

Telling the faith and climate story: Strategies for media engagement





Telling the Climate Story: Strategies for Religious Media Engagement

The media analysis for this report was provided by Nathalie Bolduc and Filipe Ferreira from Zero Carbon Analytics, an international research group providing insights and analysis about climate change and the energy transition.

Disclaimer:

The data in this report are subject to the limitations outlined in the methodology section. The results and conclusions derived in this report are those of GreenFaith and Laudato Si Movement to the limitations outlined in the methodology section.

Special thanks to Reba Elliott and Rev. Fletcher Harper for their guidance and advice throughout the process.



Foreword

A Growing Multi-Religious Chorus

Over the past decade, religious leaders and educators have spoken, taught, and written about climate change with unprecedented urgency. International faith leaders such as Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama, Imam Zaid Shakir and leaders at al-Azhar University in Cairo (the Muslim world's pre-eminent university) alongside countless local, national and international religious leaders have brought attention to the climate crisis, highlighting the plight of the impacted and lifting up opportunities and solutions.

Polling data reveals that most religious leaders support action to address climate change, with 90% of Christian leaders in the U.S. and 80% of Muslim leaders around the world expressing such a position. While there is no comprehensive global, multi-faith research on this topic, indications suggest that concern among religious and spiritual leaders is both widespread and growing.

A New Study of Religious Voices on Climate in the Media

There are many existing resources that help faith leaders speak about the challenging issue of climate change - theological statements, compilations and interpretations of sacred writings, sample sermons, khutbah, dharma talks, d'var torah, and other spoken teachings, educational lesson plans, and messaging guides.

However, until now, no **singular** analysis has examined how both secular and religious media cover religious voices on climate change. This first-of-a-kind study now suggests several insights. Here are the key takeaways from this analysis.

Key Findings

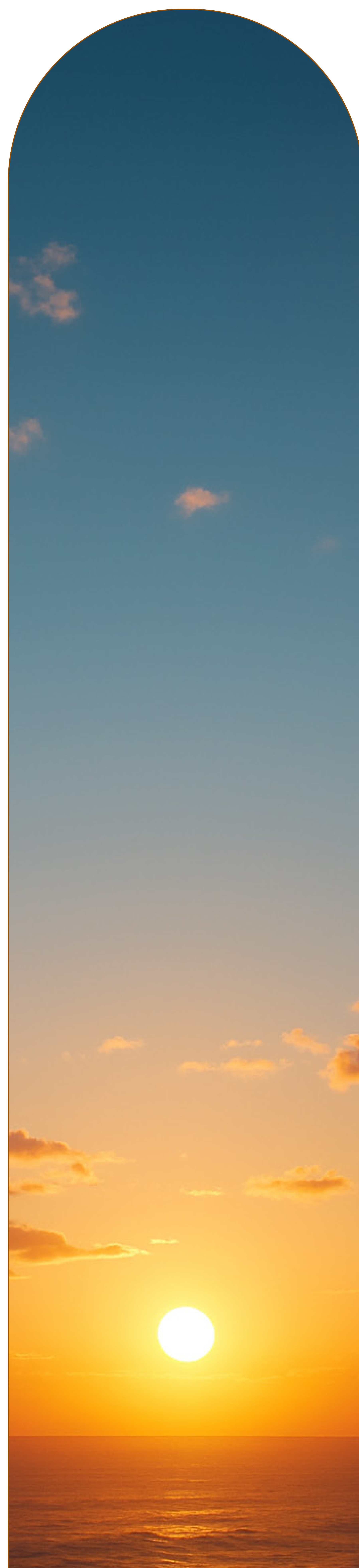
As religious affiliation globally is projected to increase through 2050, communicating about climate change with faith-based groups is an important lever for advancing climate action.

The top narrative on faith and climate in secular and religious media is that faith is a motivator for climate action. The stories analysed in this research project focus on how religious values and traditions can inspire climate action and serve as models for responding to the climate crisis.

There is diversity in how different religious groups and religious media outlets approach the climate crisis. Some actively advocate for collective policy and legislative action, others focus more on individual behaviour change, and some remain either skeptical or less engaged.

Coverage of faith and climate topics spikes around major climate events like the UN climate summits (COP), indicating that there are specific windows of opportunity for placing faith and climate-related stories in the press.

Ordained religious leaders - both in their actions and words - have driven much of the media coverage at the intersection of climate and faith. There is an opportunity to leverage their profiles, to draw more attention to the climate crisis and the action needed to combat it.



Faith and climate: the need for more research to inform communications

Globally, religious affiliation is strong and growing, projected to rise from [84% in 2010](#) to [87% by 2050](#), with especially strong growth forecast in the [Middle East and North Africa](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#) and [Asia-Pacific](#) regions. All religions have teachings which strongly encourage [reverence and respect for nature and environmental stewardship](#): for instance, [Christian teachings on caring for creation](#), the Islamic principle of [khalifah](#) (guardianship), [Hinduism's recognition of divinity within various aspects of the natural world](#) and Buddhist beliefs about the [interconnectedness of human beings and nature](#).



The past decade has seen the world's faith communities increasingly recognise the urgency of the climate crisis, moving beyond general concern to specific calls for action. Landmark statements like Pope Francis's [Laudato Si'](#) have framed environmental care as a moral and spiritual duty, alongside significant contributions from other traditions. [The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change](#) and Al-Mizan urge Muslims to protect the Earth as stewards of creation, while the Buddhist statement [The Time to Act is Now](#) calls for a clear shift away from fossil fuels.

Faith groups have also taken increasingly active roles on the global stage. In the lead-up to major summits, from [COP21](#) to the most recent [COP29](#) in Baku, they have spoken with increasing unity, urging just and immediate climate action as a shared ethical and spiritual responsibility.

