



STUDY ON
MONITORING
MEDIA COVERAGE OF
**CLIMATE CHANGE
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
ISSUES**

Executive summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY 2024

Study on Monitoring Media Coverage of Climate Change and Environmental Issues

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First: General framework of the study

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1. The risk of climate change and environmental challenges

Climate change refers to long-term alterations in weather patterns on Earth's surface and its impacts on nature, individuals, and communities. The current climate change is primarily attributed to human activities, especially greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas. These emissions generate greenhouse gases that act as a blanket around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and increasing global temperatures.

The effects of climate change include the increase in global temperatures, the rise of the sea level, changes in precipitation patterns, and the intensity of natural events such as storms, droughts, and floods becoming more severe and unpredictable. Climate change can also lead to widespread impacts on ecosystems, agriculture, the economy, and public health.

Combating climate change is a global challenge requiring cooperation and joint efforts from governments, communities, businesses,

and individuals to reduce emissions and adapt to future climate changes.

Experts recommend taking actions at global, national, and local levels to address climate change. These actions include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, enhancing sustainability in agriculture, transportation, and industry, preserving forests, raising awareness of the importance of climate change, and adopting sustainable behaviors.

International agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1994, the Kyoto Protocol annexed to the Framework Convention that came into effect in 2005, and the Paris Agreement of 2015, aim to establish policies for combating climate change and adapting to its impacts. These agreements place climate change at the forefront of global policy agendas due to its evident effects on the planet and the increasing risks it poses to the sustainability of the Earth for future generations.

1-"Climate Change," United Nations website, published at the following link: <https://www.un.org/ar/global-issues/climate-change>



2.The role of the media in addressing environmental issues

The environmental shift has become a significant topic in daily concerns, prompting global media to allocate more resources to cover issues like climate change, environmental policies, and related actions. Environmental issues have become prominent in media coverage, raising environmental awareness and shaping public opinion by providing information, encouraging dialogue, and influencing political decisions. The media can actively promote positive actions and support climate change mitigation policies for sustainable change.

The increased media attention on environmental issues and climate change is due to several factors:

- From the scientific and realistic perspective: Media increasingly recognize the importance of accurate reporting on climate science and human activities disrupting ecological balance.
- From the public interest perspective: The audience shows widespread interest in extreme weather events, massive fires, and environmental disasters caused by immediate climate change effects. These events often receive extensive media coverage, raising awareness and discussion.
- From the support for advocacy campaigns perspective: Youth-led climate activism, spearheaded by figures like Greta Thunberg, attracts media coverage, helping to mobilize public support and pressure decision-makers to take action.
- From the accountability and oversight perspective: Growing political focus on environmental and climate issues, both internationally and locally, has driven the media to play a crucial role in monitoring climate policies and covering government commitments.
- From the perspective of informing the public: Increasing concerns about the negative impacts of environmental and climate issues have boosted public demand for accurate and comprehensive reports. Media have responded by dedicating more time and space to in-depth coverage of these issues.



3. Study objectives and methodology

The study aims to monitor media coverage of climate change and environmental issues in Lebanese media by:

- Identifying topics covered.
- Assessing the coverage scope and importance given by media.
- Determining the nature and type of coverage.
- Identifying key actors in the coverage.
- Evaluating coverage inclusiveness regarding affected groups.
- Analyzing information sources, its types and how to handle it.
- Assessing media's role in informing the public about climate and environmental issues.
- Reviewing coverage of public policies and executive actions.
- Evaluating professionalism and understanding of climate issues through case studies.
- Analyzing inclusiveness and sectoral engagement in public discourse.
- Identifying media's contribution to raising awareness and social responsibility.
- Tracking media's engagement with specialized and scientific entities on climate and environmental issues.

