

“A slew of climate records were broken, many of which have been, or are on course to be, broken again this year”



A meltwater stream flowing from the Tsanfleuron Glacier, Switzerland. The country is seeing its alpine glaciers melting at an increasingly rapid rate. Photo: FAbrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images.

April media coverage of climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe dropped 12% from March 2023 and also dipped 4% from April 2022 levels. International wire services decreased 16% while radio coverage went down 26% from March 2023. Compared to the previous month, coverage decreased in all

regions: 4% lower in both the European Union (EU) and in North America, down 8% in Asia, 19% lower in Africa, down 23% in both Oceania and in the Middle East, and 33% lower in Latin America. 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 2023.

2004–2023 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

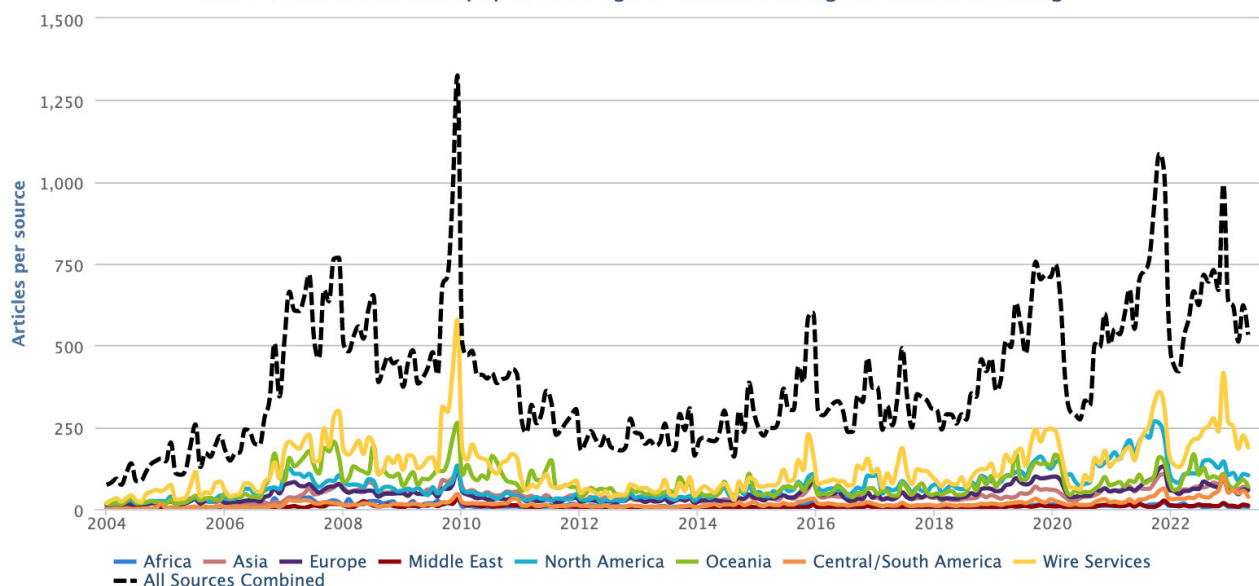


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through April 2023.

