

# “Together we can end the climate wars”



The Abbot Point coal terminal in Queensland, Australia spends billions each year on subsidies for fossil fuel industries. Photo: David Maurice Smith/New York Times.

**M**ay media attention to climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe increased 13% from April 2022. Additionally, coverage was up 20% from the year before (May 2021). Meanwhile, coverage in international wire services increased 9% and radio coverage was up 19% from April 2022. Compared to the previous month coverage increased in all regions except Latin

America. While dropping in Latin America 5% coverage increased in Africa (+1%), North America (+1%), the Middle East (+9%) Asia (+10%), and the European Union (EU) (+10%), while coverage was up more substantially in 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 May 2022.

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

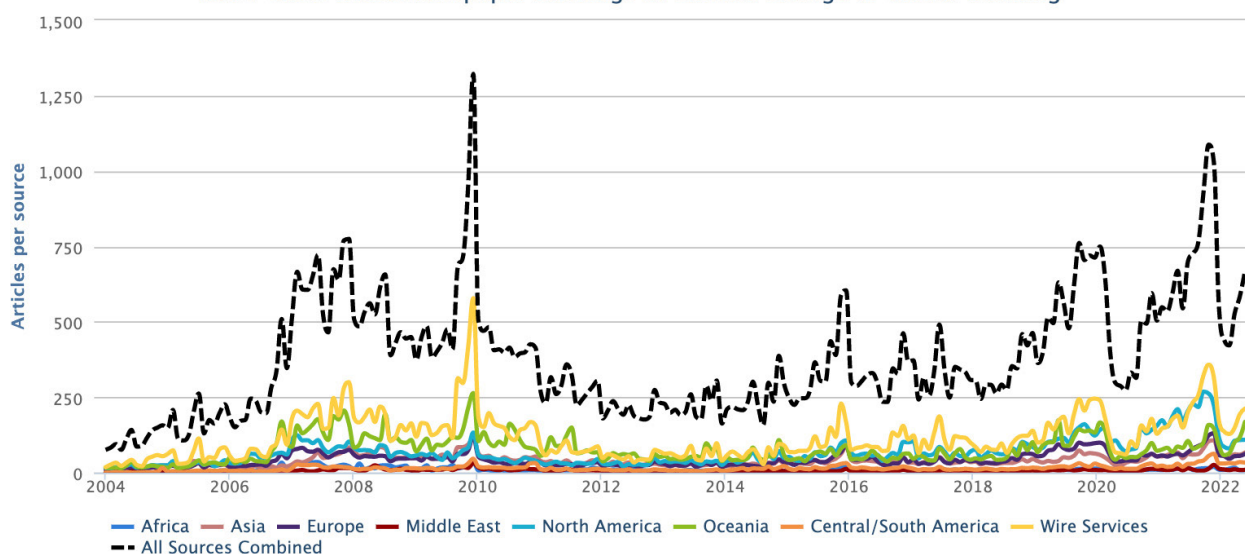


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through May 2022.

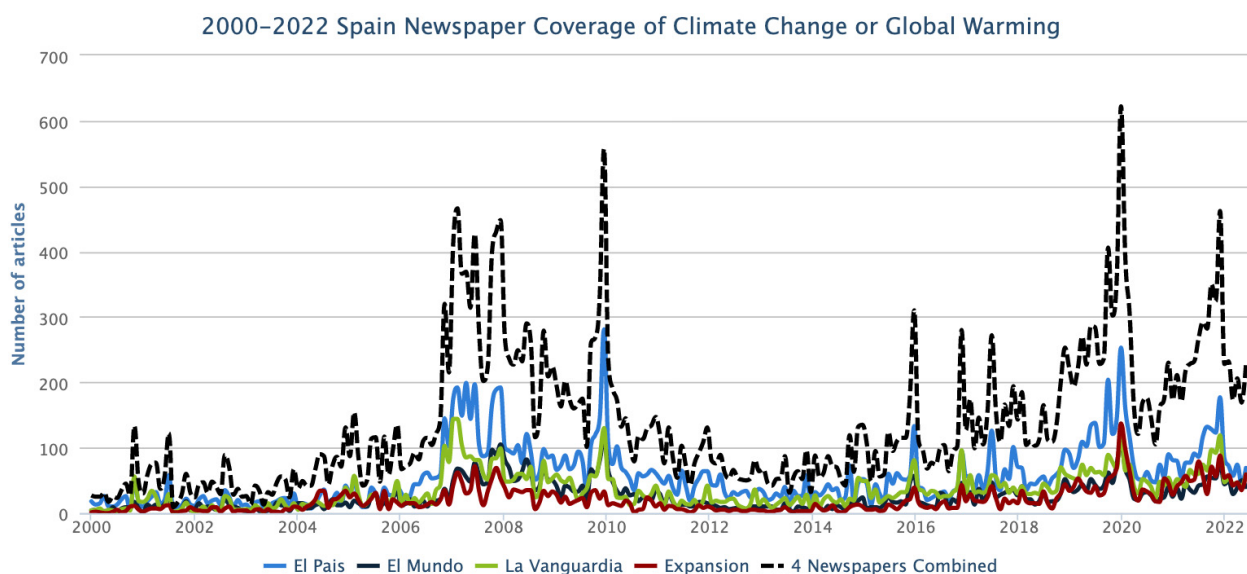


Figure 2. Spanish newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming from January 2000 through May 2022.

