

# Surviving climate communications

A personal perspective from a climate scientist

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Met Office Hadley Centre





The climate  
comms  
environment



late 2000s

early 2010s >

2017 >

Trusted by Millions Users



**WUWT**  
Watts Up With That?  
The world's most viewed site on global warming and climate change

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Climate Etc.



30p GET YOUR DAILY EXPRESS FOR JUST 30p  
SAVE 10p A WEEK ON YOUR DAILY & SUNDAY EXPRESS

**DAILY EXPRESS**

Clooney's amazing mother  
FREE £5 SPEND AT WH Smiths FOR EVERY POUND  
Iran threatens serious action against sailors

**THE BIG CLIMATE CHANGE 'FRAUD'**

We are not to blame says top scientist... It's a cue to raise tax

IT'S FURRY NICE TO MEET YOU



15°C  
14.5°C  
14°C

Global Mean Temperature

**THE GLOBAL WARMING POLICY FOUNDATION**  
Director: Dr Benny Peiser

**GWPF**  
Common Sense on Climate Change

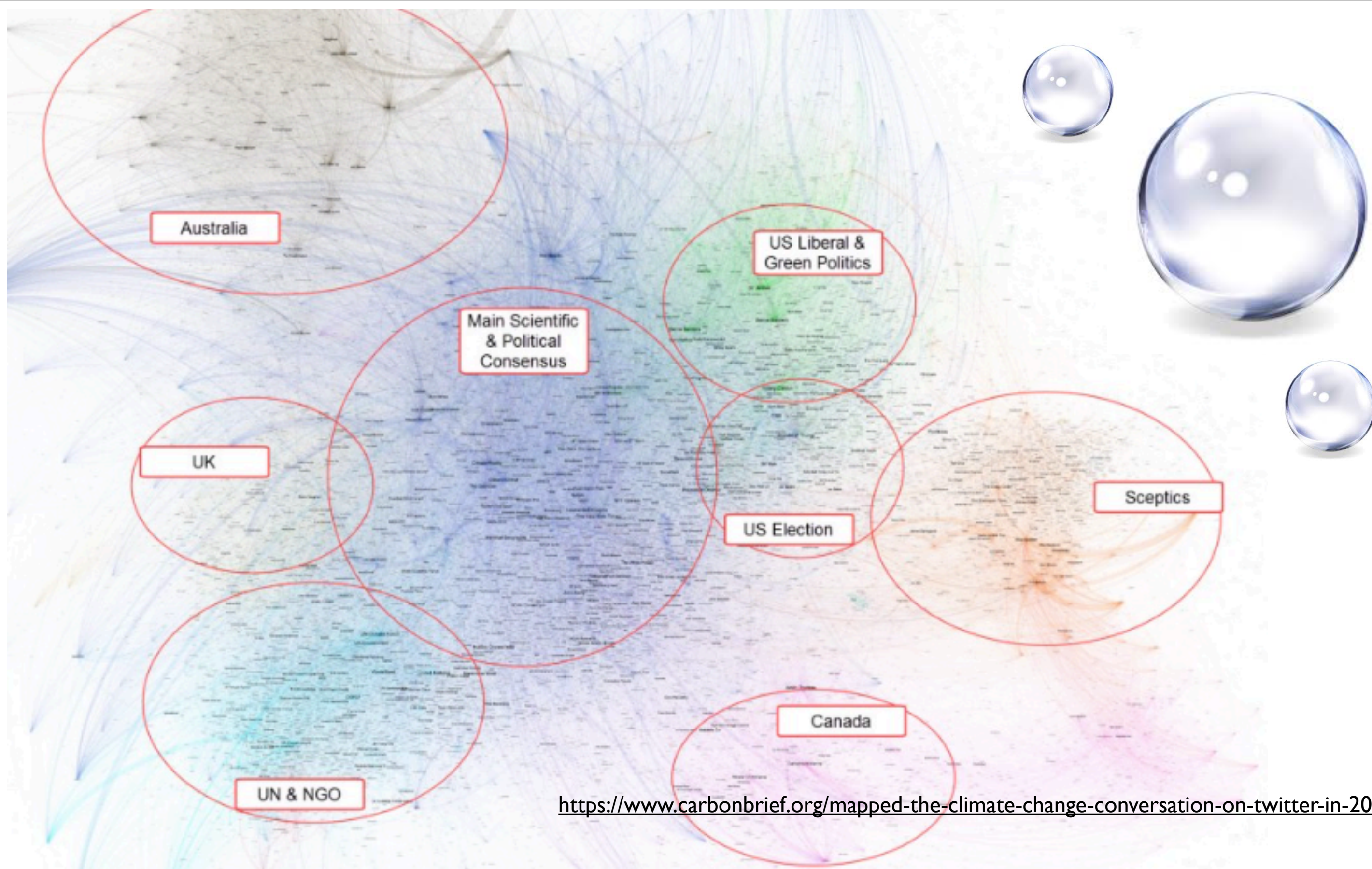


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**RealClimate**  
Climate science from climate scientists







