

# ‘Dominant themes in the international media coverage of the IPCC reports’

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# Outline of talk


- Context – rapidly changing media landscape but television still very used and trusted in most countries
- Selected results from various studies of media coverage of IPCC reports, with focus on different themes
- Some issues to consider



# RISJ Digital News Report 2015

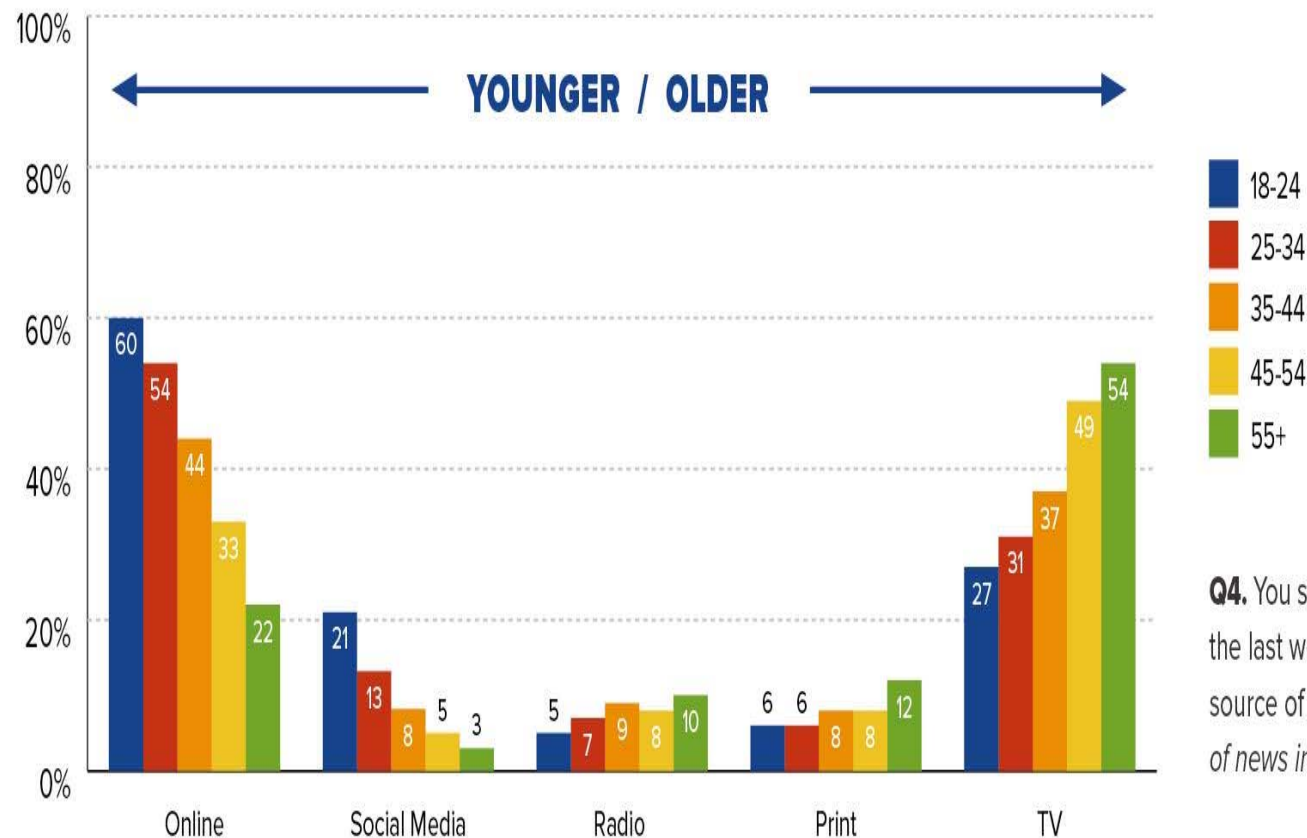


## SOURCES OF NEWS BY COUNTRY

	 UK	 GER	 SPA	 ITA	 FRA	 IRE	 DEN	 FIN	 US	 BRA	 JPN	 AUS
TV	75%	82%	82%	78%	80%	76%	75%	75%	64%	81%	73%	72%
Radio	37%	50%	40%	23%	28%	50%	50%	45%	26%	39%	17%	41%
Printed Newspapers	38%	38%	47%	38%	19%	49%	33%	49%	23%	33%	44%	39%
Online (inc. social media)	73%	60%	86%	81%	71%	83%	85%	90%	74%	91%	70%	85%

