

The Impact of Political Polarization on Climate Justice: Ideological Resistance, Disinformation, and Pathways to Bipartisan Engagement



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The Source Project: Research In Climate Justice

BACKGROUND:

- Political polarization fuels climate denial obstructing policy action, driven by misinformation and ideological resistance.
- How does partisan identity shape opposition to climate policies?
- Exploration of strategies to reduce resistance.
- Depoliticizing climate discourse is crucial for advancing effective climate solutions.

METHODOLOGY

1. Analysis of political media & policy debate
2. Analysis of public opinion surveys
3. Examination of perceived ideological threats
4. Assessment of effective messaging strategies

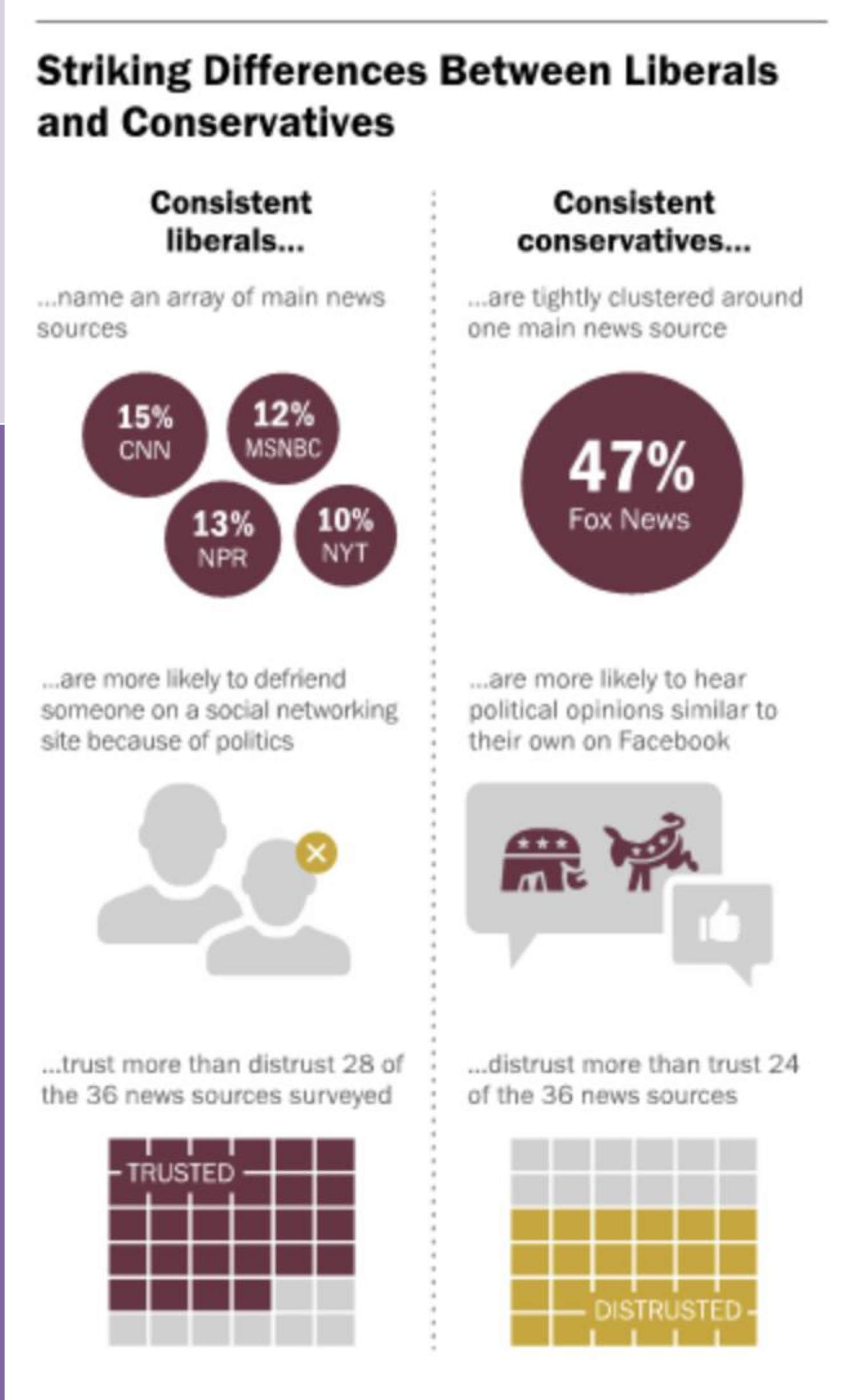
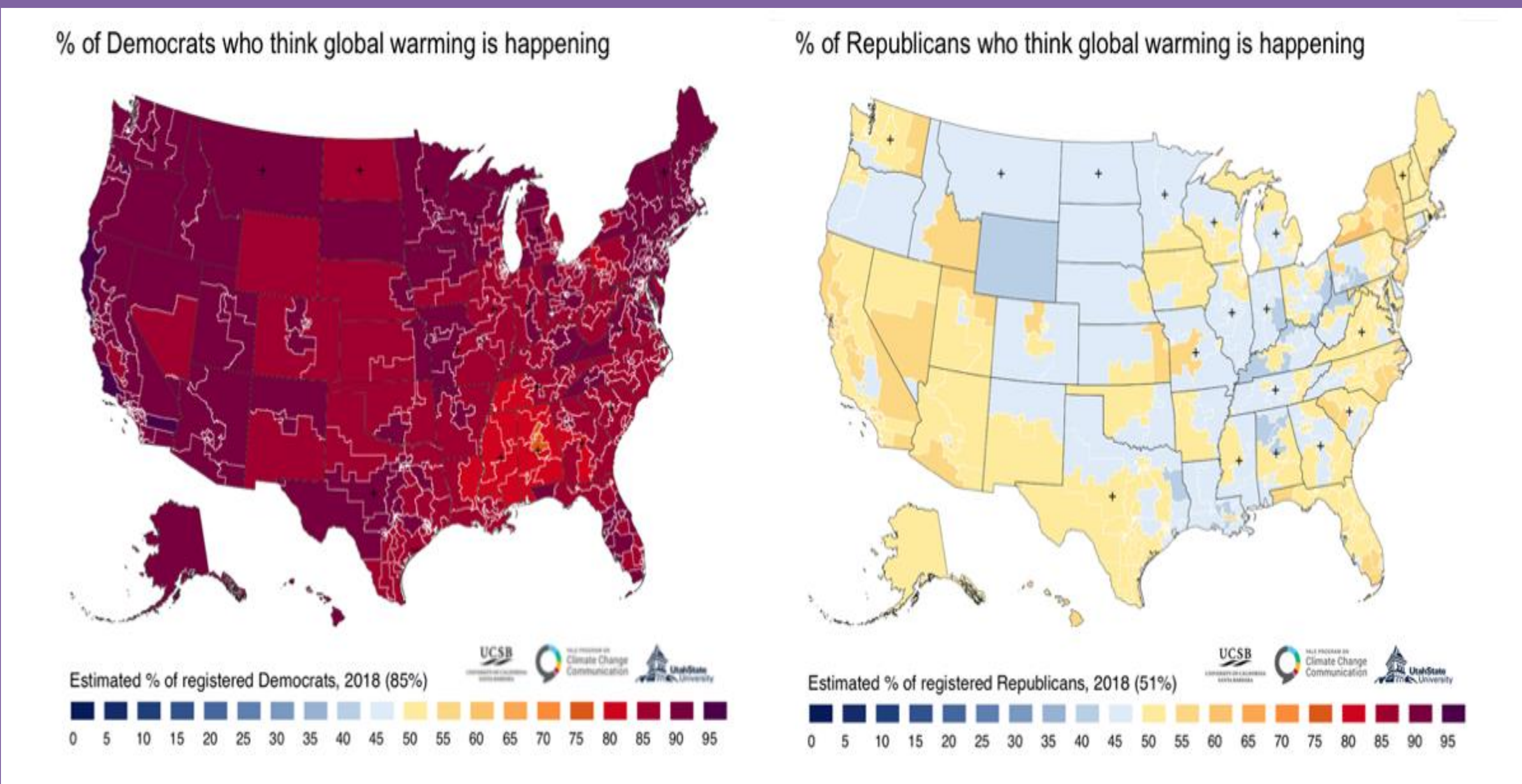
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POLARIZATION	FINDINGS	PATHWAYS TO PARTISAN ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ideological resistanceDisinformationPartisan framing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Climate denial reinforced by ideological identityElite-driven disinformation fosters distrust in climate sciencePolicies framed as political threats face opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic framingLocalized impact narrativesNonpartisan messaging