<https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-the-climate-change-conversation-on-twitter-in-2016>



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You are here



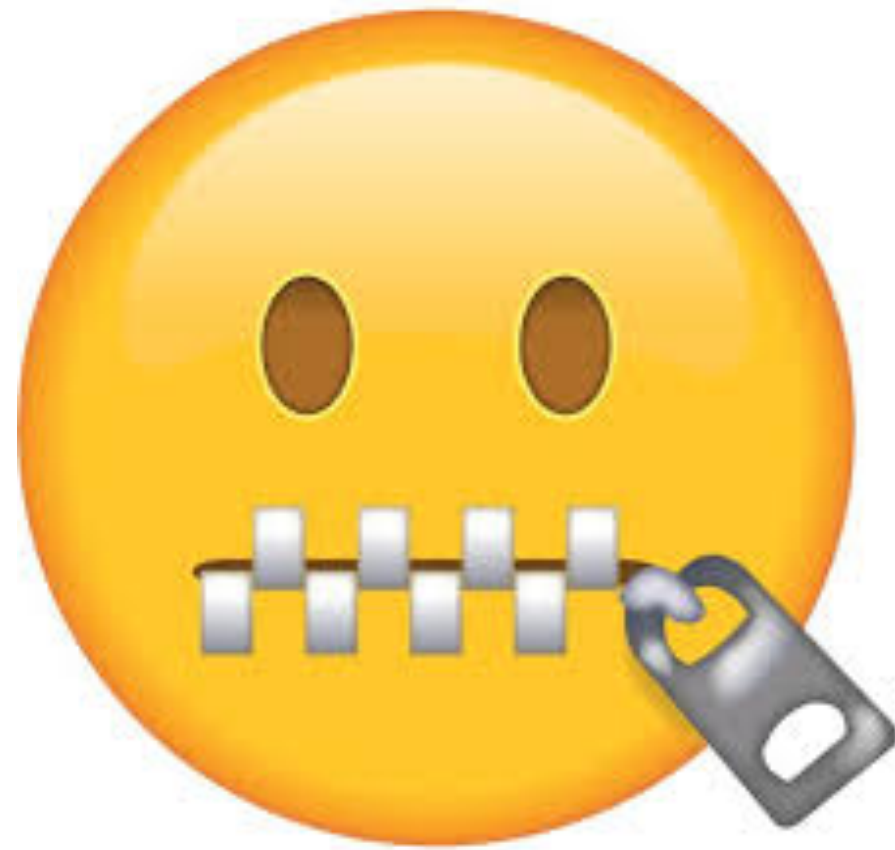


Do





# Say something (interesting)





# Choose your message carefully



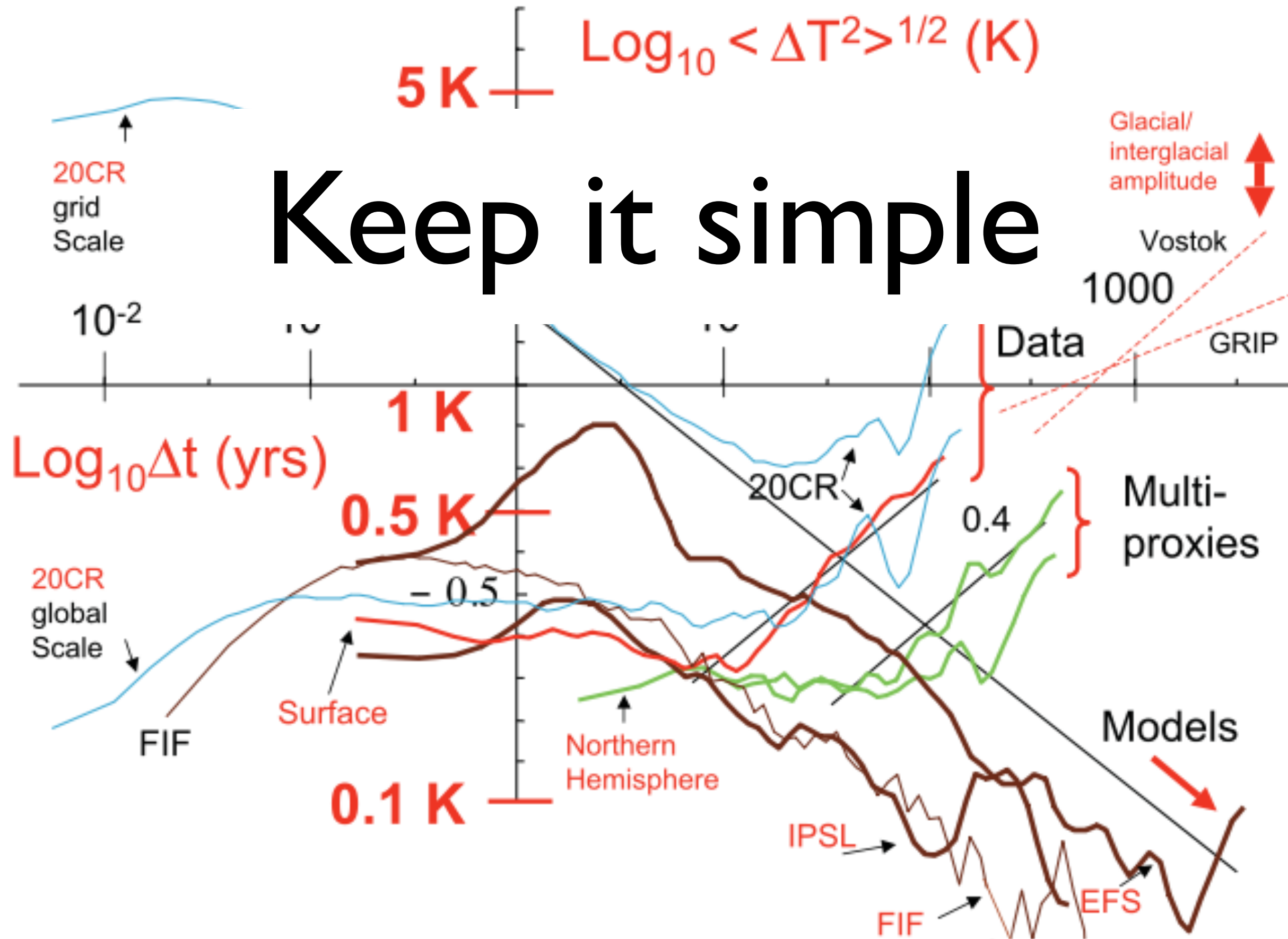




Make it  
