

Study confirms more media coverage of climate change wanted

6 October 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Large majorities of American news audiences care about climate change and want more information from the media on the topic, according to a new report from the University of Cincinnati, in partnership with Yale University and George Mason University.

"Our findings show that for several major American [news](#) sources, a majority of their audience thinks the media should be doing more to address the issue of [climate change](#). A majority are interested in [news stories](#) about climate change topics. In fact, our study shows fewer than 20% of Americans in any of these news audiences feel they are 'very well informed' about climate change," says the report's lead author, Abel Gustafson, an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at UC.

"These findings put the ball in journalists' court," he says, because "much of their audience is saying they feel that climate change is an important issue to be covering in more depth."

The report uses three national surveys to measure

[public opinion](#) on climate change among the regular audiences of Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, NPR, the Weather Channel and the national nightly network news on CBS, ABC or NBC. The survey measured many beliefs about climate change, including whether it is happening, is caused by humans, should be a high priority for elected officials and how this issue influences their choice of a candidate in the 2020 presidential election.

According to the report, majorities in each of these news audiences say [global warming](#) or protecting the environment will be important to their vote for president. Gustafson says other takeaways from the report include:

- In each of the news audiences studied, large majorities underestimate the true strength of the scientific consensus on climate change. "Even among people who care deeply about climate change, most underestimate just how strong the scientific consensus is," he says, adding that, "Journalists can play an important role in fixing this misperception by emphasizing the strength of the scientific evidence when they cover climate change topics."
- Among the news audiences studied in this report, the Fox News audience is least accepting of climate science and thinks the issue is least important to them personally. However, there are many differences among Fox viewers, he says. "The climate opinions of the Fox News audience are much more diverse than common stereotypes would suggest. In fact, nearly half of the regular Fox News [audience](#) say they are worried about [climate](#) change and think it should be at least a 'medium' priority for our elected government officials."
- In most news audiences, large majorities (over 80% for CNN, MSNBC and NPR) think global warming is happening, think it is human caused and are worried about it.

Overall, Gustafson says, "There's a clear gap between what people want from their news providers and what they are getting, because many Americans specifically say the media should be doing more to address this issue."

Provided by University of Cincinnati

APA citation: Study confirms more media coverage of climate change wanted (2020, October 6) retrieved 26 February 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-10-media-coverage-climate.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.