

## Track 15

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### Exercise 3

Announcer: Listen to a financial expert making predictions about the global economy.

Financial expert: Political instability around the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, remains a top threat to the global economy. Just as in the second quarter of the financial year, the July report also predicts that rising energy prices will be the number one concern for countries over the next few months. This is followed by inflation, which looks set to rise in most developed countries. Issues surrounding supply chain come in at number three in the list of top three concerns facing governments. Businesses also cite the supply chain as presenting a major obstacle for their companies' growth during the next three months. And for the second survey in a row, more than 75% of respondents expect interest rates in their countries to rise in the next six months. And all of this comes on top of the problems we are still dealing with linked to the COVID pandemic of 2020 and 2021.

## Track 16

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### Exercise 5

Announcer: Listen to the next part of the financial expert's talk.

Financial expert: It's fair to say that most European nations are experiencing a devastating cost-of-living crisis at this stage, and, unfortunately, this is likely to get worse before it gets better, especially in low-wage countries. As we already know, energy prices have risen dramatically, which has a knock-on effect on everything. If it costs more to put petrol or diesel in lorries to distribute food and other domestic goods, then these items go up in price, as sellers have to pass on the inflated prices of the goods on the shelves to consumers. And in terms of supermarket shopping, the cost of everyday items is going up at an alarming rate. Pasta, for instance, has gone up in price by almost 50% on this time last year! To put that in some kind of perspective, where it used to cost £3,000 to ship one container of goods from Asia to the UK, it's £15,000 these days.

So how are households dealing with all of this? Well, in addition to cutting down on perceived luxuries, more and more are turning to consumer credit to make ends meet. Borrowing on credit cards is growing at an annual rate of 13%, marking the fastest pace since 2005. Across all forms of consumer credit, borrowing is growing at an annual rate of 4.5%, which is the highest rate since March 2020.

Governments everywhere need to step in now and do more to lift people out of poverty. It's that simple! People should not have to live in this kind of hardship in this day and age.

## Track 17

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### Exercises 7

**Announcer:** You are going to listen to a student presentation about the history of the cashless society. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, match the beginnings of the sentences (1–7) with the sentence endings (A–J). There are two extra sentence endings that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

After the second listening, you will have 45 seconds to check your answers.

**Katie:** Hey everyone! I'm Katie. So, for my presentation today I'm gonna talk about the history of the cashless society. We might think of cashless transactions as a modern phenomenon, with things like credit cards, debit cards and contactless payments replacing traditional banknotes in our pockets. But just how new is this way of doing things? Let's see!

Going right back to the beginning, you'll be amazed to know that it was a mind-blowing 8,000 years ago that the Mesopotamians created a cashless barter system. The Mesopotamians were a tribal people who lived in what's now modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey and Syria. And a barter system's basically a system of exchange where participants in a transaction directly exchange goods or services for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange such as money. These ancient people utilised the bartering scheme to pay for the grains, beans, spices, livestock and weapons they needed. Salt was another commodity of great worth. In fact, at one time salt became so valuable that Roman soldiers were paid their salaries with salt! Isn't that just incredible?! And on that note, you may not know that the word 'salary' originates from the Latin word 'sal', which means salt! Anyway, back to the barter system ... one problem with this system was that because the value of an item couldn't be fixed, often objects of lesser worth were exchanged against more valuable items and that's how fraudulence crept in.

Moving on about 4,500 years to the Bronze Age, valuable metals such as bronze, silver and gold were used as a form of money. Bars and rings of these precious and semi-precious metals were produced from pieces of metal that had been cut and weighed. Again this system had its problems – forgery appeared when gold was mixed with silver or other lower-value metals to increase the weight of the

bars and coins. Consequently, merchants ended up spending a great deal of time weighing metal pieces to check if they were authentic. In response to this, bronze, copper, gold and silver coins, produced in places called mints, were introduced for convenience.

