

Don't Mention Meat

Media coverage and public opinion of livestock production, food choices and climate change in the US and Great Britain.

Summary

A new analysis of climate change reporting has revealed a shockingly low proportion of articles in mainstream media mentioning meat or livestock, despite its outsized impact on the climate.

It comes as new polling in Britain and the US suggests people think the media is doing a bad job of explaining the impact of food choices on the climate and that people underestimate the climate impact of meat consumption.

Zero Carbon Analytics, which conducted the media analysis for Madre Brava, looked at top US, UK and English-language European outlets' articles on climate change from January 2020 to June this year.

It found that just 0.4% of these mentioned meat or livestock when discussing climate change, despite the significant proportion of global emissions linked to the livestock sector (around 20% of human-induced emissions by the latest peer-reviewed scientific account).

Meanwhile, new polling in the US and Britain by YouGov for Madre Brava has found that, in both countries, the link between food choices and climate change is poorly understood. It also revealed that the public thinks the mainstream media is doing a poor job of informing people about the link between food choices and climate change.

The underrepresentation of meat and livestock in traditional media coverage of climate change coincides with a trend in the US, Britain and the EU of excessive animal protein consumption, particularly among young men, fuelled by misinformation and trends on social media, which the polling also showed to be ineffective in informing people about the link between food choices and climate.

The under-reporting of animal agriculture's role in climate change helps fuel low levels of public awareness. This limits the potential for public pressure on the issue and potentially stops governments taking action to reduce emissions from animal agriculture.

