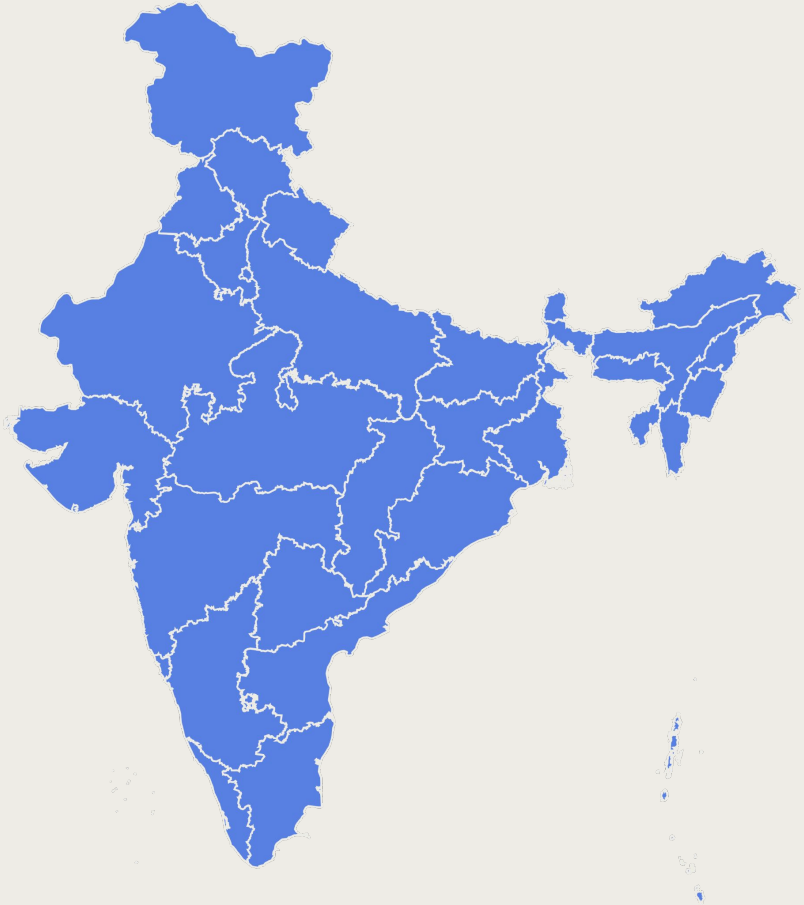
Mind Works

Anger & Agency India

Feb 2024



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Executive Summary

India's complex emotional landscape reveals both challenges and opportunities for climate campaigners. In a country where high anger, particularly amongst the youth, could act as both a powerful motivator and a potential disruptor and narratives of prosperity clash with the realities of climate change, driving widespread denial, it is more important than ever to understand how your audience's emotions and narratives can make or break a climate campaign.

The Anger & Agency Monitor combines survey data with cognitive science, and campaign strategy to help you turn data into action. This second round was carried out in 10 countries in February 2024 via a representative survey amongst 1,065 respondents in India, with an added weighting for 16-24 year olds, a key demographic focus in this round (see the methodology for more information).

Whilst the key theme of the first round of the Anger and Agency Monitor in September 2023 was measuring the quality and quantity of social anger, in this second round we focus on the climate story. In an age of constant crisis, we need a new climate story—one that connects deeply with how your audience feels and the stories they live by. To do this it is critical that you identify the key emotions and narratives, using them to inspire compelling campaigns that drive action. On the next few pages you will find a summary of the key findings. By integrating some of these emotional and narrative insights, changemakers can build a compelling case for climate action that resonates with India's unique context. You can find an overview of these strategies in our climate communications guide.

India Key Findings

- **Widespread climate denial**
  Climate denial is prevalent and higher than other countries, with a staggering 38% of Indians in what we define as full denial, almost double the amount in most countries. Meanwhile, 40% are in partial denial and only 4% are fully climate-aware.

- **High self-reported climate action**
  India has a high rate of self-reported climate action, with 62% of the population claiming to have taken some form of action in the past year, by far the highest of any country. Meanwhile, 57% of people who think climate change has changed their view on using natural resources.

- **Highest level of anger towards climate activists**
  While relatively low compared to other anger causes, 31% of Indians said they felt angry towards climate activists, the highest of any of the ten countries and a worrying sign of climate becoming embroiled in the culture wars.

- **Disparity between political and personal power**
  Indians show some of the highest levels of perceived political power of any country, but personal power is notably lower. Among young adults, perceived political power drops by -10% and personal power by -5%.

India Key Findings

- **Open anger culture & high anger levels**
  26% of India's population reports feeling angry, placing the country at the high end of the global spectrum of anger while India has the angriest young people at 36%. India also has high levels of Toxic and Constructive Anger Types, again young people show higher Toxic anger than the national average and the highest of any country. India has one of the most extroverted anger cultures and some of the highest positive perceptions of anger as emotion.

- **Pollution and corruption drive anger**
  Anger in India is primarily driven by environmental pollution (56%) and governmental corruption (55%), with lower concern for climate change (43%)—especially among young adults, where it ranks at just 36%.

- **Narratives of security and prosperity**
  The prevailing national narrative of prosperity is beginning to show signs of strain, particularly among young people, who showed lower levels of optimism about the future and belief in an *abundance narrative* compared to the broader population. Security has become a more dominant concern, with 68% believing the government should prioritise security over prosperity (74% of young people) meanwhile 63% (64% of young people) prioritise security for themselves and their families.