The Chinese invented the first form of paper money about a thousand years ago, and Marco Polo introduced paper money to Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century after he returned from China. Coins didn't alleviate the danger of travelling with a wallet of valuables or storing them at home. The Middle Ages saw the introduction of Bills of Exchange, or cheques, to markets, allowing people to carry funds abroad without actually carrying the precious metals. This meant that a knight off on a crusade, for example, could deposit his gold and silver in a bank and travel to the Middle East with a limited amount of money. The first forms of cheques were handwritten and they grew in popularity. The earliest specimen of handwritten cheques still in existence was drawn on the bank Messrs Morris and Clayton based in London. It indicates a date in February 1659 and was for 400 pounds.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the birth of bank or wire transfers, using the telegraph network. Once the sender paid money to one telegraph office, the operator would send the message to another office and the funds would be released to the recipient. The beauty of this system was that people from any region could send money across the globe.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, banks started issuing plastic cards and, by the 1970s, cards with information-encoded magnetic strips using a personal identification number, or PIN number, came in. The mid-1980s saw the introduction of electronic Point of Sale terminals where customers just swipe their cards through a swiper for transactions. The late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century then saw a whole new wave of cashless payment technologies, meaning that making payments became much more convenient. I'm talking about things like contactless and mobile payments that revolve around making payments from phones or smartwatches. And, of course, we now have cryptocurrencies. Bitcoin was the original cryptocurrency and offered an alternative to traditional banks. It calls itself 'a secure decentralized working digital currency offering financial freedom from financial institutions and governments, and user anonymity'. Off the back of Bitcoin, at least a further 1,500 cryptocurrencies have since emerged.

Cash is increasingly losing ground to a reliance on plastic, electronic payment means and cryptocurrencies, and some countries such as Sweden and India have already made moves to creating a totally cashless economy. This strikes me as the likely new way of doing things.

**Track 18**

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**Exercise 9**

**Announcer:** You are going to listen to four young people talking about their experience of attending a job interview. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, match the speakers with their statements (A–J). There are two extra statements that you should not use. Write your answers in the boxes provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

After the second listening, you will have 45 seconds to check your answers.

**Announcer:** Speaker 1 – Vicky

**Vicky:** Well, I knew looking the part was important for a banking job because bankers, as you know tend to be a pretty conventional-looking bunch ... so nothing too over-the-top. My dark suit did nicely, I think. In hindsight though, I could've done a better job in turning the tables on them and getting them to talk more about my career prospects with them. Anyway, that aside, my one chance to really shine was when they quizzed me about working in stressful situations and meeting urgent deadlines. With my background in the finance sector, and also that period that I spent in New York, I certainly had more than enough examples of my people skills and problem-solving skills to give them. And I made sure I explained each scenario very clearly too. I must have stood out from the crowd, though, because the next day the hiring manager called to offer me the position!

Announcer: Speaker 2 – Erkan.

Erkan: I love interviews because I thrive on performing under pressure. My last interview was with a large multinational. Looking back, I probably should've spent a bit more time getting my plans for moving up the career ladder across. I'd done a lot of background reading on the organisation, though ... checking their annual reports and so on, so that obviously went down well because I've now joined the company. Another thing that the panel seemed to like hearing about was my experience of training the customer service team ... something that was assigned to me in my last place of employment. And it was no mean feat due to the legacy of the last guy who'd really mismanaged the whole thing. There was a lot of discontent among the team, so if ever I needed my conflict resolution skills, it was then, I can tell you! (*laughs*) The team members got over their fears and can now operate entirely self-sufficiently. I didn't go into a lot of detail about other things though, like my ability to manage time or my technical ability, and I actually had a lot to say about those too. Oh well ...

Announcer: Speaker 3 – Phillipa.

