

# STUDY: How Broadcast Networks Covered Climate Change In 2015

[Research](#) March 7, 2016 5:41 AM EST >>> KEVIN KALHOEFER, DENISE ROBBINS, & ANDREW SEIFTER

ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox collectively spent five percent less time covering climate change in 2015, even though there were more newsworthy climate-related events than ever before, including the EPA finalizing the Clean Power Plan, Pope Francis issuing a climate change encyclical, President Obama rejecting the Keystone XL pipeline, and 195 countries around the world reaching a historic climate agreement in Paris. The decline was primarily driven by ABC, whose climate coverage dropped by 59 percent; the only network to dramatically *increase* its climate coverage was Fox, but that increase largely consisted of criticism of efforts to address climate change. When the networks did discuss climate change, they rarely addressed its impacts on national security, the economy, or public health, yet most still found time to provide a forum for climate science denial. On a more positive note, CBS and NBC -- and PBS, which was assessed separately -- aired many segments that explored the state of scientific research or detailed how climate change is affecting extreme weather, plants, and wildlife.

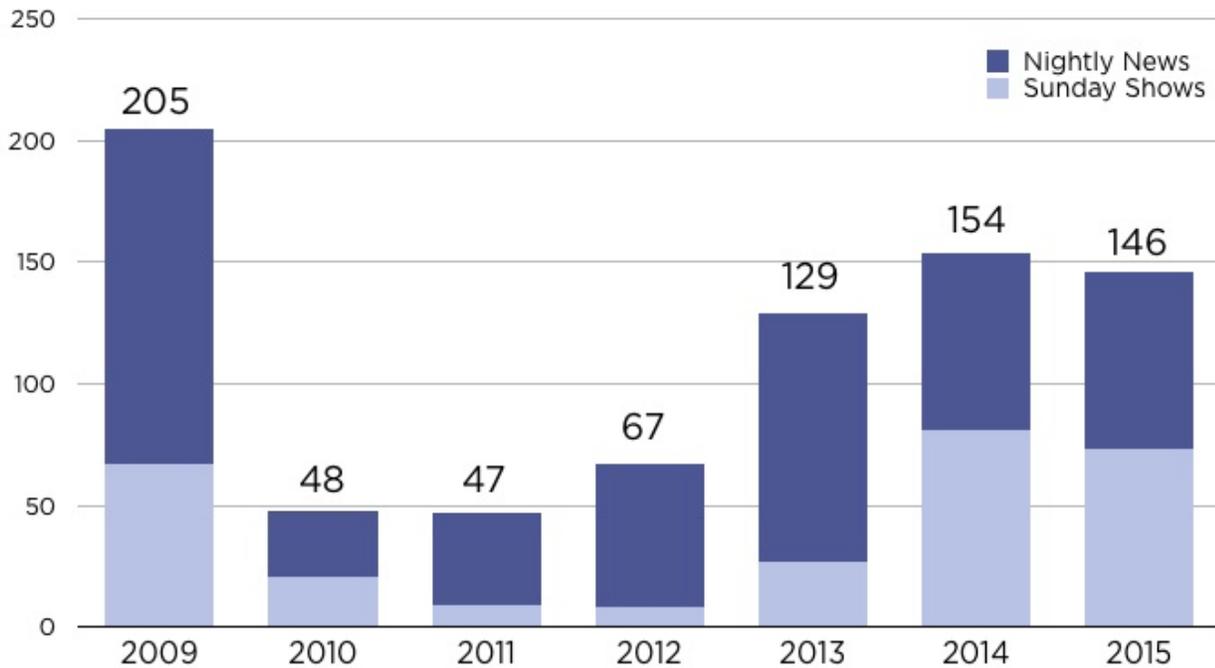
For the pdf version of this study including an appendix, see our [full report here](#).

## Total Climate Coverage On Broadcast Networks Decreased In 2015

**Combined Climate Coverage On ABC, CBS, NBC, And Fox Decreased Five Percent From 2014 To 2015, Despite Landmark Actions To Address Global Warming.** In 2015, ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox collectively aired approximately 146 minutes of climate change coverage on their evening and Sunday news shows, which was eight minutes less than the networks aired in 2014. This five percent drop in coverage occurred even though 2015 was a year full of significant actions to address climate change, including the EPA finalizing the Clean Power Plan, the first-ever federal limits on carbon pollution from power plants; President Obama rejecting the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, citing the need to fight climate change; Pope Francis releasing the first-ever papal encyclical on climate change; and leaders from 195 countries agreeing to a landmark accord to lower greenhouse gas emissions at the United Nations climate summit in Paris.