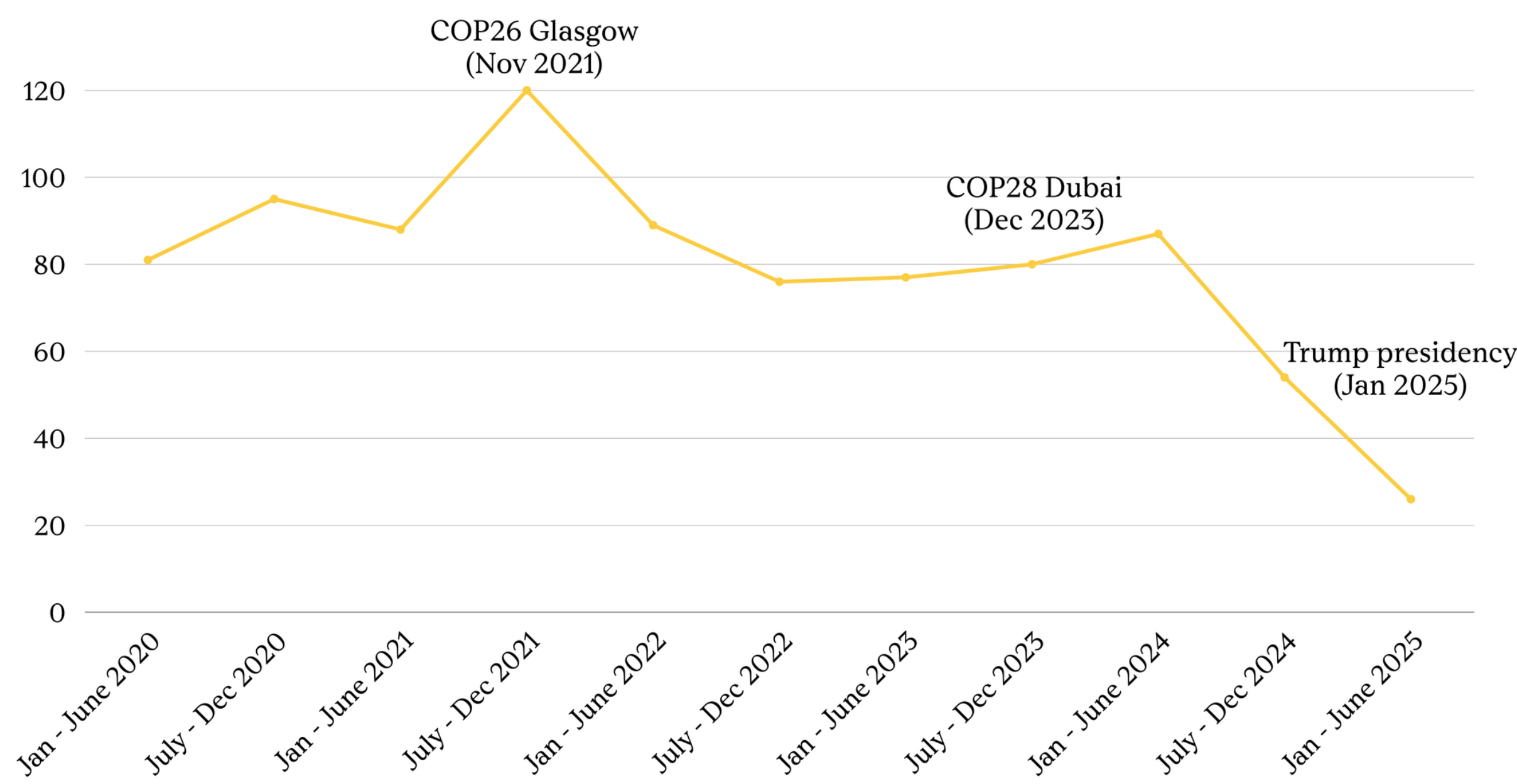
Main Findings

The media analysis covered the period from January 2020 to June 2025, looking at coverage in six-month increments.

It found:

- **Climate change as a media topic dropped since COP 28 in 2023:**
 - The number of articles in selected media focused on climate change has declined since December 2023, when COP 28 in Dubai raised hopes of progress in the fight against global warming.
 - From a high of **almost 30,000 articles** in the second half of 2021, when the UN’s COP conference was held in Glasgow in the UK, **the total number of climate articles fell more than half (to just over 13,000)** in the latest six-month period to June this year, which coincided with the start of US President Trump’s second term.
- **Mainstream media underreports on meat’s outsized impact on our climate:**
 - The proportion of articles about climate change which mentioned meat or livestock production **averaged just 0.44%** over the five year period.
 - Mention of meat and livestock alongside climate change has fallen off a cliff since January 2025. The last six months’ of data show **just 0.2% (26 articles out of 13,171)** of climate coverage mentioned meat or livestock.

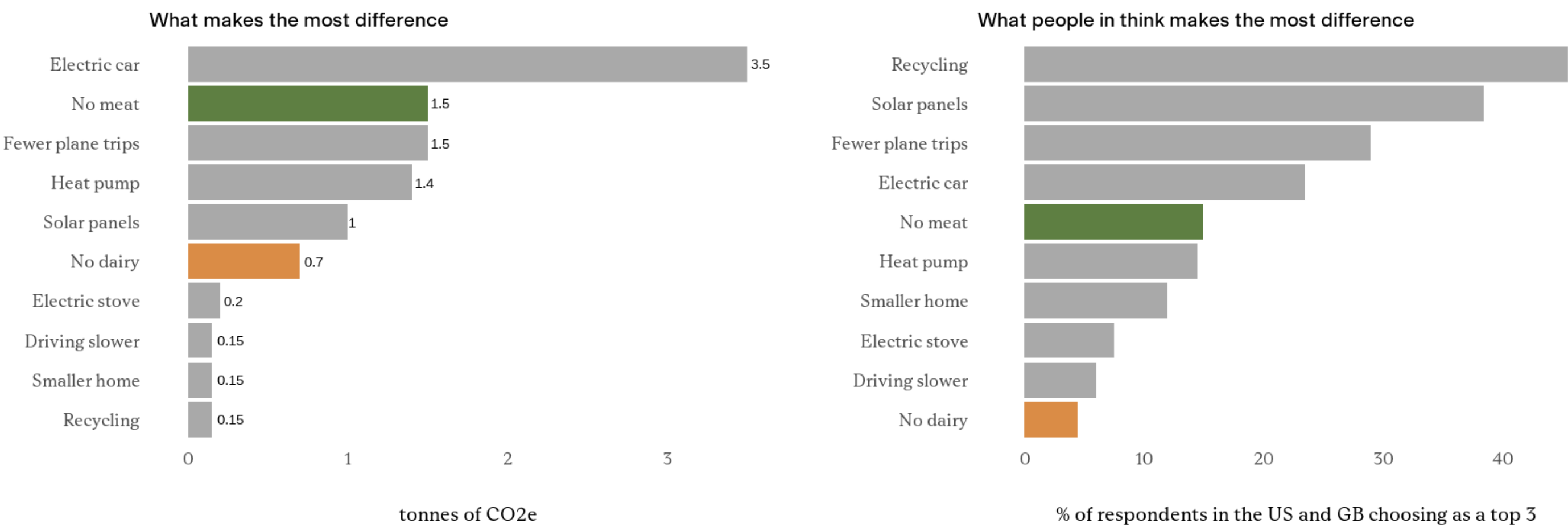
Mentions of Meat/Livestock in Climate Articles



