ARE JOURNALISTS REPORTING THE 'GLOBAL POLYCRISIS'?

A report for Internews' Earth Journalism Network

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DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

EARTH JOURNALISM NETWORK

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Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the unceded lands, skies and waterways on which Deakin students and teachers come together, and on which our research takes place. In virtually and physically constructed places, we pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country, as well as the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which this research will take place. We acknowledge that study, education and learning have taken place on these lands in diverse settings, by diverse peoples, for many thousands of years.

Acknowledgements

Suggested citation

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Are journalists reporting the 'global polycrisis', a report for Internews/EJN.

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1. Executive Summary

To report the news in the current global moment is to observe a world in crisis. Multiple, cascading risks mark our times, intersecting with each other in ways that amplify their seriousness, and underscore planetary precarity. Climate change, (un)natural disasters, environmental harms – including deforestation, pollution and biodiversity loss – a global pandemic, wars, inflation shocks, democratic dysfunction and the rise of authoritarianism are just some of the interlinking crises that have marked the start of the 21st century. If societies are to confront these crises meaningfully and holistically, it is imperative that people and policymakers understand the interconnectedness of these threats and respond in a way that is commensurate. Journalists, as observers and public-facing analysts, are well placed to interpret and make sense of such phenomena for media audiences locally and globally.

To date, however, there has been little research into how, and indeed whether, journalists and the media they report for, cover intersectional crises. It has also not been established whether, when journalists do report on seemingly singular threats or disasters, they intentionally do so in such a way that makes the links between concurrent crises clear, so that audiences might grasp the interconnections, better understand causes and therefore the commensurate action needed. Further complicating this issue, there is no one agreed term to describe the spectrum of current, intersecting threats – though the expression 'global polycrisis' is one idiom that has emerged in some media and research publications to signify the concept.

This study clearly establishes that the term 'global polycrisis' is not widely recognized, or used by journalists.

To respond to these gaps in knowledge, this study examines journalists' practices and perspectives on reporting the concept of 'global polycrisis'. The study traces the origins of the concept and the current use of the term, in both media and in research publications and reports. Importantly, this research also goes directly to journalists themselves, asking them about their understanding of polycrisis, and how and indeed whether they report on intersecting crises. The work presented here is truly global in scope: journalists from 102 countries responded to the study's multilingual survey, and the research team undertook in-depth interviews with 74 journalists in 31 countries. We present here findings from this first, detailed research into the attitudes of an international cohort of journalists about reporting on the world's intersecting crises.

The study finds that, although the term 'global polycrisis' began to be used more regularly in online reports and in some media coverage from 2022 and in 2023, it is still a nascent term which is used more by NGOs than by media professionals. This study clearly establishes that the term 'global polycrisis' is not widely recognized or used by journalists. While only a minority of journalists who responded to our research said they used the specific term 'global polycrisis' in their reporting, most indicated that they were familiar with the concept it represents.

Journalists were largely motivated to present issues to their audiences in a way that underscored intersectionality, however, they experienced multiple barriers to doing so. These included time, resource and word constraints that curb in-depth reporting; newsroom/editorial interest and perceived audience concern; and the media's economic imperative to provide 'click-bait' and 'soundbite' stories that sell. When covering intersecting crises and disasters, journalists were most likely to do so through the frame of climate change and environmental issues. While journalists felt they were mostly unable to convey the notion of 'polycrisis' in a single story, some said they could do so across a series of stories, over time. Importantly, some journalists railed against the term 'polycrisis' itself, considering it to be 'jargon' manufactured by NGOs, unintelligible to audiences, and unpalatable to editors. Significantly, the term 'global polycrisis' is overwhelmingly used in the English-speaking world: very few journalists working in languages other than English said they would translate the term into the languages they usually reported in.

Our study reveals an uneven global mediascape when it comes to covering the issues that constitute our contemporary confluence of crises. Broadly, journalists from wealthier countries and the English-speaking world reported in interviews being slightly more familiar with the term 'polycrisis', and the concept it represents, than those in low- and middle-income country locations – precisely the places where people are currently most vulnerable to intersecting existential risks. However, journalists in higher income countries also had some of the strongest reactions against using the term itself. Likewise, many journalists working in low- and middle-income countries were familiar with the 'polycrisis' concept (if not the term) and reported using it in their work. This seemed to be especially the case if a journalist had worked with or had been funded by international donors or NGOs.

Protest in Santiago, Chile, 2020

These results suggest that there are widespread opportunities for media support and donor organizations to fund journalistic work that highlights the interconnections between global and local interconnecting threats. However, as we detail below, seeking to encourage the adoption of the 'polycrisis' term may not be the most productive avenue for amplifying reportage on these issues. Engaging with journalists and their newsrooms to assist them in reporting the 'polycrisis' concept in whichever ways are most relevant for their specific audiences may be a more fruitful pathway for promoting public understanding and awareness.

This study uses the World Bank's classification of countries by income, based on GNI per capita data. This data is available at: https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html

Flooding in the Philippines

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A landscape of multiple crises

Journalists, academics and commentators have long been alerting us to the complicated set of threats we currently face. These threats are economic, environmental, geo-political, societal and technological. They include 'hot' war in several global locations, and frozen – but still lethal – conflicts in others; environmental degradation and extreme weather disasters; societal and political polarization; economic shocks and a cost-of-living crisis, and diverse threats from artificial intelligence, including rampant mis- and dis-information (World Economic Forum, 2024). Overarching all of these is climate change, acting as a "threat multiplier" (UN News, 2019) and posing "systemic, existential risk" (Ripple, 2023). Economist Nouriel Roubini has written of this landscape as one of "megathreats" (Roubini, 2022): such threats are both broad in scope and ongoing. In 2022, as the world lurched from the COVID-19 crisis to war in Ukraine, Collins Dictionary named "permacrisis" the word of that year (Turnbull 2022).

In 2023, we were told, the Doomsday Clock ticked closer than ever before to a metaphorical 'midnight' (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2023). That is, the set of potentially catastrophic crises that humans and the planet face have become more immediate and pose more serious risk than ever. The United Nations has warned of "total global catastrophe" from "multi-level" crisis unless humanity enacts urgent, transformational change (UN, 2023). However, such change looks unlikely in the current moment. In its Global Risks Report of 2024, the World Economic Forum warned of a "deteriorating global outlook" in the next 2-10 years. In this context, stability is fragile and "weakened economies and societies may only require the smallest shock to edge past the tipping point of resilience" (World Economic Forum, 2024). Some observers have called this a "planetary emergency" (Rockström, 2020, p. 370) and the start of "civilizational collapse" (Cottle, 2023). Some analysts have gone further, warning that the "collapse of civilization is a near certainty within decades" (Erlich, cited in Carrington 2018). It is clear, then, that humanity and our shared planet are living in a time of profound precarity.
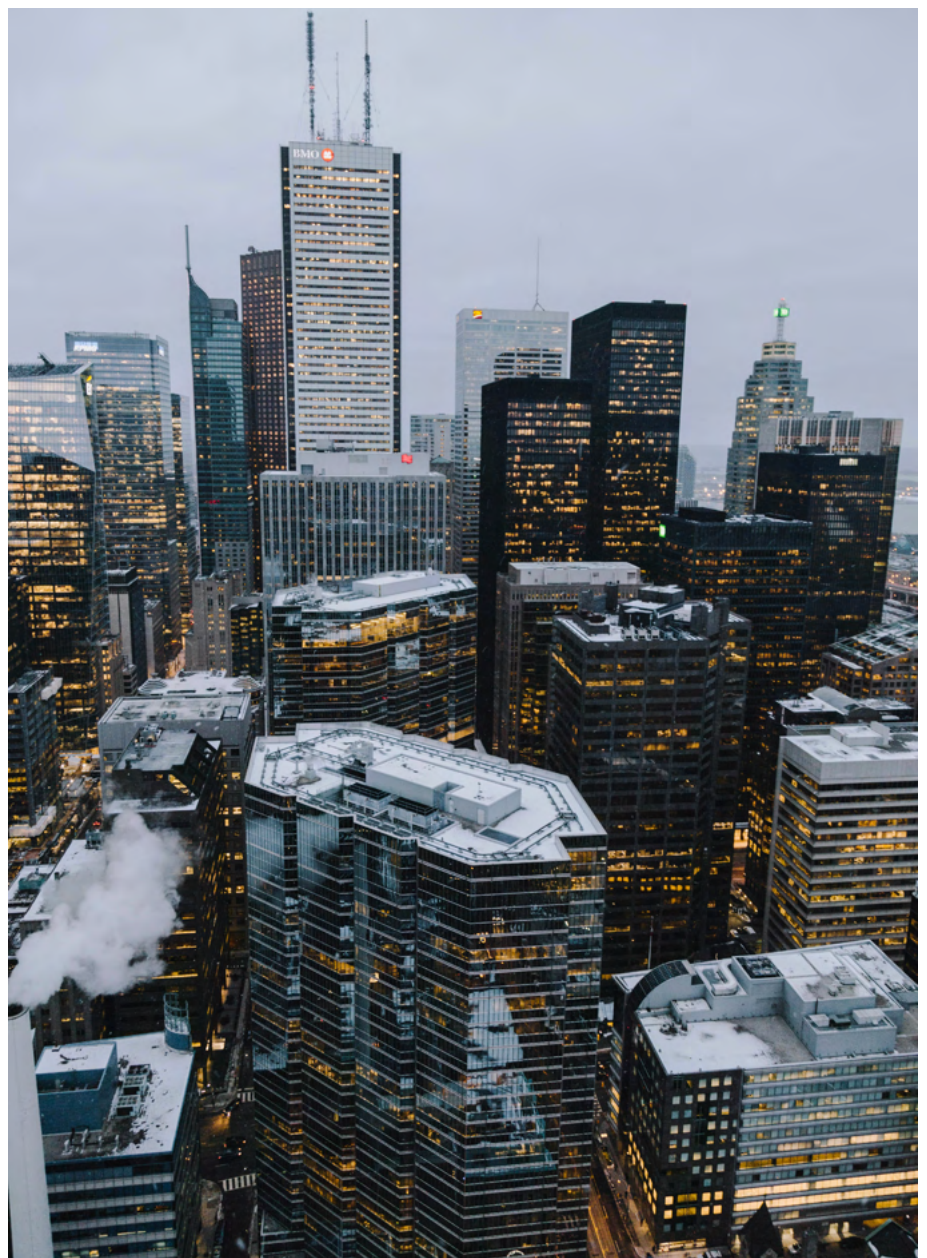
2.2 Defining 'global polycrisis'

The term "polycrisis" has been deployed in some spheres in recent years as a shorthand for our current, multiple, critical threats. In 2022, economic historian Adam Tooze wrote a "welcome to the world of polycrisis" in an article for the *Financial Times* (Tooze, 2022). Tooze described this phenomenon as being when "shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts". In the same publication, journalist Jonathan Derbyshire dubbed 2023 "the year of polycrisis", including the definition: "Noun: collective term for interlocking and simultaneous crises of an environmental, geopolitical and economic nature" (Derbyshire, 2023). Writing in *The Australian*, that newspaper's editor-at-large also invoked polycrisis as the *leitmotiv*, or recurring theme, of 2023, describing an "age of polycrisis" in which "multiple shocks" threatened "democratic societies and the world order" (Kelly, 2023). The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2023 also used the term, defining 'polycrisis' as "present and future risks" that can "interact with each other to form...a cluster of related global risks with compounding effects, such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part" (Torkington, 2023).