# Broadcast News Coverage Of Climate Change

Minutes of airtime on ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX\*

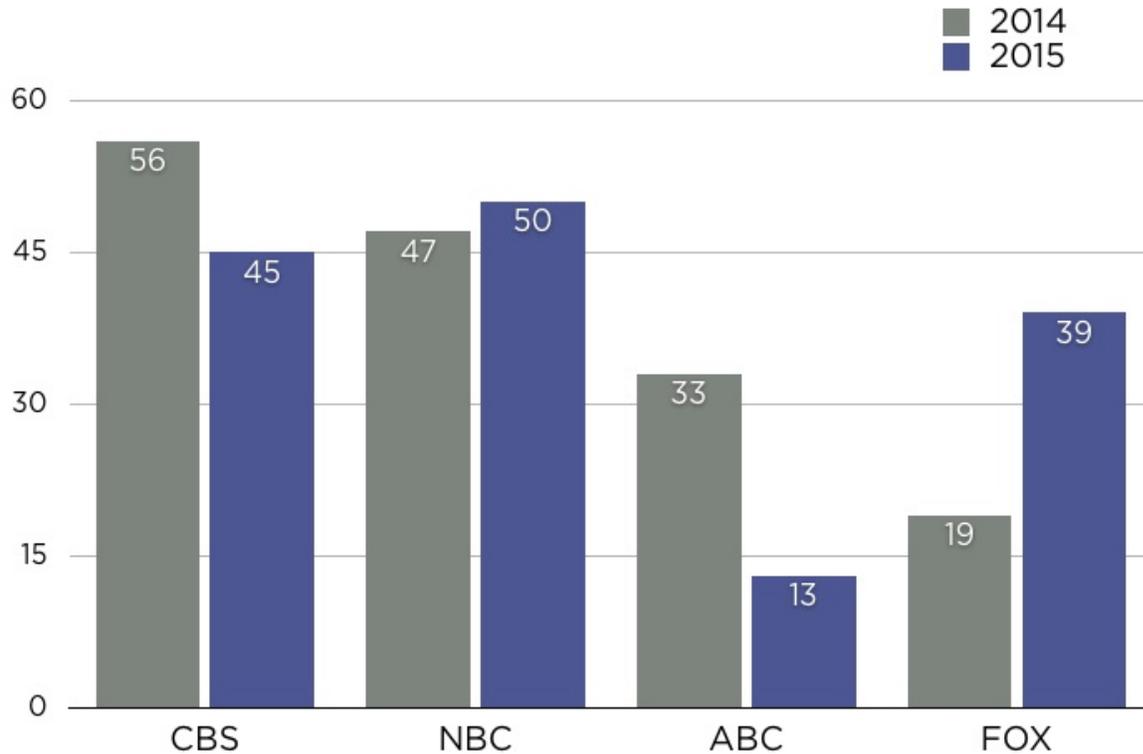


\*FOX does not have a nightly news program

The network with the most significant decline in coverage was ABC, which devoted about 13 minutes to discussing climate change in 2015, a 59 percent drop from 2014 and far less coverage than any other network provided in 2015. In fact, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders brought up climate change four separate times during his appearances on ABC's *This Week*, which was twice as often as the show's own journalists did. The only network to dramatically *increase* its climate coverage in 2015 was Fox, but that increase largely consisted of criticism of efforts to address climate change.

# Total Coverage Of Climate Change In 2014 And 2015

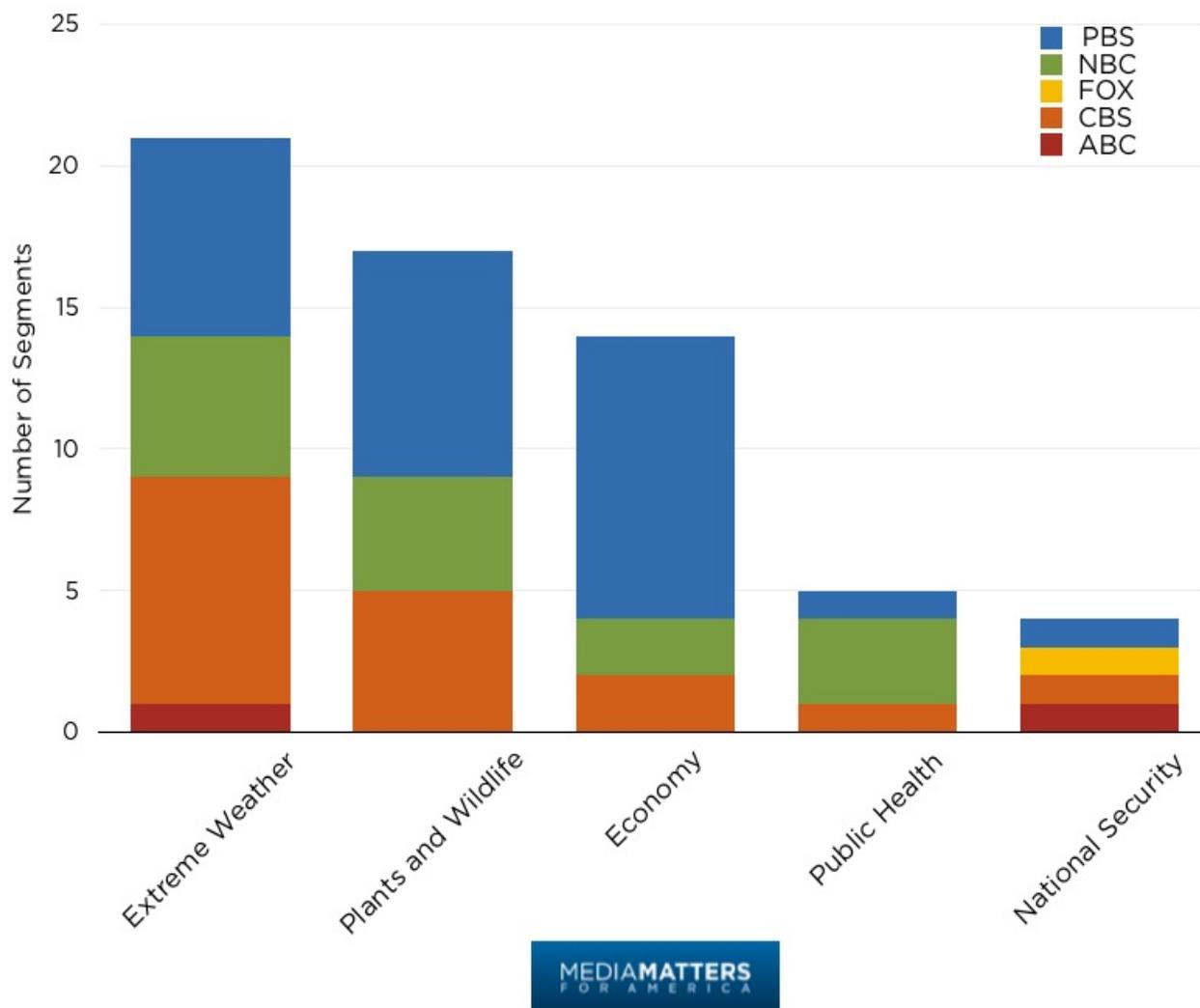
Minutes of airtime on ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX



Altogether, the Sunday shows -- ABC's *This Week*, CBS' *Face the Nation*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, and Fox Broadcasting Co.'s *Fox News Sunday* -- aired 73 minutes of climate coverage in 2015, a decrease of eight minutes from 2014's total of 81 minutes. Meanwhile, the nightly news programs other than the hour-long *PBS NewsHour* -- ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS' *Evening News*, and NBC's *Nightly News* -- also aired 73 minutes of climate coverage in 2015, the same amount they aired in 2014.