Methodology of media coverage analysis

In analyzing media coverage of climate change issues and environmental topics, both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were employed. This study focused on examining evening news bulletins of monitored television channels and press coverage from February 1st to February 29th, 2024. The analysis was conducted using detailed guidance data collection and analysis models related to a set of variables and classifications related to the main and subordinate coverage topics (Appendix 1: Main and Subordinate Topics of Coverage), the type and placement of coverage in the context of daily news and its volume, the media coverage approach to climate change issues (Appendix 2: Media Coverage Approaches), referenced texts and legal documents, as well as the main actors involved in the coverage, other participating actors in public discourse, targeted special interest groups, media sources and their types, media tone, and coverage style (Appendix 3: Monitoring and Analysis Methodology).

- The media content subject of monitoring and analysis

The monitoring and analysis process focuses on media coverage of issues related to climate change and environmental issues. It includes all news coverage, whether in television news bulletins or in reports and investigative journalism, that falls within the following main categories:

Climate change and environmental issues

- Climate change
- Renewable energy
- Greenhouse gases and carbon emissions
- Environmental degradation
- Agriculture and food security
- Health and human impacts
- Governance and environmental policies
- Innovation and environmental technology
- Waste management
- Climate justice

Monitored media outlets

Online platforms
(Alternative media)

Newspapers

Television channels

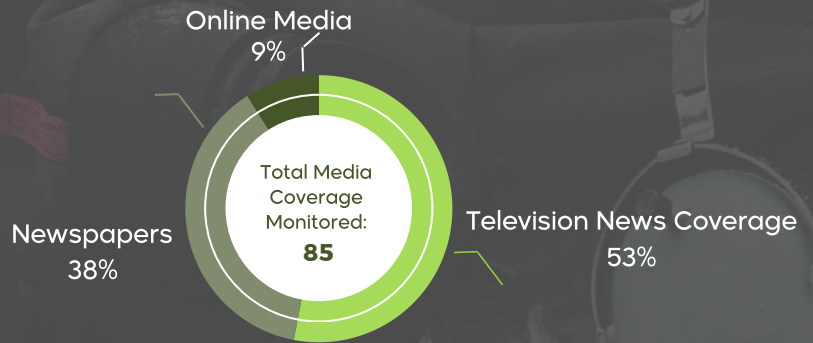


Second: Results of media coverage monitoring

The study monitored primetime (evening) news broadcasts from six local TV channels, daily coverage from four newspapers, and three online platforms, extending during January and February 2024.

1. Distribution of coverage by media type

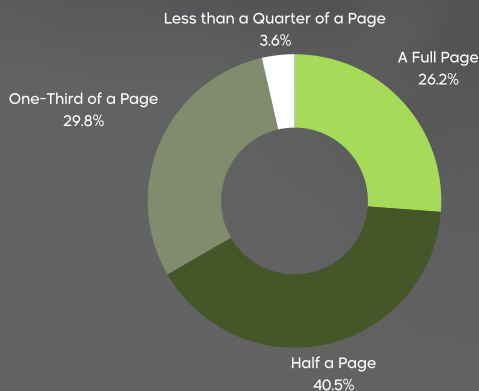
- A total of 85 media coverages related to climate change and environmental issues were monitored. TV coverage accounted for the majority with 45 media pieces (53%), followed by newspapers with 32 media content (38%), and online media with 8 media pieces (9%).



-For television news coverage in the monitored primetime news bulletins, the number of reports broadcasted by MTV channel reached the highest proportion with 17 reports. Following MTV, LBCI aired 10 reports, then Al Jadeed with 8 reports, OTV with 6 reports, and the lowest proportion was for Al Manar and Tele Liban channels, each with 2 reports monitored.