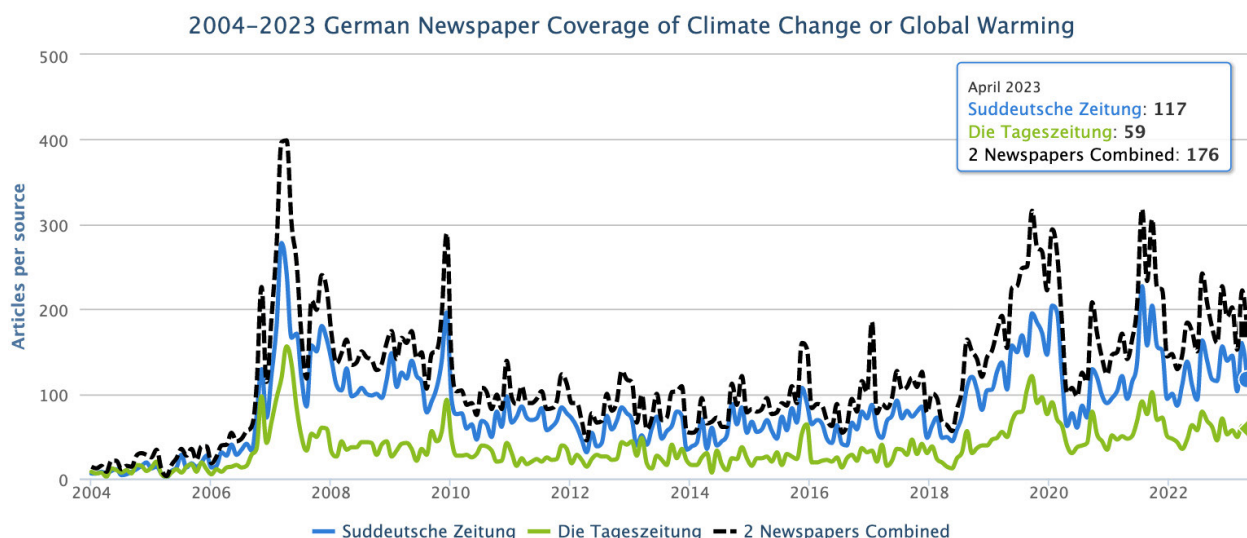


Figure 2. Newspaper coverage of climate change ('klimawandel') or global warming ('globale erwärmung') in two German newspapers (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Tageszeitung*) from January 2000 through April 2023.

Among countries that we at the Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) monitor, United States (US) print coverage decreased 5% while television coverage went down 7% from March. But coverage not uniformly trend either up or down across the US media sources: on ABC coverage increased 75%, coverage on CBS and PBS both doubled (+100%) and coverage tripled at *The Wall Street Journal*. Meanwhile, coverage at *The Washington Post* decreased 8%, as coverage dropped at MSNBC (-10%), *The New York Times* (-13%), Fox (-25%), NBC (-25%), CNN (-26%), *The Los Angeles Times* (-45%) and in the pages of *USA Today* (-64%).

Turning to the content of coverage, media attention to climate change or global warming was pervaded by *ecological* and *meteorological* themes. For instance, record-breaking heat across Asia – with connections to climate change – generated several news stories in April. For example, *Washington Post* journalist Dan Stillman wrote, "Numerous heat records have been broken across Southeast Asia, China and other parts of the continent in recent days as the region remains in the grip of a dangerously scorching heat wave, with Thailand in particular experiencing unusually extreme conditions. Weather historian Maximiliano Herrera is describing it as the "worst April heat wave in Asian history"... Meanwhile, hundreds of weather stations across China have seen their

warmest April temperatures on record. Climate specialist Jim Yang tweeted that 109 weather stations across 12 provinces broke their record for high temperature for April on Monday. An additional nine stations tied their April record for high temperature...China's hottest months are typically June and July. Last year, the temperature reached as high as 113 degrees (45 Celsius) in Beibei in Chongqing province during a record-setting summer heat wave that dried up rivers and sparked forest fires...The hot days had been accumulating over the past few weeks, with Yuanjiang in Hunan province having exceeded 95 degrees (35 Celsius) for 22 straight days as of Friday...Studies have found that human-induced climate change is increasing the intensity and duration of heat waves in China. Elsewhere in the region, temperatures reached 112 degrees (44.6 Celsius) on Monday in Prayagraj, India. And in Bangladesh, the high temperature reached 109 degrees (43.0 Celsius) in Ishurdi, tying the April record for warmest temperature. Kalewa, Myanmar, set a new April high of 111 degrees (44.0 Celsius), while Nepal got to 107 degrees (41.7 Celsius). Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, reached 105 degrees (40.6 Celsius)". Meanwhile, *Guardian* correspondent Rebecca Ratcliffe added, "In Bangladesh, temperatures rose above 40C in the capital, Dhaka, earlier this month, marking the hottest day in 58 years and causing road surfaces to melt. The International Centre for

Integrated Mountain Development (Icimod), an intergovernmental group, has raised particular concern about the impact of global heating on the Hindu Kush Himalaya region. The region holds the third largest body of frozen water in the world, and is warming at double the global average, according to the Icimod. "In the most optimistic scenario, limiting global warming to 1.5C, the region stands to lose one third of its glaciers by 2100 – creating huge risk to mountain communities, ecosystems and nature and the quarter of humanity downstream," said Deepshikha Sharma, a Climate and Environment Specialist at Icimod. "Human-induced climate change is the major cause of the growing number and ferocity of heat-waves we're seeing across Asia. These signal to the fact that the climate emergency is here for this region," said Sharma, who called for faster emissions reductions and increased investment to help protect areas adapt".