**Networks Rarely Addressed How Climate Change Impacts National Security, The Economy, And Public Health, But Some Detailed Links To Extreme Weather**

## Which Climate Impacts Did Networks Cover In 2015?



**Networks Largely Ignored Climate Change As A National Security Threat.** The national security implications of climate change were rarely mentioned by the broadcast networks in 2015, even as a study in the National Academy of Sciences journal linked man-made climate change to the conflict in Syria, the Pentagon released a report detailing why climate change is a "security risk," and President Obama and Democratic presidential candidates made high-profile remarks describing the connection that climate change has to terrorism and the rise of the jihadist group ISIS. ABC, CBS, PBS, and Fox each featured just one segment addressing the national security impacts of climate change, and the topic never came up on NBC. On two other occasions, Fox News contributors George Will and Brit Hume briefly brought up climate change on *Fox News Sunday* in order to criticize President Obama for supposedly treating climate change as a more serious threat than ISIS. [*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, [1/30/15](#); U.S. Department of Defense, [7/29/15](#); *Fox News Sunday*, 11/22/15; 12/20/15; *Media Matters*, [12/10/15](#)]

**Other Than PBS, Networks Largely Overlooked Economic Impacts Of Climate Change.** As business and financial leaders increasingly warned about the severe economic risks posed by climate change -- and new reports by the bipartisan Risky Business Project and researchers at Stanford and the University of California-Berkeley quantified some of those risks -- the broadcast networks were largely silent on the issue, with the notable exception of PBS. Fox and ABC ignored the economic impacts

of climate change entirely, while CBS and NBC each aired just two segments on the topic, including a *CBS Evening News* segment on climate change's impact on California's Dungeness crab industry and an *NBC Nightly News* segment on the impact of Arctic warming on Alaskans' livelihoods. By contrast, *PBS NewsHour* aired ten segments on the economic impacts of climate change, on topics such as the threat it poses to Florida's tourism industry, how sea-level rise can impose costs on property, and why economists say the benefits of climate action will outweigh the costs. [*Media Matters*, [10/27/15](#); *Risky Business*, accessed [2/25/16](#); *Nature*, [10/21/15](#); *CBS Evening News*, 11/5/15; *NBC Nightly News*, 9/16/15; *PBS NewsHour*, 6/10/15; 7/16/15; 12/3/15]

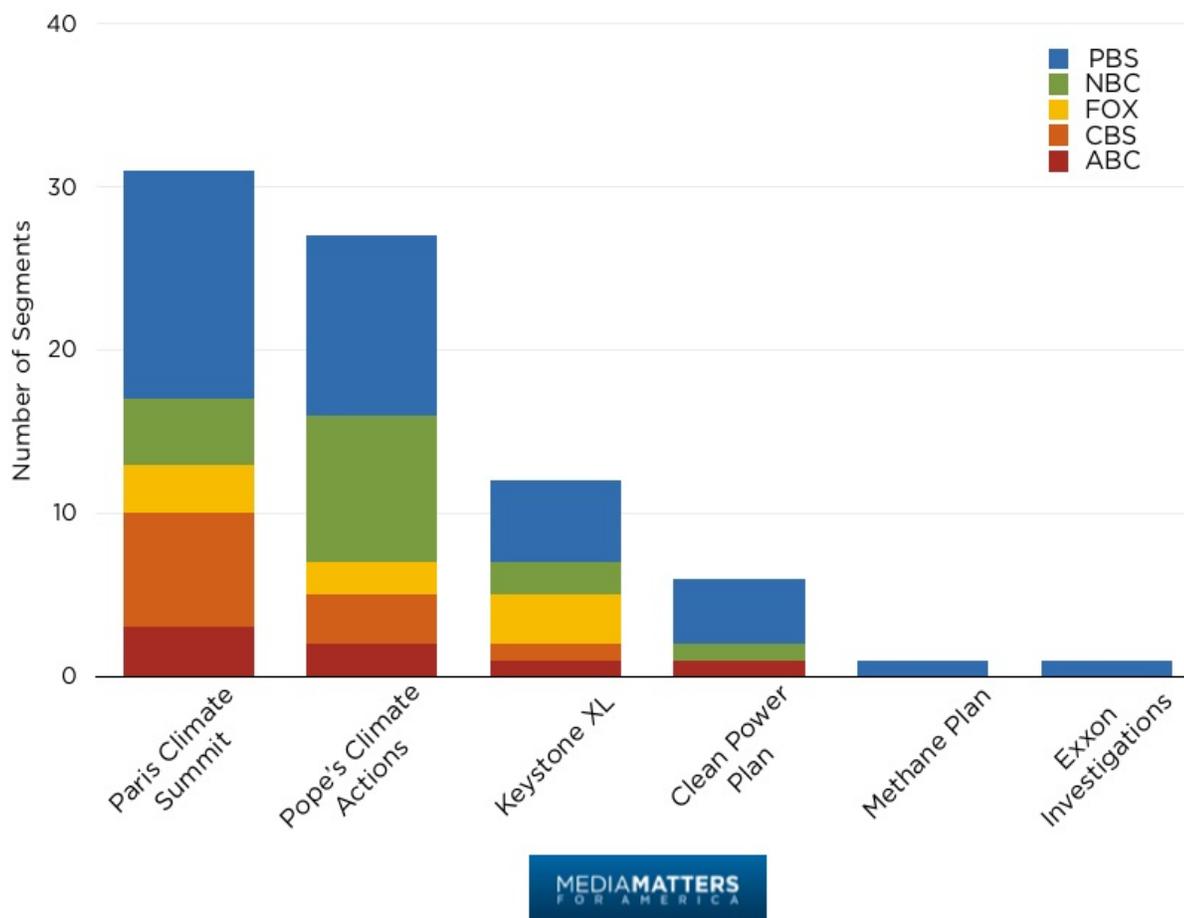
**Networks Rarely Addressed How Climate Change Affects Public Health.** When the EPA finalized the Clean Power Plan in August, President Obama noted that climate change "degrades the air our kids breathe" and made the case that limiting carbon pollution from power plants was critical to protecting "the health and safety of all Americans." Yet the broadcast networks discussed the public health impacts of climate change a grand total of five times in 2015, with the subject never coming up on ABC or Fox. NBC was the only network to air multiple segments on the topic (three). Notable public health segments included a *CBS Evening News* report on the connection between climate change and asthma, which noted that "research suggests heat waves can increase ground-level ozone and help set off an attack of asthma." And *NBC Nightly News* aired a segment detailing how climate change is "supercharging" pollen production, which is leading to longer allergy seasons. [The White House, [8/3/15](#); *CBS Evening News*, 4/8/15; *NBC Nightly News*, 3/21/15]

**PBS, CBS, and NBC Frequently Addressed Link Between Climate Change And Extreme Weather, Unlike ABC And Fox.** As extreme weather events ravaged the U.S. throughout 2015, CBS (eight segments), PBS (seven segments), and NBC (five segments) frequently addressed the role of climate change in extreme weather. Conversely, ABC only addressed the relationship between climate change and extreme weather once, and Fox never did so. The only time a weather event was discussed in relation to climate change on Fox was when *Fox News Sunday* host Chris Wallace wrongly suggested that there is a legitimate "debate" about climate science. Wallace noted that it was snowless in Buffalo, New York in December for the first time in more than a century, and then added: "Let the climate change debate begin." [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed [2/18/16](#); *Fox News Sunday*, 12/6/15]

***CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, And PBS NewsHour Aired Stories Detailing Climate Change Impacts On Plants And Wildlife.*** *PBS NewsHour, CBS Evening News* and *NBC Nightly News* aired eight, five, and four segments about the impacts of climate change on plants and wildlife, respectively, but this aspect of climate change did not come up on ABC's *World News Tonight* or any of the Sunday shows. Examples of reporting on this topic included a *CBS Evening News* segment detailing how "warmer-than-normal water" caused by climate change has led to the spread of coral bleaching and could cause the world to lose five percent of its coral, and a *NBC Nightly News* report about a documentary addressing how carbon pollution and other factors are "driving species to become extinct." Another example was a *PBS NewsHour* report about "a National Audubon Society report [that] found climate change is likely to disrupt the habitat of about half of North America's bird species by 2080." [*CBS Evening News*, 10/8/15; *NBC Nightly News*, 11/30/15; *PBS NewsHour*, 2/17/15]

# Networks Largely Ignored Clean Power Plan, America's Most Important Climate Policy, But Devoted Significant Coverage To Other Key Climate Actions

## Which Climate Actions Did Networks Cover In 2015?



**EPA's Clean Power Plan Received No Substantial Coverage On Network Sunday Shows, Little Coverage On Nightly News Programs.** The Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan -- which establishes the first-ever federal limits on carbon pollution from power plants -- was finalized in August, representing the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to fight climate change. But the Clean Power Plan never came up on any of the Sunday shows in 2015, outside of passing mentions by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Chris Coons (D-DE) (on *Meet the Press* and *Fox News Sunday*, respectively) that were not explicitly about climate change. In an interview on *Fox News Sunday*, Secretary of State John Kerry referenced President Obama's Climate Action Plan, of which the Clean Power Plan is a component, but did not reference the Clean Power Plan specifically. Two nightly news programs, ABC's *World News Tonight* and *NBC Nightly News*, each aired a single segment that described the Clean Power Plan as an effort to address climate change, and *PBS NewsHour* aired four such segments. Strangely, *CBS Evening News* reported on the landmark climate policy without mentioning the words "climate change" or "global warming." [The White House, [8/3/15](#);

NBC's *Meet the Press*, 3/8/15; *Fox News Sunday*, 1/11/15, 12/13/15; *CBS Evening News*, 8/3/15; *Media Matters*, [8/4/15](#)]

**PBS Led The Way Among Networks In Coverage Of Paris Climate Summit And Pope Francis' Calls For Climate Action.** PBS provided the most coverage of both the Paris climate summit (14 segments) and Pope Francis' calls for action on climate change (11 segments), which included an encyclical on climate change and a major speech before Congress. NBC also aired substantial coverage of these events, devoting nine segments to the pope's climate efforts and four segments to the international climate negotiations between its Sunday and nightly news shows. CBS covered the Paris climate summit in seven segments and Pope Francis' climate efforts in three segments, but one of those segments included an interview with a Catholic University professor denying climate science. ABC and Fox devoted the least coverage to the Paris climate summit and the pope's statements about climate change, with each network providing three segments on the Paris agreement and two segments on the pope's activities. [*CBS Evening News*, 6/18/15; *Media Matters*, [6/19/15](#)]

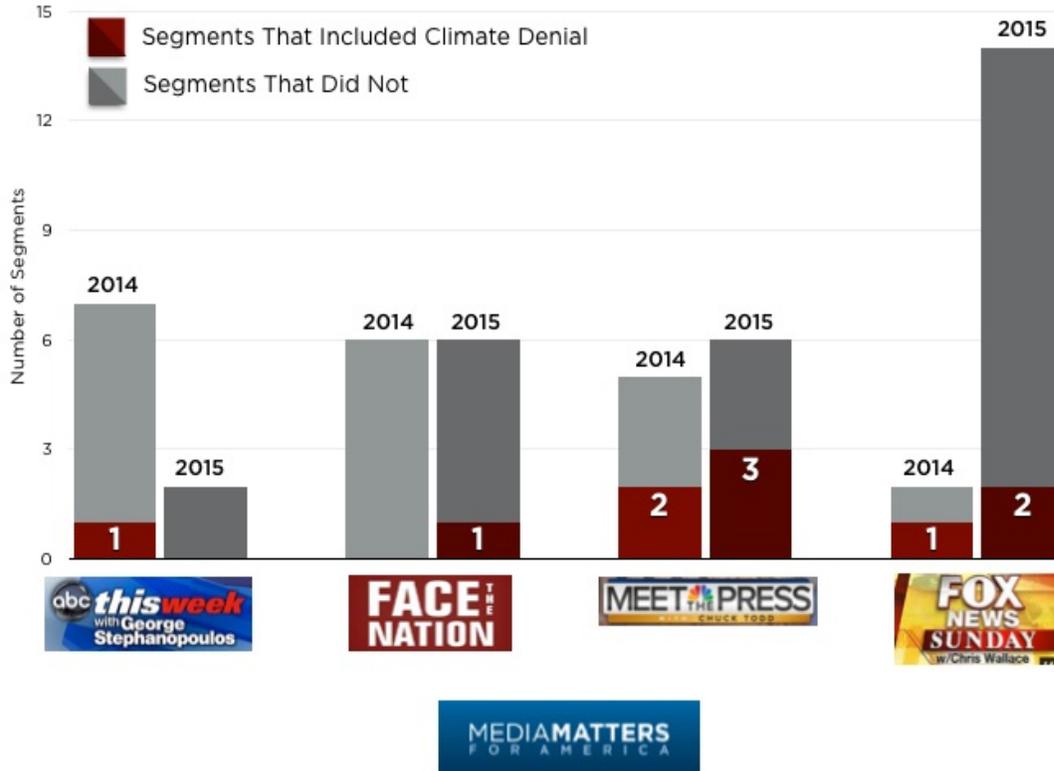
**ABC, CBS, And NBC Sunday Shows Did Not Address Climate Impacts Of Keystone XL Pipeline.** When President Obama announced his climate action plan in 2013, he emphasized that the Keystone XL pipeline's "impact on our climate" would guide his final decision on the pipeline, and when he rejected Keystone XL in November 2015, Obama said that approving the pipeline would have "undercut" America's global leadership on climate change. Yet even though Keystone XL was a frequent topic of discussion on the Sunday shows on ABC, CBS, and NBC, coming up in 18 different segments, the hosts and other media figures featured on those programs did not once address the pipeline's climate impact in any of those segments. However, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders did bring up the climate implications of Keystone XL on his own during three different appearances on CBS' *Face the Nation* and an appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press*. *Fox News Sunday* was the only Sunday show in which the host (Chris Wallace) raised the issue of Keystone XL's climate impacts, citing President Obama's explanation for his decision to reject the pipeline three times. But Wallace raised the topic in order to ask for a response by three Keystone XL supporters -- Gov. Chris Christie (R-NJ), Fox News contributor Karl Rove, and Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) -- and just one Keystone XL opponent, Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE). Apart from *PBS NewsHour*, which aired five segments examining Keystone XL's role in fueling climate change, the nightly news shows rarely addressed the climate implications of Keystone XL, doing so in a combined four segments. [The White House, [6/25/13](#); The White House, [11/6/15](#)]