At the country level, United States (US) print coverage increased 2% while television coverage actually decreased 15% from the previous month. Among other countries that we at the Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) monitor, (April 2022) coverage dropped only in Germany (-6%) while it stayed steady in Canada compared to the previous month. Coverage increased in the remaining 14 countries monitored: Japan (+3%), Sweden (+8%), the United Kingdom (UK) (+12%), Canada (+12%), India (+17%), Russia (+19%), Finland (+20%), Spain (+34%) (see Figure 2), Australia (+35%), Norway (+48%), New Zealand (+71%), and Denmark (+74%).

Many climate change or global warming stories focused on *scientific* themes in the month of May. To begin, coral bleaching and links to climate change made news through new research. For example, [journalist Tori B. Powell from CBS News reported](#), “Ninety-one percent of reefs surveyed along the Great Barrier Reef in Australia were affected by coral bleaching to some degree during the summer of 2021-22, according to a government study. Researchers say climate change is “the greatest threat to the Reef” and that the warming ocean is a key factor behind the recent mass bleaching event. “Climate change is escalating, and the Reef is already experiencing the consequences of this,” the study stated...In the annual Reef Summer Snapshot - conducted by the Great Barrier Reef

Marine Park Authority, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization - scientists conducted surveys of 719 reefs across regions. Aerial surveys revealed that 654 reefs displayed coral bleaching”. Also in May, several studies linked soil loss with food and climate challenges. For example, [CNBC journalist Andrea Miller reported](#), “Soil can be considered black gold, and we’re running out [of] it.” The United Nations declared soil finite and predicted catastrophic loss within 60 years. “There are places that have already lost all of their topsoil,” Jo Handelsman, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and author of “A World Without Soil,” told CNBC. The impact of soil degradation could total \$23 trillion in losses of food, ecosystem services, and income worldwide by 2050, according to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. “We have identified 10 soil threats in our global report ... Soil erosion is number one because it’s taking place everywhere,” Ronald Vargas, the secretary of the Global Soil Partnership and Land and Water Officer at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, told CNBC. According to the U.N., soil erosion may reduce up to 10% of crop yields by 2050, which is the equivalent of removing millions of acres of farmland. And when the world loses soil, food supply, clean drinking water and biodiversity are threatened. What’s more, soil plays an important

role in mitigating climate change: Soil contains more than three times the amount of carbon in the earth's atmosphere and four times as much in all living plants and animals combined, according to the Columbia Climate School".

May media coverage also featured many **cultural** stories relating to climate change or global warming. For example - among several stories on the topic - *New York Times* journalist [David Gelles](#) wrote, "John Doerr, one of the most successful venture capitalists in the history of Silicon Valley, is giving \$1.1 billion to Stanford University to fund a school focused on climate change and sustainability. The gift, which Mr. Doerr is making with his wife Ann, is the largest ever to a university for the establishment of a new school, and is the second largest gift to an academic institution, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education. Only Michael R. Bloomberg's 2018 donation of \$1.8 billion to his alma mater, Johns Hopkins University, ranks higher. The gift establishes the Doerrs as leading funders of climate change research and scholarship, and will place Stanford at the center of public and private efforts to wean the world off fossil fuels." Also, cultural attention was paid in May to climate researchers themselves taking action in the face of a changing climate. For example, *Washington Post* reporter [Casey Quackenbush](#) wrote, "As time runs out for the planet to avert a future of climate chaos, scientists around the world are throwing down the gauntlet. Climate change science has been settled for decades, yet policymakers have yet to take sweeping action, and greenhouse gas emissions continue to climb to record highs. Climate scientists began to publicly make policy recommendations based on their research in the late '80s, and their warnings have become increasingly strident. In April, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said emissions must peak by 2025 to avoid catastrophic consequences. Now this inaction is driving some scientists to engage in civil disobedience, while others are striking against the IPCC, calling for a halt of further reports until governments mobilize. It's a dire situation that's taking a toll on the mental health of scientists, and raising the question of

what climate advocacy scientists should engage in as politicians imperil the planet." Finally, infrastructure and climate change continued to make news stories in May. For example, *Los Angeles* journalist [Dánica Coto](#) reported, "Lax oversight, dwindling budgets, and permits illegally issued by the government have led to an increase in construction in protected areas and regions, some of them prone to flooding or landslides. The ongoing probe into homes built illegally in Puerto Rico's second-largest estuary, where officials say more than 3,600 mangrove trees were cut, has led to public hearings, the launch of a criminal investigation by Puerto Rico's Justice Department and to scrutiny of similar cases. Environmentalists warn that these cases are leaving the U.S. territory even more vulnerable to climate change amid wetter and more intense hurricane seasons."

