

Abstract

We study the media discourse and public opinion on climate change in the aftermath of extreme weather events. In both cable news and local media, and for both national-interest and local events, we find that left-leaning media consistently increase their coverage of climate change in the aftermath of extreme weather events, while conservative media do not, despite equal disaster-related coverage. We then link the experience of extreme weather events to concerns about climate change expressed in large-scale electoral surveys. We find a polarizing effect: disaster-experience increases concerns about climate change and support for environmental policies among liberal respondents, but has the opposite effect on conservative respondents. Both effects are stronger in areas where the ideology of the respondent is in the minority.