relevant



# Keep it simple

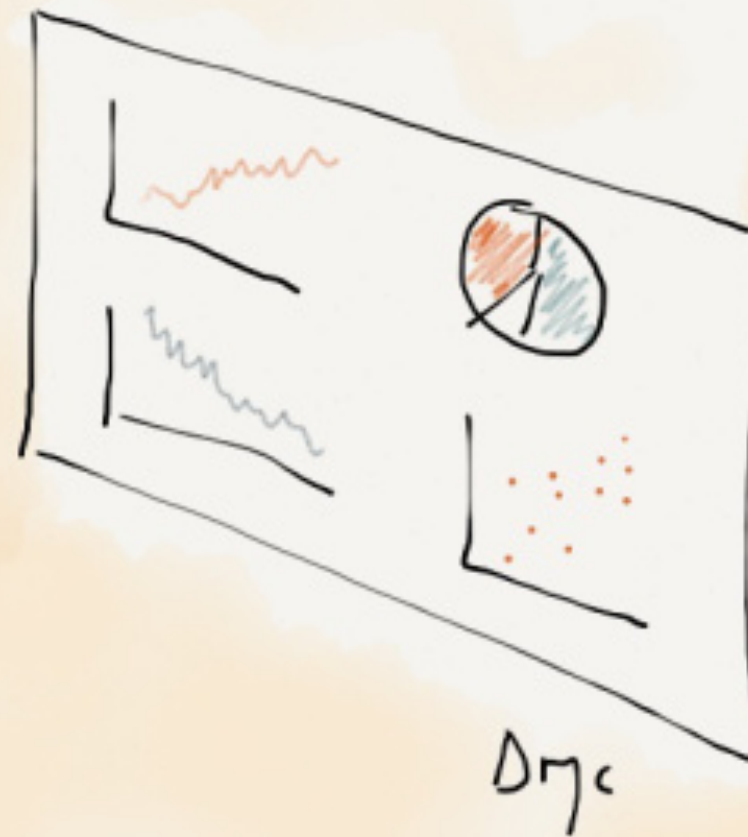




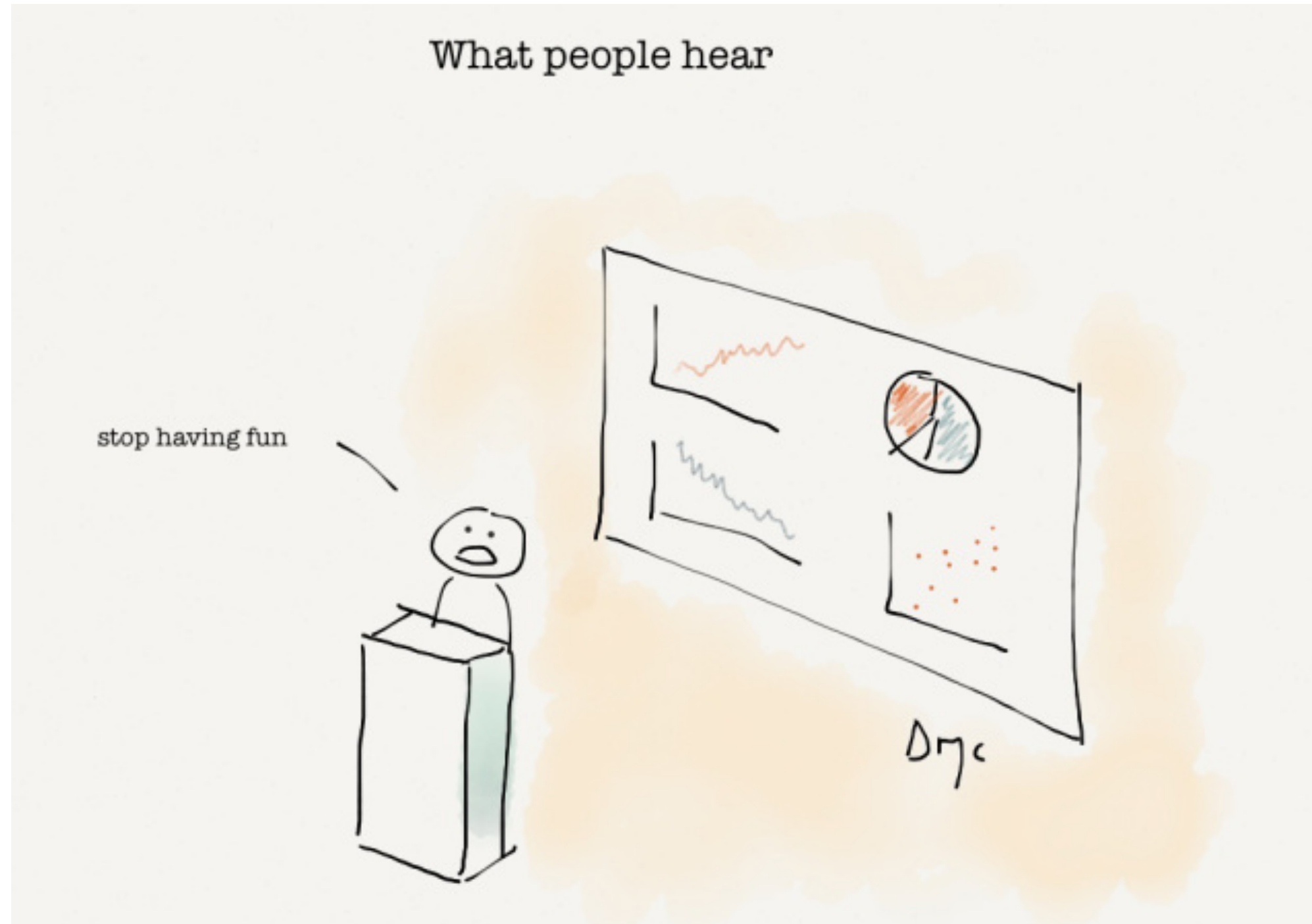
# Know your audience

... so, as the Earth is a complex system with many feedbacks, we think the risks of a rapidly changing climate are considerable .... By far the simplest way to mitigate these risks is to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted to the atmosphere due to human activity ... Even this drastic measure might not be enough to stop the worst effects of climate change, although .... there will always be a tradeoff between adaptation and mitigation ...

What climate scientists say



# Know your audience





Deficit Model!

Cultural  
Cognition  
Model!



