

Climate change and its perceptions in Latvia: what stories do we tell?

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“From indifference to making difference in climate policy: improving the interaction between political narrative and societal perceptions in Latvia”*

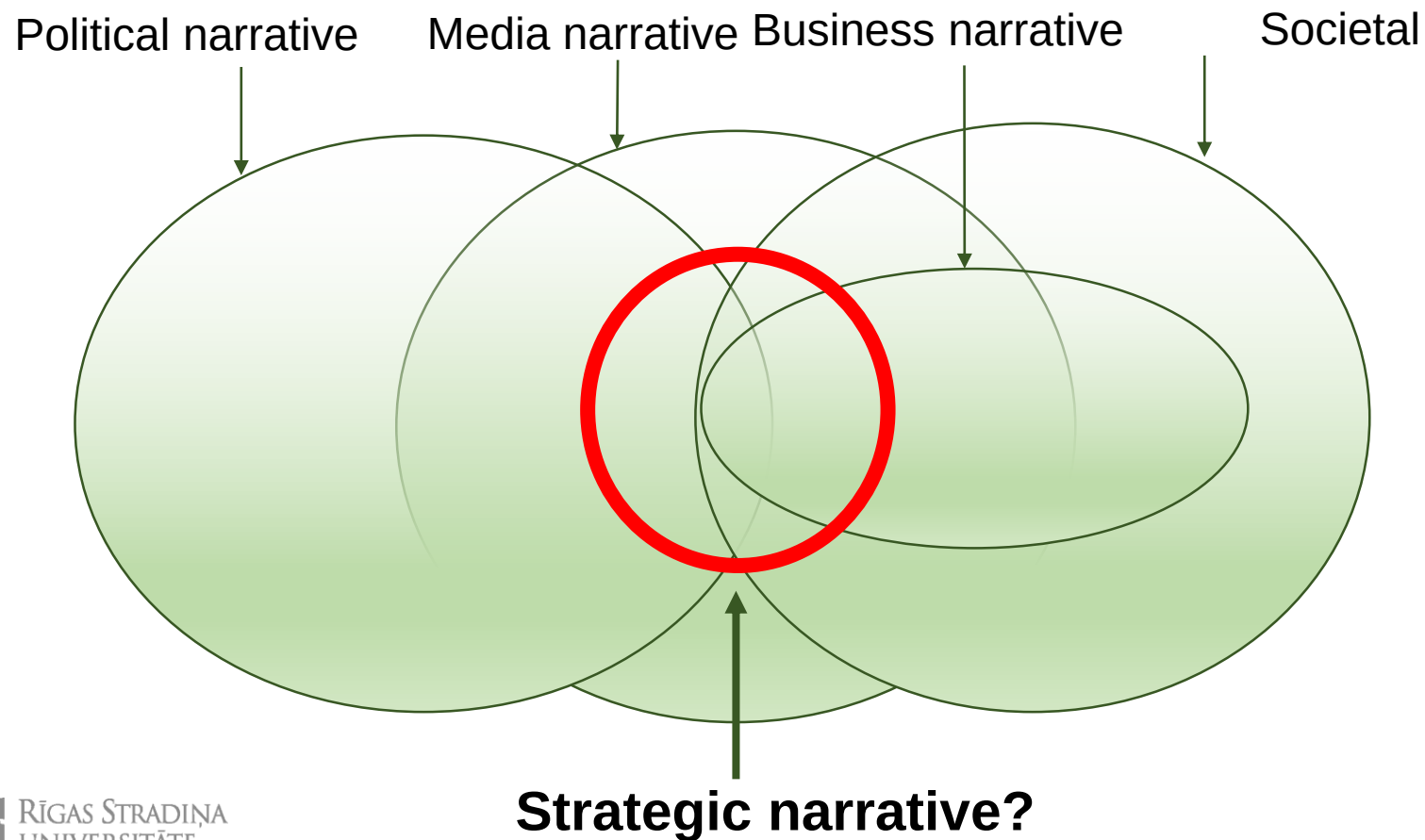
Why to study stories?

