

## Why don't we act more on climate change? Social media has the answers

*The global conversation on climate indicates high expectations of businesses to bring solutions yet skepticism about corporate greenwashing dominates*

Paris, June 22, 2023 – [Dassault Systèmes](#), [Capgemini](#) and [Bloom](#) today published the first of their "[Social Intelligence for Climate Action](#)" studies, which analyzes the reasons why, despite increasingly obvious signs of climate disruption, real actions are not being taken to address the challenge. The most prominent barrier that emerges from this analysis, between February and October 2022, is consumer skepticism generated by greenwashing. This period also saw an increase in eco-anxiety and frustration over the lack of reliable and relevant information to guide climate action.

The joint study set out to better understand the obstacles to climate action and how people can overcome them to limit the impact of global warming. To do this, Bloom, an artificial intelligence platform dedicated to social network analysis, analyzed the "global conversation on climate", and in particular the obstacles to climate action, using a reference matrix on the subject<sup>1</sup>. Over 8 months, more than 330 million people expressed themselves on the subject with vigor and passion. If climate skepticism is now marginal (even if it generates a disproportionate echo, especially in the United States), the debate is raging on the best way to deal with the problem, in a year marked by a worsening of climate disruption, with dramatic human consequences (heat waves, drought, fires, floods, hurricanes ...).

The main barriers to climate action that emerge from the 2022 study in order of prominence<sup>2</sup>, are:

1. **"Disconnected optimism"** of companies and institutions about their environmental progress, whether significant or minor. As the real impact of this progress is often difficult to grasp, positive, opportunistic over-communication, sometimes in contradiction with expert analyses (in which case it can be referred to as "greenwashing"), creates a dissonance that generates mistrust and discourages action. Consumers, especially younger ones, have become more mature on these subjects and are now very sensitive to them. "Disconnected optimism" also concerns those who think that technology is the solution to the climate emergency to the point that it is not necessary to act.
2. **Lack of reliable information** on solutions: citizens, in search of the "right information", are paralyzed by contradictory information or misinformation, which provokes mistrust and a feeling of powerlessness. During 2022, an increase in the number of postings and the rate of engagement on this aspect was noted, marked by strong negative emotions. In this context, institutions and authorities such as the IPCC, which published its 6th report in April 2022<sup>3</sup>, are highly anticipated references.

<sup>1</sup> [Discourses of climate delay](#), Lamb et al., Cambridge University Press, 2022. The article analyzes the arguments put forward to justify inaction against climate change, and classifies them into 4 categories: delegation of authority ("someone else should take action first"), disconnected optimism ("disruptive change is not necessary"), fear of the downsides ("emphasize the downsides"), or desperation ("it's not possible to mitigate climate change"). For this study, Bloom also added a fifth category: lack of information.

<sup>2</sup> In volume of conversations (posts and comments)

<sup>3</sup> The publication of the IPCC report in April 2022 has generated a 56% increase in the volume of publications related to the barriers to climate action, compared to the previous month

3. **Fear of negative social impacts of climate measures:** social justice is at the heart of the climate conversation. In a year marked by inflation, the cost of living is becoming more of an issue in the debate on the drastic lifestyle changes needed to limit warming to 1.5°C (energy, transportation, food, etc.). Citizens are particularly concerned that the most vulnerable populations should not be the first victims.
4. **Delegation of authority:** considering that climate action is the responsibility of others rather than oneself. The report shows that businesses are seen as the most able to act effectively in the long run, ahead of individual action, and far ahead of governments. Consumers consider that the "hummingbird" effect of individual actions is no longer sufficient in view of the scale of today's climate urgency and that businesses, which are perceived as being responsible for part of the problem, have the capacity to have an impact on a large scale and more quickly than governments.
5. **Climate change despair:** people feel helpless in the face of the impact of climate change, to the point of discouraging any action. This barrier, which has seen an increasing number of posts and engagements over the course of 2022, has the highest engagement and the largest proportion of negative emotions of all the barriers studied.

*"In the fight against climate change, two elements will make a difference: scientific and accurate measurement, and collaboration and dialogue among all stakeholders. Our scientific measurement, simulation and planetary diagnosis capabilities have considerably progressed these past few years, allowing for more and more precise simulations and projections thanks to AI. At the same time, we need to reinforce our capacities to listen to all stakeholders and citizens so that everyone can contribute to the necessary changes at their level,"* says Philippine de T'Serclaes, Chief Sustainability Officer, Dassault Systèmes. *"In order to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century transitions, we will need to maintain and reinforce the link between science, citizens, businesses and public institutions. In the era of platforms, we can precisely mobilize new capacities of collaboration, observation and communication, such as social media, to understand postures and overcome obstacles to climate action. This understanding will allow industries to innovate differently by mobilizing the collective imagination."*

*"Public opinion has acquired a great maturity in the understanding of climate action, and the scale at which it needs to happen",* adds Cyril Garcia, Head of Global Sustainability Services and Corporate Responsibility at Capgemini and Group Executive Board Member. *"Our research shows that businesses are in the front line, not just to adjust their business models towards a more sustainable economy, but also to be clearer and more transparent on the impact of their actions. However, today they are not necessarily equipped to respond to these expectations. The challenge for them will now be to work more closely with their partners and clients to restore credibility and trust in this debate, and drive all of the stakeholders towards a low-carbon economy."*

*"Bloom's research reveals that the sustainable development journey is not immune to the rise of misinformation and influence. The absence of strong points of reference leads to doubt, suspicion and discouragement when faced with the commitments of companies or governments. It is vital for brands to build a new, more militant narrative,"* concludes Bruno Breton, founder and CEO of Bloom.

### **Methodology**

Bloom analyzed content posted in English by individuals and organizations on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) between February and October 2022, representing more than 330 million actors, 14 million "documents" (posts and comments) and 480 million engagements ("likes", emojis etc.).

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### **About Bloom**

Bloom is a strategic-anticipation platform that enables brands, industries and institutions to detect trends and weak signals, anticipate crises and decipher communities on social networks. It was founded in 2017 by Bruno Breton – a media and social network expert who notably headed the social network research center at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, EPFL) for five years – and Alexander Polonsky, a doctor in applied mathematics and neuroscience.