SAMPLE SIZE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The India Anger and Agency Monitor quantitative survey was rolled out in **February 2024** and the **sample size was 1065.**

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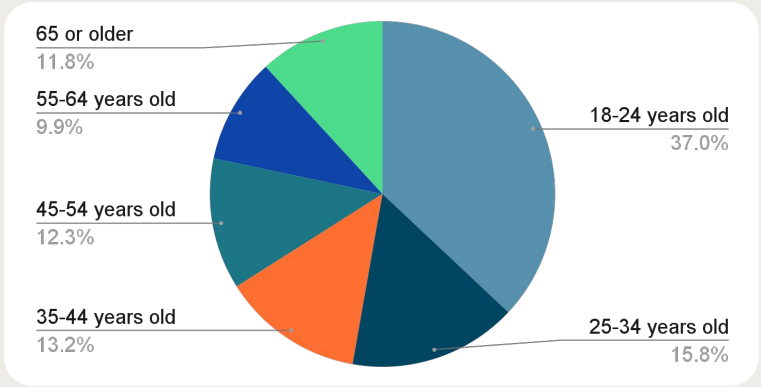
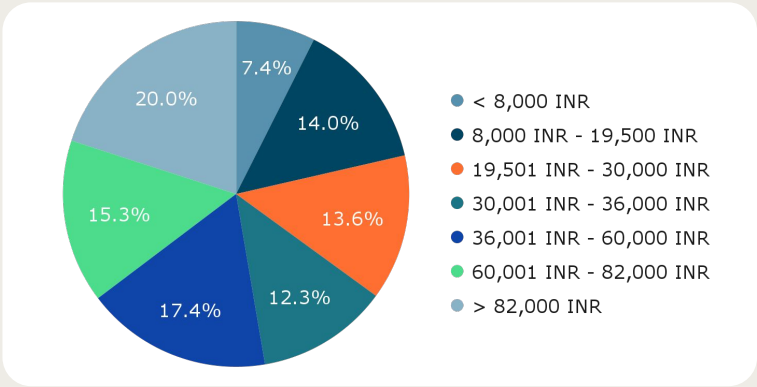
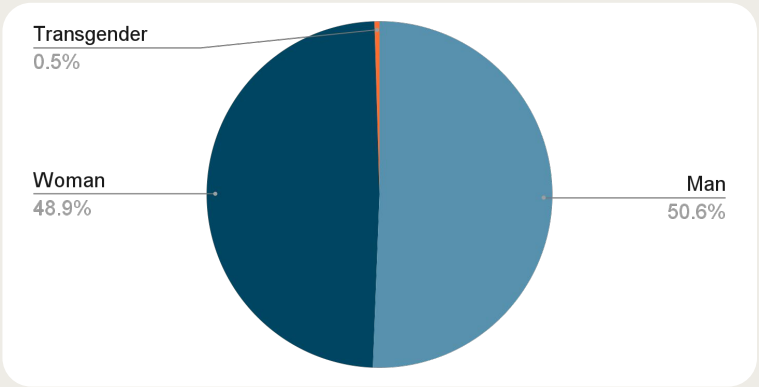