- The transition to climate neutrality requires not only engineering solutions and appropriate legislation but also active public engagement.
- **Stories or narratives can either promote (or hinder) habit change and proactive action.**

For example:

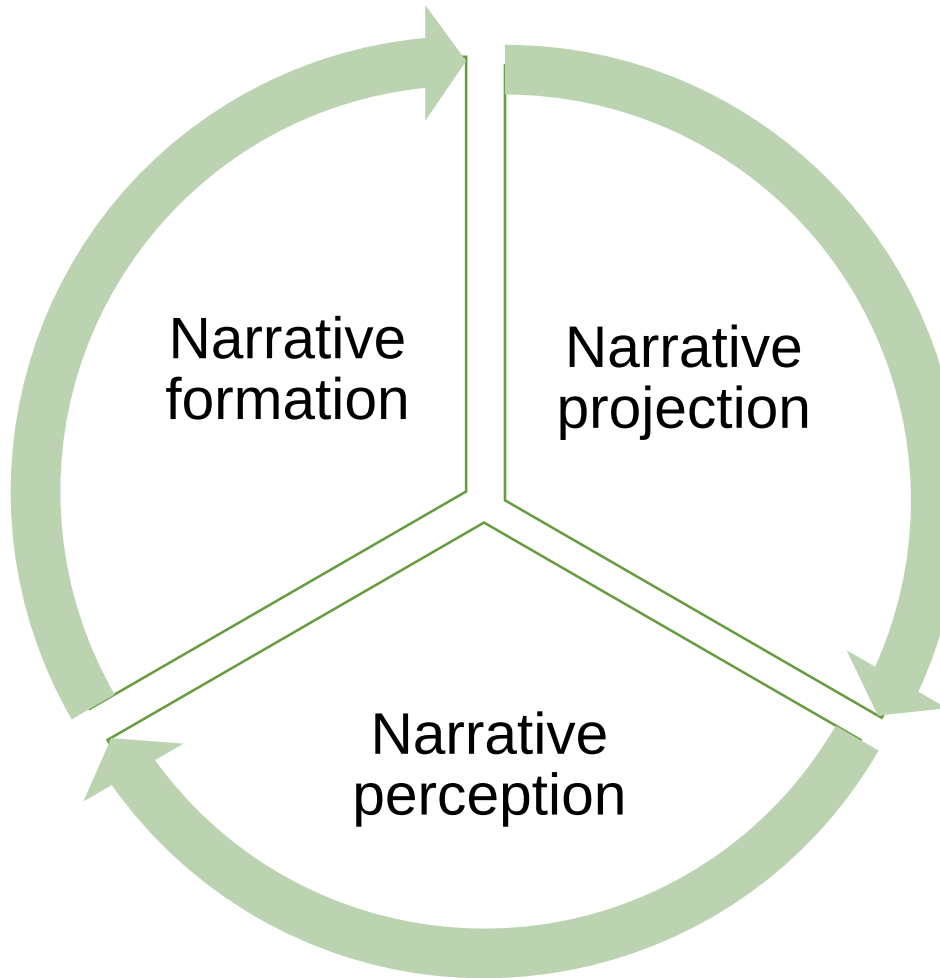
- *Climate change has always existed and always will; humans cannot influence it.*
- *Climate change is a fabrication, a scam, or a conspiracy serving someone's interests.*
- *Latvia is not a major polluter and cannot significantly impact climate change mitigation.*
- *The climate in Latvia is becoming warmer, and climate change is not necessarily a bad thing.*
- *Climate change presents an opportunity to foster innovation and promote economic growth.*
- *Climate change threatens Latvia's nature, public health, and property, making it necessary to fight it.*

