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Citizens' level of trust in public institutions in Ireland in relation to climate change



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About CLIMATUDE

CLIMATUDE will deploy a programme of engaged research to develop an in-depth understanding of Irish people's attitudes, beliefs and values related to climate change. In realising this, the project will consider perceptions and attitudes to specific climate mitigation and adaptation measures, attitudes to wider governance structures and to decision-making processes.

The project will map the knowledge and perceptions of Irish people relating to climate change and its societal implications. It will develop an in-depth understanding of how people's attitudes to climate change are shaped by their sources of information, social networks and wider public discourse. It will explore how their beliefs and values are influenced by their socio-demographic attributes, especially gender, life-stage, socio-economic privilege, and educational attainment.

The outcomes of the CLIMATUDE will feed into future research within the EPA's climate change pillar and will inform ongoing activities within the National Dialogue on Climate Action and Local Authority Climate Action plans. Project outcomes will contribute towards the inclusion of climate justice principles in the design and implementation of climate actions. It will contribute to building public support and fostering accelerated movement towards a just transition.

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Executive Summary

This report explores the contemporary climate policy landscape in Ireland through the concepts of trust and fairness situating these considerations within the wider context of sociotechnical systems. This enables a more nuanced treatment of how the success of climate policy can be determined, by moving beyond the purely technical outcome of emissions reductions, demonstrating the extent to which policy success is also contingent on public perceptions of fairness and on their levels of trust in the institutions that implement these policies. Trust and fairness are critically linked in this context, perceptions of fairness serve to generate trust and likewise a high level of trust can generate public acceptance and compliance, ultimately leading to the success of a policy.

This report begins by developing a framework which links trust and fairness to policy instruments. We begin by identifying the issue of trust as a concept, highlighting the nuances and complexities of placing trust in an institution, we note that trust is often dependent on other factors deemed to have intrinsic value, such as fairness, equity or justness. The trust-fairness typology forwarded in the report facilitates the broadening of the perimeters of how policy success is defined. The degree to which the public accept a policy is based on considerations of trust and fairness, this same public acceptance is intrinsic to policy success. Considering a multi-level sociotechnical systems perspective allows for the consideration of social, cultural, and normative factors alongside technical effectiveness, highlighting the centrality of fairness and trust to policy success.

The next section examines the level of trust in public institutions in Ireland considering the specificities of our history and our societal dynamics. Data from several sources are used to present the general level of institutional trust amongst Irish people. Comparisons and differences with international peers are highlighted to better understand the Irish situation in the context international norms and trends. Trust in public institutions especially on the issue of climate change is considered using data from the *Climate Change in the Irish Mind* report, supplemented by other surveys and analysis (e.g., EIB Annual Climate Surveys). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the data demonstrates that citizens trust more in scientific and evidence-based institutions, which are consistently trusted over administrative and political bodies, with obvious implications for the design, communication and realisation of climate change mitigation and adaption programmes.

Several case studies are presented as a means of examining the intersections of policy, trust, fairness, and participation in Ireland's climate and energy landscape. We begin with a treatment of deliberative mini publics, such as citizen's assemblies, which are framed and presented as mechanisms which can address issues with declining trust in democratic systems and declining political engagement. Next, we

look at Ireland's carbon tax, considering the ways in which economic policies interact with concepts of fairness and success. This case in particular highlights tensions between perceptions of fairness and climate policy, as the tax disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups. The EU Emissions Trading System is the third case, which offers another example of potential impact of the vulnerable, with the 'pass-through' of such policies often found to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in society. For our fourth case we examine the ways in which the Just Transition Fund in the midlands attempts to build trust while working to mitigate the economic impact of decarbonisation is examined. The fifth of these initial cases is the Corrib Gas Controversy which highlight multiple failures in engagement and trust which the controversy exemplifies.

Having established the concepts of trust and fairness, we present an in-depth analysis of Ireland's state broadcaster, arguing that RTÉ provides a vital and informative lens through which to consider these trust and fairness as they pertain to climate issues. We position the broadcaster as central in the development and articulation of Irish national identity both domestically and abroad. Because RTÉ has consistently served as a staging ground for national debate across a wide range of issues, the broadcaster now plays a role in disseminating information about climate change and mediating the public's relationship to climate policy and climate action. We analyse RTÉ's normative stance on climate change within the context of sociotechnical systems. We then analyse the broadcaster's internal stance on climate change, examining the body's climate commitments and approach. We consider the extent to which trust in the broadcaster is undermined by recent financial scandals and by their revenue generation streams. Finally, we offer an in-depth analysis of four pieces of climate focused media produced by RTÉ. We argue that these programmes offer limited critique of socio-technical systems, placing the burden of climate impact on individuals, an ideological stance likely to alienate many viewers by exacerbating perceptions of climate policy as unfair or disproportionately punitive towards individuals.

Ultimately this report find that policy success is highly dependent on ideas of fairness and trust and the ways in which policies interact with these concepts in the context of sociotechnical systems can dictate a policy's failure or success, we also find that media is highly impactful in shaping public perceptions of fairness and trust in relation to climate change. This deliverable will serve as a foundation for further research into the shaping of public attitudes and perceptions, in line with CLIMATUDE's goals over the remainder of the research project.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

CLIMATUDE is an EPA-funded research project that seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of Irish people's attitudes, beliefs and values related to climate change. In realising this, the project considers perceptions and attitudes to specific climate mitigation and adaptation measures, attitudes to the wider governance structures and decision-making processes. This research approach builds on a participatory research methodology successfully deployed in (and iteratively refined through, projects such as ENTRUST (Horizon 2020, 2015-18), Imagining2050 (EPA/SEAI, 2018-21), ENCLUDE (Horizon 2020, 2021-24), and ACCEPT (Horizon 2020, 2021-24), etc. This mixed-methods approach involves deploying proven research methods, involving a systematic review of literature, survey of citizens, semi-structured interviews, workshops, and an asynchronous dialogue (using a modified Delphi-panel approach). CLIMATUDE has adopted a co-creation approach with citizens being engaged to co-produce knowledge with the researchers. This work is informed by the recent Creative C-Change project (Creative Ireland, 2021-2023) and is benefiting from cross-fertilisation with the JustCities Hub project (EPA 2024-28), which is running concurrently.

CLIMATUDE aims to provide a mapping of the knowledge and perceptions of Irish people relating to climate change and its societal implications. It is developing an in-depth understanding of how people's attitudes to climate change are shaped by their sources of information, social networks and wider public discourse. It is exploring how their beliefs and values are influenced by their socio-demographic attributes, especially gender, life-stage, socio-economic privilege, and educational attainment. In this work the researchers are leveraging their involvement in the SHiFT COST action¹ to discuss emerging outcomes and compare with international experience.

In particular, the role of gender will be illuminated by intersectional analyses of risk-related behaviour and attitudes towards climate change and will assess how multiple identities and social positions, combine to shape attitudes. These analyses will be integrated within a transitions management framework which takes account of the complex meshing of human values and identities with the socio-technical systems that shape them. Here the project team will leverage their work in the International Energy Agency UsersTCP task 'EmPOWERing All: Just and Inclusive Energy Transitions'² in which the PI and one of the co-PIs are the Irish participants.

¹ SHiFT (CA21166) Social Sciences and Humanities for Transformation and Climate Resilience (European Cooperation in Science and Technology COST, 2021-2026]. <https://shift-cost.eu>

² <https://userstcp.org/empowering-all-task/>

There is general acceptance (albeit not universal) in Ireland that climate change is a real phenomenon and moreover a significant threat to our planet (O'Mahony *et al.*, 2024), with most people accepting that the causes are anthropogenic. However, notwithstanding the high regard of science in Irish society³, there remains an antipathy amongst a certain cohort towards climate science. This antipathy means that such people are more susceptible to the online misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (MDM) that has become increasingly common, not least on the topic of climate change. The role of *personal interest bias*⁴ in climate discourse only often serves to exacerbate the spread of such misinformation whether knowingly or unknowingly. The importance of trust in communications on climate change will be examined, considering both traditional and newer forms of media. The role that MDM can play in undercutting social trust and its impact on climate discourse and wider political debates will be considered. Trust between citizens and their governments is crucial for the legitimacy and functioning of democracies (Brezzi *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, specific recommendations on countering disinformation related to climate change during the work of this project.

It is planned that the outcomes of the CLIMATUDE will be fed into future research within the EPA's climate change pillar and into ongoing activities within the National Dialogue on Climate Action and Local Authority Climate Action plans within Ireland. It is intended that project outcomes will also contribute towards building public support and accelerating the pace of climate action, while also ensuring climate justice principles are adhered to⁵.

1.2 Background

The CLIMATUDE workplan comprised four separate but interlinked knowledge creation packages of work. The first is concerned with exploring how much society understands and how much it trusts climate science. The second is focused on understanding the perceptions that the public have of government policy and messaging around climate change. The third assesses citizens' engagement with, and understanding of, climate science and the level of trust they have in public institutions to deliver on climate strategies that are both fair and equitable. The fourth, building on this citizen engagement, aims to co-develop a better understanding of the relationship people have with their public institutions (especially in the context of climate change).

³ As demonstrated by the strong presence of science and technology in the Irish economy coupled with the above average performance of Irish students in science and mathematics (OECD 2023), and the high level of trust afforded to scientists on climate change by Irish people (O'Mahony *et al.*, 2024).

⁴ As Upton Sinclair (1994, 1934) said '*It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it*'.

⁵ CLIMATUDE also includes a consideration of nature of climate justice both as the general system of ethics and how it might be implemented.

This report is the second of two planned outputs from the second of these work packages, 'Public perceptions of government policy and messaging on climate change'. It explores trust in Irish public institutions with regards to climate change. This report is complemented by a preceding companion report, which involved 'capturing a picture' of the Irish climate change policy and regulatory landscape.

1.3 Structure of the document

The report is divided into seven sections as outlined below.

The initial section, *Introduction*, describes the foundation of the project and provides background and context to the work undertaken.

The second section, *Methodology*, outlines the desk-based research approach adopted for this consideration climate change policy and regulation across different scales.

The third section, *Trust and Fairness*, a review comprises a treatment of trust and fairness as it relates to the context of policy development cycle.

The next section, *Irish Citizens' Perspectives*, provides an overview of the trust that Irish people have in their government and the public institutions that serve them.

The fifth section, *Public Institution Case Studies*, comprises five case studies illustrating how the perception of fairness and trust manifest within national discourses and subsequently impact the policy domain at different scales.

The sixth section, *RTÉ – A Study in Trust*, provide an analysis of Ireland's state broadcaster, RTÉ providing a useful lens through which to consider trust they pertain to climate issues, given the fundamental important of public media on the topic.

Finally, the last section, *Conclusions*, summarises the report's findings and links it to the other work within CLIMATUDE.

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This report is the outcome of desk research. This involved the identification and review of relevant literature from both academic publications and information sources produced by organisations outside of traditional publishing channels, such as governments, NGOs, and universities (the so-called grey literature). The literature review is a foundational research method. It is most used as a means of framing and contextualising subsequent research, *i.e.*, exploring existing knowledge, theories and practices of relevance to a particular research study (Webster & Watson, 2002)⁶. In this way an understanding of existing research (derived from different knowledge sources, applicable theories, and practice-based analyses already in the public domain) is developed. However, reviews of literature should not just simply be thought of as a preliminary research step, as Torracco (2005) observes a literature review can in and of itself constitute a worthwhile research method leading to new knowledge and insights. The objective of this review of literature was to explore citizen trust in public institutions in the Irish context.

To do this, the authors reviewed relevant literature sources: this included academic literature on trust and fairness, surveys on levels of trust in Irish public institutions, and reports relating to specific cases of Irish public institutions. Following selection and collating of relevant material, the literature was thematically analysed – a common analysis technique which allows for the identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting on the key themes from the data being investigated (see for example Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

2.2 The literature review process

Fink (2010) identifies seven tasks (or steps) involved in reviewing literature, namely: (i) choosing a research question; (ii) selecting bibliographic databases and other sources of literature; (iii) choosing search terms and combinations of terms; (iv) applying practical screening criteria *e.g.*, language, availability; (v) applying methodical screening criteria *e.g.*, methodological approach; (vi) 'doing' the review; and (vii) synthesising the results.

The initial step is defining the research question as a means of orientating the review. For this study the purpose of the review is to explore concepts of trust and fairness, and specifically to relate them to public institutions in Ireland and how citizens perceive these institutions. The next step relates to the selection of bibliographic databases and other sources of literature. Criteria for this selection

⁶ For example, Onwuegbuzie and Freis (2016) observe a false impression promulgated by some that a literature review is simply a preliminary task that has to be endured and should be quickly got out of the way before the start of 'real' research.

include, topic relevance, quality, accessibility, cost, etc. As strengths of various services differ, it is considered advisable to use a number, accordingly for this review multiple databases (JSTOR, Science Direct, SCOPUS, Google Scholar⁷) were used to overcome potential weaknesses of individual services (Falagas *et al.*, 2008).

The next step suggested by Fink (2010) involved choosing search terms and combinations of terms. Keyword search constructions, comprising words, phrases and basic Boolean operators, were created for the database searches. A snowballing search strategy was deployed to locate more relevant literature – including so-called ‘backward snowballing’ (literature listed in bibliographies of papers identified through searches), ‘forward snowballing’ (literature that has cited the identified papers) and ‘relationship snowballing’ (literature recommended based on relevance scoring). Such an approach is facilitated by the information supplied by many bibliographic databases in their search results.

