



Climate Change and Labor

The media landscape

 Pulitzer Center

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Photo: Simon Reza, Bangladesh, 2021

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CHAPTER 1

Research Methodology



CHAPTER 1

Research Methodology

Climate change has had a profound effect on labor issues around the world, but the media landscape has lagged in reporting on the complexity of these relationships. Critical intersections - including gender discrimination, loss of traditional livelihoods, and a just transition to clean energy - are yet to be fully explored on a global scale.

This needs-assessment seeks to identify key intersectional issues, analyze previous reporting and journalist capacity on labor/climate issues, and gather input on what media outlets require in order to achieve a significant scaling in coverage of these issues.

This work was carried out in a three-phase research: The first phase consisted of qualitative in-depth interviews with 12 scientists and media experts on the issue. The second part was a quantitative survey with more than 140 media professionals from 32 countries. Finally, a digital research was carried out, using audience analysis and digital media mapping tools, to measure news media coverage on the topic.

The qualitative research was carried out August 18-September 29, 2021, and consisted of 90-minute-long in-depth interviews led by a discussion guide divided in two blocks. On the first block, the questions aimed to explore the interconnection between climate and labor, while in the second block, the focus of the conversation was the media landscape regarding the discussed issues.

The following professionals were interviewed:

Amol Mehra, Director of Industry Transformation at Laudes, formerly head of ICAR (International Corporate Accountability Roundtable)

Farhana Sultana, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment at Syracuse University, specialized in political ecology, climate change, decolonizing, and feminisms

Jason Walsh, Executive Director of the BlueGreen Alliance of environmental and labor groups

John Schwartz, Former New York Times climate writer, professor at the University of Texas, and experienced journalist on labor and climate

Laurie Parsons, Co-author of Climate Change in the Global Workplace: Labour, Adaptation and Resistance, Lecturer in human geography at Royal Holloway, University of London

Marielle Ramires and **Raissa Galvão**, Communication leaders at Mídia Ninja.

Marina Dias, Executive Director and Editor at Agência Pública.

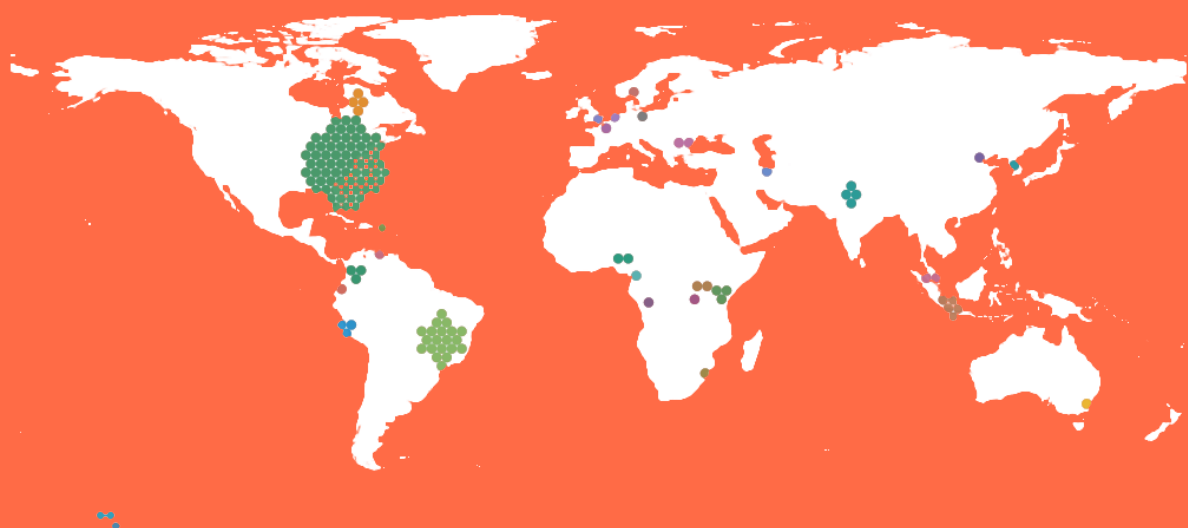
Maxwell Boykoff, Director of the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, University of Colorado Boulder, author of Creative (Climate) Communication.

Navin Khadka, Environmental Correspondent at the BBC.

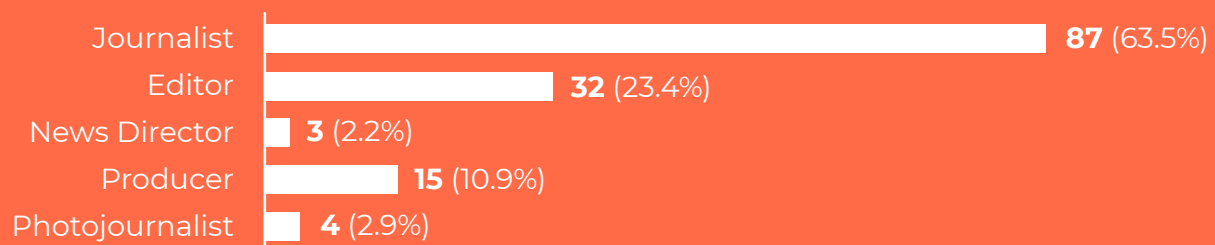
Phaedra Pezzullo, Associate Professor at University of Colorado. Pezzullo has authored numerous publications and was awarded the Christine L. Oravec Research Award in Environmental Communication.

Saleemul Huq, Senior Fellow in the Climate Change Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

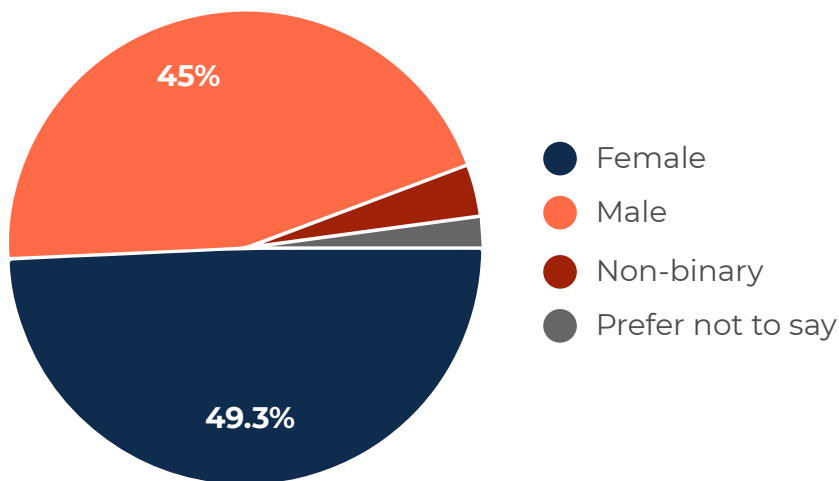
The **quantitative research** consisted of an online survey applied September 16-28 and distributed to the Pulitzer Center media and journalism network. The survey received 141 answers from participants from 32 countries around the world. The questionnaire was based on findings from the qualitative research. It consisted of 21 questions, of which 17 were closed-end questions. The final language was evaluated and revised by the Pulitzer Center editorial team, making sure appropriate concepts and terminologies were being adopted. The demographic profile of survey respondents was distributed according to the graphics below:



Graphic 1. This map shows the country of origin of the 141 participants of the quantitative survey, in 32 countries.



Graphic 2. The vast majority of the respondents were communication professionals, being 63% journalists and 23% editors.



Graphic 3. 49.3% of participants self-identified as female media professionals.

The key topics addressed were: sense of how the media is currently covering the climate and labor intersection, interest in further investigating related issues, preparedness to cover this topic, appropriate framings of media coverage (including gender), important obstacles blocking sustained media coverage, common mistakes in media coverage, key audiences to reach, and strategic outlets to be engaged and/or supported.

The digital research used audience analysis and digital media mapping tools such as BuzzSumo, Muck Rack, and Media Cloud, in order to measure news media coverage on the topic. BuzzSumo is a bank of social engagement data that searches content, monitors performance, and identifies influencers based on 8+ billion articles. Muck Rack is an online PR tool that allows users to access the industry's accurate media database, analyze coverage, and monitor the news. It is useful for identifying the journalists and influencers who frequently cover specific topics. Media Cloud is an open-source tool that analyzes and maps news media coverage of a base of 1,500 global media outlets. The digital assessment was carried out in English only with outlets from all over the globe in September. It used base keywords and boolean research, with different combinations of the following words: "Climate", "Climate Change", "Global Warming", "Labor", "Labour", "Labor Rights", and "Gender".

CHAPTER 2

Main Insights



Main Insights

1

Climate change is experienced primarily through the lens of labor. Labor is also a pathway into the majority of adult lives on this planet. It resonates with ordinary people and opens room from a strong intersection narrative.

2

The most shared perspective in our survey and in interviews with experts is that the intersection of labor and climate change is a question of vulnerability. From a global standpoint, people who have contributed least to it are suffering the impacts most intensely. The most vulnerable people to adverse impacts of climate change are the poorest citizens of any country.

3

Looking through the lens of labor, the front-line communities consist of organized and unorganized workers. In organized work, you will find a very insecure and vulnerable workforce, forced into jobs without guarantees of labor rights or proper working conditions, facing difficulties or threatened when demanding better conditions. In non-organized labor, workers are highly exposed due to climate risk: They are in the front line of natural disasters and catastrophes and have their livelihoods and culture at stake. Media outlets need to serve both as a platform to raise those voices and as a knowledge-sharing hub, aiming to inform the most vulnerable people and helping them to prepare and adapt to what is already inevitable.

4

There is will on the part of consumers and governments not to depend on exploited workers. Production of the goods they consume, however, is out of sight and mind. There is a need to make processes, trade flows, and supply chains more visible to consumers. The media can be a key player in this change.

5

The exploitation of workers is a structural problem and there are few incentives for change. There is a need for governance and it cannot be corporately led. It needs to be led by organizations with gravitas that companies want to be associated with, such as the International Labour Organization or other United Nations agencies. Strong media coverage on this set of issues can leverage pressure for the implementation of governance mechanisms.

6

News media outlets have lagged in reporting not only the complexity of these relationships but the interconnection itself. The lack of background within news organizations in climate change science leads to common mistakes such as not exploring the bigger picture of climate change or leaving it out of stories. Misrepresentation or lack of diverse voices was also highlighted as a common media mistake.

7

The outdated framing of tradeoffs between economic development and protecting the environment, present in media and fostered by interested industries, is one of the key obstacles to tackle in the interconnections within climate change. It creates a false opposition, repelling key stakeholders—such as workers themselves, who feel threatened and fear losing their jobs.

8

The narrative of climate change has changed and evolved during the past decades. First it was seen as an environmental framing, focusing on the problems generated from emission of greenhouse gases and on possible solutions to stop the emissions. The narrative then changed to climate change adaptation, as the problem became more real with visible effects and the challenges society would need to face. From an environmental issue it changed to a development issue. We are now on the cusp of a third phase: climate change loss and damage. This calls for a justice framing. Rich people and countries are causing the problem and poor people are suffering the results. A strong narrative for climate justice needs to be at the center of a communication initiative.

9

The "Just Transition" narrative is also frequently cited as a key point in the intersection of climate change and labor, but with caution. It is seen as a strong and potentially effective framing approach in some regions but unknown in other parts of the world.

10

There are strong views on how to organize the decarbonization of the economy and transition to a renewable world. Better livelihoods need to be a goal of this transition, with labor as a key focal point and where workers' dignity, pride, and cultural history—from subsistence farming to carbonized industries—are taken into account.

11

Concern was voiced about shortfalls in capacity at local media outlets, organizations closer to the marginalized communities and front-line people most affected by changes in working conditions and climate-change impact.

12

Gender is a key perspective in the intersection between climate change and labor. Women are experiencing climate risk most and they are at a disadvantage in almost every labor market, with lower wages and worse working conditions. Women tend to be in unorganized labor groups, enhancing their vulnerability. The correlation between climate, gender and labor is hardly explored in the media. Journalist capacity-building might be key to a successful initiative.

