

MeCCO

Media and Climate Change Observatory

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

ISSUE 20, AUGUST 2018



Office for Outreach and Engagement
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



CENTER & FOR
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
POLICY RESEARCH



MeCCO monitors 74 sources (across newspapers, radio and TV) in 38 countries in seven different regions around the world. MeCCO assembles the data by accessing archives through the Lexis Nexis, Proquest and Factiva databases via the University of Colorado libraries. These sources are selected through a decision processes involving weighting of three main factors:



**Geographical
Diversity**

favoring a greater geographical range



Circulation

favoring higher circulating publications



**Reliable Access to
Archives Over Time**

**favoring those accessible consistently
for longer periods of time**

Media and Climate Change Observatory, University of Colorado Boulder
http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/media_coverage

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Issue 20

'Morrison installed, Clean Power Plan uninstalled'

"August media attention to climate change and global warming was up 17% throughout the world from the previous month of July 2018, and up about 42% from August last year. An increase was most pronounced in Oceania (up 55%), where Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull was replaced by Scott Morrison. Turnbull's downfall was widely attributed by media reports to internal party rejection of his stance on climate change emissions reductions."



A power plant in Cheshire, Ohio. Photo: Maddie McGarvey, *The New York Times*.

AUGUST 2018

In addition, North American coverage was up 27% in August, due primarily to media attention paid to the mid-month proposal by the US Trump Administration to replace the Clean Power Plan with what was dubbed the 'Affordable Clean Energy rule'. Elsewhere, moderate increases were also detected in Central/South America (up 18%), Africa (up 10%) and Europe (up 8%), while going down only in Asia (down 7%) this month compared to the previous month of July.

In January of this year, MeCCO expanded coverage to sixty-two newspaper sources, six radio sources

and six television sources. These span across thirty-eight countries, in English, Spanish, German and Portuguese. In addition to English-language searches of "climate change" or "global warming", we search Spanish-language sources through the terms "cambio climático" or "calentamiento global", German-language sources through the terms 'klimawandel' or 'globale erwärmung', and Portuguese-language sources through the terms "mudanças climáticas" or "aquecimento global". Figure 1 shows these ebbs and flows in newspaper media coverage at the global scale - organized into seven geographical regions around the

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

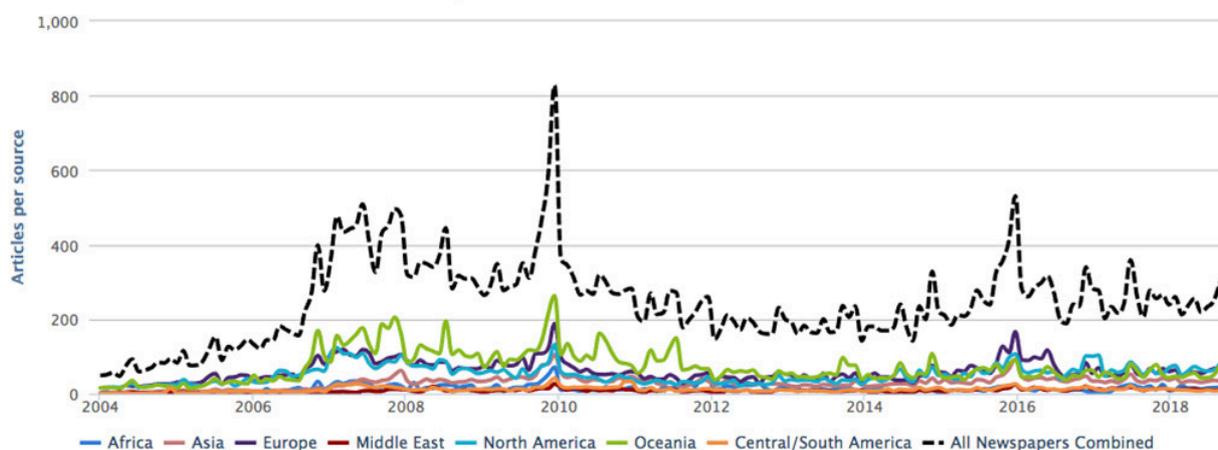


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in sixty-two sources across thirty-five countries in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through August 2018.