Most recently, a [handbook](#) was released to guide faith communities on how to take legal action against climate inaction. Yet, while we have seen some progress, data from the US and UK indicates variation [within religious groups regarding belief in climate change](#) and on how some groups [prioritise environmental action over traditional measures of economic growth](#) and political/cultural identity.

The research presented here is the result of two media analyses and a social listening exercise that examined the role of faith groups in shaping narratives and public understanding of climate change and climate action. A supporting briefing for religious leaders, religious organisations and the climate movement also gives guidance on how to communicate better with religious audiences to help expand their understanding of climate issues and generate climate action. Our research shows there is an opportunity to better connect religious teachings and beliefs with climate policy, highlighting this as an area of significant potential when communicating with faith-based groups.

This initial research examined coverage of the climate crisis in religious media, and of religious voices on the climate crisis in the mainstream media and online forums, but further research is needed to identify messaging for specific religious groups and within specific regions. In media coverage and in social listening, we find that faith is portrayed as a motivator for climate action, that faith leaders drive coverage, and that interfaith collaboration is at the heart of secular reporting. Based on these insights, recommendations on how to better communicate with religious groups are provided.



Delivering insights into current media coverage of faith and climate

To inform communication with and to religious audiences, three analyses were conducted.

First, a media analysis focused on religious outlets examined climate-related stories published between 2010 and 2024 in 18 English-language publications serving followers of five major world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. These outlets were selected based on readership and online reach to ensure a broad audience, though relevant articles may have been excluded due to the search terms (see Methodology box for further limitations).

The second media analysis explored how the intersection of religion and climate was discussed in secular news outlets between October 2021 and July 2024. This covered both English-language media and Portuguese-language outlets from Brazil and Portugal, to capture Global South and non-English-speaking Western audiences.

Finally, a social listening analysis covering September 2022 to September 2024 was conducted to explore online discussions on climate issues within faith communities. The analysis identified key narratives and influential voices from the five faith-based communities posting online in English, French, Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Content related to Buddhism was limited and excluded due to low volume.

The study also profiled audience demographics and interests. It focused on themes such as stewardship, social justice and moral responsibility, and mapped influential voices to assess how faith communities align their efforts with critical global events.

Together, these analyses build our understanding of how faith shapes climate narratives, offering opportunities to amplify messages, foster collaboration and drive action.



Narratives in the media and online

The three analyses provide an overview of how climate change is discussed across different platforms and religious communities. While each analysis approaches the topic from a different angle, their results reveal several common narratives of focus within the faith and climate discourse.

Faith is a motivator for climate action

Faith is highlighted as a potentially powerful framework for addressing climate change in all three analyses. Media attention on the intersection of faith and climate action supported steady growth of climate-based mentions by faith actors on social media between 2022 and 2024. Religious values are broadly discussed as driving climate action, although there are some differences in religious publications' approaches to climate.

Religious values drive climate stories in secular media

Our analysis highlights reporting that shows recognition in the media of how religious values and traditions can contribute to climate solutions, both by providing ethical teachings and frameworks for understanding the importance of climate solutions, and for demonstrating how traditional religious practices can serve as scalable models for responses to the climate crisis.

For example, an opinion piece published in the [Guardian](#) suggested using *zakat*, the Islamic practice of charitable giving, to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, the Portuguese outlet [Observador](#) explored the theological and moral dimensions of Christianity's role in addressing the climate crisis.

The social listening analysis shows that across all religions studied, the values of Earth stewardship, social justice and moral responsibility consistently emerge as strong drivers of engagement by leading religious voices online. There is some variation depending on the political leanings of the groups. For example, both progressive and conservative faith groups use the "stewardship" framework while "moral authority" resonates

particularly with Catholics and also conservative and progressive Christians and progressive Christians.



Fig. 1: Selection of social media posts by faith leaders captured by social listening


JESC | Jesuit European Social Centre
 @EuropeanJesuit

November 15th
 12:00 CET
 Join us to learn about what [#Catholics](#) are doing at [#COP27](#) and how Catholics can help address [#climatechange](#) in their daily lives 
 Register: bit.ly/3UjJaM4

COP27 & CATHOLICS' ROLE IN CLIMATE ACTION

15 November
12:00-1:00pm CET






Lydia Macheka
CIDSE Climate Justice & Energy Officer

Fr Eduardo Agesta Secant
Laudato Si' Movement Senior Adviser

Loudel Bello
Climate Change journalist

Fr. Charles Chikwe, S.J.
Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network Africa


[Register here](#)





