

“A comprehensive architecture to meet our climate ambitions”



The EU's most polluting industries have been subject to the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme for the past 15 years. Photo: Reuters.

July media attention to climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe increased 4% from the previous month of June. However, July 2021 global radio coverage of climate change or global warming decreased 6% from June 2021, while coverage in international wire services increased 17% from the previous month. Regionally,

compared to the previous month, coverage was up in Europe (+17%), Latin America (+17%), and North America (+11%), but was down in Asia (-3%), Oceania (-25%), the Middle East (-28%), and across Africa (-54%). Figure 1 shows trends in newspaper media coverage at the global scale – organized into seven geographical regions around the world – from January 2004 through July 2021.

2004–2021 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

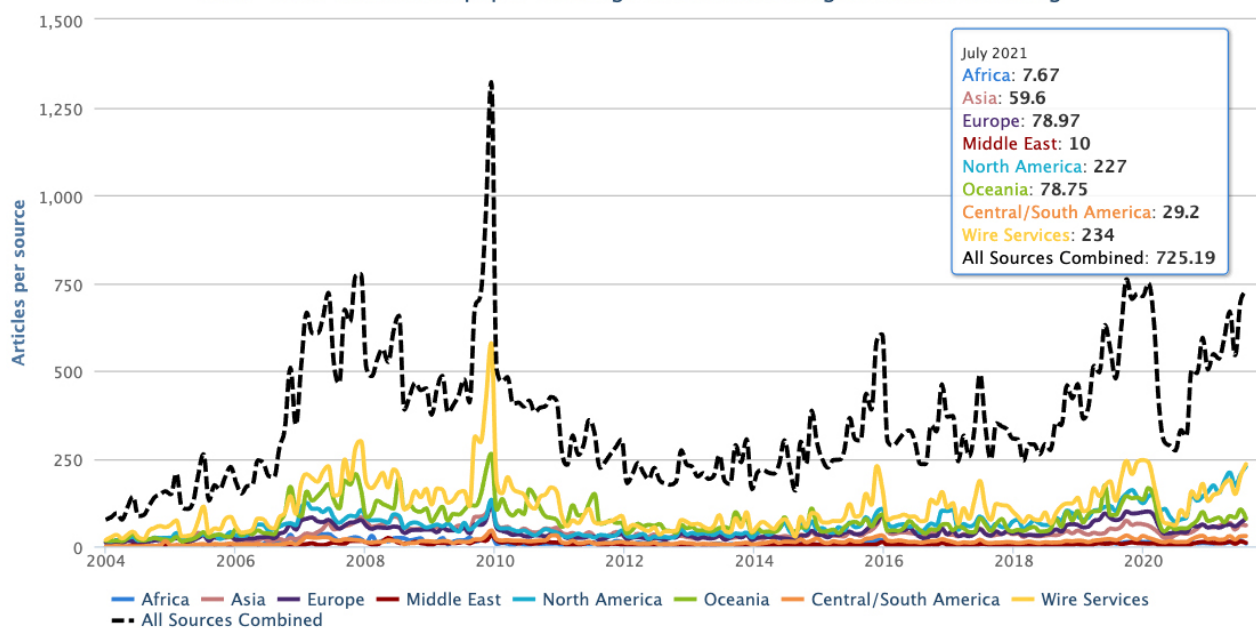


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through July 2021.

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At the country level, United States (US) print coverage increased 15% while television coverage decreased 18% from the previous month. Of note, while we noted last month that CNN coverage of climate change or global warming more than tripled from May 2021 to June 2021, CNN coverage dropped again 15% from June 2021 to July 2021 while levels of coverage increased only slightly at CBS (+14%), stayed level at PBS and dropped at all the other outlets (ABC (-55%), MSNBC (-14%), NBC (-67%) and Fox News (-22%).

Meanwhile, compared to the previous month coverage rose in Canada (+8%), Spain (+9%), Sweden (+10%), India (+16%), Germany (+55%) (see Figure 2), Norway (+83%), and Finland (+112%), and remained level in the United Kingdom (UK) while decreasing in Denmark (-9%), New Zealand (-12%), Japan (-13%), Russia (-17%), and Australia (-33%) in July 2021.

