Progress on mitigating climate change is slowed by the stubborn persistence of climate skepticism, as well as a failure for non-skeptics to translate their concern about climate change into meaningful action. The goal of this paper is to describe and synthesize research on how to understand (and overcome) this public inaction on climate change.

The first section of the paper examines the question of how to understand (and overcome) climate change skepticism. Key points are as follows:

- Levels of skepticism that humans are causing climate change remains stubbornly high (although there has been evidence of a drop in skepticism since 2017).
- The biggest predictor of whether or not people are climate sceptical is whether they are politically conservative, an effect that is particularly pronounced in fossil-fuel reliant countries such as the U.S. and Australia.
- The tendency to believe conspiracies is also a significant contributor to climate skepticism in the U.S., but not elsewhere.
- There is little evidence that merely repeating climate science is effective in “converting” climate skeptics.
- There is evidence that skeptics can be guided toward pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors if climate messages are framed using values that are consistent with conservative ideologies (e.g., patriotism, security, freedom from government, economic growth).
- Understanding that 97% of climate scientists agree humans are causing climate change is a “gateway belief” that cascades into concern for the environment and urgency to enact change. There is also some evidence that this strategy is equally effective for skeptics and believers (although this remains a contested point).

- If people are aware of the “dirty tricks” that vested interests have used in the past to undermine perceptions of scientific consensus, they are better equipped to discount similar campaigns in the future.

**The second section examines the question of how to promote more climate-friendly behaviors among people who believe in the reality of climate change.** Key points:

- Despite an emerging zeitgeist arguing that fear-based messages are causing people to switch off from climate change news, there is little evidence for this.

- Optimistic messages raise hope, but also have the potential to increase complacency and reduce motivation to make necessary sacrifices.

- Climate policies are more likely to be accepted when they are supported by members of people’s “ingroups” (e.g., when Republicans hear messages from other Republicans) than when the same argument is expressed by members of an “outgroup”.

- When it comes to acting in a pro-environmental way, people are highly sensitive to information about what is normal and appropriate. Information about what is normative is more effective than appeals to social responsibility, self-interest, or even the need for environmental protection.

- Environmental behavior can be increased by communicating that most people are engaging in climate mitigation behaviors; and if that is not true, by highlighting that behavior is changing in a positive direction.