narratives we use often do not resonate with most of the population.

The exact context for people in your country may be different to the UK, but generally speaking Persuadables are a key audience to reach and engage.

2. Break out of the echo chamber: Your organic content is shown to just 2% to 10% of your audience. This means your content is only shown to a small percentage of people who are already converted. Running paid campaigns is critical to reach new audiences. ACT has a

[universally applicable paid media guide](#) with tips on how and where to reach target audiences.

3. Think about framing: A frame is the broad structure for how an issue or story is presented; think of it like the scaffolding on which you can build an argument or specific narrative. For example, the frame of individual or personal responsibility can be used by fossil fuel interests to present the narrative of reducing your carbon footprint. To use an example from COP26, the frame of shady globalists controlling the world helps bad actors seed narratives of elitism and hypocrisy.

When launching a pre-bunking campaign, first think of what you are trying to re-frame. Focus on just one re-frame at a time. Use simple language and avoid doomism. For a more detailed look at how to frame your campaigns for Persuadable audiences, irrespective of where they are, check out [ACT's framing guide](#).

Countering COP27 disinformation as it happens

We will all come across climate misinformation during COP27. Once it is out there:

1. Don't amplify disinformation. Stop before you hit the quote tweet button. It's our collective responsibility to not allow sticky misinformation to spread further. If you're thinking of responding to misinformation, check the [CAAD journalist field guide first](#). This is a fantastic resource for journalists and non-journalists alike on how to avoid fanning the flames.

2. Rebut where appropriate. The old adage goes that [only 10% of users contribute to content online and only 1% actively create it](#). ACT has found that on social media most users posting or commenting on climate misinformation are not Persuadables. Responding to these people may not be the most effective use of your time.

If you are rebutting, you should use the [Fact, Myth, Fallacy technique](#) developed by climate misinformation expert John Cook.

Keep things sticky. Correcting the record is not as simple as presenting information. You want to start with the fact, then repeat the myth – being clear that it is a myth beforehand – and then point out the fallacy in the myth.

All possible fallacies in climate misinformation come under one of five FLICC headings – Fake Experts, Logical Fallacies, Impossible Expectations, Cherry Picking or Conspiracy Theories. Learn all of the [FLICC climate denial techniques](#).

ACT has a variety of [misinformation alerts](#) covering frames and narratives that might arise during COP27, and how to get ahead, including:

- Divisive rhetoric used [during environmental protests](#).
- Frames [suggesting climate policy is too expensive](#), or hurts those worst off.
- False narratives relating to [energy security and Ukraine](#).
- False narratives [blaming the energy crisis on renewables](#) and climate policy.

3. Use paid media. If a climate misinformation narrative has gone viral, and only then, it is a good time to fight back with a paid media campaign. Call into question in a non-threatening way the narrative that they may have seen. Use Fact, Myth, Fallacy as the structure for your campaign. ACT's framing guide and paid media guide are useful resources to get started.

4. Report repeat offenders on social media. Use your online clout to talk to your contacts at major social media platforms about repeat offenders. This can open up a wider discussion about platforms writing and enforcing climate misinformation policies. An ideal set of platform asks can be found at the CAAD website.

Post conference – keep up the communications

While information and misinformation peak during COP, the intervening months are just as important for getting ahead and maintaining the public mandate for action.

After COP27 we recommended using organic, earned and paid media techniques with strong personal benefit messaging to reach people with the benefits of climate action.

About ACT Climate Labs

[ACT Climate Labs](#) aims to improve the effectiveness of climate communications through audience insights, co-creation of advertising campaigns and by leveraging a vibrant network of climate communicators. We are a group of advertising and climate experts with a track record of creating innovative and impactful creative campaigns around social issues and climate change.

ACT has a number of resources to help brands and NGOs understand [the 69% of people in the UK](#) that are on the fence about climate action and how to communicate to them (for example [through ad campaigns](#)). All of the work is based on the landmark [Britain Talks Climate study by Climate Outreach](#) and supplemented by independent research from the ACT Climate Labs team.

If you are interested in supercharging your climate communications you can join the network by emailing Kathryn@actclimatelabs.org and sign up to ACT misinformation alerts at www.actclimatelabs.org.