

Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)



University of Colorado Boulder

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April media attention to climate change and global warming was up 6% throughout the world from the previous month of March 2018. Newspaper coverage in Oceania went up 8%, and North America increased 19%. Central/South America dropped 19%, while coverage in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East held relatively steady. At the country level in April 2018, newspaper coverage went down compared to March in Spain (-4%), India (-7%) and Germany (-6%). It was up in the other countries monitored: Canada (+17%), the United Kingdom (UK) (+7%), Australia (+4%), New Zealand (+14%) and the United States (+20%). Meanwhile, US television coverage increased 26% from the previous month, while the six world radio sources monitored more than doubled from coverage in the previous month.

Global newspaper counts were about a quarter though of those (73% less) from counts a year ago (April 2017), when a great deal of global media attention was focused on the Trump Administration's dispositions towards the Paris Climate Agreement. For example, journalist Coral Davenport of *The New York Times* reported that Mr. Trump intends to make a decision before the Group of Seven (G7) meeting in May 2017 on whether or not the US will follow through with its commitments under the Agreement.¹ Davenport suggested that President Trump's policy advisors are urging him to keep the US committed, while journalists Chris Mooney and Brady Dennis at *The Washington Post* reported that US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt was lobbying for withdrawal.² Meanwhile, both the 'March for Science' and the 'People's Climate March' garnered significant coverage in April 2017. The 'March for Science' included a large demonstration in Washington D.C., but similar protests took place in hundreds of cities across the U.S. and around the world.³ *The Bangkok Post* reported that Australia, New Zealand, and Germany also saw large turnouts as part of the 'March for Science'.⁴

Figure 1 shows these ebbs and flows in media coverage at the global scale – organized into seven geographical regions around the world – from January 2004 through April 2018.

Moving to considerations of content of climate change or global warming coverage in April 2018, Figure 2 shows word frequency data at the country levels in global newspapers and radio, juxtaposed with US newspapers and US television in April 2018. It is notable that the US-based media sources still continue to show signs of 'Trump Dump' (where media attention that would have focused on other climate-related events and issues instead was placed on Trump-related actions (leaving many other stories untold)). And as in previous months, content in media reporting outside the US context shows that this pattern of news reporting continues to be limited to the US. To illustrate, April 2018 news articles related to climate change or global warming in the US invoked 'Trump' 2498 times through the

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/us/politics/trump-advisers-paris-climate-accord.html>

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/04/14/trumps-epa-chief-scott-pruitt-calls-for-an-exit-to-the-paris-climate-agreement/?utm_term=.7d23570578df

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/22/science/march-for-science.html>

⁴ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1236594/scientists-speak-out-worldwide>

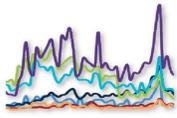


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426 stories this month (a ratio of nearly 6 times per article on average) in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *the Los Angeles Times*. In US television sources of *ABC*, *CBS*, *CNN*, *Fox News Network*, *MSNBC*, and *NBC*, Trump was mentioned 3198 times in 91 news segments (a whopping 35 mentions per segment on average). In contrast, in the UK press, Trump was mentioned in the *Daily Mail & Mail on Sunday*, *The Guardian & The Observer*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Telegraph & The Sunday Telegraph*, the *Daily Mirror & Sunday Mirror*, *The Scotsman & Scotland on Sunday*, and *The Times & The Sunday Times* 735 times in 557 April articles (approximately 1.3 mentions per article on average). As has been noted in previous MeCCO summaries, however, these current trends can quickly change, contingent on Trump Administration actions (or lack thereof) that could influence media attention on climate change or global warming.

