

“A litany of broken climate promises”



Smoke and steam rise from a coal processing plant in Hejin in central China's Shanxi Province. Photo: Sam McNeil/AP.

April media attention to climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe increased 4% from March 2022. However, coverage was down 13% from a year before (April 2021). Meanwhile, coverage in international wire services increased 23% and radio coverage was up 28% from March 2022. Compared to the previous month coverage decreased in Africa

(-102%), the Middle East (-32%) and slightly in Asia (-2%), but increased slightly in North America (+2%) and the European Union (EU) (+2%), while coverage was up more substantially in Latin America (+13%) and Oceania (+14%). Figure 1 shows trends in newspaper media coverage at the global scale - organized into seven geographical regions around the world - from January 2004 through April 2022.

2004–2022 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

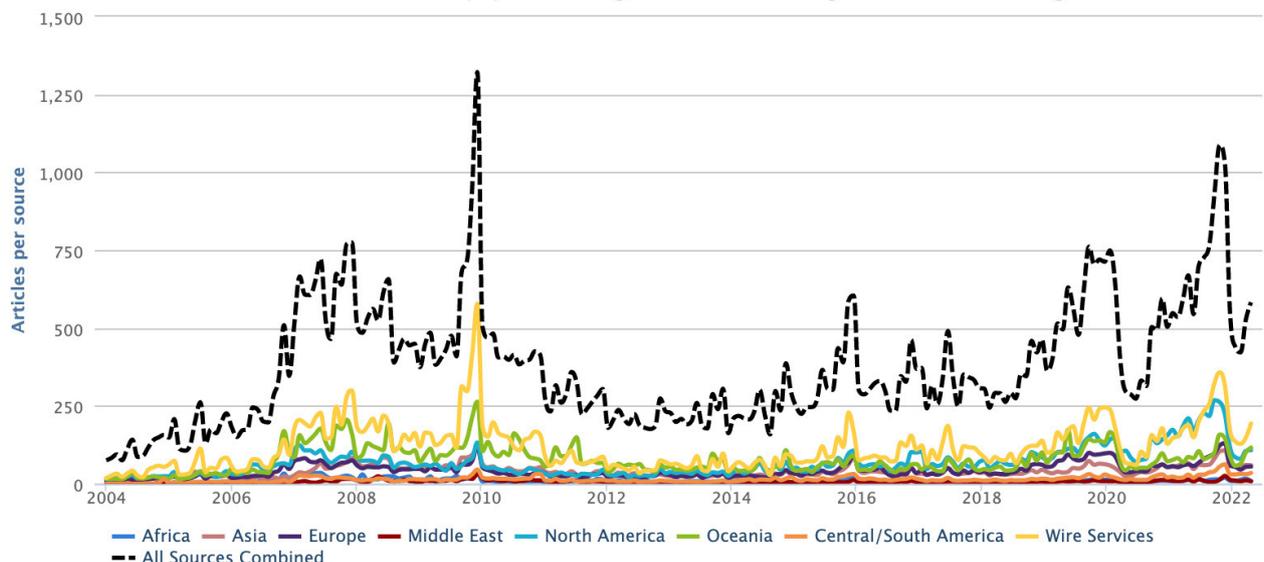


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through April 2022.