The resultant list of literature was reduced by applying both practical and methodological screening criteria. The practical screening step involving identifying “... *a broad range of articles that may be potentially usable in that they cover the topic of interest, are in a language you can read, and are in a publication you respect and can be obtained in a timely manner*” (*Ibid.*, p. 59). Methodological screening criteria were then applied (*i.e.*, considering the methodology applied, quality of the work and the journal, author’s reputation, etc.) to ensure suitability. Consideration of such attributes tends to result in a higher quality and more focused literature review. The objective of these two steps was through an iterative review of practicality and relevance to reduce the initial collective of identified literature to a more manageable amount, while ensuring that the pertinent literature was captured. The final step was the actual review of the literature, which we have described in previous work as “*the familiar iterative process of searching, reading, annotating, organising, summarising, analysing, and finally synthesising*” (Dunphy *et al.*, 2021, p. 10).

Through such a process we can begin to get a deeper understanding of the research topic and develop a more informed state of the art with regards to current scientific thinking etc. The following sections outline the initial results from this effort.

⁷ Google Scholar has been criticised on several grounds (including unclear selection and ranking schemes) (see *e.g.*, Jacsó, 2010). While acknowledging and appreciating such criticisms, Google Scholar was used to complement the other bibliographic databases, not least due to the power of its search algorithms. However, we note used only as a secondary databases supplementing the other databases and in full knowledge of its perceived shortcomings.

3 Trust and fairness

3.1 Introduction

Navigating questions surrounding trust is a multifaceted task. It is often implicit in climate and energy transitions literature that the success and acceptance of new policies or energy developments often hinge on trust. In this sense, trust is highly instrumental in both the adaptation and mitigation of climate change (Büscher & Sumpf, 2015). However, trust can be ambiguous. We might desire trustworthy people or institutions but at the same time we would not have to trust these at all if we had full confidence of the outcomes of a scenario or development. Whilst trust is often seen as instrumental, it can often depend on goods that are intrinsically valuable such as fairness, equity, or justness. We might trust and thus depend on others to deliver such outcomes but if they fail to do so our trust might wane. Such experiences (or observations of other's) may give rise to mistrust as a means of navigating uncertainty or may lead to distrust – resulting in resistance and rejection (Lehtonen & de Carlo, 2019).

The wider task of this report – to understand trust in institutions surrounding climate change – requires a characterisation of the system we seek to change and the instruments through which this change might be elicited. These instruments of change are diverse. This report focuses on conventional policy instruments, climate change communication and portrayal in the media, public participation and discourse, and a set of case studies that illustrate how components of these have played out in Ireland. These facets are understood as interlinked and embedded within “socio-technical regimes”. We understand Ireland's energy system and wider decarbonisation efforts as a complex amalgamation of technical and social elements. The components we explore are simultaneously understood as elements of this regime but also as potential disruptors which seek to alter or reshape this regime (distinguishing which elements hold promise to transform a regime and not passively reinforce it, is discussed later in this report). Subsequently, exploring these components in relation to trust and its mediating values sets out a foundation for how we might better understand citizens' trust in relation to institutions surrounding climate change.

This report begins by setting out a conceptual framework centring on two components. First, it outlines the relationship between policy success, fairness, and trust. Second, it lays out a means of understanding Ireland's decarbonisation efforts as a sociotechnical system as means of positioning and relating the case studies discussed later. Within this conceptualisation we set out a series of policy typologies which may help in relating conventional policy instruments to fairness and in turn, trust. This typology is also essential in framing policy as only part of a much wider bundle of instruments of change.

3.2 A trust-fairness-policy complex

The following section sets out a complex which relates policy, trust, and fairness. This complex is predicated on the notion that fairness (or at least perception of fairness) is instrumental in the formation of warranted trust. As discussed shortly this is trust which is “well-grounded” or “justified” (McLeod, 2023). We therefore can draw a connection between trust and fairness. In turn we could assess the policies and cases studies in this document about fairness as a conduit for understanding the relationship between these cases and warranted trust (or indeed mis- and distrust). Whilst certainly not exhaustive we can therefore draw a preliminary triangular relationship between policy, fairness, and trust.

3.2.1 TRUST

Whilst trust is often implicit in much of the transitions literature – seen as a conduit to acceptance and the progression of the transition, it can seem to be subject to a similar but distinct bundle of intrinsic and instrumental dynamics that are applied to fairness. In a similar way, trust can be emphasised as an instrumental good – there is a focus on what trust *lets us do* as opposed to trust having an intrinsic value. Trust faces distinct conceptual dilemmas compared to fairness or justice which can be more clearly viewed as desirable outcomes in and of themselves. It is simple enough, for example, to state and rationalise a preference for fair outcomes or a more just society, it is more difficult to simply state a preference to trust.

Quoting Bok, (1978) Baier, (1986) begins on trust: “(w)hatever matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives.” However, Baier adds to this suggesting “that not all the things that thrive when there is trust between people, and which matter, are things that should be encouraged to thrive. Exploitation and conspiracy, as much as justice and fellowship, thrive better in an atmosphere of trust” (Baier, 1986, p.231- 232). In addition, he posits “(t)here are immoral as well as moral trust relationships, and trust-busting can be a morally proper goal.”

In this sense, trust can be misplaced. In regards, to energy developments, we often read of broken promises made by developers or decision-makers. In the Corrib gas controversy discussed below, we see that there was at least some level of trust held in relation to the potential benefits. However, the development made salient a range of institutional failings, including a disregard of property and community rights, and lax transparency that diminished this trust (Slevin, 2019). Yet trust is not binary but can manifest as several attitudes and strategies. Lehtonen & de Carlo, (2019) survey a range of literature of trust and make a distinction between trust, mistrust, and distrust:

Trust is defined as a scenario where a person accepts to “believe without knowing” thereby making themselves vulnerable.

Mistrust can be an attitude – stemming from doubt fostering passiveness or prudence. It can also be understood as a strategy, skill or an art helping to navigate risk or uncertainty.

Distrust indicates the absence of trust and feeds cynicism. As a strategy distrust entails resistance and rejection. While mistrust might still embody some hope that a person or institution becomes trustworthy, a state of distrust signifies a loss of this hope.

“distrust is an action-enabling strategy. Distrust is not the opposite of trust, but its functional equivalent. Distrust reduces complexity into a narrow action corridor by making a few actions probable and certain others highly unlikely ... Distrust provokes counterstrategies by consumers who wish to circumvent the distrusted situation or object, thus aspiring autonomy, searching for alternatives and perhaps even boycotting. Unlike a lack of trust, which can hinder action, distrust results in a mobilization of action potential”

(Büscher & Sumpf, 2015)

Trust's complexity does not end here. It presents paradoxes. We may hold trustworthiness as desirable but if we could be certain of the outcome of trusting a person, we would not need to trust this person at all. Trust therefore inherently involves risk. As such the question of when trust is *warranted* is a central part of discussions of trust e.g., McLeod (2023) describes warranted trust as justified or well-grounded. This implies that warranted trust is a rational act or that a trustworthy person (or institution) is the recipient of trust.

Bjarnadóttir *et al.* (2025) examined the relationship between trust and support for three climate policies: carbon taxes, renewable subsidies, and assistance and retraining for workers whose industries are impacted by climate policy. They found that trust in institutions correlated with support for all three policies. On its own, this finding is not surprising but at the very least it enforces the relationship between perceptions of the public and the viability of climate policy.

Within the context of this report trust then is seen as the risks and vulnerabilities exposed in the relationships between different publics and decision-makers. Trust can be seen as enabling action – if we trust a developer or a council we may consent to the development of new infrastructure.

3.2.2 FAIRNESS

Fairness and justice are an increasing component of the discourse surrounding energy transitions. These broad values are frequently viewed as instrumental in the acceptance of new energy developments (Bal *et al.*, 2023). This idea is predicated on the notion that people or communities are more likely to accept a development if it is *perceived* to be fair. However, this instrumentalization often conceals the intrinsic value of justice and fairness, primarily that they are good in and of themselves (Bidwell & Sovacool, 2023). This instrumentalization often comes to the fore in political statements surrounding the necessity of energy transitions. This can be seen in the statement by Frans Timmerman, former executive vice-president of the EU Commission:

"We must show solidarity with the most affected regions in Europe, such as coal mining regions and others, to make sure the Green Deal gets everyone's full support and has a chance to become a reality."

(European Commission, n.d.)

In this example, we see that solidarity is seen as a conduit to support for the EU's flagship Green Deal transition package. It is helpful to reflect on the purpose of debates surrounding the meaning of justice and fairness. Debates on the meaning of these terms come into existence to establish the nature of a just society, to assess which of multiple decisions or scenarios are normatively more desirable than another, and to understand which arrangements (social, political, material *etc.*) in society are desirable. The exploration and debate of these ideas is not driven by establishing which notion of justice or fairness is likely to see an external agenda or development come to fruition. In this context, we present perceptions of fairness as instrumental in the formation of warranted trust.

3.3 Contemporary descriptions of policy

Policy instruments can be interpreted and categorised in several ways. It is not uncommon to see instruments grouped accordingly based on common features *e.g.*, the use of markets, volunteerism, or direct controls, which in turn enables their comparison (Richards, 2017). For example, chapter 13 of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report outlines eight GHG abatement policy instruments; regulations and standards, taxes and charges, tradable permits, voluntary agreements, subsidies and incentives, information instruments, research and development and non-climate policies (Gupta *et al.*, 2007). The OECD *Policy Instruments for the Environment* (PINE) database, which gathers information of policy instruments surrounding environmental protection and resource management, breaks down policies into taxes and fees, environmentally beneficially subsidies and payments, tradable permits and

offsets, and voluntary approaches (OECD, n.d.). While Taylor *et al.* (2012) group various instruments under five similar categories: direct “command and control” regulation, economic instruments, information-based instruments, co-regulation and self-regulation, and support mechanisms and capacity building.

Policy Instrument Type	Example Applications
Direct “command and control” regulation	Ambient pollution targets, bans on harmful substances, emission permits, mandated technologies, zoning and location controls.
Economic instruments	Taxes on emissions, subsidies for renewables, tradable pollution or resource rights, payments for ecosystem services.
Information-based instruments	Advisory programs, public reporting of environmental performance, eco-labels and certifications.
Co-regulation and self-regulation	Voluntary industry standards, negotiated agreements, corporate supply chain standards, professional membership requirements, self-imposed environmental management, community or NGO partnerships.
Support mechanisms and capacity building	Research funding, demonstration projects, knowledge sharing, networking and collaborative problem-solving initiatives.

Table 1: Condensed typology presented by Taylor *et al.* (2012)

Another means of arranging policy instruments is through classifying their certain dimensions or aspects. This in turn enables selected instruments to be related in various ways. For example, instead of categorising a carbon tax as a market instrument and a ban on marked diesel as “command and control” regulation, these instruments might be grouped in reference to their intended purpose, targets, focus on a specific sector, level of coerciveness or any other of a wide range of dimensions (Richards, 2017). Through the trust-fairness-policy complex, this report sets out a broad typology in which to situate and relate examples of Irish climate policy to various notions of fairness, justness and trust. Therefore, in setting out a taxonomy of instruments, we acknowledge a fundamental question that arise as a result:

“The argument is that to understand which policy instrument is best for a particular application, one must first understand the nature of the problem” (Richards, 2017, p.145)

The nature of the problem under Richard's taxonomy is divided into three types under which various instruments are nested.

Category	Policy Instruments / Measures
Type 1: Environmental Externalities and Public Goods	Product design and production process standards - Emissions or effluent taxes/charges - Subsidies for pollution control - Government spending on abatement - Emission-level regulations - Contracts or property-rights adjustments - Liability mechanisms
Type 2: Information Imperfections and Asymmetries	Public education programmes - Labelling requirements - Mandatory information reporting - Technical assistance - Information centres - Community right-to-know laws - Environmental management systems
Type 3: Research and Innovation as a Public Good	Government research facilities - R&D grants and support - Innovation prizes (e.g., X-prizes) - Intellectual property rights

Table 2: Taxonomy of three types of environmental policy instruments (after Richards, 2017)

The addition of a typology is not just beneficial in that it lets us put a name on various policies. It also tells us about the states attitude to the public and to private sectors. Richards (2017) sets an additional division in this respect, between *private ordering* and *public ordering*. Within private ordering the government sets out broad legal principles and legislation designed to establish the rights and responsibilities of various parties, creating a wide space in which parties to work out the most (often cost) effective arrangements to meet specific responsibilities. Within public ordering governments assume more active roles setting specific goal, programmes and enforcements.

The cases discussed in this report do not necessarily fit neatly into such a taxonomy. This is in part because some of the cases, such as the Corrib controversy reflect how a range of policy instruments – alongside other processes – were misemployed, misdirected or absent. In this case, information imperfections existed surrounding the environmental risks of the pipeline and refinery, subsidies were misapplied to the disproportionate benefit of the private sector, and the enforcement of property rights were disregarded. The other cases discussed do fit more neatly in such a typology, especially those which distinctly focus on the roll out of a specific policy – both Ireland's carbon tax and its participation in the EU's emission trading scheme can be understood as economic instruments, employing markets in responding to environmental externalities *i.e.*, greenhouse gas emissions and

their accumulation impacts. Components of Ireland's Just Transition fund can be seen as a set of subsidies for education and reskilling and small enterprises within the Midlands.

