

# National differences in reporting of climate scepticism

November 10 2011

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An Oxford University study of climate change coverage in six countries suggests that newspapers in the UK and the US have given far more column space to the voices of climate sceptics than the press in Brazil, France, India and China. More than 80 per cent of the times that sceptical voices were included, they were in pieces in the UK and US press, according to the research.

The study, Poles Apart – The international reporting of climate scepticism, shows that 44 per cent of all the articles in which sceptical voices were included were in the opinion pages and editorials, as compared with the news pages. It also finds that in the UK and the US the ‘right-leaning’ press carried significantly more climate sceptical opinion pieces than the ‘left-leaning’ newspapers.

A team of researchers led by James Painter, from the University's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, examined more than 3,000 articles from two different newspaper titles in each country during two separate periods. In each country (apart from [China](#)), the newspapers were selected to represent divergent political viewpoints. The periods studied were February to April 2007 and mid-November 2009 to mid-February 2010, which included the UN climate change summit in Copenhagen and 'Climategate'.

Although the researchers discovered a link between the amount of coverage given to climate sceptics and the political viewpoint of [newspaper](#) titles in the UK and the US, this link did not appear in the other study countries – Brazil, France and India. In the latter, few sceptical voices appeared and there was little or no difference between that country's two selected titles in the amount of space given to the sceptical viewpoints. In all the countries, politicians represented around a third of all the sceptical voices quoted or mentioned, with the UK and US newspapers much more likely to quote politicians than the press in other countries.

The 'Poles Apart' study defines climate sceptical voices as those sceptical that the world is warming or those that question the influence of humans in the warming. It also includes those sceptical about the pace and extent of its impacts, or about whether urgent action and government spending are necessary to combat it.

James Painter, RISJ researcher and Head of the Journalism Fellowship Program, said: "There are politicians in the UK and the US who espouse some variation of climate scepticism. Both countries also have organizations for 'climate change sceptics' that provide a sceptical voice for the media, particularly in those media outlets that are more receptive to this message. This is why we see more sceptical coverage in the Anglo-Saxon countries than we do in the other countries in the study

where one or more of those factors appear to be absent."

The research includes a detailed examination of several hundred articles in ten British national newspapers to see where views about climate scepticism receive the most coverage, and which sceptics and organisations are most quoted. The countries and media included in the study were [Brazil](#) (Folha de São Paulo, Estado de São Paulo), China (People's Daily, Beijing Evening News), France (Le Monde, Le Figaro), India (Times of India, The Hindu), the UK (all ten national newspapers) and the USA (New York Times, Wall Street Journal). The study was carried out with research assistance from the British Council, who also financed the study along with the European Climate Foundation and the Grantham Research Institute on [Climate Change](#) and the Environment at the London School of Economics.

Provided by Oxford University

Citation: National differences in reporting of climate scepticism (2011, November 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-national-differences-climate-scepticism.html>

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