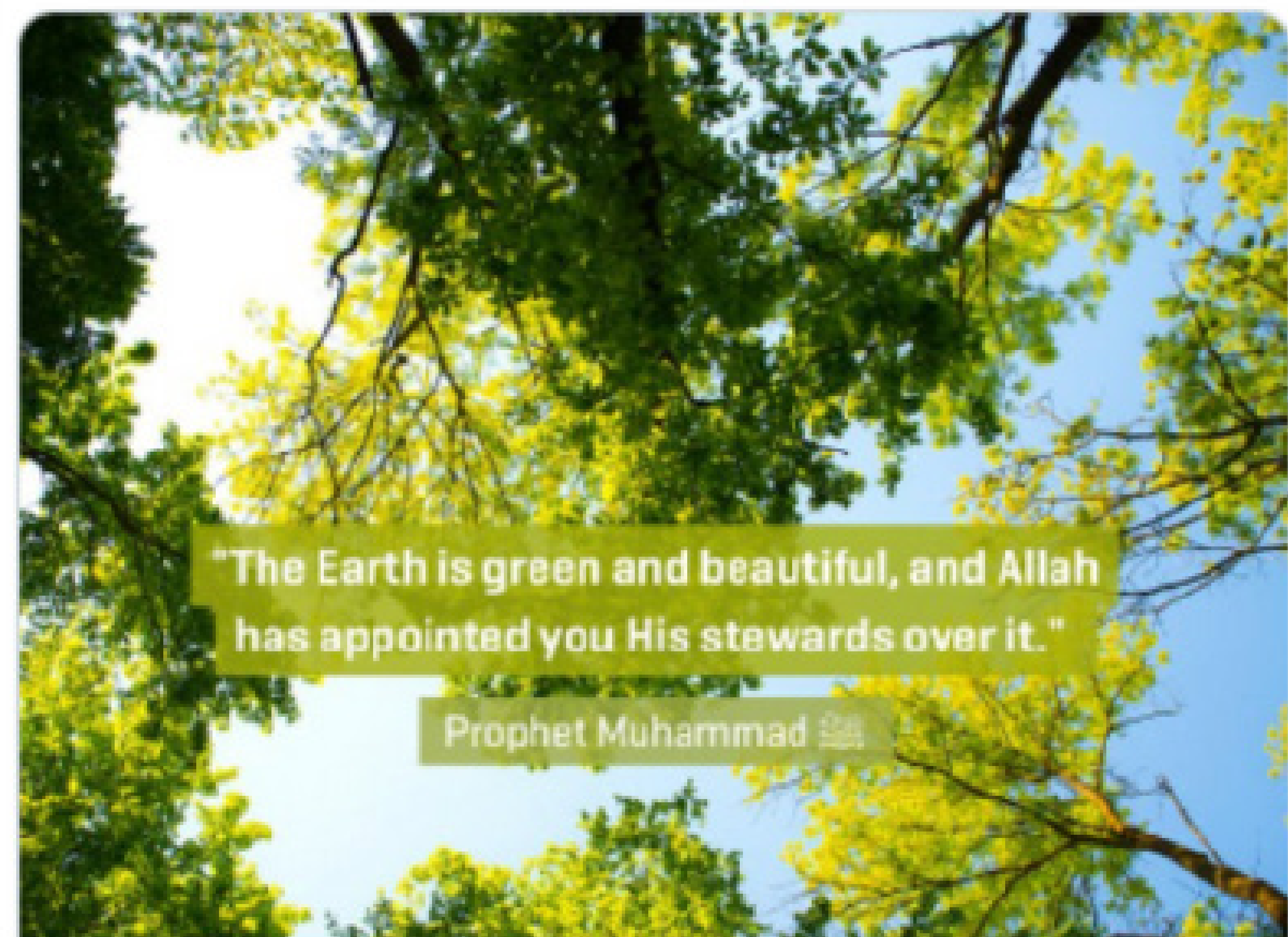

CIDSE and 2 others
 2:26 PM · Nov 4, 2022

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Islamic Relief Worldwide
 @IRWorldwide

"The Earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you His stewards over it." - Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

As we draw to the end of [#COP27](#) we encourage the Muslim community to continue raising awareness on [#ClimateChange](#) and taking [#ClimateAction](#); a key tenant of our faith 🌍




ummazing
 @UmmazingCo

We pay more charity and zakat within our community and iA everyone benefits.

So, with all these amazing people and businesses... it's time to work together, become Ummazing and create the Muslim circular economy 🤝

[#muslim](#) [#ummah](#) [#charity](#) [#startup](#) [#circulareconomy](#) [#community](#)

12:31 PM · Jun 14, 2023 · 94 Views







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 Reply


Dr. Derwin L. Gray
 @DerwinLGray

"Christians have a moral obligation to stand with the vulnerable and become agents of change in their communities." [#climatechange](#)

relevantmagazine.com/justice/enviro...

2:02 PM · Oct 3, 2022



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 Post your reply
 Reply


Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
 @JoinDayenu

Jewish New Yorkers demand climate justice!

[@GovKathyHochul](#) [@CarlHeastie](#) Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Nearly 150 NY Jews gathered in Manhattan yesterday to call on electeds to include [#NYHEAT](#) and [#ClimateChange](#) Superfund Act (S.2129A/A.3351A) in [#NYSbudget](#).

[@TheRAC NY](#) [@Adamah NY](#)



Coverage intensity varies between religions, but social media users are active across denominations

Despite the growing recognition of religion's role in addressing climate change, faith representation in the media remains uneven. Christianity, particularly Catholicism, dominated discussions on faith and climate change in secular media within the research period, largely due to the global influence of the Catholic Church and Pope Francis's active engagement with climate issues. Christianity was featured in 38.7% of secular media coverage.

In contrast, other religious traditions such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism received much less media attention in climate stories published by the secular press during the same timeframe. Compared to its share of the global population, Judaism was significantly more present in the secular press (see Fig. 2).

However, our social listening analysis shows that Islam and Hinduism are actively represented in various climate initiatives which receive attention on social media, presenting a significant opportunity for future media engagement. Hindu events organized by youth activists and around global events such as the COP climate summits were among those highlighted online.

More broadly, the breakdown of climate mentions by faith groups posting online in the six languages studied shows that Judaism and Hinduism have a particularly strong social media presence compared to the size of their respective religious populations. As with the media study focused on secular press, Christianity had the largest presence in online forums, but this was more closely aligned with its spread in the global population.