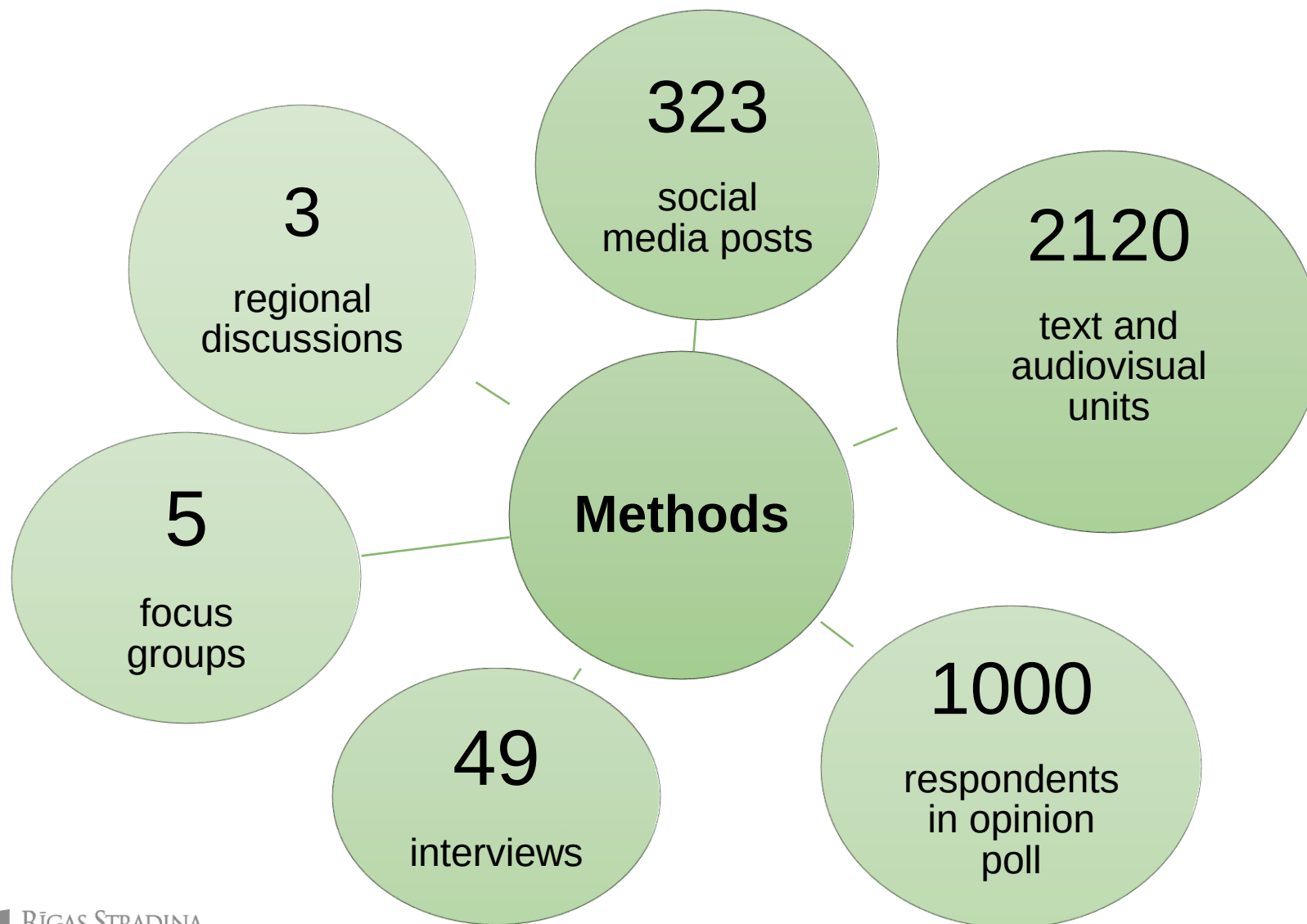
Research on climate change narratives across political, media, business and societal levels (2020.-2023.)



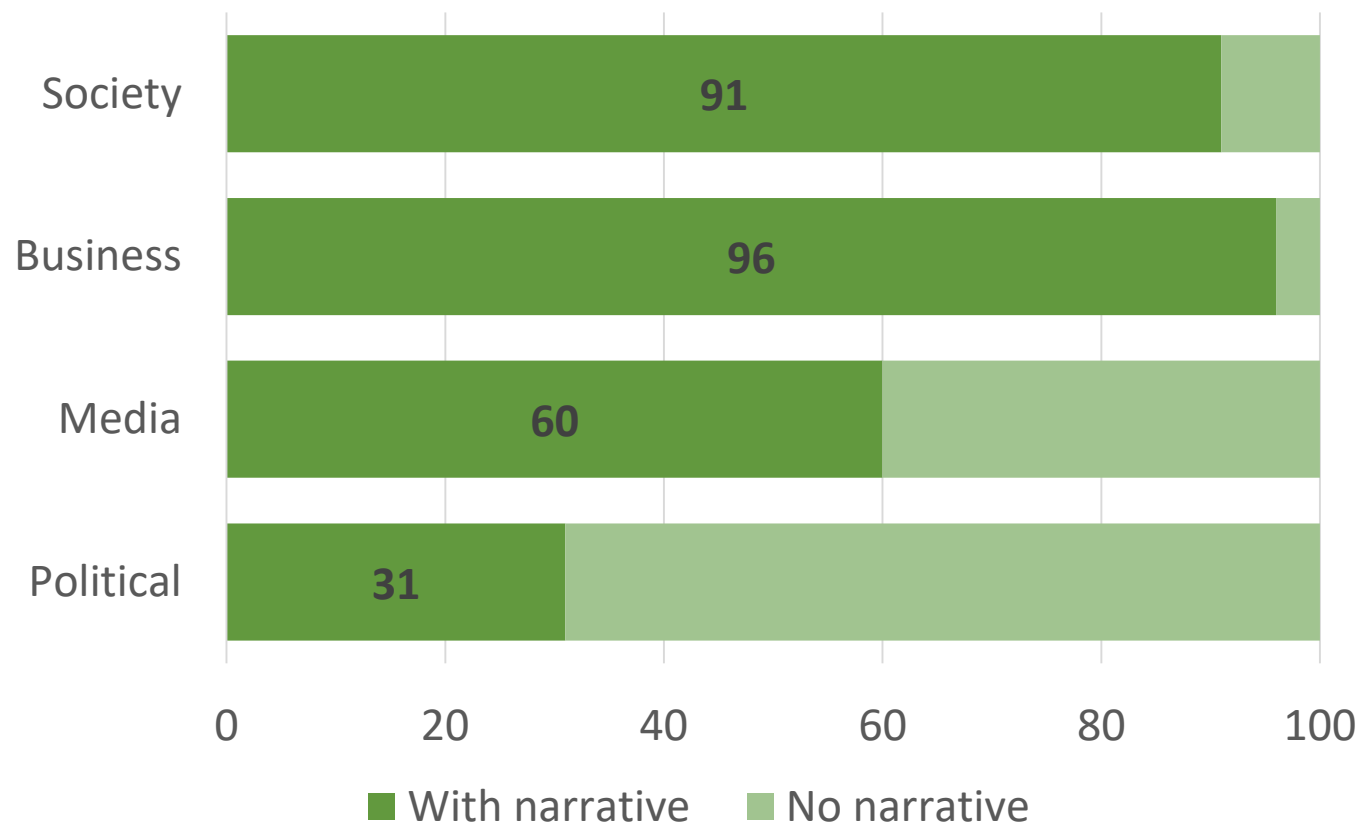
Conceptual framework of strategic narratives (Miskimmon et al. 2013)