Phillipa: Interviews aren't really my cup of tea ... I get so nervous and become quite timid. Anyway, the panel at the last interview I had were great and continually put me at my ease, so anxiety wasn't really an issue at all. Perhaps they sensed my discomfort! Or perhaps they noticed me fidgeting in a top and trousers that I shouldn't even have had on ... it's a long story but basically, I left my interview outfit on the train so had to make do with my casual travel clothes! Hardly interview gear! Anyway, I think I got the job because I ticked a lot of their boxes, especially when it came to what they called international communication ... that's where having lived in so many different countries and having proficiency in several languages comes into its own. If only I'd gone into a bit more detail when they asked for examples of my creativity. They also asked me all the usual stuff about where I saw myself in five years' time and how I felt about on-the-job training, but I was more than ready for all of that!

**Announcer:** Speaker 4 – Antonio.

**Antonio:** It was tough ... it's almost like the interview panel wanted me to fail! The way the managing director worded something about future plans, for example, meant that I completely got the wrong end of the stick and went on about their plans instead of mine! But everything considered, I kept a cool head on my shoulders, and answered their questions as best I could. Well most of the time ... On the odd occasion I just seemed to freeze for what seemed like ages. I tried hard to establish a good rapport with everyone, and I did my utmost to show that I still had a long way to go in terms of professional development ... nobody warns to someone that thinks they know it all, do they? Anyway, they must have found me likeable because I got the job!

## Track 19

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### Exercise 5+6

Announcer: Listen to a woman giving a speech during an election campaign.

Politician: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all so much for turning out in force today, on this last day of our very hard-fought Democrat campaign to reach the White House. It's been a really long, tough road, I can't deny that, especially when we see all the dirty tricks that the Republicans have pulled out of the bag. Those guys have shown their true colours ... oh YEAH! But I have faith that the American people can see right through this and will leave this unfit-for-purpose Republican candidate exactly where he belongs ... at the door. I have faith that the American people know who the right person for the job is, and will let me get on with the job I want to, and indeed need to do, which is run this great country of ours. It's been a journey, and on that journey I've listened to what the American people have told me about what's important to you. And those things are: making our streets safer; reducing gun ownership; taking control of our borders and immigration, fixing our broken healthcare system, and unifying our nation. I pledge to implement new policies on all of these issues within weeks of being elected. Enough's enough! We've had four years of failure. Four years of a Republican president who did not and could not deliver, and alienated our wonderful nation from the rest of the world. My dear people, we've had four years of being a laughing stock on the global stage. Well, ladies and gentlemen, that ends now. A tick in the ballot box next to my name tomorrow, is a vote to turn this country round and make America great again! And this is nothing less than the people of this great nation are entitled to. Tick the right box ... tick the Democrat box!

## Track 20

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### Exercise 8

**Announcer:** You are going to listen to a lecturer talk about Nelson Mandela's style of leadership, a style called transformational leadership. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, complete the sentences (1–8) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you. After the second listening, you will have 45 seconds to check your answers.

**Lecturer:** Good afternoon, everyone. So, today we're continuing our focus on leadership styles, and we're going to look at one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known, Nelson Mandela, and his leadership style called transformational leadership.

Mandela was a highly esteemed and much-loved leader, not only in his native South Africa, but also around the world. He exemplifies the transformational leader who motivates his followers to exceptional accomplishments through perfect influence, inspiring motivation, individualised attention and intellectual stimulation.

Even as a young man in his 20s, Mandela had the vision to end the apartheid system in his beloved country, South Africa. He joined the African National Congress, a social democratic political party, in 1942, and led a campaign of peaceful, non-violent defiance against the South African government and its unfair discrimination against his own people in their own land. He was a very charismatic leader who was able to articulate his vision, and, in doing so, when he spoke publicly, he gained millions of followers who shared his vision. Beyond that, he was known as a role model for his strong moral conviction, personal example and self-sacrifice. Mandela was completely aware that his political uprising would lead to prosecution and imprisonment by the ruling government, but he remained undaunted by the consequences of his actions. Then, even when he continued to stand up for fairness and equality and his pursuit of civil rights landed him in prison for 27 years, he remained committed to his vision. So, turning now to some of the characteristics of transformational leaders that Mandela showcased ... leaders who adopt this leadership style address