2004–2022 German Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

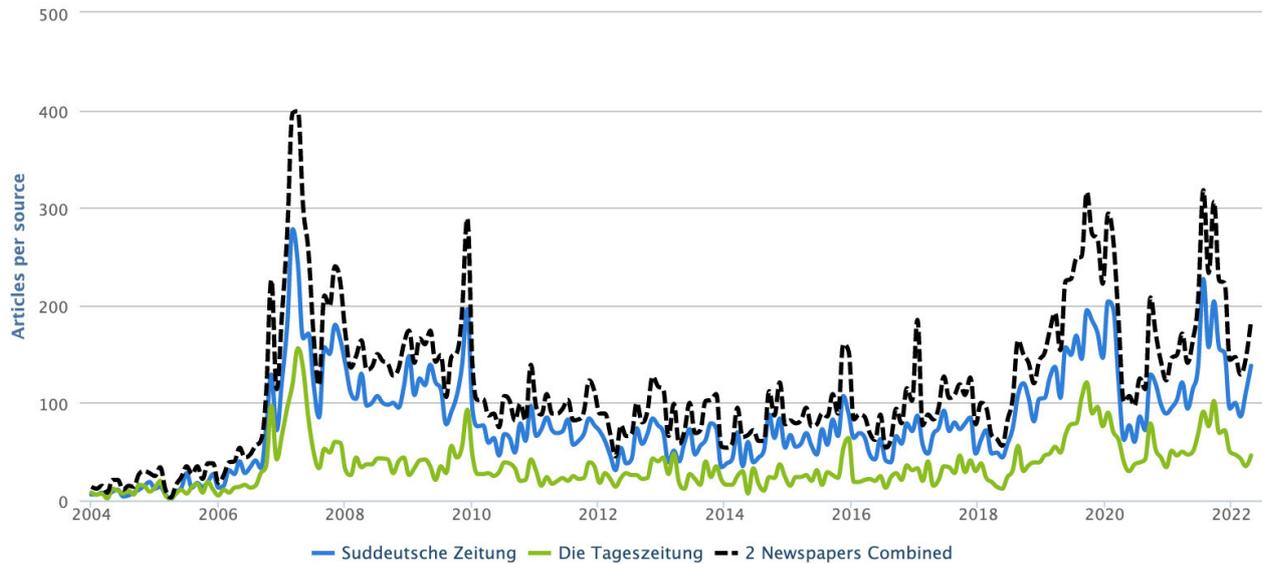


Figure 2. German newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming from January 2000 through April 2021, where several stories in April 2022 linked Germany’s dependence on Russian oil and natural gas, the war in Ukraine and contributions to climate change.

At the country level, United States (US) print coverage decreased 2% while television coverage actually increased 86% from the previous month. Among other countries that we at the Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) monitor, coverage dropped in Finland (-7%), Norway (-15%), Spain (-18%), Japan (-18%), and Denmark (-23%). However, coverage in April 2022 increased in the United Kingdom (UK) (+1%), India (+8%), New Zealand (+8%), Sweden (+9%), Canada (+12%), Germany (+27%) (see Figure 2), Australia (+41%), and Russia (+69%).

significant media attention after its April 4 release. For example, [Associated Press](#) journalists [Frank Jordan](#) and [Seth Borenstein](#) reported, “Temperatures on Earth will shoot past a key danger point unless greenhouse gas emissions fall faster than countries have committed, the world’s top body of climate scientists said Monday, warning of the consequences of inaction but also noting hopeful signs of progress. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change revealed “a litany of broken climate promises” by governments and corporations, accusing them of stoking global warming by clinging to harmful fossil fuels. “It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track toward an unlivable world,” he said”.

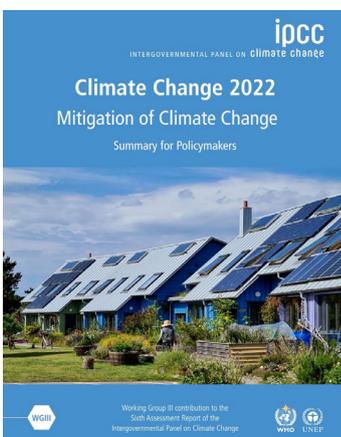


Figure 3. The front cover of the April 4 United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) report on ‘Mitigation and Policy’.

Many climate change or global warming stories focused on **scientific** themes in the month of April. To begin the month, United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) report on ‘Mitigation and Policy’ drew

As a second of many examples, [PBS Newshour](#) reporter [Isabella Isaacs-Thomas](#) noted, “We have the knowledge, money, technology and affordable clean energy that we need to cut our carbon emissions in half by 2030. That’s the good news from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Working Group III report released Monday. What’s standing in the way is lack of political will and sufficient funding to make the necessary rapid, widespread, cross-sector changes a reality, according to the report. The authors warn that “it’s now or never” if

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Figure 4. A sampling of front page print coverage of the IPCC report on climate change in early April.

humanity wants to achieve its long-standing goal of curbing global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which will “impossible” without swift and sweeping greenhouse gas emissions. But funding is currently three to six times lower than it needs to be to ensure that the global average temperature does not rise beyond 2 degrees Celsius. The money needed to bridge that gap does exist, the report emphasizes, and making it available is a matter of “stronger alignment of public sector finance and policy”.