Figure 1

Figure 2



- Climate denial is not due to a lack of scientific understanding – it’s a defense of political identity.
- Conservatives frequently see climate policy as government overreach.
- Environmentalism is often seen as an anti-business agenda and aligned with liberals.
- Climate skepticism becomes integrated into group identity reinforced by partisanship.

- Disinformation is not random – it is strategically designed to deepen mistrust and divide.
- Fossil fuel-backed campaigns fund “experts” & think tanks to cast doubt on climate science.
- Right-wing media use framing techniques to reinforce climate denial.
- Social media creates echo chambers where false claims spread rapidly without correction.

- People can support climate action – if it is framed in terms that align with their values.
- Economic framing emphasizing clean energy jobs, lower energy costs, or American innovation appeals to conservatives.



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DISCUSSION

EXISTING RESEARCH SAYS...	MY RESEARCH ADDS...
Ideological identity shapes climate skepticism.	Climate denial is often an emotional defense against values perceived as threatening.
Disinformation undermines trust in science.	Disinformation is a strategic tool that deepens ideologic divides and reinforces partisan identity.
Elite framing influences public opinion.	Emotionally charged media framing fuels tribal loyalty and hinders bipartisan solutions.
Public opinion can shift with the right message.	Economic framing local impacts, & trusted messengers reduce ideologic threat & encourage engagement.

WHY DOES THIS RESEARCH MATTER?

- It identifies the actual obstacle to climate justice
- It exposes how disinformation weaponizes polarization
- It provides actionable strategies for depolarizing climate discourse
- It contributes to both academic and policy-oriented conversations