

STUDY: Climate Coverage Plummets On Broadcast Networks

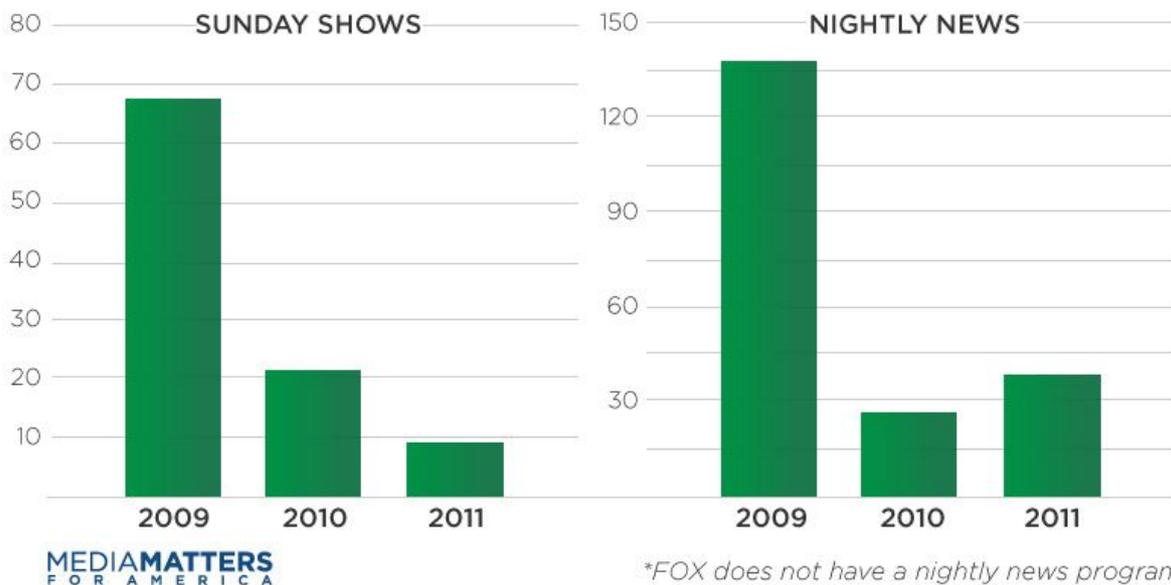
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A *Media Matters* analysis finds that news coverage of climate change on ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX has dropped significantly since 2009. In 2011, these networks spent more than twice as much time discussing Donald Trump as climate change.

Time Devoted To Climate Change Has Fallen Sharply Since 2009

Despite Ongoing Climate News, Broadcast Coverage Has Dropped Significantly. Since 2009, when the U.S. House of Representatives passed a climate bill and a major climate conference took place in Copenhagen, the amount of climate coverage on both the Sunday shows (*Fox News Sunday*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, CBS' *Face the Nation*, and ABC's *This Week*) and the nightly news (*NBC Nightly News*, *CBS Evening News*, and *ABC World News*) has declined tremendously. This drop comes despite a series of newsworthy stories related to climate change in 2010 and 2011, including a *debate* over comprehensive climate and energy legislation in the U.S. Senate, a series of *record-breaking extreme weather* events, notable *developments* in climate science, the *rise* of so-called "climate skeptics" in the House of Representatives, and a *deal struck* at the most recent UN climate summit in Durban, South Africa.

BROADCAST NEWS COVERAGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE
Minutes of airtime on ABC, CBS, NBC & FOX*



Sunday Show Coverage Of Climate Change Fell 90% Between 2009 And 2011. Since 2009, climate coverage on the Sunday shows has dropped every year across all networks. The Sunday shows spent over an hour on climate change in 2009, compared to 21 minutes in 2010 and only 9 minutes in 2011.