13

Media coverage on a new possible renewable economy, decarbonization and "Just Transition" is not generating impact because most of the world population is not well prepared for that. That framing is seen as an interesting narrative to generate momentum, but it talks about outcomes when we are still facing a moment for commitments. Building media coverage on accountability is viewed as a higher priority.

14

Climate is intersectional. Treating climate as an issue separate from labor is seen as a common media mistake by experts and by the interviewed media professionals.

15

There are significant differences in perceptions among experts and journalists in the Global North and Global South on what the pressing issues are, on what is needed in terms of capacity building, and what are the most common media mistakes. A key example is related to climate-change awareness. The United States is viewed as a place of audience polarity in this topic, divided between those who firmly believe in the reality of climate change and those who dismiss it. Countries like Bangladesh and Brazil were described as more homogenous audiences, with greater awareness of the topic (although not necessarily engaged).

16

Audience analysis and digital media mapping tools suggest that in the last two years the volume of stories on the themes of "climate change," "global warming," and "labor" is small. The attention index based on these keywords shows that only the term "climate change" reaches the level of daily occurrences in the English language news—yet it occupies no more than 2% of the total stories. When combined with "labor", it occupies at its peak 0.005% of the total monitored stories in media.

17

The conversations online captured in a survey of 1,500 global outlets around the themes of "climate change", "global warming", and "labor" are very much centered on the themes of government policy and finance. The main actors when it comes to the relationships among these keywords are world leaders, indicating journalism dedicated mostly to replicating stories, government programs, and speeches without adding local contexts.

CHAPTER 3

Exploring the intersections between climate change and labor



CHAPTER 3

Exploring the intersections between climate change and labor

3.1 Most pressing issues: transformation of labor from climate justice to a 'Just Transition'

Experts interviewed in the qualitative phase of the research highlighted the **Energy Economy** transition as a high priority in this intersection. According to them, there is a massive shift ahead of us, one that the media needs to be on top of - making sure to address this is a high-quality transition where workers are not left behind. It is important to make sure that during any decarbonization process, workers and communities actually benefit. Inevitably, this will have an impact on their life. Media coverage cannot ignore that many front-line workers feel threatened by this transition and fear losing their jobs; in some cases they feel their culture and identity under attack. Workers need to be at the center of any major economic change, from having their history respected to being trained for new jobs. News media can position their voices in the center of the story to be told.

In that sense, **"Just Transition"** is a frame of interest. It is seen as a strong and potential framing concept in some regions but still unknown in other parts of the world. It is considered a U.S./European-based narrative, something being discussed under other frames in the Global South. Experts highlighted the need to bring to this debate—and to the forefront of media coverage—the voice of emerging economies.

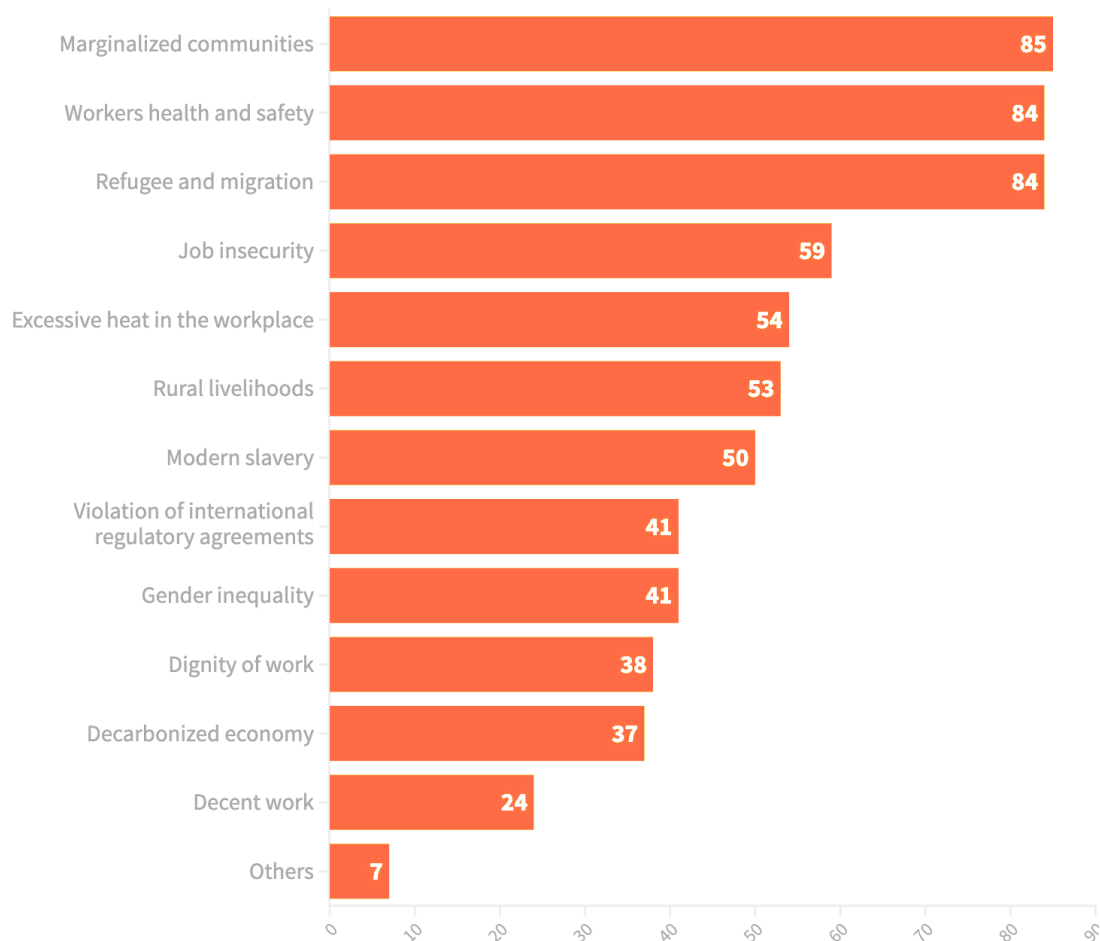
They underlined the importance of learning from these front-line emerging economies their experience and perspective in addressing climate change while transitioning their economies from carbon to alternatives and being at the same time resilient to natural disasters caused by climate impact.

The **COVID transformation of labor** and how it exacerbated labor inequalities was also mentioned as an ongoing pressing issue, one that will only be exacerbated by the parallel pressures on labor from climate change. **Gender** was a topic that rarely surfaced organically during the discussion. However, when mentioned, it was frequently cited as one of the most pressing issues in the labor/climate space. It is a consensus view that women bear the brunt of climate risk and tend to be front-line workers or located in unprotected communities. **Heat** was mentioned as the topic of an increasingly important strand of research, especially how workers are experiencing it and the extent to which workers lack agency to control their periods of exposure to extreme temperatures. It was observed that the media traditionally look at water when covering climate impacts: a focus on heat would be a new and important framing to investigate, exposing its impact on people and especially workers.

An important lens mentioned during the interviews was the **loss and damage** perspective. Once climate communication was seen as an environment-only lens, and later as a development issue, now, according to the experts interviewed, we are on the cusp of a new phase that is about loss and damage, that says society failed to adapt and mitigate. The adverse impact on people is no longer a forecast but the reality, especially for the most vulnerable people, among whom are laborers. In this sense, the experts constantly called attention to the need of a **climate justice** frame, a topic that will be further explored below.

When it comes to the media professionals interviewees, it is interesting to note that the first issue highlighted as a key node for the climate/labor intersection was the refugees and migration perspective, second only to the perspective of marginalized communities and worker health and safety. This result matches the findings from the exploratory digital research that shows immigration, refugees, and slavery are the most explored angles by journalists in current coverage and the only topics with considerable, yet still low, coverage thus far (as explored further below).

When we talk about the intersection of climate change and labor rights, what are the first things that come to your mind?



Graphic 4. Key nodes highlighted by journalists and media professionals in the climate/labor intersection were the refugees and migration, marginalized communities and workers' health and safety perspectives.

3.2 A question of vulnerability

The most shared perspective in the landscape by the expert interviewees is that the intersection of labor and climate change is a question of vulnerability. Graphic 1 confirms this also applies for the media community: 84 out of 138 journalists state that marginalized communities are the first thing that comes to their mind when addressing intersectionality between both issues.

From a global standpoint, people who have contributed least to climate change are suffering the impacts most intensely, especially in the Global South and equatorial regions. Disproportionately poor people, people of color, women, people living in slums, and indigenous communities (aka historically marginalized communities) are the ones with fewest resources to get away from and survive climate-induced disasters.

In that end of the climate change spectrum are also laborers, whether in organized labor in factories and constructions or unorganized labor in subsistence farming. Floods, cyclones, excessive heat, lack of water, job insecurity, and unproductive crops will affect people who work manually for a living. People who haven't contributed to these problems are stuck in systems where the labor force is adversely affected by climate. The survey shows that media professionals are aware of this effect. 61% of those interviewed agreed that exploring the intersection of labor and climate change is key to understanding that climate change is worsening the terms of work and making life harder for the poorest people.

In labor, it is a large cohort of people potentially subject to vulnerability. The specialists stressed that it is hard for laborers to demand better working conditions, without harassment or being fired, considering the mix of low wages and a very insecure workforce where people desperately need the job.

The garment industry was highlighted as an example, given the reality that the cost for an employer to lose a worker and find and train another person is minimal. This unequal power dynamic creates a system in which people are forced into lower quality jobs without any commitment to labor rights.

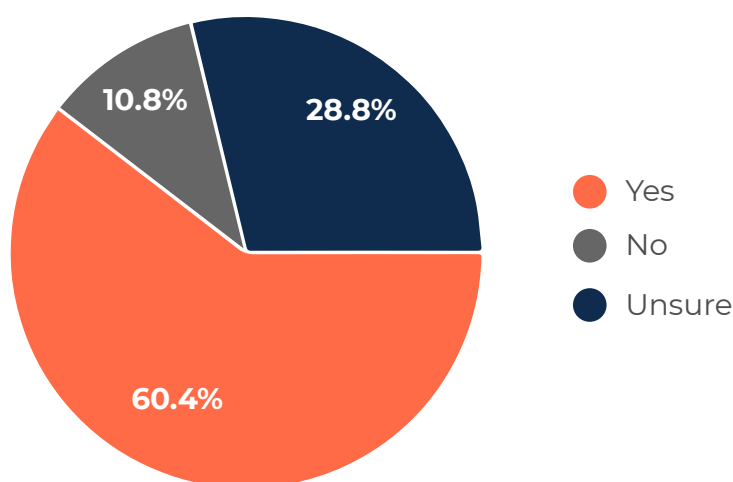
Climate's disproportionate, unjust impact on labor and vulnerable communities is a story largely missed by the mainstream news media. Critical intersections - from gender discrimination and the loss of traditional livelihoods to what constitutes a truly just transition to clean energy - go unexplored. Vulnerable communities should be a primary prism through which the news media covers climate change and labor rights issues, serving as a platform to raise unheard voices. From a climate-narrative perspective, this reiterates the need discussed above for a justice framing. This is a viewpoint shared by the surveyed journalists, where 100 out of 138 considered Climate Justice very or extremely important as framing for a journalistic investigative project connecting climate change and labor issues.

It also is key that strong reflections on justice are made when discussing how to organize the decarbonization of the economy and the transition to a renewable world. What will be the most affected economic sectors? And what does that mean to its workers? What happens to those who haven't been given a pathway out of their non-clean jobs? And what will be the impact on communities where just transitions are not taking place? Those were questions raised during the interviews. Better livelihoods need to be at the center of any major economic transition, where workers' dignity, pride, and cultural history - from subsistence farming to carbonized industries - are taken into account.

3.3 Gender

The consensus among experts is that gender is a key node in the intersection between climate change and labor and that this correlation is hardly explored in the media. Those interviewed shared a perspective that women are experiencing climate risk most and are at a disadvantage in almost every labor market, with lower wages and worse work conditions,

often also bearing the consequences of climate impacts at the family level. For the media professionals, gender is seen as a key topic of interest by 59.9%, with 29.2 voicing some uncertainty on the possibilities of climate coverage via the gender lens. Only a small percentage (10.9%) considered gender unrelated to the broader climate issues.



