

Global Warming and the Media

Cliff Mass

February 25, 2022

Some Questions

- What is the role of the media in communicating about global warming?
- What are some of the dangers and issues in discussing this topic?
- How can one get reliable information?

A minefield



Minefield



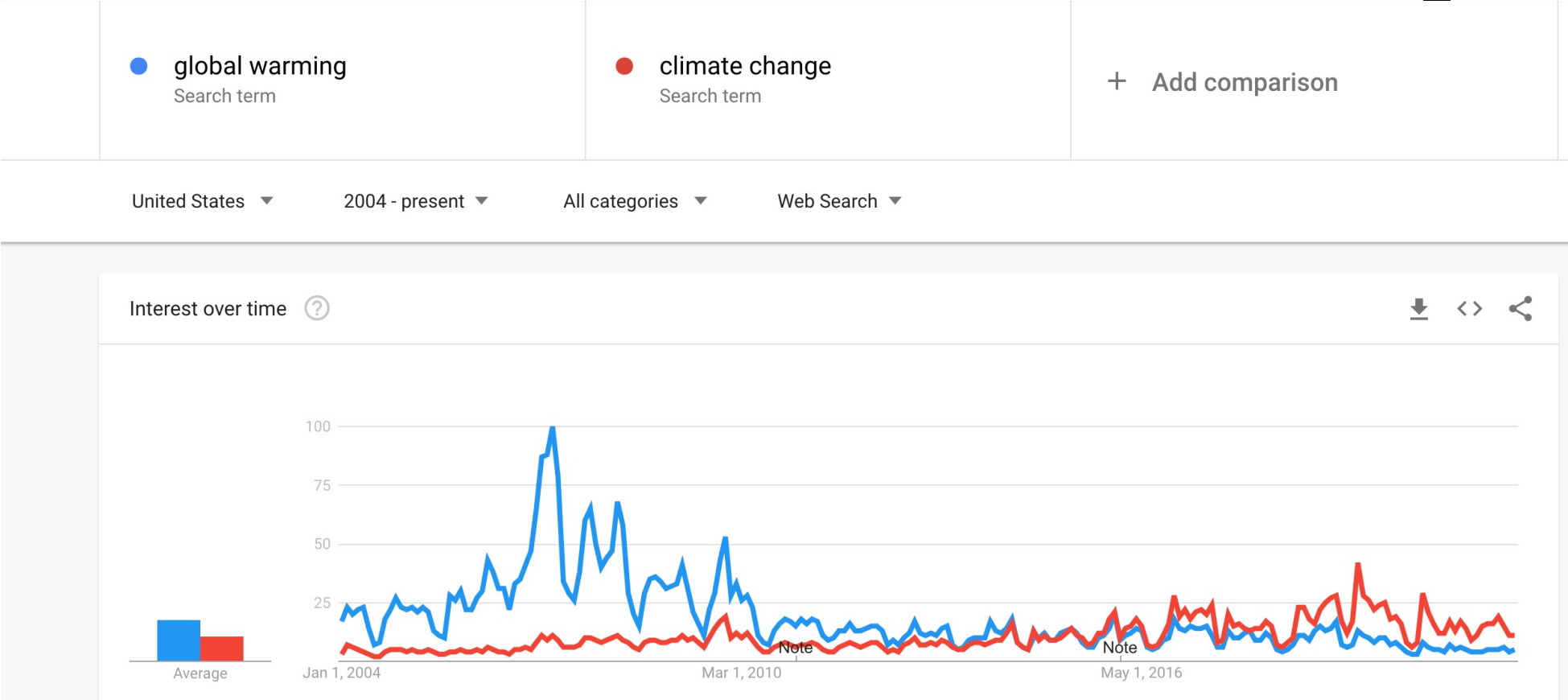
- Your job is to provide that most scientifically supportable information, based on the most reliable sources.
- Strong pressure from politically motivated listeners, advocacy groups, and others to follow their “line.”
- There are important areas of uncertainty, and those need to be communicated.

Global Warming Versus Climate Change: Which Term Should You Use?

How have concerns changed over time?

General move from global warming to climate change

Google Trends



It is interest to see what people think...and it is more nuanced than one would expect.....

Estimated % of adults who think global warming is happening (nat'l avg. 72%), 2021

Select Question:

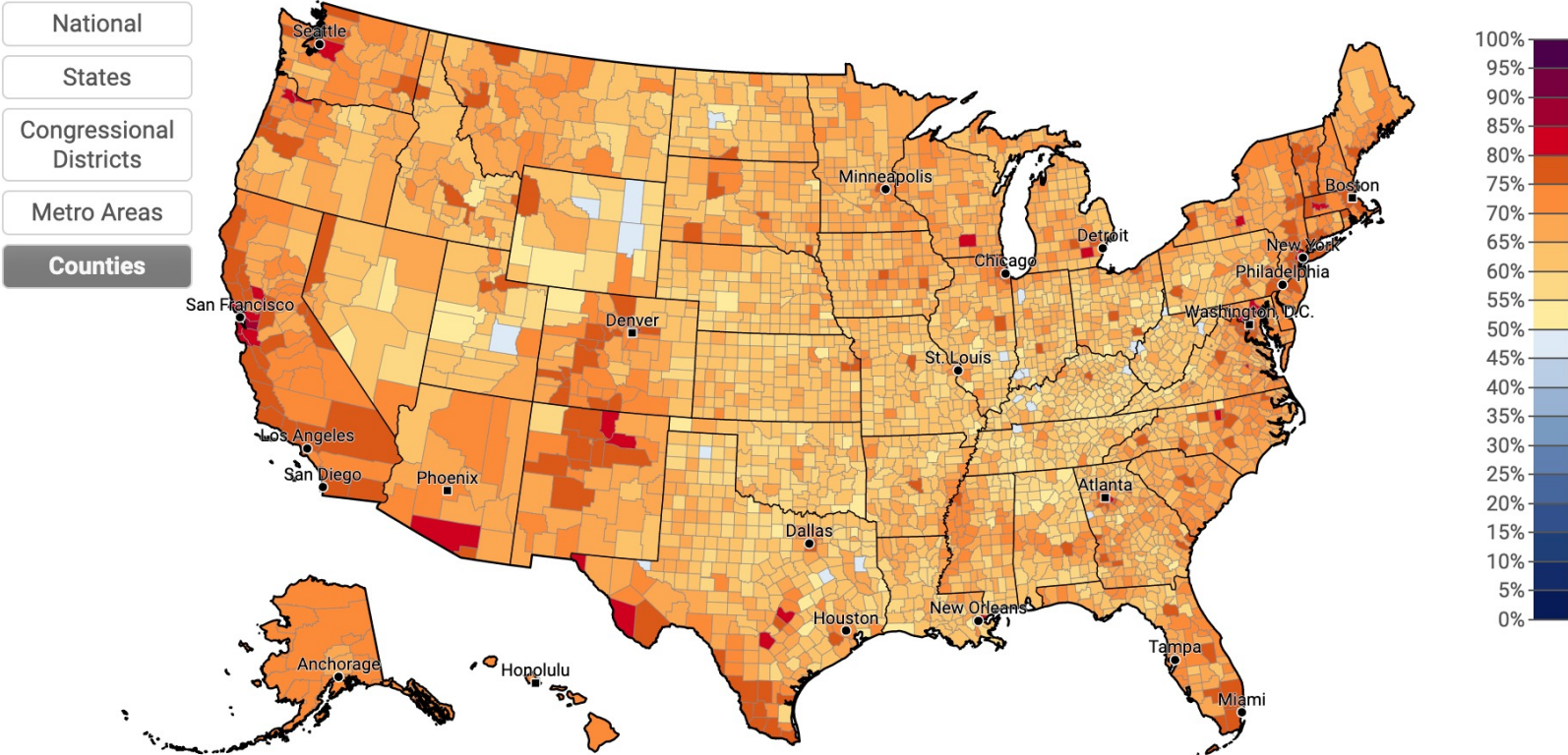
Global warming is happening

Absolute Value

Click on map to select geography, or:

Select a State

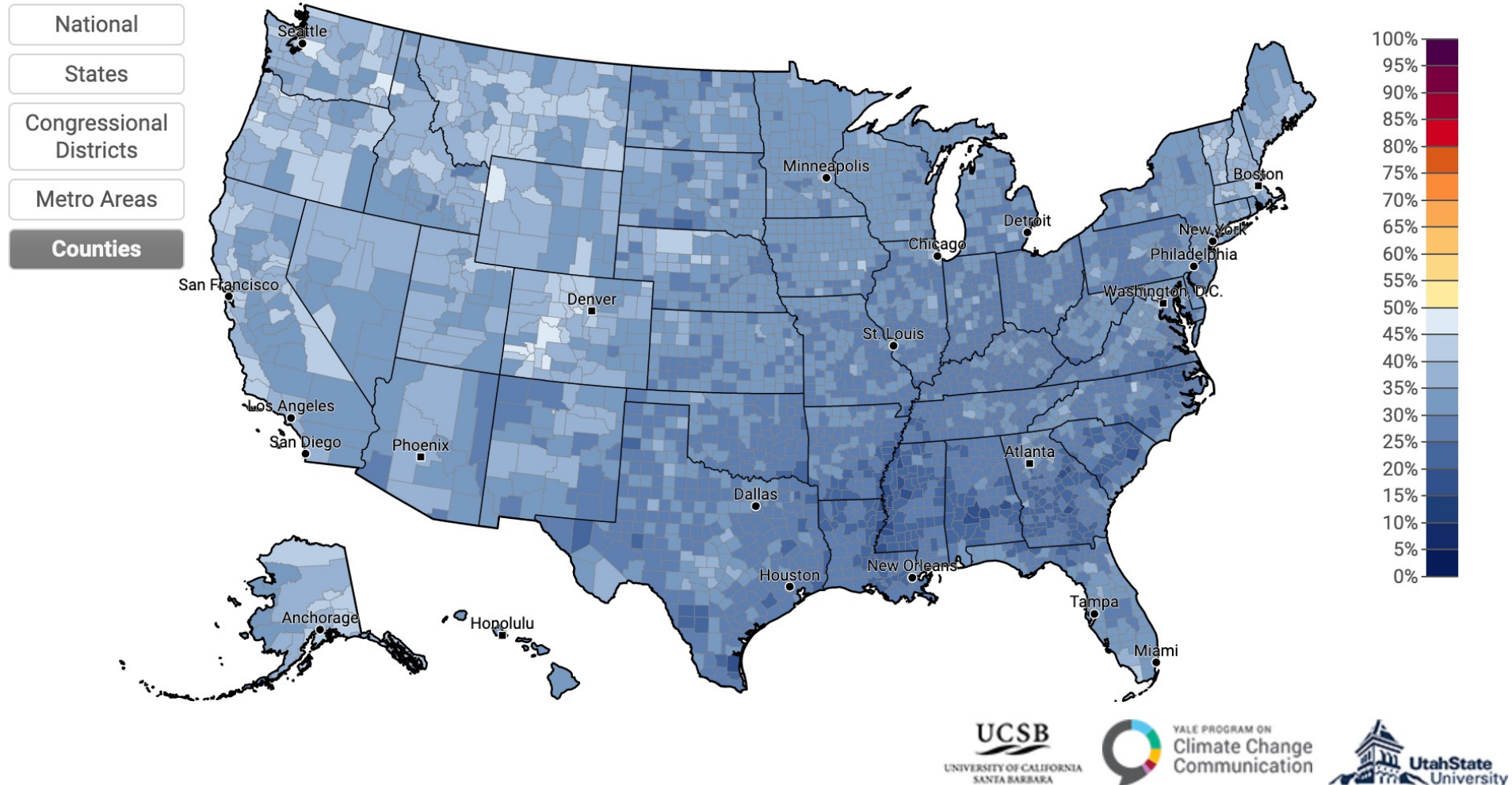
Select a County



Estimated % of adults who hear about global warming in the media at least once a week (nat'l avg. 33%), 2021

Select Question:

Click on map to select geography, or:



Estimated % of adults who have personally experienced the effects of global warming (nat'l avg. 46%), 2021

Select Question:

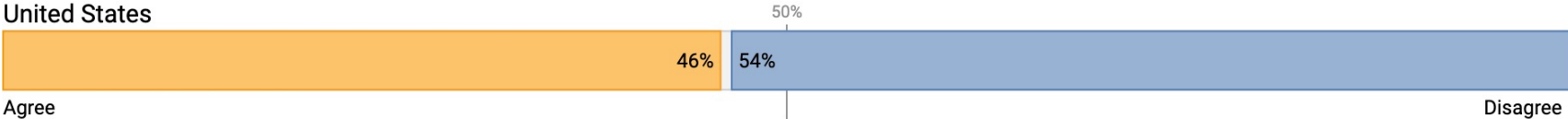
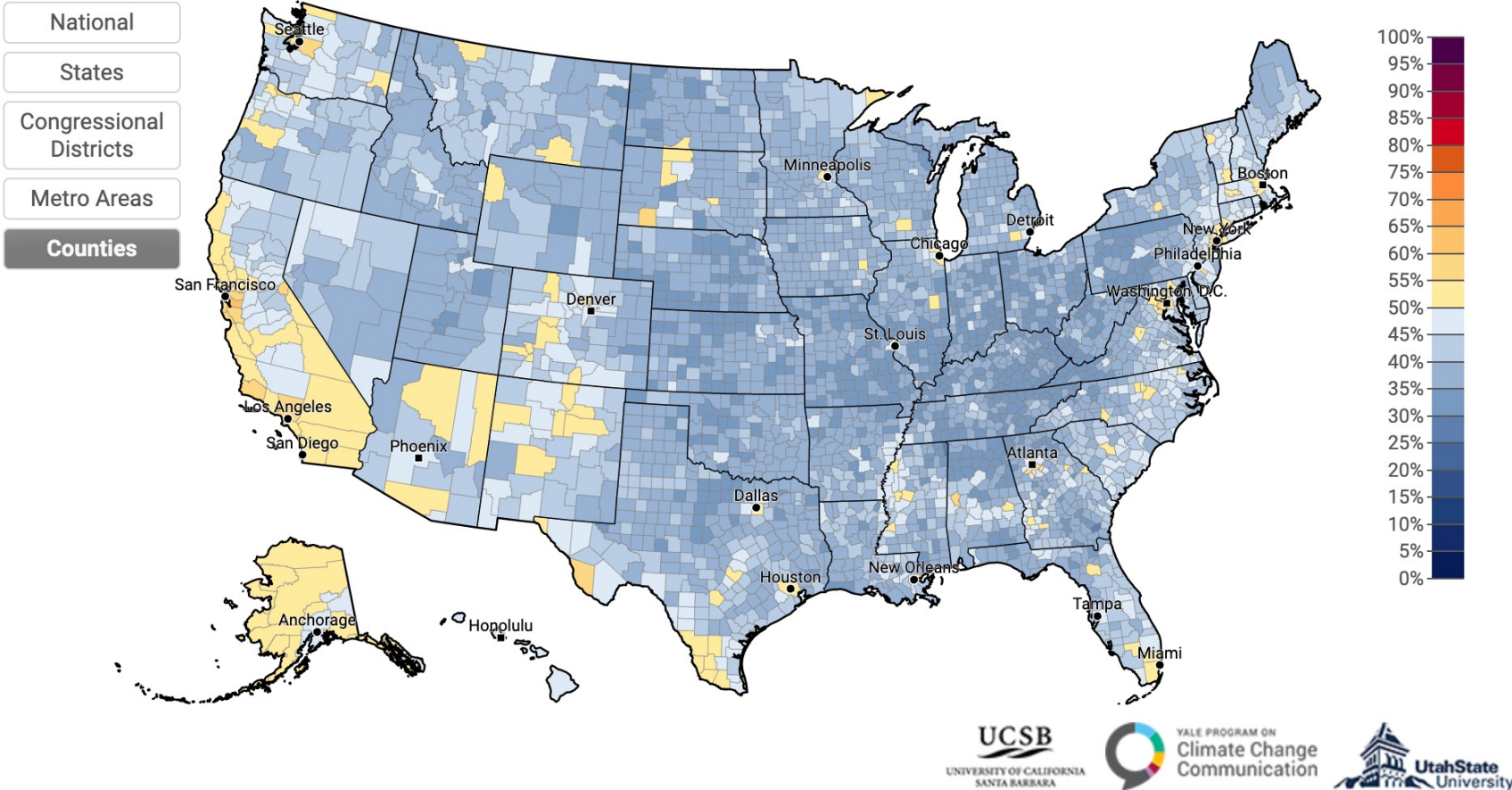
Has personally experienced the effects of global warming