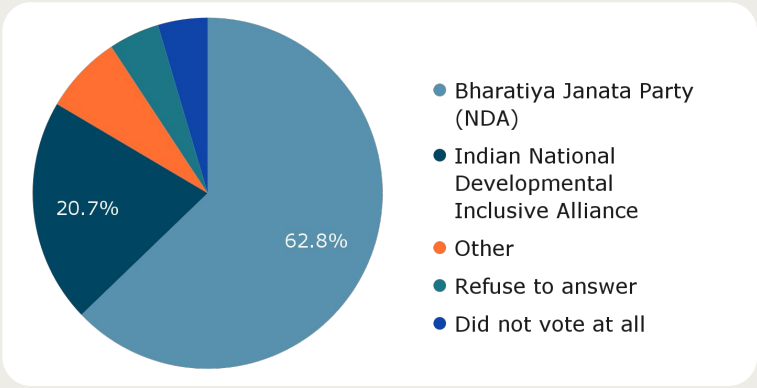
INCOME DISTRIBUTION



GENDER DISTRIBUTION

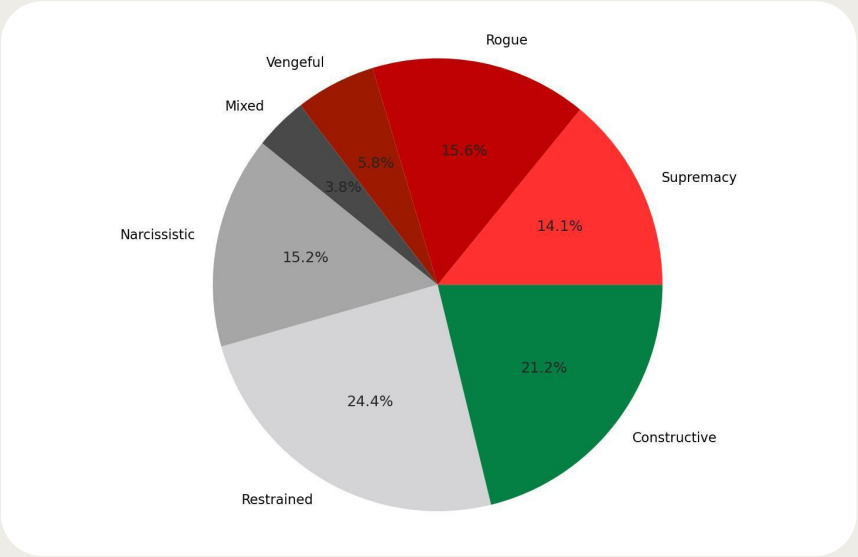


VOTE DISTRIBUTION

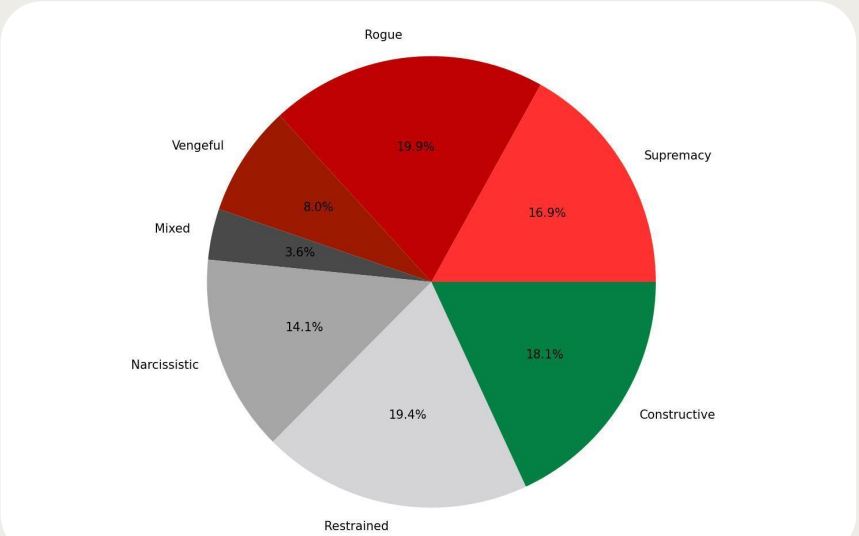


ANGER TYPES IN INDIA

Learn more about Anger Types here



COUNTRY AVERAGE



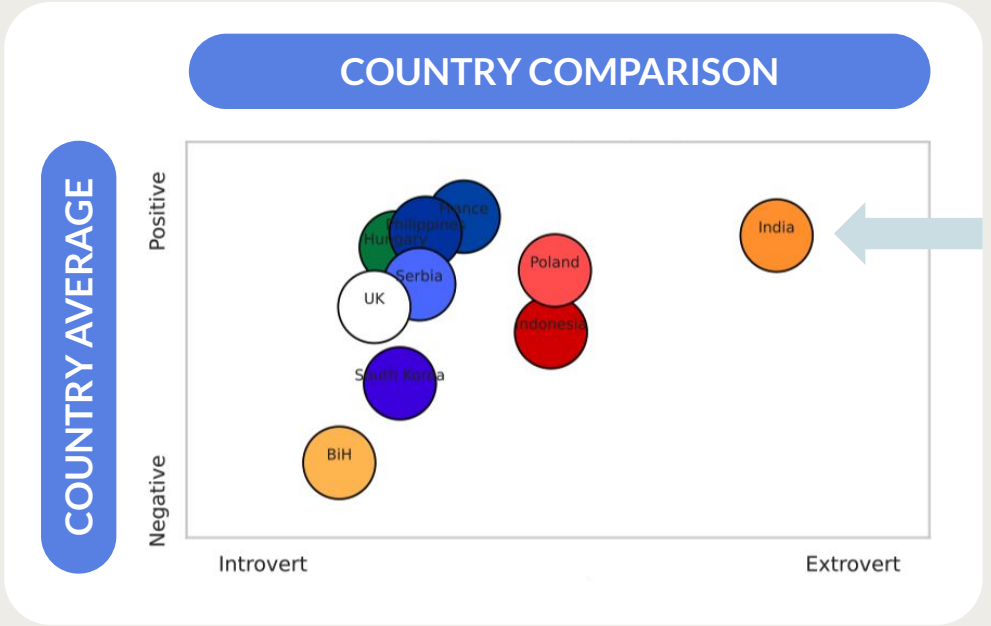
YOUTH () AVERAGE

We segment the audience according to Six Anger Types: *Constructive* anger (21% / 18% young people) is the most useful group for your work - using their anger to tackle injustice and create change. Meanwhile the *Toxic* types (36% / 45% young people, combined red types) demonstrate frustration and powerlessness and are often instrumentalised by powers with toxic ideas.

ANGER CULTURE
INDIAN AVERAGE

India has the most extroverted anger culture and ranks among the top countries that perceive anger as a positive emotion. For anger levels it also ranks high with 26% of the population feeling angry.

The use of anger in public and political campaigning is well-established in India and has been used for good and bad reasons. However, anger in the country can quickly descend into violence, as seen in religious, caste, political, and regional conflicts.

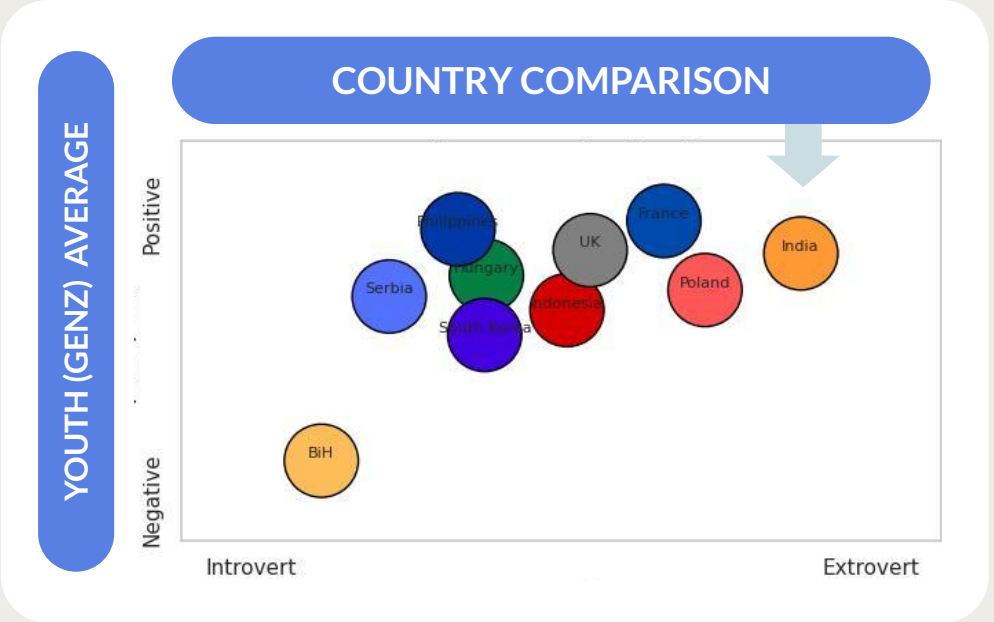


- **Building motivation through anger is therefore relatively easy in India.** However, it is crucial to **establish safeguards** when channeling this anger to prevent excessive aggression or violence, especially considering the high prevalence of *Toxic* anger which tends towards lower levels of optimism, personal power, and empathy.
- On the positive side, **the significant presence of Constructive anger offers a valuable opportunity** to engage people as early movers in campaigns. This group should be strategically targeted with constructive strategies and necessary safeguards to ensure their anger is channeled productively.

