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"Climate change is evident"

Villagers try to retrieve bodies from a minibus partly submerged in the Nabuyonga River in Namakwekwe, eastern Uganda. Photo: Badru Katumba/AFP/Getty Images.

August media attention to climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe was down 4% from July 2022 and down 9% from August 2021. Coverage in international wire services increased 4% and radio coverage was up 12.5% from July 2022. Compared to the previous month, coverage increased in North America (+2%), the Middle East (+2%), Asia (+5%), and Africa (+38%), while coverage decreased in Latin America (-4%), the European Union (EU) (-10%), and Oceania (-25%). Figure 1 shows trends in newspaper media coverage at the global scale – organized into seven geographical regions around the world – from January 2004 through August 2022.

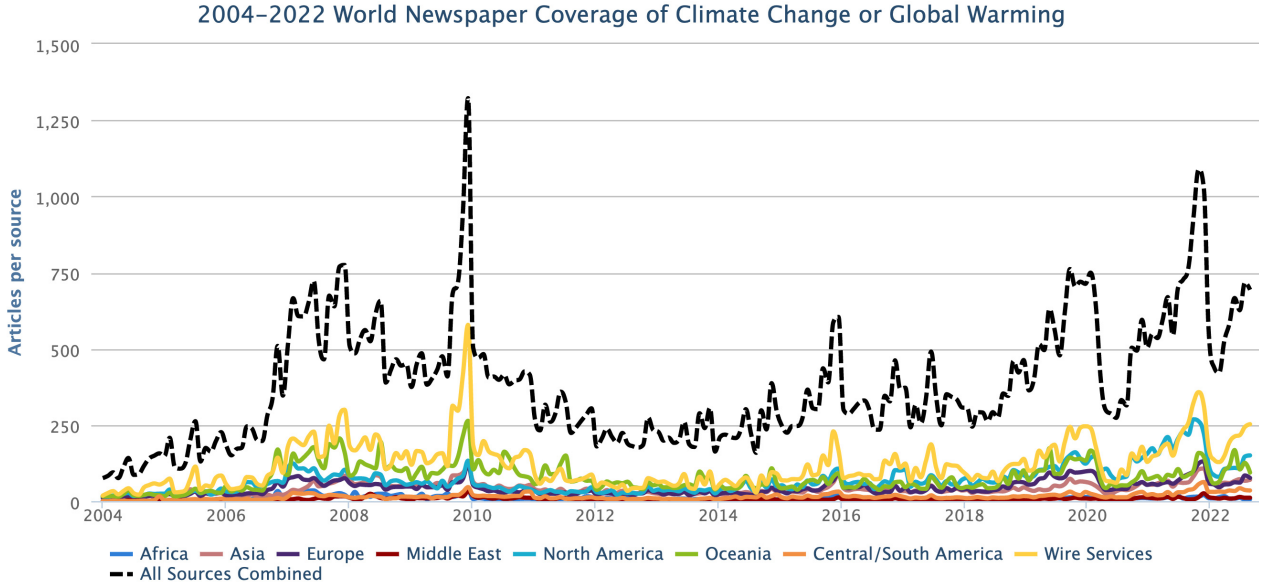

Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through August 2022.