Graphic 5. Surveyed journalists stated a high interest in covering the intersection of climate, labor, and gender, with $\frac{1}{3}$ feeling unsure and with the need to build knowledge around the issues nexus.

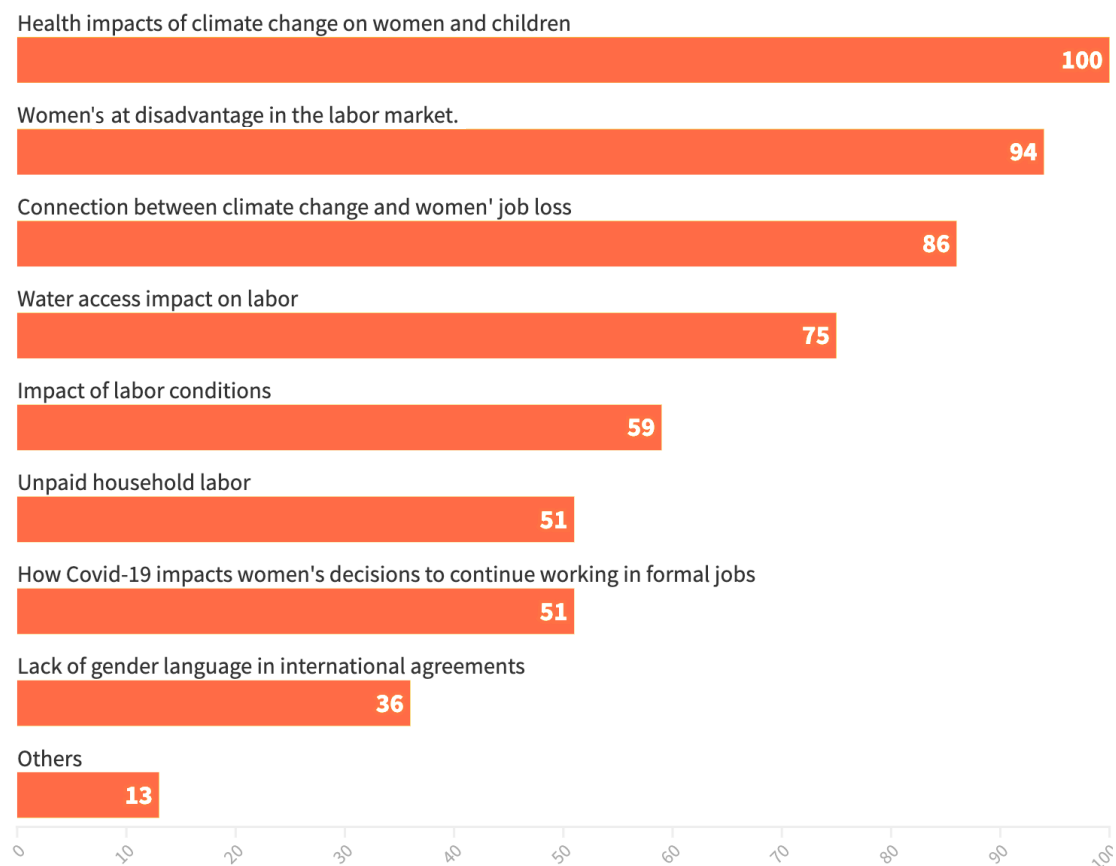
Unorganized labor is considered a norm for women. It points up the female burden in agricultural production and in unpaid and unrecognized household labor. As the family members seen as responsible for gathering water and food and for caregiving, women lose the ability to take up paid labor and are disproportionately subject to

climate risk related to field work and thus more vulnerable to health impacts. These impacts (incorporating as well the effect on children) were identified by 72% of the journalists interviewed as the most important frame in the intersection between climate change and labor considering a gender perspective.



Photo: Sean Gallagher, Cambodia, 2020

Considering a gender perspective of the intersection between climate change and labor, what framing should/could be further explored by the media?



Graphic 6. Framings considered important to be further explored by the media, considering the gender perspective of the intersection between climate change and labor.

In organized labor, the experts underlined women's disadvantages and vulnerability in the work context, bearing the brunt of natural disasters and of the impact of climate change on industries predominantly occupied by women (fashion for instance). For journalists, a crucial topic of interest is the connection between climate change and women's job loss. 68% of the interviewees believe this is a theme to be further explored by the media. In that context, the COVID pandemic plays a key role. According to some of the specialists consulted in the qualitative phase, in many developed nations women are the factory workers and have suffered massively in the pandemic. They were also the ones who stayed home to support their family, with double work shifts and with the forced abandonment of their paid work. How COVID-19 affects women's decisions to continue working in formal jobs is not among the top topics of interest by journalists but still was chosen by 50 surveyed as an important frame to be explored.

Incidentally, in terms of raw experience of climate, one interesting point that could be further examined by journalists is that, according to some of the specialists' research in the field, women experience and talk about climate differently, especially in the Global South. From the Bangladeshi factory women to Indigenous communities in Brazil, women experience it more, from health impacts on urban children to the crops' change in productivity. The fact that they are more aware and worried about climate change's impacts on their daily lives can be a crucial nexus of differentiation in media coverage and give journalists the opportunity to feature women's voices and perspective as essential sources in their reporting.

It is important to highlight that the use or interpretation of the term "gender" towards women only was questioned twice (once in a qualitative interview and once in the quantitative). These respondents noted that the health, economic, and labor impacts on trans, nonbinary, and gender-queer people should be put into consideration as well.



3.4 International regulatory frameworks and their role in measuring public and private policies and governance

The experts interviewed were not aware of key international regulatory options available to address specifically intersectional issues between labor and climate. They mentioned broader arrangements such as ILO conventions and recommendations related to labor and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change agreements related to climate. However, regarding specific regulatory functions covering climate and labor nexus, only oblique references. In terms of theoretical guidance, IPCC was the most cited reference.

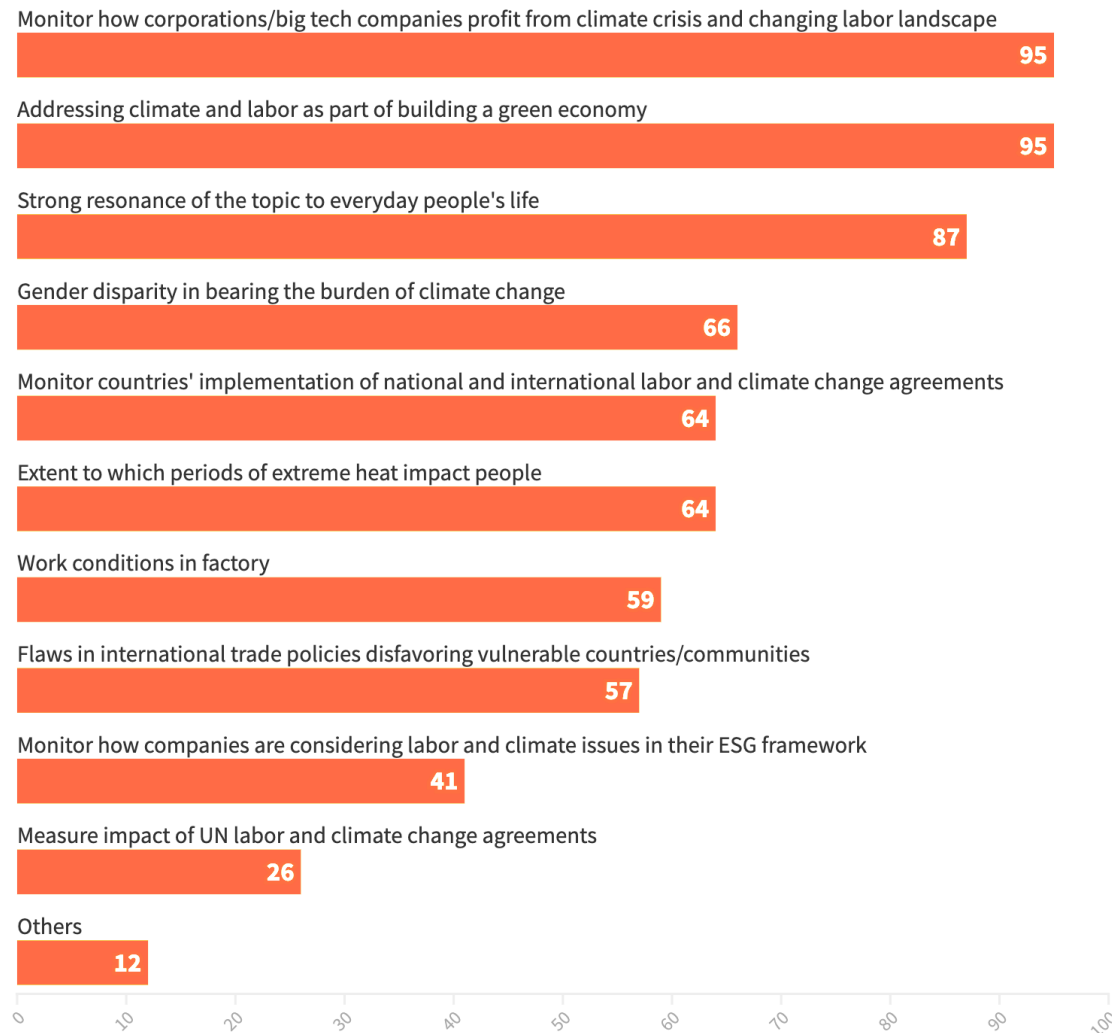
For the interviewed journalists, there is an uncertainty about the importance of this topic coverage, with results varying according to the question approach. Violation of international regulatory agreements was cited as a key point of connection on the climate and labor nexus by only 29% of respondents, being the fourth least cited among the available options. At the same time, monitoring countries' implementation of national and international labor and climate change agreements was among the most voted, with 45.7% of the respondents agreeing this is an important frame for media coverage. This result suggests that despite not being a topic of immediate appeal, there is receptivity for investigation with some spur needed.

For the available frameworks, two realities were brought up during the qualitative phase of the research. The first was a pessimistic attitude about the impact of these regulatory approaches and how seriously any agreements reached are taken by global bodies, corporate governance, and finance institutions. The specialists suggested that understanding better the agreement's impact is an interesting frame for a journalism investigation. This framing approach found low resonance in the quantitative survey, with only 18% agreeing that this is an important focal point.

The second attitude on this potential framing was skepticism. Respondents noted that in countries with extreme-right and climate-denying leaders and governmental structures, such as Brazil, media, human rights, and judicial bodies are directing all their energy and time to stopping rollbacks on basic human rights policies, with very little or zero time to address or press for global agreements or for the implementation of a just-transition economy.

There is, however, a general interest in the creation and maintenance of monitoring systems to enforce companies to proactively address potential human, labor and environmental risks in their supply chain, through the creation of proper policies and through the revision of their trade provisions. The need would be to compare corporate sustainability rhetoric and policy to measurable impacts on communities and workers. The fact that "exploitation of workers is out of sight of consumers, and that process, trade flows and supply chains need to be more visible" was the most voted perspective in potential explanations for the under-coverage of the intersection of labor and climate change, with 67.1% of the journalists reiterating this lens's importance. In terms of overriding framing for investigative journalism projects, 68% considered it is key to monitor how corporations profit from the climate crisis and changing labor landscape; 29% want to monitor how companies are considering labor and climate issues in their ESG framework.

What would you say are appropriate framings of media coverage on this topic?



Graphic 7. Journalists showed a general interest in monitoring how corporations/big tech companies profit from the climate crisis and changing labor landscape

It was also pointed out that the Global North trade policy regime enabled and exacerbated the dynamic where mitigation and adaptation lag in poor nations and in poor communities that can't afford to rebuild. It allows companies to relocate to countries where workers can be more easily exploited, with fewer regulatory options. The need for enforcement mechanics to put teeth in that aspect was highlighted

as well, given the potential imbalance between decent work and economic growth in a just transition. This approach is also favored by journalists: among those surveyed 40.6% believe flaws in international trade policies disfavoring vulnerable countries/communities should be further explored and 67% say it is key to address climate and labor as part of building a green economy.

