

# “We have a choice”



A board warns passengers about high temperatures and their impact on rail traffic at Euston train station in central London on July 19. Photo: Niklas Halle'n/AFP/Getty Images.

July media attention to climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe was up 14% from June 2022 and up 1% from July 2021. Coverage in international wire services increased 11% and radio coverage was up 13% from June 2022. Compared to the previous month, coverage decreased in Asia (-8%), Latin America (-16%),

Africa (-144%), and the Middle East (-26%), while coverage increased in North America (+27%), the European Union (EU) (+28%), and Oceania (+17%). 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 2022.

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

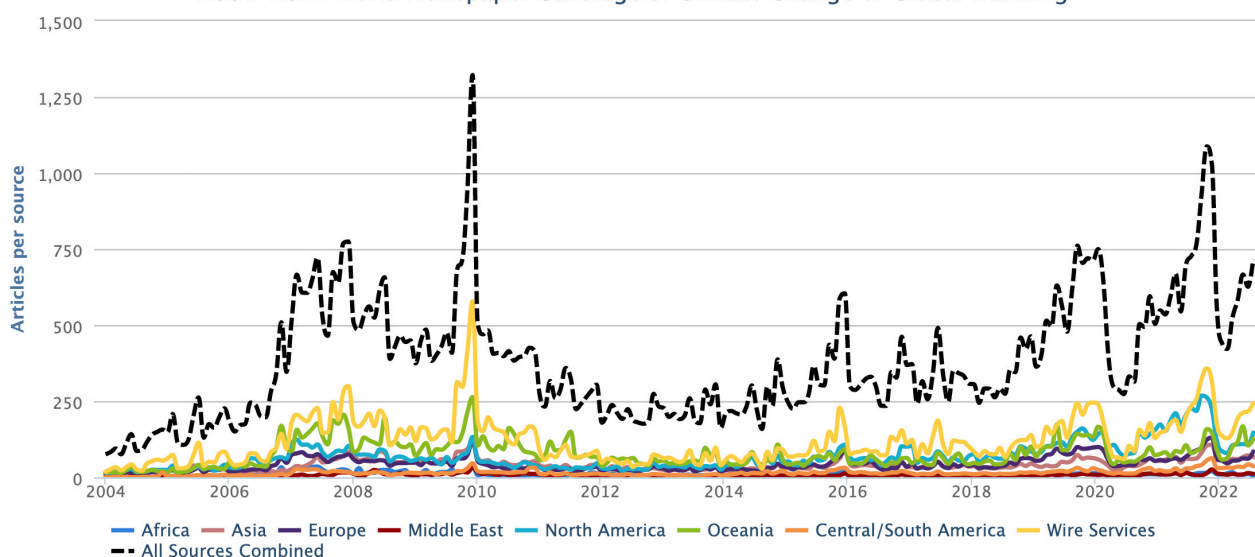


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through July 2022.

At the country level, United States (US) print coverage increased 51% while television coverage increased 122% from the previous month.

July saw significant media coverage about climate change or global warming with *ecological* and *meteorological* themes. To begin, early in July low snow levels and avalanches at high elevations with links to climate change generated several media stories. For example, *Guardian* journalist [Helena Horton](#) reported, “The snow at the highest observatory in the world to be operated all-year-round is expected to completely melt in the next few days, the earliest time on record. Scientists at the Sonnblick observatory in the Austrian Central Alps, which is 3,106 metres (10,190ft) above sea level, have been shocked and dismayed to see the snow depleting so quickly. Some years the peak is covered in snow all summer. But this year it has melted more than a month before the previous record time, which was 13 August in 1963 and 2003. The heating climate in Europe, where there have been scorching heatwaves, has caused much of the snow and ice on the mountains to melt unusually quickly. This had a tragic outcome this week at the Marmolada mountain in Italy, where at least seven people died after a glacier collapsed, causing an avalanche. Scientists linked the disaster to the climate crisis, as the ice has become weakened due to sustained heat”.

Throughout July, extreme heat as well as flooding events across several continents grabbed media attention. For example, *Guardian environment editor Damian Carrington* reported, “The UK and continental Europe are sweltering in a heatwave due to last until at least the weekend, and the climate crisis is playing a clear role in intensifying extreme temperatures...Scientists are clear that human-caused global heating is making every heatwave more intense and more likely. “When it comes to summer heat,



Figure 2. Fareed Zakaria discussing climate change on CNN, July 24, 2022.

climate change is a complete gamechanger and has already turned what would once have been called exceptional heat into very frequent summer conditions,” said Dr Friederike Otto, of Imperial College London. “Every heatwave we experience today has been made hotter because of the fossil fuels we have burned over the last decades in particular”.