2004–2018 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

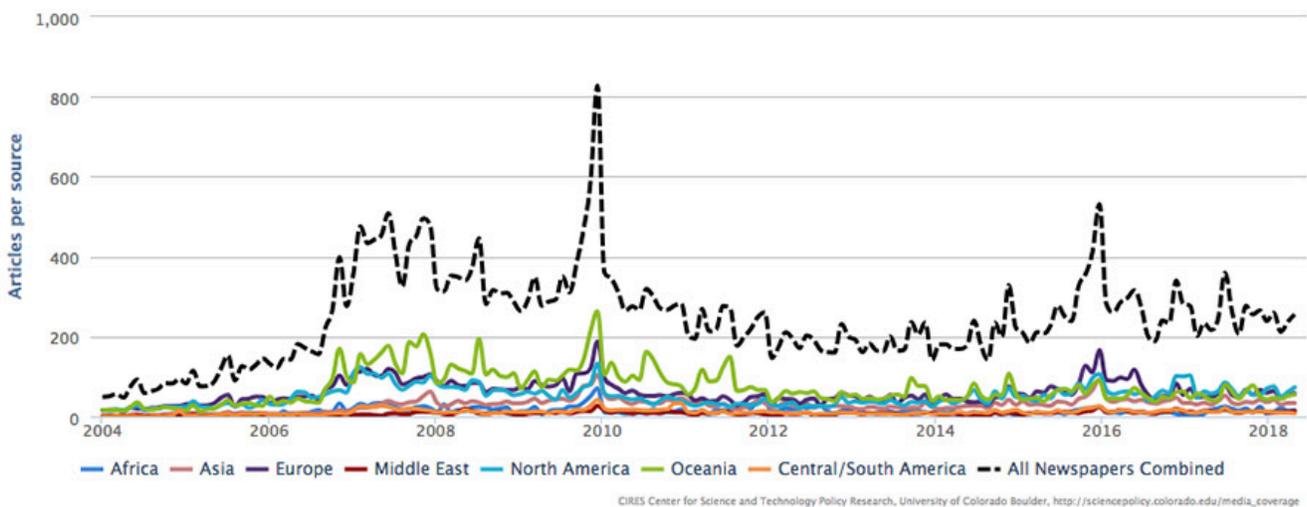
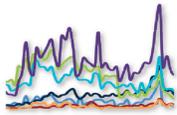


Figure 1: Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in sixty-two sources across thirty-six countries in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through April 2018.



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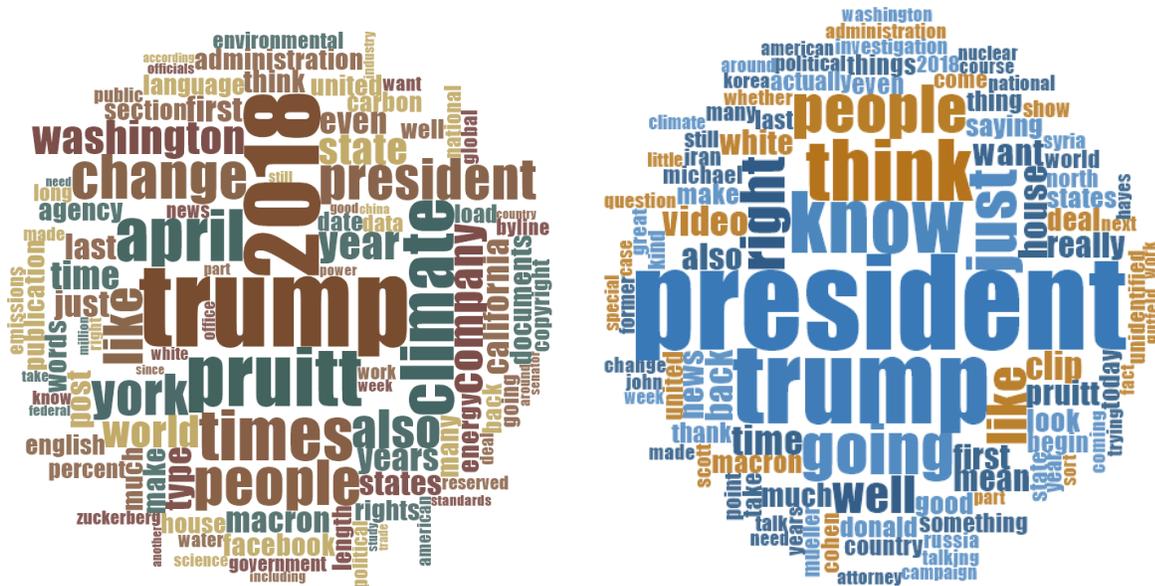


Figure 2: Word clouds showing frequency of words (4 letters or more) invoked in media coverage of climate change or global warming in US newspapers (left) and US television (right) in April 2018.