Despite these uses of the term in recent reports and media outputs, polycrisis does not seem to have become widely used, and is considered by some a neologism, still a "new" expression. For example, in late 2023, *Bloomberg Online* still referred to the idea as a novel concept, writing of "this new word polycrisis" in the context of the COP28 climate negotiations (Driscoll, Rathi & Boyd, 2023). These contemporary commentators and journalists are far from the first to use the term, however. Former European Commission president (2014-2019) Jean-Claude Juncker deployed the idea of polycrisis

frequently, deriving it from the writings of French theorists Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern. These academics first used the term in the 1990s to refer to the "interwoven and overlapping crises" (Morin & Kern, 1999) facing humanity, especially in terms of environmental harms.

A dedicated research centre, The Cascade Institute at Royal Roads University in Canada, has studied the polycrisis concept for several years. In a 2022 discussion paper published by the institute, Lawrence et al. defined global polycrisis as occurring when "crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects" (Lawrence et al., 2022). These interacting crises produce greater harms at a faster rate than each crisis would produce alone, demonstrating a deep interconnectedness of global systems (Davies & Hobson, 2023). Global systems, such as finance,

security, and energy, are susceptible to systemic risk. While systemic risk is an unexpected issue that occurs in a system that quickly disrupts that entire system, systemic risk is not understood to be able to spill over into other systems. The concept of polycrisis, in contrast, embeds the idea of systems' interconnectedness, so that one system in crisis can indeed adversely affect other systems it interacts with (Lawrence et al., 2022).

Complicating the use of polycrisis and analogous concepts is the fact that to date, there is no single, universally agreed on definition of the term and the exact set of overlapping challenges to which it refers. Further confounding the use of this term, recent articulations of polycrisis seem not to focus on differential exposure to the impacts of polycrisis on different global locations, demographics and socio-economic groupings. That is, the intersectionality of geography, race, gender, age, and relative economic wealth are not well

addressed in current public discussion of polycrisis. Although the term, by definition, has a 'global' orientation, it is crucial to consider the local manifestation of global problems. Much research (for example, Degeling & Koolen, 2022; Scannell and Gifford, 2013) has shown this to be the case in communicating the global crisis of climate change. Locally relevant framing of a global problem is more meaningful to audiences, enhancing public understanding.

Crisis orientation as an epistemology has also frequently been criticized in academia. Scholars have argued that characterizing 'crisis' as a new phenomenon in need of urgent solutions denies the centuries over which Indigenous and first peoples have been subjected to crisis by colonizers (Whyte, 2021). Likewise, it has been argued that current crises have arisen because of dualist framings of "nature" and "society", and that capitalism and colonization themselves have precipitated our contemporary state of global precarity (Lilley & Moore, 2011).

As research has established, those least responsible for global environmental harms are now most likely to be experiencing its impacts (Begum & Craig, 2022). The polycrisis concept, despite its orientation toward systems' interconnectedness, does not necessarily incorporate understandings of social and environmental justice, or as noted, differential exposure to harm

The concept of polycrisis, in contrast, embeds the idea of systems' interconnectedness, so that one system in crisis can indeed adversely affect other systems it interacts with.

and crisis. In addition to this, some studies of climate communication in particular have established that a 'crisis' framing does not promote public understanding or action. Crisis framing has been shown to produce lower levels of concern in some contexts, (Jaskulsky & Besel, 2013) while dire or pessimistic framing can cause a boomerang effect: an opposite outcome to the intended message (Hart & Nisbet 2012). By contrast,

solutions framing, or constructive journalism in general, has been shown to engender more favorable audience attitudes toward the possibility of solving social problems (McIntyre 2019). Given these research findings in relation to 'crisis', as opposed to alternative framings, it is important to consider whether the specific term 'polycrisis' is well suited to conveying the interconnected problems we face.

'Global polycrisis' has also been criticized in the media. It was described by *Time Magazine* as a "buzzword" (Sherhan, 2023) at the January 2023 Davos Forum. Chief foreign affairs commentator for the *Financial Times*, Gideon Rachman, has described 'polycrisis' as a "cliché" (Rachman, 2023). Other commentators have questioned whether our global moment is more characterized by crises than other periods. Historian Niall Ferguson, for example, has dismissed the term as a useless concept, saying: "it's just history happening" (Sherhan, 2023). In the face of such criticism, however, there appears to be little broadly available guidance on how journalists might report the intersecting problems of our times, and do it well.

A plastic garbage dump near Sahiwal Jhal Road, Pakistan

On reporting of multiple crises more broadly, many resources are available, including UNESCO's resources for media in crisis preparedness and response (UNESCO, 2023). Currently, however, seemingly the only publicly available resource for practicing journalists on reporting 'global polycrisis' specifically, is an April 2023 webinar produced by the Earth Journalism Network (EJN, 2023) – one of the supporters of this report. Besides this, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists incorporates the Pamela Howard Forum on Global Crisis Reporting, a forum designed to equip journalists with the expertise needed to cover critical global issues. This forum provides webinars and training – however, none of these resources explicitly mentions 'global polycrisis', or provides advice as to how journalists might report the world's crises in a way that meaningfully presents their interconnectedness to audiences. This relative paucity of freely available resources for journalists suggests they are not well equipped with the knowledge necessary to investigate and publish on the polycrisis concept in their local contexts.

However, as global risks multiply and intensify, some analysts have called emphatically for media and journalists to do more in the face of this challenge. Prominent media academic, Simon Cottle, criticizes media for coverage of global crises that has been overly event orientated, and therefore "diluted" and "disaggregated". He challenges journalists and those who research journalism to use their public platform decisively in this context. He has called for:

> **...journalism and journalism scholars to step up to the table of unfolding civilizational collapse, recognizing the urgency and repercussions for world society and the biosphere, whilst also playing their part in enacting pathways of transition and transformation. It is imperative that the world of journalism and its academic interpretative community recognize the increasingly entangled and compounding nature of global crises today and address these holistically as endemic to contemporary world society. (Cottle, 2023: 270)**

In this context of urgency, and toward the challenge Cottle prescribes, this study seeks to unpack just how practicing journalists understand and interact with the polycrisis concept. This study asks and works toward answering how – and indeed whether – journalists understand and are reporting on global polycrisis. It does so with the aim of helping journalists, and the organizations that support them, better convey to media audiences our current multiple, intersecting global threats, so that people, communities and policymakers might confront them in more effective ways.

3.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate journalists' engagement with the term and the concept of polycrisis, around the world, it was important to include a truly global cohort of reporters. This study was therefore concerned with including journalists in diverse country settings, and to research beyond the English-speaking world and high-income countries, which has largely been the focus of most journalism inquiry to date. The focus on polycrisis was embedded in a wider study of journalists who report on climate change and environmental issues – therefore, all journalists who participated in the study cover issues related to the environment to some degree. The broader study focus was not on journalists who were climate or environment subject specialists, however, meaning that participants reported on the broad range of subjects necessary to incorporate coverage of polycrisis. This study sought to answer the key research question:

Are journalists reporting on the global polycrisis, and if so, how?

A student goes to school wearing a mask to protect him from the smoke that blankets the city of Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.

3.1 Ethical considerations

The research team applied to the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC) which adheres to Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The project was granted approval under the DUHREC number: 2023-260. The research sought to obtain informed consent from each participant, providing each with a Plain Language Statement about the research and a consent form, translated into the study's multiple languages (detailed below). Mindful of the dangers journalists face in some countries, the project survey was designed for anonymous participation. Interview material has also been used anonymously, to protect participants' identities and gender neutral pronouns have been used to further protect anonymity. Only country identifiers for interviewees are used in this report. No adverse outcomes were reported during the conduct of this research.

3.2 Research survey

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, including a quantitative survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey was made available in 11 languages (Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, French, English, Hindi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Ukrainian) with the aim of giving accessibility to the widest possible global cohort of journalists. In translating the survey into all these languages, we considered carefully how to situate the 'polycrisis' term, given that is primarily used in English. Before introducing the questions around 'polycrisis' in the survey, a short description of the concept was included for each language version. In consultation with the translators of the survey, the specific term 'global polycrisis' was rendered in English in some languages, while it was fully translated in others.

The survey was hosted on the online platform, Qualtrics. Potential survey participants were contacted through the researchers' existing networks, and through Internews' and EJN's journalist networks. Journalists were asked to share the survey link with their peers, and calls to complete the survey were also shared on social media.
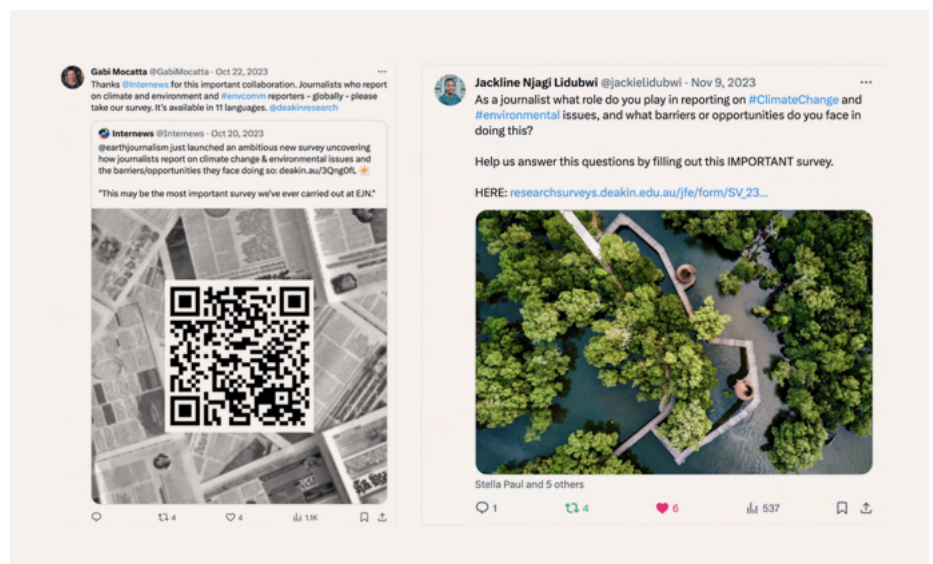
Figure 1: Examples of social media posts sharing the survey link.

