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ABSTRACT

As the sole tool for projecting future climate trends under conditions of increasing greenhouse gas concentrations, climate models form the basis for global warming risk assessments and thus are inextricably linked to policy formation. As such, one would expect that they would be a central part of climate change discourses in the media. This study evaluates the quantity of attention to climate modeling in four U.S. newspapers over the period of 1998-2007, as well as in 20 media sources frequented by high-knowledge U.S. audiences for the year 2007. My findings indicate that over the past decade newspaper attention to climate models has remained generally low in comparison to overall coverage of the climate change issue. While the number of newspaper texts mentioning climate models has increased over the period, the trend has not been linear; higher frequencies appear at years 1998, 2001/2002 and 2007. Mention of climate models has occurred the most frequently in *The New York Times* over that duration, followed by *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA TODAY*. During 2007, a peak year of climate change coverage, the largest sources of information on climate models, taken from a devised index of media preferred by high-knowledge U. S. audiences, were National Public Radio, *The Rush Limbaugh Show* and *The Nation*. Preliminary findings indicate that little of the text in these materials provided explanation of key terms or processes in climate modeling, with the highest amounts of explanatory text occurring in *The New York Times* of the four newspapers analyzed from 1998-2007, and *The Rush Limbaugh Show* and *The Nation* in 2007 of the media titles preferred by high-knowledge audiences.