



GLOBAL WARMING and **HEATWAVES IN EUROPE**

A DATA PRO

JULY 2022

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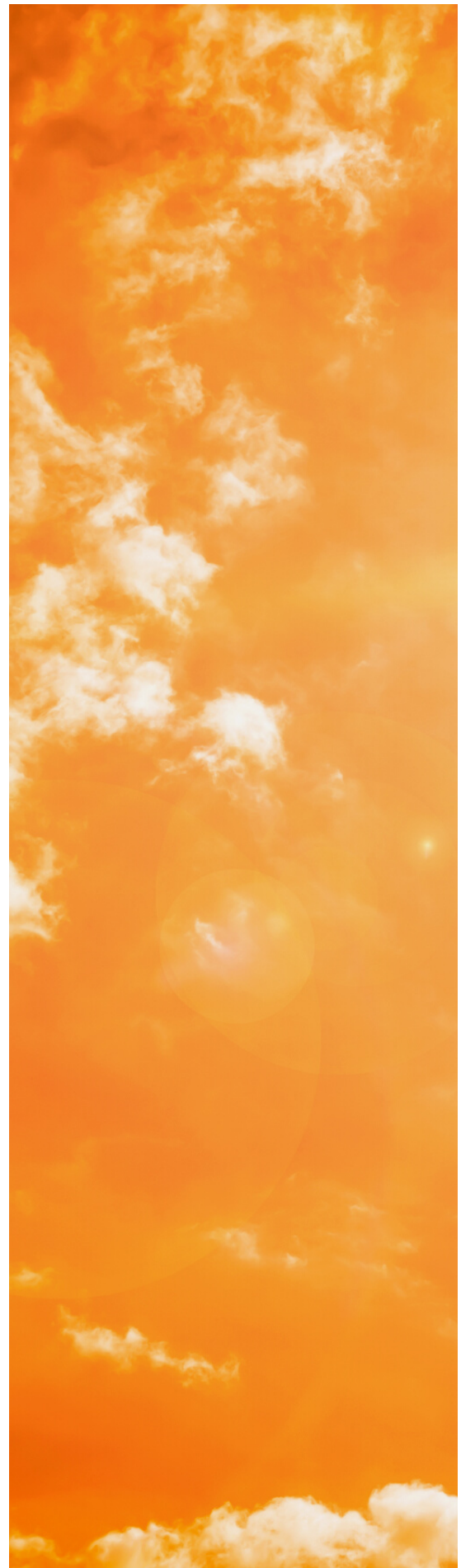
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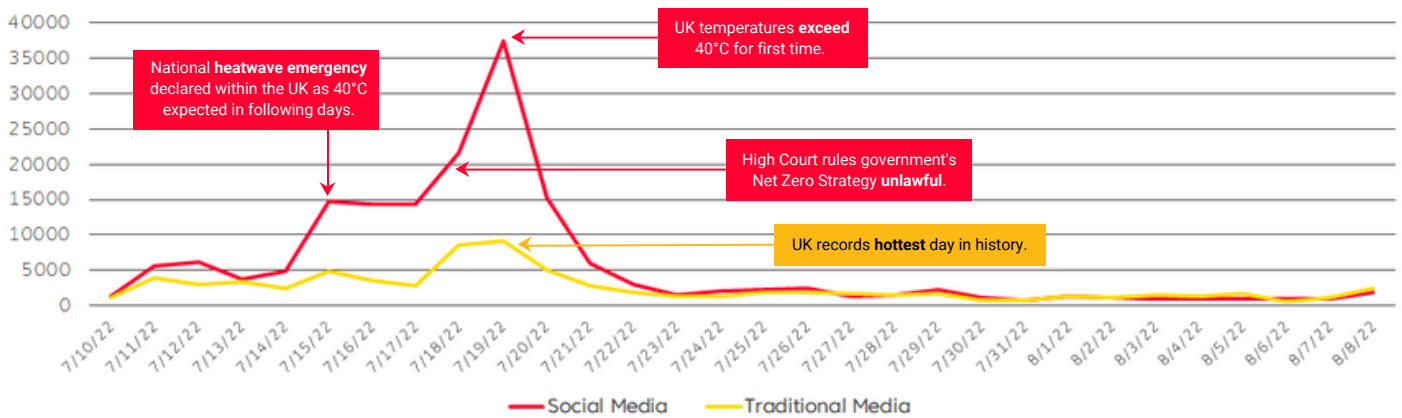


OVERVIEW



- Heatwaves and climate change were a hot topic in the UK traditional and social media in July, with over 245K mentions in the period 10 July – 8 August 2022. The number of publications and interactions increased towards the middle of the month, before peaking on 18 July – just before the **hottest day** in English history, which saw temperatures go over 40°C.
- A significant number of discussions covered health **concerns**, **fires** and accidents, **transport** issues, and other disruption to daily life, which contributed to a 40.6% share of negative sentiment.
- The link made between the heatwave and climate change turned out to be divisive, with deniers often pointing to a **1976** heatwave in the UK as proof that climate change was overhyped. Meanwhile, **climate scientists** warned that the UK could no longer be considered a cold country, with periods of extreme heat expected to become increasingly common and longer.