@KHayhoe



# Repeat your message

- Repeat your message

- Repeat your message
- Repeat your message
- Keep repeating it



# Don't



# Don't lie





# Don't use cliché





# Don't use cliché







**Don't [just] preach to the choir**

# Don't be afraid to be a human





# Defense against the dark arts



# Know the tricks





# How to win at Twitter (don't do this)

## 1. Start offensive

Get off to a good start by being deliberately offensive right at the start of a debate, and put your opponent on the wrong foot. They'll be too perturbed, emotional and quite possibly angry to make a rational argument. This is a real win for you, as you can gradually get more reasonable, and then accuse them of bad behaviour.

## 2. Always have the last word

No matter how petty, how incomprehensible, how inconsequential, or how far from the original disagreement, make sure you get the last tweet in any exchange. Link to cat gifs if you have to, the last person tweeting wins the argument.

## 3. Be selective

Point to facts that back up your world-view, and nothing that challenges your world-view. Ideally these facts will be true, but they should on no account give the whole story. Then, when somebody points to a fact that challenges your worldview, you can safely say "that does not contradict my fact", and it *sounds* like it doesn't contradict your world-view.

## 4. Be speculatively rude

Say offensive things about your opponents, and only back down if robustly challenged. Make a show of an apology, delete tweets – you'll look grown up and gracious if challenged, or the original insult will make your opponents look an idiot if not. Win-win.

# How to win at Twitter (don't do this)

## 7. Be heard

Demand that your opponent reads everything that you ever wrote, on any subject. If they haven't, or they won't, chide them for being ignorant or narrow minded as appropriate.

## 8. Victim Bully

Victim bully. Use claims that your opponent has wronged you to gain leverage over them. This works especially well if you have harried or frustrated them into being robust with their language.

## 9. Flat out hypocrisy

Accuse your opponent of the very thing that you are doing right now to gain advantage over them. It doesn't matter what it is.

## 10. Hold them responsible

Hold your opponent responsible for the actions of their entire group, or culture. Demand that they show penance by calling out every example of the behaviour you don't like. Be sure to gleefully point these out.



# How to win at Twitter (don't do this)

## 11. Demand answers

It doesn't matter if your questions are relevant, interesting, or important. Keep demanding. Proclaim loudly that your opponent won't answer your questions, and that, really, the answers to the questions are the important thing.

## 12. Be disappointed

Make it clear to your opponent, you are disappointed in them. Look, you expect a higher standard of behaviour and/or argument from them, and really, they've let you down, they've let their family down, but mostly, they've let themselves down.

## 13. Change the subject

If all else fails, and you're still losing your argument, you can always **LOOK: A SQUIRREL!!!!**

<https://dougmcneall.com/2015/08/27/more-ways-to-win-at-twitter/>

# Dangers





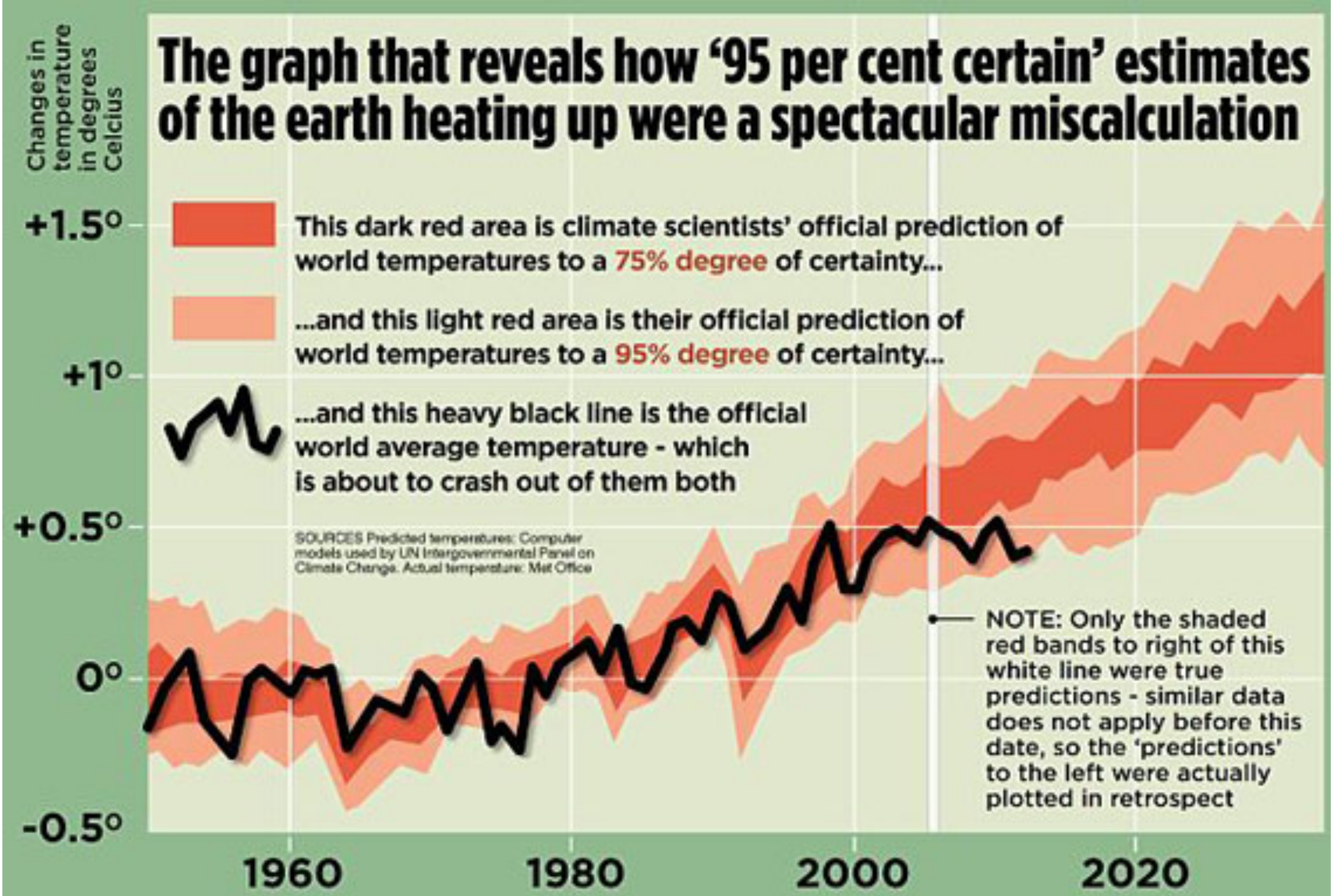
- [this slide had a nasty tweet in it, threatening climate scientists]