The purpose of the typology presented henceforth has two main purposes. First, is to embed Ireland's flagship policies and case studies within Ireland's wider energy regime (and broader policy landscape). Second, instead of framing policies in relation to oft described types of market failures or the quality of mechanisms they employ, this typology positions these cases in relation to a nexus of fairness, justice and trust.

3.3.1.1 FAIRNESS, SUCCESS AND POLICY

"... as long as people believe that all classes and sections are suffering and enduring equally, they will put up with very great hardship. It is 'unfairness' that people resent"

UK Ministry of Information, 1941

Many measures can be used to assess the success of a policy. With regards to measures seeking to shape people's or household energy consumption to national emissions targets many proxies can be measured, *e.g.*, cars on the road, fluctuations in public transport, household energy consumption, uptake of EVs *etc.* can all be measured and in turn connected to reductions in national emissions. However, a narrow measure of success connected primarily to carbon accounting and national emissions may conceal other plausible goals. For example, there is a difference between reducing emissions *efficiently* and reducing emissions *fairly* (Wood *et al.*, 2024). Notably, many forms of carbon taxation are regarded as regressive, disproportionately impacting low-income groups (Büchs *et al.*, 2011; Callan *et al.*, 2009).

Often adjacent measures may be needed to mitigate disproportionate impacts of policy. Callan *et al.* (2009) found that the regressive impacts of an Irish carbon tax could in part be offset by redistributive adjustments in other systems such as benefits payments. They note, however, that such aggregate approaches can exclude certain groups – at the time of the study 55,000 households in Ireland neither paid tax nor received benefits and so could not be compensated for a regressive carbon tax through these avenues. Alongside being normatively problematic, perceptions of (un)fairness can become mediators of both acceptance, compliance and ultimately the success of a policy. In the context of a shaping more just energy transitions, we might also ask how efforts to reduce national emissions interact with peoples' living standards. If a measure is successful in reducing emissions it may do so to the detriment of a person's, household's or community's well-being (Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017).

A key challenge in presenting a typology with explicit normative components such as fairness, is that fairness may be a general outcome mediated or offset by any other range of policies, processes, or crises. For example, a regressive tax might to some extent be offset by greater wealth redistribution via other mechanisms or subsidies. Whilst the introduction of ultralow emissions zones may exclude motorists from city centres, investment in inclusive mass transit may offset or indeed enhance mobility. To better conceptualise this issue, we introduce a multi-level perspective on sociotechnical systems (Geels, 2002). This framework, introduced below, enables us to position or embed each policy and case study discussed in reference to Ireland's wider energy regime.

3.4 Dealing with complexity: embedding policy mixes in sociotechnical systems

Many of the case studies here correspond in some way to our typology of climate policies. Yet, distinguishing which policy leads to which outcome is a difficult task. The cases below for example, include economy-wide and blunt policy tools such as taxes and trading schemes. These will have raised the price of emitting activities and therefore have almost certainly played a role in the shifting composition of Ireland's energy system and practices. However, it is difficult to say, for example, that the EU's emission trading scheme (discussed below) was directly responsible for the decline of Ireland's peat industry (also discussed below). Rather, such shifts are likely composites of both varying governmental policies and targets and public action.

What's more, an elaborate account of the functioning of a policy-mix (*i.e.*, a combination of several policy instruments (Lehmann, 2012; Rogge & Reichardt, 2016)), cannot alone account for structural shifts happening within a society. One way of explaining this – and to some extent capturing this complexity – is to understand these mixes as being embedded in a multilevel sociotechnical systems or regime. A regime refers to the dominant socio-technical system that meets a particular set of needs. A multilevel perspective of sociotechnical systems both describes how a regime stabilises and is disrupted overtime (Geels, 2011). The goal of Ireland's decarbonisation is in one sense to transform this regime. Yet confusingly policies policy can both stabilise and disrupt a regime.

Key components of the multi-level perspective

Regime: the dominant system through which a particular set of needs are met.

Multilevel: regime change unfolds over three interconnected levels.

- Macro: external contexts difficult to change within a system *i.e.*, climate change.
- Meso: the regime level – the dominant system of technologies *i.e.*, fossil fuels.
- Micro: spaces where *radical innovations* can develop.

Sociotechnical: recognises that these systems consist of technical and social elements. The latter referring to a range of element such as cultural practices, political institutions, regulations and policies, markets and normative values.

Landscape: broad external environment in which socio-technical regimes and niche innovations exist.

- Long-term structural trends.
- Cultural values and societal norms⁸.
- Political ideologies.
- Major events or shocks (*e.g.*, wars, crises, pandemics).

It is the “socio” aspect of the system that aids in understanding the connections between physical technologies and more abstract categories such as cultural practice, values and political institutions. In turn, this can act as a conduit to link policies which attempt to reconfigure a regime (a decarbonised Irish energy system) to reflect or align with certain values.

This approach has been integrated with a specific normative framing “energy justice” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2018). In this report, we avoid subscribing to a specific justice framing, reimagining the space in which values which guide reimagining of regimes (both processes and outcomes) are open, deliberative and reflexive. The normativity we depart from then is not a specific framing of energy justice – a predefined framing may confine space for deliberation (Wood, 2023) – but rather that deliberation and participation are both intrinsic and instrumental in discovering the notions of fairness and justice (or indeed a wide range of other values) that should guide transitions.

In the context of this report a multi-level perspective (MLP) performs numerous functions, including:

1. Providing a space in which to understand and structure on the landscape set out in report 3.1.
2. This landscape lets us position cultural values and societal norms in reference to regime change in Ireland.
3. An explicit space for norms and values sets up a space in which to ask the question what we mean by “success” in relation to Ireland’s climate policies *i.e.*, efficient or efficient *and* fair.
4. Creates the opportunity to define and position our own normative contribution/take within this landscape and ask *where is normativity hidden in this landscape?*
5. MLP is framed around analysing transitions in sociotechnical systems – a primary aim of many climate policies.

⁸ See for instance the analysis of RTE and people’s trust in it regarding climate change in Chapter 6.

4 Irish citizens' Perspectives

4.1 General institutional trust

Unusually for a post-colonial state⁹, Irish people generally have confidence in their public institutions¹⁰, with high, albeit it varying levels of trust expressed. Irish people's trust in their public institutions is high by international standards. Ireland ranks alongside Nordic countries coming in at 8th out of 30 countries surveyed for the OECD (2024)¹¹, with some 47% of Ireland people having high or moderately high trust in the government compared to an OECD average of 39%. This level of trust is in line with the most recent Standard Eurobarometer¹² which found 43% of Irish citizens trusted their government, 10% higher than the average for EU member states (European Commission, 2025).

As shown in Table 3 below, Irish people, in common with citizens of other developed countries, have more confidence in other people generally than they do in public institutions. OECD (2024) found that more than 83% trust 'most people', a figure amongst the highest in developed countries.

Institution	Trust Level	OECD Rank
Fellow citizens	83 %	-
National government	47 %	8 th
Courts & legal system	69 %	7 th
Gardaí Síochána (police service)	70 %	9 th
Oireachtas (national parliament)	49 %	-
Political parties	26 %	-
Local government	41 %	-
News media	47 %	-

Table 3: Trust in public institutions (OECD, 2024)

At the same time a report from Ipsos B&A (2024) shows a more mixed picture with just 58% saying they trusted fellow citizens. Much of this variance can be ascribed to differences in methodology,

⁹ Postcolonial states typically have inherited political systems that originally designed for control (and extraction) rather than representation leading to low levels of trust in public institutions. In such contexts institutional trust is not deeply rooted in culture but rather highly dependent on performance.

¹⁰ Ireland's unusual (for former colony) institutional trust can be attributed to several factors including the inheritance of a non-partisan civil service from the so-called Westminster model. The "greening" of existing administrative bodies and the creation of a shadow administration (e.g., Dáil Éireann's Department of Local Government) during the war of independence, their reconciliation with the Dublin Castle administration post-independence and the strong institution-building in the formative years of the Irish Free State (Fathartaigh, & Farrell 2024; Biggins *et al.* 2024).

¹¹ The Irish component of this 30-country survey was conducted by the Central Statistics Office.

¹² Regular public opinion surveys conducted by the European Commission since 1974, assessing EU citizens' views on various topics.

question wording and the scales used¹³. It can also be argued that the OECD survey reflects fundamental interpersonal trust, with the Ipsos B&A survey showing social cohesion challenges. Ipsos B&A data shows an 8% drop in trust of other citizens from 2005 to 2024 reflecting increasing societal polarisation.

It is notable from the data in Table 3 that political actors are trusted notably less than administrative bodies. Institutions in which Irish people expressed the highest level of trust are 'An Garda Síochána' (the national police and security service) and the judicial system, at c. 70% of respondents, with almost two-thirds (66%) expressing trust in the civil service OECD (2024). At the other end of the scale, just less than half of people (49%) have high or moderately high levels of trust level in the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) while political parties are trusted by just over a quarter (26%) (*Ibid.*).

Irish people's trust in local government in Ireland at 41% of respondents is lower than that expressed in their national government, usually for OECD countries. This level of trust is also a little lower than the OECD average, the only public institution type for which this was the case (OECD, 2024). This can be attributed in part to the centralisation of power in the Irish state and the limit power and resources of local government compared to their international peers (Reidy, 2018), and in part to perceptions of a power imbalance between unelected and elected officials at this level (Quinlivan, 2015).

Overall, while still relatively high recent years have seen a noticeable shift in institutional trust in Ireland. There has been a decline in trust across several public institutions including the government and political parties. There are a multitude of reasons for these changes but increased societal pressures, economic challenges, and a growing disconnection between citizens and public representatives play significant roles. For many people, there is sense of alienation from the political process. In particular, many Irish citizens express distrust due to the government's perceived failure to critical issues like health (Burke-Kennedy, 2025), housing (O'Leary, 2026; Kehoe, 2025), and climate change (O'Doherty, 2025). The high level of people (approximately six in ten) that believe government leaders, business people and journalists would "*purposely mislead them*" (Pelly, 2025) is illustrative of the mistrust and alienation present in Irish society.

Of course, institutional trust is influenced by underlying socio-demographic variances arising from different perceptions, experiences, and social dynamics. There is for instance a marked gender difference – with five in ten men expressing trust in the government compared to just four in ten

¹³ For example, Eurobarometer (2024) was online, used the term 'other people' and considered scores of 6/10 and higher as moderate to high trust; Ipsos B&A (2024) was a telephone survey, used the term 'fellow citizen' and asked a binary question about on whether respondents "*generally trust (institutions) to tell the truth, or not*"

women (CSO, 2024). Unsurprisingly economic privilege also influences levels of trust, the 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer for instance suggests “(i)n Ireland, high and low income live in opposing institutional realities”, reporting a difference in average institutional trust¹⁴, a trust inequality, of 11 points between those living in high-income (top 25%) and low-income (bottom 25%) households (Edelman, 2026). Interestingly, only 24% of people in Ireland find it likely that government balances interests of current and future generations, lower than the OECD average (37%) (OECD, 2024).

It is perhaps no surprise that the analysis for the OECD 2024 report found that individuals who voted for a government party had higher levels of trust in both national and local government (Murray, 2024). This reflects an element of cognitive consistency and positive reinforcement because their political choices align with the current policies and actors. Such people often take partisan positions interpreting government actions more favourably, attribute successes to competent leadership, and explain away failures as exaggerated, which preserves their world view. A world view that is often supported and reinforced through echo chamber media and social networks. The inverse is of course also true, and those who feel excluded from political processes tend to have significantly lower trust.

4.2 Trust on climate change

According to the 2024 “*Climate Change in the Irish Mind*” report, more than four in five of the Irish population are worried about climate change, (O’Mahony *et al.*, 2024). There is strong public support for climate action policies, albeit the nature of such policies is perhaps somewhat more contested. McCurry (2024) observes that the report shows “*continued high level of climate awareness, acceptance of human causation and the personal importance of climate change.*”

The annual Climate Survey commissioned by the European Investment Bank, found that some 96% of Irish respondents see the importance for Ireland to adapt to climate change, with 55% say it needs to be prioritised by the Government¹⁵ – both responses are above the EU averages (EIB, 2024). The EIB survey also found that 64% of Irish people see the need for global solidarity on climate adaptation and agrees that Ireland should do more to help those developing nations most vulnerable to climate change – 7% more the EU average (*Ibid.*). A previous edition of the survey found that 68% of people in Ireland felt that they were more concerned about climate change than the government, indicating a government action trust deficit (EIB, 2021).