2. Distribution of coverage in newspapers and online platforms

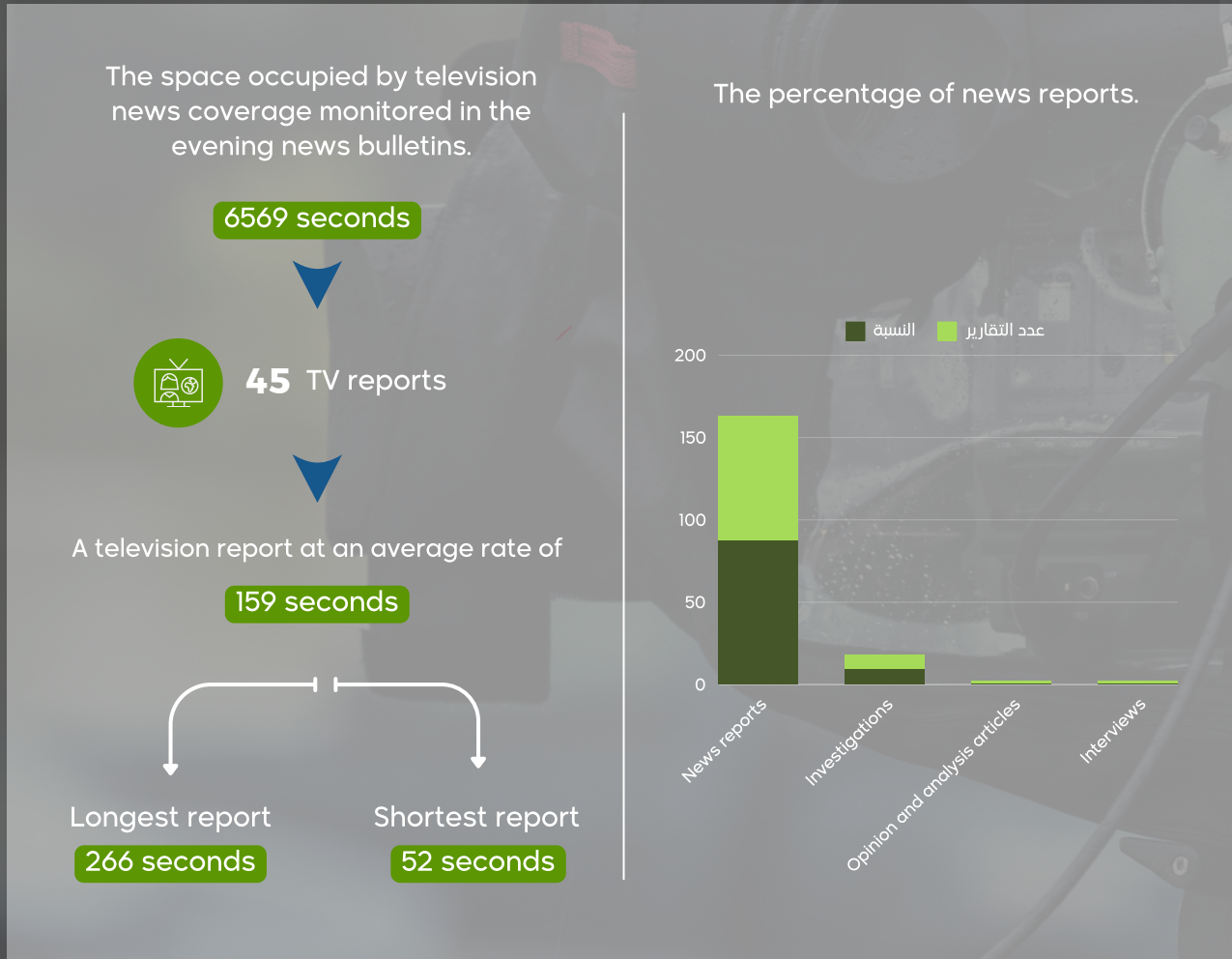
The distribution of journalistic coverage (newspapers and online platforms) on climate change and environmental issues was as follows: Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper (15 reports), followed by Al-Akhbar newspaper and Megaphone website (seven reports each), then L'Orient-Le Jour (six reports), An-Nahar newspaper (four reports), and Daraj website (one report). No coverage was reported on the Beirut Today website during the monitoring period.



The coverage space in the monitored newspapers on climate change and environmental issues was distributed as follows: 22% full page, 34% half page, 25% one-third page, 16% quarter page, and 3% less than a quarter page.