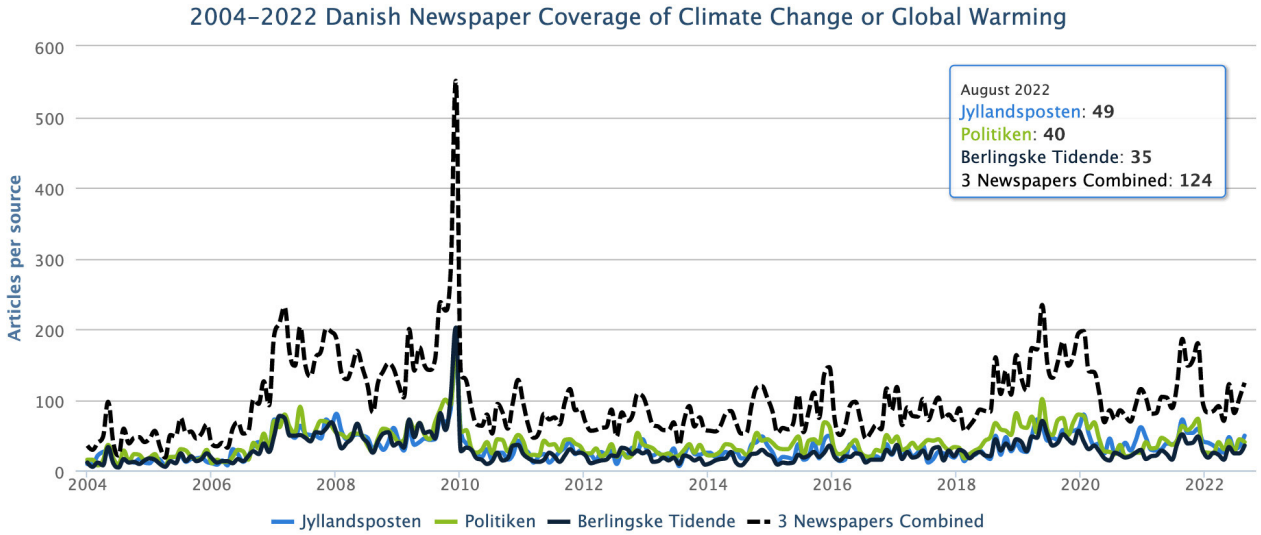

Figure 2. Denmark newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming in *Jyllandsposten*, *Politiken*, and *Berlingske Tidende* from January 2000 through August 2022.

At the country level, United States (US) print coverage increased 1% while television coverage also decreased 6% from the previous month. Among other countries that we at the Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) monitor, coverage dropped in Finland (-2%), India (-4%), Spain (-7%), Norway (-10%), Germany (-14%), the United Kingdom (UK) (-17%), New Zealand (-24%), and Australia (-26%). However, coverage in April 2022 increased in Canada (+7%), Sweden (+20%), and Denmark (+22%) (see Figure 2).

August saw significant media coverage about climate change or global warming with ***ecological*** and ***meteorological*** themes. To begin, early August saw flooding in Uganda with connections made with a changing climate in media accounts. For example, *Guardian* reporter Caroline Kimeu wrote, "At least 24 people have died and more than 5,600 people have been displaced by flash flooding in eastern Uganda. Two rivers burst their banks after heavy rainfall swept through the city of Mbale over the weekend, submerging homes, shops and roads, and uprooting water pipes. About 400,000 people have been left without clean water, and more than 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) of crops have been destroyed. Rescue efforts have been hampered by rainfall, with a number of areas still inaccessible…The head of communications at the office of the prime minister, Julius Mucunguzi, said: "The long-term solution is to protect the environment, stay clear of wetlands, riverbanks and avoid destroying river pathways. Climate change is evident. You can no longer predict when the rains will come and how intense they will be." About 300km north of Mbale, the Karamoja region has experienced severe drought over the last few months. A World Bank report predicts that at least 86 million Africans will migrate within their own countries by 2050 as a result of climate change".

August media stories about floods – with connections to climate change – also emerged through events in South Korea. For example, *CNN* correspondents Gawon Bae and Jessie Yeung reported, "Record downpours flooded homes, roads and subway stations in the South Korean capital Seoul this week, killing at least nine people, as forecasters warned of more rain to come. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol sent his condolences to the victims on Tuesday, saying he would conduct an on-site inspection and work to prevent additional damage. He also pointed out the need to review the country's disaster management system, since extreme weather is expected to become increasingly common due to the climate crisis".

In August, several meteorological-themed media stories were published on climate change or global warming throughout Europe. For example,

Spain suffered a summer of record extreme heat. *El País* journalist Manuel Planelles noted, "The country has suffered three episodes of soaring temperatures that have gone off the charts due to their harshness, geographic spread, and duration. Added to this is an also historical lack of rain and a devastating fire season. Between the months of June and August, there have been 42 days with a heat wave". Meanwhile, *La Vanguardia* journalist Antonio Cerrillo reported, "This July will go down in history for its extreme temperatures and its serious consequences (deaths and fires). According to data from the Carlos III Health Institute (ISCIII) from July 1 to 29, it is estimated that 2,124 people have died as a result of high temperatures, an average of 72 per day". A main theme of the front page of *El País* was titled "Extreme weather breaks into the Spanish political agenda". *El País* journalists Manuel Planelles and Natalia Junqueras wrote, "The parties prepare their programs for the municipal and regional elections in the midst of an environmental crisis plagued by heat waves, fires and lack of water".