Share of global population (2022)

Buddhism



Christianity



Hinduism



Islam



Judaism



Religions most featured in manually analysed secular media

Buddhism



Christianity



Hinduism



Islam



Judaism



Share of social media mentions in study period

Christianity



Hinduism



Islam



Judaism



Source: Zero Carbon Analytics, Statista

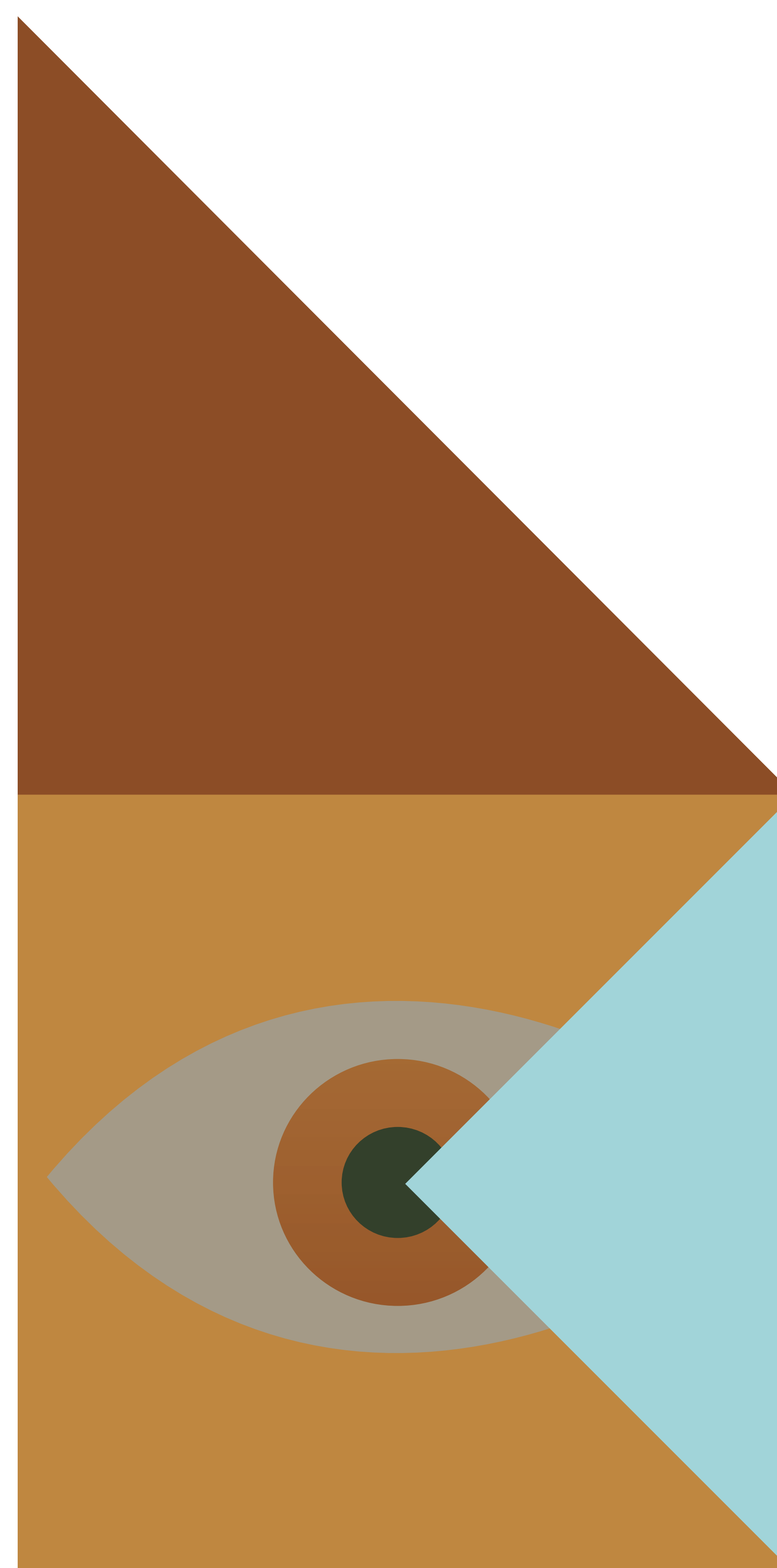
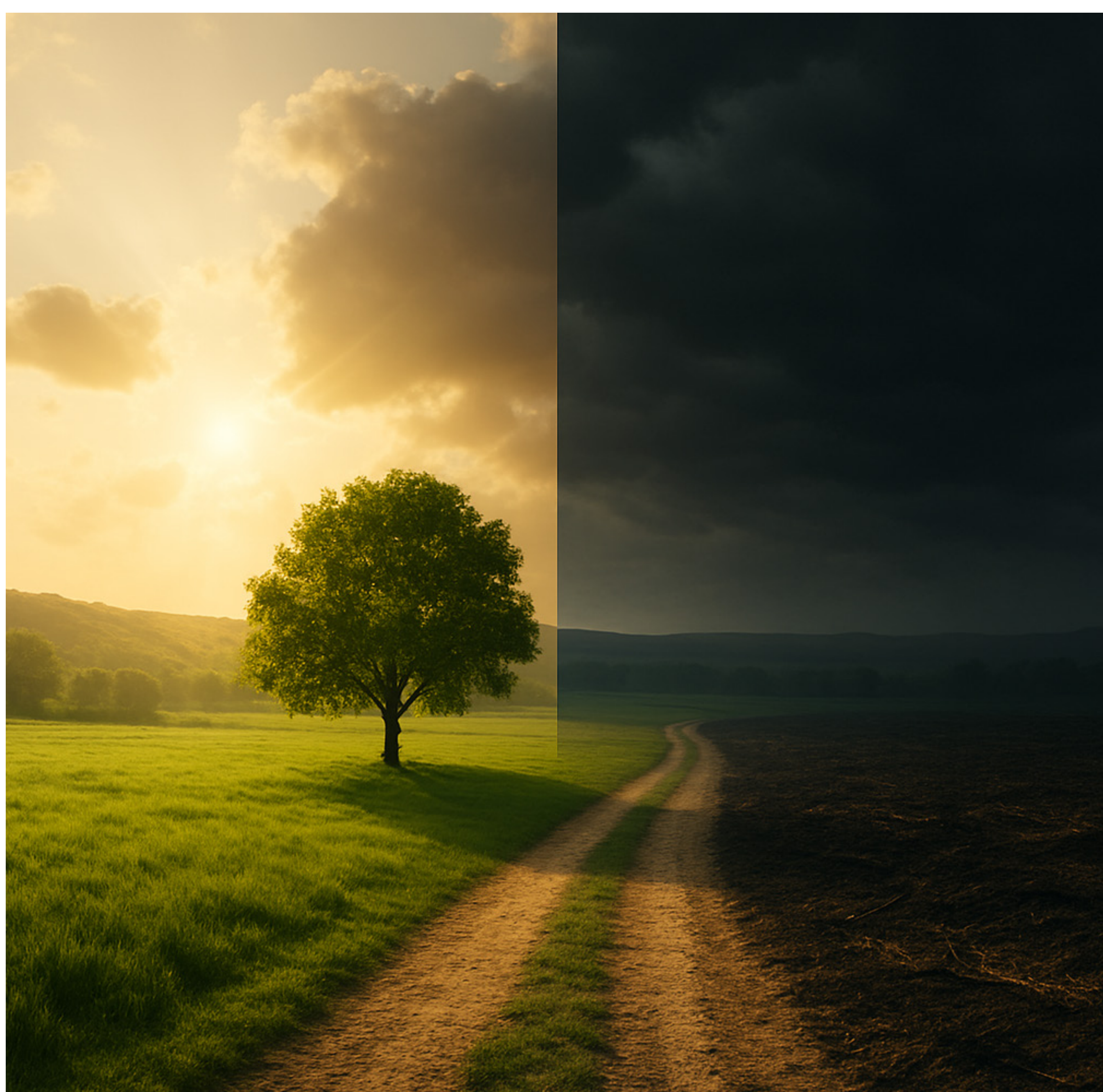
Fig. 2: Comparison of media mentions with population across the five world religions