**Q3.** Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply. *Base: Total sample in each country.*

## MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY AGE



**Q4.** You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? *Base: All who have used a source of news in the last week All = 23155.*

## TOP GLOBAL BRANDS

	Huff Post	Buzzfeed	Vice	MSN	Yahoo	D Mail	Guardian	NY Times	BBC	CNN
US	22%	10%	3%	11%	23%	3%	4%	12%	10%	14%
UK	12%	5%	1%	5%	8%	14%	12%	1%	48%	1%
France	8%*	1%	1%	7%	8%	-	-	1%	3%	2%
Germany	6%*	1%	1%	4%	5%	-	-	1%	3%	3%
Spain	8%*	1%	1%	9%	8%	-	-	3%	5%	4%
Italy	7%*	1%	1%	8%	11%	-	-	2%	3%	4%
Ireland	8%	6%	1%	5%	9%	7%	4%	4%	17%	5%
Brazil	2%*	2%	1%	20%	18%	-	-	6%	8%	9%
Australia	12%	7%	1%	25%*	21%*	3%	7%	4%	14%	7%
Japan	2%*	1%	-	10%	52%*	-	-	2%	3%	5%
Weighted <sup>1</sup>	10%	4%	1%	8%	18%	2%	2%	5%	8%	6%

**Q5b.** Which, if any, of the following have you used to access news in the last week?  
Via online platforms (web, mobile, tablet, e-reader). Base: Total sample in each country.

<sup>1</sup> Weighted percentage calculated using population data from Internet World Stats and the World Bank: weighted = (country population \* percentage adults \* percentage accessed)/total population of all countries surveyed. Brazil is not included due to the absence of reliable data about its urban population.

\* Represent joint ventures and some cases (e.g. Australia's NineMSN) where MSN retains the name but has sold the business.

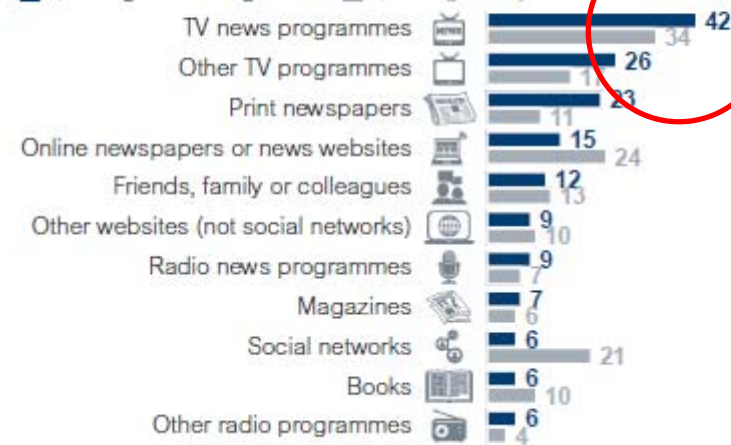


# UK – where do people get their science news from?

Figure 4.3 – people's most common sources of information about science

Q. From which one or two of these, if any, do you hear or read about new scientific research findings most often?

■ % among all adults aged 16+ ■ % among 16-24 year-olds



Bases: 1,749 UK adults aged 16+; 510 16-24 year-olds

# Sources of information on science

- UK: In 2014, 68% of the British people regularly used television news and programmes as a source of information for science. This compares to 23% for print, 15% for online newspapers and news sites, 2% for science blogs.
- Germany: Television is the main news platform by 56%, compared to online (19%), radio (13%) and print (11%). On the specific issue of climate change, Germans use television as their main source of info.
- Spain: Spaniards use television as their main source of news. However, in sharp contrast to Germany, over a third prefer online (including social media), followed by print (11%) and radio (4%).
- Poland: television held the dominant position as an information source about climate change (over 90%), followed by the Internet, daily newspapers, the radio, and weekly publications (which were all mentioned by about one third of the interviewees)
- Norway and US; online has overtaken television as source of news about science