individuals' needs to support the greater good rather than their own self-interests, and they recognise that charismatic effects are more likely to occur in contexts in which followers feel distress. Mandela understood his people very well, and their desire for freedom and democracy, and his followers believed that Mandela's principles and vision represented the means to end the years of prejudice in their country. They also felt empowered to adopt the necessary measures to achieve their common goals, and were willing to abide by guidance given by their leader. The situation Mandela found himself in, and by that I mean his confinement to a prison cell, also greatly boosted the cause, and he garnered immense international support around the world. People took notice of him and his quest. Along with domestic support, this system of international backing resulted in his eventual release on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1994, and he was appointed South Africa's first black president. Mandela had a remarkable ability to remember others' names, and spread an energy and warmth to everyone. He was in close contact with his subordinates and wasn't afraid to humble himself and serve them. He also possessed clear communication skills, management abilities and listening skills. Transformational leaders also understand that multiple stakeholders are involved, and that there's a need for an inclusive and interactive environment. They can be described as social architects who employ highly effective communication tactics by participating in group efforts, encouraging participation and being openly supportive and sensitive to conflict. From 1994 to June 1999, Mandela led the country through a period of transition from apartheid to black majority rule. As a transformational leader, he successfully used the country's love for sports to promote reconciliatory efforts, and hosted the Rugby World Cup in 1995, which appealed to the people and further instilled a sense of national pride in the people of South Africa. Under the new constitution, Mandela ensured that the rights of minorities and freedom of expression was incorporated under the system of black majority rule. It's all about equal opportunities for all, no matter what race someone is, and righting the wrongs of the past.

Nelson Mandela truly epitomises the transformational leader whose values transcend beyond that of his own needs for the greater good of humanity. In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1993, Mandela urged the rest of the world to fight racism wherever it occurs and under whatever guises it assumes. Mandela served as the South African president for five years, but his impact as a

transformational leader will last for many decades. His legacy teaches us that transformational leadership goes much deeper than just the surface level. Making a lasting impact on any given group of people begins at the surface level, but in order to be truly effective, one must transcend to the deep and personal level.

**Track 21**

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**Exercise 4+5**

- Announcer: Listen to a conversation between Marek and Emma about overfishing in our seas.
- Marek: So, you know we're researching overfishing for our school project ...
- Emma: ... Yeah.
- Marek: Well, I found a great article about why overfishing's become such a problem. Apparently, millennials play a big part in it because they love sushi! Who knew!
- Emma: (*sounding cynical, smirking*) Seriously?
- Marek: Yeah, well, fish is a great source of protein and sushi's yummy, so it's a cool option to go for on the menu.
- Emma: Sure, but people need to stop eating unsustainable seafood and learn about the dangers of overfishing on such a global scale.
- Marek: Not just that, though ... surely governments and NGOs and international organisations need to be more committed to safeguarding marine life, and start implementing strict laws on fishing practices and quotas ... take conservation a bit more seriously!
- Emma: Definitely! And apparently it's the Bluefin Tuna population that's been worst affected.
- Marek: I read that. Numbers are down by 96 %. That's shocking. I mean, that's almost the entire population that's been depleted!
- Emma: But even with all the regulations that are in place, the species is still facing extinction. Salmon, shrimp, squid and octopus are under threat too.
- Marek: Yeah, I know .... They're the ones people love to eat! The species most affected by unsustainable fishing practices are those with slow reproduction rates. And the problem is that many of the harmful fishing methods we know about don't discriminate between juvenile fish and adult ...
- Emma: (*interrupting*) ... so the number of marine species left to repopulate is dwindling. Yeah, and that's a major problem for cod fish, for example, in the North Sea.
- Marek: So what kinds of fishing are harmful? I'm not too clear on that.