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine may have somewhat stymied climate change coverage in April, newspapers still dedicated many column inches to the findings. As yet another example,

in a front page story *Guardian* journalist [Fiona Harvey](#) wrote, “The world can still hope to stave off the worst ravages of climate breakdown but only through a “now or never” dash to a low-carbon economy and society, scientists have said in what is in effect a final warning for governments on the climate. Greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025, and can be nearly halved this decade, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to give the world a chance of limiting future heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels”.

In further science-themed climate change news in April, attention paid to findings of record-breaking methane emissions fueled media stories. For example, [journalist Victoria Albert](#)

from [CBS News](#) reported, “The atmospheric concentration of methane – a greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to global warming – increased by a record amount in 2021 for the second year in a row, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Thursday. Levels of carbon dioxide also increased at a “historically high rate,” NOAA said. A preliminary analysis showed atmospheric methane levels increased by 17 parts per billion (ppb) in 2021, which NOAA said was “the largest annual increase recorded since systematic measurements began in 1983.” Atmospheric methane levels averaged 1,895.7 ppb in 2021, which is approximately 162% higher than pre-industrial levels. This graph shows globally-averaged, monthly mean atmospheric methane abundance determined from marine surface sites since 1983. Values for the last year are preliminary. NOAA’s findings also provided alarming news about carbon dioxide, which it said was the primary contributor to human-caused global warming. Last year was the 10th year in a row that saw a more than 2 parts per million increase, which NOAA said is the “fastest sustained rate of increase in the 63 years since monitoring began.” Approximately 36 billion tons of carbon dioxide were emitted due to human activity in 2021, NOAA said”.

Several [political](#) and [economic](#) themed media stories about climate change or global warming continued in April. To begin, the Russian war in Ukraine garnered media stories that linked energy and Russian oil and gas exports to climate change or global warming. For example, [Wall Street Journal](#) reporter [Julia-Ambra Verlaine](#) noted, “Natural-gas prices extended their climb Thursday, bucking seasonal trends as demand from overseas continues to pressure inventories. U.S. natural-gas futures for May delivery rose 4.3% Thursday to \$7.3000 per million British thermal units—a 96% rise in the year to date. While natural gas stockpiles rose modestly during the week ended April 8, they remain nearly 25% below last year’s levels and 18% below the five-year average for this time of year, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Energy Information Administration”.

As the month of April wore on, Russian oil giant Gazprom’s actions to cut off Poland and Bulgaria from oil and gas supplies – along with connections to climate change – grabbed media attention. For example, [Associated Press](#) journalists [Vanessa Gera](#) and [Monika Scislawska](#) wrote, “Polish and Bulgarian officials said Tuesday that Moscow is cutting off natural gas deliveries to their countries due to their refusal to pay in Russian rubles, a demand made by President Vladimir Putin after sanctions were levied against his nation over the invasion of Ukraine. Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom informed the two EU and NATO member nations that gas supplies will be suspended starting Wednesday, their governments said. The suspensions would be the first since Putin’s announcement last month that “unfriendly foreign buyers” would have to transact with Gazprom in rubles instead of dollars and euros. Only Hungary has agreed to do so, with other countries rejecting the demand as an unacceptable, one-sided breach of contracts and a violation of sanctions. If deliveries are halted to other countries as well, it could cause economic pain in Europe, driving natural gas prices up and possibly leading to rationing – but it would also deal a blow to Russia’s own economy. Wednesday’s cutoffs will affect deliveries of Russian gas to Poland through the Yamal-Europe pipeline, according to Polish state gas company PGNiG, and to Bulgaria via the TurkStream pipeline, that country’s Energy Ministry said. The Yamal-Europe line carries gas from Russia to Poland and Germany, via Belarus. Poland has been receiving some 9 billion cubic meters annually, fulfilling some 45% of the country’s need. PGNiG said it was considering legal action over Moscow’s payment demand. But Climate Minister Anna Moskwa said Poland is prepared to make do after having worked to reduce its reliance on Russian energy sources. Several years ago the country opened its first terminal for liquefied natural gas, or LNG, in Swinoujscie, on the Baltic Sea coast, and later this year a pipeline from Norway is to become operational”.