# International media coverage of IPCC reports

- RISJ, 'Disaster Adverted?' (2014): TV in Australia, Brazil, China, India, Norway, and the UK.
- Mètode Science Studies Journal, 'Disaster, Uncertainty, Opportunity or Risk? (2015): TV in Germany, Norway, Poland, Spain and the UK.
- Media Climate, Palgrave, forthcoming chapter (2016): print coverage in 10 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, and South Africa - Canada, France, Japan, Norway and the UK).
- JPI project (2016), television and print coverage in four European countries, Norway, Poland, Spain and UK.
- 'Taking a Bet on Risk', Commentary, Nature Climate Change (2015).
- 'The effectiveness of the IPCC communication: a survey of UK-based users', Working Paper, (2015)







Scientists and politicians are increasingly using the language of risk to describe the climate change challenge. Some researchers have argued that stressing the 'risks' posed by climate change rather than the 'uncertainties' can create a more helpful context for policy makers and a stronger response from the public. However, understanding the concepts of risk and uncertainty – and how to communicate them – is a hotly debated issue. In this book, James Painter analyses how the international media present these and other narratives surrounding climate change. He focuses on the coverage of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and of the melting ice of the Arctic Sea, and includes six countries: Australia, France, India, Norway, the UK and the USA.

'How the media communicates risk and uncertainty about climate change is critically important. This book highlights good and bad practice by the media and provides extremely sensible suggestions for improvements in the future.'

LORD (NICHOLAS) STERN, CHAIR OF THE GRANTHAM RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

**James Painter** is Head of the Journalism Fellowship Programme at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University. He worked for several years for the BBC World Service and has written extensively on climate change and the media. His latest publication is *Poles Apart: The International Reporting of Climate Scepticism* (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University).

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CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MEDIA JAMES PAINTER



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# CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MEDIA

REPORTING RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

JAMES PAINTER

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# Four Main Frames or Themes:

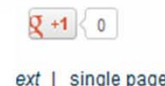
- **Disaster/implicit risk:** mention of adverse impacts such as sea level rise, more floods, water or food shortages etc
- **Uncertainty:** ranges of projections, the presence of sceptical voices or duelling experts, or the inclusion of words like 'may', or 'possible', the climate pause
- **Opportunity:** move to low carbon economy
- **Explicit risk:** use of the word 'risk', where the odds, or probabilities of something adverse happening were given, or where everyday concepts or language relating to insurance, betting, or the precautionary principle; or the concept of risk management





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## Amid 'uncertainty', scientists blame mankind for global warming



Environment Correspondent Alistair Doyle

Yet it also has the words "uncertainty" or "uncertainties" 42 times over 31 pages, according to a final draft obtained by Reuters, a comparable rate to 26 mentions in 18 pages in 2007.

week but may struggle to drive home the message in a report that uses the term "uncertainty" 42 times. The 'language gap' between scientists and the policy makers, public and media they seek to alert is proving hard to bridge.

Scientists say uncertainty is inevitable at the frontiers of knowledge - in, for instance, calculating how much of Greenland will thaw or how fast temperatures will rise by 2100 - but that policymakers and the public often mistake it for ignorance.

That gap in semantics may complicate the message of greater overall understanding of global warming in the report by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), due for release in Stockholm on September 27 after a final round of editing.

A final draft summary raises the probability that most climate change since the 1950s has a human cause to at least 95 percent, from 90 in 2007 and 66 percent in 2001. Temperatures could rise by almost 5 degrees Celsius (9 F) by 2100, bringing enormous risks for society and nature.

Yet it also has the words "uncertainty" or "uncertainties" 42 times over 31 pages, according to a final draft obtained by Reuters, a comparable rate to 26 mentions in 18 pages in 2007.