- Emma: Well there's 'bottom trawling'. That involves dragging a net across the bottom of the ocean and drudging up any living marine creatures to the top. It's really damaging to the seabed ecosystems and produces large amounts of bycatch.
- Marek: What's bycatch?
- Emma: It's basically any catch that's either unused or unmanaged. It covers all marine life that's pulled up, but that's not able to be immediately sold on the global market.
- Marek: Got it.
- Emma: A second harmful kind of fishing's gill netting. Gill netting is huge amounts of netting that hangs in the water. This netting's invisible to fish, though, and it's designed to allow only the fish's head to go through the net. When the fish tries to escape, its gill cover gets caught and it becomes entangled in the net. Often for days at a time! Imagine! Obviously the fish then panic and can struggle to breathe properly. They end up with cuts to their skin and scales and even become prey for animals like seals.
- Marek: Shocking!
- Emma: Then there's something called blast fishing. That's a technique that uses poison and explosives to catch fish.
- Marek: (*shocked*) POISON???
- Emma: Yep! This method can catch a lot of fish in one go, but obviously there's a high cost to consumers and the environment. It's illegal in most places but it can be hard to enforce. And it's also hard to persuade people living in remote communities to give up this way of doing things.
- Marek: So, what can be done, apart from raising awareness, so that people can make better decisions regarding which and how much fish they eat?
- Emma: Well, I think we need a common set of laws to protect our oceans and seas. Right now, too many parts of the ocean are unregulated and unmanaged, and that means humanity just continues to take and take rather than maintain and replenish. And any countries not abiding by those laws will have to deal with the consequences and take their punishment. It's that simple, as far as I'm concerned.
- Marek: It's all very well saying that, but who should be responsible for policing the waters and checking what's going on? I mean we're talking about a lot of seas and oceans!

Emma: And yes, you're right ... it's blatantly obvious that we need to do our bit by consuming less seafood and checking food labels when we do. Treat fish more as friends!

Marek: *(laughs)* Friends not food, huh?! I like that!

**Track 22**

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**Exercise 6**

**Announcer:** You are going to listen to a radio discussion about the problem of dealing with waste. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each question (1–6). Put a cross (☒) in the correct box. The first one (0) has been done for you.

After the second listening, you will have 45 seconds to check your answers.

**Anita:** Welcome to *Earth View*, where I'm joined by Harry Brown, former Minister for the Environment. Welcome, Harry!

**Harry:** Good afternoon, Anita. Delighted to be here!

**Anita:** So, today's discussion's on the subject of some countries returning plastic waste to its source. ... I'll just quickly explain the background to this for listeners: For years now, many wealthy nations have been sending their recyclable waste overseas for numerous reasons – it's cost-effective, helps them meet their recycling quota and reduces their own domestic landfill.

**Harry:** Indeed!

**Anita:** And of course for those countries taking in the rubbish, which are mostly developing countries, it's a much-needed income source. The issue is that contaminated plastic and rubbish that can't be recycled often ends up mixed in, and in illegal processing centres. Increasingly, though, these countries are taking a stand and demanding that nations take their waste back.

**Harry:** That's correct.

**Anita:** So where exactly, and why, is this happening?

**Harry:** The European Union's the largest exporter of plastic waste, but only a fraction of all plastics that it ships can actually be recycled. The materials that can't be recycled end up being burned illegally or dumped in landfills or waterways to decompose. This clearly has implications for environmental and public health. Concerns about receiving such high volumes of this waste have forced countries into action.