- A strategic narrative is **crafted intentionally with the aim of influencing** and altering audience behaviour to achieve a strategic objective.
- The impact of a strategic narrative is greater when it is **aligned across all phases** of the narrative's lifecycle.





In one-third of the analyzed units, no narrative - a causally linked storyline - was identified



Narrative alignment is limited.

Four narratives observed at the political level resonate across other levels.

Recognition: Climate change poses a threat [also to Latvia] (nature, human life, health, property, etc.).

Ambitions: The EU and Latvia must be ambitious and promote proactive climate policies

Duty: Latvia must comply with EU climate requirement. Narrative develops in two directions: either too diligent adherence or insufficient compliance.

Economic opportunity: Climate change offers prospects for innovation, entrepreneurship, and Latvia's economic growth.

	Politika	Mediji	Bizness	Sabiedrība
Korporatīva sociālā atbildība	1	80	261	48
Atzišana	25	216	31	110
Ambīcijas	25	176	21	81
Pienākums	27	93	23	89
Iespēja ekonomikai	23	73	21	71
Starptautiskā sadarbība		80	2	19
Pieaugoša izpratne	1	8	37	32
Iekļaujoša pārvaldība		22	2	44
Politiku lozungs	4	50		9
Pietiekams finansējums	3	22		37
Individuāla atbildība		2	39	21
Ziemeļeiropas valsts	2	39	8	10
Resursu dažādošana	5	42		1
Paradumu maiņa	1	30		6
Ekonomikas, vides un sociālais līdzsvars	4	1	1	27
Piegādātāju dažādošana	2	30		1
Ekonomiskie zaudējumi		17	2	12
Valsts specifiskā situācija	1	4		22
Taisnīgums		4		23
Pašvaldības kā virzītājspēks	1			24
Briseles spiediens	2	18		3
Pragmatisms		1		20
Jaunieši kā virzītājspēks				18
Pārspīlējums		3		12
Izglītība		1	2	12
Vilcināšanās		15		
Uzraudzība				13
Klimats & karš		13		
Bezdarbība		3	1	3
Pozitīvā ietekme		6		
Atpaliecīgs				6
Pārlicības trūkums		6		
Cilvēktiesības		1		4
Dabas aizsardzība		4		
Zema prioritāte		4		
Klimata pielāgošanās		2		1
Atspēkošana				2
AER izaicinājums		1		
Baltijas jūras piesārņojums	1			
Neskaidrība				
Citi		3	1	3
Nav naratīva	186	383	16	44

The narrative is rooted in a technocratic process that is well understood by officials but may diminish public interest.

Is it adapted to Latvia's specific situation?