ANGER CULTURE
INDIAN YOUTH

While young Indians share the general extroverted anger culture, together with Poland, **India is home to the angriest youth of all, at 36%. They also show higher levels of Toxic anger (45%).**

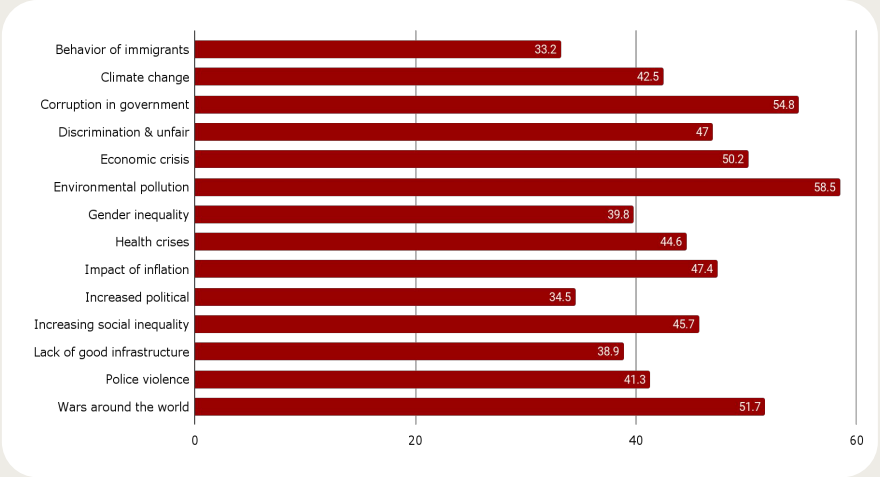
Compared to the national average, a 10% increase in overall anger and a 9% rise in *Toxic* anger are alarming indicators of underlying issues that threaten future social stability in India. These trends are closely linked to lower levels of personal power—often associated with Toxic anger—significantly reduced optimism, and a weaker alignment with basic empathy norms.



- ➔ **It is crucial to constructively engage Indian youth by providing them with meaningful future perspectives.** The significant presence of Constructive anger within this generation offers a valuable entry point.
- ➔ **Campaigns must harness this anger, transforming it into a force for positive change.** Failing to address their anger or offering inadequate solutions risks missing the opportunity to empower and reintegrate this generation effectively.

ANGER CAUSES & ISSUES

Many issues other than climate change create anger. Besides security or prosperity, multiple anger-creating issues can be integrated into a narrative. **Most people are angry about environmental pollution. Narratives that frame climate change as pollution or identify the same culprits for both disasters can help build and direct anger.** People are also angry about governmental corruption because they think the crisis could have been avoided. Narratives that identify corruption as the cause of the avoidable crisis go a long way as they align with existing beliefs—examples we can see in blaming real estate companies in Bengaluru for flooding.

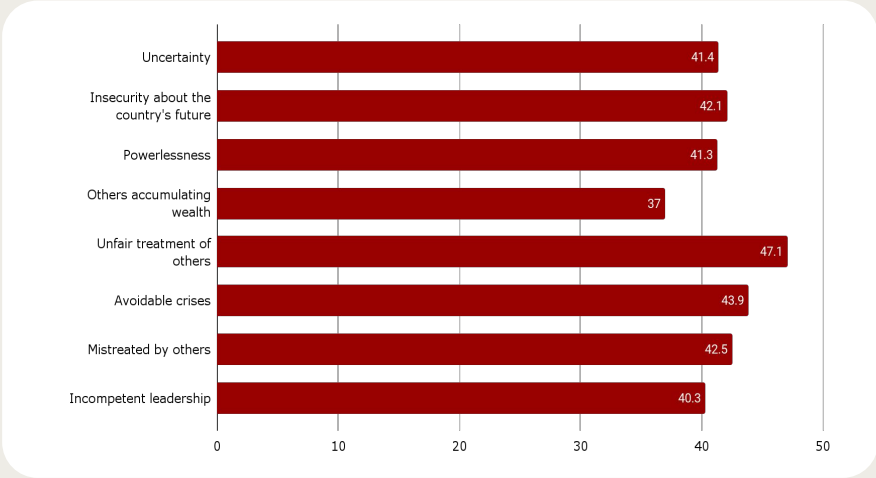


ANGER CAUSES

ANGER CAUSES & ISSUES

People are also angry because of unfair treatments; thus, solutions should create more fairness in society. Framing can be picked up to make people accountable.

The ranking of these issues might suggest they are competing for attention, but the data indicates that many people are angry about multiple topics simultaneously. The emotional impact of these overlapping crises should be seen as cumulative rather than competitive, leading to heightened feelings of worry, exhaustion, anxiety, and anger. When these emotions become overwhelming, denial often emerges as a defense mechanism.

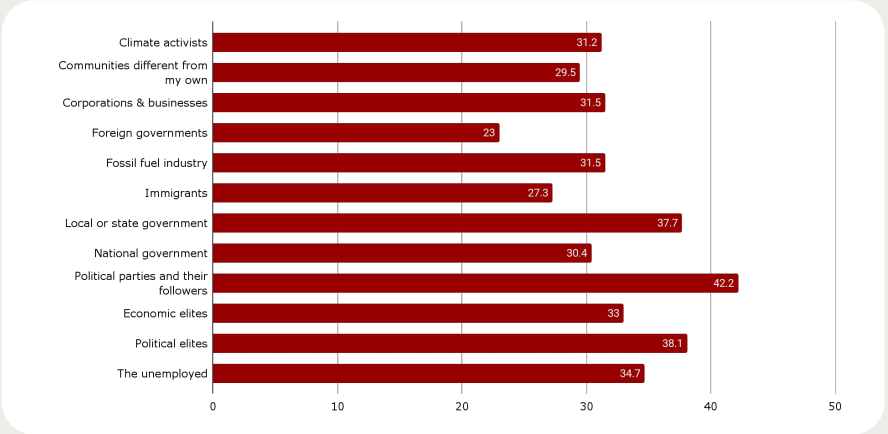


ANGER ISSUES

- ➔ Communication that ignores the complexity of overlapping crises—such as overemphasising climate change as the single biggest problem—can backfire by creating unnecessary competition in people's minds, a competition that is unlikely to be won. This approach can also come across as lacking empathy, which erodes the trust necessary for effective engagement.
- ➔ Even during extreme weather events, simply attributing a heatwave to climate change is unhelpful. In times of widespread struggle, trust can only be built by demonstrating genuine interest in addressing people's immediate concerns and problems.