**Anita:** Which countries are we talking about?

- Harry: Well, just this month, Malaysia sent back five containers of plastic waste to Spain after discovering that it was contaminated. Malaysia also said that up to 3,000 tons of waste will soon be sent back to several developed nations. The UK's among them, as are Germany and Norway. And it's not just European nations – Saudi Arabia and Japan are apparently facing similar situations. Some of these countries are alleged to have falsely marked rubbish as plastic recycling.
- Anita: Sounds serious.
- Harry: Exactly. And you asked why this is happening?
- Anita: Yes.
- Harry: Well, let's look at China. Until early 2018, China imported the vast majority of the world's plastic waste, but due to concerns about contamination and pollution within its own borders, it declared at that time that it would no longer buy recycled plastic scrap that wasn't 99.5% pure. The upshot was that by the end of 2018, global plastic waste exports fell by, incredibly, almost 50% compared with 2016. There were reports of plastic piling up, mostly in Europe, and, perhaps unexpectedly, some of this was diverted elsewhere.
- Anita: I'm guessing Malaysia was one of those countries?
- Harry: Correct. Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, India and Poland all took up the slack, but Malaysia took the lion's share.
- Anita: Right.
- Harry: Many countries importing this waste have found it difficult to manage, and introduced stringent new controls, like Thailand and Poland, for instance. The former's said that it won't take in any waste for the foreseeable future, and the latter's said that it now has been made much trickier to send rubbish there. Perhaps they'll soon go down the route of prohibiting any imported waste. Some of the countries listed earlier have said that they'll only import single-use plastics.
- Anita: Well, I can't argue with any of that! ... So, over here, we're familiar with the mantra 'reduce, reuse, recycle', which makes perfect sense. I mean rinsing and refilling a glass bottle's more logical than crushing it and melting it to make a new one.
- Harry: Unquestionably. Examples of reuse go back before paper, to papyrus actually. The Ancient Greek word '*palimpsest*' literally means 'scraped clean to be used

again', and even the Romans were on board – they melted old bronze statues to make new ones.

Anita: All driven by market incentives, surely? The raw materials were just too valuable to be thrown away. The idea that we should recycle because it's morally the right thing to do is much more recent.

Harry: That's true.

Anita: I wonder what the future holds.

Harry: Perhaps technology will come to the rescue. An Australian shopping centre's trialled an AI-enabled rubbish bin which senses what's been put in and sorts it accordingly. And state-of-the-art sorting facilities already use robots, lasers, magnets and air jets to separate recyclable streams. None of this, naturally, can compete with the low-cost labour in so many countries. So, yes, perhaps closing off that option's the spur to innovation that the industry needs.

Anita: Thanks for talking to us, Harry. So, let's take a break and...

**Track 23**

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**Exercise 3**

**Announcer:** Listen to two students talking about an article they have read on hydroelectric power.

**Lucy:** Hi Aron, have you finished reading that article on hydroelectric power that we had to study?

**Aron:** Hi Lucy, yeah, I've read it. But to be honest there was nothing much there that I didn't already know.

**Lucy:** I know what you mean. I was really keen to know the cons of it rather than the pros, actually, because most of us already know what's good about it ... like that it's a renewable resource and it produces no harmful emissions.

**Aron:** Correct, but of course it does have an environmental impact because dams and reservoirs have to be constructed, and that involves displacing lots of natural habitats. Blocking the flow of water can also profoundly impact fish migration, especially for species like salmon that rely on rivers to spawn.

**Lucy:** That's right, yeah. Dams can even affect biological triggers that tell fish where to go when it's time to migrate. But there's a way round this, and that's to create some fish ladders to help migratory fish make it to their spawning grounds.

**Aron:** That makes sense, I suppose .... A fish lift! (*laughs*)

**Lucy:** (*laughs*) You mentioned that building reservoirs displaces animals from their habitats, but what about people? They often have to move out of the area to a completely different place. OK, so they get financial compensation for having to move on, but even so ... it's no picnic I'm sure.

**Aron:** For sure. Imagine the effect that has on families and local cultures!

**Lucy:** Exactly!

**Aron:** One final thing I noted in that article was the cost of building a dam. Apparently it can cost an arm and a leg!

**Lucy:** No doubt about it! Did you see that the Itaipu Dam in Brazil, for example, cost \$18 billion? That's eye-watering, isn't it?