The survey ran from October 2023–January 2024. A total of 888 journalists from 102 countries engaged with the survey over this period, however, 144 journalists were excluded by the screening question which asked whether they ever reported on climate change or environment, given the 'polycrisis' enquiry was embedded in a wider survey that sought insights from journalists covering climate/environment. Those 144 journalists who answered in the negative were excluded, leaving a cohort of 744 respondents. Not all journalists answered every question, meaning that the number of respondents to questions varied. The survey was conducted fully anonymously, and no identifying information was requested of participants, beyond their age, gender and country of residence.

3.3 Interviews

Interviews were used to triangulate the quantitative survey data component with more nuanced qualitative data. To recruit journalist participants for the interviews, we undertook a broad desktop search to locate relevant journalists and editors across diverse global locations. The researchers also worked with the funding organization, Internews, to compile a broad global cohort of potential interviewees. The researchers' own journalist networks were also used. Out of some 200 journalists, editors and media workers invited to interview, 74 journalists consented and participated in semi-structured interviews of approximately 40-60 minutes. All interviews were conducted online, the majority in English. All journalists were offered the opportunity to have an interpreter in their interview and interpreters were included where journalists requested it, joining the interview and interpreting simultaneously. Some interviews were conducted in Spanish, Portuguese and Swedish with transcripts produced and translated into English. Interviews were conducted by a research team of five interviewers who worked closely together to ensure interviews were consistent. All interviews were transcribed and transcripts were stored securely to preserve journalists' anonymity.

3.4 Data analysis

Descriptive reports of the survey data were generated using Qualtrics. For more in-depth analyses, statistical tests, more advanced tabulation and visualization that require data manipulation, R Statistical Software (v4.3.1; R Core Team 2023) was used. The survey serves primarily to identify common categorical/discrete patterns across cohorts of journalists. As such, descriptive methods, such as heatmaps and distribution comparisons, were the main approach to analysis. A thematic analysis of qualitative interview data relating to global polycrisis was also conducted. Reponses to the questions specific to global polycrisis across the 75 interviews were summarized. For each interview, we logged the journalist's self-described understanding as well as their self-described likelihood to use the term. Both the statistical survey analysis and the thematic analysis of the interview data sought to systematically identify, organize, and offer insights into patterns of meaning across the data set. We present below a synthesis of findings across the two data sources.
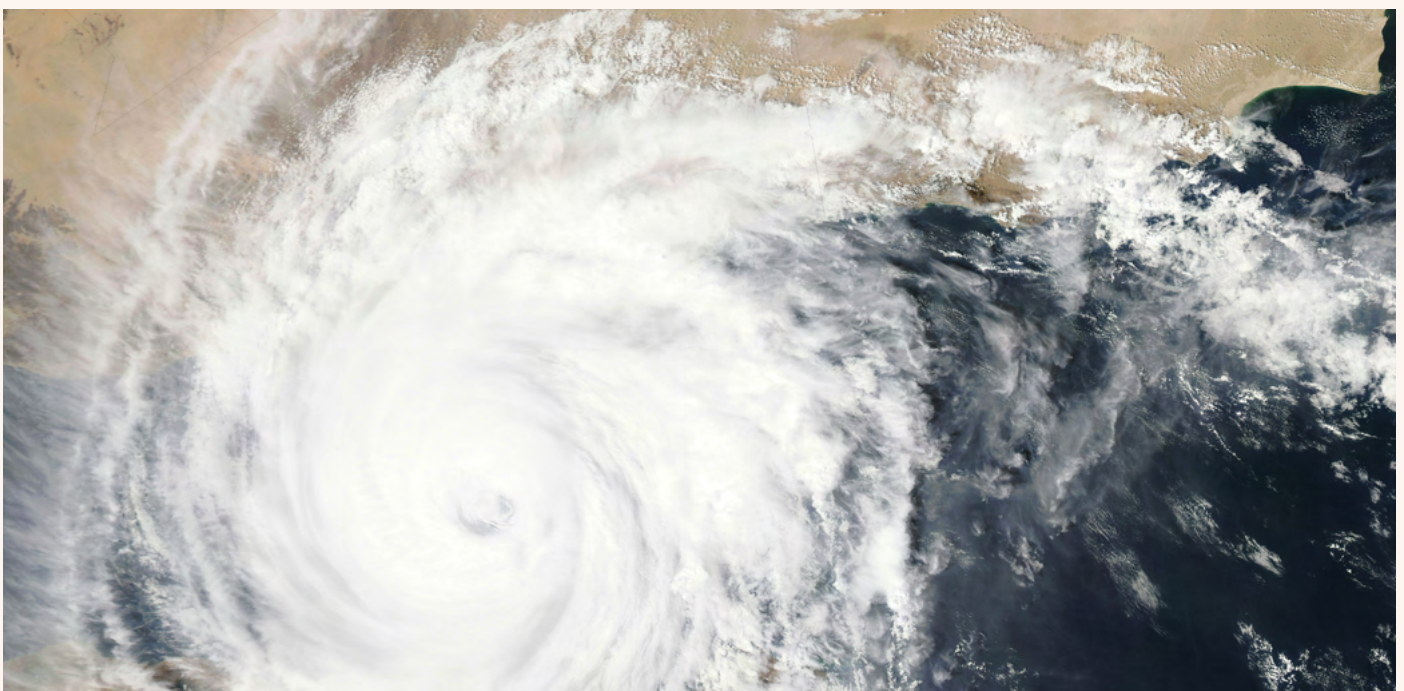
4.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Survey results

The most significant finding across both interview and survey components of the research was that the term 'global polycrisis' was not widely recognized, or used by journalists, across our international cohort of participants. In the survey, we asked journalists to tell us how often they had used the term in the preceding year. This recent timeframe was chosen to correspond with the very recent use of the term observed in media coverage and organizational reports. Forty-seven percent of journalists reported never having used the term, while another 21% said that they rarely used it.

Q28 - In the last 12 months, how often have you used the term 'global polycrisis' (or a similar concept referring to multiple, inter-connected global crises) in your editing/reporting?

741 responses

Never	47%
Rarely: once or twice in a year	20%
Sometimes: every few months	16%
Regularly: at least once a month	11%
Frequently: once a week	6%
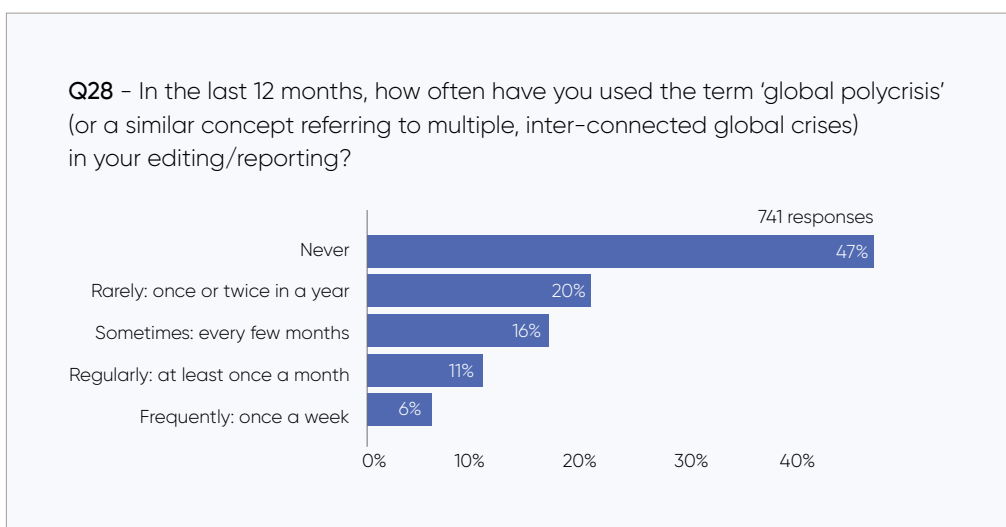
Figure 2: Journalists' self-reported use of the term or concept of 'global polycrisis'.

A participant at a workshop on natural resources in Thailand interviewing a local resident next to the Mekong.

Given that the survey included journalists in such a broad spectrum of national contexts and media landscapes, our analysis of survey data also sought to discern any patterns in journalists' recognition, or use of 'global polycrisis', by country. In this analysis we included each country in which five or more journalists responded – 33 countries. Countries from which there were four or fewer responses were grouped as 'Other countries' and the label 'Unspecified' was used where survey respondents did not supply country information. Again, there is no clearly observable trend, by country, in terms of self-reported usage of the term, or concept, other than that journalists in most countries never or rarely make use of either in their work.

n = 740 Respondents across 35 country categories

Country	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Frequently
Algeria	20%	60%		20%	
Argentina	20%	40%	40%		
Australia	58%	25%	8%	8%	
Bangladesh	20%	30%	50%		
Brazil	65%	9%	13%	9%	4%
Colombia	64%	9%	27%		
Ecuador	38%	15%	38%	8%	
Germany	86%	14%			
Ghana	56%	11%	11%	11%	11%
India	46%	18%	21%	11%	3%
Indonesia	47%	31%	16%	6%	
Iraq	8%	25%	33%	25%	8%
Kenya	36%	21%	23%	9%	11%
Malawi	80%	20%			
Mexico	58%	21%	11%		11%
Nepal	27%	45%		27%	
Nigeria	43%	19%	14%	14%	10%
Pakistan	40%	40%	13%	7%	
Papua New Guinea	83%	17%			
Peru	50%	38%	12%		
Philippines	64%	36%			
Rwanda	17%		67%	17%	
South Africa	57%	29%	14%		
Sri Lanka	30%	20%	40%	10%	
Sudan	29%		43%		29%
Tanzania	40%	26%	16%	12%	6%
Tunisia	20%	40%	20%		20%
Uganda	35%	10%	25%	15%	15%
United Kingdom	75%				25%
United States of America	77%	7%	9%	5%	2%
Vietnam	33%	17%		50%	
Zambia	10%	10%	20%	20%	40%
Zimbabwe	62%		12%		25%
Other Countries	50%	22%	11%	13%	4%
Unspecified	47%	7%	17%	23%	7%

Figure 3: Self-reported use of the term or concept of polycrisis, by country.