The scientific community is the most trusted source of information about climate change for people in Ireland, with O’Mahoney *et al.* (2024) finding that some 93% of Irish people somewhat or strongly

¹⁴ Edelman Trust Index score for average percent trust in business, government, media, NGOs

¹⁵ Notably is was not the top priority (EIB 2024)

trust scientists on climate. This is in keeping with the relatively high level of trust afforded to scientists in Ireland, which exceeds global averages. However, the lower levels of trust expressed by younger respondents may have implications for deliberations and '*evidence-based decision-making*' for future policy decisions around responding to climate change (Roche *et al.*, 2025) and is something to be aware of. Other sources of information on climate change which are highly trusted include EPA (88%), educators (87%), family and friends (85%) and tv weather reporters (84%). Other sources of information trusted by more than half are community leaders, mainstream news media and journalists – all of which are trusted by 68% of people. At the other end of the scale are political leaders who score just below 50%, while business and religious leaders are both in the mid-30s, and just one-quarter of people have trust in the climate information supplied by celebrities, or media personalities as shown in

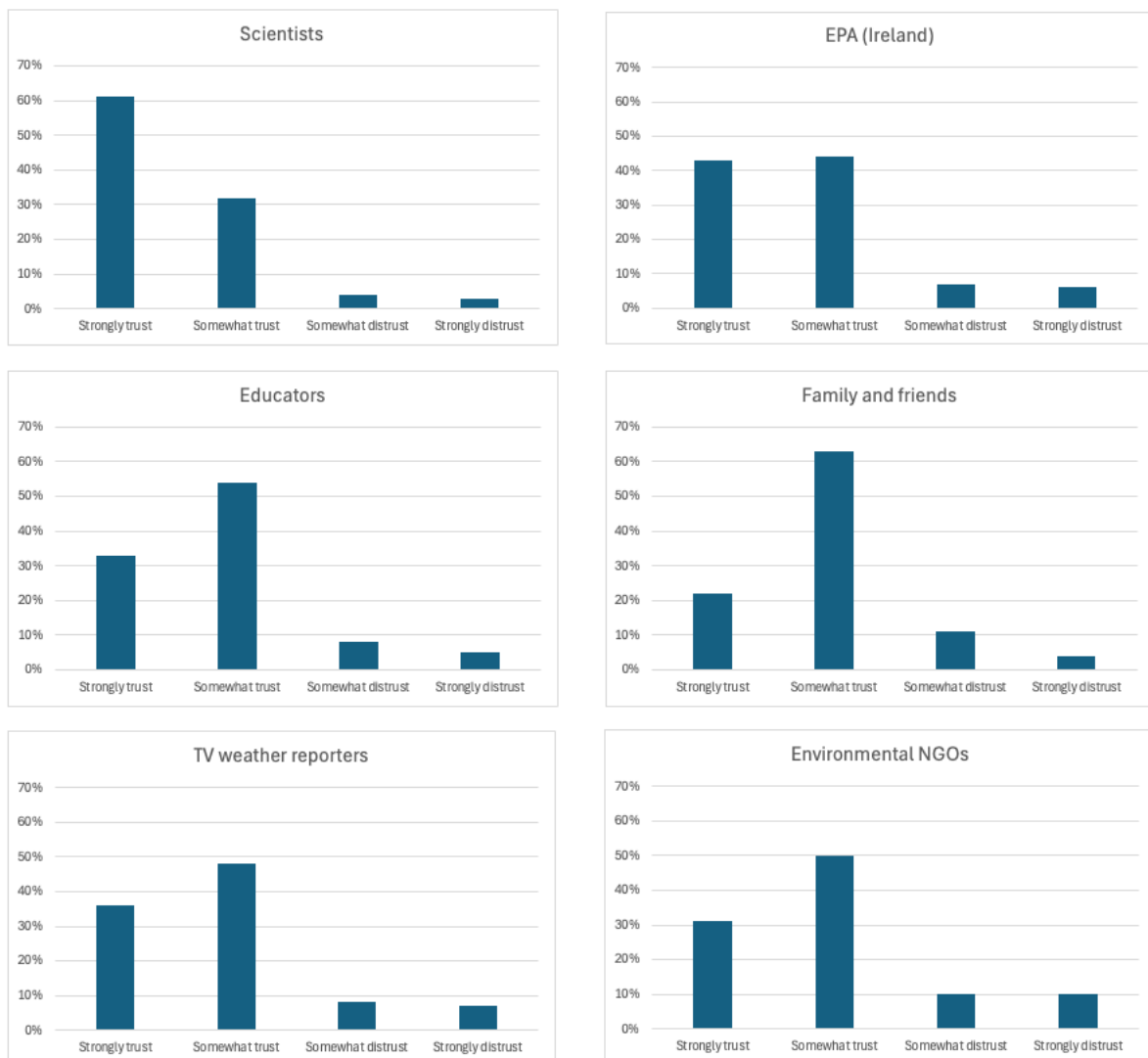


Figure 1: Levels of trust across different cohorts of Irish society - Part 1 (data sourced from O'Mahony *et al.*, 2024)

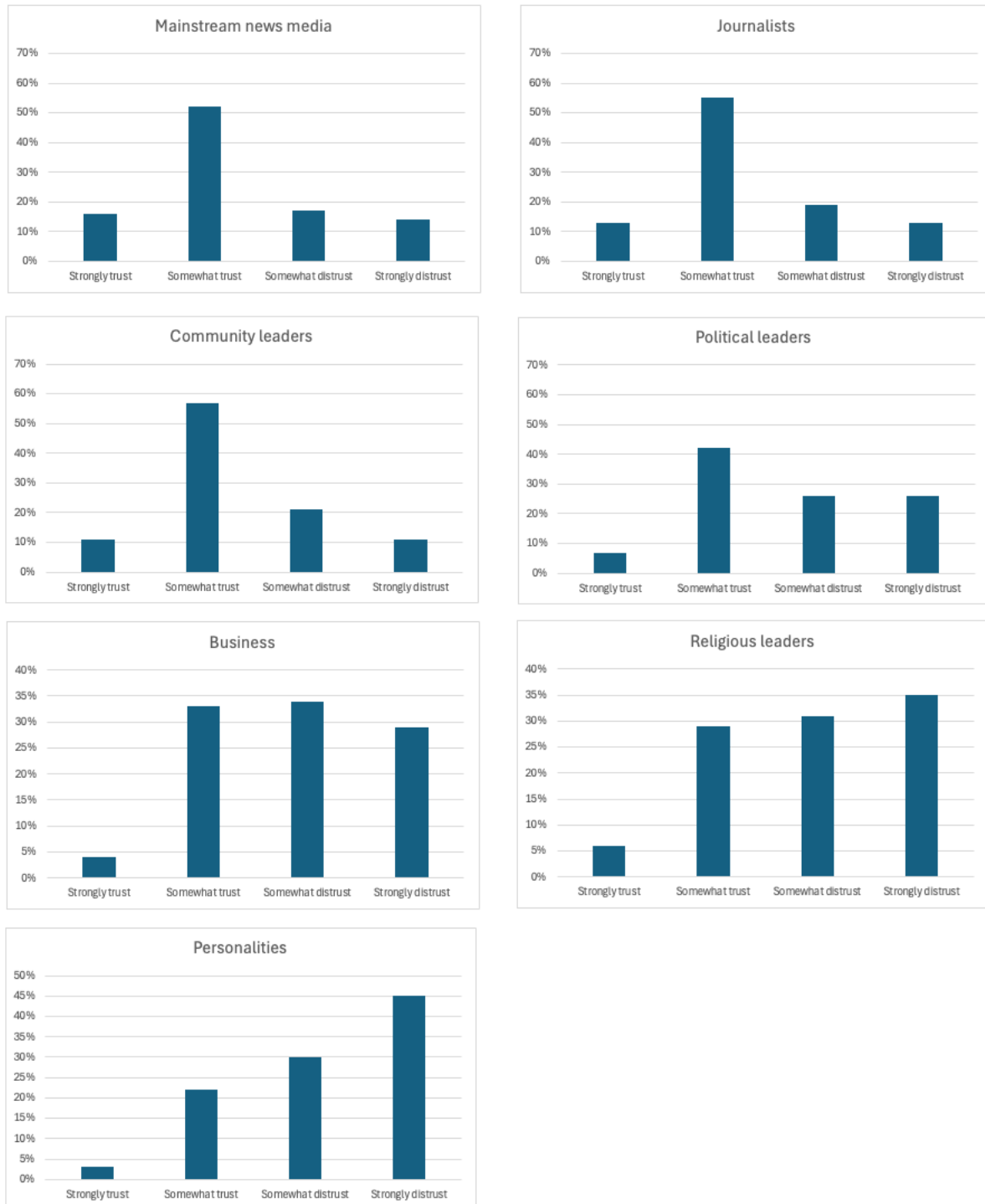


Figure 2: Levels of trust across different cohorts of Irish society - Part 2 (data sourced from O'Mahony et al., 2024)

The data summarised in the above charts (after O'Mahony et al., 2024) clearly shows that scientific and evidence-based institutions are consistently trusted more than administrative and political bodies. This indicates the Irish public places trust in experts and that they prefer solutions grounded in technical expertise and independent analysis. This would imply that public engagement on climate change (and the response to it) should foreground scientific evidence, involve trusted expert research institutions communication and implementation, to boost legitimacy and acceptance.

5 Public Institution Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how the perception of fairness and trust manifest within national discourses and subsequently impact the policy domain at different scales. These illustrative examples provide a brief overview of the processes involved and were selected due to their different expressions in terms of trust, ranging from the establishing and/or negotiation of trust between the different stakeholders involved, to the breach and/or collapse of trust that takes place when one stakeholder ignores the perspectives of other stakeholders affected by their actions.

5.1 Citizens' Assembly critique (and deliberative mini-publics)

Over the past decade novel forms of democratic and deliberative engagement have come to the fore. These include citizen juries, citizen assemblies, and public parliaments and are often collectively referred to as *deliberative mini-publics*. Elstub & Khoban (2023) suggest that citizen assemblies¹⁶ can be positioned in front of a backdrop of declining trust in politics.

Voters in the 2018 abortion referendum with stronger knowledge of the citizen assemblies were found to have more likely voted yes (Elkink *et al.*, 2020). This suggests that familiarity with concept and process may align with trust. Similarly, perceived levels of corruption in politics correlate with increased support for citizen assemblies (Walsh & Elkink, 2021). The association between trust and citizen assemblies extends beyond Ireland. Wappenhans *et al.* (2024) for example, found that citizen assemblies bolstered political trust, political efficacy, and political participation amongst participants.

Whilst well-regarded and often viewed as a much needed “revitalisation” of democracy (Walsh & Elkink, 2021) citizen assemblies also subject to critiques. Elstub & Khoban (2023) elaborate on six prominent critiques of citizen assemblies.

1. Members of the public do not have the capacity to engage in meaningful deliberation and decision-making.
2. Citizen assemblies do not address power disparities.
3. Citizen assemblies are excessively manipulated spaces whereby citizens have little say in the construction of overarching procedures and participatory opportunities.
4. Citizen assemblies may be co-opted by public authorities and can have limited policy impact.
5. Citizen assemblies may exclude the majority of the public from deliberation.
6. Because they are representative, they do not necessarily offer a platform for marginalised groups and may exacerbate inequality.

¹⁶ A general outline of Citizen Assemblies is outlined in Deliverable 3.1 of the CLIMATUDE project.

Despite reasonable critiques, variations of citizen assemblies have brought ordinarily sidelined groups into the fold – notably children's assemblies within Ireland and Scotland.

A Scottish initiative, Children's Parliament, involved 100+ participants and centred on capturing children's views and experiences related to climate change. Children from the Children's Parliament worked alongside adult members of the climate assembly to produce 42 calls for action. This process presented several participatory benefits. Firstly, children were given an initial space and process through which to voice and explore their concerns. Second, the initial parliament acted as a conduit for their concerns to be heard in other arenas, namely the Scottish Parliament and COP26.

Another initiative in Ireland, the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, included 35 randomly selected participants aged 7-17 (Mallon *et al.*, 2025). As with the Scottish Children's Parliament, this initiative elevated children's voices to arenas in which they would ordinarily be absent.

With the above in mind citizen's assemblies can be seen as beneficial procedures capable of responding to democratic deficits. This is pertinent when revisiting the critiques of Elstub & Khoban (2023), in that many of these can be applied to contemporary forms and arenas of participation and citizen engagement. For example, the first critique outlined by which follows that members of the public may lack the capacity to engage in meaningful debate and decision-making appears mute when we reflect on how many decisions about public life are made without opportunities for deliberation or power over decision-making.

5.2 Ireland's carbon tax (and fiscal crisis)

Following Ireland's 2008 financial crash, an agreement was brokered between the Irish government and the European Central Bank (ECB), European Commission (EC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) whereby the former would receive financial support in return for implementing several revenue raising and expenditure reduction measures (Convery *et al.*, 2014).

It was agreed that one revenue raising measure was to be a carbon tax. This would cover CO₂ emissions from sectors which were not already subject to the EU emission trading scheme or related to agriculture. The resulting carbon tax applied to emissions from residential, transport, commercial buildings and small industry (Convery *et al.*, 2014).

Beginning in 2010 a price of €15/tonne was set, as of 2025 this price is now €71/tonne. The logic of pricing carbon is that it incentivises behavioural change encouraging its subjects to shift behaviours or consumption patterns. This might entail reducing carbon intensive behaviours and shifting to low-

carbon ones. A common example is shifting from a petrol or diesel vehicle to an electric vehicle or to more active modes of transport such as cycling. Of course, each of these examples highlights the bluntness of a tax – it is not targeted and can disproportionately impact some groups over others. For example, a person with a disability may neither be able to afford an electric car nor use a bicycle, in which case their options for adaptation are limited. They may make decisions which reduce their quality of life or must bear the additional costs of the tax. Conversely, a wealthier person may be able to pay not to have to change their behaviour or may be able to afford to make more costly energy efficiency upgrades in their day-to-day life (Wood *et al.*, 2024).

