

# Covering Climate Change: A Journalist's Guide to Science, Stories, and Solutions

Climate change poses significant threats to the health of the planet, ecosystems, and humans. Journalists can raise public awareness about the health impacts by reporting accurately and giving their audience relevant and accessible information. They can help communities prepare for and prevent potential health crises and influence policy makers to take action against climate change. Here is a list of tips for effectively telling the story of one of the greatest challenges facing humanity.

## Understand the Science:

Familiarize yourself with the **science behind El Niño**. Learn how it influences ocean temperatures and atmospheric conditions to cause weather anomalies, such as droughts and floods. While El Niño is a natural phenomenon, it's important to place it within the broader context of climate change. Discuss the links between El Niño events and long-term climate trends, stressing the importance of global and local climate action.

Take the time to understand the basic **science of climate change**. Get to grips with the greenhouse effect and how the earth is heating up due to trapped gases caused by the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change. Get to know key terms and concepts and the scientific consensus. For example, understand the difference between weather and climate change. Key terms include, mitigation, adaptation, extreme weather events and renewable energy.



In telling the story of the health impacts of climate change, it's equally important to understand the **science of health**. Find out about the various infectious disease that have spread as a result of an extreme weather event.

Climate change and extreme weather events such as those caused by El Niño causes anxiety, depression and feeling powerless. Survivors of extreme events can also develop mental illness. This is an important issue to report on.

Offer practical advice to your audience on how they can prepare for and respond to El Niño-related challenges. Include tips on water conservation, agricultural practices, and disaster preparedness. Report on early warning systems in place to mitigate the impact of El Niño.

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**Stay Updated:** Keep on top of the latest developments in climate science, policy, and technology. Attend conferences, read scientific journals, and follow credible and reputable sources to stay informed.



**Scientific Consensus:** The overwhelming scientific consensus is that human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, leads to a rise in global temperature that has a detrimental effect on the health, particularly of vulnerable communities.



**Credible sources:** Climate change mis- and disinformation hinder action by causing confusion and delaying policies, resulting in a lack of public support for changes. Consult reputable sources like universities, climate organisations, meteorologists, climatologists and epidemiologists.



**Fact checking:** Fact-check all information rigorously. Cross-reference data with reliable sources before publishing. Having reliable sources means you can check your information with them.



**Interconnected Issues:** Reflect on the fact that the health impacts of climate change and the El Niño phenomenon are interconnected with other global challenges, such as social justice, inequality, and lack of access to health. Explore these intersections in your reporting.



**Local Stories:** Focus on success stories and innovative methods in climate change adaptation and mitigation. This not only inspires action but also empowers readers and viewers, encouraging communities, policymakers, and businesses to act by providing practical, actionable solutions rather than just outlining problems.



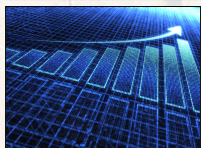
**Human Stories:** Report on personal stories of individuals and communities affected by health-related challenges. People like to see themselves and their challenges reflected in stories about people like them.



**Diverse Voices:** Ensure your reporting reflects diverse voices and perspectives, including those of marginalized communities. Climate change impacts different groups in unique ways, and different perspectives enrich your storytelling.



**Avoid False Balance:** While presenting multiple perspectives is important, be cautious not to create a false balance by giving equal weight to fringe opinions (eg climate change denialists) that lack scientific support. Represent the scientific consensus accurately.



**Visual Storytelling:** Use visuals, such as infographics, maps, and charts, to help communicate complex information. Visual storytelling can help your audience understand and interact with the information you want to convey.



**Highlight Solutions:** Showcase success stories and novel approaches aimed at mitigating or adapting to climate change. Highlighting solutions can inspire positive action and encourage a sense of responsibility and empowerment among your readers and viewers. Instead of merely highlighting problems, this approach focuses on actionable solutions, inspiring communities, policymakers, and businesses.



**Track Policy and Legislation:** Keep an eye on climate-related policies and legislation. Understand the political landscape and how decisions at local, national, and international levels impact climate action.