Much like in June, July media stories about climate change or global warming were dominated by *ecological* and *meteorological* stories. For instance, at the beginning of the month, flooding in Germany and Belgium - with connections to a changing climate - captured international media attention. For example, reporting from Europe *Associated Press* correspondent Frank Jordans noted, "Malu Dreyer, the governor of Rhineland-Palatinate state, said the disaster showed the need to speed

up efforts to curb global warming, which experts say could make such disasters more frequent. She accused Laschet and Merkel's center-right Union bloc of hindering efforts to achieve greater greenhouse gas reductions in Germany, Europe's biggest economy and a major emitter of planet-warming gases. "Climate change isn't abstract anymore. We are experiencing it up close and painfully," she told the Funke media group. Steinmeier, the German president, echoed her calls for greater efforts to combat global warming. "Only if we decisively take up the fight against climate change will we be able to limit the extreme weather conditions we are now experiencing," he said". Meanwhile, *CNN* journalist Angela Dewan reported, "European officials have said climate change contributed to this week's extreme flooding, which has left entire towns submerged and more than 120 people dead. Scientists have for decades warned that climate change will make extreme weather events, including heavy rain and deadly flooding, more likely. Around 100 of those killed after torrential rainfall since Wednesday were in Germany's western states of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia, where local leaders are urging the world for swifter action on climate change as villages under their watch become a new and unexpected epicenter of global warming. Neighboring Belgium has also been hit hard by the floods, which have killed 20 people in the country and could rise further". And among several *New York Times* articles covering the flooding, *journalist Somini Sengupta* quoted

2004–2021 German Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

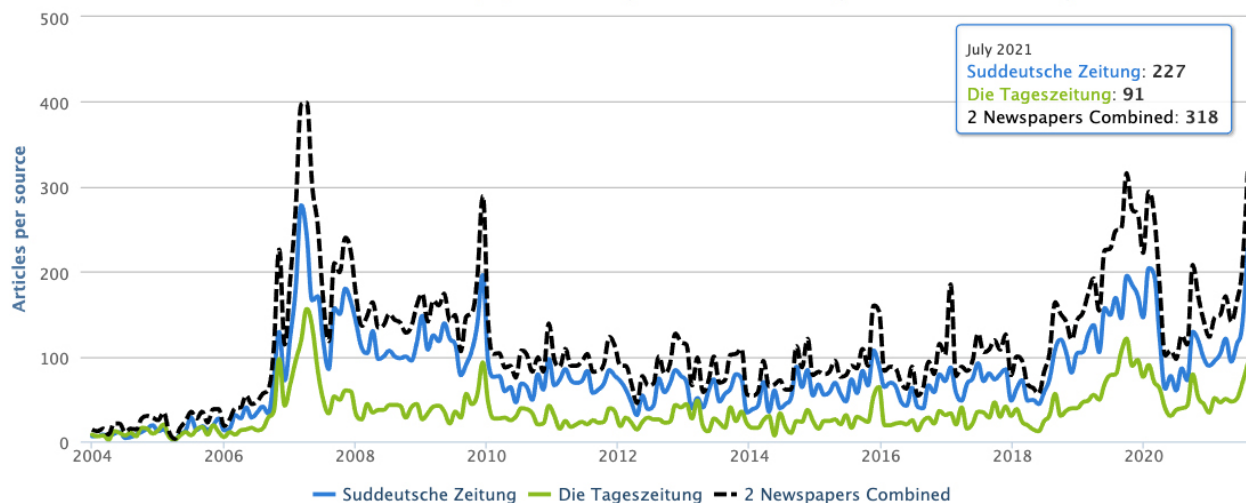


Figure 2. German newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming from January 2000 through July 2021.



Figure 3. A sampling of July 18 front pages - in *Expressen* (Sweden), *New York Times* (US), *Politiken* (Denmark), and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany) - covering the flooding in Germany and Belgium, noting links with a changing climate.

former president of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed, when he remarked, “While not all are affected equally, this tragic event is a reminder that, in the climate emergency, no one is safe, whether they live on a small island nation like mine or a developed Western European state”.

Reflecting further on the tragic events, *Guardian* journalist [Jonathan Watts](#) reported, “The intensity and scale of the floods in Germany this week have shocked climate scientists, who did not expect records to be broken this much, over such a wide area or this soon. After the deadly heatwave in the US and Canada, where temperatures rose above 49.6C two weeks ago, the deluge in central Europe has raised fears that human-caused climate disruption is making extreme weather even worse than predicted...Climate scientists have long predicted that human emissions would cause more floods, heatwaves, droughts, storms and other forms of extreme weather, but the latest spikes have surpassed many expectations”. Furthermore, *Associated Press* correspondent [Rafe Casert](#) noted, “Just as the European Union was announcing plans to spend billions of euros to contain climate change, massive clouds gathered over Germany and nearby nations to unleash an unprecedented storm that left death and destruction in its wake. Despite ample warnings, politicians and weather forecasters were shocked at the ferocity of the precipitation that caused flash flooding that claimed more than 150 lives this week in the lush rolling hills of Western Europe. Climate scientists say the link