New website arms consumers with Internet tracking info

Tuesday marks 1,000 days at \$3-plus per gallon of gas

Taxes, penalties for individuals, companies who opt out



Ads by Google



# And is this the evidence all those taxes are cash down the drain?

By **Fiona MacRae**  
Science Correspondent

GLOBAL warming has been put on ice, the world's leading experts are expected to confirm today.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is set to reveal world temperatures have barely risen in the past 15 years, despite growing amounts of greenhouse gases being pumped into the atmosphere.

Critics say this shows carbon dioxide is not as damaging as had been claimed. Indeed, the report is expected to admit that computer models of climate change were too pessimistic. However, some scientists insist the slow-down is temporary – and warn that global warming remains a pressing threat.

The IPCC report – the first in six years – has been compiled by more than 250 scientists. It will be used to inform government policy around the world.

Officials from 195 countries have spent this week behind closed doors in Stockholm, Sweden with UN scientists, hammering out a 30-page summary document due to be released today.

It is expected to give the strongest warning yet that climate change is man-made and will cause more heatwaves, droughts and floods unless governments take action. Drafts say it is 'extremely likely' – with at least 95 per cent certainty – that the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities are the main cause of rising temperatures since the Fifties.

That level of certainty is up from 90 per cent in the last report in 2007, and 66 per cent in 2001.

The IPCC, led by Rajendra Pachauri, will also give new estimates of the effect of global warming on sea levels, glaciers and ice sheets.

But its explanation of why the rise in global average surface temperatures has 'paused' will be the most contentious passage. After the IPCC's last major report, was

## The world's hardly got any hotter in the past 15 years!

criticised for a string of errors – including the since-withdrawn claim that Himalayan glaciers would vanish within 25 years – confidence in the new document's conclusions will be crucial.

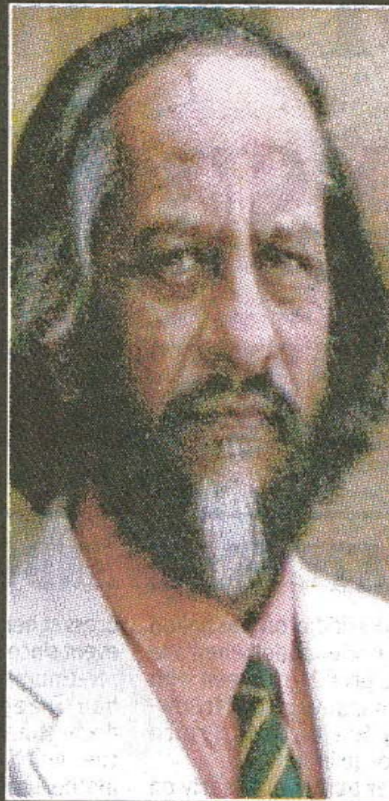
The report is expected to say that temperature rises have dropped from 0.12C per decade since 1951 to just 0.05C per decade since 1998. The slowdown is great enough to be termed a 'pause' or 'hiatus' by scientists.

Climate change sceptics argue this means that the heating effect of carbon dioxide has been greatly exaggerated. Controversially, sev-

eral governments have called for the references to the slowdown to be amended or even removed from the report.

Germany has asked for the passage to be deleted, saying a timespan of 10 to 15 years is misleading in the context of climate change, which takes its toll over longer periods. Belgium objects to using 1998 as a starting year for the statistics, as it was exceptionally warm.

Climate scientists say such pauses in warming occur regularly throughout history and can last for up to 20 years – but cannot be



New forecasts: IPCC chief Dr Pachauri

predicted. In addition, the IPCC is expected to say that much of the 'missing' heat is being stored deep beneath the sea, preventing it from contributing to temperatures at surface level.

Volcanic eruptions and changes in the sun's activity are also thought to have contributed to the slow-down.

However, the summary is also likely to acknowledge that some of the computer programmes used to predict changes to the climate over-estimated the effect of carbon dioxide. Ed Hawkins, a climate expert from Reading Uni-

versity's department of meteorology, said: 'The current "pause" in global surface temperatures certainly does not mean climate change has stopped.'