In religious press and online, there are a range of views, including climate scepticism

There is not a consistent position on the importance of climate action across religious publications or within religious groups. On the more sceptical side, [The Christian Post](#) has questioned the validity of climate science, with one author writing: “How much is increased CO2 the result of human activity? We are simply not sure.” Climate scepticism also appears in opinion pieces in [The Jewish Chronicle](#), a religiously and theologically conservative outlet based in the UK, including one which advocates dialling down “climate change panic”.

Meanwhile, other religious publications within the same religions have shared positive messages about climate action. [Vatican News](#) stories on climate consistently emphasise [environmental stewardship](#) and themes of climate justice, with reporting focusing both on climate solutions implemented at the church level and on Pope Francis’s comments on the UN climate negotiations, the fossil fuel industry, and other climate-related political issues. American outlet The US-based [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#) has run multiple stories highlighting climate activism by Jews in the US.

Social listening results confirm the existence of disinformation on climate in faith communities. For example, online stories have spread widely about [US right-wing evangelical Christian leaders working to undermine the transition toward sustainable energy](#).



Faith leaders play an important role in coverage on climate and faith

Faith leaders’ statements and actions were seen to drive media coverage of the faith-climate connection, highlighting the important role they play. For example, the [Winnipeg Free Press](#) covered a story about Jewish leaders encouraging climate discussions during Passover, and the [AFP](#) reported on Muslim scholars in India issuing a fatwa against tree burning to combat climate change.

The social listening exercise found that local climate leaders are already active in environmental stewardship in the Indonesian Muslim context. Muslim accounts such as [Susi Pudjiastuti](#) and [Ganjar Pranowo](#), which are deeply tied to national or regional political leadership, show that prominent national influencers with significant social and political standing are vital in communicating messages that blend themes of cultural and religious heritage and environmental stewardship. In Hindu social media groups, some regional political leaders that integrate climate messaging into their policy announcements [garner significant attention in national media](#). Smaller Christian accounts illustrated the presence of grassroots and community-driven environmental activism.

Pope Francis exerted strong influence on the climate conversation during 2021 to 2024, with other leaders represented more online



Credits: Photo by [Ashwin Vaswani](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Pope Francis was a particularly prominent figure during the research period, frequently cited in both secular and religious media as well as on social media for his leadership on climate change. His *Laudato Si'* encyclical, which underscores the Catholic and ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship, is widely referenced.

In secular media, Pope Francis is portrayed as a global authority advocating for climate action. For example, the UK's [Telegraph](#), a conservative broadsheet, quoted his demand for “radical” action at COP26, in which he urged world leaders to act swiftly, stressing that “we cannot allow this [degradation of the Earth] to happen.” The Brazilian outlet [Jornal Grande Bahia](#) frequently covered the Pope's appeals to world leaders.

Pope Francis's climate advocacy is framed through a religious and ethical lens in religious media. [Vatican News](#) and [Catholic News Agency](#) emphasise his calls for a shared moral duty to protect the planet, grounded in Catholic teachings.

The social media exercise captured more voices. [Yogi Adityanath](#), an Indian Hindu monk and regional political leader, received significant online mentions from posts addressing negative impacts of climate change in specific parts of India and encouraging people to take up the six Rs - reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, refabricate and repair. Follow-up analysis showed that the majority of his following online is based in India. [Nour Golan](#), a Muslim-Syrian journalist, connects Islamic teachings with broader societal issues, such as climate change. [The bishop of the Amazon's speech](#) in the Brazilian Parliament on the need for environmental laws also drove engagement.