Beyond the conflict in Ukraine, April contained political news about climate change in the

French presidential campaign. For example, [Expansión published an article by journalist Sara White](#) entitled, “Macron opts for green credentials in the fight against Le Pen”. She wrote, “The president accentuates his support for renewable energy to appeal to leftist voters and environmentalists, but he faces criticism for his record”.

April media coverage about climate change or global warming with [ecological](#) and [meteorological](#) themes also kept pace with science stories. For instance, heavy rainfall across southeast Africa - with linkages made to climate change - drew attention. For example, [Associated Press journalist Wanjohi Kabukuru reported](#), “Extreme rainfall in southeast Africa has become heavier and more likely to occur during cyclones because of climate change, according to a new analysis released Monday by an international team of weather scientists. Multiple tropical storms that pummeled Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique earlier this year were analyzed by the World Weather Attribution group, who determined that the storms were made worse by the increase in global temperatures. In just six weeks between January and March the region saw a record three tropical cyclones and two tropical storms make landfall. The heavy rains, storm surges and floods left more than 230 people dead and displaced hundreds of thousands across the region. The countries remain vulnerable to devastating weather this year, with cyclone season set to end in May”.

Also, in late April heatwaves in India and Pakistan were connected with climate change in several media accounts. For example, [New York Times journalists Hari Kumar and Mike Ives reported](#), “Across a wide swath of the Indian subcontinent, scorching temperatures have damaged harvests. People are suffering from heat stroke. And the lights are flickering in some cities amid surging demand for air-conditioning. Now, the heat wave that has been pummeling India and Pakistan for weeks is expected to intensify over the weekend. In some hard-hit areas, it may be weeks before the region’s annual monsoon sweeps in to provide relief...Heat-related

watches were in effect on Thursday afternoon for all but a few of India’s 28 states, encompassing hundreds of millions of people and most of the country’s major cities. An alert – one notch up in severity – was in effect for the northwestern state of Rajasthan. The subcontinent’s scorching weather is a reminder of what lies in store for other countries in an era of climate change. Climate scientists say that heat waves around the world are growing more frequent, more dangerous and lasting longer. They are certain that global warming has made heat waves worse because the baseline temperatures from which they begin are higher than they were decades ago”.

Finally, ecological and meteorological stories related to climate change or global warming were generated when a report on the state of the climate in Europe by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) was published. For example, [journalist Antonio Cerrillo wrote in La Vanguardia](#), “Climate change has already caused an average rise in temperatures of 2.2 °C in Europe. The increase experienced in the Old Continent is much higher than the world average of the planet, estimated between 1.1°C and 1.2°C since pre-industrial times. The Old Continent recorded in 2021 its hottest summer since there are records, according to the Copernicus service”.

April media coverage featured [cultural](#) stories relating to climate change or global warming. Some related to political stories about the ongoing war in Ukraine. For example, [El País journalist Manuel Planelles wrote](#) that the “War in Ukraine threatens global fight against climate change”, noting “Increased support for fossil fuels and oil and gas extraction contradict efforts against warming. Experts warn of the impacts of the conflict for multilateralism”. [El País also published an editorial](#) with the title “For the energy transition”, as a European bet on “the path to disassociate its economy from the current dependence on gas and oil supplies from Russia”, concluding, “The best way to guarantee energy sovereignty is to stop depending on fossil fuels”.

Furthermore, climate misinformation across social media made news. For example, [Guardian journalist Alex Hern reported](#), “Pinterest is to block all climate misinformation, as the image-focused social network seeks to limit the spread of false and misleading claims. Under the new policy the site is committing to take down content that distorts or denies the facts of the climate crisis, whether posted as adverts or normal “organic” content. Pinterest is defining misinformation broadly: the company will take down content that denies the existence or effects of climate change or its human causes, as well as content that “misrepresents scientific data” in order to erode trust in climate science and harmful, false or misleading content about natural disasters and extreme weather events”. As a second example, [New York Times reporter Tiffany Hsu noted](#), “Pinterest will prohibit ads and posts that feature climate misinformation in its latest attempt to block harmful content on its virtual pinboard service, the company said...The ban includes any content that denies the existence or impacts of climate change, or denies that humans influence global warming and that the phenomenon is supported by scientific consensus. Inaccurate posts about natural disasters and extreme weather events will also be removed, as will misrepresentations of scientific data through omission or cherry-picking meant to erode trust in climate science. Searches about sustainability are on the rise on Pinterest, with queries about “zero waste lifestyle” surging 64 percent in the past year”.