MENTIONS TIMELINE



Global warming and heatwave mentions increased in mid-July, as the UK prepared for a week of extremely high temperatures. On 15 July, the authorities announced a **level-4 red alert** based on forecasts for temperatures reaching 40°C in the coming days, which experts explained was due to **global warming**. Mentions peaked on 19 July, when England recorded 40°C for the **first time** in its history, a topic which was more extensively covered in social media.

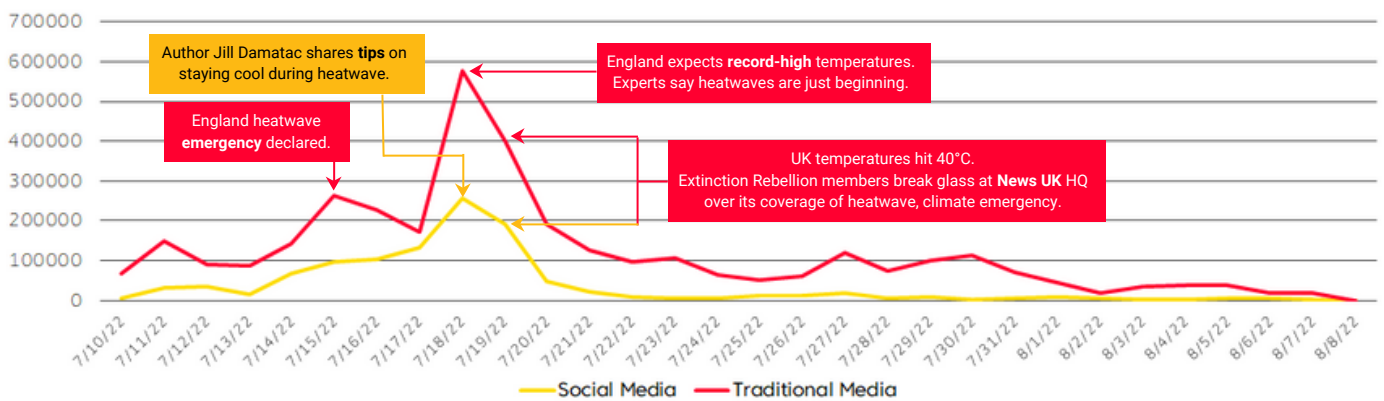
Traditional media outlets reported on a number of issues linked to the heatwave such as **fires** and **transport** problems, including closed **roads**, **railway** transit restrictions, cancelled **flights** due to melting runway tarmac, and lack of air conditioning and low water pressure at **Gatwick** airport.

Ahead of the record-temperature day, both Twitter posts – which accounted for almost two-thirds of all mentions – and online publications often featured **advice** on **staying** cool, keeping **homes** cool, and taking care of **pets** during the heatwave. Attention was paid to the effects of extreme weather on **people** and animals, with reports on **wildlife** including cases of dehydrated birds **falling** from the sky.

Publications also noted some business trends driven by the weather. Marks & Spencer stopped selling disposable barbecues to help **reduce** the risk of fires, while an Aldi store temporarily **restricted** bottled water sales to one bottle per customer to avoid a shortage. Sunscreen and ice cream registered **increased** sales, while some businesses, such as restaurants and pubs, saw a **decline** in customer numbers.

INTERACTIONS TIMELINE

Traditional media content saw much higher rates of engagement, with articles receiving comments as well as additional interactions when shared on social media. On 18 July, The Mirror reported that scientists expect heatwaves to become a **regular** annual occurrence. The article recorded 24.3K interactions, including 10.7K Comments, which contributed to the highest peak for the period. Many commenters wrote that hot weather is a reality of summer and not a shocking development.



On the same date, The Guardian featured an op-ed by Bill McGuire, climate activist and UCL professor emeritus of climate hazards, according to whom the present extreme heat is “just the beginning” and by the end of the century, **40°C** will seem like a “cool” temperature.