Interfaith collaboration is emphasised in secular media coverage of faith and climate as well as online, but less so in religious media

Interfaith unity or collaboration are recurring themes in the coverage of climate action found in secular media. Stories highlight the increasing collaboration among religious leaders to engage their followers and address climate challenges collectively.

In secular media, coverage highlights the rise of (inter)faith-led climate initiatives

In secular media, faith-led climate initiatives are gaining increased coverage, with significant attention on collaborative efforts aligned with the UN's COP climate summits. For example, the presence of a Faith Pavilion at COP28 was reported in [The New York Times](#) and an interfaith letter to leaders ahead of COP26 signed by more than 50 religious leaders and scientists calling for strong climate action was reported in [Agencia Brasil](#). The interfaith collaboration around COP28 also extended online, [with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Pope Francis coming together](#) virtually to sign the Abu Dhabi Interfaith Statement for COP28, demonstrating interfaith unity.

Coverage highlights how religious leaders from various faiths are collaborating on climate, bridging traditional divides. English-language outlets emphasise their joint efforts, showcasing initiatives beyond COP meetings. For example, a [Reuters](#) story covered an interfaith outreach to banks funding drivers of climate change, while the [Straits Times](#) reported on an interfaith meeting addressing global issues.

Portuguese-language media, reflecting their largely Catholic audiences, focused on Pope Francis's leadership in uniting both religious and scientific leaders, as seen in the [Folha de S.Paulo](#) and [Euronews Portugal](#). This is also seen in Portuguese-language social listening, with 43% of Portuguese-language posts referring to Christianity.



In religious media, interfaith collaboration is not such a common narrative

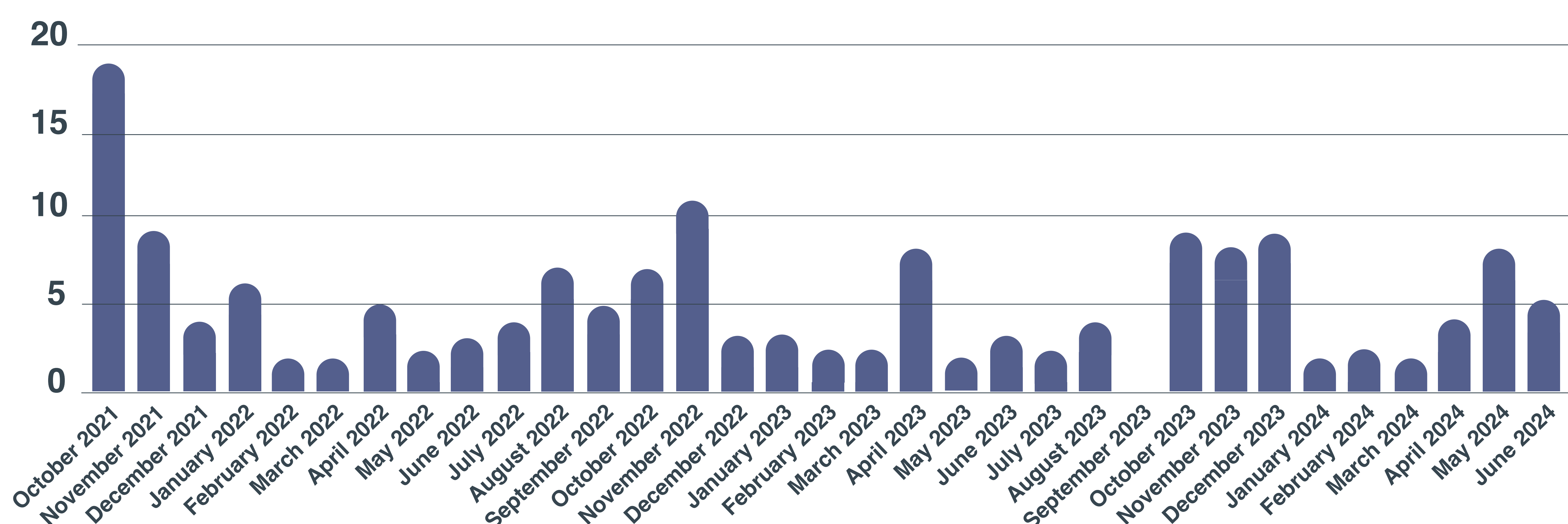
Religious media highlight the same or similar global events featuring interfaith collaboration as secular media, but with more focus on their respective leaders or actions. For example, the Catholic outlets surveyed tend to report on climate matters while focusing primarily on the Pope's role, such as these stories in [Vatican News](#) and [Catholic News Agency](#).

Other religious outlets largely cover climate issues within the context of their own traditions, with limited coverage found on interfaith initiatives. The exception to this is around coverage of high-profile interfaith events or actions, such as COP28's Faith Pavilion.

Temporal and event-driven patterns significantly influence the faith-climate discourse