As heatwaves and flooding continued, *The Associated Press* reported, “Flooding and extreme high temperatures have caused multiple deaths in eastern China as summer heat descends earlier than usual. Record-high temperatures have been reported in Zhejiang province, just east of the global business hub of Shanghai, topping out above 42 degrees Celsius (107 degrees Fahrenheit) on Wednesday...Floods have also struck much of the country, with three people reported killed and five missing in Sichuan province’s Pingwu county as of midday Wednesday. One person was reported dead and eight missing in Heilongjiang in the northeast. Experts say such extreme weather events are becoming more likely because of climate change. Warmer air can store more water, leading to bigger cloudbursts when it’s released”.

Furthermore, stories connecting to wildfires also fueled coverage. For example, *New York Times* correspondents [Aurelien Breden](#) and [Isabella Kwai](#) wrote, “Britain is bracing for its hottest

day ever as a heat wave sweeps across Europe. Crews in the south of France were battling wildfires on Saturday that had consumed more than 22,000 acres and prompted the evacuation of 12,000 people, the local authorities said. The wildfires are among dozens across Europe, driven by a heat wave that has gripped parts of the continent and threatens to bring record-breaking temperatures to Britain early next week. The most serious fires in France were in the Gironde area, near the city of Bordeaux, where more than 1,200 firefighters had been deployed...Climate scientists have said that global warming is making extreme temperatures more common, but they are investigating whether specific weather events are intensifying or becoming more likely because of human-induced warming of the climate”.

As a second example, *El Mundo* journalist [María Crespo](#) reported, “Fires spread in Portugal and France. More than 30,000 hectares burned in Portugal exceed the total area burned last year. In France, almost 10,000 people have been evicted”. As a third example, *El País* journalist [Victoria Torres](#) wrote, “Experts warn that the current episode of high temperatures, enhanced by climate change, will be “extraordinary” and may exceed the dimension of the worst suffered in Spain”.

Then, the news of the United Kingdom’s hottest day on record – hitting 40°C (or 104°F) – garnered media attention around the world. For example, *Washington Post* journalist [William Booth](#) reported, “Has it ever, in human history, been this hot in the British Isles? Maybe not. If you want to mark an unnatural, scary, real-world data point for climate change, it is here in Britain, right now, which saw its hottest day on record Tuesday. Temperatures in six locations reached 40 Celsius or higher, with London Heathrow and St. James Park hitting 40.2 Celsius – or 104.3 Fahrenheit. It’s an extreme-weather episode, a freak peak heat, not seen since modern record keeping began a century and a half ago. Hitting 40C, for British climate scientists, is a kind of a unicorn event that had appeared in their models but until recently seemed almost unbelievable

and unattainable this soon. Cairo? Karachi? Phoenix? They are world-beating furnaces. But London? The high-latitude city – with its recorded history dating back to the Romans – had probably never before experienced temperatures such as those on Tuesday. Surely no Britons alive now – or their Britain-based great- or great-great-grandparents – had felt 40C without traveling abroad. Queen Victoria, William Shakespeare, Henry VIII? They probably never faced down a 40C day within the British Isles. This nation was not built to withstand such heat. Its homes, workplaces, roads, rails, hospitals and infrastructure were constructed for temperate weather – Shakespeare’s “other Eden, demi-paradise” – not this inferno. Britain has some of the most extensive weather records in the world, logged via diaries, observation and instruments as far back as the Age of Enlightenment, including daily records archived since the 1770s and monthly maximums and minimums dating back to the 1660s. Until Tuesday, the highest official temperature was 38.7C (101.7F), recorded at the Cambridge Botanic Garden on July 25, 2019. The Met Office reported that at least 34 observation sites across the country topped that previous maximum on Tuesday. Almost all the highest recorded temperatures have occurred in recent years”.

Similarly, in North America media stories of waves of heat with connections to climate change were abundant in July. For example, *New York Times* journalist [Isabella Grullón Paz](#) reported, “About 100 million Americans from California to New England were sweating through heat advisories and warnings from the National Weather Service on Wednesday, with a brutal heat wave across the central part of the country showing no signs of letting up...Heat warnings and advisories were in place for parts or all of 28 states. People in the Southeast and the Southern Plains faced the most oppressive temperatures”.

