

# UK tabloids contribute to climate complacency

April 28 2008

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There is scientific consensus about human contributions to climate change

The effect of human behaviour on climate change is misrepresented in the most widely-read UK tabloid newspapers, according to the latest research at Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute.

The new findings, published in the Institute of Physics *Environmental Research Letters* are cause for concern as action to reduce man-made green-house gas emissions becomes increasingly urgent.

Based on an analysis of nearly 1,000 tabloid articles from the Daily Mail, the Sun, the Express and the Mirror, the researchers found that many readers were being misinformed. The researchers analysed the tone, the context, the terminology, the labelling of those quoted and the relationships between messages.

The researchers found that about a quarter of coverage in the four UK tabloids from 2000 through 2006 misrepresented wide scientific agreement that man-made GHG emissions have ‘very likely’ had a role to play in global warming.

Dr Max Boykoff, James Martin Research Fellow at the Environmental Change Institute, said: ‘These newspapers have very high circulation and influence in the UK. We hope these findings help tabloid reporters and editors reflect further on the accuracy of their climate change reporting.

‘To the extent that reporting and commentary have misrepresented scientific consensus on the issue of human contributions to climate change, there is a problem.’

Newspaper coverage of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations and the recent ‘banish the plastic bag’ campaign illustrates how successfully newspapers can engage the public.

Commentators like the Sun’s Jeremy Clarkson are contradicting scientific thought with unfounded authority when making statements such as: ‘This confirms what I’ve been saying for years – cars do not cause global warming. Now we learn that all along it was bloody sheep and cows.’

Boykoff continued: ‘Misreporting on human contributions to climate change can contribute to skewed views among these papers’ many readers. We’re all involved in the fight against climate change and it’s in all of our interest to widen, rather than restrict, the spectrum of possibility for appropriate policy action.’

Source: Oxford University

Citation: UK tabloids contribute to climate complacency (2008, April 28) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-04-uk-tabloids-contribute-climate-complacency.html>

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