The research survey additionally sought to understand our respondents' observation of other journalists in their national contexts using the polycrisis term, or analogous concepts. Here, the data shows that journalists perceive other journalists to be using the term or concept slightly more than they are themselves (eg: a self-reported 47% said they never use the term, however, 40% of 'other journalists' are perceived as never using the term)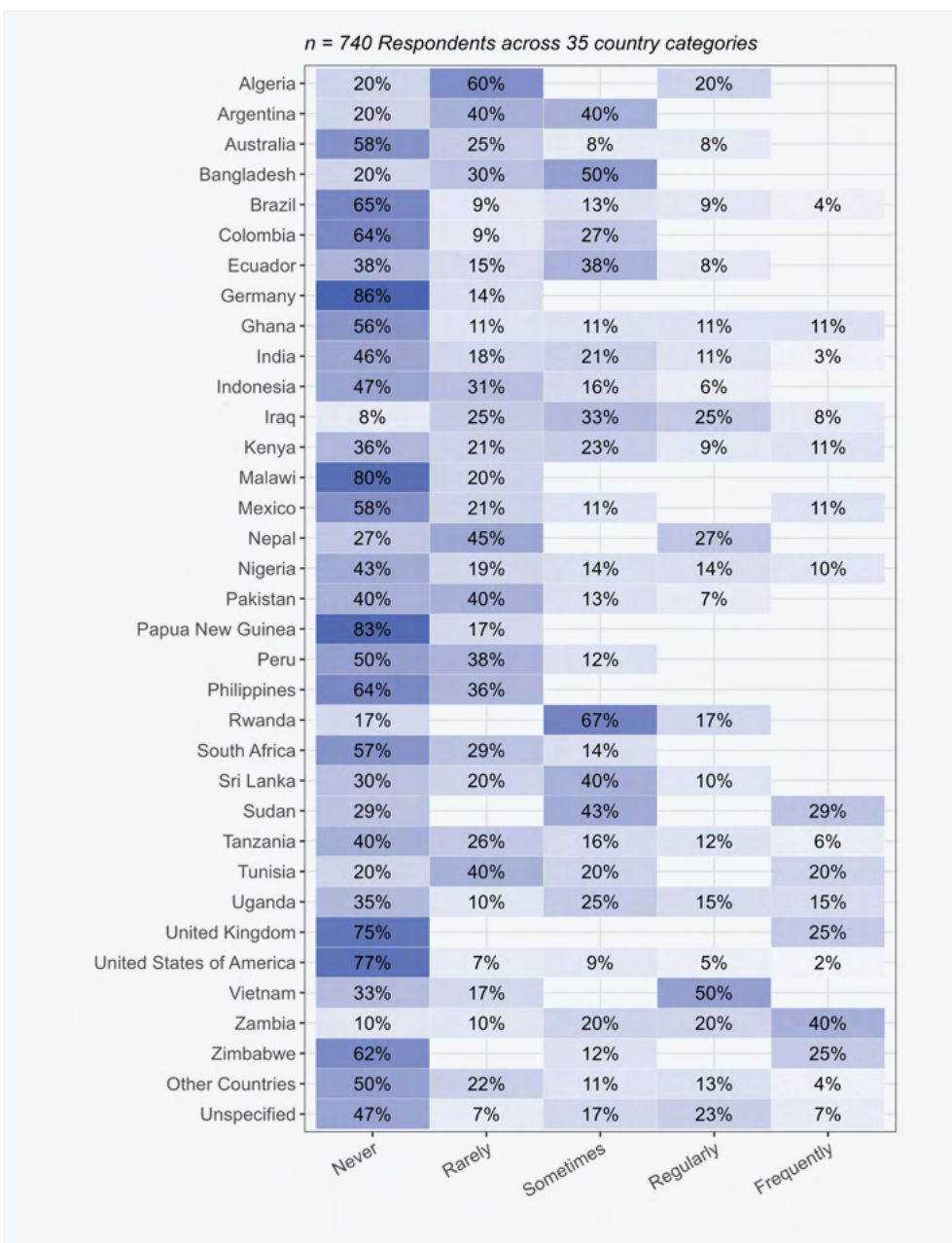. The perceived percentage of other journalists using the term regularly or frequently (12%) is slightly lower than for journalists' own reported usage (16%). This small discrepancy is likely not statistically significant. Overall, 68% of respondents reported 'never' or 'rarely' using the polycrisis term or concept themselves, as above, and an almost equal 69% reported 'rarely' or 'never' seeing other journalists use it. The conclusion here is that journalists in the study's global cohort are unfamiliar with the term and concept – and they perceive this to be the same for their national peers.

Q29 – In the last 12 months, have you seen other journalists/editors in your country using this term and/or this concept?

734 responses

Response	Percentage
Never	40%
Rarely: once or twice in a year	29%
Sometimes: every few months	19%
Regularly: at least once a month	7%
Frequently: once a week	5%
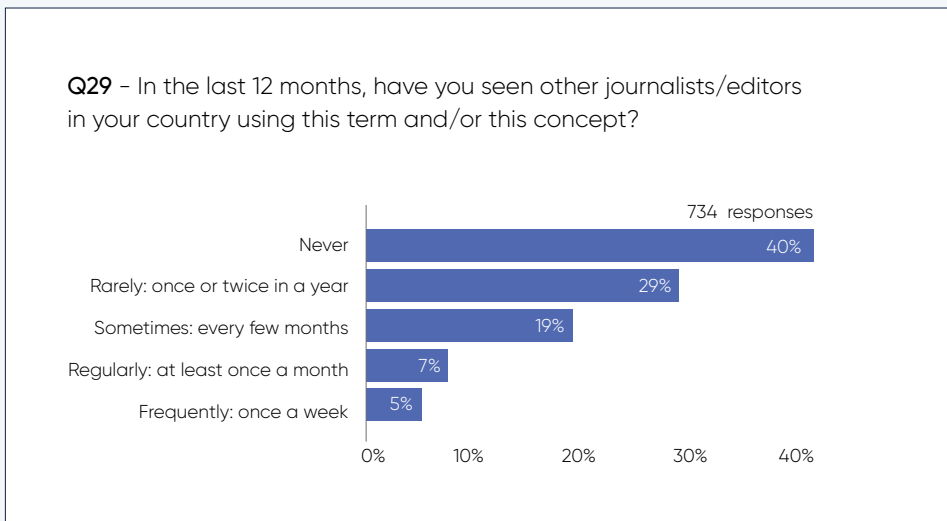
Figure 4: Journalists' responses when questioned on their observance of their peers' use of the polycrisis term/concept.

COP27 Fellow Dan Kaburu from Kenya filming in the media center in Sharm el Sheikh.

Respondents were additionally asked whether there was interest or support in their newsrooms for reporting on polycrisis. To this question, 68% of journalists responded that there was at least some support and interest for reporting on polycrisis in the newsrooms in which they predominantly worked. This contrasts with journalists' reported/observed use of the term and/or concept which confirmed limited use of the term. It seems there is therefore a perception among journalists of significantly more interest and support in newsrooms than there is actual reporting on interlinking polycrisis issues.

Q30 – Is there interest in/principal support within your newsroom for reporting on the global polycrisis? If you are a freelancer, please answer this question thinking of the main media outlet(s) you work for.

726 responses

Response	Percentage
Not at all	12%
Little interest or support	20%
Some interest or support	32%
Much interest or support	24%
Extremely high level of interest or support	12%

Figure 5: Journalists' perceived newsroom support for reporting the polycrisis.

EJN grantee and HaitiClimat founder Patrick St Pre at Le Nouvelliste office.

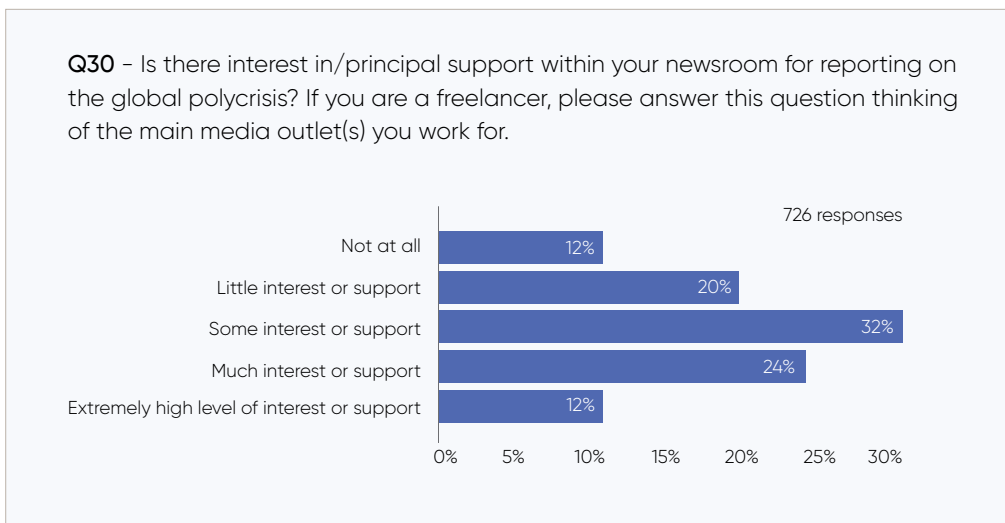Study data was also analyzed for newsroom support for reporting the polycrisis concept, by country. Here, there was again no clear observable pattern, with no particularly emphatic support in countries with higher income versus low- to middle-income countries, or vice versa.