Meanwhile, in August Europe continued to suffer its worst drought in the last 500 years. *La Vanguardia* journalist Joaquím Elcacho noted, "64% of the territory of EU countries is on warning or alert, with a serious impact on agriculture and livestock, ecosystems and the danger of the expansion of fires The data from Copernicus and the Drought Observatory add to the Report of the Joint Research Center of the European Commission (JRC). Data from this month of August indicate that 47% of the territory of the European Union is on alert due to drought and 17% on alert due to low rainfall". One of the consequences, for example, is that the drought chokes traffic on the German river Rhine. Meanwhile, *La Vanguardia* journalist Mary Paz López wrote, "The lowering of the water level of the Rhine River due to the drought it is reducing transport and therefore affects the supply chain for the industry in Germany, especially in matters such as coal, crude oil and chemical products. The barges continue sailing, but with reduced load".

In France and Spain there were also big fires that sparked media attention. For example, *El Mundo* journalist Nuria López reported, "[France] is suffering one of the worst waves of fires in its history. More than 7,000 hectares destroyed, 10,000 residents evacuated and 1,100 firefighters fighting to put it out with European help". Also, *El País* journalist Patricia Ortega noted about the burned Spain, "45 large fires and 250,000 hectares. This summer's fires have burned more mountains than ever before, breaking statistics and leaving a black blanket of ash on the affected towns".

Several ***political*** and ***economic*** themed media stories about climate change or global warming continued in August. To begin, there were several media reports that unabated climate change will mean many challenges for the European economy. For example, *El País* journalist Álvaro Sánchez wrote, "The climate against the economy: heat and drought affect Europe. Agriculture, construction, tourism and energy face changes that can make the exceptional structural".

Also in early August, an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report was covered by several media outlets. For example, *Associated Press* correspondent Wanjohi Kabukuru reported, "Richer countries failed to keep a $100 billion-a-year pledge to developing nations to help them achieve their climate goals, according to

Figure 3. Examples of front page stories in UK and European newspapers in August 2022.

an analysis by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD. $83.3 billion in climate financing was given to poorer countries in 2020, a 4% increase from the previous year, but still short of the proposed goal. The United Nations-backed payment plan was first agreed in 2009 to help poorer nations adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce emissions. The pledge, which was originally set up as an annual commitment from its inception until 2020, has never been fulfilled. "We know that more needs to be done" to address the shortfall, admitted OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann. Who pays for tackling and adapting to climate change has been a key sticking point between richer nations and poorer ones since international climate negotiations began 30 years ago. Harsen Nyambe, who heads the African Union climate change and environment division, told the Associated Press the continent will continue to put pressure on richer nations to ensure the $100 billion-a-year agreement is fulfilled. He added that the funds will give the continent better access to required technology and will help nations transition to green energy in a fair way. But others believe that after decades of unmet promises, it's unlikely that richer countries will start to step up".

In mid-August, media coverage of US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi traveling to Taiwan – with many reverberations therein – earned media coverage of China's reaction regarding retaliatory stoppage of bilateral climate negotiation. For example, *South China Morning Post* journalist Echo Xie reported, "China's decision to suspend cooperation with the United States on issues such as climate change and drug trafficking after Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan has raised questions about how long the situation will drag on and whether things can get worse. Officials from both sides have previously cited climate change and narcotics as examples of how they could try to work together despite confrontations in almost every other sphere, ranging from trade and the South China Sea to Xinjiang and Hong Kong".

