

A difficult climate: New study examines the media's response to the IPCC

March 25 2015

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) periodically releases Assessment Reports in order to inform policymakers and the public about the latest scientific evidence on climate change. The publication of each report is a key event in the debate about climate change, but their reception and coverage in the media has varied widely.

A study, published today in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, has for the first time analysed how Twitter, TV and newspapers reported the IPCC's climate evidence. Understanding how [media coverage](#) varies is important because people's knowledge and opinions on [climate change](#) are influenced by how the media reports on the issue.

The study found that there were markedly different ways in which the media portrayed the IPCC's latest findings. The researchers investigated this through studying the frames (ways of depicting an issue) the different media sources used to emphasise some aspects of climate change, whilst downplaying others. They also found large differences in how much coverage each Working Group received (the IPCC has three, which focus on the physical science, impacts and adaptation, and mitigation respectively).

The researchers found ten different frames used to communicate climate change: Settled Science, Political or Ideological Struggle, Role of Science, Uncertain Science, Disaster, Security, Morality and Ethics, Opportunity, Economics and Health. The first five frames were used to

communicate the IPCC reports much more frequently - whereas the latter frames were not used much at all.

Dr Saffron O'Neill, lead author of the study from the University of Exeter said: "We know that some of these frames are more engaging for audiences than others: for example, the Opportunity or Health frames are both effective at linking the distant issue of climate change to peoples' everyday life. But these kinds of frames are little used in newspaper coverage, on TV, or on Twitter."

The study suggests that the availability of visual content and accessible storylines played a big part in how IPCC science was reported by the media. The authors argue that these findings need to inform how future IPCC Assessment Reports are communicated, in order that policymakers and the public are better informed.

More information: 'Dominant frames in legacy and social media coverage of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report' by Saffron O'Neill, Hywel T.P Williams, Tim Kurz, Bouke Wiersma and Maxwell Boykoff is published today in *Nature Climate Change*.

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: A difficult climate: New study examines the media's response to the IPCC (2015, March 25) retrieved 3 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-03-difficult-climate-media-response-ipcc.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.