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chairperson Johny Joseph said “climate change, overflowing dams and manmade causes such as deforestation and illegal mining resulted in Kerala floods”.⁶ Journalist Liz Mathew from *The Indian Express*, quoted State Finance Minister Thomas Isaac who said, “the social cost is unimaginable, the trauma is heavy”.⁷

Across the globe in August there were a range of stories that intersected with the *cultural* arena. For example, a citizens’ ballot initiative in the US state of Colorado regarding a proposal to increase the ‘setback’ distance between homes and businesses and oil and gas wells drew media consideration. Dan Elliott from the *Associated Press* called the proposal – that could put 85% of non-federal land off-limits – ‘contentious’⁸; Rebecca Elliott from *The Wall Street Journal* claimed that if approved, this potential precedent-setting ballot measure “would make most of the State off limits to drillers”⁹. As a second example, television media stories surfaced of a crowdfunding campaign by residents in a community near Madison, Wisconsin to raise funds to purchase and install air monitors to detect pollution from a nearby coal-fired power plant. This novel way to take matters into citizen’s own hands was seen as a new turn in citizen science meeting public health concerns relating to climate change. Journalist Shirley Descorbeth from CBS quoted Miranda Erlich with the ‘Clean Power Coalition’ citizen action group who said, “For residents who have breathing issues, and want to know what the air is like on a daily basis, those monitoring reports are not helpful, so we are putting up these...monitors because it’ll give us a sense of what’s in the air on a daily basis”¹⁰. Reporter Madeline Anderson from a Fox

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6 <http://www.htdscontent.com/htsportal/ht-mumbai/article/will-extreme-rainfall-turn-konkan-into-kerala-experts-beg-to-differ/29371281>
7 <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/kerala-floods-relief-work-financial-aid-crores-cess-thomas-issac-5316638/>
8 <https://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/local/colorado/2018/08/30/proposal-limit-oil-gas-drilling-gets-colorado-ballot/1147913002/>
9 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/colorado-voters-to-weigh-sharp-limits-on-drilling-1535574912>
10 <https://www.cbs58.com/news/concerned-oak-creek-residents-install-air-monitors-around-we-energies-plant>

News affiliate quoted industry representative ‘We Energies’ spokesperson Brian Manthey, who dismissed residents’ concerns, stating “We have made great strides...to keep the coal and coal dust from leaving the [coal plant] property”¹¹.

Media accounts also focused on primarily *scientific* dimensions of climate change and global warming. For example, a study dubbed ‘Hothouse Earth’ was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) describing how runaway global warming could result from positive climate feedback loop in the climate system. In describing the study, journalist Doyle Rice from *USA Today* wrote “we have been warned”¹². As a second example, a study by Andrew J. Kondash, Nancy E. Lauer and Avner Vengosh published in *Science Advances*¹³ found that water use for and toxic wastewater produced from hydraulic fracturing (of ‘fracking’) has increased dramatically over the past five years. Science correspondent Josh Gabbatiss from *The Independent* in London. reported that “the amount of water used at fracking wells in parts of the US has increased by up to 770%, sparking fears the industry could cause water shortages in arid regions. There was also a massive increase of up to 1440% in the amount of toxic wastewater generated in the first year of operation at fracked oil and gas wells over the same period.”¹⁴

As summer gives way to Autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, we at the Media and Climate Change Observatory will continue to track media attention to climate change, amid competing interests in other political, social, environmental, economic, and cultural issues around the globe.

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

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11 <https://fox6now.com/2018/08/24/neighborhood-near-we-energies-power-plant-bands-together-to-improve-air-quality/>
12 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/science/2018/08/06/hothouse-earth-runaway-global-warming-threatens-habitability-planet/916521002/>
13 <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/8/eaar5982>
14 <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/fracking-water-shortage-drought-fossil-fuels-oil-gas-duke-university-a8493451.html>