# Successes

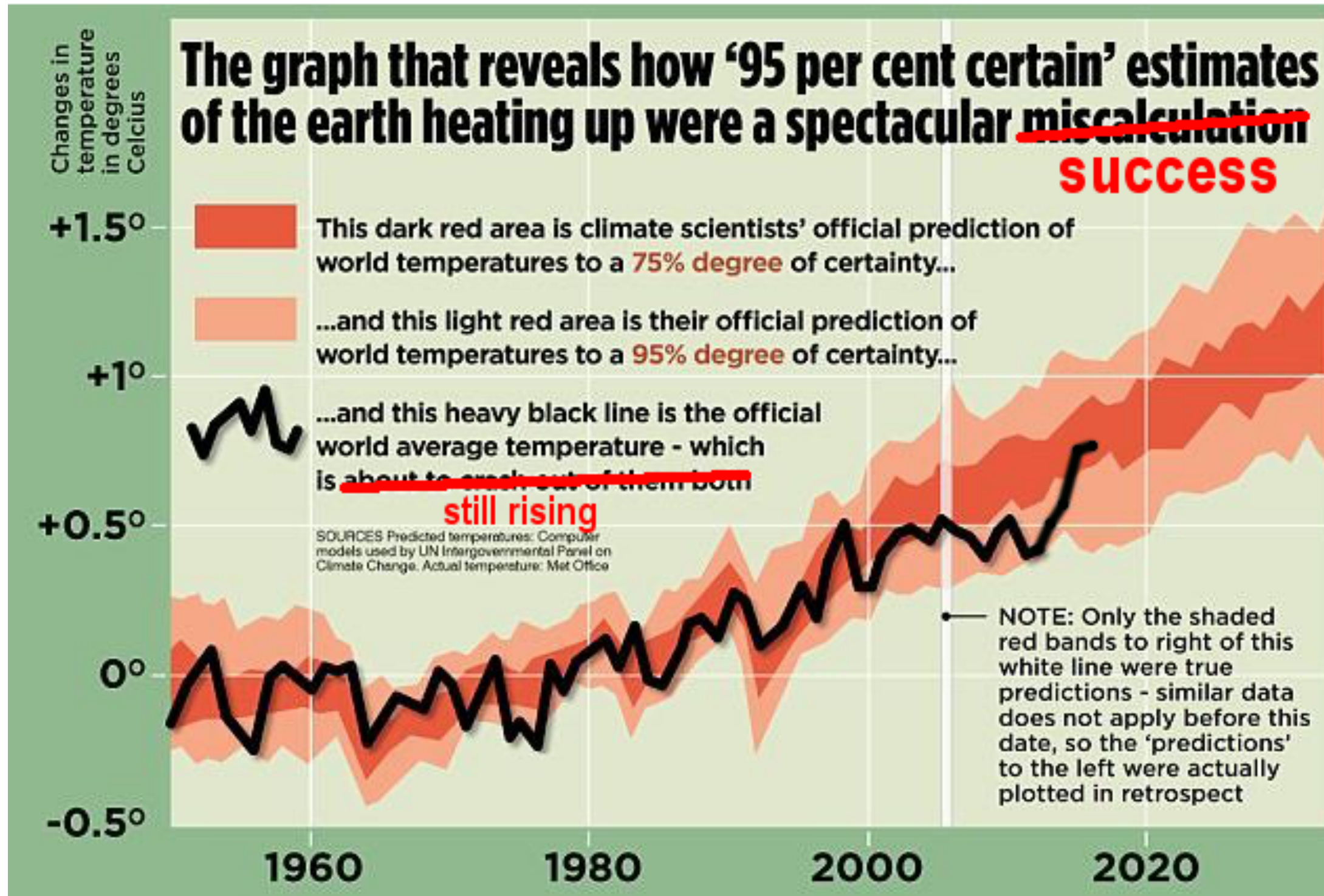


FORGOTTEN









@richardabetts @ed\_hawkins @flimsin @dougmcneall