3. Distribution of news reports on television channels

- News reports constituted 88% of the total media coverage on climate change and environmental issues (75 reports), followed by investigations at 10% (eight reports), opinion and analysis articles at 1% (one report), and interviews at 1% (one report).
- The monitored television news coverage in evening news bulletins reached the total of 6569 seconds of broadcast time in 45 reports, with an average of 159 seconds per report. The shortest report length was 52 seconds and the longest was 266 seconds.



4. Placement of coverage in television bulletins

- The vast majority of reports in the monitored evening news bulletins on climate change and environmental issues (80%) were within the framework of local news. Only about 6.5% were the lead story at the start of the news bulletin, and about 13% were the main story.
- Regarding the placement of these coverages in newspapers, 12.5% were the main story, and the remaining 87.5% appeared in local news.

5. Distribution of main and subordinate climate and environmental topics in coverage.

The media coverage of climate change and environmental issues in various monitored media outlets was primarily focused on environmental degradation (25 reports), encompassing diverse issues related to green spaces, threatened agricultural environments, and biodiversity protection. This was followed by climate change as a primary cause of environmental and natural disasters (22 reports), and waste management (16 reports).

Monitoring results showed that television news bulletins prioritized coverage of current issues related to climate change and the resulting natural and environmental disasters. In contrast, newspapers and alternative media platforms primarily covered environmental degradation.

Megaphone devoted significant coverage to biodiversity and protecting habitats from human and environmental threats, particularly the endangered Aamchit Seal Cave and human encroachments on its surroundings.

Coverage also extensively addressed Israeli attacks on agricultural environments (nine reports) and waste dumps (nine reports). Government policies and local laws were detailed in seven reports, as were carbon emissions from transportation, generators, and factories (six reports) and hazardous waste posing risks to public health (five reports).

Coverage of the protection of green spaces, especially against tree cutting for trade, was featured in five reports. Other topics covered in lesser detail included natural resource management, waste sorting facilities and home sorting, and eco-friendly initiatives and activities.

6. Extent of reference to documents and laws related to climate and environmental issues

A significant 89% of the media coverage on climate change and environmental issues did not highlight on relevant laws or documents, while only 11% of the coverage mentioned such laws and documents.

Referred to laws and documents.
11%

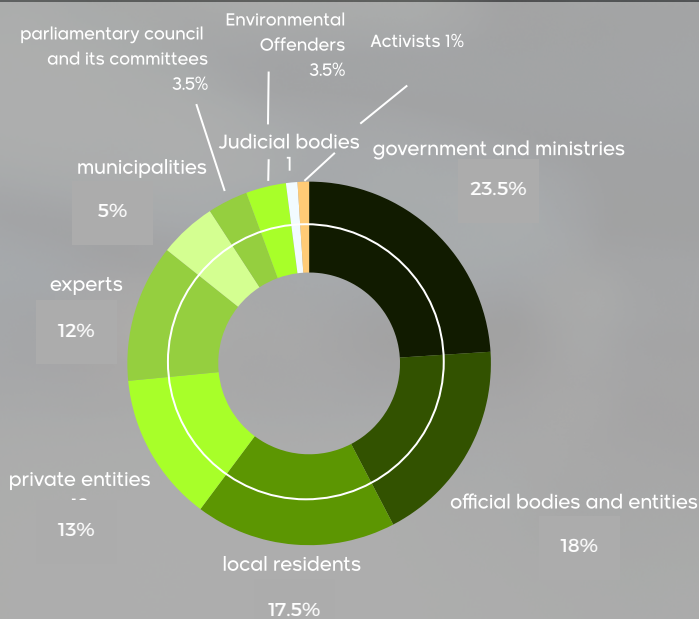


Did not refer to laws or documents.
89%

Media coverage related to climate change and environmental issues.