Absolute Value

Click on map to select geography, or:

Select a State

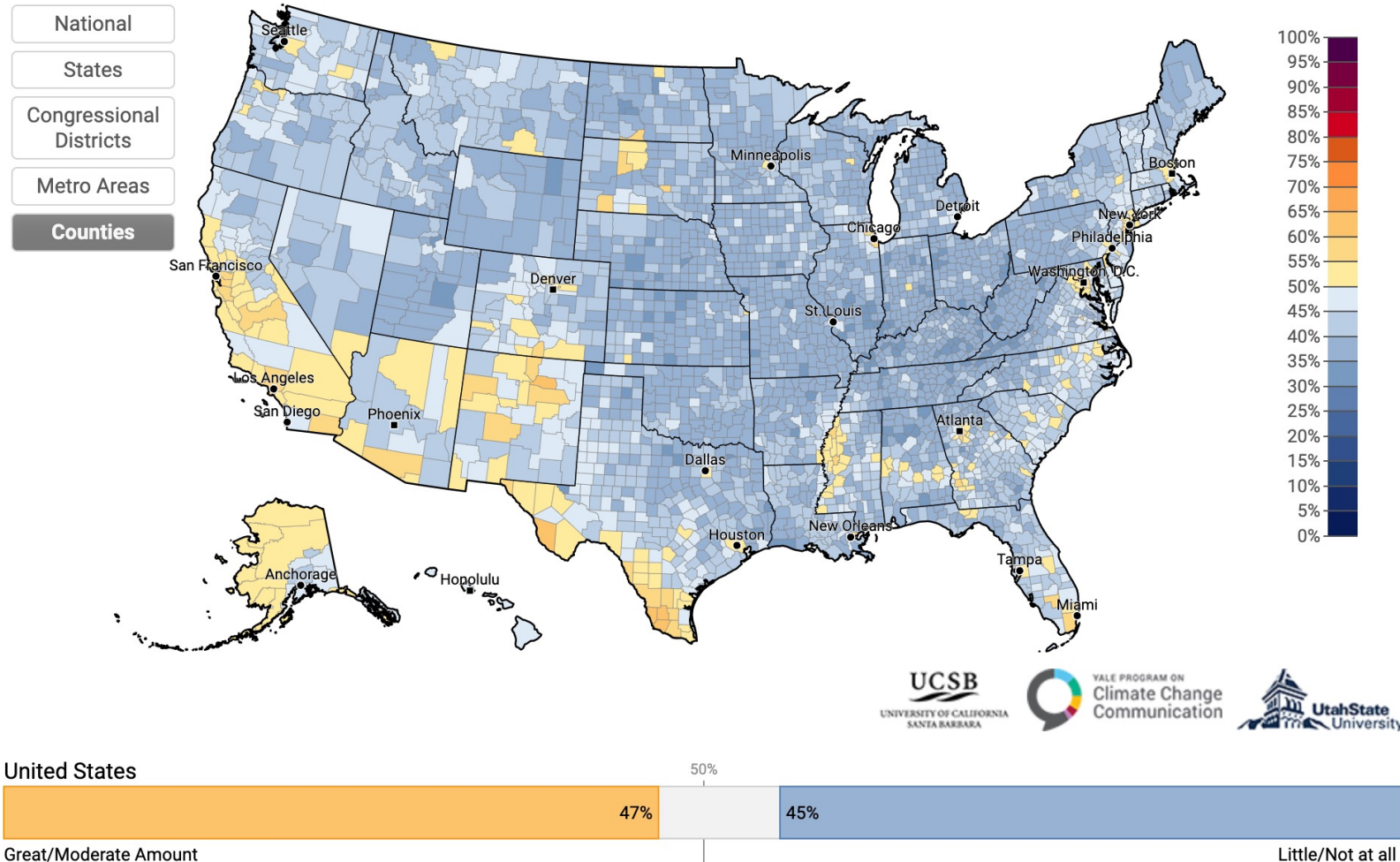
Select a County



Estimated % of adults who think global warming will harm them personally (nat'l avg. 47%), 2021

Select Question: Absolute Value

Click on map to select geography, or:



Estimated % of adults who believe most scientists think global warming is happening (nat'l avg. 57%), 2021

Select Question:

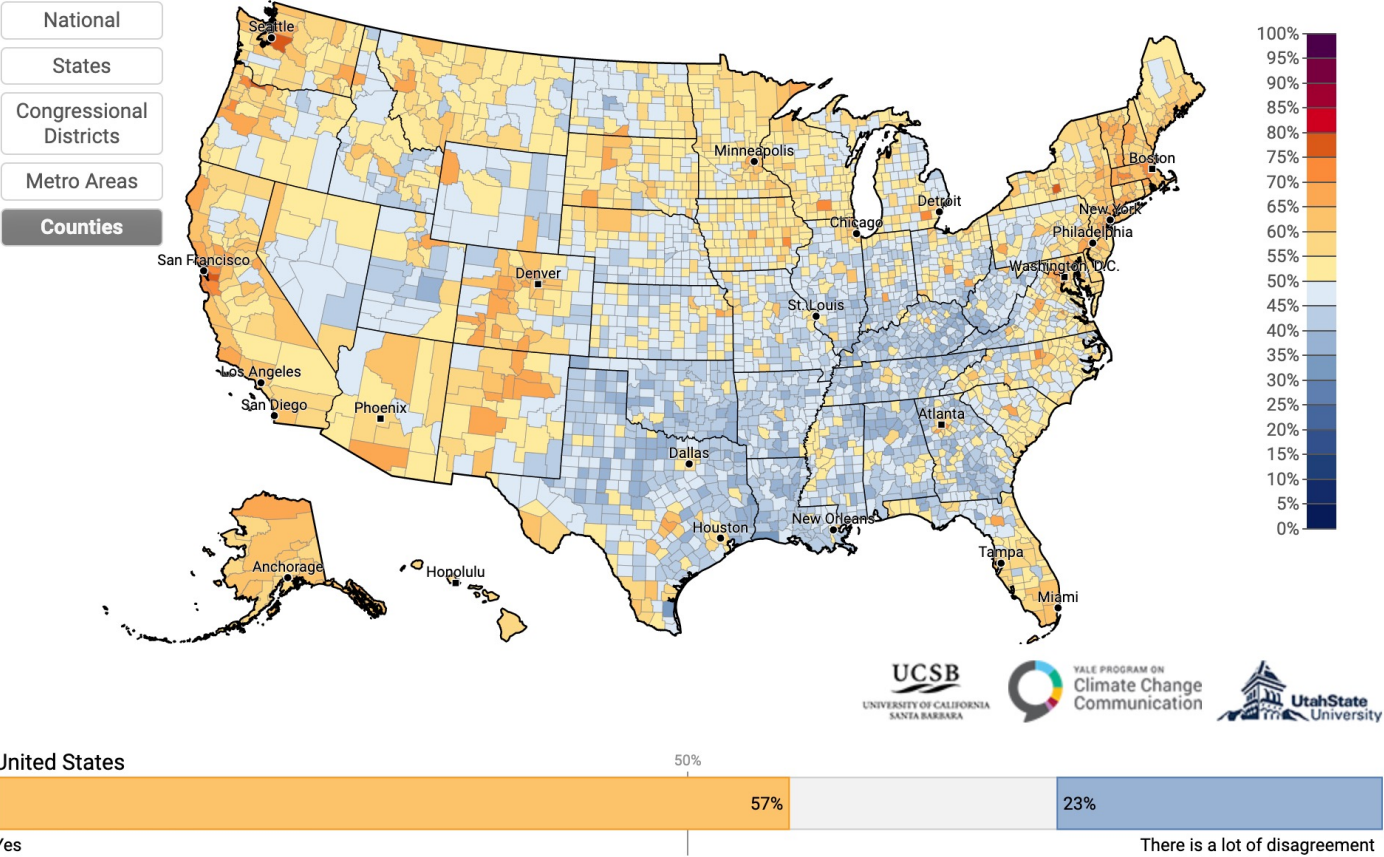
Most scientists think global warming is happening

Absolute Value

Click on map to select geography, or:

Select a State

Select a County



SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS JUNE 26, 2019 / 3:10 AM / 8 MONTHS AGO

Americans demand climate action (as long as it doesn't cost much): Reuters poll

Valerie Volcovici

8 MIN READ

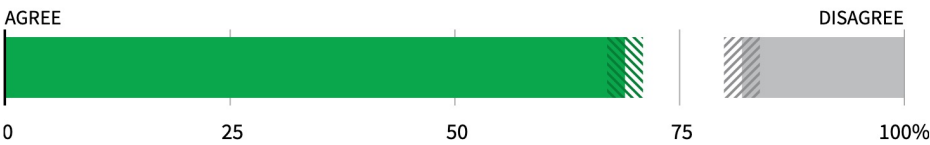


WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Nearly 70 percent of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, want the United States to take “aggressive” action to combat climate change - but only a third would support an extra tax of \$100 a year to help, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released Wednesday.

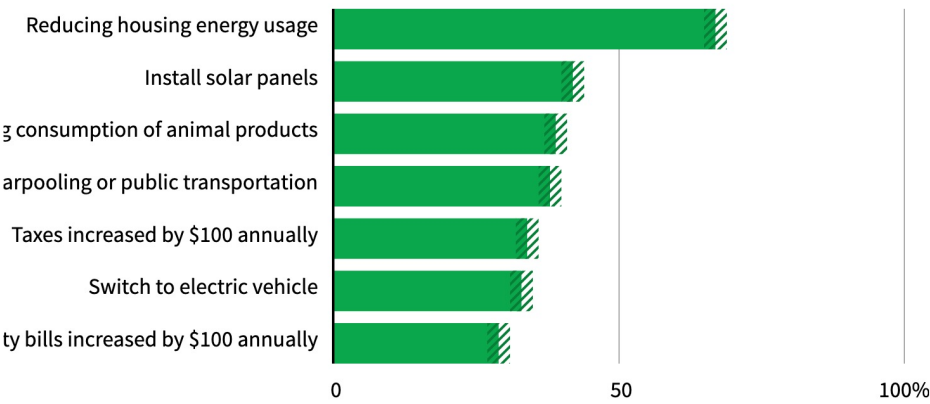
Americans' attitude on climate action

Most Americans say they want the U.S. to take “aggressive” action to stop climate change, yet only a minority would put up with even small increases in their taxes or electricity bills to do so.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that given the amount of greenhouse gasses that it produces, the United States should take aggressive action to slow global warming?



How likely would you be to do the following in the next year to help limit climate change?



Note: Poll conducted between Jun. 11-14; Credibility interval: 2% pts.; Sample size: 3,281
Source: Reuters/Ipsos

There has been some controversy about some TV weathercasters being more skeptical about global warming

NT

The New York Times

Among Weathercasters, Doubt on Warming

By Leslie Kaufman

March 29, 2010

Why Don't TV Meteorologists Believe in Climate Change?

Climate scientists agree in vast majority that human-caused global warming is occurring. But most U.S. weather forecasters don't. Why?

BY KATHERINE BAGLEY, INSIDECLIMATE NEWS

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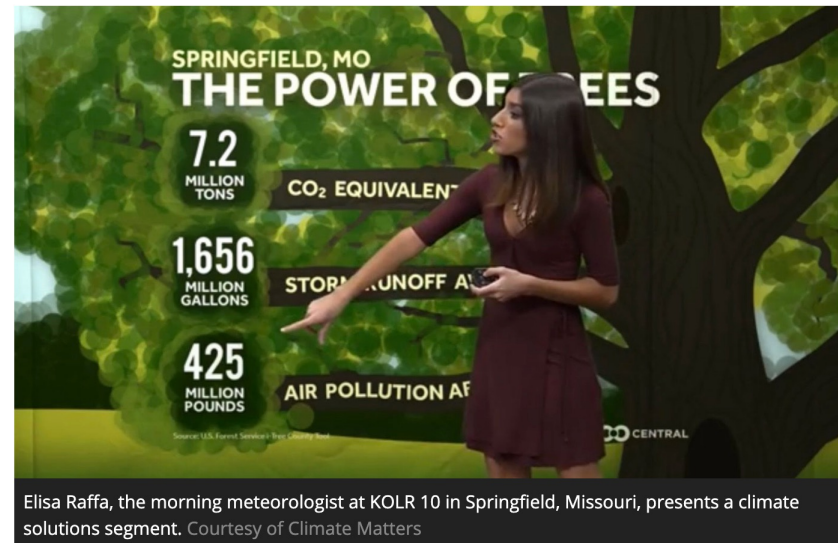
VICE NEWS

Why some TV meteorologists are still climate skeptics

TV meteorologist James Spann won't talk about climate change on the air — and we asked him why