Several *political* and *economic* themed media stories about climate change or global warming continued in July. To begin, in the larger

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Figure 3. Front page coverage of ecological and meteorological challenges – such as heat waves, droughts and wildfires – with links to climate change or global warming in July 2022.

international context many stories pointed to shortcomings in climate policy action in many governments. For example, [Associated Press reporter Seth Borenstein](#) noted, “For most of the major carbon-polluting nations, promising to fight climate change is a lot easier than actually doing it. In the United States, President Joe Biden has learned that the hard way. Among the 10 biggest carbon emitters, only the European Union has enacted policies close to or consistent with international goals of limiting warming to just a few more tenths of a degrees, according to scientists and experts who track climate action in countries”. Furthermore, [Washington Post](#) journalists [Darryl Fears](#) and [Andrea Eger](#) noted, “Many European nations are working to shift away from fossil fuels, but the combination of intense summer heat and energy shortages stemming from the war in Ukraine threatens to delay this transition. In the United States, President Biden is struggling to advance his environmental agenda in the face of intense opposition from Republicans and Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.)”.

The United Nations Secretary General António Guterres’ comments at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue grabbed media attention. For example, [New York Times](#) reporter [Jesus Jiménez](#) wrote, “The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, issued a dire warning on Monday to representatives from 40 countries at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue, calling for more concrete action to tackle what he called a “climate emergency.” “We have a choice,” Mr. Guterres said in a video message. “Collective action or collective suicide. It is in our hands... Half of humanity is in the danger zone from floods, droughts, extreme storms and wildfires,” Mr. Guterres said. “No nation is immune.” The Petersberg Climate Dialogue serves as a forum for discussing climate protection agreements before the U.N. climate change conference, known as COP27, in Egypt this November. In his address, Mr. Guterres highlighted the need to reduce emissions, treat climate adaptation with urgency, offer financial backing for developing countries, and create a “concrete global response” to help the most vulnerable.

Mr. Guterres said that people in Africa, South Asia, and Central and South America are 15 times more likely to die from extreme weather events. “In facing this global crisis, we are failing to work together as a multilateral community,” Mr. Guterres said. “Nations continue to play the blame game instead of taking responsibility for our collective future. We cannot continue this way”.

Stories also focused on US Congressional debates on a spending package that could allow for significant climate action. With the US as the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, such policy action would impact ongoing international climate mitigation and adaptation ambitions. For example, [USA Today](#) journalists [Kyle Bagenstose](#) and [Elizabeth Weise](#) reported, “For more than a decade, congressional Democrats and a growing share of their political base have chased a dream: legislation to combat climate change, large enough to transform our society into one equipped to avert the worst catastrophes of a rapidly warming planet. On Wednesday, the dream made a giant leap toward reality. In a stunning reversal from when he appeared to kill a climate deal just two weeks ago, Sen. Joe Manchin, a conservative West Virginia Democrat, announced support for the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, a bill that would invest about \$370 billion into a range of policies aimed at reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. That would make it the most substantial effort by the federal government to tackle climate change in history. A vote on the bill could come within a week, though supporters are bracing for any last-minute hurdles. Early reaction suggests the bill could transform the American energy and transportation sectors. Tens of billions of dollars would go toward supporting renewable energy development, lowering the costs of electric vehicles, building out public charging stations, weatherizing homes, plugging leaks of greenhouse gases from pipelines and wells, lowering emissions from the agricultural sector, and supporting communities near polluting industries. In total, the measures could, by 2030, reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 40% from where

they were a quarter-century earlier. That would leave the nation within striking distance of the emissions reductions international scientists say are needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change. It could even set an example for other nations to also reduce emissions”.

In July, ongoing invasion of Ukraine had effects on European climate policy and this was captured in several news accounts. For example, the front page of *El País* on July 18 had as its main news: “The EU proposes to relax the control of polluting emissions”. [El País](#) journalist [Bernardo de Miguel](#) wrote, “The EU will relax emissions controls to compensate for the lack of Russian gas with other more polluting energy sources. Brussels considers it essential to recover production with coal and even encourage it with public subsidies”.

Last, July media accounts also featured economic stories of the European Central Bank (ECB) encouragement for other banks to prepare for a climate crisis. For example, [Expansión](#) journalist [Álvaro Sánchez](#) reported, “The ECB estimates the losses of the big banks in the face of a climate crisis at 70,000 million. The agency believes that European banking is not preparing as it should in the face of climate risk (...)”Eurozone banks must urgently redouble efforts to measure and manage climate risk, filling current data gaps and adopting good practices that are already present in the sector,” said Andrea Enria, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the ECB”.