3.5 Key Audiences and Stakeholders

Before detailing which audiences were considered key for a media and investigative reporting strategy on the climate and labor nexus, it is important to stress that the concept of audience is new for many professionals, especially in the journalism field. Despite being a decisive way for strategic and assertive communication, using audience-centered techniques is still unusual among some professionals, who believe journalism should be for all, normally named as the “general public”. On the other hand, specialists interviewed about the audience question were very excited about it after the discussion—and quickly understood and praised this section's importance.

In the qualitative interviews, there were 11 audiences named as crucial to be reached in a project that aims to raise awareness and engagement around climate and labor.

Labor unions: They are seen mostly as disconnected from climate change approaches but as key potential leads. Specialists believe there would be openness for this intersectional cause within labor unions, as they live and understand conditions people face in their daily working lives. In this category, labor union leaders, labor movement and trade unions were mentioned as well.

Government: Various levels of government were mentioned, all of which are important but seen differently in terms of the level of influence and interest. Three levels were highlighted: Global northern governments, considered inevitably connected to how labor/climate processes play out on the ground; Policy makers, considered by specialists as people who understand the world through stories, hence very influenced by media; and politicians, who are writing Green New Deal legislation and conceptualizing the “Just Transition”. It is worth noting differences in response from the quantitative survey of media professionals, where local and national governments were voted as the most important audiences overall: in the qualitative interviews this was under-mentioned.

Laborers: They are seen as the primary stakeholders with a wider understanding of what labor is and with the power, by demanding rights, to be advocates for climate-resilient policies. They were divided into: organized laborers (people working in industries and construction and people working in outdoor and fossil fuel industries were the most mentioned); unorganized labor in rural communities (subsistence farmers, Indigenous communities, and grassroots movements) and unrecognized labor (women working in household and childcare).

Private companies' leaders: They are seen as the real players, and often cited as possible targets for investigative journalism. The most mentioned were carbon-based industry leaders, large multinational CEOs, large employers, and large landowners.

Investors: Financial actors and angel investors are seen as people fronting the capital expenditures needed for a just transition economy and hence key to making well informed decisions.

Consumers: Urban consumers, especially in the U.S. and EU, have a tremendous part to play in the crisis, through their consumption choices. Media work aimed at exploring how their choices affect others on the other side of the planet was considered of extreme importance.

Major international organizations: ILO, UNFCCC, Conference of Parties attendees, and U.N. negotiators were considered as primary potential readers for this nexus coverage, with possible direct influence on their way of thinking about work.

NGOs/CSOs/Organized Civil Society: People advocating for structural and public policy changes and for broader awareness on these topics could, according to those interviewed, strategically use and work with the reporting results, strengthening their actions.

University/Academia: Faculty and students are seen as an audience that represents the amplification of journalism's reach and also an opportunity for improving the quality of journalism itself. Journalists can learn from scientists and other academic experts. Students and professors can understand that what they are producing informs the media, hence society, in a virtuous circle.

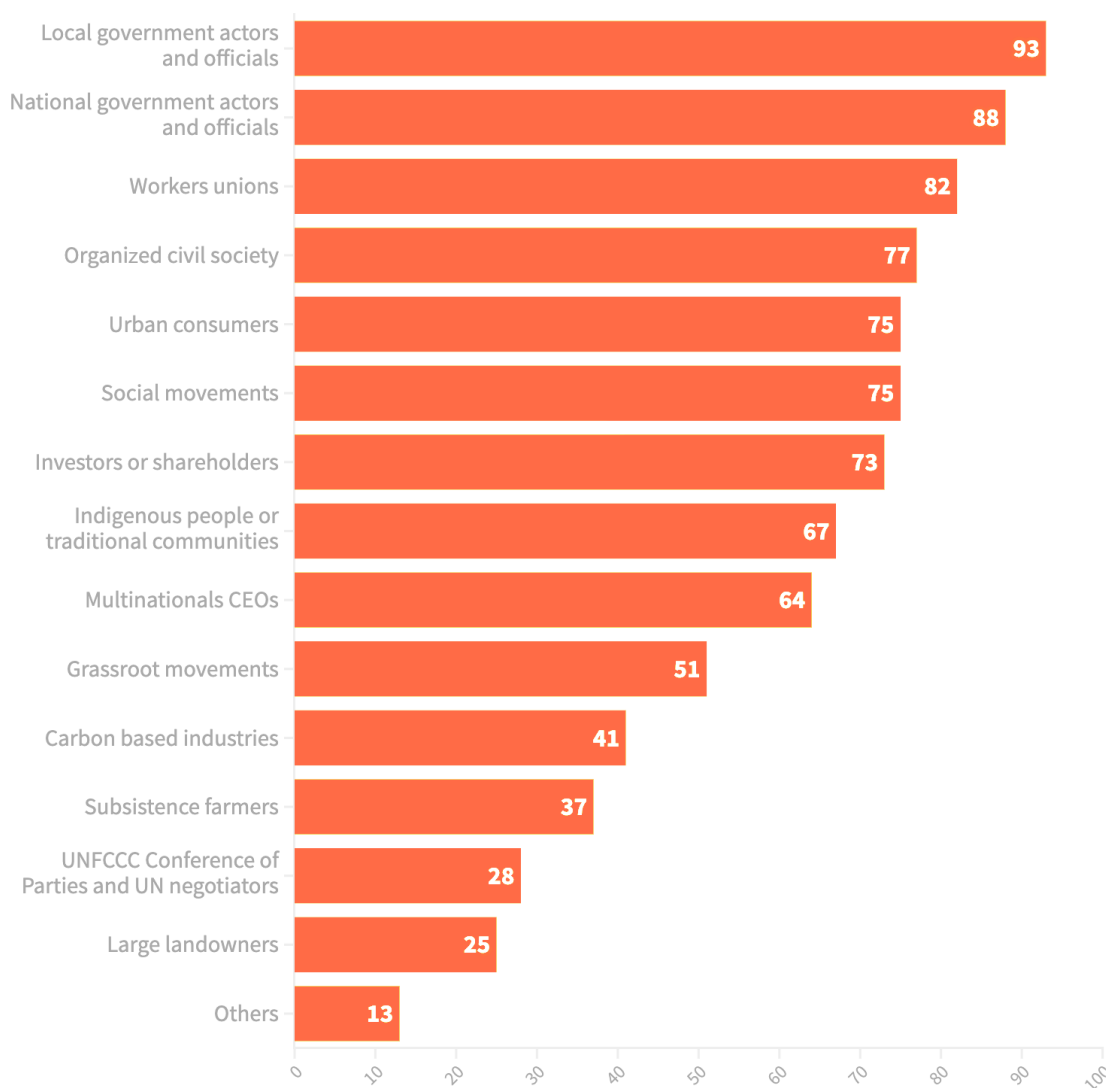
Youth: Youth are seen as a very vocal audience in some regions, one that could contribute to bringing the topic to mainstream digital discussions.

Start-ups and new entrepreneurs:

They were mentioned as the ones that will represent and build the future economy and need to be informed now about the importance of their choices.

In the quantitative survey, the most important audiences, according to the media professionals, are local government actors and officials (66.4%), national government actors and officials (62.9%), workers unions (58.6%) Organized Civil Society (55%), Social Movements (53.6%), and Urban consumers (53.6%).

Who are the key audiences that an investigative project on this topic needs to reach?



Graphic 8. The survey with journalists indicates that they believe the most important audiences to be reached are local government actors and officials and national government actors and officials.

CHAPTER 4

Media Landscape

Photo: Flávio Forner, Brazil, 2020



Media Landscape

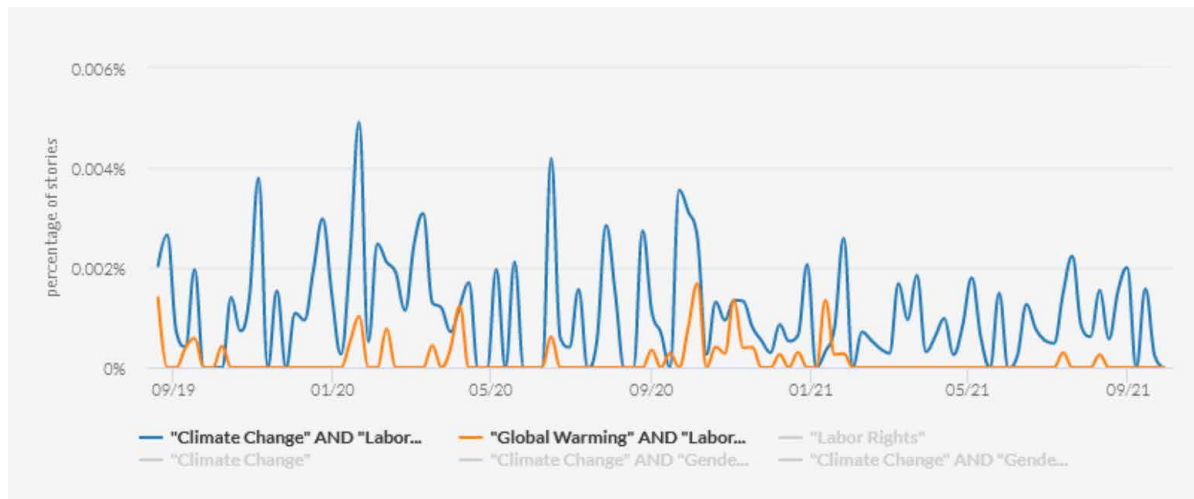
4.1 Introduction

Every interviewee agrees that media coverage on climate change has improved considerably in the last 20 years, from the early focus on polar bears losing space in the Arctic to a more holistic approach on how rising global temperature will affect everyone's lives. The media and journalists have changed dramatically the language used to discuss issues of climate change. Also, from an extractive-economy focus only, other narratives and lenses have begun to appear in the media, even if on a smaller scale: Land use, deforestation, gender, and oceans have gained attention from journalists. Media coverage of climate has gone up and gotten more accurate, as well as emphasis on the fact that this is a human-induced process.

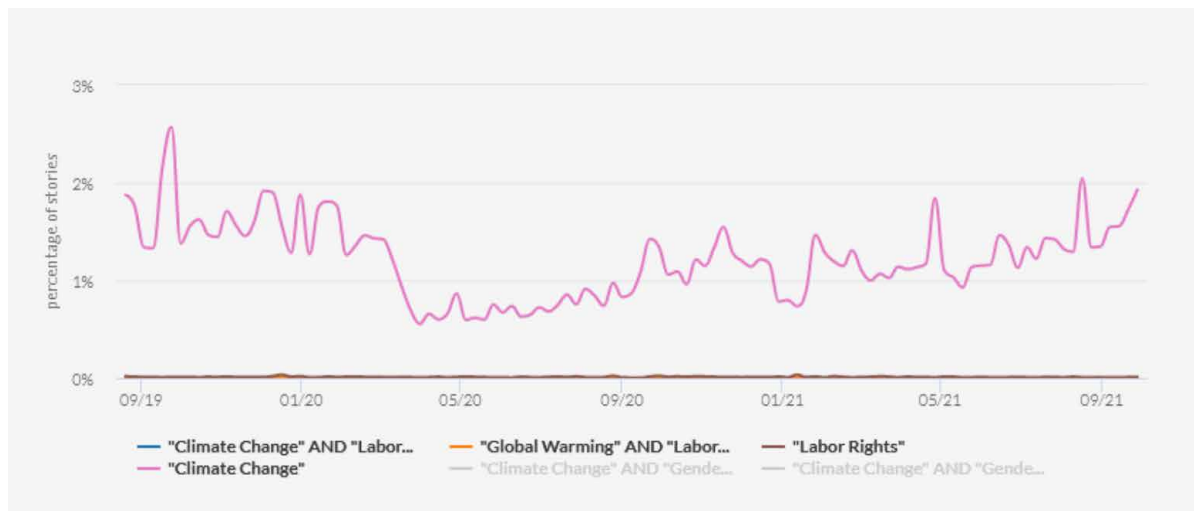
On the labor side, specialists' opinions vary. In countries like the U.S. and UK, good and specialized coverage around labor rights and labor unions were mentioned. In the U.S., Brazil, and Bangladesh, strong and organized social movements and labor unions were cited as important communicators of the issue. However, in many places, disinterest from major private media organizations (and conflicts of interest therein) was mentioned as a key cause for low coverage on labor rights. Some of the specialists and journalists interviewed believe that in countries that are suffering from human rights rollbacks, such as Brazil and Indonesia, labor rights are not on the mainstream media radar because it is overshadowed by crisis coverage. Local media were considered stronger in this sense; examples of interesting stories (albeit ad hoc) on how heat, drought, and floods are impacting workers were mentioned in India and Bangladesh.