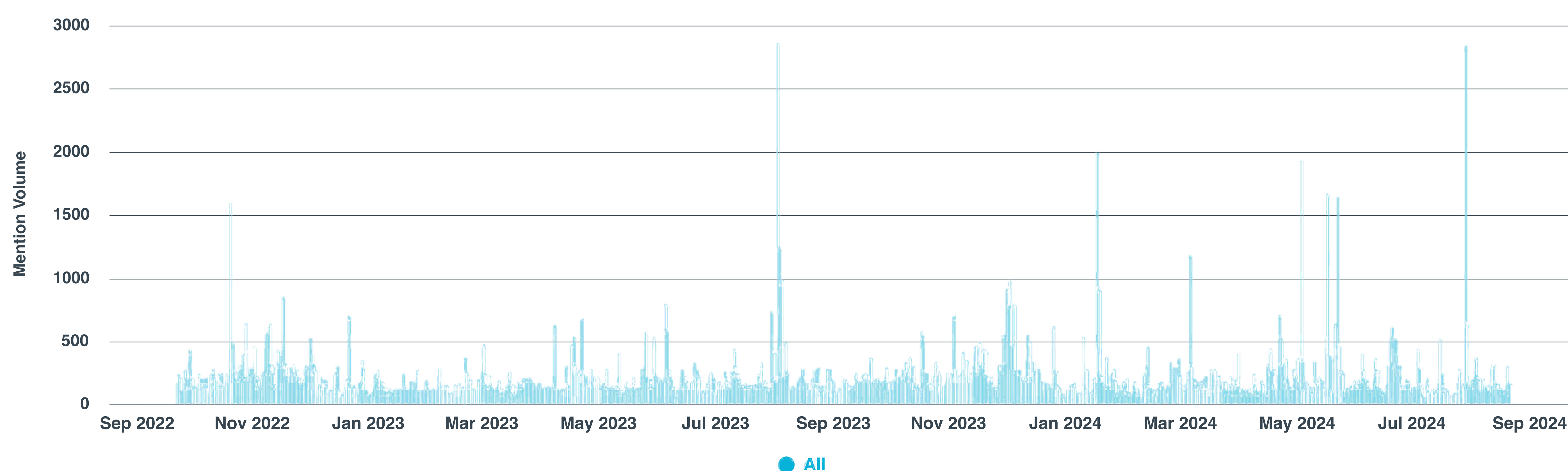
While researching the religious leaders and institutions most frequently quoted or cited in the media, we also found clear temporal patterns in faith-based climate coverage, with notable spikes during major events, including Earth Day and the COP climate summits. Interfaith collaborations, particularly around these events, tend to generate more coverage, boosting the visibility of faith-driven climate action. This is true for social media mentions as well.

Fig. 3: English-language secular media coverage timeline



English-language secular media coverage is consistent with the timing of COP events, which take place annually in November. Other peaks, such as in October 2021 and April 2023, align with statements made by Pope Francis and Easter.

Fig. 4: Climate-based mentions online



Online mentions of climate and faith have peaks around major climate and faith events. There was increased volatility in the second half of 2023, showing the reactive nature of audience interest in climate issues.

Opportunities

In addition to revealing trends, our analysis also uncovers opportunities for improving the impact of future media engagement on climate change by religious groups.



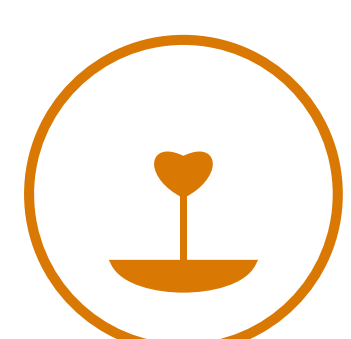
Highlight examples of grassroots faith leadership

In numerous regions, grassroots faith leaders and communities suffer the impacts of climate change (droughts, floods, fires, etc.). They are also active in opposing new fossil fuel development, supporting equitable renewable energy development, offering green jobs training, speaking out against government repression, and calling for various forms of climate relief and reparations. These local religious voices offer opportunities to tell new stories about how action on climate change is being embraced across the community.



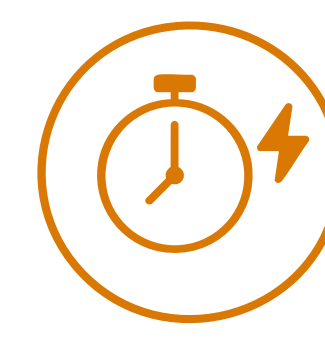
Cultivate diverse religious spokespersons

The time is ripe for the cultivation of a team of religious and spiritual leaders from diverse regions and religions who can serve as regular spokespersons on the climate issue. This could include religious leaders who develop the capacity to speak at key moments related to climate policy and finance, climate disasters, and intergovernmental negotiations.