**PBS Was Only Network To Cover EPA's Methane Reduction Plan Or New York Attorney General's Investigation Of Exxon.** PBS was the only network to report on the Obama administration's plan to reduce methane emissions from new and modified oil and gas industry sources. *PBS NewsHour* was also the only evening or Sunday news program to cover the revelation that Exxon Mobil peddled climate science denial for years after its scientists recognized that burning fossil fuels causes global warming, as detailed in investigative reports by InsideClimate News and the *Los Angeles Times*. *PBS NewsHour* interviewed New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who had recently launched an investigation into Exxon at the time. [*PBS NewsHour*, 1/14/15; *PBS NewsHour*, 11/10/15; *Media Matters*, [11/13/15](#)]

# Most Networks Aired Segments Featuring Climate Denial In 2015

**Sunday Shows Aired More Segments With Climate Science Denial Than They Did In 2014.** In 2014, the Sunday shows aired four segments that included climate science denial. In 2015, that number increased to six segments. Climate denial surfaced in 50 percent of the climate-related segments on NBC's *Meet the Press* (three out of six segments), 17 percent of the climate-related segments on CBS' *Face the Nation* (one out of six segments), and 14 percent of the climate-related segments on *Fox News Sunday* (two out of 14 segments). ABC's *This Week* did not feature any climate science denial, but the program only addressed climate change in two segments all year. [Media Matters, [1/28/15](#)]

## Most Sunday Shows Aired More Climate Denial In 2015 Than In 2014



**Between Sunday And Nightly News Shows, Networks Aired A Combined Nine Segments That Included Climate Science Denial In 2015.** In 2015, CBS' *Face the Nation*, CBS' *Evening News*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, *Fox News Sunday*, and *PBS NewsHour* aired a combined nine segments that misled audiences about the scientific consensus on man-made climate change by featuring climate science denial:

- In an April 19 interview on CBS' *Face the Nation*, host Bob Schieffer asked Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) if he has said that "humans are not responsible for climate change," to which Rubio replied: "What I said is that humans are not responsible for climate change in the way some of these people out there are trying to make

us believe, for the following reason: I believe the climate is changing, because there's never been a moment where the climate is not changing. The question is what percentage of that -- or what is due to human activity?" Rather than pointing out that the vast majority of climate scientists say human activities are the primary factor in climate change, Schieffer quickly moved on to a discussion of social issues. [CBS' *Face the Nation*, 4/19/15; *Media Matters*, [7/1/15](#)]

