# Climate misinformation surges in top podcasts amid rise of 'new denial'



Recent research from Yale Climate Connections has illuminated a troubling trend in popular podcasting: the spread of climate misinformation. Analysis shows that eight out of the ten most popular shows have circulated false or misleading narratives regarding climate change. Prominent figures, including Joe Rogan and Russell Brand, have at times undermined established scientific consensus, instead championing a softer form of denial—which questions the effectiveness of climate policies and even suggests that global warming may have benefits.

This phenomenon is not merely an issue of misinformation; it reflects a shift in how climate narratives are discussed. A striking report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate indicates that 70 percent of climate misinformation encountered on platforms like YouTube now falls under this category of 'new denial.' This is a stark rise from 35 percent in 2018. The implications are significant, not least because these narratives shape public perceptions and attitudes toward climate action.

The role of meat consumption in the climate crisis has also been misrepresented within these influential podcasts. While research such as that conducted by Project Drawdown identifies a reduction in meat consumption as one of the most potent individual actions to mitigate emissions, many listeners remain sceptical about its impact. Polls indicate that 74 percent of Americans believe eating less meat would have little to no effect on climate change, reflecting a disconnect between factual evidence and public understanding.

Podcasts have seen a marked increase in popularity, with nearly half of Americans reporting they tuned in to at least one in 2022. Among these listeners, over one-third noted that the content they consumed prompted lifestyle changes. The informal, accessible style of podcasting can create a sense of authenticity that is often missing from traditional media. According to Elisa Tattersall Wallin, a researcher at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, this informal tone allows hosts to connect intimately with audiences, often at the expense of rigorous fact-checking.

John Kotcher, a researcher at George Mason University, underscores the dual role of podcasts as both informative platforms and sources of entertainment. While many podcasts excel in presenting intricate climate issues over their longer formats, the lack of editorial oversight raises concerns. Often, podcasters do not adequately vet guest experts, leading to a dissemination of unverified information. Some channels, particularly right-leaning shows that focus on what Tattersall Wallin calls "obstruction," emphasise conspiracy theories and discredit scientific evidence, making them particularly susceptible to spreading misinformation.

This backdrop highlights the importance of media literacy in the age of influential digital content. As misinformation proliferates, audiences must learn to navigate these narratives critically, distinguishing fact from fiction. Kotcher presents a balanced perspective: while caution is warranted when engaging with biased content, podcasts can remain valuable sources of credible climate information, provided listeners are discerning in their choices.

Indeed, healthy skepticism is warranted, especially when confronted with platforms like Rogan's, where the dialogue often downplays the significance of dietary impacts on climate change. Episodes featuring figures such as Elon Musk dismiss the link between meat consumption and its environmental costs, a sentiment that runs counter to substantial scientific literature. This contradiction serves as a reminder that celebrity influence on media can skew public understanding in dangerous ways.

For those seeking to engage with quality climate information, Kotcher recommends various podcasts that prioritise factual accuracy. In navigating an increasingly convoluted media landscape, listeners must remain vigilant and informed. The rise of climate misinformation within popular podcasts not only hinders collective action on climate change but also reflects deeper societal challenges in reconciling entertainment with accurate and responsible information dissemination.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.desmog.com/2025/05/12/joe-rogan-and-other-top-podcasts-spread-climate-disinfo-research-finds/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.desmog.com/2025/05/12/joe-rogan-and-other-top-podcasts-spread-climate-disinfo-research-finds/> - An analysis by Yale Climate Connections reveals that eight out of the ten most popular online shows have disseminated false or misleading information about climate change. These influential media personalities often promote subtle narratives, such as questioning the effectiveness of climate solutions or suggesting that global warming is beneficial. This trend contributes to the spread of climate misinformation, with 'new denial' messages comprising 70% of climate misinformation on YouTube in 2023, up from 35% in 2018. The article emphasizes the need for media literacy to discern credible content from misinformation.
3. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/04/07/americans-and-podcasts/> - A Pew Research Center survey from April 2022 indicates that nearly half of Americans (49%) have listened to a podcast. Among these listeners, 36% reported making lifestyle changes, such as adjusting their diet, based on podcast content, and 28% purchased items discussed or promoted on podcasts. This underscores the significant influence podcasts have on public behavior and decision-making.
4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/food/2023/04/15/meat-consumption-climate-change/> - A Washington Post article from April 2023 highlights that 74% of Americans believe eating less meat would have little or no effect on emissions. This perception contrasts with findings from Project Drawdown, which identifies reducing meat consumption as one of the most effective individual actions to combat climate change. The article discusses the challenges in changing public attitudes toward meat consumption and its environmental impact.
5. <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2025/05/leading-podcasts-spread-climate-misinformation-study-finds/> - A study by Yale Climate Connections published in May 2025 examines the role of leading podcasts in spreading climate misinformation. The research found that eight of the ten most popular online shows have shared false or misleading information about climate change. The study emphasizes the need for media literacy and critical evaluation of podcast content to combat the spread of misinformation.
6. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/27/us/joe-rogan-jordan-peterson-climate-science-intl/> - A CNN article from January 2022 reports on an episode of 'The Joe Rogan Experience' featuring Jordan Peterson, where Peterson questioned the validity of climate models and the scientific consensus on climate change. Climate scientists criticized Peterson's remarks, highlighting concerns about the spread of misinformation and its potential impact on public understanding of climate science.
7. <https://www.mediamatters.org/joe-rogan-experience/joe-rogan-continues-cast-doubt-climate-science-joe-rogan-experience> - A Media Matters report from August 2024 details an episode of 'The Joe Rogan Experience' where Rogan and guest Peter Thiel questioned the effectiveness of climate solutions and the credibility of climate science. Thiel referred to climate science as a 'fake field,' and Rogan suggested that climate change discussions are ideologically driven. The report underscores concerns about the podcast's role in disseminating climate misinformation.