EU regulation
(too ambitious or
insufficiently implemented)



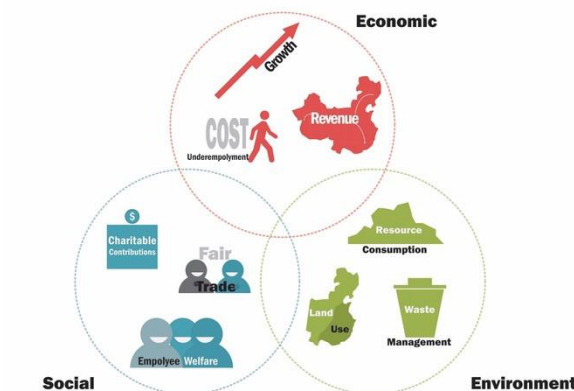
Is there adequate funding?



Is the decision-making
process inclusive?



Is there a balance between
environmental, economic and social
goals?



Climate change perception in Latvian society

- In Latvian society, climate change issues have long had low resonance.
- Is this the cause or the consequence of climate change communication?

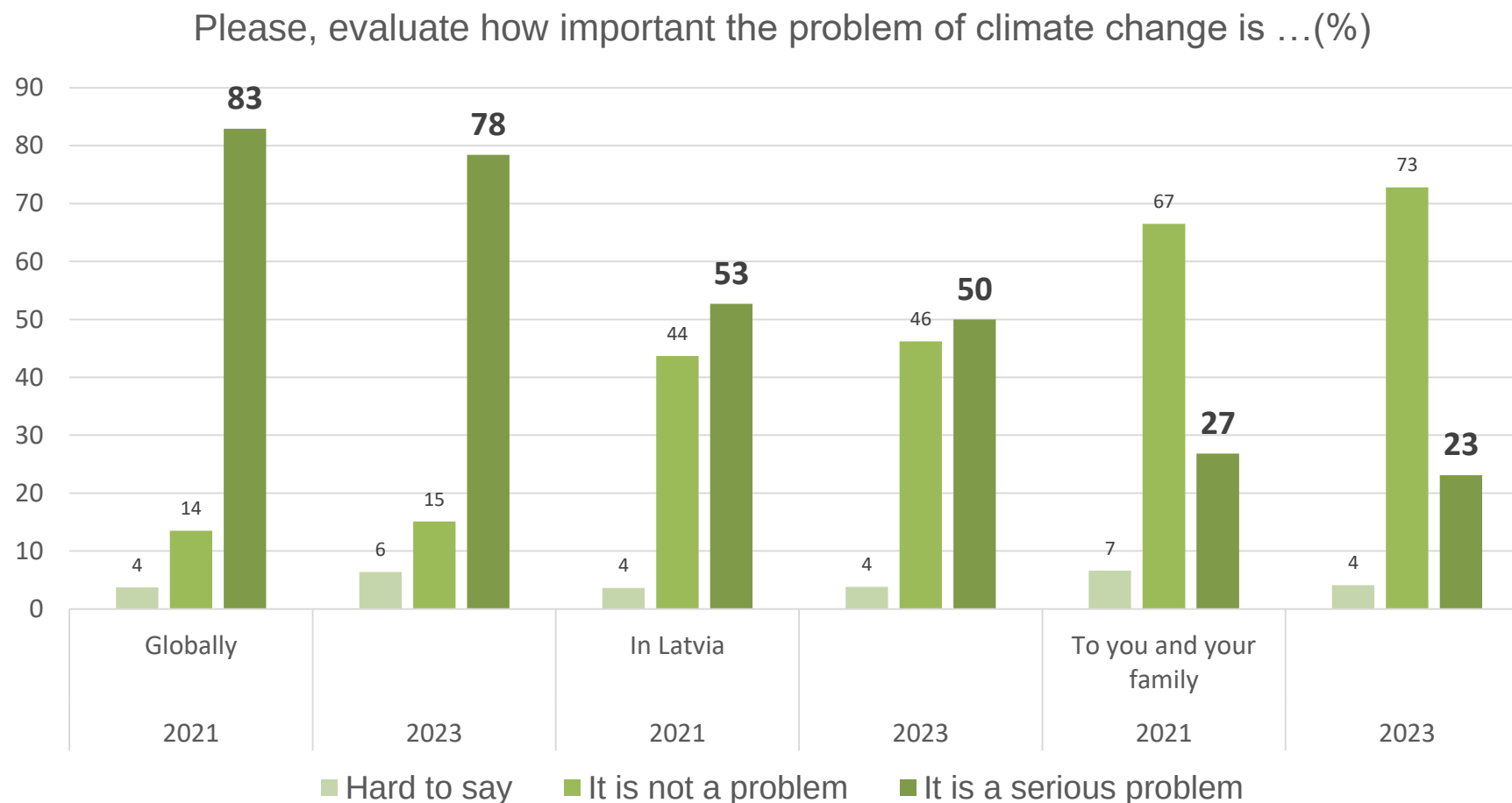
Eurobarometer: for Latvian residents, climate change is not a priority issue to address

