

A Shifting Balance: Ideological Sources in Climate News

MPSA 2025

Sylvan Zheng (NYU) Hye Young You (Princeton)

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Motivation

☰ The New York Times

E.P.A. Severely Limits Pollution From Coal-Burning Power Plants

New regulations could spell the end for plants that burn coal, the fossil fuel that powered the country for more than a century.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

New EPA Emissions Rules Squeeze Coal Plants

The measures, which come as power demand surges, will force coal plants to adopt costly technology or close

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- ▶ **WSJ**: Frank Macchiarola, senior vice president of the American Petroleum Institute
- ▶ Both articles cover the same event, but the cited sources may generate different narratives of the event

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 - ▶ Newspaper employees themselves increasingly questioning this norm (Sullivan 2022, Bennet, 2023)

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 - ▶ But also modest within-journalist change

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 - ▶ Clear division of source types: fossil fuel companies vs environmental advocacy groups

Source Extraction

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- ▶ Manual validation of extraction and categorization using crowdworkers (90+% accuracy).

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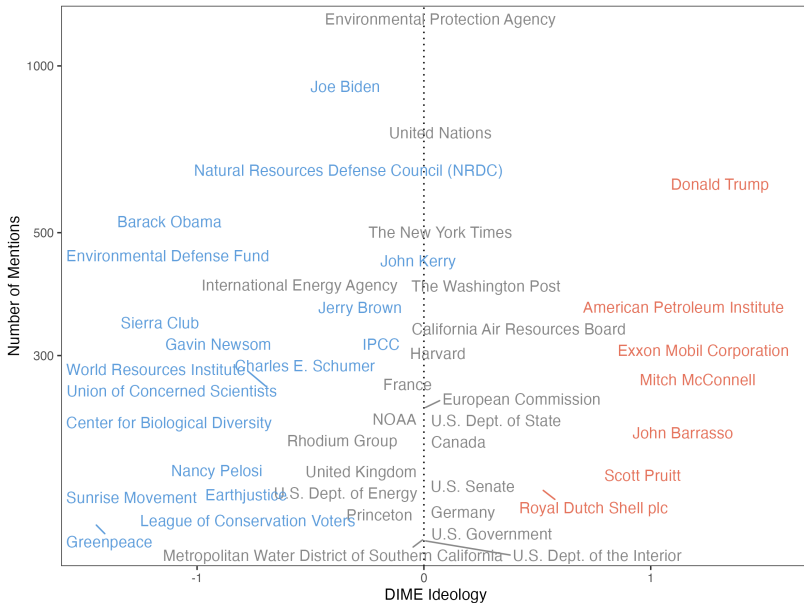
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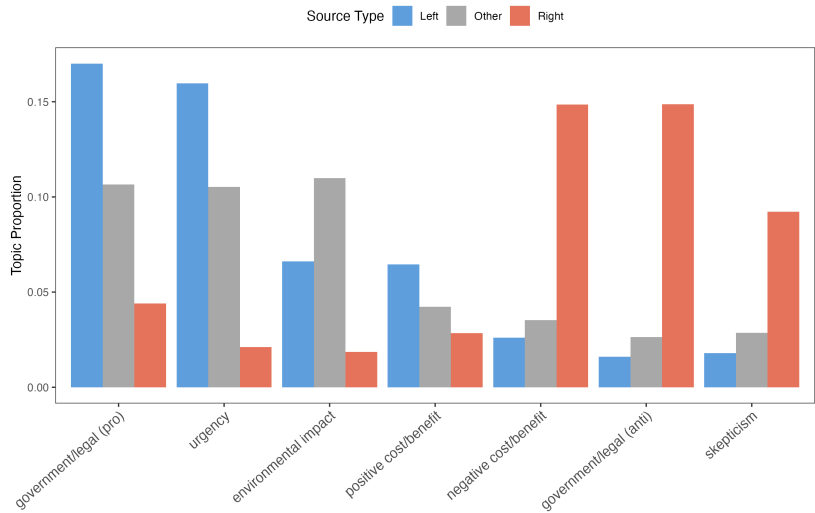
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- ▶ Academics, bureaucrats, and non-US entities excluded