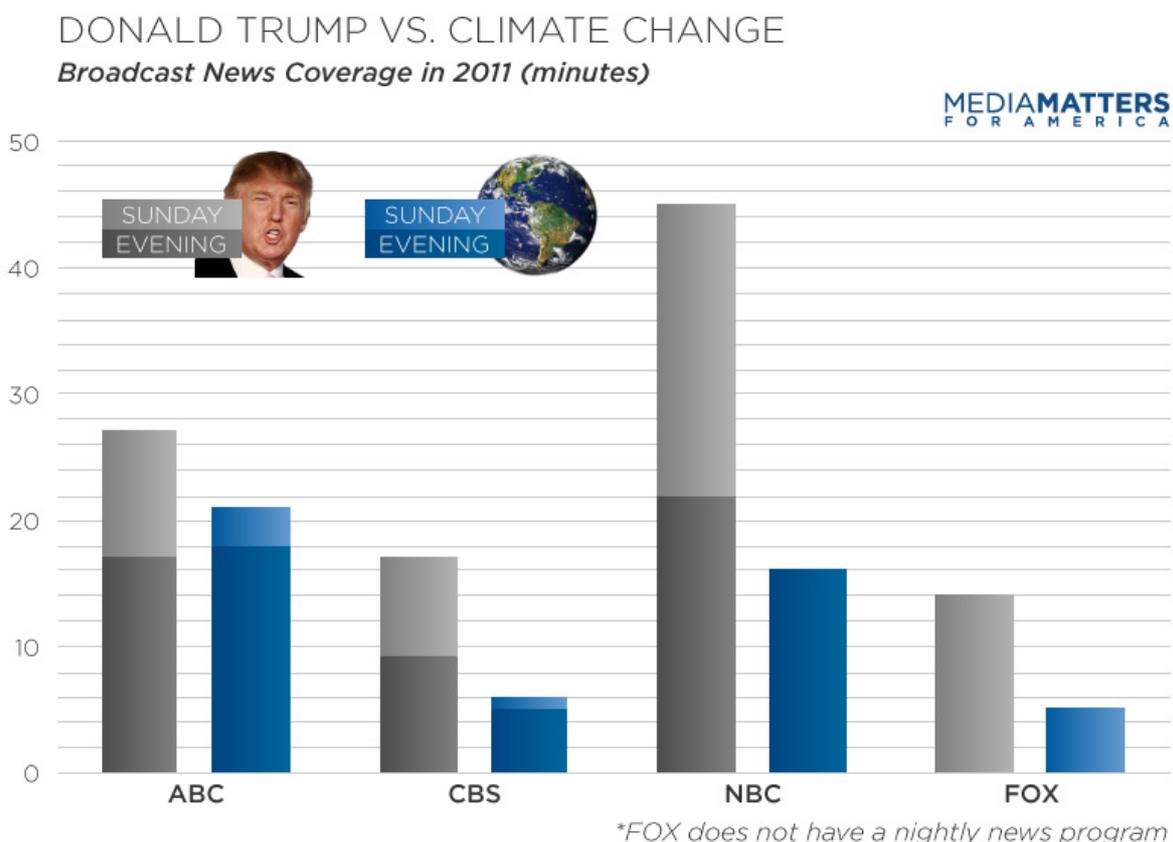
- *Fox News Sunday* covered climate change the most, for just under an hour, but much of Fox's coverage promoted the "Climategate" controversy and downplayed the threat of climate change. In fact, at no point did *Fox News Sunday* explicitly affirm the scientific consensus that human activity is changing the climate.
- CBS' *Face the Nation* covered climate change the least, for a total of just 4 minutes in 3 years.

Nightly News Coverage Decreased 72% Between 2009 And 2011. Coverage of climate change on the nightly news programs dropped from over 2 hours in 2009 to just 27 minutes in 2010 and 38 minutes in 2011.

- *NBC Nightly News* covered climate change the most - for more than an hour and a half in 3 years.
- *CBS Evening News* covered climate change the least, for a total of 40 minutes in 3 years.