Updated from: [tiny.cc/climate-confusion](http://tiny.cc/climate-confusion)



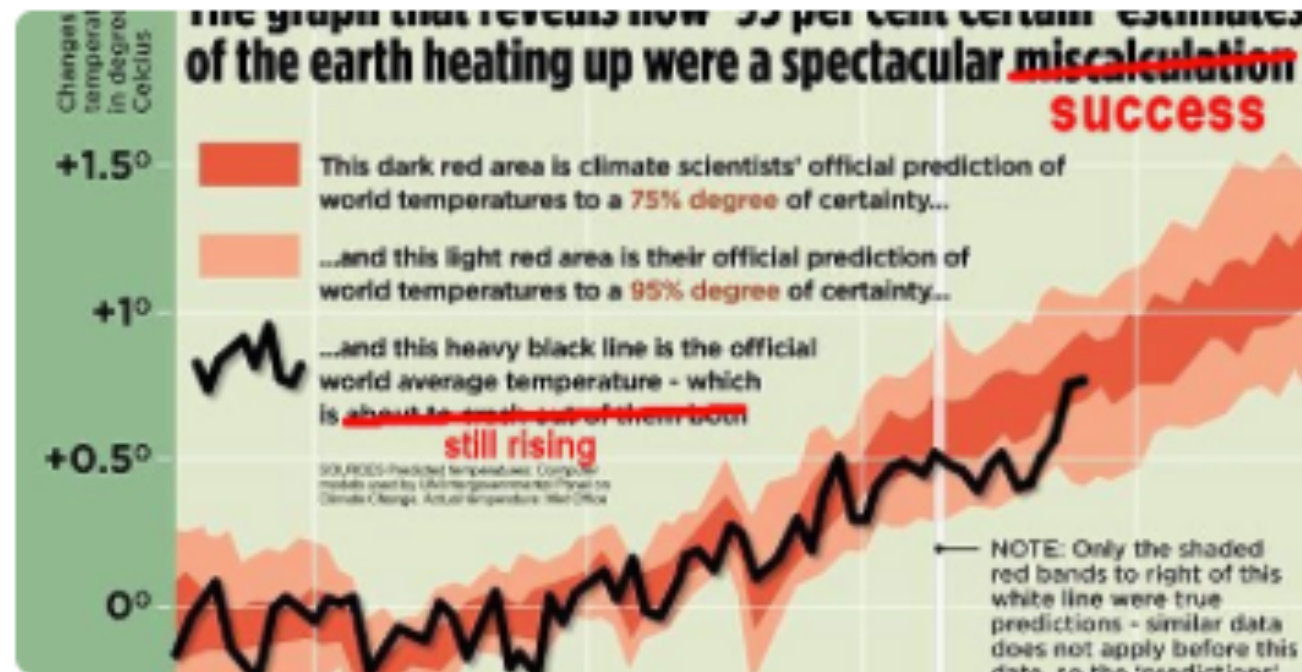
**Top mention** earned 15.9K engagements