7. Main actors in media coverage

- The distribution of main actors in the media coverage was as follows: 23.5% for the government and ministries, approximately 18% for official bodies and entities, around 17.5% for local residents, 13% for private entities, about 12% for experts, 5% for municipalities, and approximately 3.5% each for the parliamentary council and its committees and environmental offenders. Judicial bodies and civil activists each constituted less than 1% as main actors.
- The two prominent main actors in the monitored media coverage were official entities at around 45%, and local residents and experts at about 30%, with municipalities limited to 5%.



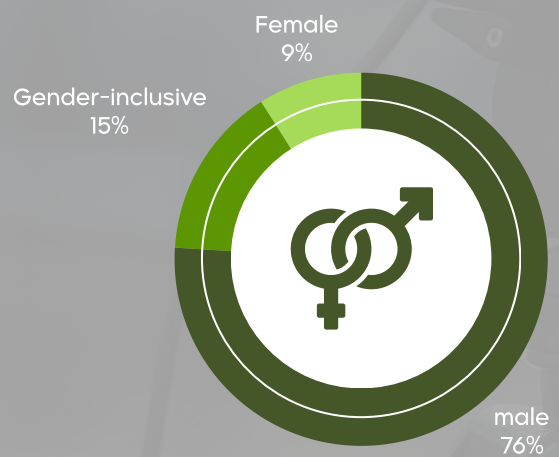
8. Gender distribution of main actors

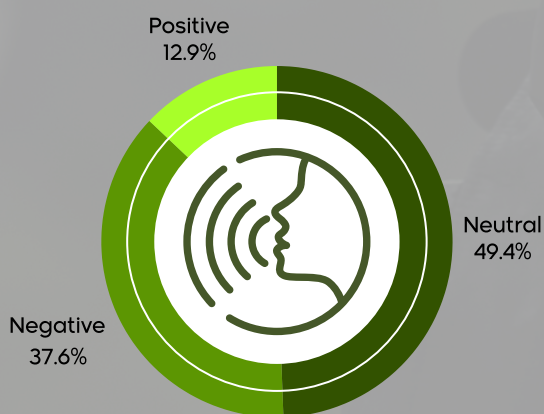
The gender distribution of main actors in the media coverage of climate change and environmental issues was 76% male, 15% mixed-gender, and 9% female. Women's appearances as main and non-main actors were predominantly in the categories of experts, local residents, and civil activists.

9. Specific Target Groups in media coverage

Specific target groups in media coverage of climate change and environmental issues included 3% for women and marginalized communities, 12% each for agricultural communities and local residents, while 73% of the coverage did not target any specific group.

The presence of municipalities and local authorities was very weak in the coverage, not exceeding 5% of the main actors.





10. Tone of coverage on climate change and environmental issues

- The tone of media coverage related to climate change and environmental issues was neutral in approximately 50% of the cases, positive in 13%, and negative in 38%.
- Among the negative tones, 78% were accusatory.

11. Distribution of sources in coverage

The majority of the media coverage relied on facts, events, statements, and positions rather than undisclosed or unreported information on environmental and climate change issues.

No media coverage was based on information obtained through the access to Information Law, and no coverage was dedicated to climate justice issues.

Third - Case studies on climate change and environmental issues

First case: Air pollution in Beirut

- On February 27, Al-Akhbar newspaper published a report titled "Beirut's air 'Tastes and Smells', Its residents Are 'Cancer Projects!'.
- On the same day, OTV channel aired an evening bulletin report on the same American University study, lasting approximately 200 seconds.

Case conclusions:

- These two media outlets exclusively published the American University study, highlighting a significant issue that Lebanese citizens have suffered from for many years, without successful resolution from the relevant authorities, often amidst general silence.
- The problem is multifaceted—political, environmental, health-related, and economic. The two reports do not directly blame any specific party for the issue. Instead, they point to pollution as the cause of the problem, highlighting its risks and impact on citizens without assigning specific responsibility. This topic then disappears from the coverage, even though it warrants continuous follow-up, especially given the wide scope of investigation available.
- Despite the ongoing nature of the pollution issue and its evident dangers, the topic is often neglected by the media, whereas it should be a priority for constant follow-up. The American University's new study on Beirut's air pollution was treated as a timely event by the media, even though the problem has persisted for many years and deserves ongoing attention from the media, particularly since it is a frequent complaint among citizens and the authorities have not taken necessary steps to mitigate the harm it causes.