Share of respondents, who chose climate change (and the environment) as the most important issue facing the EU and their respective country (in %)

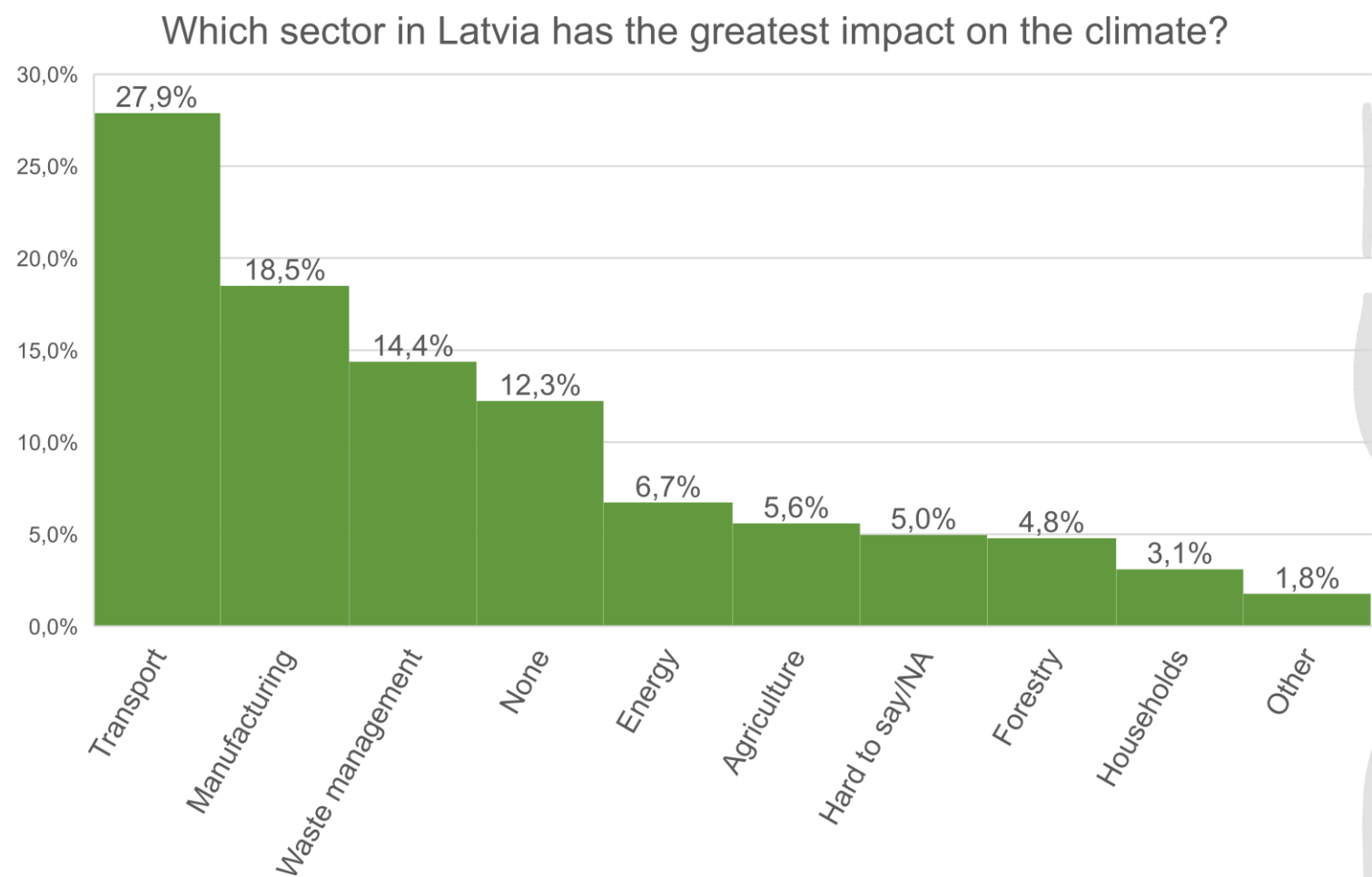
Year (Season)	Main concern at the EU level		Main concern at national level	
	EU-average	Latvia	EU-average	Latvia
2013 (Spring)	3	n.a.	4	0
2013 (Autumn)	4	3	5	0
2014 (Spring)	5	5	5	n.a.
2014 (Autumn)	7	3	7	1
2015 (Spring)	6	4	6	1
2015 (Autumn)	6	2	6	1
2016 (Spring)	6	3	6	1
2016 (Autumn)	8	4	7	1
2017 (Spring)	8	3	7	1
2017 (Autumn)	12	8	10	1
2018 (Spring)	11	7	10	2
2018 (Autumn)	16	9	14	2
2019 (Spring)	22	12	20	4
2019 (Autumn)	24	18	21	2
2020 (Summer)	20	15	14	2
2021 (Winter)	20	15	13	2
2021 (Summer)	25	20	18	2
2021-2022 (Winter)	26	12	16	1
2022-2023 (Winter)	20	8	n.a.	n.a.
2023 (Spring)	22	11	16	3
2023 (Autumn)	16	5	13	2
2024 (Spring)	16	5	14	3

