Some observer from Mars might expect that climate change would be a central issue in the campaign. There is perhaps no other issue where the views of the major candidates are so far apart. And there is perhaps no other issue of such long-term importance. But of course our hypothetical Martian would be wrong. Climate change is at most an afterthought in electoral politics.

This is not necessarily because the public is unaware that the climate is changing. In a poll last August, two-thirds of Americans agreed with prioritizing renewable energy and providing federal incentives, and an equal number favored making the U.S. carbon neutral by 2050. The partisan divide is real: Democrats are three times more likely than Republicans to view climate change as a major threat. Even so, a quarter of Republicans agreed with Democrats on this. The problem is that only 37% (almost all Democrats) view climate change as a priority, and even then it wasn't necessarily near the top.

All of this is intensely frustrating for those of us who believe in the urgency of addressing climate change. We mostly have to watch to see how other issues — immigration, the economy, and abortion, to name a few — shift voter attitudes toward candidates. The fact that one candidate supports climate action and the other adores fossil fuels may make all the difference to future generations. As for today's swing voters, not so much.

Still, it's important for people know the climate implications of the election even if only a few are ultimately swayed. In a close election, even a small effect on swing voters, turnout, or third-party support could swing the election to Trump or Biden, or shift the outcome of a tossup congressional race. What people do with the information is their business, but informing them is ours.