

# Review of: "Motivated Reasoning Leads Climate Change Deniers to Access Unreliable Online Sources of Information: Automated Text Analyses of Multiple Reddit Communities"

Mark Lynas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cornell University

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is an intriguing study, and the methodology is probably sound in terms of what it is trying to achieve. However perhaps the argument/reasoning/hypothesis is somewhat circular? It purports to discover an example of motivated reasoning on Reddit in that climate sceptics are more likely to post links to unreliable sources (e.g. social media posts and blogs) whereas climate change 'believers' (a problematic term, but we'll let that pass) are more likely to post links to peer-reviewed science and solid news sources.

However, perhaps this is simply because climate 'believers' have plenty of options from which to choose, and make their points using 'solid' sources because there are more available and anyway this is more likely to win arguments? My intuition here is that motivated reasoning is a basic human psychological characteristic, and that both sides in any debate will tend to use it - an exception might be scientists, who are part of a discipline which has explicit systems designed to enforce more rigorous standards of objectivity (but which still fails depressingly often).

So perhaps the author hasn't discovered that climate sceptics tend to employ motivated reasoning, but that both sides do and climate 'believers' simply have an easier time of it due to being on the side of the argument which happens to be supported by science. In which case what exactly is proven? It is not so much about psychology as climate consensus - given that studies have shown a consensus in the peer-reviewed literature as high as >99% (Lynas et al, <sup>[1]</sup>), it would be virtually impossible for climate sceptics to do anything else, because peer-reviewed literature to support their position simply does not exist.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> ^ Mark Lynas, Benjamin Z Houlton, Simon Perry. (2021). Greater than 99% consensus on human caused climate change in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. *Environ. Res. Lett.*, vol. 16 (11), 114005. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/ac2966.