Stories were not limited to Pinterest, but also drew attention to Twitter. For example, [CNN journalist Ramishah Maruf reported](#), “Twitter is banning misleading advertisements that go against the scientific consensus of climate change, the company announced on Friday, which was Earth Day. “We believe that climate denialism shouldn’t be monetized on Twitter, and that misrepresentative ads shouldn’t detract from important conversations about the climate crisis,” Twitter said in a blog post. Those denying the effects of climate change have targeted sites such as Twitter and Facebook, enabling them to reach hundreds and thousands of those platforms’ users with false claims. The

announced change did not indicate whether Twitter would ban or delete the accounts of users who post climate change misinformation. Twitter’s blog post cited the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose recent report called for “immediate and deep emissions reductions” to combat the impacts of global warming. The tech giant said it is working toward adding more “reliable, authoritative context” to conversations about the climate on its platform. Twitter’s move follows action taken by other tech companies. Earlier this month, Pinterest announced it will prohibit users from sharing climate misinformation on its site, banning the content outright. It will also remove posts that deny climate change. And last year, Google, announced it was banning ads on content from climate change deniers on its platform, as well as prohibiting advertisements that deny climate change. Separately, hours after Twitter’s policy update, European policymakers reached agreement on sweeping tech regulations that included stricter rules on how platforms regulate misinformation and illegal content on social media and other platforms. Big Tech has been facing increased pressure to combat the spread of climate misinformation on their platforms”.

Relating to those stories, media coverage associated with US Earth Day on April 22 prompted culturally-themed stories. For example, [Washington Post journalist Douglas MacMillan reported](#), “As big businesses face more pressure to act on climate change, corporations have unleashed a tsunami of environmental pledges, net-zero commitments and sustainability certifications, all designed to show they are part of the solution. Often, critics say, these claims are just “greenwashing” – environmental marketing with little or no substance behind it. One recent review of 500 commercial websites by Britain’s Competition and Markets Authority found 40 percent of environmental claims to be misleading in some way, such as using terms like “sustainable” without defining them or omitting pertinent information about environmental harms. “Carbon neutral” usually does not mean a firm has zero carbon emissions. A green certification label on a product’s packaging may



Thank you for your ongoing interest in the work we do through MeCCO. We remain committed to our work monitoring media coverage of these intersecting dimensions and themes associated with climate change.

**Our ongoing work is dependent on financial support
so please consider contributing:**

<https://giving.cu.edu/fund/media-and-climate-change-observatory-mecco>

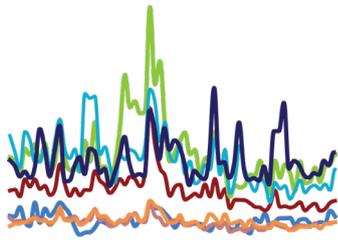
have no connection to a standard-setting group. For the average consumer, it can be difficult to assess which companies are taking meaningful steps to combat climate change, said Frederic Hans, a climate policy analyst at the NewClimate Institute, an independent, Germany-based organization that promotes measures to slow Earth's warming".

Finally, in April there were stories of scientists calling for activism to demand action against climate change. For example, journalist [Teresa Guerrero from the Spanish newspaper El Mundo noted](#), "Coinciding with the publication of the last part of the IPCC report, the main scientific

analysis on climate change, researchers from 25 countries grouped in the Scientific Rebellion movement launch non-violent civil disobedience actions to demand measures against the climate crisis".

Thanks for your ongoing interest in our Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) work monitoring media coverage of these intersecting dimensions and themes associated with climate change and global warming.

~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Jennifer Katzung, Ami Nacu-Schmidt and Olivia Pearman



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Media and Climate Change Observatory

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MeCCO monitors 126 sources (across newspapers, radio and TV) in 58 countries in seven different regions around the world. MeCCO assembles the data by accessing archives through the Nexis Uni, 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**

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