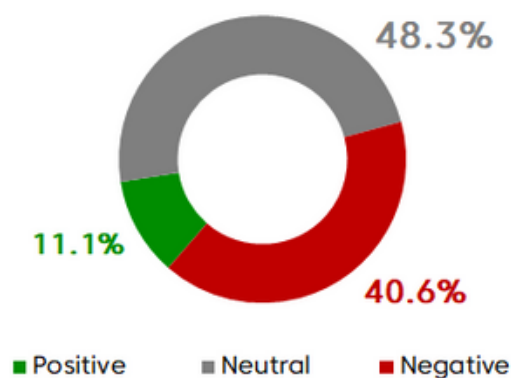
The piece recorded 18.6K interactions, including 4.6K Comments. A large number of Facebook users commented that other countries regularly have much higher temperatures.

Although Twitter posts recorded lower engagement rates than mainstream media articles, the publication with the highest number of interactions (124K) for the period was a tweet, in which Philippines-born **author** Jill Damatac shared advice on keeping cool in hot weather.

A tweet by meteorologist Scott Duncan, who wrote that climate change caused by people made it easy to **break extreme heat thresholds**, generated 30.1K interactions.

SENTIMENT

Under 50% of all content had a neutral sentiment, as many of the mainstream media outlets covered the extreme **weather** in a predominantly balanced and informative manner.



At 40.6% of all mentions, publications with negative sentiment featured criticism of climate change **deniers** and the UK government's **policy** on the climate crisis, as well as information about **fires** caused by the high temperatures, transport **disruptions**, and **deaths** caused by the heatwave. Multiple comments throughout the period included accusations of scaremongering about the **heat**.

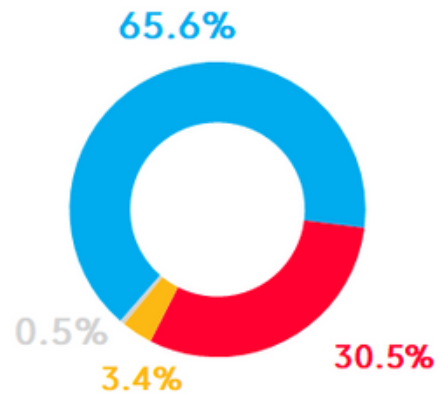
Positivity had an 11.1% share of the sentiment split due to publications giving **advice** on staying cool and tips on caring for wildlife and **pets** during a heatwave, as well as stories of people's kind **gestures** towards **neighbours** and strangers during the extreme weather period.



MEDIA TYPES

Twitter accounted for almost two-thirds of mentions.

Some used the platform to raise awareness on the **climate crisis** and explain the **factors** behind the **higher temperatures**. Others **downplayed** the situation, claiming it was **fearmongering** and noting that Brits **pay** to go on a holiday in warmer countries.



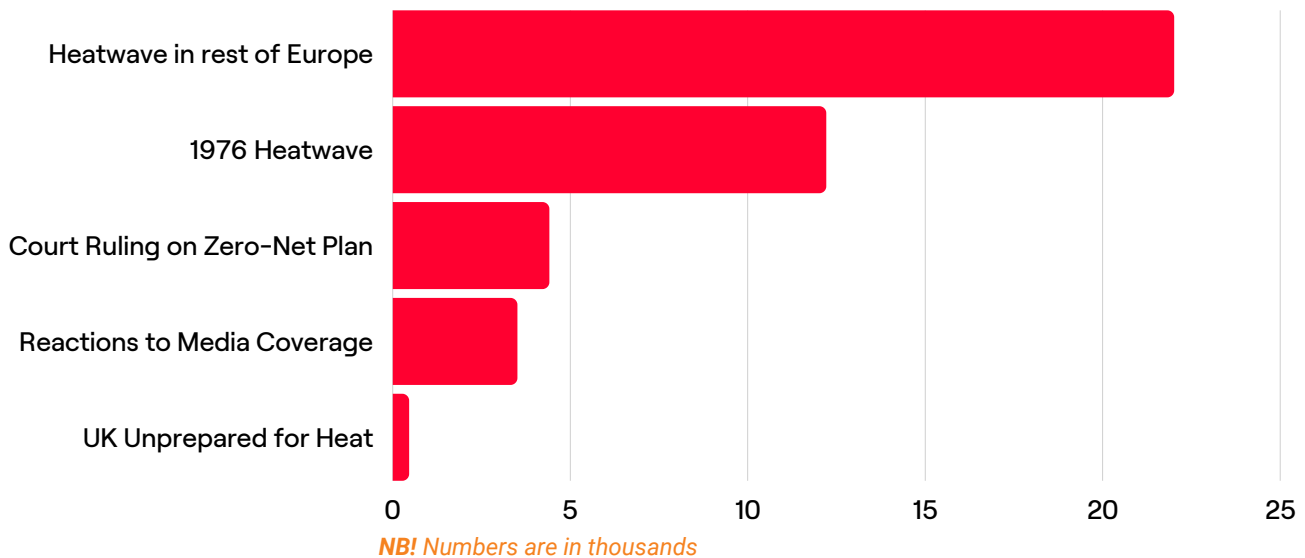
■ Twitter ■ Mainstream news ■ Blogs ■ Forums

Mainstream news outlets, which contributed close to a third of all mentions, featured frequent weather **updates** and posts on how people **dealt** with the higher temperatures, including wearing **kilts** to work, going to the **beach** or booking rooms in hotels with **air conditioning**.