Top 50 Sources

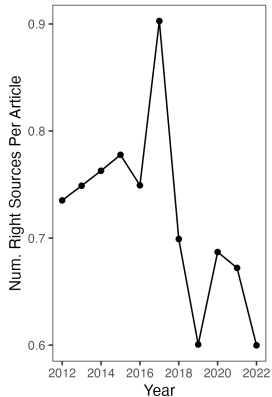
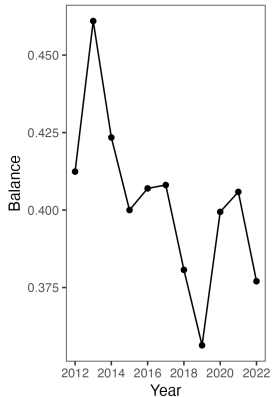
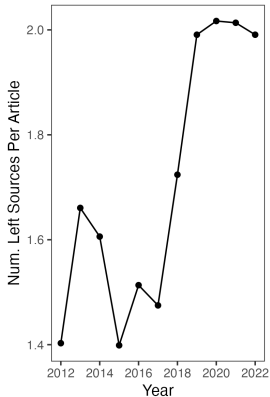


Content Analysis



Left and Right-Leaning Sources Over Time

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- ▶ **Journalist reaction (within):** Journalists at the individual level changed citation behaviors to produce fewer balanced articles

Testing Mechanisms: Journalist Replacement

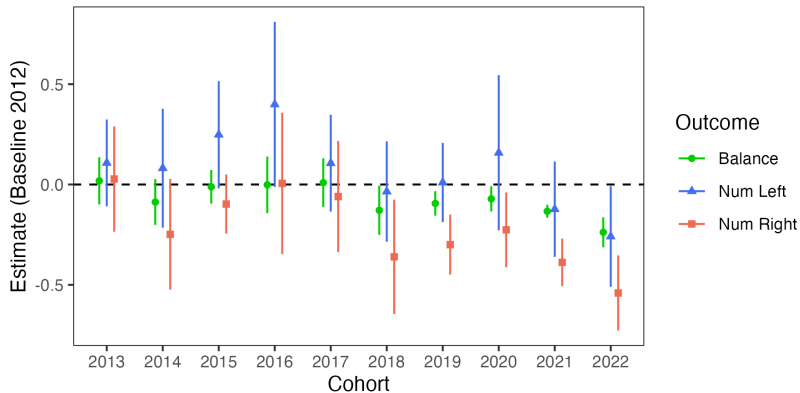
We assign each journalist to a cohort: the first year they are observed in our sample

- ▶ Estimate:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \gamma_k + \delta_t + \lambda_s + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

- ▶ The specification allows us to leverage variation in the citation patterns of journalists in different cohorts within the same year and newspaper
- ▶ Reference group: 2012 cohort

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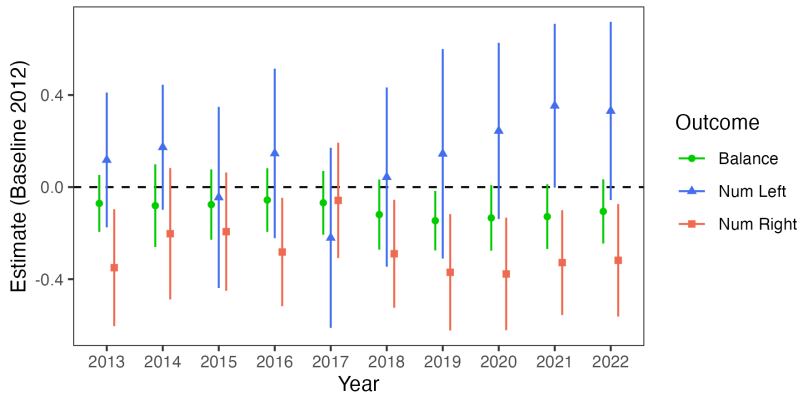
Testing Mechanisms: Journalist Reaction

We include journalist fixed effect to estimate the extent to which there was within-journalist change in citation patterns

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \delta_t + \rho_j + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

- ▶ Y_i is the article level dependent variable, δ_t is a year fixed effect, ρ_j is a journalist fixed effect,
- ▶ The specification allows us to compare the average within-journalist changes in balanced article production against the 2012 baseline

Testing Mechanisms: Journalist Reaction



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- ▶ Changes driven by both across-journalist (cohort effect) and within-journalist dynamics
- ▶ Thank you!