Meanwhile, drought across East Africa – with connections to a changing climate – made news in April. For example, [Guardian journalist Fiona Harvey wrote](#), "The devastating drought in the Horn of Africa would not have happened without the human-made impact of the climate crisis, new science has shown. The drought has affected about 50 million people in the Horn of Africa directly and another 100 million in the wider area. About 20 million people are at risk of acute food insecurity and potentially famine. The region has been suffering its worst drought in 40 years since October 2020, with extended dry conditions punctuated by short intense rainfall that has often led to flash flooding. There have been five consecutive seasons of rainfall below normal levels. At least 4.35 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and at least 180,000 refugees have fled Somalia and South Sudan for Kenya and Ethiopia, which have also been affected by the drought".

Moreover, [political](#) and [economic](#)-themed media stories about climate change or global warming continued to unfold in April. Among these stories, in the US, Environmental Protection Agency regulatory actions to reduce emissions from vehicles prompted media coverage early

"The world will likely use fewer fossil fuels to produce electricity this year in a "turning point" for planet-friendly energy, a new report says. It would be the first ever annual drop in the use of coal, oil and gas to generate electricity, outside of a global recession or pandemic."



China added around 40% of the world's new solar panels last year, with large numbers of rooftop installations. Photo: Getty Images.

in the month. For example, [Associated Press correspondent Sophie Austin reported](#), "The Biden administration cleared the way Friday for California's plan to phase out a wide range of diesel-powered trucks, part of the state's efforts to drastically cut planet-warming emissions and improve air quality in heavy-traffic areas like ports along the coast. The decision by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency allows California – which has some of the nation's worst air pollution – to require truck manufacturers to sell an increasing number of zero-emission trucks over the next couple of decades. The rule applies to a wide range of trucks including box trucks, semitrailers and even large passenger pick-ups".

Also in April, burgeoning wind and solar energy production for electricity – as reported on in the [Global Electricity Review report](#) – sparked several media stories. For example, [BBC](#)

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Figure 3. Examples of newspaper front pages with climate change stories in April.

journalist [Matt McGrath](#) reported, “The world will likely use fewer fossil fuels to produce electricity this year in a “turning point” for planet-friendly energy, a new report says. It would be the first ever annual drop in the use of coal, oil and gas to generate electricity, outside of a global recession or pandemic. As a result, fewer warming gases would be released during energy production. The authors attribute the expected change to a boom in renewable energy led mainly by China”.

