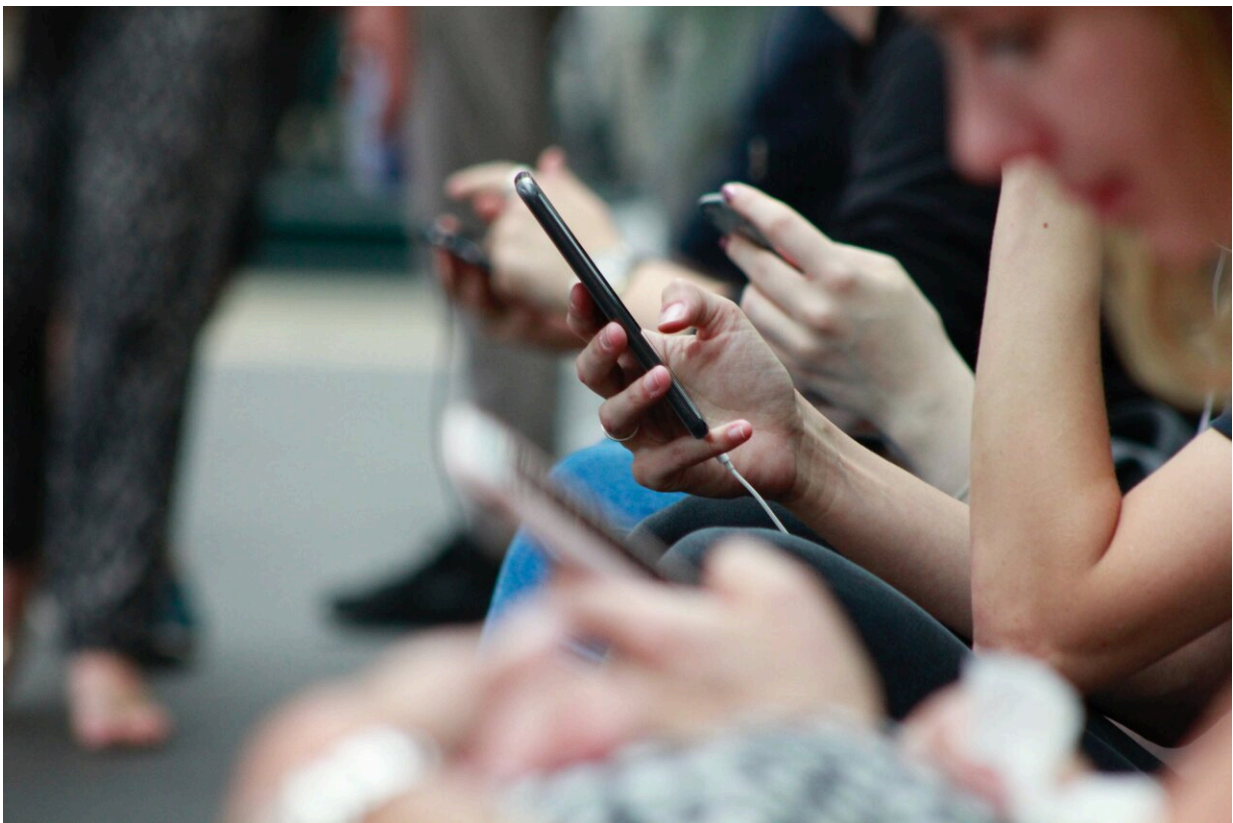


# Researchers find association between media diet and science-consistent beliefs about climate change

June 10 2024

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

In a paper titled "The Politicization of Climate Science: Media Consumption, Perceptions of Science and Scientists, and Support for Policy," [published](#) May 26, 2024, in the *Journal of Health Communication*, researchers probed the associations between media exposure and science-consistent beliefs about climate change and the threat it posed to the respondent.

Expanding on earlier work associating Fox News consumption with doubts about the existence of human-caused climate change, a team of scholars affiliated with the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) found that exposure to Fox News and far-right media was negatively associated, and centrist and science [media exposure](#) positively associated, with belief in anthropogenic climate change, perceptions of the personal threat posed by climate change, and support for a carbon tax.

The research team included Yotam Ophir, Assistant Professor of Communication at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, and a distinguished research fellow and former postdoctoral fellow at APPC; Dror Walter, Assistant Professor of Digital Communication at Georgia State University and an APPC distinguished research fellow; APPC's Adolescent Health and Risk Communication Institute director Patrick Jamieson; and APPC director Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

"The results of this study suggest that [climate science](#) scholars and advocates should pay more attention to the complex media diets of individuals and specifically of partisans to better understand the possible influence of messages and narratives about climate science and scientists circulating in the American media environment," the authors wrote.

Prior research in this area focused primarily on centrist media and Fox News, even as the media choices available to people grew more varied.

In short, says Ophir, the lead author of the new study, "a lot of research was asking people if they watch Fox News and if they believe in climate change. But there's more to the story."

For this study, the researchers asked people about their use of far-right, Christian, alternative health, and science media in addition to [mainstream media](#) (liberal, centrist, and conservative).

To assess climate beliefs, the researchers asked participants whether they thought climate change poses a personal threat to them—"One of the challenges with climate change is that people don't feel vulnerable. There is some vagueness to the impact," says Ophir—and whether they support a carbon tax. "We wanted to go beyond just acceptance of the science into behavioral intentions," says Ophir.

Finally, in addition to asking about perceptions of climate change, the researchers asked people about their perceptions of science and scientists in general. "We wanted to see if some of the relationship between media use and climate beliefs comes from undermining science at large," explains Ophir.

The study found that perceptions of science and scientists mediated the relationship between exposure to media and a set of dependent variables, including belief in [anthropogenic climate change](#), risk perception, and support for a carbon tax.

Among the team's findings are that far-right media have an even stronger relationship with rejection of the scientific consensus around climate change than do more mainstream conservative outlets like Fox News. They also found that exposure to right-wing media in general is

associated with lower perceptions of threat from climate change and lower likelihood of supporting a carbon tax.

"Consumption of right-wing media is associated not only with your views on climate change," says Ophir. "It is associated with more negative views of the scientific endeavor as a whole, and that affects your views on climate change."

The findings have important implications for how climate science scholars and advocates move forward trying to understand resistance to climate science and policy, and crafting messages aimed at countering that resistance.

**More information:** Yotam Ophir et al, The Politicization of Climate Science: Media Consumption, Perceptions of Science and Scientists, and Support for Policy, *Journal of Health Communication* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/10810730.2024.2357571](https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2024.2357571)

Provided by Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

Citation: Researchers find association between media diet and science-consistent beliefs about climate change (2024, June 10) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-association-media-diet-science-beliefs.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.