n = 725 Respondents across 35 country categories

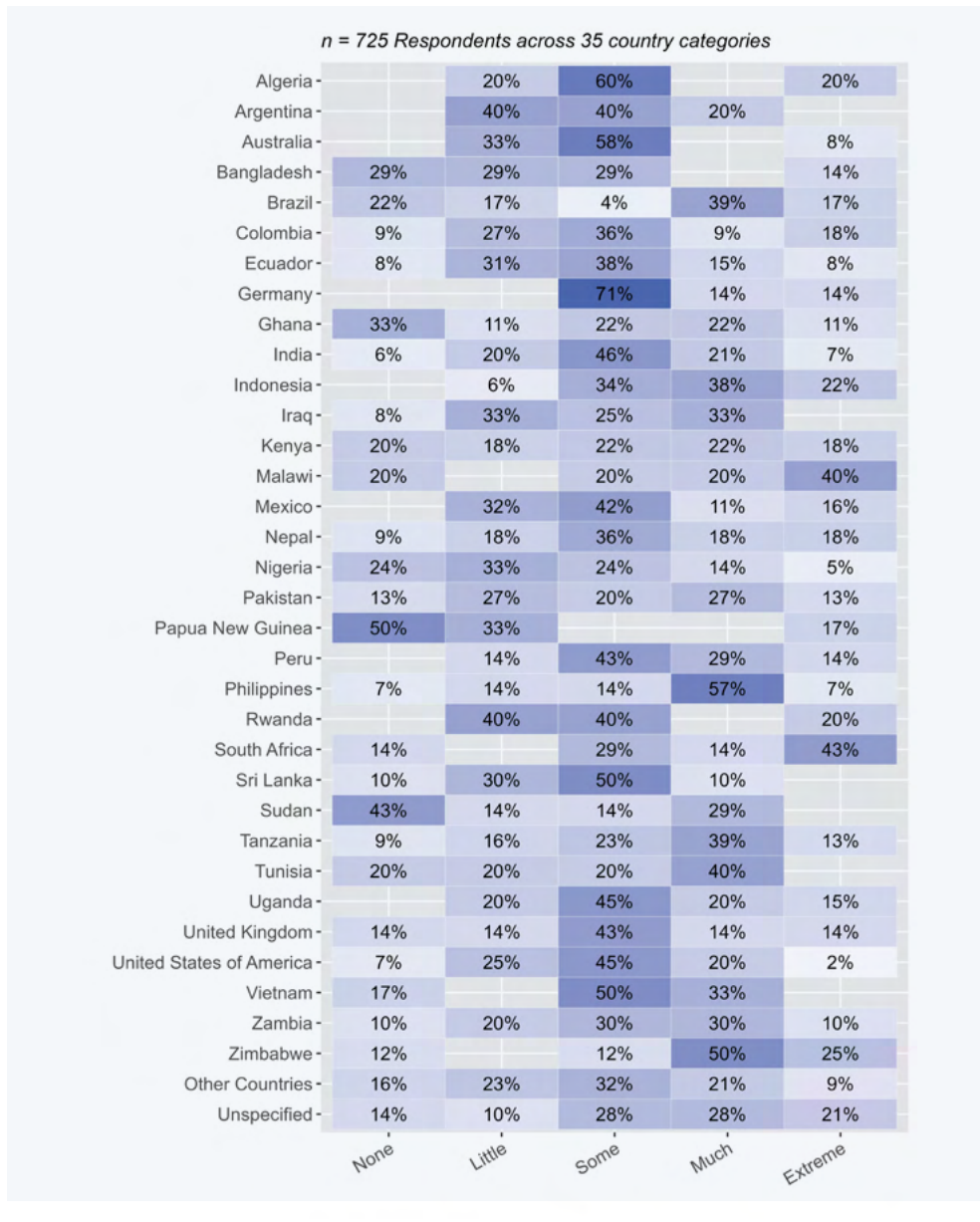| Country	None	Little	Some	Much	Extreme
Algeria		20%	60%		20%
Argentina		40%	40%	20%	
Australia		33%	58%		8%
Bangladesh	29%	29%	29%		14%
Brazil	22%	17%	4%	39%	17%
Colombia	9%	27%	36%	9%	18%
Ecuador	8%	31%	38%	15%	8%
Germany			71%	14%	14%
Ghana	33%	11%	22%	22%	11%
India	6%	20%	46%	21%	7%
Indonesia		6%	34%	38%	22%
Iraq	8%	33%	25%	33%	
Kenya	20%	18%	22%	22%	18%
Malawi	20%		20%	20%	40%
Mexico		32%	42%	11%	16%
Nepal	9%	18%	36%	18%	18%
Nigeria	24%	33%	24%	14%	5%
Pakistan	13%	27%	20%	27%	13%
Papua New Guinea	50%	33%			17%
Peru		14%	43%	29%	14%
Philippines	7%	14%	14%	57%	7%
Rwanda		40%	40%		20%
South Africa	14%		29%	14%	43%
Sri Lanka	10%	30%	50%	10%	
Sudan	43%	14%	14%	29%	
Tanzania	9%	16%	23%	39%	13%
Tunisia	20%	20%	20%	40%	
Uganda		20%	45%	20%	15%
United Kingdom	14%	14%	43%	14%	14%
United States of America	7%	25%	45%	20%	2%
Vietnam	17%		50%	33%	
Zambia	10%	20%	30%	30%	10%
Zimbabwe	12%		12%	50%	25%
Other Countries	16%	23%	32%	21%	9%
Unspecified	14%	10%	28%	28%	21%

Figure 6: Journalists' perceived newsroom support for reporting the polycrisis by country.

Additionally, the survey sought to establish how journalists perceived the knowledge of media audiences in their own national contexts on the subject of global polycrisis. While this is a question about perception, and not a gauge of audiences' actual subjective knowledge, there is an expectation that journalists have an understanding of the audiences they report for, so their perception of their audience(s) is important. Journalists' responses here show they believe that majority of their audiences, globally, have little to no understanding of the polycrisis concept.
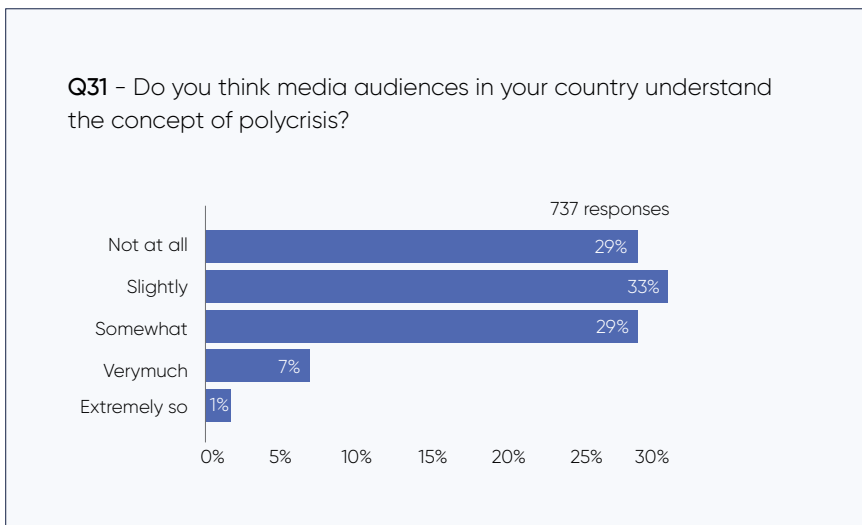

Q31 – Do you think media audiences in your country understand the concept of polycrisis?

737 responses

Not at all	29%
Slightly	33%
Somewhat	29%
Verymuch	7%
Extremely so	1%

Figure 7: What journalists think about their audiences' understanding of polycrisis.

Reporting workshop for journalists in Malaysia.

Given the multi-issue nature of polycrisis, it is also important to understand how journalists might be likely to approach reporting its interconnected challenges. The study therefore presented respondents with a number of angles which might be used to report on global polycrisis and asked them how they would be most likely to contextualize the issue. Journalists responded overwhelmingly (88%) that they would be most likely to report polycrisis through an 'environment and climate' frame, followed by a 'public health' frame (58%) and a 'food systems' frame (53%). Predominantly opting for an 'environment and climate' frame aligns with what science,

social science, and economic research indicate: that climate and environment are overarching "threat intensifiers" that link issues previously deemed separate. This also aligns with the qualitative interview data that is reported below. 'Global geo-politics' is the least used angle (35% of journalists elected it as a possible angle in the survey). It is important, in this context, to note that only 30% of the survey respondents identified as specialist climate/environmental reporters (while 70% were generalists). This indicates that 'environment and climate' is a dominant frame for reporting on polycrisis, regardless of a journalist's specialization.
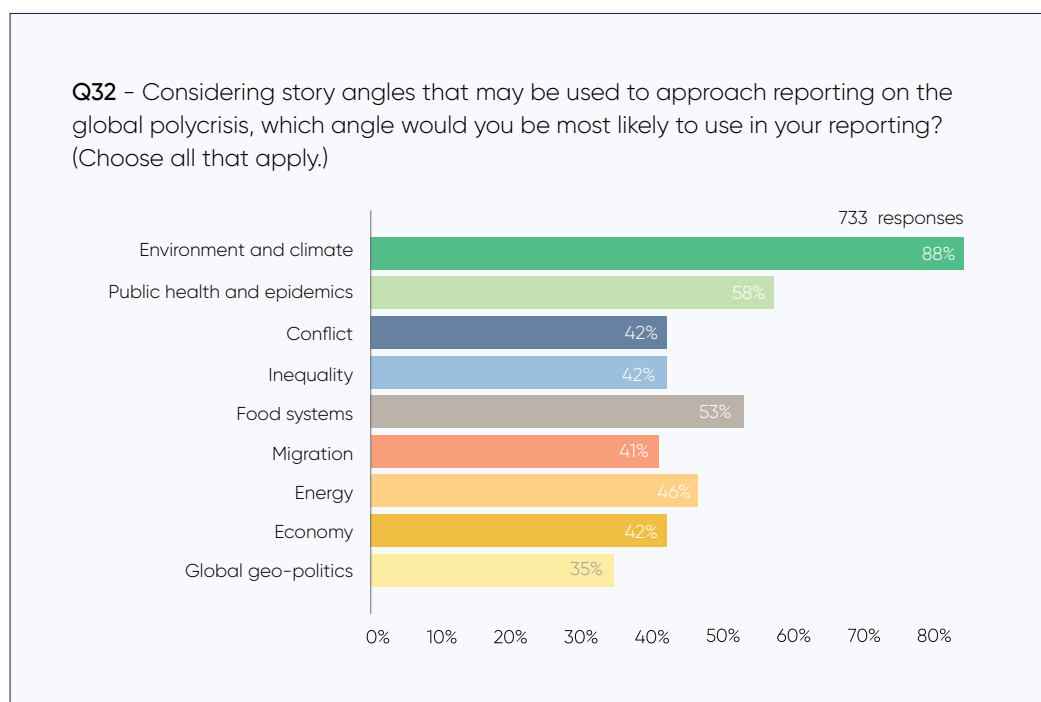
Q32 - Considering story angles that may be used to approach reporting on the global polycrisis, which angle would you be most likely to use in your reporting? (Choose all that apply.)