VILLAINS

Despite high levels of anger, Indians tend not to direct much blame, with political entities being the primary targets: 42% blame political parties, local and state governments are blamed by 37% and political elites are blamed by 38%, In contrast to other countries, the national government attracts relatively little anger, with only 30% blaming it. Other entities, such as the unemployed, businesses, the fossil fuel industry, climate activists, and minority communities, each attract blame from about a third of the population, falling within the 30-35% range.

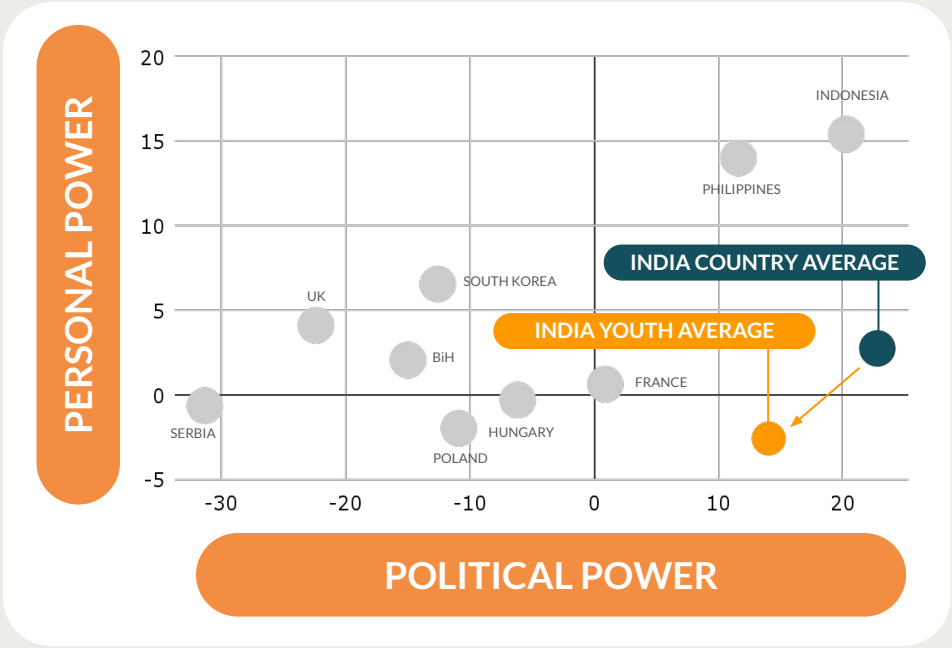


- ➔ When addressing a specific audience, it's crucial to **identify the typical villains** for that group.
- ➔ On the positive side, **business and the fossil fuel industry are already established as causes of anger** for a third of the population, providing a strong foundation for corporate campaigns.
- ➔ However, **climate activists also provoke anger from a third of the population**. Therefore, activists should be careful not to position themselves as adversaries to the widely held narrative of Indian prosperity.

ANGER BLAME

People believe in narratives because villains and heroes make sense to them and are similar to those in other stories they believe in.

POWERLESSNESS AND AGENCY

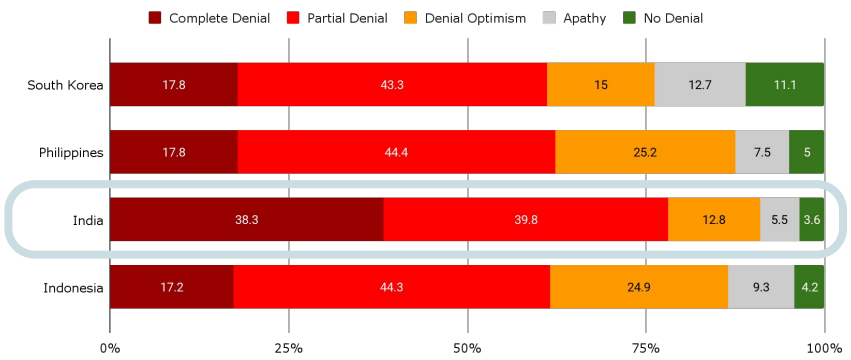


In terms of emotions powerless 24% of Indians felt powerless rising slightly to 26% of young people.

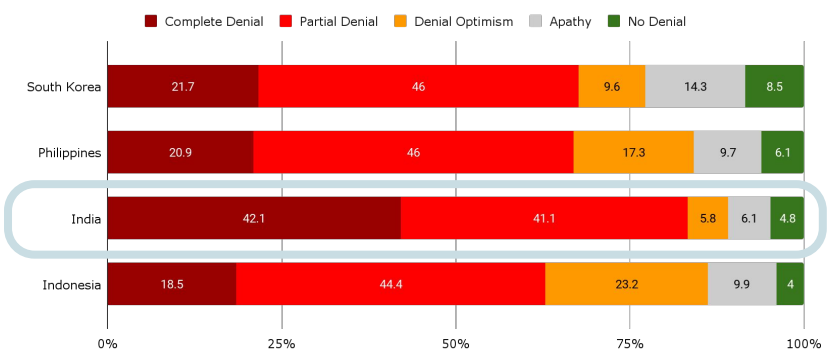
When we look at agency more broadly, between political and personal power Indians perceive themselves to have highest political power globally, alongside Indonesia and the Philippines. However, unlike those countries, their perceived personal power is only medium to low.

Young adults, on the other hand, feel more disempowered, with 10% less political power and 5% less personal power than the average, placing them among the lowest in personal power across Asia and Europe.