By Arielle Duhaime-Ross

But that has faded in recent years



CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF RENEWABLES

Weathercasters are talking about climate change — and how we can solve it

By [Maddie Stone](#) on Jan 28, 2020

Increasing Pressure on TV Weathercasters To Convince the Public



SCIENCE

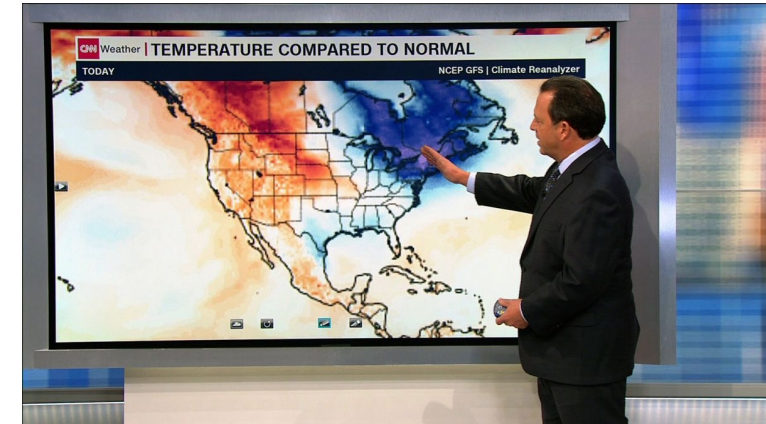
THE ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE AMERICANS ACTUALLY TRUST ON CLIMATE SCIENCE

Local meteorologists are better positioned than anyone else to talk their communities through the facts about climate change.

By Dan Schwartz

TV Weathercasters

- Often serve the role of a “station scientist”
- Central responsibility is to provide an accurate weather forecasts, describe the local and national weather situation, and educate folks about meteorology.
- Are increasingly being asked to talk about global warming/climate change.
- To what degree should TV weathercasters do this?



TV Weathercasters and Climate

- Many have decent basic understanding of meteorology—so start off better informed than most viewers.
- **Many do not have much background in climate science**
- Substantial pressure to connect extreme weather events with climate change.
- Talking about climate change has the danger of getting political or stirring politically active viewers.

Some Media Have Gone Into Full Advocacy Mode

Often Major Errors in Climate Change Stories



PARTLY CLOUDY
High, 73. Low, 56. > B6
seattletimes.com/weather

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019

The Seattle Times

WINNER OF 10 PULITZER PRIZES

\$1.50

INDEPENDENT AND LOCALLY OWNED FOR MORE THAN 122 YEARS

SEATTLETIMES.COM

Seattle heat waves could kill hundreds

CLIMATE CHANGE

Study quantifies how many more people would die if greenhouse gases not cut

By EVAN BUSH
Seattle Times staff reporter

Hundreds of Seattleites are projected to die in severe heat waves as the planet warms.

How much humans limit greenhouse-gas emissions will have a significant impact on just how many people perish, according to a new

study published earlier last week in the journal Science Advances.

Researchers used climate-warming scenarios and heat-mortality data to predict the severity of future heat waves for 15 U.S. cities, including Seattle.

Here, about 725 people are projected to die in each extreme heat event if global temperatures rise about 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit since preindustrial times. In that scenario, Seattle could see daily mean temperatures (averaging day and night measures) of about 97 degrees Fahrenheit at their highest.

If countries meet the greenhouse-gas reduction levels they pledged in the 2016 Paris Agreement, global temperatures could reach or approach that mark by about 2100, according to previous research cited in the study.

President Donald Trump vowed in 2017 to withdraw from that deal. Meanwhile, global carbon dioxide emissions hit record highs last year, according to scientists' projections. Washington state's most recent tally of its greenhouse-gas emissions showed a rise.

Scientists have warned for years

that climate change would cause killer heat waves, but the Science Advances paper estimates specific impacts for individual cities like Seattle and makes clear how many lives are at stake.

"These are the first estimates of what that increased burden from extreme heat waves would be if we don't cut emissions," said Kristie Ebi, a professor of global health at the University of Washington who was one of the study's authors.

That could help clarify the climate threat to the public, scientists said.

"This puts numbers on it to com-

municate that risk a little better to people," said Karin Bumbaco, Washington's assistant state climatologist, who was not involved in the paper.

Heat waves would increase in frequency as well as severity, Ebi said.

The researchers studied the impacts of one-in-30-year heat waves, or events that would have a 3.3% chance of happening each year. But as the world warms, the odds shift.

"In an average lifetime, this is the kind of heat wave you'd expect to

See > **HEAT WAVES, A7**

725 will die in each heat wave!

Assumes unreasonable warming and that no one will buy an air conditioner during this century



MOSTLY CLOUDY
High, 66. Low, 58. > B8
seattletimes.com/weather

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

The Seattle Times

WINNER OF 10 PULITZER PRIZES

INDEPENDENT AND LOCALLY OWNED FOR MORE THAN 123 YEARS

\$1.50

SEATTLETIMES.COM

Study: Climate change will cost us

Review of 10 states predicts millions will be spent to treat worsening health issues

By RYAN BLETHEN
Seattle Times staff reporter

Around this time last year, news outlets blared alarming headlines: Breathing the air outside was as bad as smoking several cigarettes. Wildfire haze blotted out the sun and turned the moon orange. Weather apps simply listed the forecast as “smoke.”

Just because this summer has been clear doesn’t mean that the environment is doing just fine.

While smoke from wildfires might be climate change’s most obvious impact in Washington, other threats still loom.

Some predicted health effects include heatstroke, dehydration, worsened pollen allergies and increased cancer risk. And while local scientists have a plan to fix it, they say they are concerned that no one is carrying it out.

Covering Climate Now

This story is part of Covering Climate Now, a global collaboration by more than 250 news outlets to strengthen coverage of climate change. Read more at: [st.news/coveringclimatenow](https://www.seattletimes.com/stories/coveringclimatenow)

Meanwhile, climate scientists predict more smoky summers. On Wednesday, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) released a study that found that during one year, wildfire smoke in Washington state caused 245 deaths, directly and indirectly. The study pegged the costs of those “premature deaths” at \$2.2 billion, and \$55 million spent dealing with associated illnesses.

The NRDC study examined climate-change-related events in 10 states in 2012 and was an attempt to put a dollar figure on how climate change is harming people’s health.

Researchers arrived at the figures by looking at published, peer-reviewed literature and state and federal agency reports.

Wisconsin, not a state normally associated with being hot, logged 27 deaths from extreme heat in 2012, according to the NRDC study. The state nestled between Minnesota and the Great Lakes suffered through record high temperatures for a week that summer.

“I’m seeing things that I did not think would happen until 2050,” said Dr. Kristie Ebi, a professor in the Department of Global Health at the University of Washington.

See > CLIMATE, A7



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES, 2018

Haze caused by smoke from wildfires in British Columbia hangs over Seattle last August. Although this summer was clear, scientists predict more haze and heat for the region.

Unbelievable error

Plants are producing more pollen because of increased levels of carbon monoxide in the air, prolonging allergy season. Increased carbon monoxide not only helps produce more pollen — it also reduces nutrients in the plants we eat. Greenhouse gases chew away at the ozone, leading to an increased risk of skin cancer.