'Surface temperatures have continued to rise more slowly than before – but other measures, such as rises in sea levels and melting snow and ice, show the climate has continued to change.'

'Greenhouse gases are continuing to build up in the atmosphere and are warming the climate, but we believe temporary factors such as small volcanic eruptions and a decline in solar activity, alongside extra heat being absorbed into the deep ocean, are acting to temporarily cool the climate.'

'When these temporary factors subside, we should see a return

### 'Decline in solar activity'

to warming.' The IPCC report is also expected to say that the world has already burned through half the amount of fossil fuel that will bring about dangerous levels of climate change, and that many of the changes that have already occurred to the atmosphere, land and sea are 'unusual or unprecedented on time-scales of decades to millennia'.

Two more IPCC reports will be issued shortly, covering the impact of the changing climate and how to limit the damage, ahead of treaty talks in Paris in 2015.

It is set to warn that the Gulf Stream, which brings heat north from the tropics and keeps Britain warmer than it would be otherwise, could slow down. A 30 per cent speed reduction could make Britain 1C cooler.

Comment – Page 14  
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“The report concludes that people, societies, and ecosystems are vulnerable around the world, but with different vulnerability in different places. Climate change often interacts with other stresses to

**Field added: “Understanding that climate change is a challenge in managing risk**

Adaptation can play a key role in decreasing these risks, Barros noted. “Part of the reason adaptation is so important is that the world faces a host of risks from climate change already baked into the climate system, due to past emissions and existing infrastructure,” said Barros.

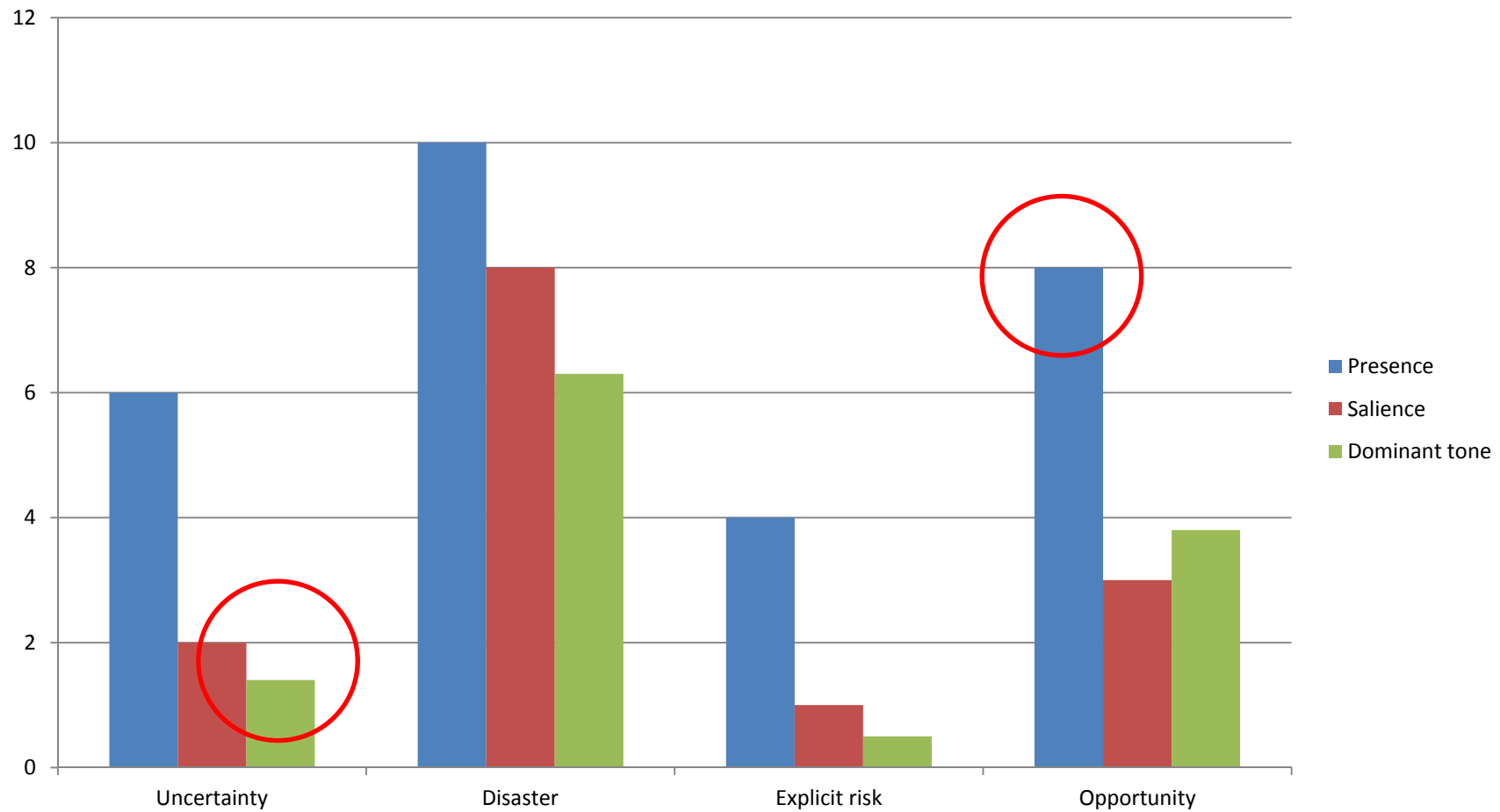
Field added: “Understanding that climate change is a challenge in managing risk opens a wide range of opportunities for integrating adaptation with economic and social development and with initiatives to limit future warming. We definitely face challenges, but understanding those challenges and tackling them creatively can make climate-change adaptation an important way to help build a more vibrant world in the near-term and beyond.”