CLIMATE DENIAL IN INDIA



COUNTRY AVERAGE



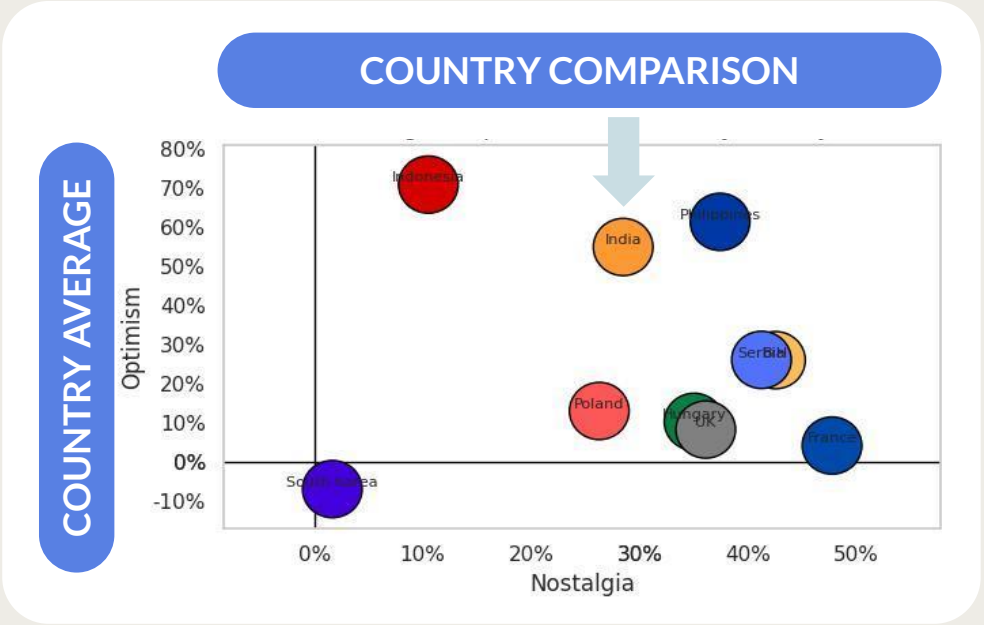
YOUTH () AVERAGE

➔ **India has a strong sense of climate denial:** a staggering 38% have what we would call *full* denial (i.e. climate is a hoax), double the amount of all other countries and 40% of *partial* denial (i.e. climate change is exaggerated), leaving only 4% with *no denial*. For young adults the ratios are even worse 42% are in *full* denial and 41% in *partial* denial only 5% have *no climate denial*.

OPTIMISM & ABUNDANCE
INDIAN AVERAGE

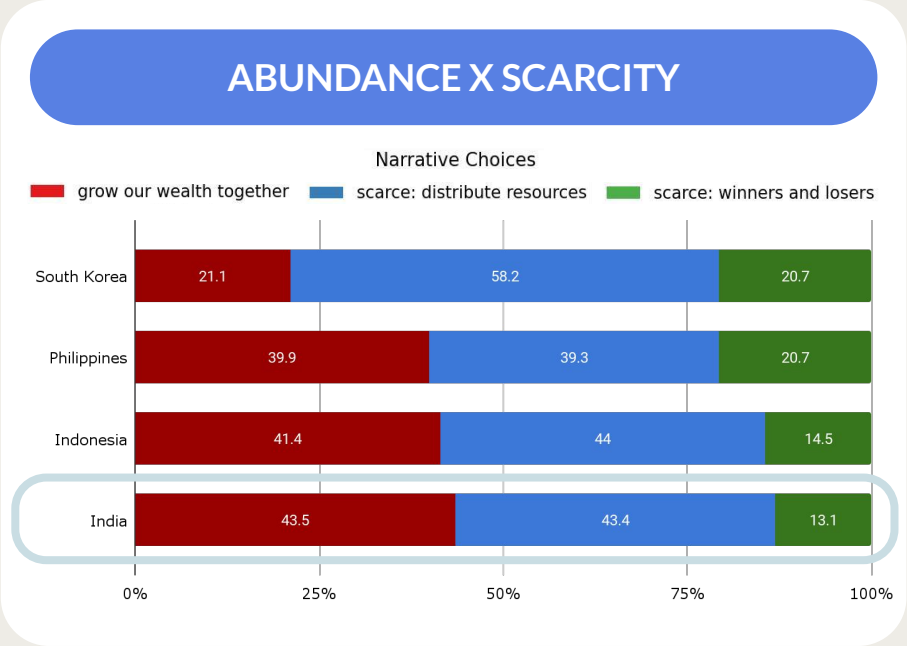
India as the third most optimistic country and has twice as much hope (58%) as worry (33%). (55% of people are more optimistic than pessimistic.)

Like the Philippines and Indonesia, optimism comes with a strong belief in an 'abundance' narrative (i.e. "*we will grow our wealth together*") at 44%.



OPTIMISM & ABUNDANCE
INDIAN AVERAGE

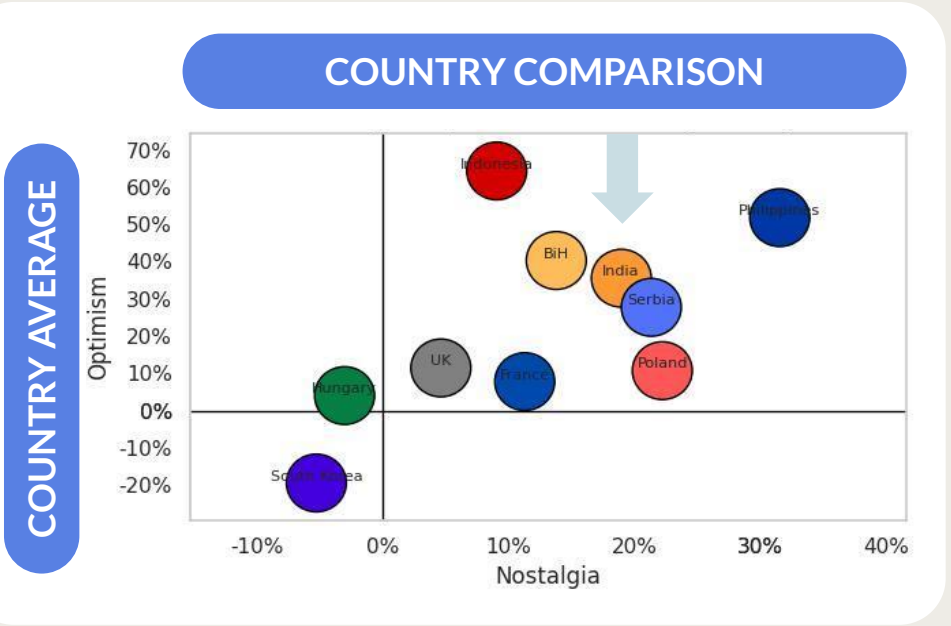
Most Indians subscribe to a narrative of rising opportunities for India in this century, a passive hope strongly fueled by the government's portrayal of India's current and future greatness. Within this narrative, uncertainty is viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat, and crises are seen as obstacles to be overcome. This mindset often leads to optimism being more of a belief than a lived experience, which in turn triggers a tendency towards post-normalisation and denial.