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Climate change: 12 years to save the planet? Make that 18 months



Matt McGrath

Environment correspondent

@mattmcgrathbbc

Scientists say as climate changes, odds increase for deadly storms



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MORE

by KING 5 News

Posted on November 12, 2013 at 6:03 PM

Updated Tuesday, Nov 12 at 6:20 PM

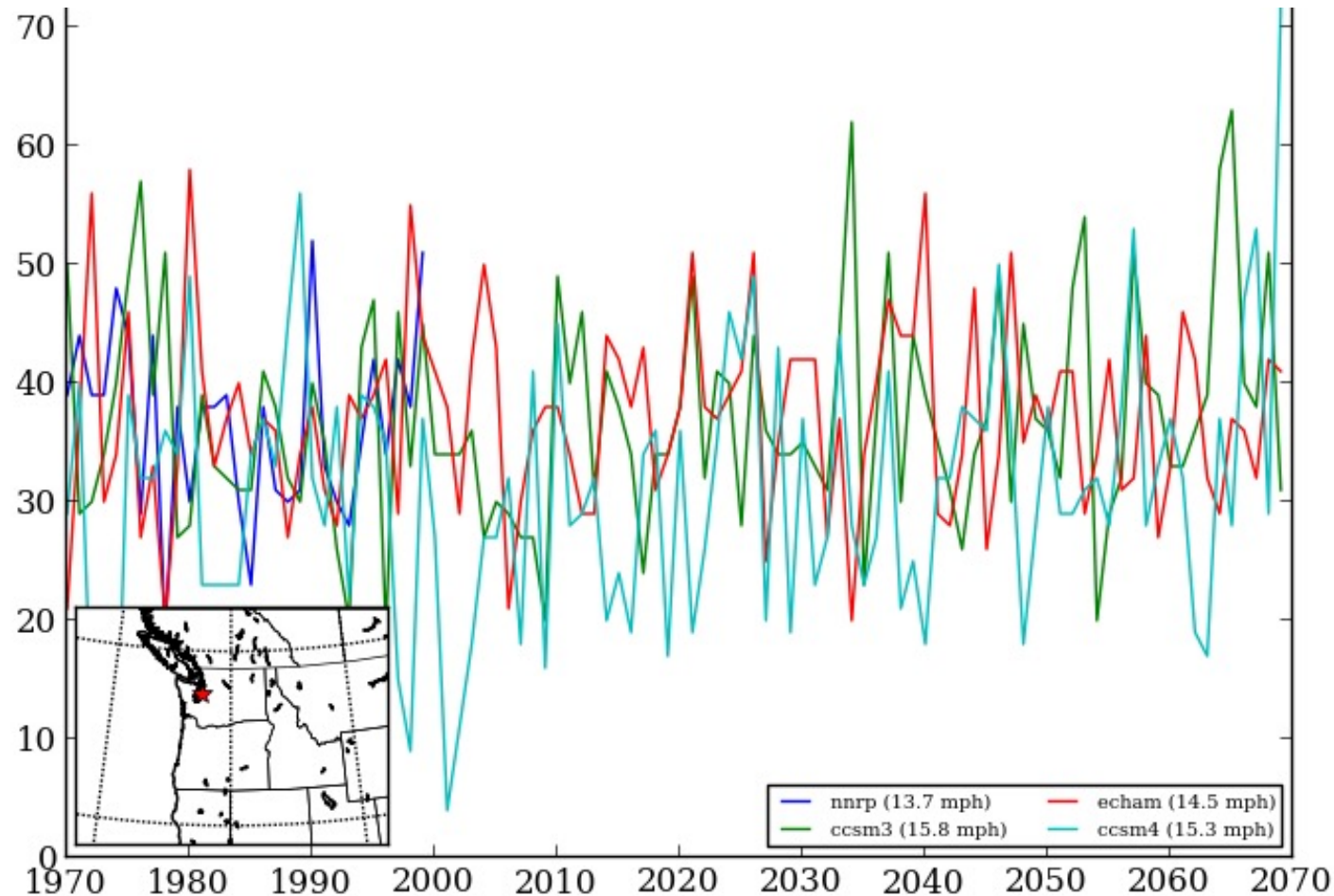
SEATTLE - Members of an international conservation group say it's time to prepare for more intense, more frequent and more damaging storms in Puget Sound

Northwest Windstorms

- **The real answer appears to be no.** No increasing trend in observations and none suggested by climate models.
- UW investigated this issue for Seattle City Light



Number of times per year winds exceed a high-wind threshold (DJF) at Seattle for several simulations

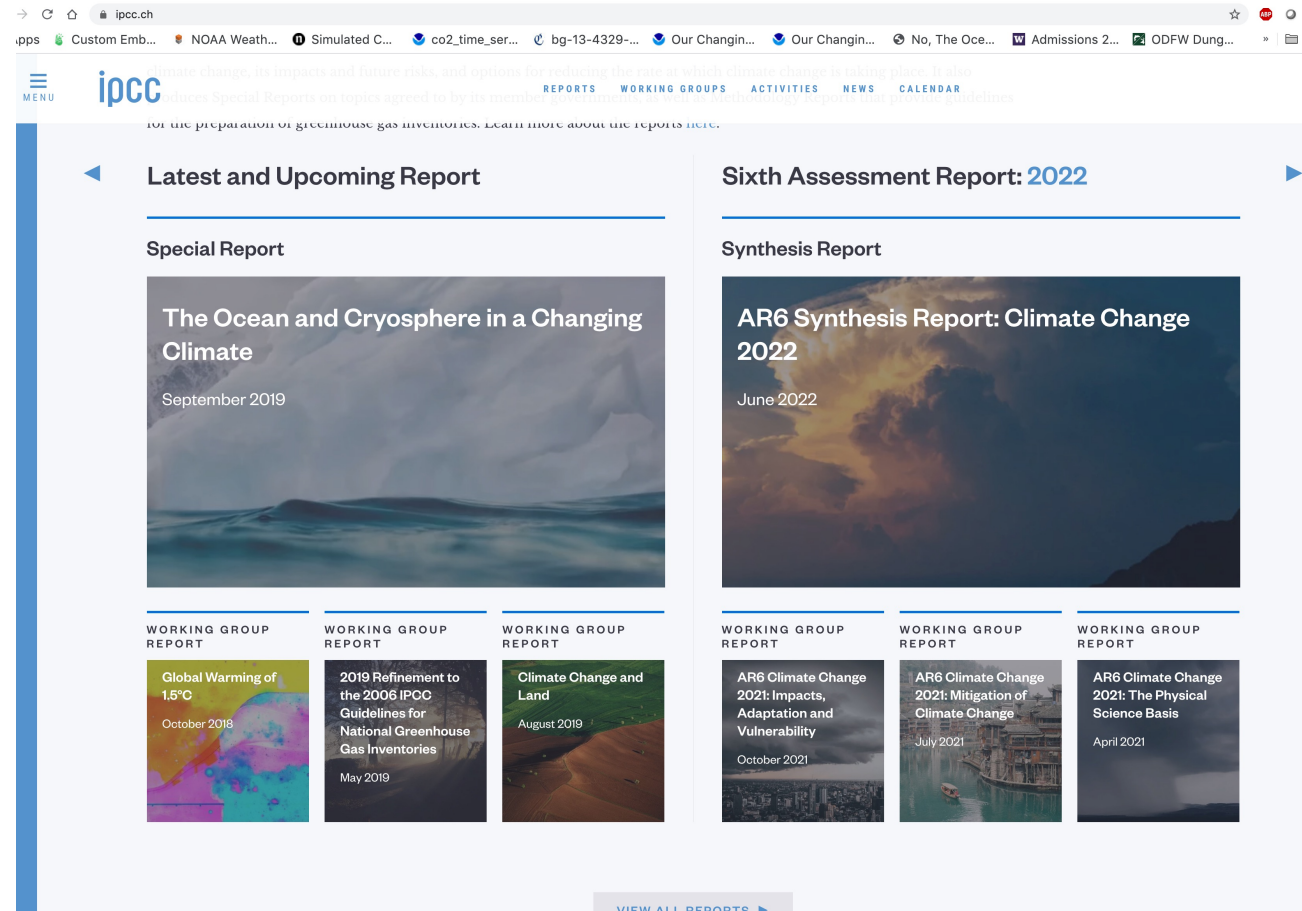


Major Challenge


- **How does one communicate about a highly complex phenomenon like climate change in an EFFECTIVE and ACCURATE WAY.**
- **Takes deep knowledge of a subject to explain it simply and accurately.**
- **Should not go beyond one knowledge and use trusted sources and experts.**