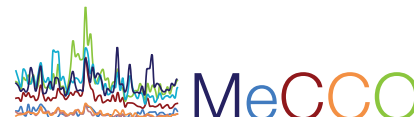
between extreme weather and global warming is unmistakable and the urgency to do something about climate change undeniable. Scientists can’t yet say for sure whether climate change caused the flooding, but they insist that it certainly exacerbates the extreme weather that has been on show from the western U.S. and Canada to Siberia to Europe’s Rhine region”.

Further to the east in Siberia, media coverage of 300 fires that were devouring 1.4 million hectares in the Yakutia region, sitting on permafrost garnered attention with connections to climate change. For example, *El País* journalist [María Sahuquillo](#) noted, “The effects of the climate emergency are palpable in this region of northern Siberia, which year after year breaks records for high temperatures: in 2020, Verkhojansk, a small town in the Arctic circle, which can register 60 degrees below zero in winter and that competes for the record of the coldest in the world, registered 37.4 suffocating degrees. The heat, which has already changed part of the orography of the area, combines with increasingly dry soil and fuels forest fires. Fires are part of the ecology of the Arctic, according to a report by the European Center for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, which nevertheless warns that their increasing frequency and intensity are “worrisome” and that they can contribute to the thawing of permafrost”.

Meanwhile, wildfires in the western US - with connections to climate change or global warming - captured media attention. Prominently, the ‘Bootleg Fire’ burning in the southern state of

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Oregon drove media stories. For example, *USA Today* journalist [Doyle Rice](#) wrote, “The ferocious 2021 wildfire season in the West showed no signs of letting up Friday, as thousands of firefighters continued to battle dozens of blazes across the parched, overheated region... The nation has set 585 all-time heat records in the past 30 days, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Extremely dry conditions and heat waves tied to climate change have swept the West, making wildfires harder to fight. Climate change has made the American West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive”.

Alongside the wildfires was ongoing heat waves across the US west, with high temperature records falling and stories making connections to trends consistent with human-fueled climate change. For example, *Washington Post* correspondent [Matthew Cappucci](#) reported, “For the fourth time in the past month and a half, a strong heat wave is roasting parts of the western U.S., as wildfires run amok. High-temperature records could fall in parts of the northern Rockies on Monday, where the most exceptional lobe of warmth is concentrated. There are signs that the seemingly unrelenting heat that has proved a staple of summer 2021 won’t be going anywhere anytime soon, with prolonged hot, dry conditions likely for weeks over large areas of the western Lower 48. The heat is contributing to increased wildfire danger as dozens of blazes rage across 12 states in the West, including in south-central Oregon, where the Bootleg Fire already has charred more than 300,000 acres. Six additional wildfires have already swollen to 50,000 acres in size or larger – and roughly two months remain until the peak of wildfire season. Red flag warnings, connoting the potential for “extreme” fire behavior, blanket most of Montana and Idaho, western Wyoming, eastern Oregon as well as southeast Washington.



Figure 4. July front page coverage in *The Washington Post* (US) and *The Guardian* (UK) reporting on the northwest US and Canada, noting links with a changing climate.

That’s where the combination of hot temperatures and low humidity will dry the landscape and its vegetation enough to make for a breeding ground for fires...The exceptional heat will amplify ongoing wildfire risk across the northern part of the West. The hot temperatures, made possible in large part by drought exacerbated by climate change, are responsible for extracting humidity from the ground and drying it out even more. Roughly two-thirds of the West is encapsulated within “extreme” or “exceptional” drought, the two most severe categories highlighted by the U.S. Drought Monitor”.

As the fires and extreme heat continued to blanket the US West in July, reporting continued to make several links with climate change or global warming. For example, [journalist Jennifer Calfas](#) at *The Wall Street Journal* reported, “More than 20,000 firefighters and other personnel battled dozens of wildfires across the western U.S. Wednesday as dry, windy weather and potential thunderstorms threatened to hinder containment efforts, and smoke from fires affected air quality as far away as the East Coast. The Bootleg Fire in south central Oregon, the largest fire in the U.S. currently, expanded to 394,407 acres by Wednesday with 32% containment. Wind and dry vegetation have helped fuel the fast-moving fire, and pushed some of the 2,250 firefighters assigned to the incident off the front lines and

into designated safety areas for 10 consecutive days...Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said the Bootleg Fire is the fourth-largest blaze recorded in the state since 1900. The fire has destroyed 67 homes and 117 structures. About 2,500 structures are still threatened by the flames. In a press briefing Tuesday, the governor pointed to drought across the state and much of the West, climate change, a series of heat waves this summer and longer and more intense fire seasons as contributing factors to the challenges facing firefighters today”.