Priorities? The Donald Trumps Climate Change In 2011

Each Network Covered Donald Trump More Than Climate Change In 2011. Every program included in our analysis devoted more airtime to Donald Trump's flirtation with a presidential run and birther antics than to climate change in 2011, with the exception of *ABC World News*, which gave equal time to the two topics. Together, the broadcast networks spent more than twice as much time covering Donald Trump. The discrepancy was most glaring on NBC's *Meet the Press*, which devoted 23 minutes to Trump but did not cover climate change at all in 2011.



Sunday Shows Feature Twice As Many Republicans As Democrats On Climate Change

Sunday Shows Featured More Republicans Than Democrats On Climate Change. In total, 68% of the political figures interviewed or quoted by the Sunday shows were Republicans, and 32% were Democrats. In 2011, the *only* people interviewed or quoted about climate change on the Sunday shows were Republican politicians. *Fox News Sunday* was the most skewed, featuring eight Republicans and only two Democrats over the three years.

Scientists Were Shut Out Of Climate Change Discussions On Sunday Shows. Our study finds that the Sunday shows consulted political and media figures on climate change, but left

WHO DID THE SUNDAY SHOWS
HOST OR QUOTE ON CLIMATE CHANGE?
2009-2011



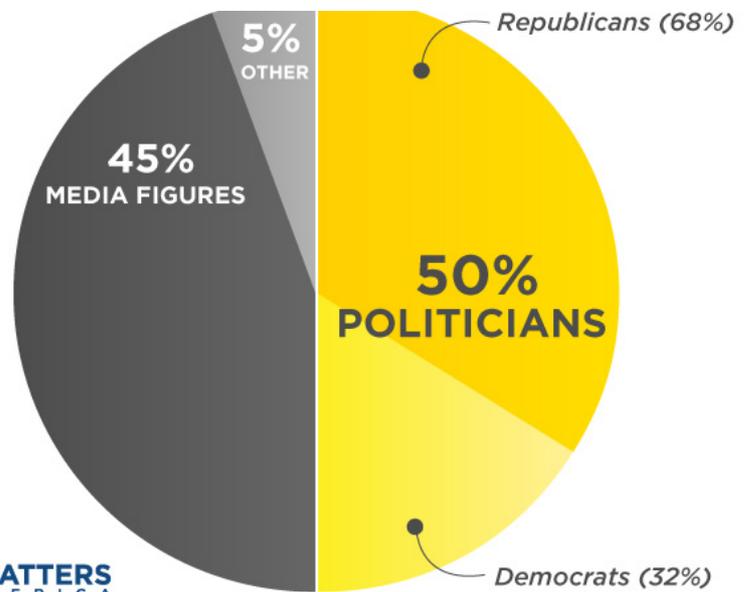
scientists out of the discussion. Of those hosted or interviewed on climate change, 50% were political figures -- including elected officials, strategists and advisers - - 45% were media figures, and none were scientists. By comparison, 32% of those interviewed or quoted on the nightly news programs were political figures, and 20% were scientists.

Almost Every Mention Of Climate Change Was About Politics.

Our results show that on the Sunday shows, 97% of stories mentioning climate change in the past three years were about

politics in Washington, DC or on the campaign trail. One story -- on *Fox News Sunday* -- was driven by extreme weather, and none were driven by scientific findings.

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Broadcast Networks Play Important Role In Public Discourse

Pew: Network Evening News "Remains An Extraordinarily Popular News Source For Americans."

From the Pew Research Center's 2012 *State of the News Media* report:

For all the losses, however, the network evening news remains an extraordinarily popular news source for Americans. More than four times as many people watched the three network evening newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC during the dinner hour than watched the highest-rated shows on the three cable news channels (CNN, Fox News and MSNBC) during prime time.