733 responses

Angle	Percentage
Environment and climate	88%
Public health and epidemics	58%
Conflict	42%
Inequality	42%
Food systems	53%
Migration	41%
Energy	46%
Economy	42%
Global geo-politics	35%

Figure 8: How journalists might approach their 'global polycrisis' reporting.

The study survey also asked respondents for some demographic information, including gender, age, and their years of experience as a journalist. While there did not appear to be any marked demographic trends in the data (including any influence of gender) in cross-comparing data one distinct trend was noted. It was observed that there is an association between the number of years respondents had worked as a journalist, their self-reported use of the polycrisis term or concept, and their perception of audiences' understanding of the term. Specifically, the longer respondents had worked as

journalists, the less likely they were to use the term polycrisis in their reporting and the more likely they were to believe their audiences did not understand the term. This marked trend could suggest that the more 'early career' journalists are, the more likely they are to introduce 'new' or contemporary topics and perspectives into their reporting. On the other hand, it could also suggest a different relationship, which is that journalists who have worked for the longest in their field

have the strongest perceptions about audience understanding, and the most deep-seated convictions about the kind of news they believe their audiences want, of which polycrisis is not a preferred news topic.
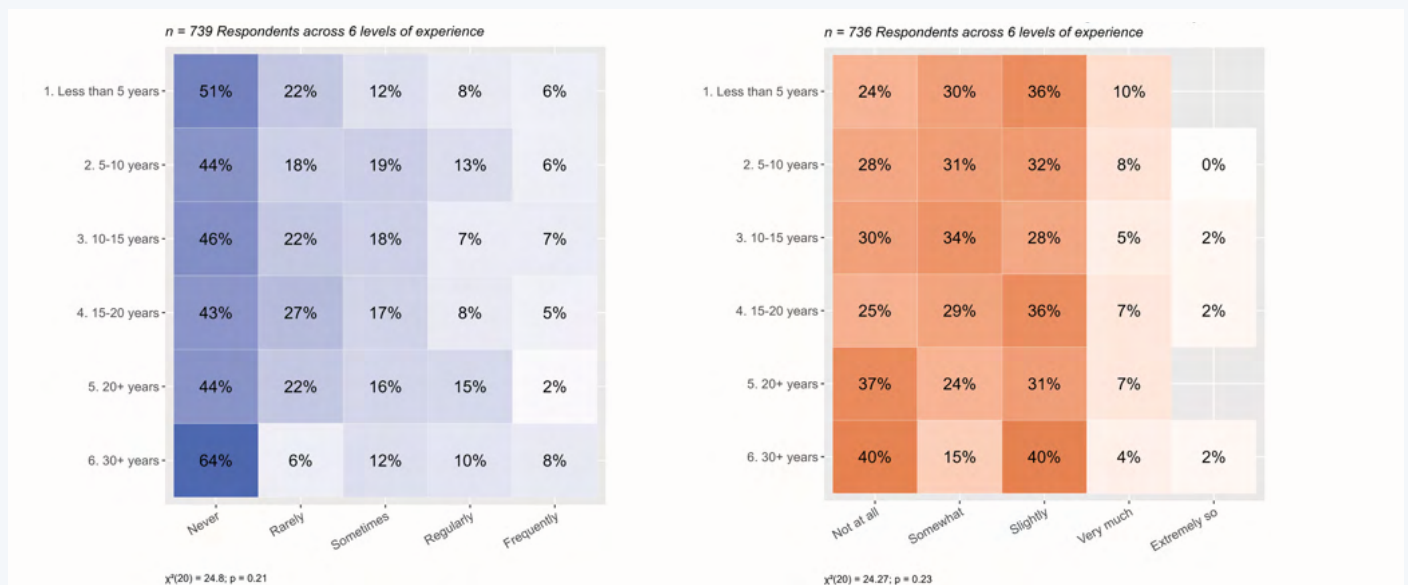

Figure 9: Self-reported use of the term 'global polycrisis' by years of experience (left) and journalists' perception of to what extent audiences understand 'polycrisis' (right).

4.2 Interview data

Broadly, the findings of the study's interviews supported what respondents reported in the survey: that journalists were unlikely to know and use the term 'global polycrisis'. However, within the qualitative context of interviews, we were able to ascertain a more detailed account of this trend. While most journalists interviewed were skeptical of the term, most agreed that it was important to convey the interlinked nature of current global crises to audiences, and indeed many said they were committed to doing so in their work, although they encountered obstacles in achieving this, as detailed below.

Above all, it is important to note that this study's interviews were conducted with journalists in 31 countries. Only those journalists working in predominantly English-speaking countries (USA, UK, Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand) were always reporting in English, meaning for the majority, the term 'global polycrisis' would need to be translated. The research established that the term polycrisis either did not exist, was not well established, or was not currently used in some languages, making it difficult to use in reporting. We also identified some broad key themes in the research interviews with journalists, which are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Journalists actively resist using the term 'global polycrisis'

Of those journalists who did understand the term, several were actively against using it, commenting that it was too "technical" or "academic" or "scientific" for their audiences. They also said they considered the term to be "jargon" which could "confuse" or "disturb" readers. Some also reported that their editors would likely strike the expression if they were to use it. Interviews additionally revealed a belief that the term was used predominantly by NGOs and other international organizations, and that journalists would resist using it precisely because of this. Several journalists felt that they needed to avoid using the term if they were to maintain their own journalistic credibility and independence. Resistance to using the term polycrisis was, then, quite common in interviews, across a spectrum of national contexts.

Examples include the following comments:

"If I use it, I have to waste three or four paragraphs explaining that in a way somebody will understand it. An editor would say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Forget it." (journalist, Costa Rica).

"...Unless you're quoting somebody who's calling it a 'global polycrisis', and that's fine, do it that way. But if you've already told [the story], why do you need to throw the definition in there when it'll just confuse or disturb what we're trying to do, which is tell the story." (journalist, Canada).

"That term would definitely get cut out by an editor as being too technical or jargony." (journalist, USA).

"If you ever read a story where I use that, I hope you ask me to leave the field. If you ever see global poly-whatever, whatever, whatever, in any of my stories, I hope you send me an email and hold me accountable. No. I don't work for the UN. I don't believe in these ridiculous jargon terms." (journalist, Cambodia).

4.4 Journalistic conventions and audience understanding

Cindy Sipula, EJN grantee in Zambia doing a broadcast interview.

Other journalists interviewed, across a broad spectrum of countries, said they would tend not to use the term because they were trained to write in simple, concise language, and they thought audiences would not understand the term 'global polycrisis'. For example, one Canadian journalist commented: "we try to avoid overly technical words when you can just say what that means in a simpler way". This goes to the heart of journalistic norms. Journalists are conventionally trained to use plain language to bring complex knowledge in an accessible way to the broadest possible audience. As Allen et al. put it in their 2015 text on journalism education: "The preference for plain language is no mere habit of journalistic practice; it goes to the very purpose of knowledge within journalism's epistemic framework, which is…the transfer of understanding from insider-knowers to outsiders who might thus become knowers" (p. 19). This deeply-ingrained imperative for writing simply in a way that is clear to audiences was cited as a hindrance to using a term like 'global polycrisis' for many journalists:

"I try to not use fancy terms in my stories. I try to write in a straightforward way and use language that people would use in conversation. And so, I do try and stick away from specialist vocabulary and things like that." (journalist, Canada).

"I don't use the exact expression. Why? Because I'm not a scientific researcher. So, I have to translate scientific data to simple narration, to a simple story, where I'm trying to interconnect [it] all together." (journalist, Iraq).

"I heard that. It's a new term, but it's hard also to [use it]. Not everybody will relate to that term, also…Sometimes they don't understand that this is a crisis situation. They don't understand." (journalist, Indonesia).

"I would say that journalists shouldn't use words like that because they're like overly academic and I think, when we're reporting, you always strive to make things as simple as possible, right?" (journalist, Canada).

"We haven't developed methods to tell our readers about these kinds of complex things. Very few understand them." (journalist, Sweden).

"I'm not sure I would use it though, in my reporting. I might use it in easier words. So I'm not saying that the audience that I'm reporting for is dumb or anything, I don't want that. But I want everybody to understand what I'm reporting on. So I'm using as simple words as possible…" (journalist, Austria).

4.5 Alternative terms that journalists use to convey the 'polycrisis' concept

In this study's interviews, journalists also spoke of other terms they might use more habitually that are analogous with, or approximate, the polycrisis concept, without using that specific term. Some journalists said they would write about "multiple crises" or "multidimensional crisis" or "multicrisis" and endeavor to explain how current global challenges are interconnected.

One journalist summarized this as follows:

"I don't use the term polycrisis, but I use 'multiple crises'...I often use the multiple crises that are affecting the entire planetary ecosystem, social, political, economic, biodiversity, you know. We are living in the Anthropocene, right, a time when humanity is the main villain on planet Earth." (journalist, Brazil).

Along these lines, a journalist from Mexico offered an additional synonym:

"Definitely with all my reporting, I would say, I have been a witness of the polycrisis. I normally use the words "social environmental crisis" to define that, but this could be synonymous of that." (journalist, Mexico).

Other journalists questioned whether the term 'crisis' or 'emergency' should be used, considering 'emergency' more impactful, and more aligned with science. One editor from the USA noted their media outlet's strategic plan to use the term "planetary emergency". That outlet uses this term:

"...because it has come from science. There's a group of academics in science, that are talking about biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution."

He went on to note that while "there are donors who use that word", the term polycrisis is "too abstract".