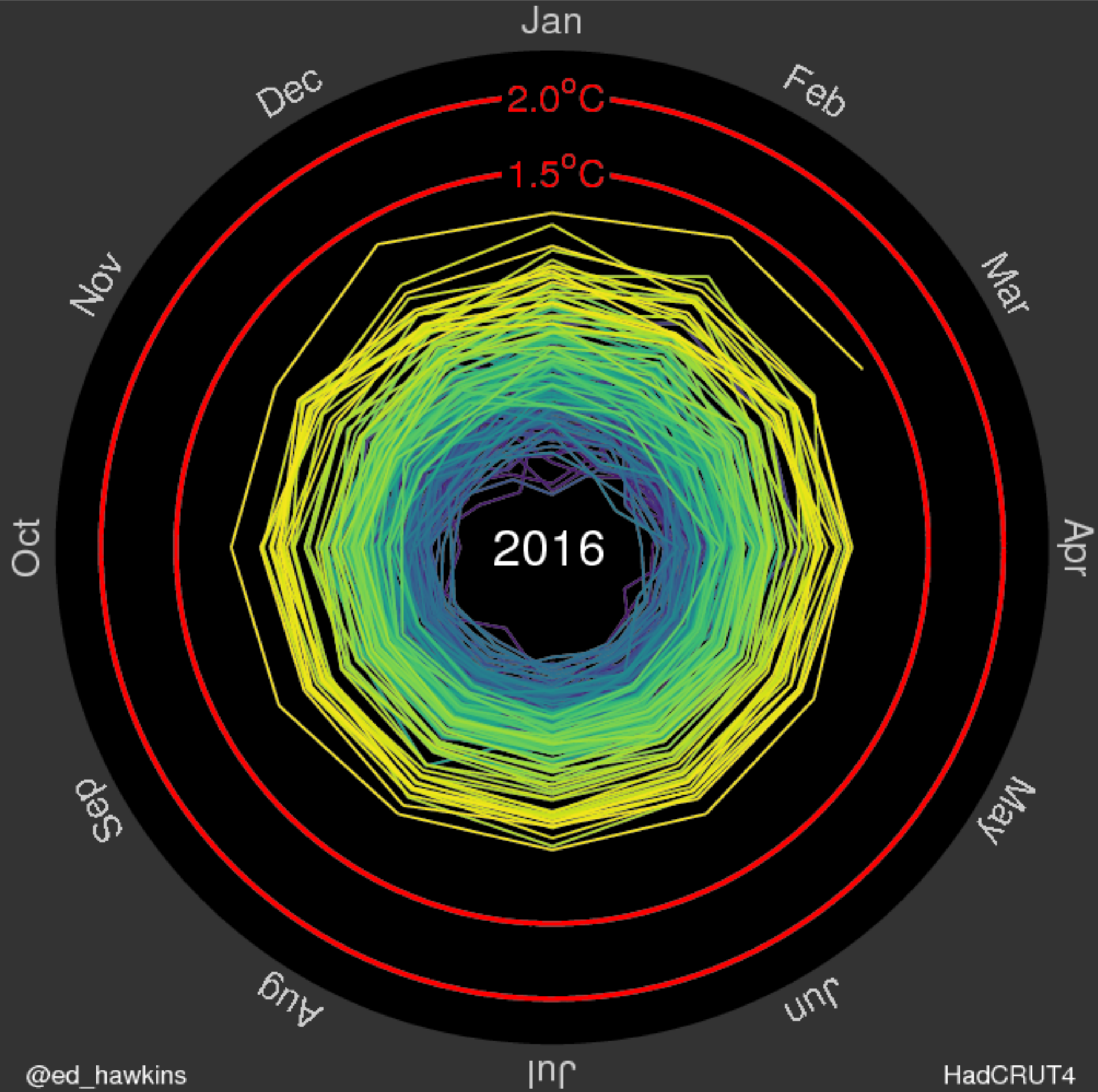
**Richard Betts**

@richardabetts · Feb 9

Hi @DavidRoseUK we updated your graph - hope it helps make your next article OK for Wikipedia :) @ed\_hawkins @flimsin @dougmcneall #fixedit [pic.twitter.com/g1PZZBiHQ2](https://pic.twitter.com/g1PZZBiHQ2)



41 634 726





# What next?

**Novelty.**



# Burst the bubble



# And finally ...

There's a simple rule: You say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again, and then again and again and again and again, and about the time that you're absolutely sick of saying it is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time. And it is so hard, but you've just got to keep repeating, because we hear so many different things – the noises from outside, the sounds, all the things that are coming into our head, the 200 cable channels and the satellite versus cable, and what we hear from our friends<sup>1</sup>

Frank Lunn



Thanks for  
listening  
Any questions?

dougmcneall.com  
@dougmcneall