The dynamic between climate change and labor is hardly explored or not told at all. There is the impression of a silencing on the topic itself, but especially from the front-line laborers. Their voices are generally considered unheard. Labor is seen as a second-level issue and the media is not doing a good job in unpacking the climate impact on equity issues through the lens of labor. It was highlighted both in the qualitative and quantitative survey that the climate and labor nexus is not clear in public discourse. Despite an ongoing debate about bioeconomy and just transition, the importance of decent work in this context is not being addressed.

By using the audience analysis and digital media mapping tool Media Cloud, it is possible to notice that in the last two years, the volume of stories on the themes of "climate change," "global warming," and "labor" is small. Media Cloud is an open-source tool that analyzes and maps news media coverage of a base of 1,500 global media outlets. The attention index based on these keywords shows that only the term "climate change" reaches daily occurrences in English-language news. Yet it occupies no more than 2% of the total stories. When combined with "labor", it occupies in its peak 0.005% of the total monitored stories in media.



Graphic 9. Lack of coverage: the combination of "climate change" and "labor" occupies in its peak a maximum of 0.005% of the total monitored stories in the monitored media.



Graphic 10. "Climate change" has more expressive coverage compared to labor-related issues, reaching daily occurrences in the English-language news. Yet it occupies no more than 2% of the total stories.

A broader digital search using Google News, BuzzSumo and Muck Rack (tracking also nonjournalistic blogs, articles, and websites) confirmed there is very little, and very infrequent, journalistic coverage specifically related to climate change and work/labor issues. A search for "global warming" and "workers" yielded 29,746 articles in the past year, but very few (if any) of these articles were specifically about workers and global warming. The vast majority of articles merely mention global warming and workers and largely relate

to business and/or policy aspects of climate change or labor/economic issues. Searching keywords "global warming" + "workers" and/or "labor" produced a large number of results related to Australia's labor party and climate change legislation. On the intersection itself, the topic primarily yields results with stories that relate to extreme heat and its toll on outdoor workers/laborers and economic output. The fact that these keywords return very few hits speaks to the scarcity of news and investigative coverage on this topic area.

On Media Cloud, the conversations captured are very much centered on the themes of government policy and finance as well, as can be noted by the word clouds below. This tool maps a collection or cluster of words that are often mentioned within a given issue, in this case “climate change and labor” in Graphic 8 and “climate change and global warming” in Graphic 9. The words are depicted in different sizes signaling how often they are mentioned.

The more important they are for context and search, the bigger and bolder they will appear. It is possible to note that the main actors when it comes to the relationship between these keywords are world leaders, indicating journalism dedicated mostly to replicating stories, government programs, and speeches without adding local contexts.

climate labor rights change human workers union
new including policy issues biden protections environmental democratic
people government work organization china trade support country agreement
action global energy jobs crisis national world trump groups companies law deal
international economic report forced american standards health need president voting
movement care political investment justice address administration public so industry increased
economy commitments clean civil social progressive fight united leaders help federal time plan house
senate power day major development called women's system green communities efforts require reform
business emissions good building wage funding activists sustainable immigration create rules america agencies
important demand corporate

Graphic 11. Word cloud resulting from the combination between "Climate change" and "Labor" in a base of 1,500 global media outlets in English.

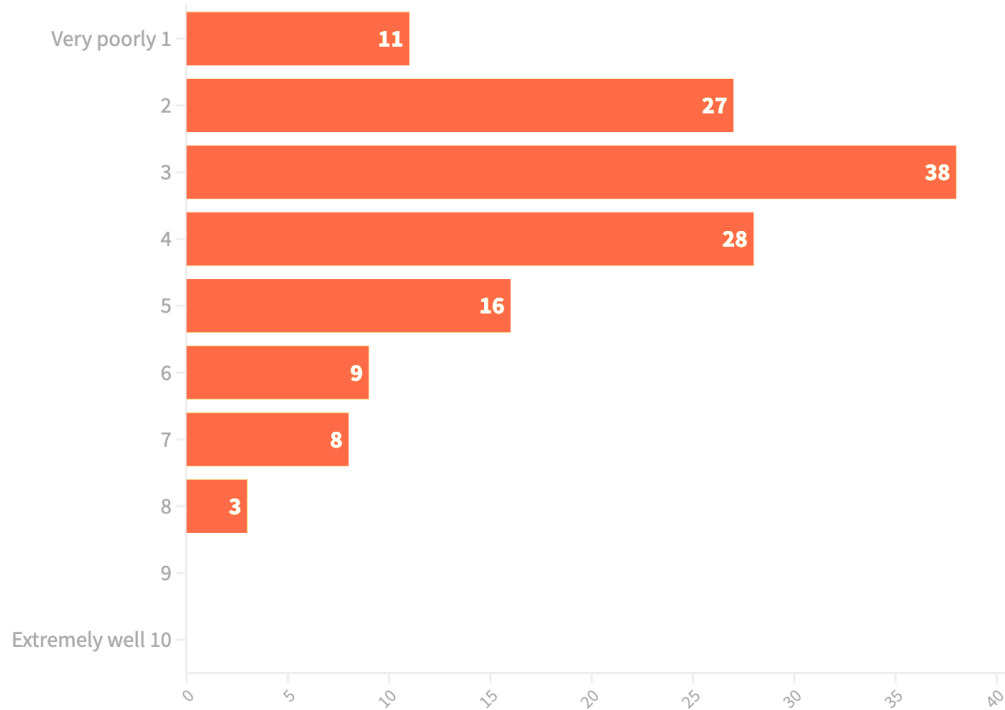
labor global rights warming workers climate unions
china new world movement organization change time president crisis
countries people including policy national emissions trump justice action work
united human environmental trade protections law job health democrats carbon
americans market international economic voting think system support so limited issue
increased social history good forced federal deal day companies biden bank war wages reduce
property need inequality groups great executive civil talk society requires progressive power pay
government capital campaign administration rule report plan order leader far donald department communities
century care business billion bargaining agreement address violations services responsible regulations pandemic oil

Graphic 12. Word cloud resulting from the combination between "Global warming" and "Labor" in a base of 1,500 global media outlets in English

The survey with media professionals shows a similar assessment result. There is a consensus about the quality of coverage around the intersection of climate change and labor. Among the 140 answers on the question about how media is currently covering the topic, no one selected "extremely well" as an answer; 85% of those interviewed rated the current coverage between medium and very poor.

What is your sense of how the media is currently covering this topic (the intersection between climate change and labor) in general?

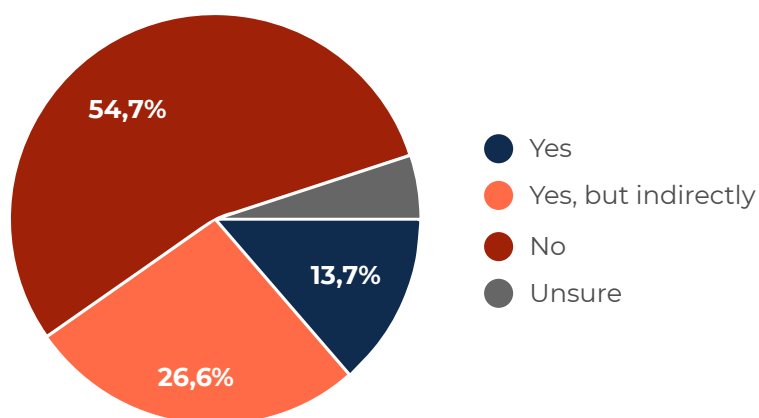
Please answer using a scale of 1-10, considering 1 for "very poorly" and 10 for "extremely well".



Graphic 13. 85% of the media professionals interviewed rated the current coverage around the intersection of climate change and labor between medium and very poor.

Survey results from journalists with professional background and experience on climate reinforce the lack of this association being reported. Only 13.7% have ever explored the Climate and Labor nexus. The fact that only 26.6% have worked even indirectly on this nexus exposes that even

when the intersection is approached, it is a secondary or distant issue. It is also remarkable that 5% of the respondents were unsure about the answer, which also confirms the lack of clarity about the topic not only in public discourse but also among media professionals.



Graphic 14. 85% of the media professionals interviewed rated the current coverage around the intersection of climate change and labor between medium and very poor.

4.2 A matter of structure

In the assessment of the media gap previously described, structural questions were raised. **Lack of knowledge** among journalists and the need for more discussion in academic spaces about the climate and labor nexus was the most obvious reason mentioned in the interviews. A second common response is that there is a pressing **need for capacity building** on climate change. Many journalists, editors, and outlets don't understand it—and consequently don't know how to cover it. They routinely cover weather events but have great difficulty in linking it to climate change. **Oversimplification of the story or not exploring the bigger picture of climate change** are seen as the most common mistakes, a topic that we will further explore in this report below.

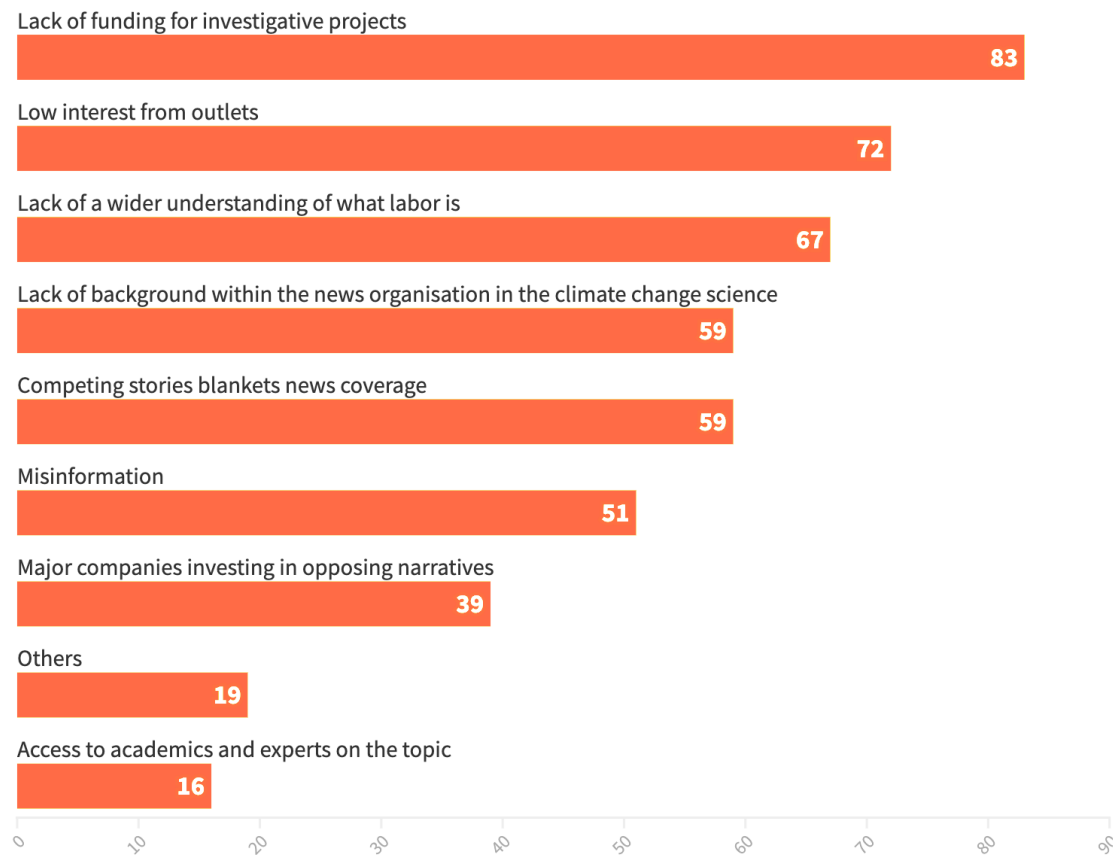
Another key issue raised is the **contrast between global and local media**. Global media was mentioned as very northern centric, globally named but northern in practice, and accused of having a strong inherent north/south bias and/or a domestic focus, only covering the Global South in negative cases. Some of the interviewed specialists from Brazil and Bangladesh believe part of the coverage in the so-called developing countries is more sophisticated in addressing and communicating climate issues than in northern countries, while others from the UK and U.S. believed local media coverage is worse, due to lack of fundings or structure, lack of specialized staff or capacity to cover the issue.