Polling in the US and Britain showed a strong correlation between media underreporting of meat and livestock alongside climate and the public's poor understanding of the link between climate and food choices.

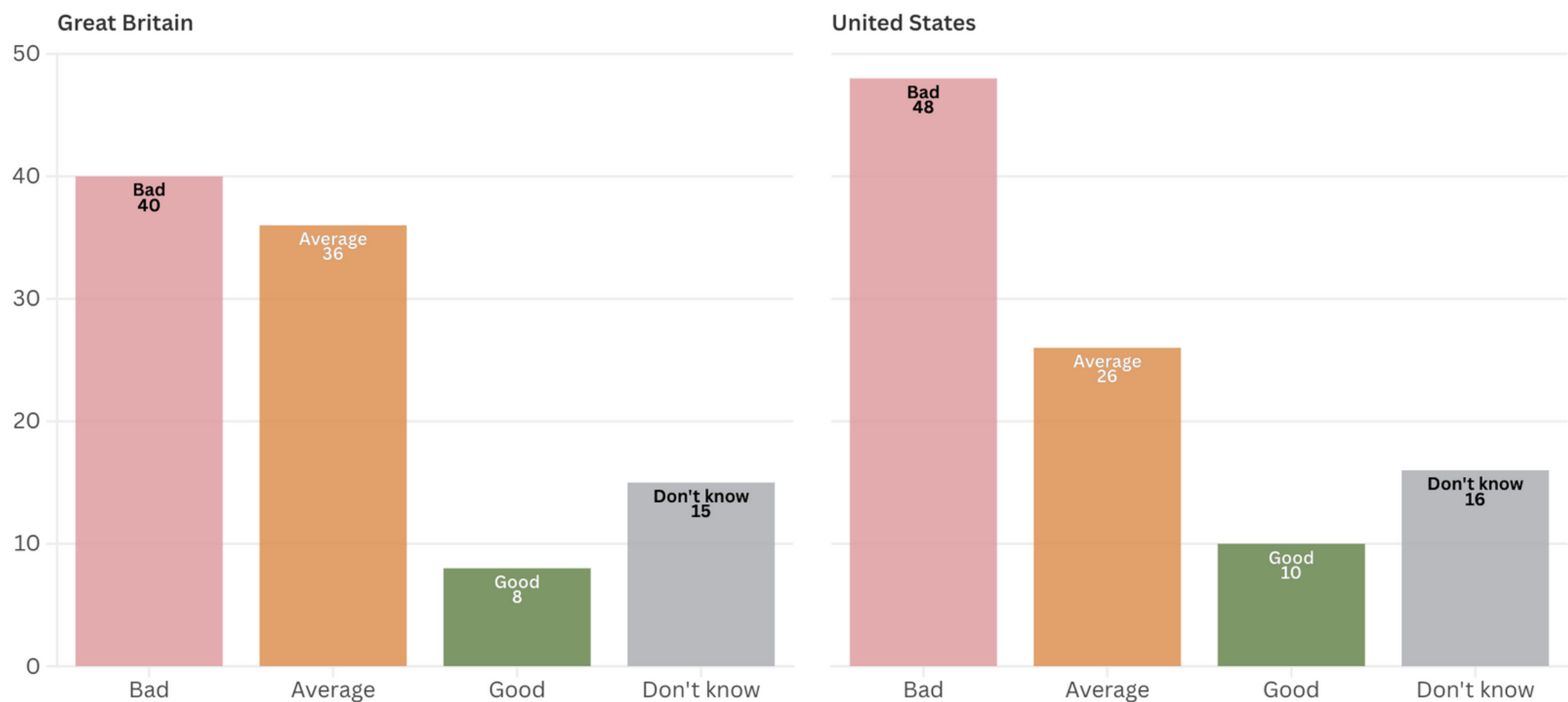
It found:

- **Cutting out meat does not feature in the top three** when it comes to people’s perception of the most effective ways to reduce their climate change impact (17% in GB, 13% in US). Respondents ranked it after driving an electric car (24% in GB, 23% in US) and recycling (46% in GB, 45% in US), among other things, in terms of impact.
- **Three quarters** of the population in both Britain (76%) and the US (74%) think the media is doing a **bad or average job** at informing people about the link between food choices and climate, with **a fifth (16%) and a quarter (26%)** of the public in Britain and the US respectively saying it is doing ‘**not well at all**’ in this regard.
- Only **one in ten** people credit the media with doing a good job in this respect (Britain 8%, US 10%).
- Despite this, in both countries **a greater proportion of the population believes the government should increase, rather than decrease,** its efforts to address emissions stemming from food production: 47% vs 18% in the US and 43% vs 17% in Britain.



Graph inspired by Ritchie H. *Not the end of the world* (page 114). The dietary change (no meat and no dairy) data was based on Poore & Nemecek, including emissions saved from dietary change and from the reduction in agricultural land use. Other actions are based on the ranges provided in Ivanova et al, and other sources to establish the average potential for a UK or US respondent.

How well does the mainstream media inform the public about the relationship between food choices and climate change?



The combination of low media attention and low public awareness is an issue for policy-makers and businesses taking measures to deliver a healthier, more sustainable food system, because part of the solution is a reduction of meat and dairy production and consumption in the US, UK and many other European countries, which becomes easier with public support and understanding.

Conclusion

Coverage of meat and livestock is hugely underreported as a climate issue, especially considering its contribution to global emissions of greenhouse gases. What is more, the trend is downwards, quite clearly in the wrong direction, particularly as emissions from meat production are likely to rise as a proportion of total emissions as energy and transport continue to decarbonise.

The current media landscape risks contributing to a detrimental cycle: insufficient coverage of the profound climate impact of meat production leads to a public that is not adequately informed and therefore potentially less supportive of reform. This lack of public support then reinforces the media's tendency to provide even less coverage, perpetuating a vicious cycle that hinders progress in addressing climate change.

Despite this, the public in both Britain and the US want their governments to do more, not less, to tackle emissions from food.

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With this in mind, we have recommendations for the following three groups.

Media outlets: Increase and improve reporting on the outsized impact of meat production on the climate. This will empower informed public, business and policy choices and accountability.

Climate non-governmental organisations and thought leaders: Make livestock emissions a central part of your communications strategy. Highlighting animal agriculture's significant contribution to climate change will shift narratives, raise awareness, and build the case for change.

To Philanthropic Organisations: Strategically invest in initiatives addressing meat overproduction and overconsumption. This area of climate action is underfunded.

Context

Media analysis

The Factiva database was used to search for English-language media in five US and British daily newspapers, as well as other European newswires.

The sources included were:

- *UK: The Guardian, BBC, The Sun, Daily Mail, The Times, The Telegraph*
- *US: Fox News, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times*
- *European: AP, AFP, Euractiv, Reuters*

The analysis compared two search term strings: one that captured only media articles focused on climate change, and a second that captured the subset of these articles that focused on climate change and meat (with key terms such as meat and livestock). This gives an indication of the proportion of climate articles that focus on meat/livestock.

Polling

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,210 adults (GB) and 2,419 adults (US). Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd - 4th September 2025. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB/US adults (aged 18+).