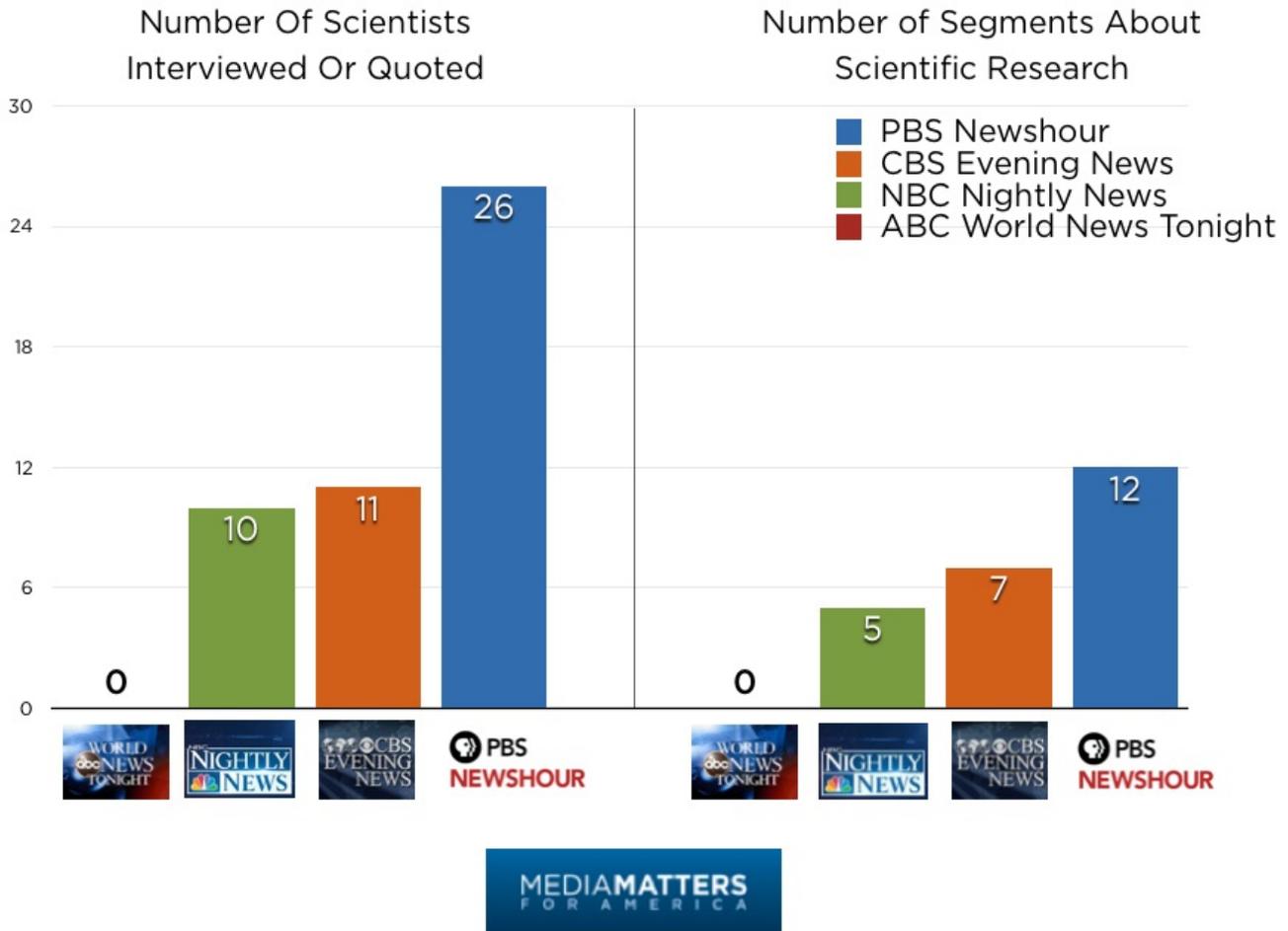
- In a segment on Pope Francis calling for action on climate change during the June 18 edition of *CBS Evening News*, correspondent Dean Reynolds interviewed Catholic University business and economics professor Jay Richards, who said that climate change "is not drastic," and added: "[I]n fact, I think the evidence suggest that what the models are predicting is actually not taking place." Richards' quote went unaddressed by Reynolds, who went on to state that "[s]ome skeptics also argue that technology will eventually solve the problem without having to turn the whole world's economy upside down." In addition, on the January 23 edition of *CBS Evening News*, billionaire businessman Rajju Shroff stated: "I think climate change is really hogwash. Climate will change, whether it is industrialization or no industrialization. It's going to happen." Correspondent Seth Doane did not explicitly refute Shroff's claim, instead responding, "As long as that is your view, can the world expect India to be really serious about the environment?" [CBS *Evening News*, 6/18/15; *Media Matters*, [6/19/15](#); CBS *Evening News*, 1/23/15]
- On the March 1 edition of NBC's *Meet the Press*, host Chuck Todd ended the show by playing footage of Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) bringing a snowball to the Senate floor to dispute climate change. Todd stated, "Senator Jim Inhofe used a fun little prop to make his point apparently on global warming claiming it was a hoax this week," adding, "I'm not going to use that to get into a climate change debate." Additionally, the March 22 edition of *Meet the Press* aired footage of Sen. Ted Cruz's (R-TX) appearance on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, in which Cruz denied the existence of climate change by stating that "many of the alarmists on global warming, they have got a problem because the science doesn't back them up." Todd did not address the accuracy of Cruz's statement, but did ask for a response from California Gov. Jerry Brown (D), who noted that what Cruz said was "absolutely false." Lastly, during an interview with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (R) on the June 21 edition of *Meet the Press*, Todd asked Huckabee whether he believes climate change is man-made. Huckabee brought up the myth that scientists predicted "a global freezing" in the early 1970s, and added, "Science is not as settled on [climate change] as it is on some things." Todd simply replied, "All right, so, if president, climate change is not in your top of your agenda." [NBC's *Meet the Press*, 3/1/15; 3/22/15; 6/21/15; *Media Matters*, [7/1/15](#); [4/2/15](#)]
- In a January 16 *PBS NewsHour* segment about the potential impacts of the Clean Power Plan in Wyoming, Inside Energy reporter Leigh Patterson aired a clip of Cloud Peak Energy CEO Colin Marshall saying of climate change, "I believe the science is clearly not settled, but there are some theories out there. And if they're right that the CO2 emissions are significant, then they could -- potentially could be very -- a big impact on the world and its climate." Moments later, Patterson reported that University of Wyoming professor Harold Bergman "says Wyoming lawmakers need to recognize the realities of a changing climate," but that "[t]he

sole U.S. House representative for the state of Wyoming doesn't share this sense of certainty." Patterson then aired a clip of Rep. Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) stating, "The climate is changing. The climate is always changing. And the science on mankind's role in the change of climate is simply not as well-established as one would have us think." Patterson did not fact-check Marshall or Lummis, instead turning to what Lummis said about the economic impacts of the Clean Power Plan. [*PBS NewsHour*, 1/16/15]

- During a discussion of Pope Francis' encyclical on the June 21 edition of *Fox News Sunday*, host Chris Wallace gave a false impression of the consensus among 97 percent of climate scientists that human activity is causing global warming. Wallace stated: "While the Holy Father says a number of scientific studies hold the world is warming and human activity is a major role, there are certainly experts on the other side who question, really, whether there is a consistent pattern of warming, as opposed to just sort of the variations of climate over the ages, and how much human activity plays a role." Then, on the December 6 edition of *Fox News Sunday*, Wallace used the lack of snow in Buffalo as an opportunity to suggest there is a legitimate "debate" about climate science, stating: "A look outside the beltway at Buffalo, New York. Snowless this time of year for the first time since 1899. Let the climate change debate begin." Each of these remarks by Wallace came after a June 7 interview he conducted with former Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA) about the pope's encyclical, in which Wallace did acknowledge the scientific consensus on climate change. In that interview, Wallace aired a clip of Santorum saying that "the Church has gotten it wrong a few times on science," and then told Santorum that the vast majority of "scientists who have studied this say that humans, man -- human activity, contributes to climate change." [*Fox News Sunday*, 6/21/15; *Media Matters*, [7/1/15](#); *Fox News Sunday*, 12/6/15]

## **Scientists Rarely Appeared On Sunday Shows But Were Frequently Interviewed On Nightly News Programs -- Except For ABC's *World News Tonight***

# ABC's *World News Tonight* Skipped The Science



**ABC's *World News Tonight* Did Not Feature A Single Scientist In Its 2015 Climate Coverage.** ABC's *World News Tonight* did not quote or interview a single scientist in 2015. By contrast, *NBC Nightly News* and *CBS Evening News* featured ten and 11 scientists, respectively, and *PBS NewsHour* featured 26 scientists.