The question of **resources** was raised frequently, especially in the quantitative survey. Many of those surveyed agree good investigative reporting takes time and money to get the stories and due to the ease of reporting on things that are already in the public domain many end up taking the easy route.

This context directly contributes to the generally poor quality of coverage. One example mentioned is the small number of professionals who can afford going to the field and covering from hotspots on the ground. In the quantitative survey many outlets stated interest in the topic but claimed to lack the staff to explore new angles. Some journalists highlighted the challenges in following a good story, a principal one being cost itself.

Questions around **audience receptiveness** were also raised. In countries like the U.S., “climate” can be seen as a politicized word and two interviewees raised the possibility that addressing climate issues while avoiding the word could in itself be a strategy for raising interest in specific topics. In other regions, such as Bangladesh and Brazil, the suggested direction was the opposite: These countries' populations are considered generally aware of the climate crisis and have considerable interest on the topic but may not be acting on the media reporting they consume. In those and comparable countries it was suggested that an “engagement” frame, as opposed to “introductory” or “educational,” might be more appropriate in terms of spurring action. Another problematic item on the audience question was around top-tier media not necessarily speaking to the most affected and vulnerable people and/or the labor audience, and the fact that such outlets are largely focused on northern, white, and educated audiences. On the other hand, local media have limited ability to reach national policy and decision makers. This contrast was consistently cited, suggesting the importance of a strategy that combines local and mainstream media in the interest of holistically addressing the core problem.

What do you see as the most important obstacles blocking sustained media coverage of these issues?



Graphic 15. Lack of resources for investigative journalism was voted as the most important obstacle - a context that directly contributes to impoverished coverage quality.



4.3 Common mistakes in media coverage

Beyond the simple absence of coverage of climate/labor issues, the interviewees also brought up common mistakes in coverage that need to be overcome in order to effectively raise awareness of climate and labor interconnectivity to a wider population. Some of the mistakes are inherent to overall contemporary state of journalism; others are strictly and specifically related to environmental or labor communication. Nevertheless, from inaccuracy to omission and from ad hoc to more systematic, media errors are an important node to address and hopefully correct in any climate communication initiative.

Among the mentioned mistakes, the most cited is **whiplash journalism**. With episodic news coverage that quickly moves from one story to another, journalists don't often have the opportunity to show the bigger pattern of climate change. They fail to put events in context and hence fail in helping the public develop a wider understanding of one of the biggest challenges and threats of our era, the environmental crisis. **Lack of empathetic analysis**, or "**lazy journalism**," were also cited: Surveyed professionals noted that many journalists (either generalists or those specialized in environmental coverage) produce judgmental reporting when it comes to describing groups of workers from nonrenewable energy resources who are resistant to changes, quickly naming them as narrow-minded and selfish. This is seen as a lack of sensitivity to people's lives and livelihood and in some cases culture. Workers feel under attack, fearful their jobs can be taken away. Media, in that sense, opens spaces for politicians like former U.S. President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to weaponize that anxiety and transform it into a culture war.

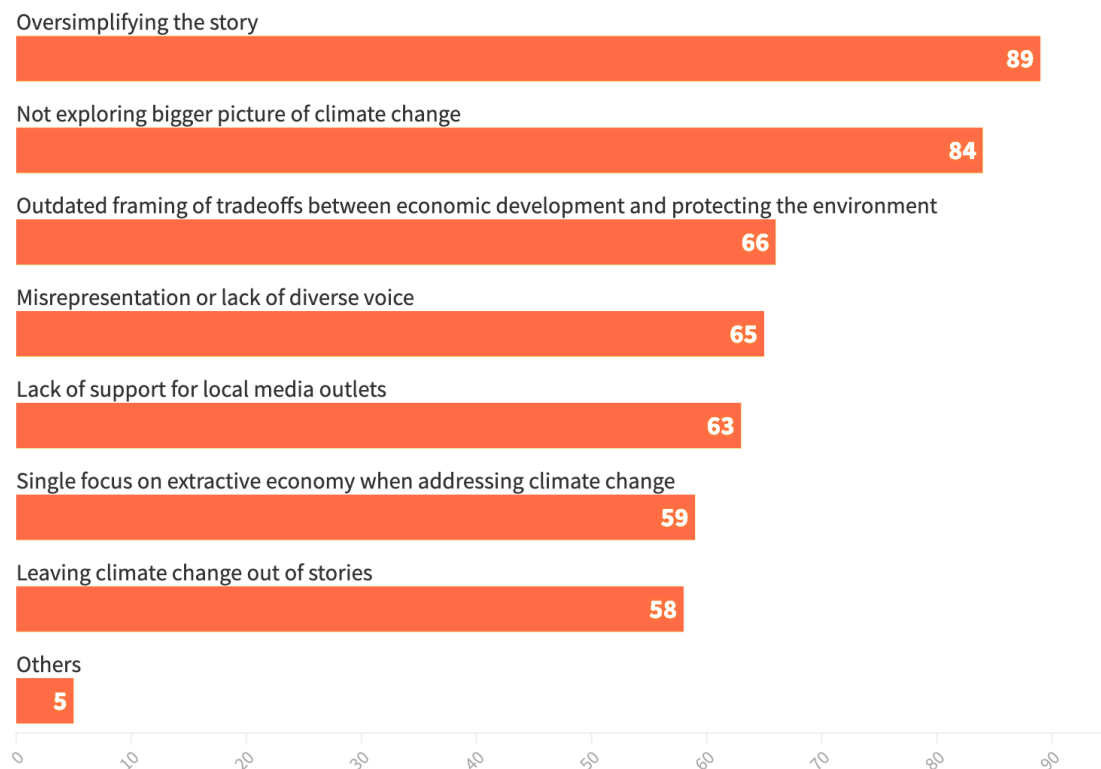
Scientists interviewed complained about journalists **bolstering undeserving authorities** and constantly calling on "specialists" who are not authorities on the topic but are treated as such. Those sources amplify generic, and sometimes imprecise, perspectives. This, added to the fear of being misquoted, makes climate scientists reluctant to talk with the media. Also commonly cited: the **lack of workers' voices**. Often the workers most impacted or those living the experience of labor are not being heard.

Technical language is seen as a media miscue, as a considerable part of the audience cannot follow technical information and lose interest in the story. Journalists ask their readers/viewers to listen to scientists because they're right, however sometimes they don't give the necessary tools to help translate what is being said so as to adapt to the realities of their different audiences. **Outlets lack structure or professional capacity in the area** was one common view as well as the facts that reporters are not given the proper time or resources to devote to study, and that media outlets should be investing in climate teams or climate experts in order to help incorporate climate change in different areas of coverage, in a more holistic approach.

Overemphasizing Western ideas was frequently brought up. Northern countries and perspectives are still the center of the stories, provoking generalistic and imprecise approaches or narratives. Another complex mistake raised was the **"one message fits all" way of communicating**. Media professionals claimed there is a general difficulty in reaching beyond their own choir and going outside the bubble. However, journalists assume that people will understand their message in the same way.

On the contrary, the narrative will resonate with different groups according to their beliefs, sensibilities and background. Few are addressing or taking action to address this issue. **Dystopian-only framings** were also cited: Fear raises awareness but also paralyzes people. Journalists have been facing the challenge in telling the climate story in a way that compels readers/viewers to engage; too often that results in a framing that stresses hopeless perspectives and gives short shrift to the practical manifestations of what's needed.

Considering the intersection of climate change and labor, what would you say are the most common mistakes in media coverage?



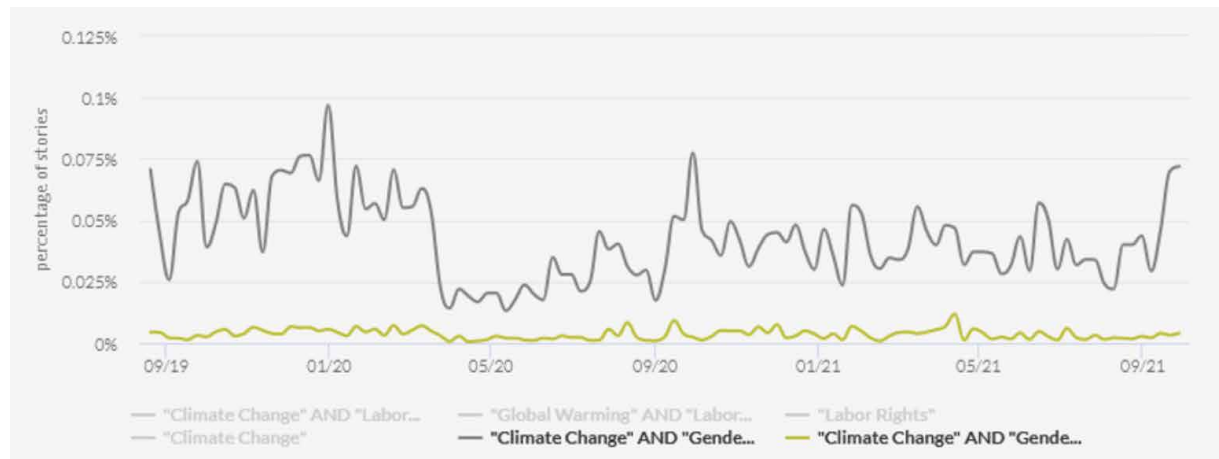
Graphic 16. Failure to put into context the bigger picture of climate change and oversimplification of the climate and labor story were seen as the most common mistakes in the media.

Specialists also named important frames and lines of investigation that are not being monitored and covered by the media, where reporting, beyond leveraging the awareness of the interconnectedness of climate and labor, could directly help in

holding decision-makers of government and supply chain industries accountable. From the **obvious connections not being explored**, the suggested possible frames mentioned varied from general approaches to specific topics.

Gender was consistently cited as a key frame and as a pressing topic to be further explored. Important digital research in Media Cloud explored how many stories mentioned “climate change” and “gender” (less than 0.1%) and how many mentioned “climate change” and “gender” and “labor rights” (less than 0.01%). Of the few mapped

stories, most are generic “state of the world” stories, often also looking at class and race and not with any specific focus. The digital research confirms that gender, despite being an obvious connection and well rated as a priority by specialists and by the media professionals surveyed, is not being covered appropriately.



Graphic 17. Digital research in Media Cloud confirms that gender, despite being an obvious connection, is not being appropriately covered by media both in climate and labor stories.

Regarding more generic framings that were nevertheless considered indispensable in the labor and climate nexus, a few were often brought up: investigation of **green tech solutions that don't address the labor question**, the **greenwashing in ESG narratives**, and better exploration of **what a green economy looks like** and how it can appeal to front-line workers. Much was said about how important it is to look at climate impacts beyond the idea of water. **Heat** should be at focus as well and the extent to which periods of extreme temperatures affect people who have the least autonomy to control their own exposure to this element.

Among the more specific suggestions as to coverage approaches, the proposed frames include: to explore what drives people into brick jobs in southern Asia and how a massive agrarian workforce is being pushed into unsafe jobs; children being forced to go to work at a young age—and how it is affected and induced by climate; looking at the supply chain in mining (with increasing demand for critical minerals); and manufacturing in Democratic Republic of Congo; lithium mining in Chile, where Indigenous communities are being displaced by mining operations; prison labor as front-line fighters against forest fires, with a focus on: who are the prisoners, how many get jobs after imprisonment, and how this is related to climate-induced social instability.