"It's abstract. It doesn't say anything. It just says "it's complicated". And so that's why, you know, I prefer the scientific one. Like, we are reporters, you know, we're not message makers." (editor, USA).

On the other hand, another journalist, from South Africa, was adamant that it was important to use the word 'crises' rather than a word this journalist had observed often being used as an alternative, the more euphemistic 'challenges'. Specifically, this journalist had observed government tending to use the word 'challenges', and journalists tending toward echoing this:

"I wouldn't use the word challenge about South Africa...That's what the government uses to describe terrible crises. "It's a challenge". Everything's falling down. "It's a challenge!". I can't bear it. No, it's a crisis...we are faced with a huge crisis." (journalist, South Africa).

Another journalist noted at interview that using the term 'crisis' to describe our current global interconnected adversities may be problematic. This journalist, from France, suggested that the term is usually used for a situation that comes to a head, which when resolved, can see a return to normal. She noted that under climate change, and the multiple interlinking catastrophes that it threatens, there will never be a return to an 'old normal':

"So yes, multiple crises, "global polycrisis", why not? But I try to make them [audiences] understand that it's not only a crisis. We will not go back to the beginning state we were [in] before. It's not the case. We have to change." (journalist, France).

4.6 Obstacles to reporting on global polycrisis

At interview, many journalists made it clear that they did endeavor to inform and educate audiences on the interconnectedness of global problems. This supports the survey data, in which 68% of journalists affirmed at least some support in their newsrooms for reporting the 'polycrisis' concept. Although many journalists agreed at interview that many current crises are "completely interconnected", journalists related the many challenges they face in reporting holistically on such interlinked global issues. Interviewees cited limited time to research and write stories as well as limited word counts or segment lengths in which to unravel complexity. They also perceived limited audience attention spans, misinformation, and the need for stories that quickly delivered their conclusions, as restraints to reporting on global complexity.

Of the minority of journalists who knew the term 'polycrisis', and of the many journalists who said they understood the concept, several said they also felt unsure themselves of exactly which crises the term referred to. Some said they would need to undertake further training or would require the assistance of both media assistance NGOs and issue-specific organizations to feel more confident about covering the concept in their reporting. Other journalists felt that whole-of-newsroom training was required. Finally, several journalists said that their audiences were more interested in local issues, making reporting about global problems challenging.

Journalists' comments on the perceived challenges to reporting on polycrisis included:

"Yeah, I talk about the multi layered issues that all come from one big thing we call climate change. I don't necessarily go into the global ramifications of it very often. I think I leave that for the national and international reporters to make that connection. I'm just trying to get you from your neighbourhood to climate change." (journalist, USA).

"…Everything that's complex seems to disappear in the debate these days…They want short punchlines to win over people and unfortunately, it seems to be working pretty well, at least here." (journalist, Sweden).

"I try to link financial institutions like banks and their roles in contributing to climate change by funding coal companies, mining companies, stuff like that. So, actually I sometimes try to do that, but in some cases it's really hard because we have limited time and energy to report on all these issues." (journalist, Indonesia).

"It's not just about journalists. We can't expect journalists to do everything. Like the NGOs, the researchers, the activists, they have to come up with something that journalists can write about, they have to come up with accessible narratives, with evidences, with a lot of other things, so that journalists can write about it." (journalist, China).

4.7 Possible pathways for reporting polycrisis

Journalists also offered some ideas about how they were currently able to cover interlinked global crises, or how they thought they might be able to in the future. Interviewees said that, while they were usually not able to cover the polycrisis concept in one short story, they could do so across multiple stories, sometimes in a series. For example, one journalist described doing a series on the polycrisis concept – though not using that term:

> **"When I pitched the series, they were skeptical – my newsroom management at the time, upper management – that we could sustain a weekly series. But then when you started connecting all these dots…yeah that's what we did almost from the inception of the series. Because it's not just climate change, it's everything that has [a] hand in [it]."**
> **(journalist, USA).**

Several journalists also mentioned the skill and education of the journalist as being crucial, as well as a detailed understanding of what interests specific audiences:

> **"I think it depends on the storyteller, the person that's writing the story, because it could be a very interesting topic. But if you write it in a way that people just like, are switched off, they don't really understand what that means. Like climate finance, as soon as people hear 'climate finance', they completely switch off, you know. It really depends on the journalist and how to write the story. Which again, boils down to storytelling techniques, what works."**
> **(journalist, Fiji).**

Although almost all journalists saw environment and climate as key anchoring issues from which to approach polycrisis (as supported by survey data) many journalists cited health and climate change as two issues they could easily convey to their audiences as intrinsically interlinked:

> **"If there are increased cases of malaria in a particular area and as a good journalist, if you investigated, you'd find that, for example, in the area the temperatures have increased, and the mosquitoes are able to live there and they cause malaria. We have had so many cases in Uganda like that. So then, in areas where there were no malaria, I find cases increasing because now most mosquitoes are able to breed there. So, then you link health with climate change. And also, we have done linkages for example, with the economy. I mean, the ability for those families that have increasing cases of malaria to …survive if they do not have enough money, how do they generate money?" (journalist, Uganda).**

While journalists are generally interested in making connections between crises for their audiences, in interview, they showed less familiarity with covering the cascading or snowballing effects of current multiple threats. This suggests that learning is still needed for journalists on the nature of current global risks, and how coverage of them might be approached.

Interviewees also reported that a health frame seemed to naturally emerge as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, when journalists were forced to connect for audiences seemingly disparate crises:

"The pandemic really forced us to think about how crises overlap." (journalist, Canada).

"Stories on the early days of COVID were on health and environment, you know, really crisis in health and environment, and its impact on environment, on economy, environment on politics, environment on livelihoods, etc." (journalist, India).

Finally, solutions journalism was offered as a strategy for reporting on the planet's multiple, intersecting crises. Some journalists said that offering solutions as opposed to constantly 'crisis' framing, or offering only 'doomsday scenarios' could help to keep their audiences more engaged and more likely to take action – perhaps even push for policy action within their national contexts. This also accords with the research literature which tells us that solutions journalism can motivate people to contribute to positive social change (Mcintyre 2019; McIntyre and Lough 2021)

"I think solutions journalism is one of the strongest tools that we have to face the polycrisis, but it's not the only one." (journalist, Mexico).

"We need to start addressing our multiple crises in a way that also includes potential ways to unravel them. Presenting 'crisis' without 'solution' is just a way to turn a reader off, make them turn away. If we are going to discuss 'crisis' then we need to follow this with 'what needs to be done', by when, and how. Also, how can people in different places can get engaged in action." (journalist, Bhutan).

4.8 Linking concepts may not deepen audiences' understanding

Journalist-interviewees also expressed a view that introducing the complex global nature of concurrent crises into their reporting may collapse together some already hard-won concepts and jeopardize audience understanding of such concepts – like climate change – where that existed. In other contexts, especially in some low- and middle-income countries, journalists said some audiences were not familiar even with the concept of climate change and its causes (though they certainly were aware of its impacts in their location). This made reporting the complexities of 'global polycrisis' especially difficult in these contexts. The research interviews found this to be particularly the case in parts of Latin America, Central and Southeast Asia and the Pacific. As one Brazilian journalist noted:

> **"…I guess "climate change" already does the job. If we can make things simpler, we should make things simpler, instead of just using a new term that people are going to take time to get acquainted with." (journalist, Brazil).**

A journalist from Mongolia talked about the ways in which people in that country were particularly affected by climate change (despite contributing to it less than other countries) but noted how the concept and causes of climate change were not clear to many:

> **"People associate climate change with…unseen forces, like gods. [They] do these rituals to ask for making the situation better if there was a flood or whatever, a drought, then they ask for the nature to change that."**
> **(journalist, Mongolia).**

Similarly in Indonesia, journalists said that audience understanding of climate change was highly demographically dependent and that this posed a challenge to reporting on climate alone, let alone the complexities of 'polycrisis':

> **"For people in the city and young people, the climate crisis is an awareness issue, but for people on the outside. I mean, not in the suburban, [but] in the village, climate change is not [an] issue.**
>
> **Twenty per cent of people has never heard about the climate crisis and 50 percent has heard about the climate crisis, but not sure that the climate crisis is happening now." (journalist, Indonesia).**

A caveat here is that the figures quoted above are the journalist's, cited from memory, but they do accord with research that confirms that in Indonesia specifically, climate literacy is low (Leiserowitz 2023) and that "journalists tend to support the government's development agenda, which is often difficult to reconcile with the concept of environmental sustainability" (Rochyadi-Reetz & Teng'o, 2021: 946). Added to this, in Indonesia specifically and Southeast Asia generally, press freedom is more limited (Indonesia was ranked 108 out of 180 countries by Reporters Without Borders in 2023) and Southeast Asia tends not be a safe place for environmental defenders or journalists who cover environmental issues. In such a media landscape, and with a low existing level of audience understanding of some of the key issues that constitute 'polycrisis', it is challenging to develop this concept in media reporting. Such a situation is undoubtedly replicated in many global locations.

Extinction Rebellion climate change protests, 2019

5. Discussion

The survey and interview data presented here indicate that, despite our current global moment being one of myriad crises, journalists struggle to make connections between these crises for their audiences. Overall, journalists are not *unwilling* in this effort: they show interest and concern and a reasonable level of knowledge on our planet's intersecting problems. At interview, they generally tended to describe a sense of professional commitment to educating their audiences on these issues for the public good. This research has clearly established that very few journalists use the term 'global polycrisis', and some are adamantly against it.

However, many do make efforts to broach the intersectionality of contemporary crises in their work – though they also feel stymied by the obstacles discussed above. Journalists are most likely to address the polycrisis concept through climate/environment and public health framing. They report being able to develop reporting on multiple crisis through story series, and they feel that the skill of the journalist as well as their detailed understanding of their audience are crucial enablers. Some also felt more training for individual journalists as well as whole newsrooms was needed to better report on the polycrisis concept.

For journalists and newsrooms, engaging more deeply with the polycrisis concept may offer an opportunity for more holistic and less linear, single-issue reporting. However, this needs to be balanced with the fact that sharply-focused, single-issue reports tend to attract larger audiences, which is also an important consideration in crowded media spaces. This study also indicates that media support NGOs need to be careful about how they work with media to stimulate such reporting. Our findings show that there is a sentiment among journalists that the term 'global polycrisis' originates with NGOs: some feel that they may be obliged to use the term to fulfill funding commitments to NGOs, media support organizations or donors. It may also be the case that journalists who work in newsrooms where resources are most constrained feel pressured to use the term because of the particular dependence they have on donors to fund their work. Speculatively, journalists from higher income countries in this

study may have felt more confident speaking out against the use of 'global polycrisis' because they may be less dependent on NGO/donor funding.