**Sunday Shows Featured Scientists Just Twice During Climate-Related Segments.** The Sunday shows featured scientists in their climate coverage just twice in 2015. On the December 13 edition of CBS' *Face the Nation*, anchor John Dickerson interviewed Dr. Marshall Shepherd, meteorologist and director of University of Georgia's Atmospheric Sciences Program, to discuss the importance of the UN summit's goal of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius. The only other time a scientist was quoted or interviewed about climate change on a Sunday show was when ABC's George Stephanopoulos asked Secretary of State John Kerry to respond to former NASA climate scientist James Hansen, who said the Paris climate negotiations were a "fraud" because "[t]here's no action, just promises." [CBS' *Face the Nation*, 12/13/15; ABC's *This Week*, 12/13/15]

**Number Of Scientists On Sunday Shows Down Sharply From 2014.** After featuring just two scientists over a five-year period from 2009 to 2013, the Sunday shows featured seven scientists in 2014 alone (16 percent of all Sunday show guests). But the Sunday shows backslid on that progress in 2015, quoting or interviewing just two scientists (four percent of all Sunday show guests). [Media Matters, [1/16/14](#);

[1/28/15](#)]

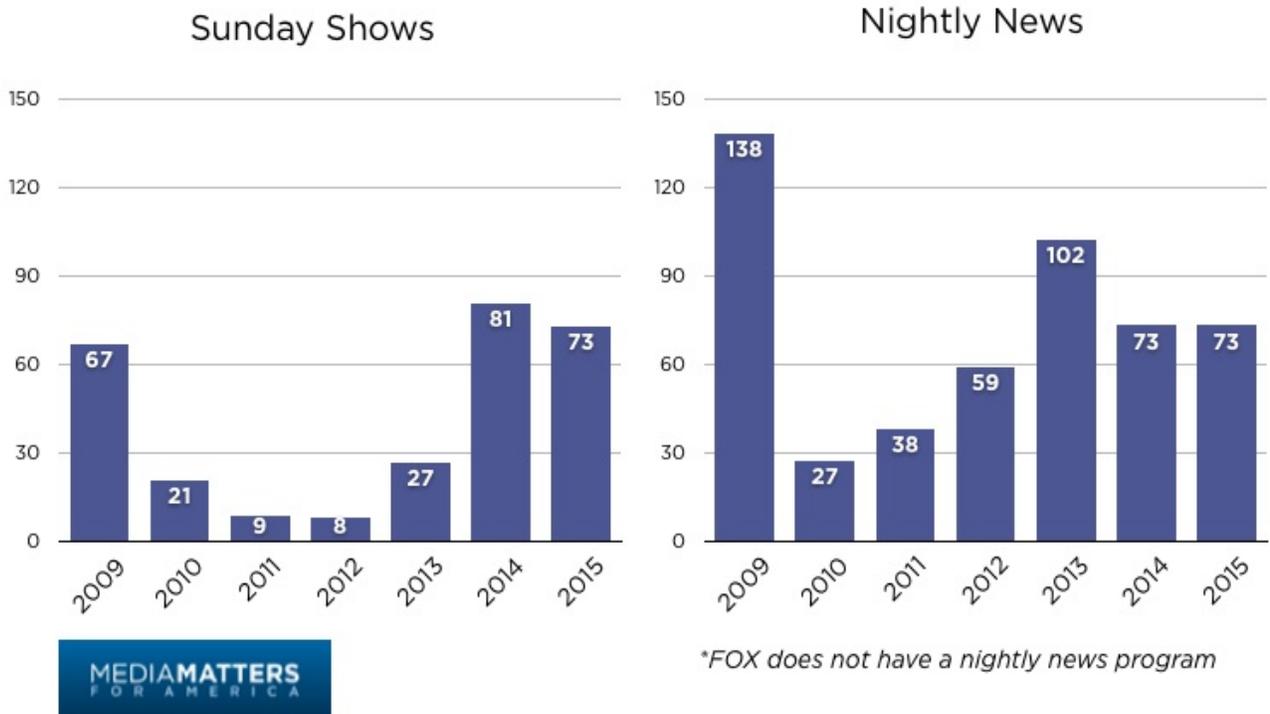
**CBS Evening News, CBS' Face the Nation, NBC Nightly News, And PBS NewsHour Were Only Programs To Air Stories On Climate-Related Scientific Research.** CBS' *Face the Nation*, *CBS Evening News*, *NBC Nightly News*, and *PBS NewsHour* were the only news programs to air stories detailing scientific research related to climate change. *CBS Evening News* aired seven segments on climate-related scientific research, including a segment in its "Climate Diaries" series that highlighted researchers' efforts to study the release of methane from permafrost thaw. *NBC Nightly News* aired five segments on climate-related research, including a segment on National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that 2014 was the hottest year on record, which included an interview with NASA scientist Jim Tucker. *PBS NewsHour* aired 12 segments about scientific research related to climate change, including a segment that examined the relationship between climate change and El Nino weather patterns. [CBS' *Face the Nation*, 12/13/15; *CBS Evening News*, 11/30/15; *NBC Nightly News*, 1/16/15; *PBS NewsHour*, 3/11/15]

## **After Reaching Six-Year High In Climate Coverage In 2014, Sunday Show Coverage Dropped In 2015**

**Sunday Show Climate Coverage Dropped Off After A Peak Year In 2014.** In 2014, the Sunday shows aired 81 minutes of climate change coverage -- a high for Sunday shows over the seven-year timeframe *Media Matters* has analyzed. The increase occurred after nine U.S. senators sent a letter to network executives criticizing the Sunday shows for airing "shockingly little discussion" of climate change. In 2015, the Sunday shows provided 73 minutes of climate change coverage, a decrease of eight minutes from the previous year, yet still above the six year average of 36 minutes from 2009 to 2014. [*Media Matters*, [1/28/15](#)]

# Broadcast News Coverage Of Climate Change

Minutes of airtime on ABC, CBS NBC, & FOX\*



**Fox News Sunday Was The Only Sunday Show To Increase Climate Coverage -- But Nearly Every Segment Included Climate Denial Or Criticism Of Climate Actions.** *Fox News Sunday* more than doubled its climate change coverage from approximately 19 minutes in 2014 to approximately 39 minutes in 2015. But 11 of the 14 climate-related segments on Fox's Sunday show included criticism of policies or other actions intended to fight climate change, and another segment featured host Chris Wallace wrongly suggesting there is a legitimate "debate" about climate science. Altogether, *Fox News Sunday* quoted or interviewed 21 individuals who discussed the following climate-related issues: Pope Francis' encyclical, the Keystone XL pipeline, the Paris climate negotiations, and cap-and-trade legislation. Of those 21 individuals, 12 criticized actions intended to address climate change, six expressed support for climate actions, and three remained neutral by either citing arguments on both sides or not offering an opinion. Individuals who criticized climate actions on *Fox News Sunday* included: Republican presidential candidates Jeb Bush, Carly Fiorina, Chris Christie, Rick Santorum, Lindsey Graham, Marco Rubio, and George Pataki, as well as Fox News contributors Karl Rove (twice) and George Will, radio host Rush Limbaugh, and Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) (Graham and Pataki said that climate change is real but rejected specific climate policies). Individuals who praised or defended climate actions included: Secretary of State John Kerry, Center for American Progress President Neera Tanden, Archbishop Donald Wuerl, Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE), and President Obama (twice). Individuals who were neutral on climate actions included: *Washington Post* editorial writer Charles Lane, Associated Press White House correspondent Julie Pace, and President Obama, who in this particular clip was framing the issues around the Keystone XL pipeline rather than offering his assessment of it. [*Fox News Sunday*, 1/11/15; 4/19/15; 6/7/15; 6/21/15; 11/1/15; 11/8/15; 11/29/15; 12/6/15; 12/13/15]