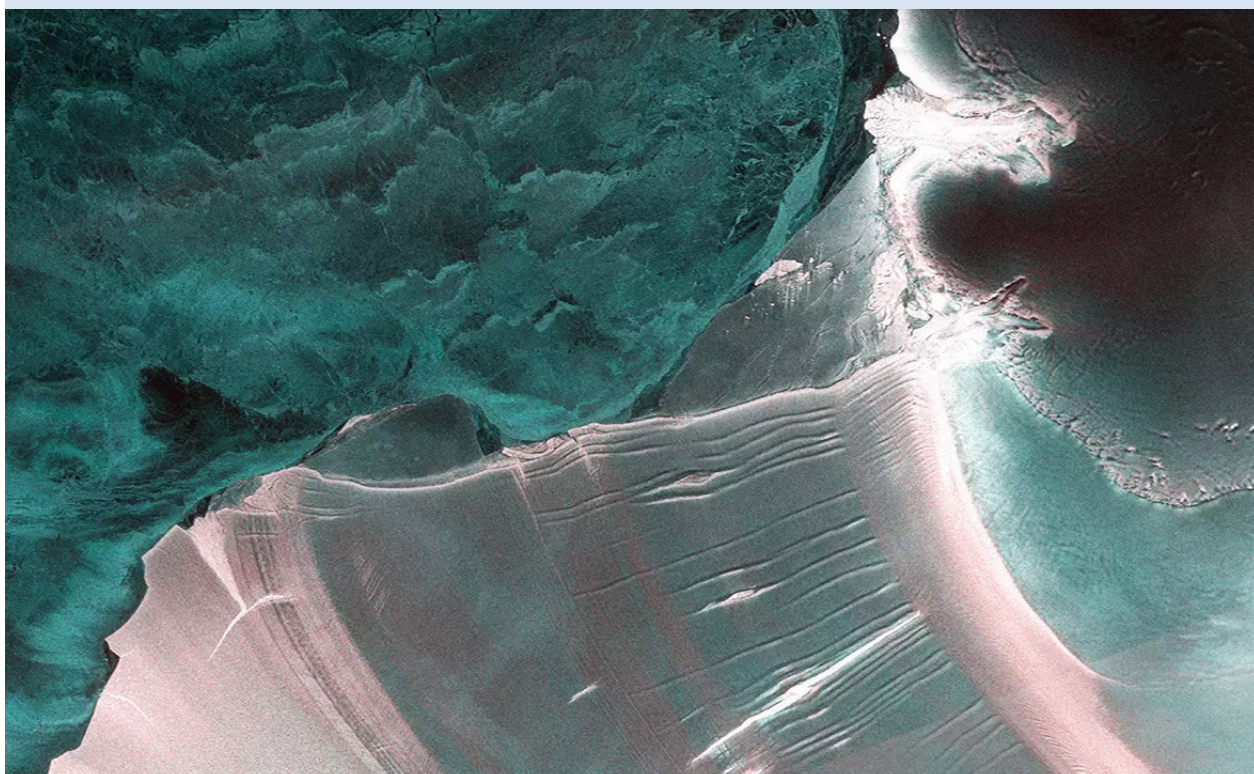
As April continued to unfold, further actions from the US Biden Administration – such as the creation of an Office of Environmental Justice – garnered media attention. For example, [USA Today](#) journalists [Doyle Rice](#) and [Dinah Voyles Pulver](#) wrote, “On the eve of Earth Day, President Joe Biden announced the creation of an Office of Environmental Justice as he lays out a plan to make it “the mission of every single executive agency,” the White House said. As part of an executive order, the new office will coordinate environmental justice efforts across the federal government. The order presses agencies to close gaps in data and use scientific research to understand and prevent the damage to people’s health brought by pollution. The White House calls it “the most ambitious environmental justice agenda in our nation’s history.” The action is the result of nearly two decades of organizing by the environmental justice movement, said the Climate Justice Alliance, a nonprofit representing 89 rural and urban community-based environmental justice organizations”.

Various [cultural](#) stories relating to climate change or global warming were also evident

in wider news coverage in April. To illustrate, food shortages across Madagascar – with links to climate change – led to media attention. For example, [Associated Press](#) correspondent [Sarah Tetaud](#) wrote, “Battered by three intense cyclones in the space of a year, southeast Madagascar is experiencing the knock-on effect of those climatic disasters: “catastrophic” hunger in remote, inaccessible areas...Cyclone Batsirai hit in February 2022, followed two weeks later by Cyclone Emnati. Then, Cyclone Freddy made landfall on the Indian Ocean island in February of this year. The combined impact left 60%-90% of farming areas in the southeast badly damaged and food crops largely destroyed, according to a report by UNICEF and Madagascar’s National Office for Nutrition...People living in remote districts like coastal Nosy-Varika and the mountainous region of Ikongo were extremely vulnerable to hunger before the cyclones, and children across southeast Madagascar experienced chronic malnutrition, according to Brian Willett, head of mission in Madagascar for Doctors Without Borders, also known as Médecins Sans Frontières. “But with the repeated climate shocks of the past year, their resilience has been exceeded,” he said. “Today, 1 in 4 children is acutely malnourished. Without medical support, these children are at risk of dying.”

Finally, many [scientific](#) themes continued to emerge in media stories during the month of April through new studies, reports, and assessments. Prominently, a [study in Nature](#) found faster ice melt in the Arctic than previously detected, and that generated media attention. For example, [Washington Post](#) correspondents [Kasha Patel](#) and [Chris Mooney](#) reported, “At the

“Today, the fastest withdrawing glaciers in Antarctica are seen to retreat by up to 30m a day. But if they sped up, the extra melt water would have big implications for sea-level rises around the globe. Ice losses from Antarctica caused by climate change have already pushed up the surface of the world’s oceans by nearly 1cm since the 1990s.”