# TV study - countries and channels

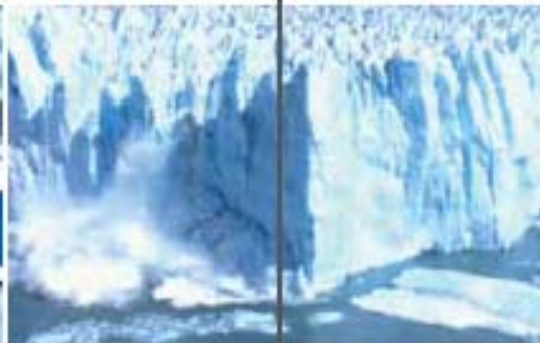
- 5 countries - Germany: ARD Tagesschau at 2000; Norway: NRK Dagsrevyen at 1900; Poland: TVP1 Wiadomosci; Spain: TVE Telediario at 2100; UK: BBC News at Ten at 2200
- One of most watched - >10 Million viewers
- BUT.... newspapers agenda-setting, particularly for 'thought leaders'
- Television picture-driven, less space available, resource-heavy

# Presence, salience and dominant tone in news bulletins covering the four IPCC reports 2013/14



N = 14

# Disaster





# Disaster theme – does it matter?

‘News values of dramatization combined with the need for compelling visuals make reporting WGI as Disaster an appealing proposition, especially for commercial news organizations. However, although Disaster framing of climate change may make commercial sense, it is likely to actively disengage audiences from feeling a sense of self-efficacy. Conversely, the Opportunity, Economic and Morality/Ethics frames, which might support self-efficacy, were relatively rare. The absence of Health is particularly surprising considering the human interest, and thus news values, that this frame offers.’

# Uncertainty

- Uncertainty was present in a considerably lower percentage of the 2013/4 coverage (30 - 65%) than in the print articles examined in 2007 (87%).
- However, the 'increasing certainty' narrative about the human drivers of increased temperatures since the 1950s received a considerable amount of media attention and went some way to provide a strong counter-narrative to all the uncertainties.
- This made uncertainty much less likely to be a salient frame or a dominant tone, even though it was relatively strongly present.
- TV coverage may find it more difficult to represent uncertainties strongly compared to print coverage.

