



The big discussion - Results

What do we want our programmes to achieve?

FF:W pol.is survey -explanation and summary of findings.

What is the big discussion?

“What do we want our programmes to achieve?” was an **online survey** hosted by Filmmakers for Future: Wildlife (FF:W) between the 14th of October and 21st of December 2020. **The purpose of this interactive poll was to better understand the views of wildlife filmmakers on our role in communicating the climate and biodiversity crises.** We believe this to be the largest survey on this topic. We hope this insight into how production staff and crew are feeling about their work will help to inform discussions within production companies and broadcasters.

The poll maintained anonymity for participants, so we do not know who took part, or their role in the industry. We expect that the majority of participants were directed to the poll by FF:W. They are therefore likely to share the group’s view that urgent action is needed to address climate change and biodiversity loss along with increased coverage of these themes in our programmes.

252 people voted on **131 submitted statements**. A total of **9,139 votes** were cast, agreeing, disagreeing or passing to each statement. Not every participant voted on all the statements. This means the percentages shown are from a subset of participants who cast a vote on that particular statement.



Key Insights

Below are the statements that achieved the most consensus between participants. We have split them by relevance to editorial or production decisions. For each statement we have put its (popularity %) and [the statements pol.is raw data reference number].

Editorial:

- Natural history programmes have a duty to report on the true current state of the natural world. (90% agree)[61]
- It is our responsibility to communicate the need to act with extreme urgency to halt the climate and biodiversity crises. (87% agree)[2]

- We should no longer portray humans as separate from nature. (89% agree)[18]
 - We should show human wildlife conflicts in our programs but more importantly the socioeconomic reasons behind them. (88% agree)[33]
 - Our programs should help audiences assess the value of different solutions to our environmental crises. (92% agree)[38]
 - Programmes encouraging carbon reduction through individual action are not enough as they don't hold Governments and Industry to account. (89% agree)[52]
 - We have to work out how to reach new audiences who don't believe in global biodiversity loss & the climate crisis. (92% agree)[83]
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- The audience already understands the urgency of climate change – we don't need to keep including it in our programs. (89% disagree)[50]
 - Wildlife films are doing enough for conservation already. (91% disagree)[71]

Production management:

- We should give more thought to the way we structure our programmes to reduce the amount of travel needed. (90% agree)[62]
- We should work with local fixers to create 'kit hubs' around the world. Where bulky kit can be checked in or out on arrival and departure. (89% agree)[125]
- Camera operator bursaries should be made available in popular countries which we film in. (85% agree) [124]
- The industry needs to be more collaborative rather than working in secrecy to protect their story/program/content to reduce their footprints. (80% agree)[120]

- If our programs are made net zero by offsetting our emissions through trusted projects we do not need to take further action to reduce our emissions. (79% disagree)[22]
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Some statements submitted have outlined future challenges while others provide ideas for solutions. Below we look at these statements and suggest actions that may help, many of which have intersectional benefits. As before, the percentages shown are from the subset of participants who cast a vote on that particular statement.

- Just 13% said that their company was providing clear editorial guidelines on communicating environmental issues.

Suggested action: Companies should provide staff with clear and detailed guidelines on what is and is not allowed, when talking about the environmental crises on each platform we work with. It may help to consider giving examples of the upper and lower limits of what might be included, both in picture and narration.

For example: could a programme name a bank that invests in deforestation (upper limit) or should a crew clean beaches of plastic pollution before filming, thereby misleading the public about our impact on the natural world (lower limit). [16]

- Only 26% say they know where to learn about best practices for communicating the climate and ecological crises.

Suggested action: As these themes become more central in our

programmes we need to refresh our methods of communicating them. Companies could offer staff up to date science communication training or host a series of guest lectures on the psychology of climate communication. [44]

- When measuring a programme's success, 77% agreed we should look at the positive changes it achieves, not just at viewing figures.

Suggested action: By changing our metric of success we could give more opportunities to make bolder programmes, with a positive impact. [25]

- As the natural world we are documenting is destroyed, filmmakers have a key role in communicating the solutions, but for years we have only been showing audiences the fringes of the crisis. Now, with so little time left, 81% agree we need to shift from passively educating to actively aiming to change our audience's behaviour with our programmes.

Suggested action: To achieve this, 86% agree we need to bring in experience from psychologists, advertisers, campaign managers and impact producers. [1 + 4]

- Where broadcasters are committed to impartiality, 84% think this is holding back programmes from addressing some of the biggest threats to the climate.

Suggested action: 82% say we should be working with NGOs so they are primed to say what we cannot in our programmes. [49+53]

- 82% of participants think our programmes have suffered from a lack of diverse views in their production and development.

Suggested action: At every opportunity we should be including people who live near the wildlife we film. This has to go beyond local guides and drivers to include hiring local camera assistants, camera people

and drivers, to include hiring local camera assistants, camera people and producer/directors. 86% feel that international production teams are a key part of reducing our carbon footprint. Over time we will

benefit from programmes with new perspectives and smaller carbon footprints as we globalize and decarbonise our filmmaking system. [9 + 64]

- Companies need to be mindful of the effect that production decisions may have on their staff, with 60% saying they feel eco-anxiety from working on projects they don't believe in, and that this is getting worse. **Suggested action:** Ensure that all staff have someone to talk to about their concerns, apart from their editorial lead. Keep the environmental messaging of a project transparent while hiring, as this may be a major consideration for someone choosing what to work on. [106]
- Offsetting programme emissions is not enough. 79% agree we need to take further action to reduce emissions. Offsetting is the cheapest and easiest way to clear a production's carbon conscience, but many offsetting projects sequester carbon too slowly to fully mitigate emissions, so companies need to start taking bolder action as well. **Suggested action:** A good start would be to set a science-based carbon budget that productions would have to stay within. 53% are in support of carbon budgets that shrink by 10% each year. There are many great solutions to mitigate emissions but without a nudge, productions are unlikely to take these steps at the rate they need to be adopted. The sooner we start, the more gradual the transition can be. [22+23]

What's next?

In this report, we have focused only on the societal value of programmes without looking at the commercial value which, of course, plays a large

...involvement in the commercial value chain, or access, play a large part in all decisions made. However, we hope these insights will help catalyse discussions in your production company and with your colleagues. You can also learn more about how to talk to your colleagues about these ideas by reading about the different opinion groups in the [pol.is raw data](#) (which you can also [download as a PDF here](#)). If you are hoping to implement any of the suggestions above, we would be delighted to help you in any way we can.

We encourage everyone to join this ongoing discussion by commenting below, or [heading over to our forum](#) where there are already a number of conversations taking place inspired by these results.

The actions we decide to take in this decade will determine the stability of many decades to come. As an industry let's be part of the solution, as so many believe we can be.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report, we would love to hear from you! If you have any feedback or would like to discuss any of the above please email us at: rowan@ffwildlife.org