Satellites can map the retreat of Antarctic glaciers but their record is short - just 40 years or so. Photo: Copernicus EU/ESA.

end of the last ice age, parts of an enormous ice sheet covering Eurasia retreated up to a startling 2,000 feet per day – more than the length of the Empire State Building, according to a study released Wednesday. The rate is easily the fastest measured to date, upending what scientists previously thought were the upper speed limits for ice sheet retreat – a finding that may shed light on how quickly ice in Greenland and Antarctica could melt and raise global sea levels in today’s warming world. Scientists monitor ice sheet retreat rates to better estimate contributions to global sea level rise. Antarctica and Greenland have lost more than 6.4 trillion tons of ice since the 1990s,

boosting global sea levels by at least 0.7 inches (17.8 millimeters). Together, the two ice sheets are responsible for more than one-third of total sea level rise. The rapid retreat found on the Eurasian Ice Sheet far outpaces the fastest-moving glaciers studied in Antarctica, which have been measured to retreat as quickly as 160 feet per day. Once the ice retreats toward the land, it lifts from its grounding on the seafloor and begins to float, allowing it to flow faster and increase the contribution to sea level rise. If air and ocean temperatures around Antarctica were to increase as projected and match those at the end of the last ice age, researchers say ice marching backward hundreds of feet in a

day could trigger a collapse of modern-day glaciers sooner than previously thought. That could be devastating for global sea levels". Meanwhile, [BBC journalist Jonathan Amos wrote](#), "Antarctica's melting ice sheet could retreat much faster than previously thought, new research suggests. The evidence comes from markings on the seafloor off Norway that record the pull-back of a melting European ice sheet thousands of years ago. Today, the fastest withdrawing glaciers in Antarctica are seen to retreat by up to 30m a day. But if they sped up, the extra melt water would have big implications for sea-level rises around the globe. Ice losses from Antarctica caused by climate change have already pushed up the surface of the world's oceans by nearly 1cm since the 1990s. The researchers found that with the Norwegian sheet, the maximum retreat was more than 600m a day".

Also in April, a United Nations World Meteorological Organization report pointed to connections between climate change and disaster events. For example, [CNN journalist Laura Paddison reported](#), "Droughts, floods and record low ice levels – from the top of the world's mountains to the depths of the ocean, the climate crisis took a heavy toll as it continued to intensify in 2022, new analysis from the World Meteorological Organization shows. The WMO's annual State of the Climate Report, published Friday ahead of Earth Day, is essentially a health checkup for the world. It analyzes a series of global climate indicators – including levels of planet-heating pollution, sea level rise and ocean heat – to understand how the planet is responding to climate change and the impact it is having on people and nature.

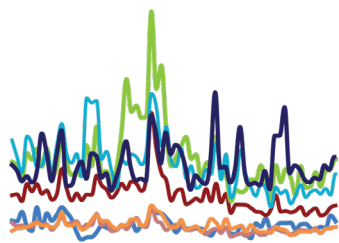
The findings paint a stark picture...A slew of climate records were broken, many of which have been, or are on course to be, broken again this year:

- Oceans reached record high temperatures, with nearly 60% experiencing at least one marine heatwave.
- Global sea levels climbed to the highest on record due to melting glaciers and warming oceans, which expand as they heat up.
- Antarctica's sea ice dropped to 1.92 million square kilometers in February 2022, at the time the lowest level on record (the record was broken again this year).
- The European Alps saw a record year for glacier melt, with Switzerland particularly badly affected, losing 6% of its glacier volume between 2021 and 2022.
- Levels of planet warming pollution, including methane and carbon dioxide, reached record highs in 2021, the latest year for which there is global data.

These broad climate indicators are an important reflection of the state of the planet, the report noted, but extreme weather events – fueled by climate change – are where the immediate effects are most felt".

Thanks for your 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, Jennifer Katzung, Ami Nacu-Schmidt and Olivia Pearman



MeCCO

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MeCCO monitors 130 sources (across newspapers, radio and TV) in 59 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**