OPTIMISM & ABUNDANCE
INDIAN YOUTH

Amongst young people worry (44%) is only slightly lower than hope (50%), and optimism is 20% lower than the national average.

Meanwhile, young people have similarly low levels of personal uncertainty but believe less in an abundance narrative (*we all grow rich together*) 8%, and competitive scarcity is up by 2% (*there will be winners and losers)*, which is in line with a decrease in empathy of 14%.



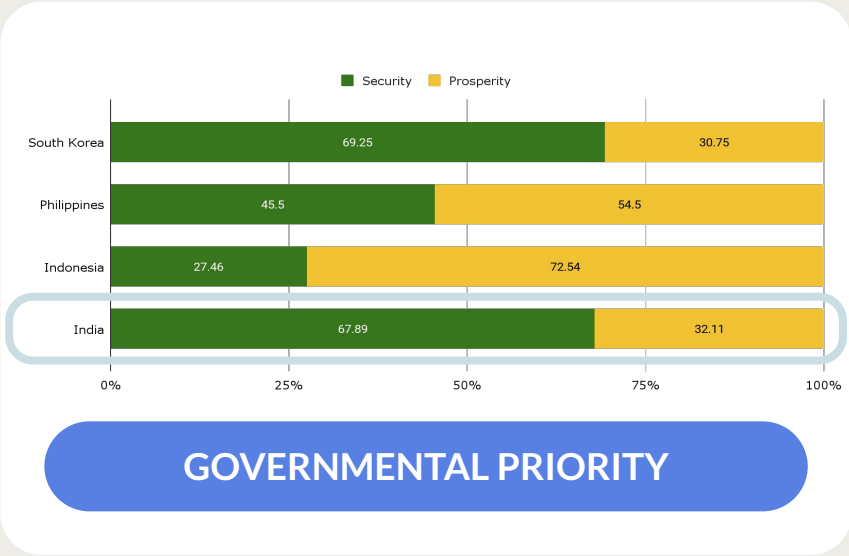
While Gen Z still holds a strong belief in India's prosperity narrative, this belief is weaker compared to the national average. Despite this weakening, it does not result in a reduction climate denial; rather, it seems to reinforce it, as the loss of hope and belief in prosperity appears to strengthen their denial of climate realities.

OPTIMISM & ABUNDANCE
INDIAN YOUTH

Youth unemployment and the cost of living crisis have fueled growing doubts about the existence of social mobility, with many young people feeling they may have even slipped down the social ladder. This sense of betrayal can easily escalate into *Toxic* anger and action, as seen in places like Kenya. In a country as angry and extroverted as India, this mentally precarious situation many young Indians find themselves in represents a dangerous ticking bomb for society.

- ➔ It is crucial for civil society actors to actively work toward empowering the youth, even those working on climate. Find ways to help them not only to express their anger constructively but also address the underlying causes of their frustration. **This powerful energy should not be left to populists and radical groups to exploit.**
- ➔ Campaigns should focus on strategies and narratives that help young people understand the root causes of their situation and identify pathways for change. Properly harnessed, **this situation has the potential to drive significant social change in India, but it also presents one of the country's greatest social challenges.**

SECURITY X PROSPERITY



GOVERNMENTAL PRIORITY

PERSONAL PRIORITY

Emerging signs of a narrative breakdown: In addition to lower levels of optimism and belief in abundance among young people, people's overwhelming belief in security over prosperity as a priority for the Indian government and in their own lives stand in stark contrast to the Philippines and Indonesia. This seems to indicate that the prosperity narrative is beginning to crack.

SECURITY X PROSPERITY

Given India's anger-expressive culture and the high proportion of toxic anger with tendencies toward aggression and violence, it is crucial to consider **the potential consequences if the prosperity narrative further deteriorates**, leading to deeper feelings of betrayal and frustration. Currently, the most significant sources of anger are unfair treatment (47%) and the belief that crises could have been avoided (44%), highlighting the fragility of social stability under these conditions.

- ➔ **Security is a shared value that can effectively motivate action and should be woven into the climate narrative.** However, it's crucial to conduct further research to understand how people in India define security, as it does not serve as the antidote to uncertainty as it does in other countries.
- ➔ To preempt the potential collapse of the prosperity narrative, it is essential to **establish new narratives that strongly emphasise security as a common value and promote personal empowerment** as a counterbalance to toxic anger.

PROSPERITY, SECURITY & CLIMATE
NARRATIVE DEEP DIVE

Climate change, with its irreversible temperature increases and potentially catastrophic impacts, presents a counter-narrative that conflicts with the mainstream belief in India's rising prosperity. This disconnect drives high levels of full and partial denial, with many in the population readily accepting information that downplays the severity of climate change.

The clash between the realities of climate change and the narrative of India's future prosperity has become part of the broader culture war. To this end, in the Monitor India had the highest levels of anger towards climate activists at 31%. This is notable even though Indian climate activists generally avoid the controversial tactics seen in other countries, such as those that have sparked debate and backlash in the UK.