4.4 Threats to keep an eye on

More than mistakes, any journalist aiming to cover this topic will also face external threats and will have to work creatively and carefully to overcome some of the major challenges in this context. Among the pressing threats identified it is possible to say that **outdated framing of tradeoffs between economic development and protecting the environment**, present in media and fostered by interested industries, is one of the key obstacles to tackle in the interconnection between climate change and labor. It creates a false opposition, repelling key stakeholders including workers themselves, who feel threatened and fear losing their jobs.

Competing narratives are also overriding. Specialists stated that there is a strong movement by major companies investing millions to amplify industry perspectives - many times not climate friendly. In that sense, amplification of fake news was also cited as a tool to manipulate audience perception, in ascendant use by some media channels, promoting **misinformation** and mistrust in science. They tend to explore a fourth threat identified in the interviews: the **subjectivity in the way climate change is experienced**. In spite of the consequences of an environmental crisis being more visible to the world every day, not all pieces of evidence are tangible and some of this evidence is distant from part of the media audience and mostly perceived by front-line communities, making it harder for journalists to link particular processes or incidents to climate change.

Another much cited threat was the **skepticism about labor rights in the just transition and in the decarbonized economy**.

There is a lack of trust that this process will consider the needs of industry workers and respect their concerns. Will they get help in transitioning to other jobs? Will they be compensated for lost wages and opportunities? Will they be fired and discarded? According to some of the shared views, every transition in the past few decades has been manifestly unjust. To overcome this pessimistic view, journalism will need to help pressure for a transition that doesn't mean only shutting down carbonized industries, but rather more investment in the quality and conditions of work as well. Lastly, there is the ubiquitous challenge of **blanket news coverage and fragmentation of attention**, with different and unrelated pressing issues consuming audience attention.

CHAPTER 5

Possible paths and next steps





CHAPTER 5

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How then can the media help in raising awareness and action on the climate and labor intersection? This final chapter will look more closely at opportunities and possible paths, but above all will discuss the media's role in bridging the gaps. A common perspective resulting from the research is that the ultimate journalism goal is that every single citizen on the planet needs to be empowered with knowledge of what it will take to reduce emissions and consumption and what it will require to prepare for adaptation. Journalism needs to serve both as a platform to raise vulnerable and unheard voices and as a knowledge hub to spur pressure for change.

Information, beyond raising awareness, needs to lead to actions that will solve the problem. In a topic as critically important as the climate/labor nexus, the media has a role of connecting the dots and helping find the common ground. One of the specialists interviewed stated that in her view the media's role is to help us find our common humanity and tell stories that pierce those bubbles of insularity. In the climate and labor space, by consistently reporting on underreported climate and labor issues and bringing new information to the decision makers of governments and industries, the media can foster accountability, transparency, and good governance. At a fundamental level, It can also lead people to see connections to their own livelihoods and those of people all around the world.

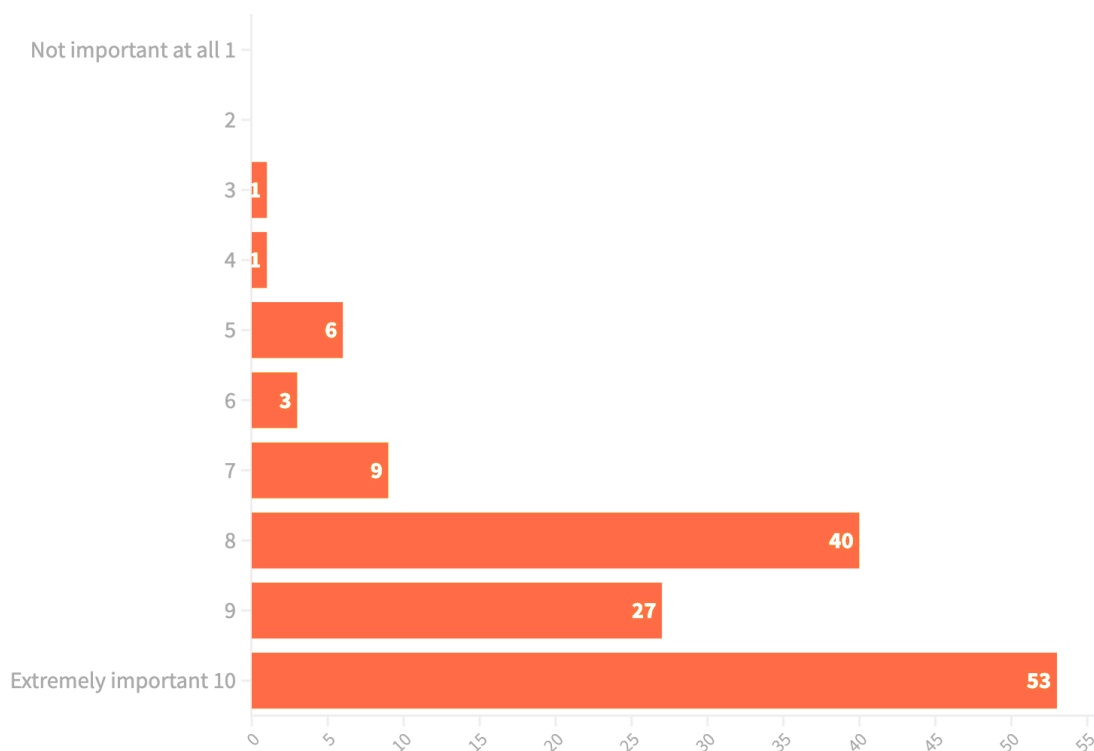
5.1 Opportunities

The research carried out help to map key opportunities for a media and journalistic approach in tackling the lack of coverage on labor and climate related issues. The most important opportunity is the sense of importance of the topic by

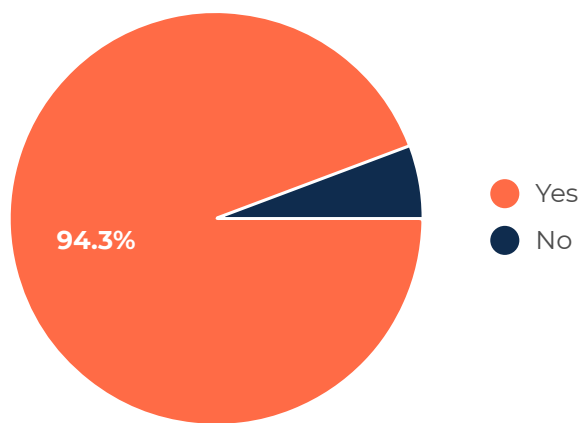
journalists and the expert community: 85% of the interviewees rated the topic between very to extremely important to be covered by the media and 94% were interested in further investigating this nexus.

How important would you consider this topic for the media to cover?

Please answer using a scale of 1-10, considering 1 for "not important at all" and 10 for "extremely important".



Graphic 18. The sense of importance on the intersection between climate and labor is high among journalists. 85% of the interviewees rated the topic between very and extremely important for the media to cover.



Graphic 19. 94% of the media professionals surveyed were interested in further investigating the climate and labor nexus.

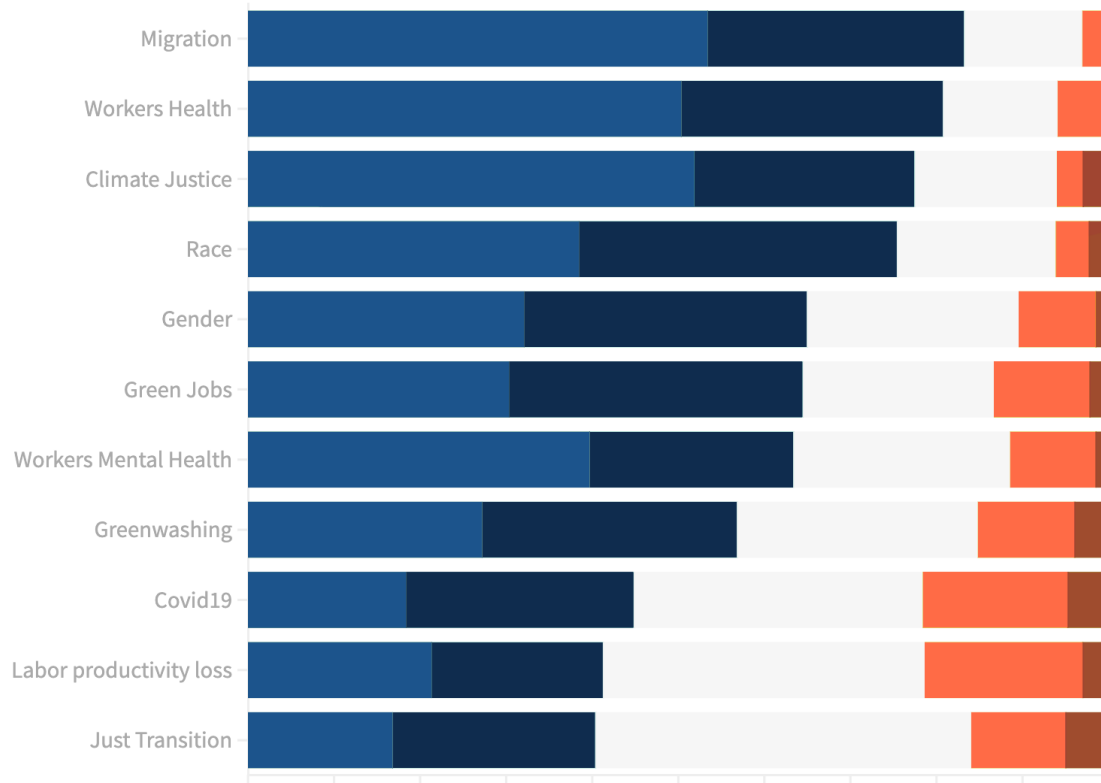
Some of the topic experts also stressed that we are experiencing an important moment in climate communications. They believe that the public concern is at the highest level it has ever been—and that this moment must be seized by responsible journalism. Another perspective shared is that labor is a very tangible prism through which climate is experienced. At a fundamental level, journalism addressing climate and labor is tapping into something that relates directly to people everywhere. Less frequently mentioned but also highlighted was the opportunity for reporting on labor as a bridge between trade and climate policies, and the opportunity to boost work-centered journalism (considered underreported in many regions around the world).

It's important to stress that the lack of coverage itself, despite being a weakness, is also an opportunity, as it shows there is a lot of room to be explored in terms of approaches, angles, and framings. Specialists mentioned and highlighted a whole range of political, economic, scientific, cultural, ecological, and meteorological themes that could be addressed. The most mentioned topics during the qualitative phase were used to ask journalists in the survey how pertinent the frames could be for good journalistic investigative projects. The overall high scoring of the topics (Graphic 17) confirms the interest in a wide range of angles and their potential to be further explored.

It's interesting to note that migration, here rated as the most pertinent issue to be covered, is also one of the most prominent topics noted in the digital-coverage mapping, confirming that immigration, refugees, and slavery are the most explored angles by journalists in the climate/labor nexus and the only topics with considerable, yet still low, coverage thus far. Crucial frames such as gender, climate justice, race and workers' health, key to understanding the intersection of labor and climate change, are hardly explored in the media—yet are viewed by journalists as extremely important.

On a scale of 1 (extremely) to 5 (not at all), how pertinent do you consider the following topics as good framings for a journalistic investigative project connecting climate change and labor issues?

1 2 3 4 5



Graphic 20. Opportunity to be explored: Crucial frames such as gender, climate justice, race and workers' health are hardly explored in the media. However, they are considered extremely important by journalists.



5.2 Suggested paths moving forward

As stated in the previous chapters, the unjust burden of climate change on front-line workers is barely understood, let alone covered, by the media. To address gaps in knowledge, coverage, and public engagement it is crucial to establish a news-media narrative that puts adverse impacts on labor, especially among women and vulnerable communities, front and center. In order to make the importance of the intersection between climate change and labor visible in media, a comprehensive strategy is needed. Below, it is possible to find suggestions of key procedures to a successful media approach, that aims beyond exploring the climate and labor nexus so as to also broaden the reach and impact of journalism itself.

Climate Justice frame and focus: Solutions for sustainability have to go through justice. If it does not, we will see the pattern of unsustainable economic transformations repeated. It is important to remember that if climate communication was seen as an environment-only lens, and later as a development issue, according to the experts interviewed, we are in the era of climate change loss and damage narrative—and this calls for a justice framing and strong narrative on climate justice.