On the other side of the globe, flooding in central China sparked many media accounts. For example, [BBC reported](#), “Twelve people have died after record-breaking rainfall flooded underground railway tunnels in China, leaving passengers trapped in rising waters. Video shared on social media shows evening commuters just managing to keep their heads above water. Water is seen rushing onto platforms. More than 500 people were eventually rescued from the tunnels in Henan province, officials said. Days of rain have caused widespread damage and led to 200,000 evacuations. Above ground, roads have been turned into rivers, with cars and debris swept along in fast moving currents. A number of pedestrians have had to be rescued...Zhengzhou saw 624mm of rainfall on Tuesday, with a third of that amount falling between 16:00 and 17:00 alone, which “smashed historical records”. It forecasted that parts of the region would continue to see “severe or extremely severe storms” and that the heavy rain would likely only end on Thursday. Many factors contribute to flooding, but a warming atmosphere caused by climate change makes extreme rainfall more likely”. As a second example, in the days of reflection after the event [New York Times](#) journalists [Steven Lee Myers](#), [Keith Bradsher](#) and [Chris Buckley reported](#), “China’s breakneck growth over the last four decades erected soaring cities where there had been hamlets and farmland. The cities lured factories, and the factories lured workers. The boom lifted hundreds of millions of people out of the poverty and rural hardship they once faced. Now those cities face the daunting new challenge of adapting to extreme weather caused by climate change, a possibility that few gave much thought to when the country began



Figure 5. July front page coverage in *El País* (Spain) noting links between ecological and meteorological events and climate change.

its extraordinary economic transformation. China’s pell-mell, brisk urbanization has in some ways made the challenge harder to face. No one weather event can be directly linked to climate change, but the storm that flooded Zhengzhou and other cities in central China last week, killing at least 69 as of Monday, reflects a global trend of extreme weather that has seen deadly flooding recently in Germany and Belgium, and severe heat and wildfires in Siberia”.

Also in Asia, July media coverage of climate change or global warming also covered flooding in refugee camps in Bangladesh. For example, [Associated Press](#) correspondent [Julhas Alam reported](#), “days of heavy rainfall have pounded Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, destroying dwellings and sending thousands of people to live with extended families or in communal shelters. In the 24 hours until Wednesday afternoon, more than 30 centimeters (11.8 inches) of rain fell on the camps in Cox’s Bazar district hosting more than 800,000 Rohingya, the U.N. refugee agency said. That’s

nearly half the average July rainfall in one day, and more heavy downpours are expected in the next few days and the monsoon season stretches over the next three months". Meanwhile, [Guardian journalist Kaamil Ahmed](#) noted, "Shelters swept away as activists say people stuck in Cox's Bazar are highly vulnerable to the 'rapidly changing climate'" and quoting Jamie Munn, director of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Bangladesh who said "Sadly, it is a sign of our times; we are accustomed to conflicts, displacements and the climate crisis cycling through our news and through the attention of the international community, including donors".

Following these many ecological and meteorological stories of climate change or global warming came many other stories in July that continued to focus on [scientific](#) themes. Among them, media stories of rapid attribution studies - while not yet having passed through peer-review - garnered significant media attention as journalists sought to make sense of connections between floods, wildfires, heat waves and human-caused climate change. For example, [journalist Nada Farhoud from The Mirror in the UK](#) wrote, "Catastrophic extreme weather on five continents at the same time prove we are experiencing the impacts of climate change, say scientists. Siberian forest wildfires, fatal floods in Europe, North America's roasting temperatures and our Met Office's first heat warning show the climate crisis is accelerating faster than scientists and campaigners expected...With rapid attribution studies, which compare data with a simulated world where there are no carbon emissions, the urgency has become clearer. In one, scientists found last month's Pacific Northwest heatwave was virtually impossible without human-caused climate change and "our rapidly warming climate is bringing us into uncharted territory". As another example, [Washington Post correspondent Sarah Kaplan](#) reported, "In Oregon, Washington and western Canada, authorities are investigating more than 800 deaths potentially linked to the punishing heat. It will be months before experts know precisely how many of those deaths can be specifically attributed to climate change. But researchers who specialize in the science of attribution say they are "virtually certain" that

warming from human greenhouse gas emissions played a pivotal role. It is a sign of how dangerous the climate crisis has gotten - and how much worse it can still become".