And more than twice as many people watch the lowest-rated broadcast evening news program (CBS Evening News) than watch the highest-rated cable news program (The O'Reilly Factor on Fox News). [Pew Research Center, accessed 4/12/12]

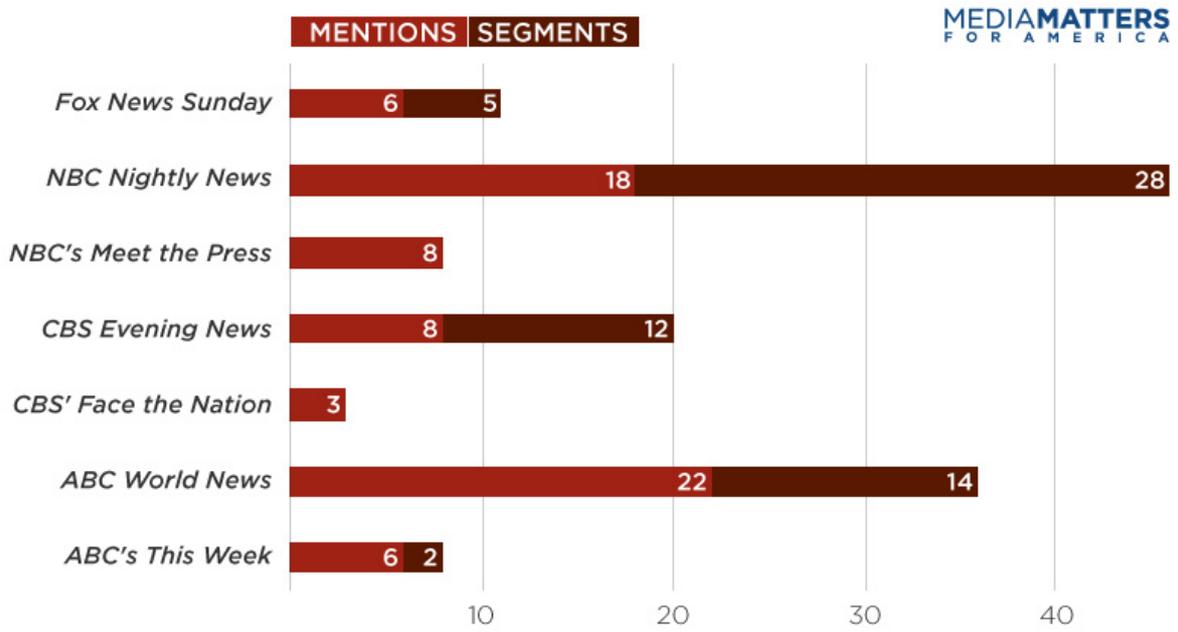
Sunday Shows Help Set Scope Of Official Debate In Washington. The Sunday shows occupy a singular place in the American media landscape. Their audience of a combined 9 million or so viewers includes virtually the entire journo-political establishment. The discussions held on the shows frequently determine the scope of official debate in Washington, legitimizing some views and -- by nature of their absence -- marginalizing others. [*Media Matters*, March 2007]

Methodology

This report analyzes coverage of "climate change" or "global warming" between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2011, on four Sunday morning talk shows (ABC's *This Week*, CBS' *Face the Nation*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, and Fox Broadcasting Co.'s *Fox News Sunday*) and three nightly news programs (ABC *World News*, CBS *Evening News*, and NBC *Nightly News*). Fox Broadcasting Co. airs *Fox News Sunday*, but does not air a nightly news equivalent; Fox News is a separate cable channel. Our analysis includes any segment devoted to climate change, as well as any substantial mention (more than one paragraph of a news transcript and/or or a definitive statement about climate change). Timestamps were acquired from *Media Matters'* internal video archive and were applied generously. For instance, if a segment about an extreme weather event mentioned climate change briefly, the entire segment was counted as climate coverage. For those segments not available in our archive, we estimated the length of the segment based on its word count.

The following chart displays the coverage included in our study:

TOTAL COVERAGE BY PROGRAM 2009-2011 *Discussion of "climate change" or "global warming"*



— J.K.F. & J.N.F.