Many media accounts in April focused on primarily *political* content associated with climate change and global warming. For example, US EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt earned a great deal of media attention (and scrutiny) for a range of accusations of inappropriate conduct and reckless spending of tax dollars. Among a number of outlets covering these stories in April, journalist Jacqueline Alemany from *CBS News* reported that “EPA chief Scott Pruitt met with lobbyist Steven Hart, who rented Pruitt a condo in Washington, D.C., for \$50 a night...Hart's lobbying firm, Williams & Jensen, revealed in a filing that Hart was a registered lobbyist for Smithfield Foods in the first quarter of 2018. According to emails obtained by CBS News, Hart and Smithfield Foods executive Dennis Treacy met with Pruitt in July 2017.”⁵ This and other allegations earned him a series of hearings in the US Congress later in the month, as reported by Louise Radnovsky and Heidi Vogt of *The Wall Street Journal*.⁶

As another example of *political* content, though outside the US, *BBC* journalist David Shukman reported on the landmark agreement made at the International Maritime Organization talks, to cut emissions of greenhouse gases in the global shipping industry. Shukman noted that “shipping generates roughly the same quantity of greenhouse gas as Germany and, if it were accounted for as a nation, would rank as the world's sixth biggest emitter. Like aviation, it had been excluded from climate

⁵ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/scott-pruitt-epa-met-with-steven-hart-lobbyist-who-rented-him-condo/>

⁶ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-administrator-faces-grilling-on-capitol-hill-1524699106?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=4>

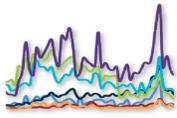


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negotiations because it is an international activity while both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement involved national pledges to reduce greenhouse gases”.⁷

Meanwhile in April, coverage relating primarily to the *cultural* dimensions continued to draw attention. To illustrate, journalist Ryan Miller from *the USA Today* reported on marches for science around the world, commencing April 14th. The article characterized the second annual gatherings as “500 marches worldwide to send one clear message to public officials: that evidence-based policy decisions are critical and science should not be ignored”.⁸ Journalist Susan Svrluga from *The Washington Post* profiled a number of marchers and their motivations, while also noting that the “March for Science’s evolution over the past year has included transforming into a nonprofit with a broader mission: to support science and research policy through campaigns, outreach and marches”.⁹

Media stories also intersected with *scientific* as well as *ecological* and *meteorological* issues across the globe in April 2018. For example, journalist Ben Smee from *The Guardian* reported on a new study in *Nature*¹⁰ that found that nearly a third of coral in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia died during a marine heatwave in 2016 associated with climate change.¹¹ The study’s lead author Dr. Terry Hughes nonetheless offered a hopeful comment in saying that “the Great Barrier Reef is certainly threatened by climate change, but it is not doomed if we deal very quickly with greenhouse gas emissions. Our study shows that coral reefs are already shifting radically in response to unprecedented heatwaves.”

As May arrives and the tripod drops and the Nenana Ice Classic in Alaska ends¹², winter in the Northern Hemisphere draws to a close. Throughout the indications of the changing seasons, MeCCO will continue to track the ebbs and flows of climate change or global warming coverage in 74 media sources (newspapers, radio and TV) in 38 countries in seven different regions around the world. So stay tuned for further updates.

- **report prepared by Max Boykoff, Jennifer Katzung and Ami Nacu-Schmidt**

⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43759923>

⁸ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/04/14/march-science-2018/517294002/>

⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/march-for-science-returns-to-the-district-on-saturday-for-a-second-year/2018/04/13/40113f00-3f23-11e8-974f-aacd97698cef_story.html?utm_term=.9c27f716b6a6

¹⁰ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0041-2>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/19/great-barrier-reef-30-of-coral-died-in-catastrophic-2016-heatwave>

¹² http://www.newsmine.com/news/local_news/the-tripod-is-down-nenana-ice-classic-ends/article_3231fbe6-4d91-11e8-90ac-938d9c814019.html