Given the critiques of a crisis epistemology outlined above, it is important to consider the neocolonial implications of donors from high-income countries promoting the use of the 'global polycrisis'. This is especially the case in low-income countries, whose people have less historical – and contemporary – responsibility for precipitating polycrisis, but who, in many cases, are already on the 'front lines' of such crises. It would be preferable, in this case, for NGO engagement with journalists in both high- and low-income countries to incorporate recognition and learning about countries' differential responsibility for precipitating global problems. So too, media support NGOs and donors, collaboratively with journalists, could more deeply consider audience knowledge, capacity, and information needs, so that any reporting that alludes to the polycrisis concept is rooted in context and highly locally relevant. Such a focus would likely lead to more audience engagement and promote public awareness of the issues that constitute our current crises.

In addition to this, with many larger newsrooms organized into news beats, it seems crucial that journalists *themselves* also collaborate within media organizations – or even between them – to ensure existing expertise is shared and issues that may previously have been covered by different subject specialist reporters are more explicitly brought together. This requires strong leadership within newsrooms. To this end, NGOs could enable international,

within-country and within-newsroom collaborations between subject specialist reporters. They could also support location-specific training that centers different audiences' lived experience and level of understanding of global crises, and that leads to place-specific reporting that is relevant to local audiences' lives. Likewise, given that journalists in this study told us they were more able to report the polycrisis concept across a series of stories, media support donors could consider supporting such series over a period of time, rather than supporting more time-limited reporting projects on specific subjects.

Establishing widespread public understanding of our intersecting crises will certainly depend on more, and better, media coverage of the issues polycrisis encompasses. Reporting locally on today's multiple global problems typically needs to be highly place-conscious and nuanced enough to recognize the causes and responsibilities for crises. In order not to alienate audiences, or have them disengage, journalists should also consider reporting on solutions – both global and local. Importantly, this study demonstrates overall a paucity of reporting on polycrisis issues, despite the fact that newsrooms are perceived to be supportive of such reporting, if not using the 'global polycrisis' terminology specifically. This undoubtedly offers an opening to journalism funders and media support organizations to work with journalists so that they can better inform and engage with their audiences on the existential threats of our times. This is an essential step to galvanize global action for change.

6. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION ONE:
While journalists understand the polycrisis concept, they see little need to use this exact term, especially in non-English language contexts. Analogous terms also serve well to describe the issues polycrisis encompasses.

Journalism funders and media support NGOs should therefore reconsider the need to emphasize the specific term "polycrisis" in their engagement with, and expectations of, journalists, globally.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:
Journalism funders and training organizations might prioritize in their education, training and interactions with journalists, increasing understanding of the multiple issues that the polycrisis concept represents.

Training journalists on how to convey place-relevant stories about these issues to their local audiences should be a priority. This should include training on framing global issues in local ways, and vice versa. Within this, journalism that builds understanding of climate change, its causes and impacts, in communities where this is not well understood, is an urgent priority.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:
Beyond understanding the causes and consequences, journalists need to be made more familiar with the potential solutions to 'global polycrisis' both globally and locally.

Training journalists in solutions journalism in the context of polycrisis could result in solutions framing in at least some of their reporting on polycrisis, which could make audiences more engaged.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:
Training and resources provided to journalists in relation to polycrisis should recognize both intersectionality of crisis impacts and differential responsibility for precipitating 'global polycrisis.'

NGOs, donors and media support organizations from high-income countries must work to avoid neocolonial implications in their interactions with reporters and media organizations in low-income countries.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE:
There is strong in-principle newsroom support for reporting on intersecting crises.

Funders and NGOs should consider engaging more with editors and media outlet management, as well as with journalists, in order to achieve more holistic multi-threat reporting.

RECOMMENDATION SIX:
Organizations aiming to proliferate the 'global polycrisis' term and concept could work to deepen their understanding of the reality of newsroom practice.

Organizations could strategically craft messages around 'polycrisis' so that they are more likely to filter through to audiences with minimal journalistic intervention or translation. Issue-specific NGOs could provide journalists with relevant data and evidence to use in their reporting on the polycrisis theme.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN:
Journalism funders and NGOs might consider moving the focus away from journalism itself to the *sources* of news.

If they are intent on promoting the specific term 'global polycrisis', NGOs could encourage more news sources (ie: experts that journalists refer to for comment) to use the term.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT:
Journalists and news organizations need to better understand audiences' perception and level of concern around intersecting global risks.

Journalism funders should consider supporting research into the consumers of news, in relation to polycrisis. This would assist journalists to more appropriately tailor their coverage of such risks in local contexts, and respond to news consumers' knowledge gaps.

RECOMMENDATION NINE:
Journalism funders are in a unique position to demonstrate the intersectional nature of global crises by building on audiences' lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We currently have a window of opportunity for audiences to grasp the concept of intersecting crises, while the pandemic is still recent and COVID remains newsworthy. As varied threats increase, making lived experiences of 'multicrisis' more widespread, their intersection should become more evident.

A couple comforting each other after losing their home in a tornado of December 2021

7. Opportunities for further research

Further research into media audiences would assist in clarifying what consumers of media information grasp about the 'polycrisis' concept. It would also be helpful to understand whether lawmakers and policy makers, for example, are aware of the polycrisis concept, and whether they are indeed using the term. This could also help highlight strategies for framing intersecting crises in ways that audiences, including decision makers, are interested in and receptive to. An audience study in relation to polycrisis could be complemented by a systematic media corpus analysis of the global use of 'polycrisis' and agreed, analogous terms.

8. Limitations of this study

This study sought to reach a large global cohort of journalists to ascertain their stance on reporting on polycrisis and we are not aware of any other study that has attempted this to date. The study is limited by the fact that the research on polycrisis was embedded within a larger study of climate and environmental journalism: polycrisis reporting was not the study's sole focus. Journalists who said they did not report on climate and environment at least occasionally were excluded from the survey and were not contacted for interview. This may mean that our cohort included more environmental reporters, although research shows that this specialization is rare and indeed 70% of the study survey cohort told us that they were generalist reporters. The by-country profile of survey responses is varied: some countries are perhaps over-represented, however, results are expressed as percentages of respondents for each country, making the raw number of responses per country less significant. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the strong working relationship that the researchers formed with the study funder, Internews. This productive collaboration resulted in both parties disseminating the research survey and proposing potential interviewees. This may mean that the respondent cohort includes more journalists who have previously had contact with media support NGOs than in a randomized sample of journalists globally, however, it also enabled the global reach of this work.

Project team

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Nicholas Payne

Nicholas Payne is a PhD researcher at Deakin University, Australia. His thesis focuses on the power, efficacy, and characteristics of award-winning Australian investigative journalism. He is also a freelance journalist, specializing in investigative and longform reporting, as well as a former media relations and corporate communications professional.

Lova Jansson

Lova Jansson is a Research Fellow in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University and a postgraduate student in international policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She takes a strong interest in sustainable international development, intersecting vulnerabilities, and the role of different actors in shaping and responding to these issues.

Dr. Jerry Lai

Dr Jerry Lai is the Senior eResearch Analyst/
Consultant at Deakin University. Jerry has a
background in psychological science (PhD) and
statistics (Masters). Jerry works in consultation with
research teams, centres, and institutes from across
various academic disciplines, providing analytical,
statistical, and technical solutions and training to
assist staff to conduct good quality research.

Prof. Kristy Hess

Kristy Hess is a Professor of Communication at
Deakin University, Australia. She researches local
journalism and communication practices in a digital
era and advises on areas of media policy. Professor
Hess is involved in several nationally-funded projects
that involve examining the role of public interest
journalism in supporting communities vulnerable to
natural disaster. She has also published on barriers
and opportunities facing media researchers from
the Global South.

Appendix

List of countries from which survey responses were received.

Country	Count
Albania	2
Algeria	5
Angola	1
Argentina	5
Australia	12
Bangladesh	10
Belarus	1
Belize	2
Benin	2
Bolivia	2
Botswana	2
Brazil	23
Bulgaria	1
Burkina Faso	1
Burundi	4
Cambodia	2
Cameroon	4
Canada	1
China	2
Colombia	11
Comoros	1
Republic Congo	3
Costa Rica	1
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Croatia	1
Democratic Congo	2
Djibouti	1
Ecuador	13
Egypt	3
Ethiopia	3
Fiji	2
France	1
Gambia	4
Georgia	1
Germany	7
Ghana	9
Guatemala	2
Guinea	3
Honduras	1
Hungary	2
India	72
Indonesia	32
Iraq	12
Israel	1
Italy	3
Japan	2
Jordan	1
Kazakhstan	1
Kenya	53
Kyrgyzstan	2
Lao	1
Lebanon	1
Lesotho	1
Liberia	4
Luxembourg	1
Madagascar	3
Malawi	5
Malaysia	4
Mali	1
Mauritania	1
Mauritius	2
Mexico	19
Mongolia	1
Morocco	1
Myanmar	1
Nepal	11
Nigeria	21
Pakistan	15
Palau	1
Papua New Guinea	6
Peru	8
Philippines	14
Portugal	1
Republic of Moldova	2
Russian Federation	1
Rwanda	6
St Vincent & Grenadines	1
Sao Tome and Principe	3
Senegal	1
Sierra Leone	3
Solomon Islands	3
South Africa	7
Spain	3
Sri Lanka	10
Sudan	7
Syrian Arab Republic	2
Tajikistan	3
Thailand	4
Togo	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Tunisia	5
Turkey	1
Uganda	20
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom	8
Tanzania	89
United States	44
Uzbekistan	1
Vietnam	6
Yemen	3
Zambia	10
Zimbabwe	8

Countries of origin of interviewees

Argentina	Ecuador	New Zealand
Australia	Fiji	Peru
Austria	France	Philippines
Bahrain	Hungary	Russia
Bhutan	India	Solomon Islands
Brazil	Indonesia	South Africa
Cambodia	Iraq	Sweden
Canada	Mexico	Uganda
Costa Rica	Mongolia	UK
Cote d' Ivoire	Nepal	USA
Czech Republic		

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