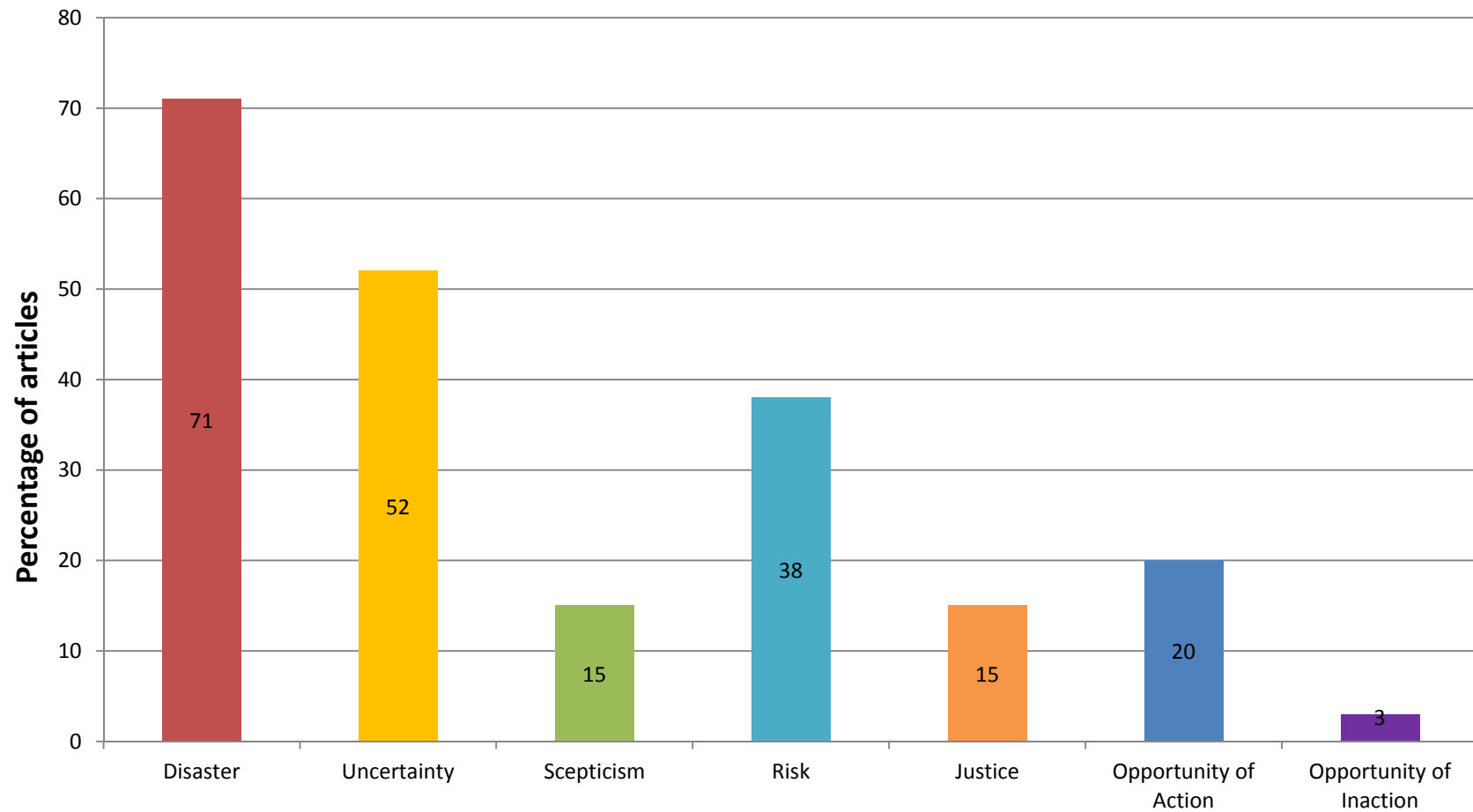


# Opportunity

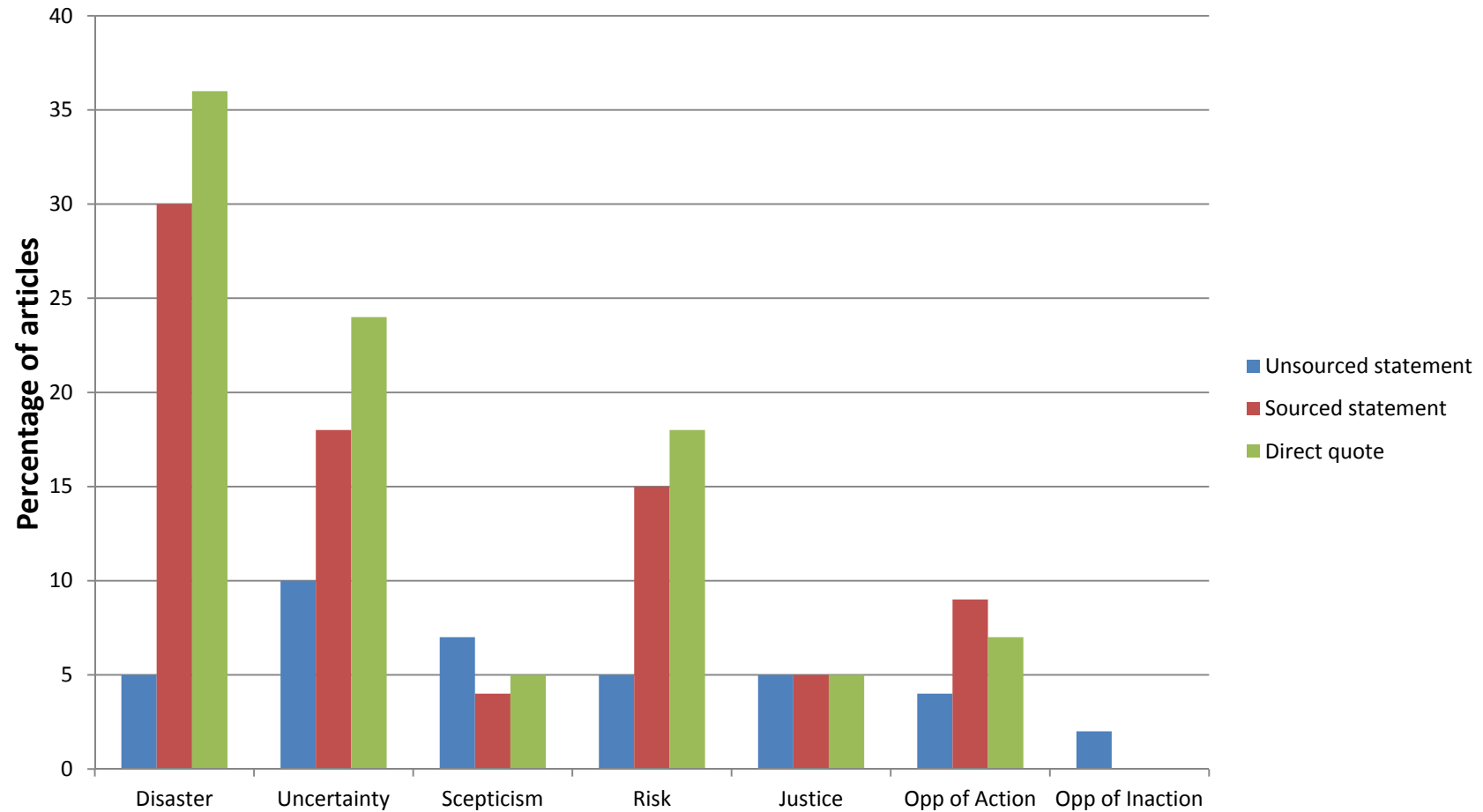




# Presence of different themes in the print coverage of the IPCC reports in 10 countries



# Strength of different themes



# Some issues to think about

More opportunity narrative compared to 2007, less uncertainty

Risk theme not picked up much in television reports, but more in print.

TV dependent on pictures and 'stories' - disaster the most attractive. Very difficult to change the 'grammar' of television.

Country variations – UK stands out for 'pause'/sceptics. Also true of USA and Australia. Coverage in part a reflection of political polarisation – why in 'Anglosphere' countries and not others?

Do we know enough about media impacts of IPCC coverage on audiences, and journalist construction (frames only one part)?



Thank you

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