**Aron:** Certainly is! And as if that wasn't bad enough, it took forever to build too!

**Lucy:** Yeah, 18 years.

**Aron:** Well I think between us, we've got enough info now to talk about hydroelectric power in class if we're asked.

**Lucy:** Yep, I think we're ready!

## Track 24

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### Exercise 7

**Announcer:** You are going to listen to a podcast by a psychologist about why our brains stop us from taking climate change more seriously. First you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then you will hear the recording twice. While listening, answer the questions (1–8) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you. After the second listening, you will have 45 seconds to check your answers.

**Psychologist:** Welcome to this week's podcast. Today I'm talking about a hot topic ... no pun intended ... climate change! Or, more specifically, why our brains stop us from taking climate change more seriously. Think about how we notice things as we go about our daily business, like a dangerous junction at a road where we live ... we always intend to report it, but something gets in the way and we never get round to contacting the proper authorities because we're already late for work, or whatever.

Our mental response to global warming and climate change follows a similar script. What needs to be done is crystal clear: to stop greenhouse gases from occupying the atmosphere. Yet any advancement moves at a snail's pace. An incredible 30 years passed between the first report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the international community's pledge for action through the Paris climate accords. It then took another two years for these governments to decide at the COP24 conference in Poland on how to keep each other accountable. And even then, the Paris agreement still carries no legal powers of enforcement.

Part of the reason it takes us so long to act is because the human brain has spent nearly 200,000 years focused on the present – 'Find food. Make shelter.

Reproduce.' We only began to contemplate time, and by extension, the future, within the last few hundred years. Our minds are constantly looking for ways to tell ourselves that business as usual is OK, regardless of our political, social or economic status.

So, in order to be able to change our mindset towards the environment and avert inevitable ecological disaster, we need to tap into the cognitive barriers that

dominate our view of climate change. These are what environmental psychologists call ‘dragons of inaction’.

One of these is ignorance – in the literal sense of a lack of information. People recognise that climate change is grave, but they don’t quite know what to do about it in their own lives. For instance, the average house has air leakage equivalent to a small window being left open all year round. But if they closed the gaps, this would reduce the infiltration of cold air, reduce energy consumption, and lower heating bills. Washing clothes on a cold wash cycle can save up to 15 pounds of carbon emissions per load, depending on how energy-efficient your washing machine is and who your energy supplier is. And lowering the water heater temperature from its normal pre-set temperature to 10 degrees lower can also greatly reduce household emissions accordingly.

Additionally, people also seem to have a psychological barrier towards electric vehicles. There’s a reluctance to trade in conventional fuel-burning cars for plug-in hybrids. The thing is that even though every major car maker produces electric or hybrid models, most lack mainstream brand recognition. And if you ask the average person to name an electric car brand, they’ll almost certainly say Tesla. A recent survey revealed that many people are unclear about the difference between plug-in hybrid vehicles, which can be plugged in to charge or use fuel, and pure electric vehicles.

Another dragon of inaction is something called optimism bias. This is when we’re aware that something bad is likely to happen soon, but we think the consequence is so far in the future that we discount the risk. We talk ourselves out of acting and the reality. We ask ourselves, ‘Do I feel vulnerable?’ And the answer is that, for the most part, we don’t, and that shapes our behaviour. Even when we do try to personalise things, we have a hard time doing it. We can picture what it’d be like to get eaten by a shark, but if we ask even the most devout climate change believers how they think it’s going to affect them, they often can’t quite describe it.

Finally, there’s a sense of futility, or the inefficacy factor as risk experts call it. Climate change is arguably one of the biggest problems the world faces, and that makes individual action seem awfully pointless. We reason that we can restrict things we want to do, like driving or flying, but if other people aren’t going to do this too, then we’re fighting a losing battle.

If we can't rouse ourselves out of our dormant state and face the situation head on now, especially in the face of the extreme weather we've just experienced this year, when will we?