Excellent Source of Climate Change Data: IPCC Reports



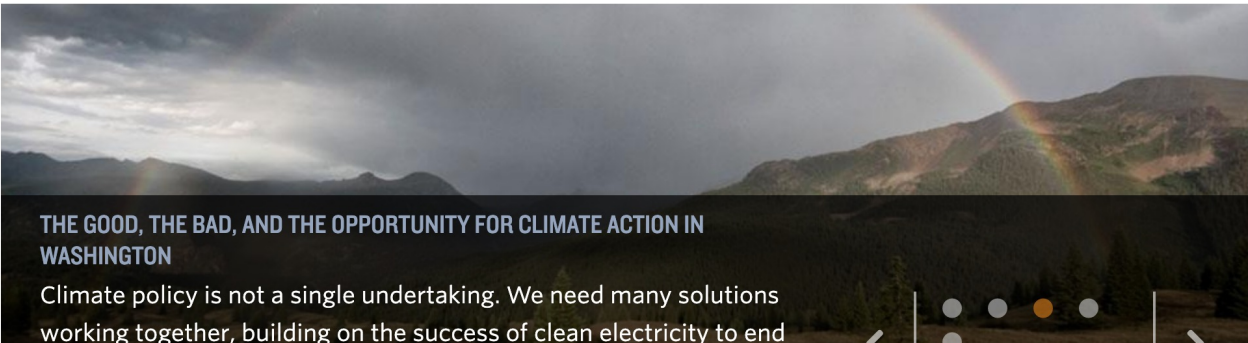
Poor Sources: Advocacy Groups and NGOs



climate solutions
accelerating the transition to our clean energy future

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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN WASHINGTON

Climate policy is not a single undertaking. We need many solutions working together, building on the success of clean electricity to end our reliance on fossil fuels in ... ➔

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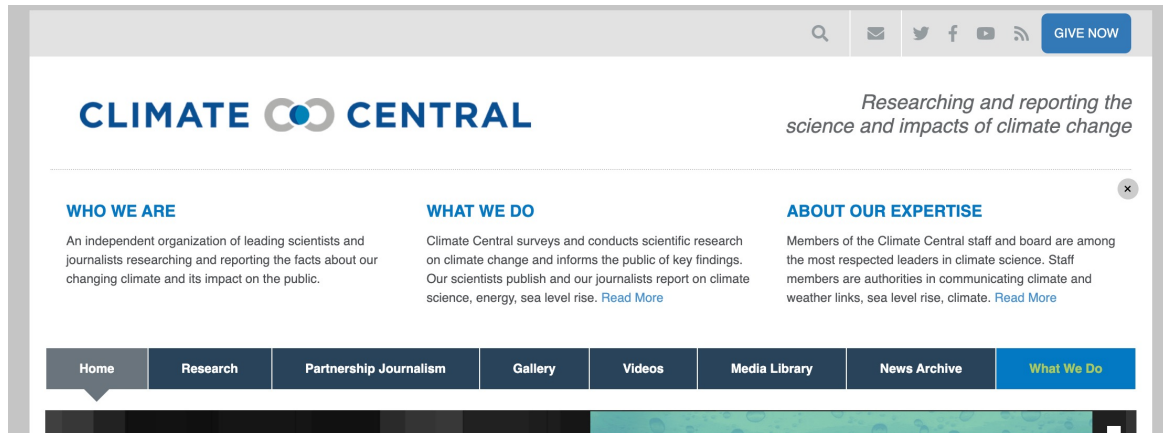


STOP FOSSIL FUELS.

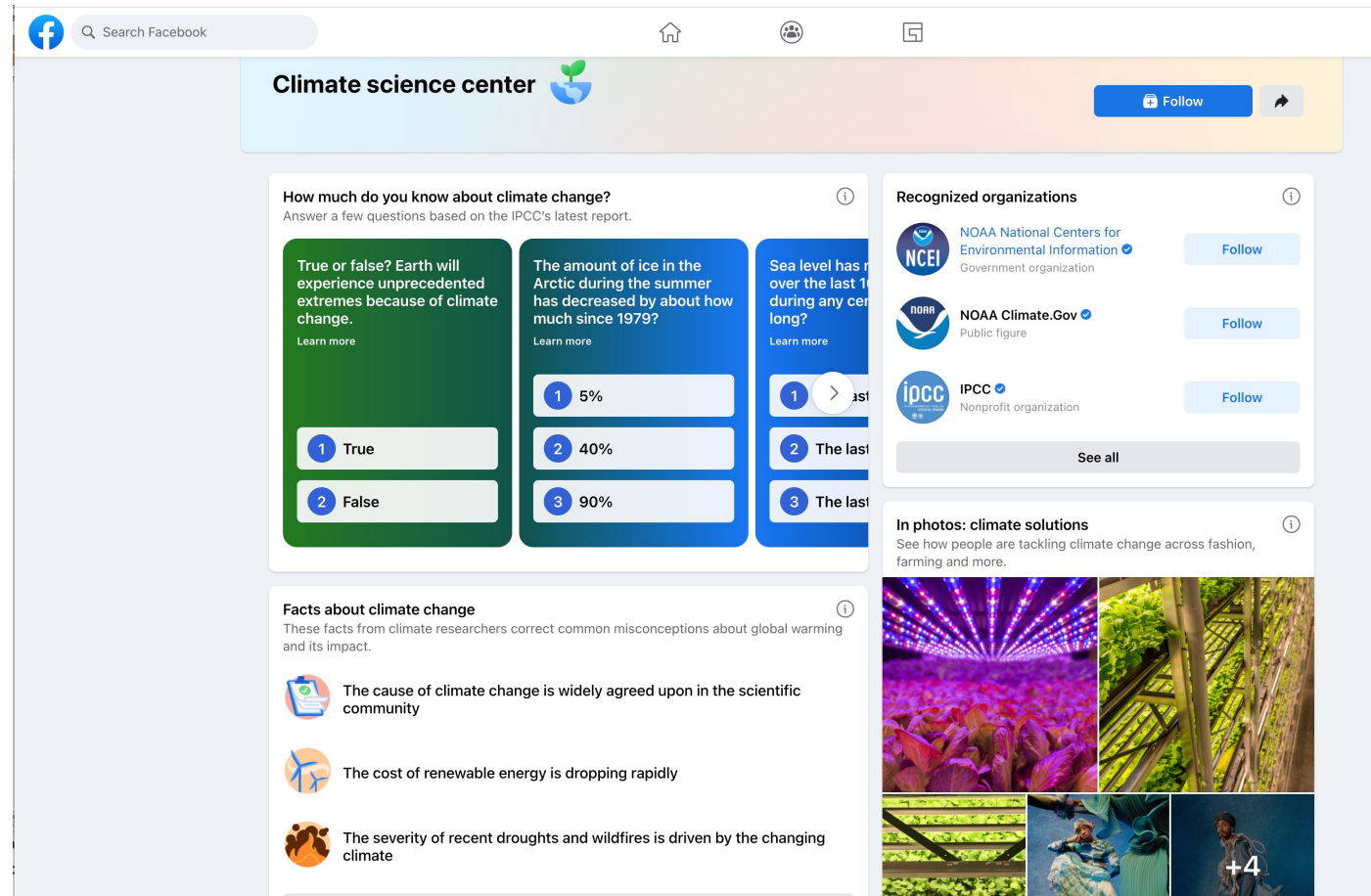
BUILD 100% RENEWABLES.