July media coverage also featured many [cultural](#) stories relating to climate change or global warming. For example, the Tour de France was halted at times due to climate protests, and this sparked media coverage. For example, [Guardian](#) journalist [Jeremy Whittle](#) noted, “Senior officials from the Tour de France organisation were seen dragging climate crisis protesters into a ditch during the 10th stage of the race from Morzine to Megève. Despite being chained together around the neck, a small group of young protesters were dragged off the race route by tour officials. At around 36 kilometres from the finish, on a section of straight

road, the protesters sat on the course and set off red flares. The stage breakaway and peloton were both halted until the road was cleared. Climate activists from the Dernière Renovation movement said, "Since the government doesn't care about the climate crisis, we need to come and take over the Tour de France to refocus attention on what matters for our survival. We need to make our government react as they lead us to the slaughterhouse. Non-violent disruption is our last chance to be heard and avoid the worst consequences of global warming," the group said". Also, [CNN reporters David Close and Matt Foster observed](#), "The statement said that the group "can no longer remain spectators of the ongoing climate disaster...Our goal is to force legislation to drastically reduce France's emissions, starting with energy reform, the area most likely to bring together social and climate justice today. This is our last chance to avoid catastrophic and irreversible consequences: deadly heat, extreme weather events, famines, mass migrations, armed conflicts... and this is for all the next generations of humans"".

Sports provided other news hooks in July, such as media coverage of climate change and golfing during the British Open. For example, [New York Times journalist Alan Blinder wrote](#), "It is the rare golfer who does not fret over weather that could wash out a round or starve shots of distance. But along the North Sea on a blustery edge of Scotland, heralded for centuries as golf's birthplace, this era's greenskeepers fear a far more damning forecast. In that nightmare, what they call a perfect storm, striking at high tide and packing an easterly wind, would hit, likely speeding coastal erosion...golf has had little choice but to start weighing its own role in climate change – most notably through the vast, lush and thirsty courses that sometimes take the place of trees and then require fertilizer and mowing – while puzzling over how to preserve fairways and greens around the world. Scientists have spent years warning how a warmer planet, which can lead to more severe storms and to more sea-level rise, could change sports. Citing climate change, the International Olympic Committee's president has said that Games organizers "may have to have a look into

the overall calendar and whether there must be a shift." Winter sports are facing a future of events on artificial snow, and activities like dogsledding and fishing are being transformed in the Arctic. Golf will not be an exception".

Protestors took to the streets elsewhere in July too. For example, [Guardian media editor Jim Waterson reported](#), "Extinction Rebellion protesters have smashed windows at the London headquarters of Rupert Murdoch's media company, in protest at his outlets' coverage of the climate crisis. Activists targeted the News UK building next to London Bridge station early on Tuesday morning, destroying glass panels and putting up posters reading "tell the truth" and "40 degrees = death" next to the entrance used by journalists at the *Sun* and *the Times*. Extinction Rebellion said it was taking nonviolent action to highlight the way that the record-breaking heat in the UK was being treated as an upbeat story in parts of the media".

Many climate change or global warming stories focused on [scientific](#) themes in the month of July. To begin, early in July The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released a report on climate change and extinction that grabbed media attention amid a busy news cycle during that time. For example, [Associated Press correspondent Fabio Maisonnave reported](#), "Every day billions of people depend on wild flora and fauna to obtain food, medicine and energy. But a new United Nations-backed report says that overexploitation, climate change, pollution and deforestation are pushing one million species towards extinction...unless humankind improves the sustainable use of nature, the Earth is on its way to losing 12% of its wild tree species, over a thousand wild mammal species and almost 450 species of sharks and rays, among other irreparable harm. Humans use about 50,000 wild species routinely and 1 out of 5 people of the world's 7.9 billion population depend on those species for food and income, the report said. 1 in 3 people rely on fuel wood for cooking, the number even higher in Africa".

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Further, connections between eating habits and climate change in a Boston Consulting Group report also generated media interest. For example, [Guardian journalist Damien Carrington reported](#), “Investments in plant-based alternatives to meat lead to far greater cuts in climate-heating emissions than other green investments, according to one of the world’s biggest consultancy firms...for each dollar, investment in improving and scaling up the production of meat and dairy alternatives resulted in three times more greenhouse gas reductions compared with investment in green cement technology, seven times more than green buildings and 11 times more than zero-emission cars. Investments in the plant-based alternatives to meat delivered this high impact on emissions because of the big difference between the greenhouse gases emitted when producing conventional meat and dairy products, and when growing plants. Beef, for example, results in six-to-30 times more emissions than tofu”.

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>

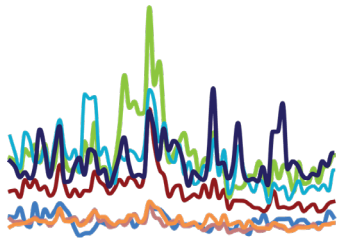
*~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Presley Church, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Jennifer Katzung, Ami Nacu-Schmidt and Olivia Pearman*



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

# 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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