It is key to focus coverage on **climate change worsening the terms of work** and making life harder for the poorest people. As highlighted before, the most shared perspective on the climate and labor intersection is the frame of vulnerability. People who have contributed least to climate change are suffering the impacts most intensely and it is the media's role to expose this contrast.

Media coverage on the possible emergence of a renewable economy, decarbonization and "Just Transition" is not generating impact. It is seen by experts as an interesting narrative to generate momentum, but it talks about outcomes when society is still facing a moment for commitments. There is a need and space for a global initiative that **builds media coverage around accountability**.

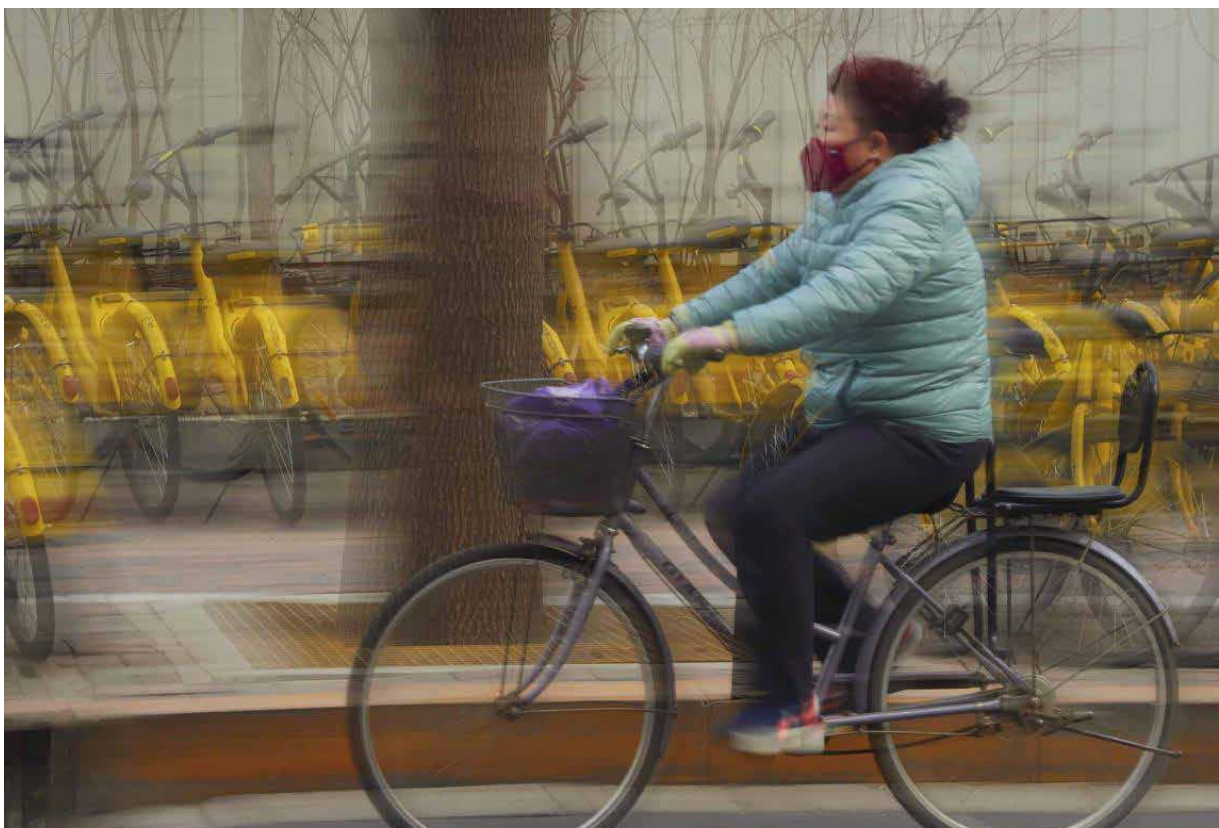
The surveyed journalists and outlets stated a high interest in covering the intersection of climate and labor but said they feel unsupported and unprepared and need to build knowledge around the issues, especially when it comes to gender. A solid **capacity-building, media-support and education structure is essential** to help reporters understand the variation of this connection.

Messaging needs to be nuanced, avoiding the "one size fits all" approach. It is important to think strategically about how to build distinct messages or work with a variety of outlets **for different audiences**. If, in some cases, basic information is needed, in other cases, stories with high complexity will have a bigger impact. For example, if for Western European consumers the angle may be the supply chain of a manufacturing factory in Bangladesh, for the Bangladeshi, this could be a too-obvious approach and for them the most interesting story to be told is about workers' resilience.

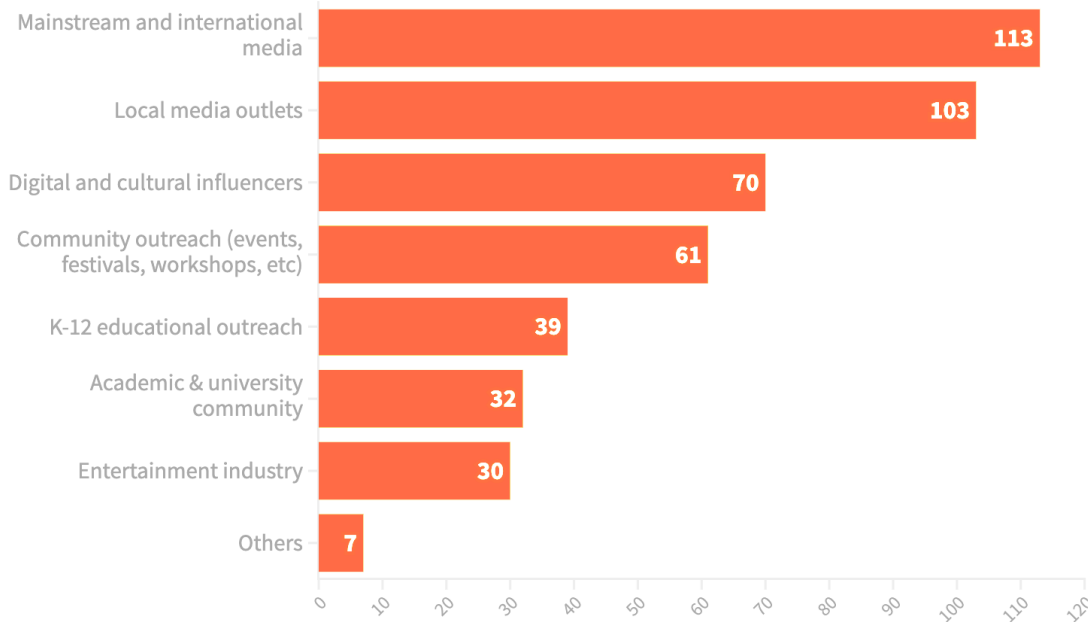
Media needs to also **consider the different and ascending levels of audience engagement with the issue**. It is important to note that **there is a learning curve**. The first foundation is awareness of people about the problem. Climate change is a global problem and everyone needs to know about it and understand what it means to their own realities and livelihoods. Once you move out of awareness it comes to the knowledge ladder, what to do about the problem. As noted by one of the experts interviewed, the media needs to address the "how" in different ways: If you're a polluter, you stop polluting. If you're a victim, you prepare for what's coming. And lastly, from knowledge comes action. Jumping from the necessary issue-education phase directly to action is to miss all the steps in between.

Voices of the unheard: Journalism needs to serve as a platform to raise vulnerable and unheard voices, whose concerns have too often gone unreported and unheard. Climate and labor coverage aimed at protecting laborers and front-line communities from continued exploitation requires giving them voice and space. Journalism needs to be framed in ways that empower people to feel they have an important role to play.

Support the combination of ambitious regional/local and international journalism on the climate-labor nexus, and foster collaborations between local and mainstream media. Regarding **local coverage**, the interviewees noted that without local reporters in place on the beat, a big part of the stories are being missed. Another key aspect is the strong relationship of grassroots outlets with local audiences. People have a bigger sense of trust in local news and follow them closely. However, there is a pressing need to support and improve coverage in local outlets that do not necessarily have the structure or capacity to cover climate change and labor issues. On the other hand, particularly among journalists, working with large mainstream and international media outlets is considered to be highly strategic in terms of reaching priority audiences, because guiding national and international conversation might be a better return for good governance pressure and for reaching policy makers.



Which of the outlets and channels below do you consider the most strategic to reach the audience you named as priority?



Graphic 21. Among journalists, working both with mainstream and international media and local media outlets are considered to be highly strategic to reach the priority audiences.

It is important to negotiate the **balance between a pessimistic and a solution approach**. No one story will change the narrative on climate and labor. During the interviews, experts in climate communication stressed that humans respond to different emotions and sometimes need stories that will uplift them but also need stories that will mess with their fears. It is important, however, to remember that the most common mistake in climate journalism has been the dystopian framing. Invoking hopelessness and despair alone runs the risk of provoking an inertia of the unavoidable, halting engagement and action that might otherwise occur. Showing people that there are positive things happening, while at same time indicating that much more needs to be done, is an important path to consider.

Combining journalism with education and outreach: If journalism has the role of giving voices to unheard communities and of telling underreported and impactful stories, hence pressuring governments and companies for change, education is the path to give extended legs to good reporting and greater traction with the stakeholders they intend to reach. **Education is a way to reach places that journalism won't reach and to translate media language to a more accessible message**, transforming and squeezing the juice of the produced coverage and content and expanding it to new audiences to ensure broad impact beyond initial publication/broadcast. By engaging scholars, students and a different audience than the outlets already speak to on those issues—through direct interactions with journalism—it is possible not only to amplify the impact of the reporting, but also help advance an appreciation of, and trust in, journalism in the longer term.

It can be done on two fronts. The first way is by **placing journalism in schools and universities**, cultivating a more curious, informed, empathetic, and engaged public by connecting teachers and students with the underreported issue of climate and labor. The more **universities can expose their students to a diversity of voices that tell stories that aren't often told**, the more powerful the climate narrative will be. This combination is mutually beneficial. While journalism can help academia slog through information overload, the presence, interaction, and constant exchange of information between journalists and the university community is key to improving journalism quality and access to first-hand knowledge. The second path is to **reach other public fora** - from webinar, seminars, and conferences to art exhibitions. **Public events can open those stories for otherwise unreachable audiences** and bring new layers for the process of absorbing media-produced content.

Strategic use of social media: We have seen in the past decade a proliferation of social media outlets. If on the one hand we saw different kinds of dystopian effects (such as misinformation and fake news), it is undeniable that it also has enabled democratization of content creation and opened spaces for different voices to produce and tell their own stories. It is also important to note that social media is a powerful way of communication, yet complex and full of unknown resources to media outlets. From sophisticated social listening tools to digital ads targeting strategy, it is important that journalism organizations are up to date in terms of digital capacity and literacy, making sure they are not left behind in the ongoing digital frontiers we have been crossing.

Social movements matter: During the interviews it was noted how elected officials and business leaders listen to, or feel pressured by, social movements. Effective climate change and labor communication needs to take this into account and work closely with this sector in a two-way road: bringing and hearing key leaders and voices in the reporting process but also by interacting, making information available, and taking the produced coverage to these movements, so they can strategically use good-quality information in their advocacy process.

The research shows not only great receptiveness but also a need for a global reporting initiative to explore innovative ways of engaging key audiences and raising global awareness on the intersection of climate change and labor rights. A new news media narrative on climate change that sheds light on the adverse impacts on labor, in focused and innovative ways, will lead to productive policy change. Providing the public with high-quality information on these underreported yet systemic issues will increase the likelihood of policymakers and the public making more informed decisions.

It is key to have in mind and be guided by the idea that a change of narrative is a collective process that needs to involve and foster collaboration among global and local media networks, educational partners, social movements and, above all, the front-line communities. To broaden understanding of this underreported and not fully understood nexus, it is crucial to establish a supporting and strategic media hub to foster overriding frames, lift unheard voices, and help journalists and outlets in finding the adequate coverage lenses.



Climate Change and Labor

The media landscape

 Pulitzer Center