



New Report Reveals Media's Climate Alarmism Irks Readers

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A new paper jointly released by Rutgers University and University of Michigan found alarmist climate phrasing turns people off and makes them less engaged in environmental advocacy.

In "Upping the ante? The effects of 'emergency' and 'crisis' framing in climate change news" researchers reveal negative climate phrasing in media, specifically the use of "climate crisis" and "climate emergency."

"News organizations increasingly use the terms "climate emergency" and "climate crisis" to convey the urgency of climate change; yet, little is known about how this terminology affects news audiences," the report began.

It continued:

"Results showed no effect of terminology on climate change engagement; however, "climate emergency" reduced perceived news credibility and newsworthiness compared to "climate change." Both climate engagement and news perceptions were more consistently affected by the focus of the stories: news about climate impacts increased fear, decreased efficacy beliefs and hope, and reduced news credibility compared to news about climate actions."

The report added, "Despite the surge in usage of this terminology, **few empirical studies speak to the effects** of the climate emergency and/or crisis frame on the US public...yet, little is known about how this particular use of stronger terminology may affect readers of climate change news."

Their research concluded climate news stories conveying strong threats prove to be "overwhelming" and "disempowering"—especially stories that fail to provide workable climate solutions.

This report is a response to a May 2019 editorial in *The Guardian* updating their style guide as it pertains to environmental coverage.

The article noted, “Instead of “climate change” the preferred terms are “climate emergency, crisis or breakdown” and “global heating” is favoured over “global warming”, although the original terms are not banned.”

“We want to ensure that we are being scientifically precise, while also communicating clearly with readers on this very important issue,” said *Guardian* editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner. “The phrase ‘climate change’, for example, sounds rather passive and gentle when what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity.”

The politically-charged rhetoric doesn’t motivate consumers to pay a high premium for clean energy.

A 2019 January AP-NORC poll found the majority of Americans don’t support paying more in energy bills to combat climate change.

The CATO Institute explained:

“Although Americans say they are worried about climate change, most clearly aren’t worried enough to spend their own money on it, or make personal sacrifices for the cause. Perhaps it might be that people know they are supposed to be concerned about climate change because this is a salient message they receive from trusted sources and thus say so on surveys. However, receiving these messages and cues hasn’t been enough to convince them to give up their own money, let alone lower their own standard of living, for the cause of combating global warming.”

In light of these new findings, perhaps media organizations should follow the science and tone down the alarmist climate coverage if they want readers to care about the issue.