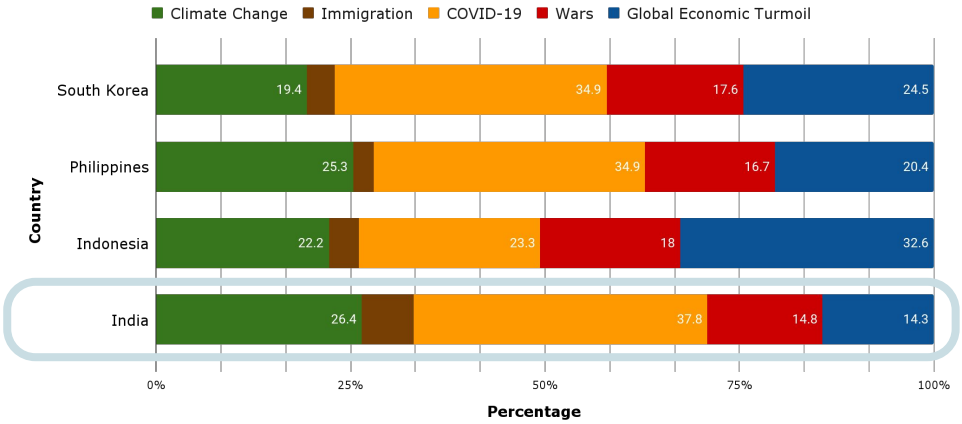
- ➔ As we emphasize later, **framing climate action in opposition to the prosperity narrative will not succeed** i.e. advocating for degrowth or doomsday rhetoric about the future.
- ➔ **Instead, it must be integrated into it -** harnessing the abundance of sunlight, showing how India can achieve energy independence at both the national and individual levels, how climate adaptation can enhance community resilience or how reducing pollution can improve security and well-being.
- ➔ If climate change is already a contentious issue within your audience or is poorly understood, it is wise to avoid positioning it as the central focus. Instead, **center the discussion on opportunities, security, and prosperity, with climate action woven into these themes.**

CLIMATE ANGER & CLIMATE ACTION

26% of Indians perceive climate as one of the two most impactful crises for them, the highest in Asia. For older adults (excluding young people), the main losses associated with climate are **economic well-being** and **security**.

43% of Indians are very or quite angry about climate change, ranking ninth amongst anger causes. India has **the highest percentage of people globally who claim to have taken some form of climate action in the past year** (62%), far exceeding those who report feeling angry or directly impacted. This high level of activity aligns with the 57% of Indians who believe that climate change has influenced their views on using natural resources, the second highest rate among all countries. Additionally, activity rates for issues like environmental pollution and inflation are also notably high.

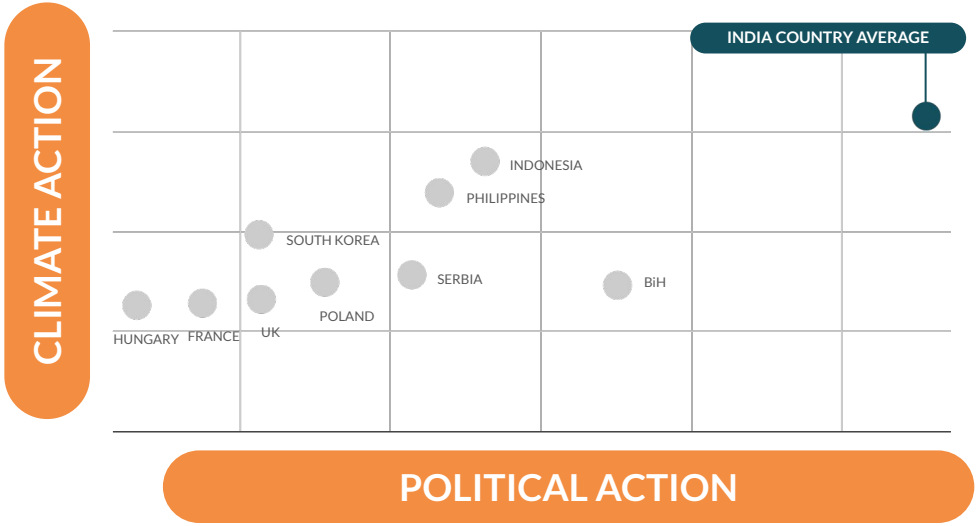
MOST IMPACTFUL CRISIS



Indians tend to value being active or being perceived as active, but this doesn't necessarily mean that they are all consistently ambitious or deeply engaged in climate activism on a daily basis.

CLIMATE ANGER & CLIMATE ACTION

POLITICAL AND CLIMATE ACTION



Instead of doubting the validity of these numbers, **use this insight to normalise climate and environmental action** - showing how it is a normal behaviour amongst most Indians or amongst most of a key audience. For example, “it has become normal for Indian house owners to secure their energy supply through the installation of rooftop solar” or showing how electric scooters are becoming increasingly common cities, providing economic benefits and reducing air pollution.

Glossary

Anger Types

Anger is not a one dimension emotion, it can be broken down into different anger “types” such as Constructive, Toxic or restrained. This determines if the anger can be used to drive social change (Constructive) or is more likely to be violent, vengeful and dangerous (Toxic).

Agency

Agency is the sense of control you feel over your actions, and the capacity to influence your own life (personal agency) or that of your political context (political agency). Agency can only be achieved when people can take action and see the impact it has. Actions without impact leads to powerlessness.

Climate Denial

We use a broad definition of climate denial that includes “partial denial” such as believing that climate change is exaggerated or that personal action is pointless. It also includes “optimistic denial”, for example those who believe that we will adapt or that “technology will fix things”. These types of denial can act as barriers to collective action and we need to find ways to dissolve them.

Scarcity Mindset

One of the key narrative shifts in the polycrisis is from abundance (we all grow rich together) to scarcity (there are limited resources to go around). Depending on your audience’s values scarcity narratives could either be built around competition (every person for themselves) or collectivism (we share what little we have).

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology and Data Preprocessing

Data collected from surveys was thoroughly preprocessed to ensure it was clean and structured, making it suitable for detailed analysis and visualization.

Data Segmentation and Construct Creation

We introduced a point system to categorize responses into different types of anger. Additionally, we combined various survey answers to create unique constructs that represent specific emotional or behavioral patterns.

Analysis and Conclusion

We conducted an in-depth analysis of these constructs across different demographics, including age and gender, to identify distinct patterns in anger types. This analysis helped in drawing specific conclusions for various segments.

Dashboard Development

The constructs and their corresponding analysis results were then integrated into a Tableau dashboard. This dynamic dashboard is designed to visually compare these historical constructs against new survey results as they become available, allowing for ongoing assessment and comparison.

Mindworks

Thank you!

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