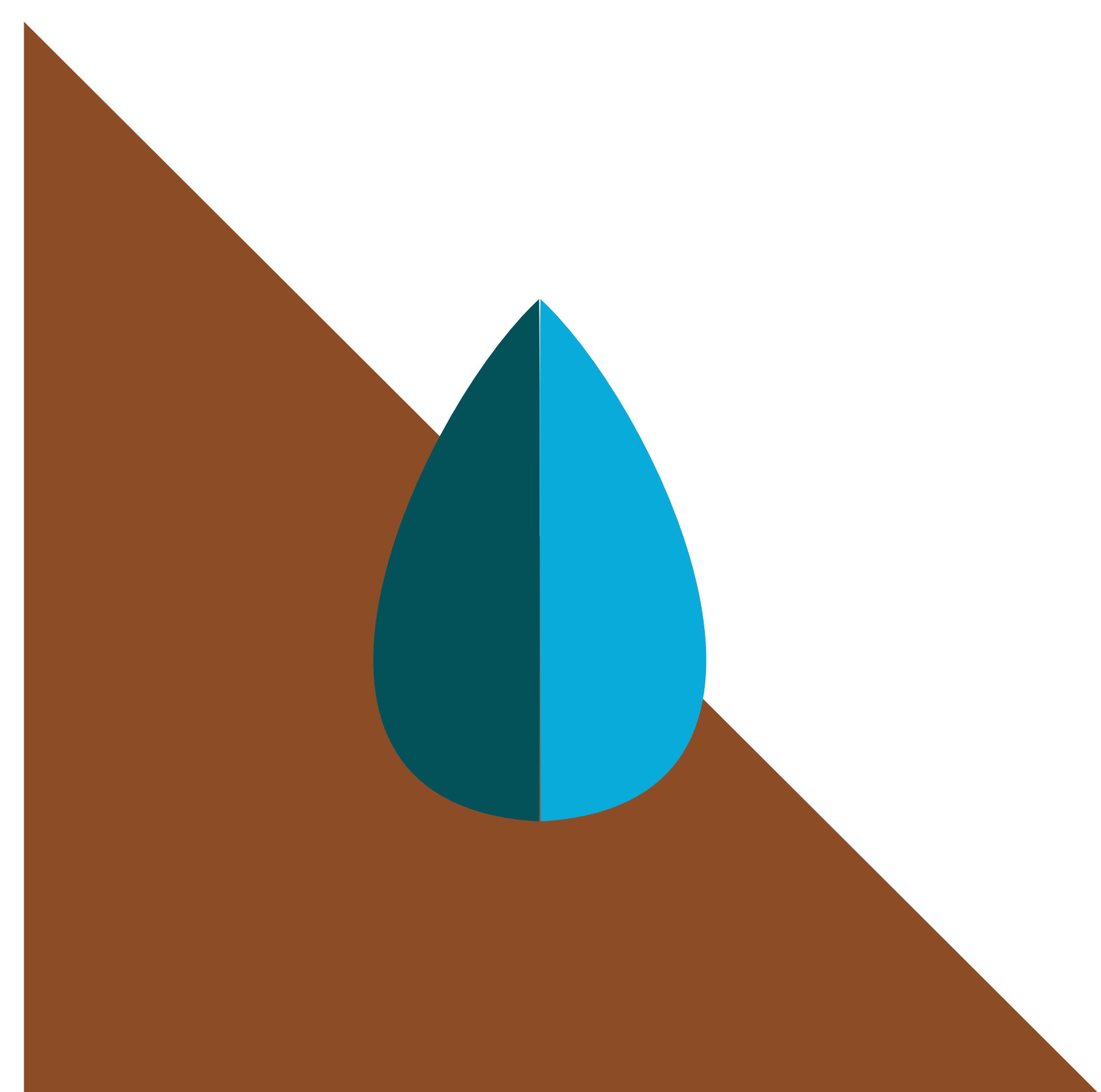
Showcase activism by religious youth

Many religious youth are involved in climate activism - whether as part of a religious community or as part of a secular climate organisation - motivated by their faith. Media coverage could highlight faith and values as critically important motivations for youth, while also noting the contributions they are making to the climate movement.



Respond rapidly to climate-related events in the news

Climate change is increasingly in the news. Severe storms, droughts, fires and floods receive regular coverage, with consistent references to the role of climate change. Major political moments such as the annual UN COP negotiations, Climate Week programmes in different major cities, and high-profile legislative debates also put climate change on the front pages of newspapers, and at the top of news broadcasts and influencer feeds. Engaging faith leaders offer an opportunity to cover these stories from an unexpected and more engaging angle.



Annex / Methodology

1 - Media analysis - selection of outlets and stories

Religious media outlets were identified through a manual online search for news from each of the main world religions (including major branches of Christianity and Islam). From the resulting long list, the following 18 outlets were selected based on their circulation figures or social media reach:

- The Christian Chronicle
- Vatican News
- Catholic News Agency
- Christian Post
- Christianity Today
- Pravmir
- Orthodox Christianity
- Muslim Matters
- Islam21c
- IslamiCity
- Ahlulbayt TV
- Shafaqna
- Hindu Post
- Hinduism Today
- Tricycle: The Buddhist Review
- Lion's Roar
- Jewish Telegraphic Agency
- The Jewish Chronicle

The websites of each publication were searched to identify climate-related articles from the full available archive, using keywords like “climate change”, “global warming”, and “climate crisis”. Stories were selected based on relevance and stance on climate issues to capture as full a picture of coverage as possible. Up to five articles were read and analysed per site, depending on availability, resulting in a total of 70 articles.

Secular media analysis was conducted using the Factiva news aggregation database. Search queries were undertaken for English-language and Portuguese-language articles published between October 2021 and July 2024 that referenced climate change (including global warming and climate crisis) and a named religion or relevant terms such as faith, spirituality, etc.

This search retrieved 268 articles, narrowed to 109 after duplicate removal, of which a sample of 85 articles (52 English-language and 33 Portuguese-language) was manually reviewed for type of coverage (e.g. news, opinion, feature), key religions and spokespeople, events, regional focus, and narrative.

2 - Social insights analysis - tools and focus

Researchers monitored online conversations using Brandwatch to identify critical narratives, influential voices, and religious events tied to climate discussions globally. This involved audience assessments to profile faith-based communities, thought leaders, and influencers, and the analysis of audience demographics, behaviours, and interests in climate-related discussions. Sections related to Buddhism were removed from the report due to low conversation volumes.

Desktop research of reports, articles, and case studies on faith topics supplemented the online social listening findings to contextualise insights within broader faith traditions and historical advocacy efforts.

Limitations

- **Language:** Audience was limited to English and Portuguese speakers, with an impact on geographic and religious representations.
- **Data:** The Factiva database is not exhaustive and can change, meaning results may vary when the search is repeated. Social listening cannot cover all sources and may overlook niche faith-based groups with different perspectives.
- **Study scope:** Analysis of secular media covered a specific time period and may not fully represent ongoing or multi-year media coverage, or views of events outside of the period of study. By contrast, there was no timeframe applied to the search of religious outlets' coverage.
- **Search term bias:** Search terms like “climate change” may only capture articles that support the concept of climate change, potentially skewing results.
- **Individual bias:** As the analysis was conducted by a single researcher, personal bias and simplification may influence the findings.

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