Several **political** and **economic** themed media stories about climate change or global warming continued in May. To begin, the Australian election - with connections made to the candidates' climate stances - garnered media attention around the globe. For example, Australian-based *New York Times* journalist [Damien Cave](#) reported, "A few minutes after taking the stage to declare victory in Australia's election on Saturday, Anthony Albanese, the incoming Labor prime minister, promised to transform climate change from a source of political conflict into a generator of economic growth. 'Together we can end the climate wars,' he told his supporters, who cheered for several seconds. 'Together we can take advantage of the opportunity for Australia to be a renewable energy superpower.' With that comment and his win - along with a surge of votes for candidates outside the two-party system who made combating global warming a priority - the likelihood of a significant shift in Australia's climate policy has suddenly increased." As a second example, *NBC News* correspondent [Patrick Galey](#) reported, "One topic dominated Australia's election: climate change. Following a string of climate-related catastrophes in recent years, Australian voters this weekend returned the opposition Labor Party to power,

with incoming Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowing to 'end the climate wars' and turn Australia into a 'renewable energy superpower.' Analysts said the result showed how the public is increasingly demanding great climate commitments from leaders in a shift that could hold lessons for lawmakers in other developed countries. 'This was the climate change election for Australia,' said Ben Oquist, executive director of the Australia Institute, an independent think tank based in Canberra, the capital of Australia. 'A decade of electoral frustration spilled over into a wave of support for candidates that supported stronger climate action,' he said."

Additional stories in May 2022 relating to political themes included those circulating about climate change or global warming and Ukraine. For example, the European Union presented a plan of 195,000 million euros to divest itself of Russian oil and gas in 2027. Journalists [Valentina Pop, Alice Hancock and Sam Fleming narrated an article in \*Expansión.com\*](#) (published in *Financial Times*) wrote, "Today the energy independence plans are published and EU environmental protection, known as RePower EU, including plans to install solar panels on all buildings...The RePower EU draft suggests that the changes of behavior could reduce the global consumption of EU gas by 5% in the short term, and that the measures adopted by the industry could save up to 35,000 million cubic meters of natural gas by 2030." The war in Ukraine influenced other economic and climate change issues that captured news attention. For example, [Máster Brooke wrote an article published in \*La Expansión\*](#) "BlackRock warns it will vote against more climate resolutions this year." Furthermore, there was abundant news coverage about climate change and renewable energy in May. Spanish media discussed ambitions of 100% renewable electricity. For example, journalists [Manuel Planelles and Ignacio Fariza wrote in \*El País\*](#), "The expansion of photovoltaic and wind power allowed almost the entire peninsular demand to be covered punctually with clean energy on the first Saturday in April. It was for a short time...But it's a true picture of what's to come."

May media coverage about climate change or global warming with [ecological](#) and [meteorological](#) themes also kept pace with science stories. For instance, heatwaves and floods throughout South Asia - with links to a changing climate - grabbed media attention. As an example of the latter, [New York Times journalists Karan Deep Singh and Saif Hasnat reported](#), "Heavy pre-monsoon rains in India and Bangladesh have washed away train stations, towns and villages, leaving millions of people homeless as extreme weather events, including heat waves, intense rainfall and floods, become more common in South Asia...Climate scientists have said that India and Bangladesh are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their proximity to the warm tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, which are increasingly experiencing heat waves. The rising sea temperatures have led to 'dry conditions' in some parts of the Indian subcontinent and 'a significant increase in rainfall' in other areas."

Also in May, ecological and meteorological themed stories related to climate change or global warming touched on temperature rise around the world. From [El País journalist Manuel Planelles](#), experts from the Met Office (the UK's meteorological agency) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) maintained that "in the next five years there is a probability of around 50% that the average global temperature of the planet's surface will exceed 1, 5 degrees in any of those five years." Planelles also noted, "Global warming is advancing steadily and is approaching the safety thresholds established by the nations of the world when they signed the Paris Agreement in 2015." In May 2022, there was also coverage of high temperatures regionally. For example, [Spanish newspaper \*La Vanguardia\* reported](#), "Summer is forty days longer now than it was in the 1980s. According to a study by the AEMET (Agencia Estatal de Meteorología), every ten years summer is brought forward by almost 2.7 days in Seville due to the effects of climate change. This month of May, where there should have been milder temperatures, is a great example of this phenomenon. For a few

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years now, what was the exception has become common: an exaggerated heat during spring. In fact, summer is eating spring." Furthermore, [journalist Antonio Cerrillo wrote in \*La Vanguardia\*](#), "The climate crisis robs us of spring. Summer has lengthened an average of 30 days in 50 years in Spain."

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.

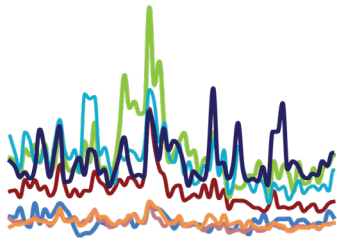
*~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Presley Church, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Ami Nacu-Schmidt and Olivia Pearman*



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  
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MeCCO

Media and Climate Change Observatory

# MONTHLY SUMMARIES

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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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