August media coverage also featured many ***cultural*** stories relating to climate change or global warming. For example, some celebrity Instagram posts led to greater scrutiny about private air travel. Among these stories, *New York Times* journalist Constant Méheut reported, "As France reels from a summer of extreme temperatures and soaring energy prices, prompting increasingly urgent calls to rein in polluters contributing to global warming, one high-flying culprit is finding itself in the cross hairs: the private jet. In recent days, France's transportation minister called for flights by such planes to be restricted because of their outsized contribution to climate change, while a prominent lawmaker for the Green Party said he would soon introduce a bill to ban them altogether. The announcements have struck a chord in France, where weeks of severe drought and wildfires have brought home the realities of global warming, stoking a larger debate about consumer responsibility for addressing climate change. Calls for better conservation of energy are also growing in France, like in much of Europe, as the war in Ukraine squeezes supplies of gas and oil".

Meanwhile, *Washington Post* journalist Allyson Chiu wrote, " Popular celebrities are no strangers to being at the top of rankings. But several big names recently found themselves featured on a new list: "Celebs with the Worst Private Jet CO_2 Emissions." The analysis of flight data, which was published online Friday by a U.K.-based sustainability marketing agency Yard, came on the heels of other celebrities such as Kylie Jenner and Drake weathering intense public criticism after it was revealed that their emissions-spewing private jets logged trips as short as 17 minutes and 14 minutes, respectively. Using data from a popular Twitter account that tracks celebrity jet movements based on public information, the report stated that planes affiliated with celebrities emitted an average of more than 3,376 metric tons of CO2 – roughly 480 times more than an average person's annual emissions. The report, which was not peer-reviewed and features a prominent disclaimer about its analysis, includes the names of a handful of celebrities, at least two of whom have publicly disputed the list, saying that the flight data affiliated with them does not

reflect their actual usage. Taylor Swift's plane was identified by the report as the "biggest celebrity CO2e polluter this year so far," racking up 170 flights since January with emissions totaling more than 8,293 metric tons. A plane affiliated with boxer Floyd Mayweather came in second, emitting about 7,076 metric tons of CO2, with one logged trip only lasting 10 minutes. Jay-Z, who could not be reached for comment, was listed third. After publication, a lawyer for Jay-Z told The Washington Post the rapper does not own the private jet in question; Rolling Stone reported that the flight data used in the analysis is from a plane tied to Puma and attributed to Jay-Z for his relationship with the brand".

Finally, many climate change or global warming stories focused on ***scientific*** themes in the month of August. To begin, early in August a study in the journal *Lancet Planetary Health* earned media coverage in several outlets. For example, US *National Public Radio* correspondent Ayana Archie noted, "Rising nighttime temperatures may increase the mortality rate worldwide by up to 60% by the end of the century, according to a study whose authors say is the first research to estimate the impact of hotter nights on climate change-related mortality risks. More heat at night can disrupt sleep patterns as the body attempts to cool down, leading to adverse effects on the immune system. This could contribute to the probability of developing cardiovascular disease, chronic illnesses, inflammation and mental health challenges, the authors of the study concluded. By 2090, nighttime temperatures could double from an average of 68.7 degrees Fahrenheit to 103.5 degrees Fahrenheit in 28 cities across China, South Korea and Japan that the study examined".

In mid-August a study in *Communications Earth & Environment* also earned media attention. For example, *CBS News* correspondent Li Cohen reported, "Scientists have known for years that the Arctic has suffered from more warming than the rest of the world. But a new study shows that it's much worse than previously thought. Researchers have long estimated that the Arctic warms twice as fast as the rest of the world – a phenomenon known as Arctic amplification – but a new study published in Nature Communications Earth & Environment on Thursday found that it's actually double that. The Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than anywhere else on Earth. In some areas of the Arctic Ocean, the warming rate is even up to seven times as fast".

With all this in mind, we thank you 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. There simply are no comparable monitoring services for news coverage of climate change or global warming. We provide these monthly summaries, datasets, and figures open source and downloadable so that they can be used widely; however, our ability to do so depends on financial support from those who can do so. If you are someone who can support MeCCO (any amount is helpful), follow this link: https://giving.cu.edu/fund/media-and-climate-change-observatory-mecco-fund

~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Presley Church, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Jennifer Katzung, 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 so please consider contributing:

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MeCCO
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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