Author's compilation. Source: Standard Eurobarometers (European Commission) from Spring 2013 to Spring 2024.
Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/browse/all/series/4961>

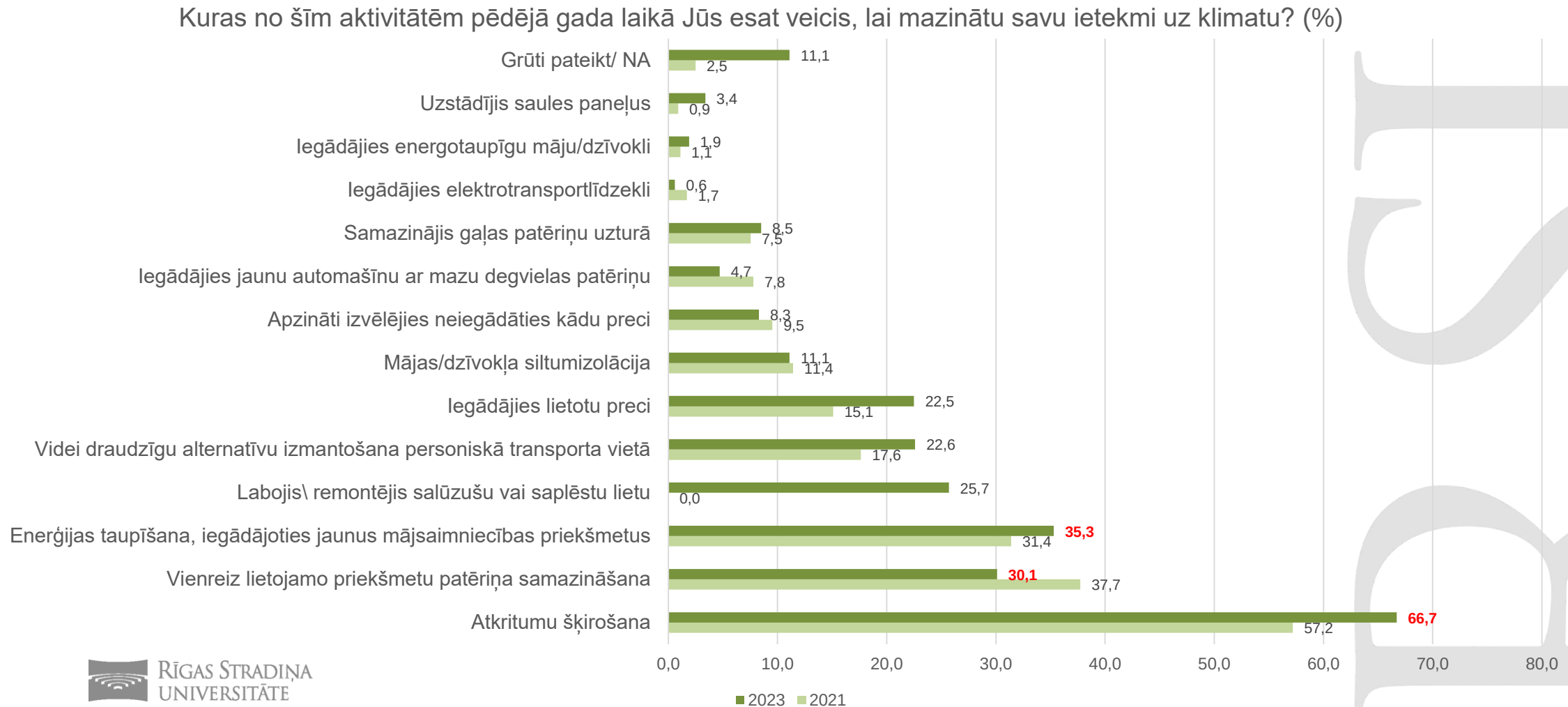
Survey: climate change is a geographically distant problem