The most obvious (seemingly) point of assessment for a carbon tax is whether it causes a decline in emissions. Yet the effectiveness of a such a tax is difficult to gauge in practice. External factors and shocks that also impact the price of fossil fuels can be hard to unpick from the effects of a carbon tax. de Bruin & Yakut (2024) find that gradually increases up to €100/tonne will result in a substantial decline in economy-wide emissions. Bearing in mind earlier discussions on what counts as success – they also find that this will lead to small decrease in overall growth during this time.

Another aspect of gauging the efficacy of a carbon tax regards what the revenue is used for. For example, this could be redistributed to energy vulnerable households, invested in renewable energy or used to reduce other taxes. Each option here has the potential to address or compound certain inequities. This important to bear in mind given that a carbon tax without these measures is generally seen as regressive (Büchs *et al.*, 2011).

5.3 Ireland and the EU's emission trading scheme

The EU's emissions trading system (ETS) came into operation in 2005. The ETS operates on a cap-and-trade scheme whereby overall emissions for specific sectors are capped, emissions allowances are then distributed through a registrar and traded via the EU carbon market. This applies to companies which operate powerplants, industrial plants (excluding small businesses), airlines and other large energy users (EPA, n.d.). Firms which require emission allowances are then able to purchase them from other firms who require less. As the price of permits increases firms are incentivised to decarbonise to avoid further purchase of allowances. As time goes on, the quantity of emissions allowances granted decreases thereby tightening the cap and reducing the ability of each sector to emit.

Between 2005 and 2023 emissions from sectors under the ETS in Ireland decreased by 48.7% (Jensen, 2025), although in 2024 emissions from aviation increased by 17% year-on-year (Environmental

Protection Agency, 2025). Unlike a tax, the ever-tightening cap prevents target sectors from over-emitting.

Whilst the ETS move money between firms seeking to buy and sell excess permits, ETS has wider economic implications, namely pass-through and absorption. Firms may absorb the additional cost of purchasing emissions allowances or may eventually pass these costs through to consumers via higher prices (European Commission, CE Delft and Oeko-Institut, 2015). Where pass through emerges and the prices which subsequently rise can dictate the distributional impacts of the ETS.

Passthrough is predicted to have moderately regressive impacts (Nill *et al.*, 2025). For example, low-income households spend proportionately more on energy (especially heating), making them more vulnerable to price increases. Other increases, such as transport fuel prices may not necessarily passthrough to lower income households as they tend to own less vehicles (*Ibid.*). ETSs, and other blunt policy instruments, may also exacerbate or create regional inequalities where regions with higher emitting industries are disproportionately impacted (*Ibid.*). The case of Ireland's transition away from peat is discussed in this respect below.

5.4 Peat and Ireland's Just Transition Discourse

Often a frequent focus of Ireland's Just Transition discourse, peat extraction in Ireland's midlands was impacted by the ETS. Whilst the initial price of CO₂/tonne was low it remained commercially viable. However, as the price of allowances increased the economic viability of peat declined. The last peat fired plant (Edenderry) ceased the use of peat in 2023.

The decline of the peat industry in Ireland is a quintessential manifestation of contemporary just transitions discourse. Such examples often characterised by a region predominantly dependent on a fossil fuel related industry for employment. When an energy regime begins to shift, communities which depend on employment and wider benefits of these industries face significant uncertainty. Within Just Transition agendas measures are put in place to mitigate the consequences of such declines in industry. Typically, these involve the introduction of alternate industries or occupations, reskilling and training, or early retirement schemes.

Up until 2019 three peat-fired power plants operated in the Irish Midlands. The sole supplier of peat in region, Bord na Móna (BNM), was also the leading employer (Banerjee & Schuitema, 2022). Mounting climate pledges, particularly the Irish government's intention to phase out peat fired power plants by 2030, and viability issues due to the increasing price of emissions allowances has led to a rapid decline in the Midland's peat industry (Government of Ireland, 2019). BNM withdrew from

industrial-scale peat harvesting after losing its largest customer, when the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) decided to stop using peat in its powerplants – subsequently peat workers came to face an uncertain future (Banerjee & Schuitema, 2022).

In 2020 the Irish Government set up the Just Transition fund to support communities as they transitioned away from peat (Department of Climate Energy and the Environment, 2020). This fund primarily focused on re-training workers and funding green enterprises with the broader agenda of making “the region a more attractive and sustainable place to live and work” (*Ibid.*). Highlighting the increasingly vast space in which a just transition can be understood, the fund produced mixed results.

Workers did not trust that the retraining and upskilling would result in a just transition – workers viewed these programmes as insufficient and anxiety provoking with regards to securing future employment (Banerjee & Schuitema, 2022). Quotes from a participant illustrated the palpability of *this distrust*:

“the just transition is a political thing. It's politicised and it's all a game [...] Politicians don't want negative PR and it's about soundbites.”

(Banerjee & Schuitema, 2022, 7)

A key observation by Banerjee & Schuitema, (2022), was the apparent gulf between a just transition in theory and in practice – captured by the divergence between the needs and anxieties of the workers and the priorities and actual delivery of the Just Transition Fund. As Banerjee & Schuitema, (2022) summarise:

“those who were meant to be supported by the just transition felt that the just transition programme itself fell short on its basic tenet (i.e., being “just”).”

In the case of Just Transition Fund, we see a clear connection emerging between perceptions of justness and trust. Cases such as the Just Transition Fund are interesting because, *prima facie*, their goal is not to produce an outcome within which justness or fairness are instrumental, rather they are intended to pursue these values because they are intrinsically important. This resonates with the policy-fairness-trust framework (figure 1) in which fairness is understood as instrumental in a policy success. In this case, weak perceptions of fairness may have contributed to the ultimate mistrust in the policy (although an initial lack of trust may well have played a part in shaping weak perceptions of fairness).

A contributing factor to this may have been the rushed and relatively closed nature of development of the policy. This would in part explain the divergences between perceptions of fairness and justice in the target communities and the use of justice with the program.

What this highlights, however, is the fragility of policy development which lacks participation and co-production, thus challenging the policy-fairness-justice framing.



Figure 3: An illustration of how top-down decision-making and the treatment of fairness as purely instrumental can result in a collapse of trust.

5.5 Corrib Gas Controversy

The discovery of the Corrib gas field in 1996 was presented as a panacea for the local community – it would resolve the depopulation, deliver jobs and improve the areas quality of life (Slevin, 2016). However, through a series of opaque processes and state-private-civic confrontations the development of the gas became increasingly controversial:

- Lack of consultation: the initial pipeline plan was not open to public consultation.
- Local environmental concerns: local communities, in part perturbed by Shell's track record, voiced a range of environmental concerns.
- Initial proposal for an onshore gas terminal was rejected; however, this did not halt the wider project – the Corrib Consortium continued development of other components, and the Irish state did not attempt halt this.
- Irish state undertook a range of legislative changes to enable the project to proceed.
- Public resistance to the project was met by increasing violence and in some case incarceration.
- Garda was used to allow Shell access to private property despite lacking permission from the landowner.
- Revenue: consortium was only liable to pay 25% rate, against which costs accrued over a 25-year period are offset (compared to an estimated global average of 75%).
- Recommendation of an €8.3 million community fund which was tax deductible.

Slevin's (2019) analysis attempts to depart from the conventional David vs Goliath framing of a small community challenging a large multinational, Instead, Slevin outlines a multilevel tapestry of power,

politics and flawed policy formulation which resulted in a range of controversies, which they argue raises questions regarding Ireland's socioeconomic composition, the nation's relationship to the environment and the state's structural interdependence with multinational corporations (Slevin, 2019).

"It was first of all that the oil companies could consider that Sruwaddacon was the place to put a gas pipeline and secondly that the government could even begin to consider considering it ... after that then came the insult to the people who are currently living here, that we were obviously considered so worthless or so undeserving of any consideration whatsoever, that we didn't feature in it [decision-making about the project]."

Whilst trust is not the primary frame in Slevin's analysis, it is not difficult to see how this 20-year controversy may have eroded the public's trust in a range of public institutions. Many of the decisions and processes are antithetical to notions of participation, co-productions, and "best practice" that feature in normative frameworks surrounding decision-making in transitions (Chambers *et al.*, 2021; Chilvers *et al.*, 2018).

What's more, this case is severe in comparison to the cases studies on taxation and carbon trading above (although each are embedded within and products of the same system and their consequences may be no less benign). In the Corrib case, the state mobilised resources to police and incarcerate resisting people and communities, shift regulatory landscapes interests and privatised public assets largely for the benefit of a corporation and often at the expense of the public both monetarily, environmentally and in terms of civil liberties.

6 RTÉ – A Study in Trust

In the context of concepts of trust and fairness, we now turn to an in-depth analysis of the Irish state broadcaster Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ). RTÉ provides a useful lens through which to consider ideas of trust as they pertain to climate issues, given the broadcaster's central role in the development and articulation of national identity both domestically and abroad. Since its establishment in 1926¹⁷, RTÉ has consistently served as a staging ground for national debate across a wide range of issues.

Under British colonial rule, Irish cultural and national identity was actively repressed. Following independence, the establishment of a national broadcasting corporation through which the identity and ideals of the new state could be articulated and disseminated became an imperative for the Irish

¹⁷ Initially as 2RN (later Raidió Éireann) as a section of Dept of Post and Telegraphs. Raidió Éireann Authority was established in 1960, later renamed Raidió Teilifís Éireann to reflect the launch of RTE TV in 1961.

government (Barbrook, 1992). In doing so, RTÉ was not merely a channel for entertainment or information; it was a deliberate instrument of cultural cohesion, tasked with fostering a sense of belonging and collective understanding that underpinned social trust. This historical role continues to influence perceptions of RTÉ as a reliable and authoritative source in contemporary debates, including climate discourse. It is worth acknowledging that there is a tendency to flatten the landscape of influence in Irish media history—often downplaying the impact of British channels, pirate broadcasts, and the complex histories of viewership (Barbrook, 1992; Brennan, 2022). However, the centrality of RTÉ to Irish public life during the first century of the state, as well as the broadcaster's close relationship to public policy, means it cannot be ignored as a barometric instrument in considerations of trust and fairness.

From its establishment through to the 1960s, RTÉ was committed to the promotion of a form of cultural nationalism heavily inflected by Catholic doctrine and shaped by a scepticism towards modernity. This programming was directly influenced by the aims of the Irish government, which sought to promote a specific vision of Ireland as culturally conservative, Catholic, and agrarian. This identity was positioned as distinct from Britain. The construction of this national identity was understood to be integral to the development of Ireland's socio-economic position and its standing both domestically and internationally.

Since its establishment RTÉ has served as an institution of nation-building, a public sphere for debate and a mediator of Irish identity. As Farrel Corcoran (2024) notes:

"For about 40 years, RTÉ's radio and television channels have played an enormous role in shaping Irish social and cultural life. As the national publicly owned and funded broadcaster, RTÉ is probably the biggest cinema, school, sports stadium, market square, performance stage, town crier and concert hall in Ireland. In its news, current affairs, sports, serial drama and documentary output especially, it sets the agenda for the national conversation that drives modern Ireland."

While the media landscape has grown increasingly fragmented with the rise of streaming services, something to which many state broadcasters have struggled to adapt (Doyle, 2024), RTÉ as a "legacy broadcaster" remains one of the most trusted news sources in Ireland, with 81% of people affirming that they consider RTÉ valuable to society (Lloyd, 2025). Because most citizens encounter climate change primarily through mediated communication, news organisations play a central role in shaping how environmental issues are framed, interpreted and debated within the public sphere (Culloty et al., 2019). This makes the broadcaster not just a historical artefact but a living institution whose

editorial decisions and public credibility are central to contemporary debates about environmental responsibility. By examining RTÉ, we gain insight into how trust, fairness, and national identity intersect in the communication of climate issues, highlighting the unique position of public service media in guiding societal discourse.

6.1 Public Service Broadcasting in Ireland

Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) is Ireland's principal national public service broadcaster¹⁸ –it recorded a 27.9 % share for TV and 29% for radio in 2024 (RTÉ 2025a, 2025b). It is a publicly owned, non-profit, statutory body, funded through a dual model that combines a public service broadcasting license fee and commercial revenue (such as advertising and sponsorship). The channel produces content for television and radio, digital on-demand radio and playback content and news coverage through an app (RTÉ News) and website. It has a board responsible for the oversight of the institution which is appointed by the Irish government. The company is managed by a team of directors. RTÉ is overseen by the network is currently composed of four channels: RTÉ 1, RTÉ 2, RTÉ KIDS jr, and RTÉ News. Its radio service is composed of four channels: RTÉ Radio 1, RTÉ 2fm, RTÉ Lyric FM and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta. RTÉ's stated purpose is *"to serve as an independent source of stories, news, information and entertainment for Ireland, reflecting the diversity of its people and providing experiences that enrich the lives of all"*.