**Sunday Show Climate Coverage Featured Slightly More Republicans Than**

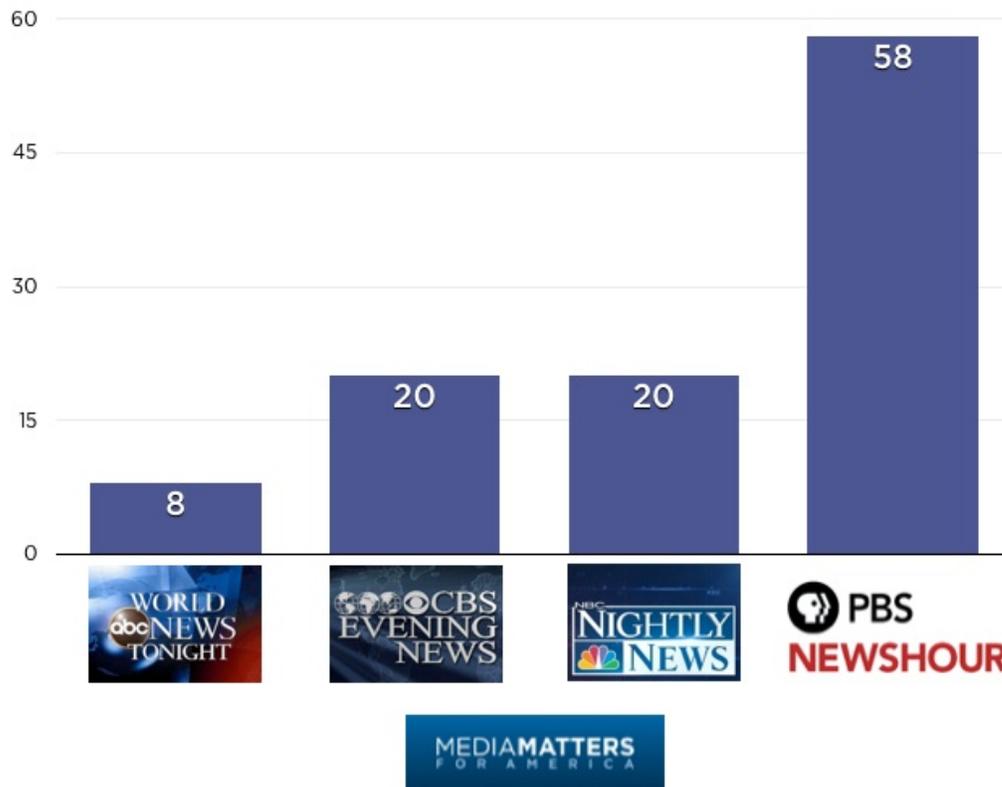
**Democrats And Obama Administration Officials.** In 2015, Sunday show coverage featured 33 political figures discussing climate change, including 18 Republicans and 15 Democrats or Obama administration officials.

## **Total Climate Coverage On ABC, CBS, And NBC Nightly News Shows Remained Unchanged, Despite A Significant Decline On ABC's *World News Tonight***

***NBC Nightly News* Boosted Climate Coverage, *CBS Evening News* Coverage Slightly Decreased, And Coverage On ABC's *World News Tonight* Sharply Declined.** Together, ABC's *World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, and *NBC Nightly News* aired 73 minutes of climate coverage in 2015, the same amount they aired in 2014. *NBC Nightly News* increased its climate coverage by about seven minutes, while *CBS Evening News* coverage decreased by less than a minute. Meanwhile, ABC's *World News Tonight*, which aired significantly less climate coverage than its competitors in 2014, dropped off even further in 2015, declining from 13 minutes of climate coverage to just seven minutes. [*Media Matters*, [1/28/15](#)]

**PBS Aired More Climate Coverage Than All Other Nightly News Programs Combined.** *PBS NewsHour* aired more segments addressing climate change than the other nightly news shows combined. *PBS NewsHour* aired 58 climate-related segments in 2015, while ABC (eight), NBC (20), and CBS (20) aired a combined total of 48 climate-related nightly news segments. *PBS NewsHour's* climate coverage increased from 2014, when it aired 45 climate-related segments.

# Number Of Climate Change Segments In 2015



## Methodology

This report analyzes coverage of "climate change" or "global warming" between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2015, on four Sunday news shows (ABC's *This Week*, CBS' *Face the Nation*, NBC's *Meet the Press*, and Fox Broadcasting Co.'s *Fox News Sunday*) and four nightly news programs (ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS *Evening News*, NBC *Nightly News*, and PBS *NewsHour*). Fox Broadcasting Co. airs *Fox News Sunday* but does not air a nightly news equivalent; Fox News is a separate cable channel. *PBS NewsHour* is a half hour longer than its network nightly news counterparts, but airs five days a week, compared to seven days a week for the other nightly news shows (*PBS NewsHour Weekend* was not included in this analysis).

Our analysis includes any segment devoted to climate change, as well as any substantial mention (more than one paragraph of a news transcript or a definitive statement by a media figure) about climate change impacts or actions. The study did not include instances in which a non-media figure brought up climate change without being prompted to do so by a media figure, unless the media figure subsequently addressed climate change. It also does not include teasers if they were for segments that aired later on the same program. Timestamps were acquired from IQ Media and were applied generously for nightly news segments when the overall topic was related to climate change. For instance, if a nightly news segment about an extreme weather event mentioned climate change briefly, the entire segment was counted as climate coverage. However, if a significant portion of the segment was not related to climate change, such as a report on the pope giving a speech about climate change, immigration, religious freedom, and outreach to Cuba, only the portions of the segment that discussed climate change were counted. For the Sunday shows, which often feature wide-ranging discussions on multiple topics, we only used the relevant portion

of such conversations. All coverage figures have been rounded to the nearest minute. Because *PBS NewsHour* is an hour-long show and the other network nightly news programs are half-hour shows, our analysis compared *PBS NewsHour's* climate coverage to other nightly news programs' coverage in terms of topics covered and number of segments, but not in terms of number of minutes.