Second case: Risks posed by cement factories in the city of Chekka

- The Chekka area, particularly, and northern Lebanon in general, suffer from pollution caused by cement factories. This chronic issue arises mainly from the factories' use of non-compliant fuels and the lack of appropriate filters, resulting in toxic emissions.
- Despite its importance and severity, this issue was absent from the monitored media coverage throughout January and February. Only OTV addressed it in a single report on January 21, which lasted about 180 seconds.

Case Conclusions:

- The report did not include any investigation to verify the accuracy of the information provided.
- The report did not reach out to the cement factory officials to verify the accusations and give them the right to respond or clarify.
- The report did not approach the relevant official authorities, who are directly responsible for protecting citizens, even though the statement accuses ministers, officials, and religious authorities of covering up the factories' activities.
- The report did not seek the opinions of the local residents who are primarily affected, nor did it include interviews with patients suffering from pollution-related illnesses to verify their complaints.
- While featuring the environmental activist helps in highlighting the issue, which other media outlets missed in doing so, the topic deserves deeper investigation and continuous coverage to pressure authorities and factory owners to stop harming the residents.



Third case: Distributed renewable energy law

Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper and OTV channel covered the "Distributed Renewable Energy Law."

- Nidaa Al-Watan published a report on January 3, 2024, titled: "Awaiting the regulatory authority, implementing decrees, strengthening, and updating the grid, the distributed renewable energy law will remain ink on paper!"
- OTV addressed this law in its evening news bulletin on January 26 (approximately 170 seconds) from the angle of "Battery recycling and solar panel recycling: A new problem, are there any solutions?"

Case conclusions:

- Despite its significance, the law appears to be largely absent from media coverage, as it did not appear in the media monitoring schedules throughout January and February.
- The OTV report seemed optimistic, featuring a guest who spoke about "executive steps" to implement the law and promised "imminent solutions" to the pollution problem caused by solar energy devices, although the report's conclusion mentioned a ticking time bomb.
- Nidaa Al-Watan's report appeared pessimistic, highlighting the obstacles to implementing the law and suggesting that it would remain "ink on paper until further notice."
- Both the newspaper and the channel discussed the obstacles to the law's implementation but did not include any interviews with officials responsible for overcoming these obstacles.
- There were no field reports on the topic, nor any discussion of the law's impact on the private sector.



Fourth case: Environmental degradation in Lebanon

Nidaa Al-Watan newspaper published a report on January 10 about pollution and environmental degradation titled "Is our poverty exhausting our environment? Is poverty in Lebanon a contributing factor to environmental destruction?"

Nidaa Al-Watan addressed the issue of pollution in Lebanon, referencing a July 15 post by "World of Statistics" on their X platform page, which ranked Lebanon third among the most polluted countries in the world after Mongolia and Myanmar. The report also recalled a test conducted by the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission on particles from Beirut's air in 2017, which showed the presence of toxic and carcinogenic substances.

Case conclusions:

- The interviews included in the report highlighted the extent of environmental degradation in Lebanon, its multiple dimensions, and the various areas it affects.
- The newspaper shed light on numerous pollution issues and their causes.
- The report underscored the significant risks threatening Lebanon's environment.
- Given the severity of the issue and its repercussions, continuous follow-up and extensive coverage of various environmental issues in Lebanon should be guaranteed.
- The report partially falls within the educational and awareness-raising role of the media.
- The report lacked suggestions for mitigating environmental destruction and stopping the violations it addressed.
- It also omitted the perspectives of officials responsible for implementing measures to mitigate Lebanon's environmental problems.