In the context of Ireland's sociotechnical system and contemporary discourse around climate change RTÉ functions as both a state institution and a public forum. As a state broadcaster, RTÉ exists within a wider global context of state bodies who are tasked by governments to provide both factual and entertainment media services to the population. Coimisiún na Meán, the body responsible for overseeing RTÉ defines Irish public service media as *"publicly owned, publicly funded media organisations that provide content related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of Irish society that is free at the point of consumption"*. Paddy Scannell (1989) argues that public service broadcasting constitutes *"the provision of a service of mixed programmes on national channels available to all."* Scannell also highlights the "technical and economic components" of this availability. *"To enjoy the services of broadcasting people need at the least a marginal surplus of disposable time and income"*. In this sense public service broadcasting and state broadcasters more generally navigate a dual role. In one sense they can be understood as an essential service, like transport, energy or housing infrastructure. State media can be utilised to present public service announcements, as during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In another sense, as a space of artistic production it can and should operate

¹⁸ Ireland's other public service broadcaster TG4, has responsibility for the provision of a television service with a range of programming primarily in the Irish language. TG4 recorded a 2.2% audience share in 2024.

outside the remit of the state, to function discursively as a staging ground for the kind of cultural and social change that can only be affected through artistic freedom.

RTÉ have traditionally, held a unique role in terms of public trust as well as in the shaping of public perceptions on a host of issues. We might consider the influence of *The Late Late Show*¹⁹ As the state broadcaster, audiences historically would have placed a certain degree of trust in the channel to present information that was both factual and. The Coimisiún na Meán, which oversees RTÉ's programming also has specific guidelines around parity and balance, which must be adhered to. These regulations should – in theory – ensure that all information presented by the broadcaster especially as it pertains to the experiences of minority groups will be given parity during broadcasts.

6.2 RTÉ and Climate Change

In the context of climate change, public trust is central to the failure or success of state broadcasters' ability to respond to the challenges of creating and disseminating climate engaged media. Public trust in this context is intertwined with the framing of climate change. Culloty *et al.* (2019) describe the effects of the 'framing' of climate change within media discourse, noting that media framing of climate change is both episodic and thematic. They also note that the way in which climate change is framed within media can affect public perceptions of the threat. In their report on Climate Change in Irish Media they subsequently make several recommendations among them that "Climate change communicators need to establish and follow strong principles of ethical integrity and social responsibility" (*Ibid.*, p. 41).

The call to ethical and social responsibility here suggests that state broadcasters have an infrastructural role in the socio-technological transition; however, this role is a complex one. As noted above, a state broadcaster sits at the intersection of the state and the people, groups that are not necessarily always aligned. In the context of a multilevel sociotechnical system, we might usefully place a state broadcaster at the meso-level, the level of regime, since it is the broadcaster with the most conspicuous relationship to the state. RTÉ's 2023 Climate policy is conducive to this reading, where the organisation states: "*RTÉ will embrace its role in informing and engaging the public on this critical issue*". RTÉ's comments position the broadcaster as the normative and authoritative voice within the discourse. In this sense we might expect information about climate change and ideas

¹⁹ *The Late Late Show* is a late-night chat show which has been broadcast on RTÉ since 1962. One example of the influence of the programme and on its attested ability to shape public perceptions is the 1987 broadcast which saw then host Gay Byrne demonstrate and discuss the use of condoms during the broadcast. The discussion took place during the AIDS crisis and has in the intervening years been understood as a moment in Irish culture which undermined the structure conservatism of predominately Catholic culture and began to open the door to more liberal attitudes to sex and sexuality.

around sociotechnological transition to be communicated by the broadcaster, given that this is the stated aim of the Irish government.

6.3 Normative Frameworks

To understand normative stances on a given sociotechnical regime, it is perhaps useful to define non-normative stances. Radical reimagining's of contemporary relationships to sociotechnological regimes, quite frequently develop outside or on the socio-cultural margins of those regimes. We might think of the Fridays for Futures Movement, which transgresses against normative stances –children should attend school, should not have a political voice – which drew widespread support globally and refocused conversations around the impacts of climate change on younger generations. Spaiser *et al.* (2022) note that the normative challenge posed by the movement, made the crisis feel far more salient. We might also consider protest movements such as Just Stop Oil, whose actions have drawn both incredulity and condemnation. In 2022 activists from the group vandalised Vincent Van Gogh's painting 'Sunflowers' while demanding an end to oil and gas industries. The group have also vandalised the English neolithic monument Stonehenge by spraying it with orange powder paint. Just Stop Oil's actions are at odds with contemporary relationships to the preservation of art and culture and were widely condemned. What both Just Stop Oil and Fridays for Futures have in common however is that these acts of transgression against a system serve to highlight systems (and the failure of systems) more broadly. During her protest at the National Gallery in London, Just Stop Oil Protestor Phoebe Plummer asked onlookers "*What is worth more, art or life? [...] Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet and people?*" Drawing attention to normative attitudes to art or education in this instance draws attention to equally accepted global systems such as fossil fuel dependency. These protest movements also serve to ignite conversations around climate change in a way that pre-existing infrastructural elements of transition cannot or do not. Vandeweerd (2025) argues that disruptive non-violent protests can increase the salience of an issue (though with some effect to how this message is received by the public) and push it to the forefront of public discourse.

The way in which these movements are framed in mainstream media can reveal the bias or 'normative' stance of the regime. Looking briefly at RTÉ's coverage of the Sunflowers painting protest, one news report gives extensive detail about the actions of the protestors, without addressing, considering or making comment on the impetus for their actions. Without being given broader context about ongoing fossil fuel extraction, readers of the news article are invited to view the protestors' actions in isolation from their political impetus. Dablander *et al.* (2025) find that media coverage of these groups can drastically shape the effectiveness of a protest group's actions, in an analysis of

German newspaper reporting on the actions of the Fridays for Future and Last Generation protest groups, they found that while the groups received coverage (with Last Generation receiving more and less favourable coverage overall particularly from right wing outlets), the reporting on the group often did not discuss the risks or solutions associated with climate change. In the context of sociotechnological transition, the actions of groups like JSO and FFF which contradict the underpinning ideological imperative of the dominant sociotechnical regime are examples of radical cultural innovation, which in their transgression can both highlight and serve to shift mainstream attitudes. This in turn can place pressure on the regime to act.

In the context of shifting attitudes RTÉ is constrained by a number of normative frameworks, the first is, as a state broadcaster their mission to “to serve as an independent source of stories, news, information and entertainment for Ireland, reflecting the diversity of its people and providing experiences that enrich the lives of all” cannot be read as a straightforward statement of intent. However, an ability or willingness to reflect diversity for example can only be extended so far as the dominant cultural hegemony which RTÉ operates within is willing to accept and allow. An independent report from 2017 revealed that there is a lack of ethnic diversity among RTÉs employee base, it was recommended that *“RTÉ needs to widen the context of its recruitment profile to include the diverse ethnic background, reflecting the more cosmopolitan society we have become in recent years ...”* (Mulvey 2017)²⁰. While there are examples of RTÉ’s programming being acknowledged as shifting the dial on national conversations around reproductive rights, sexuality and the Catholic Church (Inglis 1987), hegemony functions in such a way that transgressive perspectives are situated and contextualised within the broader context of a ‘normative’ worldview, which both implicitly and explicitly suggests that a non-hegemonic perspective sits outside the realm of what is culturally sanctioned. While this can be a useful and even contribute towards social good through the inculcation of positive normative behaviours via grand narratives (*i.e.*, violence is immoral) in the context of climate change hegemonic viewpoints are deeply enmeshed within the dominant socio technical system. Because this system supports the frameworks of fossil fuel dependency; it arguably does not contain the language to articulate an alternative in any context other than a language of failure. Even a system of transition imagines a fossil fuel ‘norm’ from which society is gradually detaching itself. In this context the climate communications of a state broadcaster like RTÉ can only be as radical and incisive as the dominant actors of its national cultural context.

²⁰ Report to RTÉ on the Terms of Reference regarding Review of Role Gender Equality

In November 2025 the Climate Change Advisory Council (2025) advised that while progress had been made *"The biggest blockage to Ireland's progress remains our dependence on expensive, harmful fossil fuels, which were subsidised by €4.7bn of taxpayers' money in 2024."* Ireland is not progressive in its handling of climate change, like many countries in the Global North it demonstrates nominative adherence with the goals and objectives of fossil fuel transition, but little of the action required to achieve it. A recent example of a missed opportunity to foreground just transition and systemic change was during the 2025 Irish presidential election debates, which were broadcast on RTÉ to an audience of 865,000. O'Doherty (2025) reporting in the *Irish Times* says following the debate a letter of complaint was received by RTÉ...

"...from a group including academics, doctors and public representatives over what they described as the "omission of climate, sustainability and environmental issues" from debates held during the Presidential Election campaign. More than 125 signatories sent the letter, which highlighted the group's "concerns" over RTÉ's "failure to include any substantive questions or discussion relating to climate change, sustainability, or broader environmental issues" during the debates [...] Dr Cara Augustenborg, an Assistant Professor of Environmental Policy at UCD and a member of President Michael D Higgins' Council of State, was the lead signatory to the letter."

RTÉ responded, stating that:

"Campaigns are run by those contesting the election, who decide their own themes, approaches and campaign schedules, and that the issue of climate and environment were not central to the 2025 Presidential Election campaign. RTÉ highlighted that, constitutionally, the president has no role in the formation policy in respect of climate and the environment, with these matters solely for the government and the Oireachtas."

RTÉ's response should be contextualised with reference to the fact that during these televised debates presidential candidates were asked several questions surrounding issues over which the President of Ireland has no jurisdiction, among them, protests against asylum seekers entering Ireland and the current cost-of-living crisis. These are issues however which are forefront in much mainstream news media, the choice to foreground them in debates highlights the extent to which RTÉ followed current trends within the news cycle. The failure to ask presidential candidates about their stances on environmental issues however, deprived the viewing public of learning about and making fully-informed democratic decisions about the candidates. This omission can be understood to have had an influence on the democratic process.

6.4 RTÉ Funding Framework, Trust and Public Perception

RTÉ's funding framework influences the kind of programming and messaging we can expect to see from the broadcaster. RTÉ is partially funded through license fees and partly through sponsorship and is accountable to both parties for the content it produces.

The company receives revenue from fossil fuel companies and has defended the "almost €20 million" (Cahill, 2024) a year which this advertising revenue provides the broadcaster. This sits in comparison to the €700,000 RTÉ has received from the state "towards its coverage of climate issues". It becomes necessary to consider the malleability of RTÉ's climate commitments in the context of commerciality. The head of strategy and commercial compliance at RTÉ Conor Mullen has stated that: "Under the Broadcasting Act we are obligated to maximise commercial income so as to subsidise costs of our public service objects" (*ibid.*). While RTÉ has made climate commitments, these are not legally binding and can be supplanted, watered down or ignored in favour of the financial imperative to generate revenue. This supplanting of pro-climate goals in favour of revenue generation is unlikely to bolster trust from either side of the political spectrum, but more than that, undermines the efficacy of pro-environmental programming as well as leaving RTÉ open to accusations of greenwashing.

6.5 RTÉ Climate and Trust

RTÉ have produced a document (*RTÉ on Climate 2023 – 2025*) stating their climate commitment and outlining the way in which their programming and production practices have, and will continue to shift, in line with the urgent need to tackle climate change. *RTÉ on Climate* seeks to highlight progress the broadcaster has made in this regard, citing their coverage of COP27. They also highlight the page specifically dedicated to climate on the RTÉ website and their partnership with the European Broadcasting Union. The reports states that between *Mar-2021 and Mar-2022* "more than 560 articles themed around climate change were published on rte.ie achieving almost 17.5 million views".

The above programming, content, and initiatives notwithstanding, the issue of climate remains a contentious one for the broadcaster RTÉ's head of news Deirdre McCarthy stating to a Dáil Committee in 2024 (Cahill 2024), that:

"There's a huge amount of ambivalence in the audience towards the climate crisis, climate change, their role in it and whose role and responsibility it is."

McCarthy's comments are at odds however with the broad swathe of contemporary Irish relationships to climate change. The EPA Report Climate Change's Four Irelands: An Audience Segmentation Analysis 2022 highlights the presence of four groups in terms of societal relationships to climate

change (Leiserowitz *et al.*, 2022). They identify four groups. Among these four are the "Cautious" and the "Doubtful". The *Cautious* "believe climate change is happening but are less sure of the causes and are less likely to think it will personally affect them". The *Doubtful* "believe climate change is happening, but with less certainty than other audiences, while smaller proportions say climate change is not happening or say that they don't know [whether it is happening]". These relationships to climate change compose 12% and 3% of the population respectively. This is significant in the context of misinformation and disinformation; however, these groups are vastly outnumbered by the two other groups.

Firstly, individuals who are "Alarmed" (36%) this group "strongly believe that climate change due to human activity is a real and immediate threat. They strongly support climate mitigation and adaptation policies and are willing to take direct action through political and economic activity. The Alarmed are most likely to be highly educated, younger, urban, female, and Employed." The remaining group, the "Concerned" are "convinced that climate change is a serious issue, but when compared to the Alarmed are less worried about it and view it as a less immediate threat. They support policies addressing climate change and adaptation but are less willing than the Alarmed to take direct action themselves. The Concerned are evenly split on gender and are most likely to be urban, highly educated, and employed". The Concerned are the country's "largest climate change audience comprising 48% of the population".

This EPA report would seem to suggest at the very least that there is a widespread recognition in Ireland that climate change is a serious issue requiring urgent action. A commonality between each of these groups is that the greatest proportion of their media engagement is with national media (Alarmed 56%, Concerned 57%, Cautious 48% and Doubtful 41%). It is worth acknowledging here two caveats, the first is that the Doubtful group are also "much more likely than other segments of society to say they never use national media (31%), local media (34%), social media (45%), or streaming services (42%)". Additionally, national media might be understood to include broadcasters other than RTÉ, including but not limited to Virgin Media and TG4, as specific broadcasters are not indicated.