Also in July, several prominent [political](#) and [economic](#) themed media stories about climate change or global warming pervaded the airwaves, broadcasts and newsprint. For example, [New York Times journalist Somini Sengupta](#) reported, "European officials are preparing to introduce ambitious legislation designed to wean one of the world's biggest and most polluting economies off fossil fuels far more quickly than other nations have pledged to do. The proposals could include phasing out coal as an electricity source as well as imposing tariffs on polluting imports - an idea with the potential to set off global trade disputes. An ambitious blueprint to reduce emissions 55 percent by 2030 promises tough haggling among 27 states, industry and the European Parliament. The European Commission's package of around a dozen legislative proposals, expected on Wednesday, is designed to swiftly reduce the emissions of planet-warming gases and meet an ambitious climate goal, already enshrined in law: The 27-nation bloc has said it will cut its emissions of greenhouse gases by 55 percent by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The legislation is expected to be in sharp contrast to vague aspirations by various other countries to neutralize their emissions by midcentury". As a second example, [CNN journalist Luke McGee](#) observed, "The package of measures looks to fundamentally transform the world's single largest trading bloc. It touches on almost every area of economic activity -- from how citizens heat their homes and commute, to a total upheaval of manufacturing practices. The EU last month enshrined in law its target to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030, compared with 1990 levels, but on Wednesday unveiled the aggressive 10-step program, titled "Fit for 55," which is a roadmap for how it will achieve its reduction". And [journalist Jonathan Eyal from The Straits Times in Singapore](#) noted, ""Europe is now the very first continent that presents a comprehensive architecture to meet our climate ambitions," Dr Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, the European Union's executive body, said this week".



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>

Meanwhile, coverage of a similar US tariff in the Democrats' budget plan made news. For example, *New York Times* journalist [Lisa Friedman](#) noted, "Democrats have agreed to include a tax on imports from nations that lack aggressive climate change policies as part of a sweeping \$3.5 trillion budget plan stocked with other provisions aimed at ratcheting down fossil fuel pollution in the United States. The move to tax imports was made public Wednesday, the same day that the European Union outlined its own proposal for a similar carbon border tax, a novel tool that is designed to protect domestic manufacturing while simultaneously pressuring other countries to reduce the emissions that are warming the planet. The two actions in concert suggest that government leaders are turning toward trade policy as a way to attack climate change. Top Democrats called the timing coincidental but said both the United States and Europe must work together to put pressure on China and other heavy polluting countries to reduce emissions".

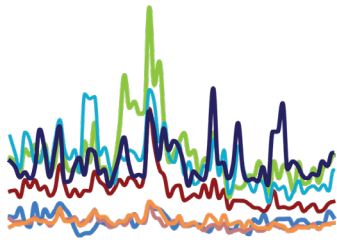
And also in July, many [cultural](#) stories continued to drive coverage related to climate change or global warming. For example, *New York Times* correspondent [Farnaz Fassihi](#) reported, "Iran is struggling with a fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic, an economy strained by American sanctions and stalled talks on rescuing a nuclear agreement that was once seen as an economic salvation. Now the country is contending with a different but easily foreseen crisis: a severe water shortage. A prolonged drought and rising temperatures from climate change, combined with decades of government mismanagement of natural resources and lack of planning, have turned the water crisis into a volatile incubator

of protests and violent unrest. For the past week, demonstrators have surged into the streets of parched Khuzestan Province in the southwest, the epicenter of the protests. They have been met by security forces whose crackdowns have sometimes turned deadly – fueling more anger that is spreading elsewhere".

And billionaires going in rocketships to sub-orbital space in July generated some media stories about links between future space travel and climate change. For example, *New York Times* correspondent [Sarah Kessler](#) observed, "It is not yet understood exactly how an increasing number of rocket launches would affect the planet. The space industry is the only direct source of emissions into the stratosphere above 20 kilometers. Particles that rockets leave behind can absorb sunlight or reflect sunlight, potentially changing the climate of the stratosphere or affecting the ozone layer...Aside from whether space tourism will contribute to climate change, there's skepticism over space companies' claims that they can help address it. Some say Mr. Bezos' vision for colonizing space isn't feasible, and Mr. Bezos himself calls it a "long-range problem." Billionaires going to space should first consider climate disasters on Earth, critics argue".

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



MeCCO

Media and Climate Change Observatory

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MeCCO monitors 127 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**

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