Fourth: General conclusions

Photo: © Canva Pro

The topics of climate change and environmental issues covered by Lebanese media are varied, but the coverage is periodical and lacks a consistent focus on major issues. Instead, there is a tendency to cover daily events, and the reports addressing these topics are relatively few.

1. Weak interest in climate change and environmental issues

Daily monitoring over two months reveals that climate change and environmental issues are not a priority in the news coverage of Lebanese media institutions, with varying degrees of attention depending on the outlet. Given the importance of environmental topics and the many serious environmental problems facing Lebanon, the coverage is insufficient.

There are severe issues threatening citizens' daily lives that deserve continuous attention. The media should fulfill its educational and awareness-raising roles, as well as pressures authorities to enforce laws, suppress violations, protect the environment, and find solutions to these urgent issues.

2. Disparity in coverage among media institutions

The inconsistency in the number of coverage media pieces among media institutions is notable. Some barely address these topics, while others give them relative attention.

-In television channels, the level of interest and the amount of coverage on these topics vary: Tele Liban and Al-Manar only covered these topics once a month, OTV covered them 3 times a month,

Al Jadeed 4 times a month, LBCI 5 times a month, and MTV 8.5 times a month.

-In daily newspapers, An-Nahar covered these topics 2 times a month, L'Orient-Le Jour 3 times a month, Al-Akhbar 3.5 times a month, and Nidaa Al-Watan 7.5 times a month.

-On online platforms (alternative media), these topics were absent from Beyrouth Today, while Daraj published 2 reports, and Megaphone published 7 reports.

3. Coverage of "current issues"

News reports have emerged covering topics related to climate change and environmental issues, addressing events such as the environmental damage and destruction resulting from Israeli attacks, the waste problem especially concerning the Costa Brava landfill crisis, and soil erosion caused by floods. It's worth noting that there are serious environmental issues deserving continuous

attention beyond the immediate news cycle, such as Lebanon's longstanding waste problem, which only resurfaces in the news during protests by residents or when waste piles up in the streets. Other long-standing environmental issues include air pollution, the harms of quarries and stone quarries, bird hunting, pesticide damage, and others.

4. Lack of adequate coverage and highlighting of important issues

The majority of the monitored media outlets have not given special attention to climate change and environmental issues, as there has been a lack of focus on these topics. In fact, interviews, opinion articles, analysis, and investigations have been scarce, with coverage often limited to news reports.

5. Media initiatives

From a positive perspective, news reports have covered environmental topics beyond daily events. Some of these coverages include:

1. An LBCI report on the dangers of electronic cigarettes to youth.
2. An MTV report on the harmful effects of toxins and chemicals that negatively affect women, fetuses, and male fertility.
3. A report by Megaphone on the sale of citizens' daily waste such as plastic, iron, and cardboard, as a "new" model for waste management.

4. A report from L'Orient Le Jour on a study showing that plastic water bottles contain 10 to 100 times more plastic residues, with analysis finding 240,000 plastic particles. An expert explained the dangers of these findings.

5. A report by Daraj about Lebanon's Green Investment Fund, which "provides a strategic approach to attracting investments for sustainable projects or dealing with the effects and damages of climate change on the country."

6. Absence of investigative journalism

Investigative journalism is notably absent when it comes to climate change and environmental issues, despite its richness and significance, and its direct relevance to people's daily lives and the future of generations. Media outlets have also not resorted to access to information laws to uncover many scandals surrounding these issues.

7. Lack of public policies

The importance of these issues is underscored by the absence of a role played by official institutions primarily responsible for addressing climate change and environmental issues.

8. Weak presence of municipalities and civil society

Municipalities seem to be absent from these issues despite their direct correlation to these topics. Similarly, civil society and environmental advocacy groups appear to have a weak presence.

9. Absence of the accountability principle

Despite the important and sometimes critical issues raised by the coverage, the principle of accountability and responsibility is often absent. Moreover, there is a rare inclination towards holding responsible official authorities primarily accountable for addressing these issues.

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