A point to note however is the comparatively low trust which each of the above groups place in mainstream news media's coverage of climate issues (Alarmed 23%, Concerned 18%, Cautious 15% and Doubtful 11%), this sits in contrast to the trust which these same groups place in scientists for example (Alarmed 77%, Concerned 65%, Cautious 48% and Doubtful 27%). In the context of RTÉ, O'Rourke (2025) reports that trust in RTÉ had fallen and that only 40% of the public had the perception that the organisation overall is "trustworthy". The RTÉ on Climate document however cites a Reuters report from 2021 which claims that:

"RTÉ is the most trusted news organisation in the country with 78% of the public trusting our services, according to the 2021 Reuters Digital News Report".

We can potentially attribute some of this lack of trust in RTÉ to a series of financial scandals which took place in 2023. These scandals resulted in public outcry and saw a massive restructuring of the broadcaster's board of management. We might also attribute this lack of trust to a broader decline in the trust which citizens place in mainstream media due to the rise of alternative media ecosystems. A Reuters report, Newman *et al.* (2025) reveals that *"traditional news media [is] struggling to connect with much of the public, with declining engagement, low trust and stagnating digital subscriptions."*

Considering this Deirdre McCarthy's comments above require further investigation. It is possible that what is understood by RTÉ as ambivalence on climate issues is not or is not only stemming from societal attitudes but from broader failures within mainstream media to foster and maintain trust, which is essential to presenting climate issues in a way which engages the public. An extensive analysis of the way in which RTÉ attempts to engage the public around this issue and the potential pitfalls of this approach will be presented later in this paper.

6.5.1 RTÉ CLIMATE POLICY

RTÉ on Climate 2023 - 2025 is not a legally binding document, nor has it received coverage in media outlets. While it has functionality as a guideline and mission statement for staff of the company, it also seems to be intended to be read by a general audience. There is an effort made in the document to present RTÉ as a progressive agent of pro-climate attitudes and practices and to inform the reader about some of the potential challenges and risks to life which climate change poses. There is however at times a use of language which obfuscates, or a presentation of facts which suggest a different narrative to the one which accompanies them, which suggests an attempt to present the organisation in a way which appeals to the public, but does not necessarily align with RTÉ's practices. This kind of obfuscation, or lack of accuracy does very little to foster trust (Kohring & Matthes, 2007) The document (and its accuracy) is analysed in some detail here.

Certifications: There is a significant portion of the document which focuses on the variety of certifications and standards of climate friendly production to which RTÉ has already and aspires to meet.

ISO 50001 Standard: The international standard for Energy Management Systems (EnMS), provides a framework for organizations to consistently improve energy performance, efficiency, and use, ultimately reducing costs, greenhouse gas emissions, and environmental impact. This is a useful tool in measuring the energy efficiency of the company, but perhaps less useful in the context of energy

transition. Wang and Pan's (2025) findings suggest that the system does not contribute significantly to energy transition within firms. A more useful assessment tool in the context of environmental impact is the ISO 14001 (an international standard for environmental management systems). The redundancy of RTÉ's use of the ISO 50001 in the context of climate change commitments can be contextualised by considering other organisations which have received the certification, such as fossil fuel companies Shell and BP.

Albert Certification and Climate Content Pledge: Several RTÉ productions have received an albert sustainable production certification. Albert is an organisation which promotes environmental sustainability in the media industry. The organisation describes itself as follows:

"Founded in 2011, albert supports the global film and TV industry to reduce the environmental impacts of production and to create content that supports a vision for a sustainable future."

(From 'About' section of the Albert website)

According to the RTÉ on Climate document RTÉ programmes which are certified to albert standards include:

"The Today Show (ongoing), Primetime (series 2022-23), The Main Stage (series 2022) 3 x Primetime Climate Specials, Cloch Le Carn, Scannal & Gafa (2022), The Late Late Show (series 2022-23), Ask Me Anything (series 2022), FIFA World Cup 2022."

At COP 26 in 2021 RTÉ signed the albert Climate Content Pledge along with several other national broadcasters and streaming services. This kind of public commitment to environmentally positive film and television production has the potential to increase public awareness and belief in RTÉ's climate commitment. It establishes a mechanism of accountability. If the public are made aware of a broken pledge their trust in an institution will decrease, though the fulfilment of a pledge can strengthen trust (Bytze et al. 2025).

6.5.2 RTÉ'S UNDERSTANDING OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The understanding of and relationship to climate change communicated by RTÉ in the RTÉ on Climate document deserves consideration in the context of accuracy. The document states that "climate change now threatens every aspect of human life" and "affects everyone, everywhere". Then follows a graphic which outlines "What climate change really means" and lists the following effects:

"Heat death, Sea level rise + floods, Decreased access to clean water, Mass displacement, Increased conflict over natural resources, Global warming, Widespread hunger, Extreme

drought, More frequent + intense extreme weather events, Unreliable yields for farmers, More wildfires, Physical + mental health impacts, Insect outbreaks, Destruction of infrastructure.”

All of the above effects are the expected outcomes of global warming and climate change, but conspicuous by their absence in RTÉ's communications are the sociocultural dimensions of climate change. A European parliamentary research report notes *“climate change, a global phenomenon, affects every aspect of our lives, including cultural heritage in both its forms – tangible and intangible”* (Pasikowska-Shnass, 2024). RTÉ does not acknowledge the threat to culture which climate change presents. Operating without a comprehensive understanding of the impact of climate change on human culture, the broadcaster is ill-equipped to utilise culture to combat climate change.

The threats which climate change presents to human culture are multiple and diffuse, we have already been presented with their troubling manifestations. We might look Venice, where urban cultural heritage is critically threatened by rising sea levels. We might consider the loss of traditional craft practices, language and heritage practices of the Gullah Geechee people whose geographical isolation in a rapidly warming ocean leaves them exposed to the threats of increasingly numerous hurricanes. Periods of drought and rising sea levels are also an encroaching threat for the Gullah Geechee. Creative practitioners and custodians of culture have already responded to the challenges and losses of climate change in diverse and powerful ways *“cultural heritage should not be seen solely as a victim of climate change, but also as a source of reflection and answers to related challenges”* (Pasikowska-Shnass, 2024). We might consider the novels of Nobel Prize Winning author Olga Tokarczuk, the Jurassic World film franchise, and the works of Canadian photographer and artist Edward Burtynsky as examples of creative practitioners combating climate change through culture.

While it is not within the remit of this discussion to dictate best practice in this context; it is worth stating that if the effect of climate change on culture is multiple and diffuse so too must be the responses. Currently RTÉ's climate focused programming consists solely of factual broadcasts, a mix of documentary, current affairs and magazine shows (a selection of which will be analysed later in this paper). RTÉ pursues a knowledge deficit model in its climate communications, however as Tannenbaum argues *“this approach assumes that scientific knowledge communicated to public stands alone to encourage understanding and support of science. The interpretation of these facts is assumed to be identical for all members of the public”*. This is emphatically not the case and if we recall the four distinct groups of Alarmed, Concerned, Cautious and Doubtful the impossibility of addressing climate change in mass media solely through factual content becomes evident, there are groups who are no longer interested in or quite possibly have never responded to climate science. There is also a

demographic assumption, underpinning the knowledge deficit model. It assumes that all individuals have experience of and are open to learning. As such RTÉ must make recourse to the diversity of aesthetic, generic and semiotic approaches which their visual and audio platforms present. This diversity of approaches invites in the possibility of a diversity of experience to be represented. The effects of climate change have not and will not be felt equally by all people, allowing these personal and collective experiences to be represented in affective ways would align RTÉ's efforts with the ideas of fairness addressed earlier in this report. Trust in institutions tends to be lower when individuals feel that these bodies will not be concerned with their interests (De Cremer & Tyler, 2007).

Low Impact Production Measures

The environmental impact of film production has been well attested (Maxwell and Miller), as such RTÉ's efforts to align with albert guidelines go some way towards acknowledging the need for urgent and decisive action by media producers to develop content and programming which not only aligns with the goals to inform audiences and inspire climate positive action but also to ensure the programming generated with this aim in mind does not offset these same goals through environmental damage. As such, part of RTÉ's climate approach involves the consideration of the environmental and climate impact of production, namely the implementation of virtual sets, waste prevention measures and digitisation. Of these three approaches, the use of virtual sets and digitisation requires further consideration.

Virtual Sets and Digitisation

The RTÉ Document claims that virtual sets "tend to generate less emissions than using geographic locations" this is true, it reduces the need for production crews to travel to sets. Though the broadcaster acknowledges that "large virtual sets can use huge amounts of electricity, so the need to use virtual sets with a focus on energy usage is also important." Broadly however, virtual sets tend to result in lower carbon emissions (Cabello *et al.*, 2025). It is important however to consider the lifetime of all materials associated with production, in the case of the iPads RTÉ have adopted in favour of paper scripts on some productions, the claim made by the broadcaster is that:

"A standard iPad produces about 82kg of carbon from production to disposal over a 5-year period. Therefore, over the lifetime of its usage in this context, the savings it will generate in terms of carbon emissions are multiples of this single investment."

This may be valid from the perspective of waste management but fails to acknowledge the environmental impact of the production of hardware which require mining for precious metals, the

use of water and the production of CO₂. Much of an iPad's carbon footprint is generated during its production (Sukswan *et al.*, 2020).

6.6 Analysis of RTÉ's Climate Themed Programming

While efforts were made to engage with all the climate themed media developed by RTÉ and signposted in the document, some of this media is no longer available through streaming channels. As such a select number of the texts signposted in the document have been analysed. An effort has been made to present as diverse a selection of programming as possible.

What Planet Are You On

What Planet Are You On sees three families from around Ireland pledge to reduce their carbon footprint and compete against each other to reduce their household carbon emissions in an effort to win €5,000. Each week one of the families is filmed struggling or thriving as they adopt new energy saving measures in their homes and personal lives. At the end of each episode the family's behaviours are assessed by a team of environmental experts and they are given a performance score. The show also features segments profiling community initiatives from around the country which are aiming to reduce carbon emissions. Audiences of the programme can also visit the website associated with the programme to sign up to the same pledge as the families onscreen.

In an interview with RTÉ Lifestyle (Ryan, 2022), the programme's host Maia Dunphy discusses the issues of fatigue and overwhelm in people's responses to the climate crisis. She says:

"I think there's still a lot of fatigue and overwhelm around this issue and as we see targets being missed and deadlines approaching and going, there's a bit of, 'what is the point cycling to work in the rain and getting wet and trying to eat less meat when I've just read there's another coal-powered factory opening somewhere in the world every other week?' There's a disconnect between these things and our behaviour [...] What do you think that factory is making? It's probably making maybe car parts or mobile phones or fast fashion."

Maia Dunphy's comments are a useful starting point for understanding *What Planet Are You On's* stance. The show promotes the ideological stance that for the most part it is the individual, or more accurately the individual consumer, who is responsible for climate change. Dunphy's comments mirror exactly the reticence displayed in the programme towards a discussion of the systemic issues associated with climate change, namely fossil fuel extraction and dependency pushed by corporations and a lack of government will to introduce legal frameworks which curb the power of industrialists. Each episode opens with the statement "The way we live is affecting the climate in a big way. Households across Ireland are responsible for emitting greenhouse gas into the atmosphere". This is

true, individuals' behaviours do contribute to climate change and global warming, however the issue with this kind of framing is that it places blame and responsibility at the feet of individuals who exist within and are subject to the vagaries of systems over which they have limited control. The determined focus on families and individuals without wider context and without analysis of these systems also means that from an audience perspective the individual is framed as uniquely responsible. This approach fails to acknowledge the carbon emissions and damaging outputs of Ireland's most polluting industries. It can also potentially increase climate scepticism or denial, as Romeu notes "*fear-based or blame-heavy messaging [...] could still alienate some audiences*" it could also increase feelings of hopelessness in individuals (Comella Romeu, 2025).

Maia Dunphy's interview comments acknowledge this initially by highlighting fatigue and overwhelm, but by shifting focus to and reducing climate change to the level of consumer choices Dunphy compounds the fatigue, overwhelm and frustration, which in most cases is prompted by the action and inaction of industry and government. What Planet Are You On is essentially framed around consumerism. The show also presents the concept of climate footprints as central to resolving climate change. The success metrics of the show are built around carbon footprint rhetoric. The concept of a carbon footprint (a term coined by oil company BP in 2004 as part of an advertising campaign) has been widely criticised as an act of greenwashing which effectively deflects blame for climate change from industries and fossil fuel companies. While the pledge to which audiences can commit, the profiling of community action groups and the focus on families making conscious and determined efforts to protect and care for the environment can inspire change and collective action, a more thorough and meaningful engagement with the causes of climate change are needed to ensure sustained commitment from individuals. As it stands the presentation of small individual changes to tackle climate change does not disrupt the current socio technical system but instead engenders a sleepwalking towards disaster where individuals are reliably informed about climate change and as such cannot call for action from elected officials.