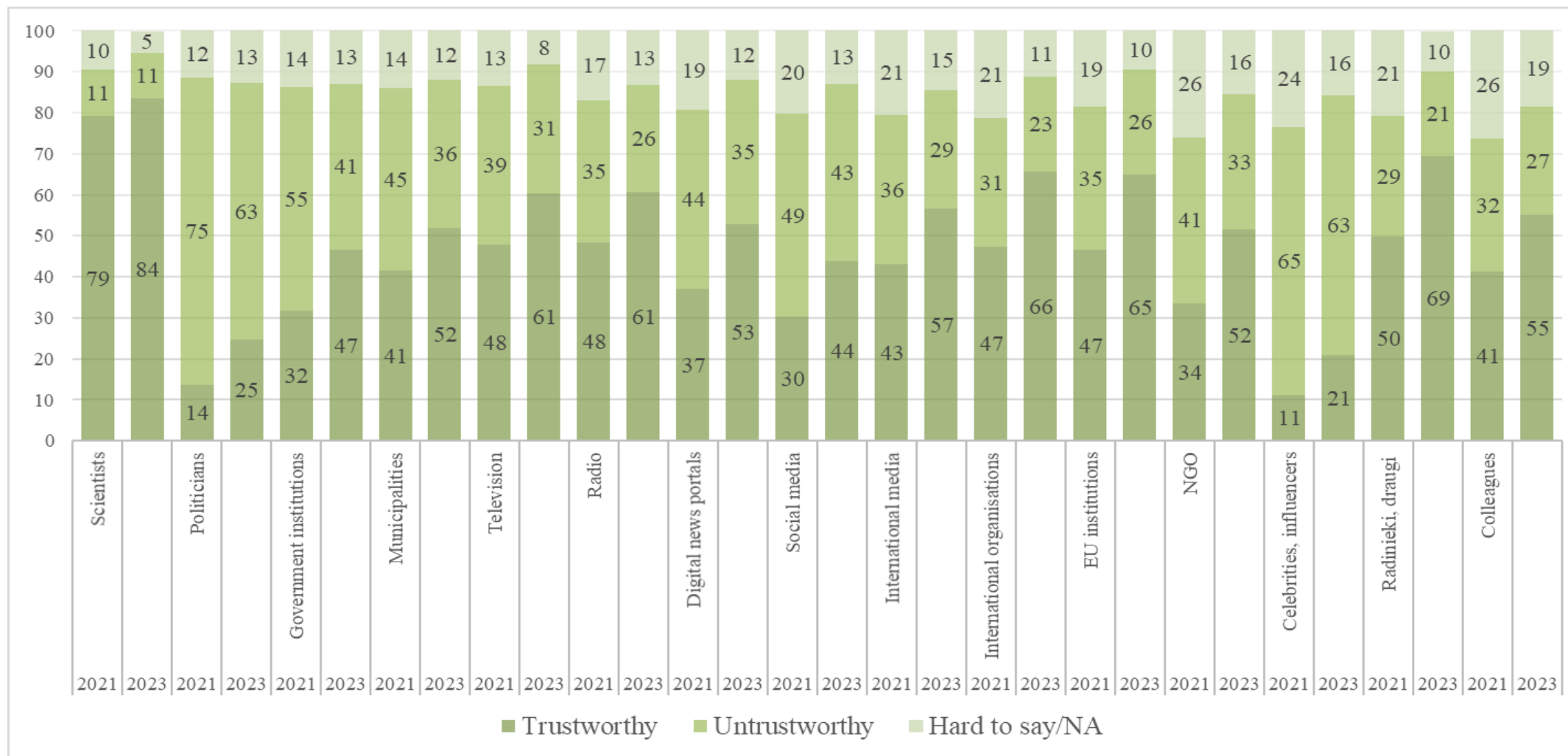
Survey: Latvian residents are poorly informed about the sectors that impact climate change



Survey: Waste sorting and reducing the consumption of single-use items are the most popular activities, followed by energy saving



Survey: potential of scientists is not fully employed in shaping the narrative



How to communicate about climate change in Latvia?



VADLĪNIJAS KLIMATA PĀRMAIŅU STRATĒGISKĀ NARATĪVA LATVIJĀ UZLABOŠANAI

Sagatavotas projekta "No vienaldzības līdz pārmaiņām klimata politikā: politiskā naratīva un sabiedrības uztveres mijiedarbības uzlabošana Latvijā"
(CLINAP) (lzp-2020/1-0047) ietvaros

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Ilva Skulte
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Information about the project is available at the RSU website: <https://www.rsu.lv/projekts/no-vienaldzibas-lidz-parmainam-klimata-politika-politiska-narativa-un-sabiedribas-uztveres>

Thank you!

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