We are standing up to the fossil fuel industry to stop all new coal, oil and gas projects and build clean energy for all.

Large Increase in Online Information Services on GW



And Now Social Media Sites Are Starting to Censor “Wrong” Materials and Provide “Guidance”





The severity of recent droughts and wildfires is driven by the changing climate

A common myth claims that droughts and wildfires aren't caused by climate change because they happen naturally during annual dry seasons. However, research shows that climate change is intensifying these events. While droughts and wildfires do happen seasonally, the claim doesn't account for the fact that global warming is now creating longer and hotter dry seasons. These factors cause more severe drought and heat waves, plus more frequent, destructive fires.

Source: [Yale School of the Environment](#)



Recent global warming is caused by humans, not natural events

The claim that today's changing climate is just like historic periods of global warming wrongly assumes that the same natural factors, like the sun, are causing it this time. No natural factors can explain how fast the planet is warming today. According to scientists, the rapid global warming observed in recent history can only be caused by the billions of tons of carbon pollution created by human activities.

Source: [NASA](#)

It is critical for responsible media not to hype or exaggerate global warming impacts, but to go with the best peer-reviewed, consensus science

- Important to keep in mind that not every peer-reviewed paper is correct. Thus, important to look for consensus statements of groups such as the IPCC.
- Hying climate change to “get people to do the right thing” is not an appropriate role for a media representative.
- Sticking to consensus science, may get complaints by advocacy groups on the right or the left. Or advocacy media.

Ethical Dimensions: Exaggeration, hyping, and existential threat stories can hurt the most vulnerable

Climate change

‘Overwhelming and terrifying’: the rise of climate anxiety

Experts concerned young people’s mental health particularly hit by reality of the climate crisis



Feeling hopeless about climate change? There's a class for that (at UW Bothell)

grist

#MYCLIMATECANDIDATE

CLIMATE

JUSTICE

POLITICS

ADVICE

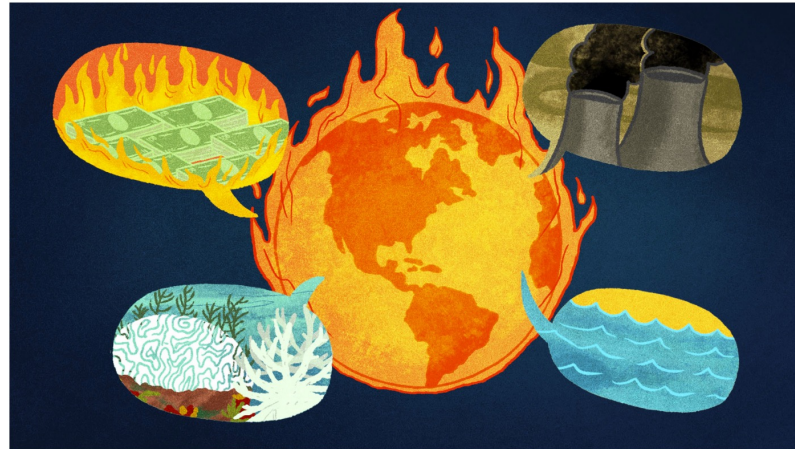
SCIENCE

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Q



Grist / Amelia Bates

FUTURE SHOCK

'The Uninhabitable Earth' puts words to a future you don't want to live in

By Kate Yoder on Feb 19, 2019

Should one bring up climate change on air?

- **Sometimes it is unavoidable, particularly after an extreme weather event.**
- **Stick to science and keep away from politics.**
- **Make sure information about uncertainties is clear.**
- **The media must be seen as a source of objective information, not advocacy.**

I have learned this the hard way of some of the dangers....

theStranger

THINGS TO READ ▾

THINGS TO DO ▾



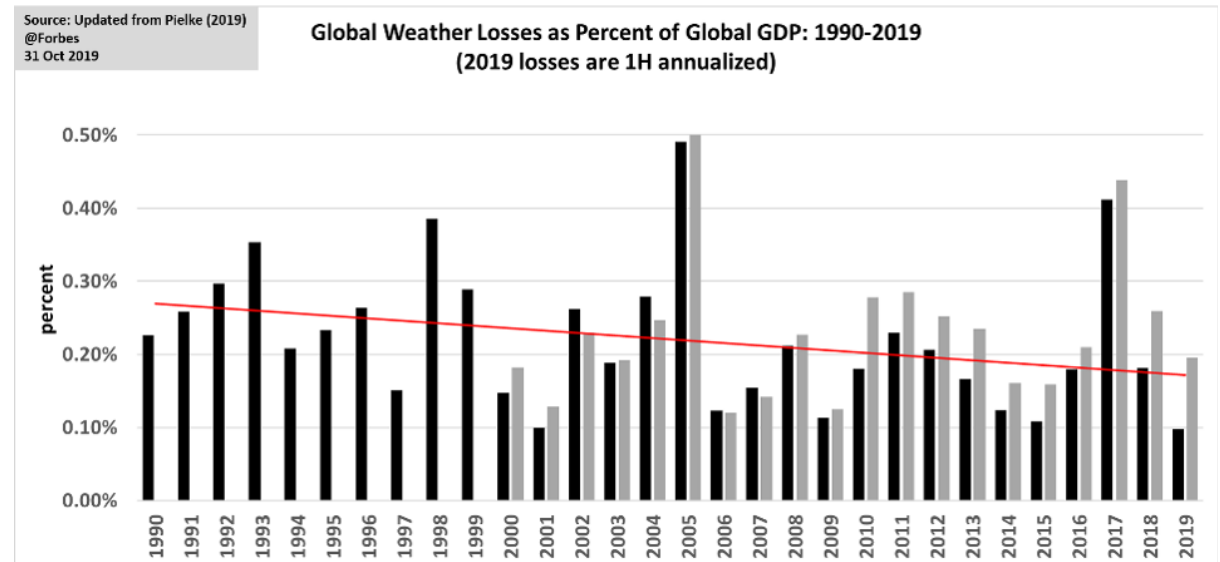
ENVIRO

Cliff Mass Is Trump's Weatherman

by Charles Mudede • Oct 23, 2018 at 3:10 pm

Many positive stories about climate change and related subjects

- Becoming clear that the worst is not going to happen
- Major advances in technology (solar and wind, safe fission, storage technologies)
- Major potential for adaptation
- Improved forecasting and richer societies are less prone to environmental disaster



The End