Growing Up at the End of the World

Growing Up at the End of the World is a documentary which follows three Irish teenage climate activists over the course of a year. The students engage in the Fridays for Futures movement, lead demonstrations, interview and lobby politicians and attend a global summit of youth climate activists. Among the cohort of attendees at this summit is youth climate activist Greta Thunberg. The documentary spends time building up a personal profile of each of the teenagers, their values, hopes and what drew them to the movement. The parents of the activists are also interviewed at various points and give their perspective on their child's engagement with the movement. The programme

ends on a note of uncertainty as the Covid-19 Pandemic stalls the momentum of the youth climate movement. The programme presents a sensitive portrait of the young people it profiles and makes recourse to archive footage and news broadcasts showing the devastating effects of climate change on communities and ecologies both nationally and internationally to invest the documentary with urgency and potency.

Of the four programmes analysed for this paper, *Growing Up at the End of the World* engages most consistently with the notion that the current sociotechnical system is preventing decisive and meaningful action on climate change. The programme does this by having the young people it profiles express their thoughts and opinions on climate change. These young people decry the lack of leadership and action in government and speak out against the fossil fuel industry.

North Atlantic

North Atlantic follows Irish underwater cameraman Ken O'Sullivan as he explores Ireland's north Atlantic coastal waters. On his journey, O'Sullivan captures footage of marine life in an effort to dispel ignorance around these creatures and their habitats and foster a sense of pride and responsibility in the viewer. O'Sullivan also explicitly comments on the degree to which these creatures have been impacted by climate change noting that many of these creatures are now rare sights in Irish waters but "*were once plentiful*". The programme makes use of the aesthetics of the sublime to communicate what O'Sullivan describes as the sea's "*terrifying power [which] is humbling yet magnetic*".

The series' first episode *North Atlantic: The Dark Ocean* was awarded the Flamingo Grand Prix Prize at the Rotterdam Wildlife Film Festival in 2023. The judges noted that:

"Myths about sea monsters have long shaped our exploitation and maltreatment of marine life. The film that wins the Flamingo Grand Prix 2023 debunks those myths with solid knowledge and, by showing the grandeur and beauty of ocean life, it makes you realize this should be loved and protected."

There is some research to indicate that an appreciation of the aesthetic value of nature can promote pro-environmental behaviours. Romeu notes that media framing which highlights the destruction of nature and which stresses collective responsibility have the power to transcend divides within climate discourse. Similar findings about the link between the appreciation of nature and environmental care are attested by Carlson (1979) and Kaiser *et al.* (2014). Highlighting the aesthetic value of nature and the degree to which this value has salience within human culture is a longstanding tenet of environmentally engaged media or pro environmental media. Often these images sit in contrast to

images of sites of aesthetic value which have been significantly altered by human activity (thus reducing their aesthetic value). This approach is a concise, affective means of engaging audiences. However, it runs the risk of encouraging audiences to adopt a value system which places anthropocentric considerations at its centre. The aesthetic value which is lauded in the productions is not neutral or incidental, it has been developed throughout human history within the context of specific economic, social and cultural contexts. In the context of sociotechnical systems and the normative aesthetic values associated with these systems, North Atlantic situates itself as part of a larger Western tradition of representing ecologies as sublime landscapes, places of awe and occasionally terror, from which humans are abstracted by virtue of language, culture and perceived or putative superiority.

Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight

Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight is a pseudo-documentary set in the year 2050, when successive governments and industries have failed to take decisive action on climate change. The show is constructed as a live broadcast, from RTÉ on a night when the world awaits news of drastic international governmental action on climate change, led by Swedish Prime Minister Greta Thunberg. The use of the pseudo-documentary form here is notable. The pseudo-documentary has been usefully employed in the past to raise public engagement with and awareness of issues. The pseudo-documentary typically engages the stylistic conventions of documentary to portray fictive events. Unlike the related mockumentary form, this is not necessarily intended to be read as satirical.

The pseudo-documentary form is employed in *Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight* in a way not dissimilar to its use in Peter Watkins' film *The War Game* (1965). *The War Game* presents a fictional account of the lead-up to and aftermath of a nuclear strike on Kent, England. The film is presented as though these events were captured by a documentary film crew. The film enlightened viewers as to the kind of world they could anticipate living in following a nuclear attack. That the film used documentary techniques to depict these events, heightened the verisimilitude of the film and the urgency of its message of de-armament and an end to the rhetoric of mutual assured destruction.

Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight differs from Watkin's film is in its scope and execution which culminate in a failure to meaningfully convey the urgency of the crisis it discusses. Critical response to the show was negative, with one reviewer calling the programme "*not merely the worst programme RTÉ has ever made. It may well be the worst programme anyone has ever made*" (O'Hanlon, 2023).

The reviewer points scathingly to the ideological slant of the programme, which they describe as "progressive authoritarianism" and the highlights a host of stylistic issues, among them the approach

of the actors playing climate scientists who they describe as “*all talking woodenly about things no one in 2050 would need to have explained to them because they'd be living it*”. The reviewer also laments that “despite being made by people who work every day in television” the programme emphatically did not feel like television.

The review, though hyperbolic, goes some way towards articulating the unique combination of factors which rendered the pseudo-documentary form ineffective in this context. Where *The War Game* excels, is in presenting nuclear war and its resulting effects as an imminent threat demanding immediate action. This is partly achieved through its shocking and distressing imagery, its recourse to archive footage of previous nuclear and humanitarian disasters, and its deliberate use of affect (we might consider the close ups of vacant eyed children which close out the film) to elicit an emotional response from the viewer. This approach provokes a sense of urgency and fosters a huge degree of emotional investment in the issue.

Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight however, is predominantly focused on discussing the potential future of the dairy industry, which is presented as environmentally progressive and central to Ireland's climate successes. It is emphatically disinterested in presenting the threat to life which climate change already represents. The programme is ideologically conservative despite the subversive potential of its format with phrases such as “Irish farmers stepped up [to the issue of climate change] like they always do” and “we were very quick to blame the farmers and that was wrong it was the policy that was wrong” intended to mollify more regressive viewers, rather than inspire climate action.

In addition to the above, *Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight* like *What Planet Are You On?* does not analyse meaningfully or in any sustained way the sociotechnical system associated with climate change. Rather the industries and systems which are currently most responsible for carbon emissions are held up as the solution to climate change. There is frequent use of the word ‘we’, for example “*we didn't do it fast enough*” or “*we didn't do enough of it*” (in relation to individual actions to tackle climate action), but this stance from the characters feels at odds with reality. Speculating on the age of the scientist and climate expert characters presented in the programme, most would have been born after 1995. Many of them would be old enough to have participated in the Fridays for Future protests depicted in *Growing Up at the End of the World*. As was discussed above, the young people in *Growing Up at the End of the World* frequently point to the failures of governments to hold industry to account at the detriment of their future. In *Ireland 2050: Tomorrow, Tonight* these teens have grown into adults who view climate change through the lens of individual behaviours and attitudes, the carbon footprint model of climate discourse which RTÉ returns to again and again.

Programming summary

A persistent limitation of RTÉ's climate-related programming is its failure to engage in sustained analysis of the sociotechnical systems that have produced and continue to exacerbate climate change. Rather than interrogating the structural factors — industrial, political, and economic — that underpin climate disruption, these programmes overwhelmingly frame the crisis through the lens of individual responsibility and individual failure. While such narratives may encourage personal behavioural change, they ultimately obscure the systemic nature of environmental destruction and displace accountability, obfuscating the role of the institutions and infrastructures most responsible.

While programmes such as *Growing up at the End of the World* and *North Atlantic* stand slightly apart from other programming in the strand by virtue of their explicit and implicit engagement with themes of environmental and multispecies justice, the programmes still tend to avoid critical engagement with fossil fuel systems. It is also worth considering the instances where community groups are profiled. Although these segments foreground collective action, they nonetheless position communities as responding to the effects of climate change rather than as agents confronting its structural causes. The systems that necessitate such grassroots interventions remain unnamed, nebulous, and unexamined. As a result, climate change risks being presented as an abstract or diffuse problem, rather than because of identifiable and contestable arrangements of power. Without a clear articulation of causality, the effects of climate change struggle to register as an immediate or meaningful threat to individual audiences, regardless of the volume of information provided.

Moreover, the stated aim of these programmes, to inform the public, aligns closely with what has been critiqued as the “knowledge deficit model,” discussed earlier in this paper. This approach assumes that a lack of information is the primary barrier to climate engagement, thereby privileging factual programming over other content. Such a framework leaves little room for the imaginative, and emotional dimensions through which climate change can be powerfully apprehended.

7 Conclusions

This report comprised a review of relevant literature from both white (*i.e.*, academic books, journal articles) and grey (*i.e.*, information sources produced governments, NGOs, and research reports) literature. The objective of this review of literature was to examine how citizen trust in public institutions manifests in the Irish context.

7.1 Trust and fairness in socio-technical regimes

To achieve this, the report established a conceptual framework underpinned by two complementary approaches. To begin, it explored how policy success is intrinsically linked to perceptions of fairness and trust, before setting out to better understand Ireland's decarbonisation efforts within what is first and foremost a sociotechnical system. We then situated this conceptualisation within a series of policy typologies, ultimately framing policy as one (albeit important) component in a much broader bundle of instruments of change.

Taken together, this allowed us to characterise trust in institutions engaging in climate change topics within a diverse suite of instruments of change. In addition to focusing on conventional policy instruments, we also examined how climate change is communicated and represented in the media, and how public participation is expressed through a set of illustrative case studies that demonstrate how these are interlinked and embedded within socio-technical regimes. By examining these components, as they relate to trust and its mediating values, allowed for a deeper understanding of citizens' trust in relation to institutions surrounding climate change.

7.2 Exploring Trust and fairness

This report illustrated the importance of trust and fairness to policy success within sociotechnical systems through the analysis of a number of case studies. The case studies were chosen as examples wherein trust was not only integral to failure or success, but where there was also significant potential for broader public perceptions of trust and fairness to shift in response to the intervention. For this reason, Citizens' Assemblies, Ireland's Carbon Tax, the EU Emissions Trading System, the Just Transition Fund and the Corrib Gas Controversy were selected.

The citizens' assemblies case study served to highlight the complexity and nuances of deliberative mini-publics, highlighting the extent to which these mechanisms can bolster public perceptions of fairness as well as engender public trust, while simultaneously remaining vulnerable to options and carrying the potential within their mechanisms to see vulnerable groups further marginalised. The Irish carbon tax case study demonstrated the ways in which economic policies interact with concepts of trust and fairness and highlighted the tensions between public perceptions of fairness and robust policies to curb carbon emissions. Our research also indicated that this tax disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, thus undermining trust in policy. The EU Emissions Trading System case study revealed the potential for economic policy instruments to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in society, regardless of their potential to incentivise firms to reduce emissions. Our fourth case study demonstrated the ways in which the Irish midlands were inordinately affected by decarbonisation initiatives, significantly undermining public trust. Our research revealed that while the Irish

Government's Just Transition Fund attempted to mitigate these effects, this economic policy failed to capture the trust of the affected groups and failed to meet their expectations of fairness. Our research indicated that a greater degree of coproduction with the affected communities was required for this climate policy to have effectively mobilised public trust and perceptions of fairness. Our case study examining the Corrib Gas Controversy further illustrated the need for coproduction in successful policy development and realisation.

7.3 Trust and public broadcasting

Our public broadcasting case study presented an in-depth analysis of Raidió Teilifís Éireann. RTÉ has historically been and continues to be integral to the development and articulation of Irish identity both on the national and global stage. We find that the broadcaster plays a central role in disseminating information about climate change and mediating the public's relationship to climate policy and climate action. As such, this report established RTÉ's normative stance on climate change within the context of the sociotechnical system outlined in this report. The broadcaster's internal stance on climate change was then analysed, examining RTÉ's climate commitments and approach. To this end, a close reading of the *RTÉ on Climate* document was performed. Having established RTÉ's stated climate commitments and low-carbon production practices, these approaches were assessed in the context of fairness and public trust.

Four pieces of climate-focused media produced by RTÉ were analysed, namely: *What Planet are You On*; *Growing up at the End of the World*; *Tomorrow, Tonight: Ireland 2050*; and *North Atlantic: The Dark Ocean*. Our research indicates that these programmes frame climate issues in ways which place the burden of mitigating climate impact on individuals, an ideological stance likely to alienate many viewers by exacerbating latent perceptions of climate policy as unfair or disproportionately punitive towards individuals.

7.4 Reflecting on trust and fairness

Policy success or failure is frequently dependent on ideas of trust and public perceptions of fairness, particularly within the context of the sociotechnical regimes as outlined in this report. Positionality of media is of great importance within a sociotechnical regime. How a media outlet frames climate issues is likely to influence public perceptions of trust and fairness as they pertain to climate policy.

Our research suggests that while levels of trust in situations remains high in Ireland, particularly in comparison to international levels, this trust is contingent on a host of diffuse and interconnected factors. It is also worth acknowledging that trust is not even spread across population groups with



D3.2 Citizens' level of trust in public institutions ... in relation to climate change

multiple factors playing a role in determining citizens' levels of trust and their perceptions of fairness. Recent surveys suggest that a gradual erosion of trust in institutions is taking place in Irish society.

In the context of climate policy, this erosion of trust is particularly relevant. Irish citizens have, and continue to demonstrate, high levels of concern about climate change and support for climate action. As demonstrated throughout this report however, public perceptions of fairness and trust are crucial to effective climate governance and the success of climate policies. As this report finds, policies that are perceived by the public as unfair are likely to undermine trust in that policy and the institution responsible for it. Ensuring that trust and fairness are central to considerations of how policy functions will be central to the success of climate policy implementations.

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