Some focused on science to explain the UK's weather and **changing climate**. The BBC reported that according to the World Weather Attribution group, without human-induced climate change, record-high **temperatures** such as those registered in the UK in the second half of July, would have been "almost impossible."



MAIN TOPICS



In addition to the heatwave in the UK, news outlets also covered the heat in continental Europe, with reports focusing on **wildfires** in the **Mediterranean** and other **accidents** caused by the extreme weather, as well as advice for British **tourists**. The topic received 22K mentions.

Both news outlets and social media users compared the July 2022 heat period in the UK to the **1976** heatwave, with climate scientists **explaining** that an anomalous hot summer decades ago did not mean the **climate crisis** was not real. The UK Met Office had to **debunk** a heat map comparison which claimed that the government agency had designed its newer graphics to spread fear.

On 18 July, the High Court ruled the UK government's **climate strategy** unlawful and ordered the cabinet to present a **new plan** on reaching its net-zero emissions goal by 2050. A Sky News **article** on the topic saw Facebook comments pointing out that the UK has much lower CO2 emissions than other countries, such as China, India, and the US.

Another frequently discussed topic during the period was how media **reported** on the heatwave. Some Twitter users **complained** that the extreme heat and climate change warnings were exaggerated. Meanwhile, members of the **Extinction Rebellion** group broke windows at the London offices of News UK and chalk sprayed "TELL THE TRUTH" and "40 DEGREES = DEATH" on the front of the building on 19 June as a protest against the publisher's **coverage** of the topic.

Multiple news publications and social media users noted that **infrastructure** in the UK was not built for hot weather, with buildings – including **homes** and **prisons** – designed to **keep heat** in. Coverage included analysis of how the construction industry needs to **adapt** to the UK's changing climate and build homes suitable for heat and the **challenges** before it.

MOST ENGAGING POSTS

1 The top post in terms of interactions (124K) was the first **tweet** in a thread by England-based writer Jill Damatac, who shared a series of tips on how people can stay cool during the heatwave, based on her experience living in the Philippines. The entry also generated over 480 comments, as many users discussed what clothes are suitable for hot weather.

2 An Observer **article** focused on Hothouse Earth: An Inhabitant's Guide – the latest book by climate hazards emeritus professor Bill McGuire, gathered 47.1K interactions. McGuire expected heatwaves to become more frequent, be hotter and last longer. The article was shared on Reddit, where users discussed ominous **predictions** and research on the topic, including biased expert opinions.

3 It was followed by another Observer **article** (with just under 44.8K interactions), about three wild bison released in the Kent countryside as part of a project seeking to transform a commercial pine forest into a natural woodland and help address the climate crisis. The entry had 5.3K comments, with some saying that the project could hopefully demonstrate that cows could help sequester more carbon if managed properly.

4 A **tweet** by London Walking and Cycling Commissioner Will Norman, who compared heat maps from June 1976 and June 2022 to disprove claims that climate change is overhyped, gathered close to 12.4K RTs and over 650 comments. The opinion was split, with some replies criticising the lack of action against global warming, while others claimed the data was manipulated.

5 Communication consultant James Melville posted two heatwave **maps** of the UK on Twitter (31.7K interactions). He insisted that the old map featured “cheery sunshine graphics” while the new one showed “scorched earth.” A majority of the users who commented on his tweet agreed that the change was part of “green propaganda” and shared similar temperature maps of other countries.

TOP SOURCES BY REACH

1 msn.com

The web portal was the top source in terms of reach during the period (197B). It shared articles from multiple other outlets, covering various angles of the heatwave news. A piece on health **risks** linked to high temperatures, such as thickening blood and cloths, gathered more than 170 interactions. Several users commented that the piece sought to cause panic or divert attention from other issues.

2 Mail Online

The tabloid came in second, with a reach of 71.4B. One of its most-engaging posts was a **live blog** with updates on the hottest day in English history, 19 July. It featured news on weather, several fires fuelled by heat, transport disruptions and travel chaos, as well as health advice. Some users who commented under the article disagreed that two days of hot temperatures could be a sign of global warming.

3 BBC

With a combined reach of 71.2B of its UK and international pages, the broadcaster ranked third among all sources. One of the topics which the BBC reported on was trolling and abusive messages **targeting** meteorologists who linked the record-high temperatures in the UK during the period to climate change. The article gathered 4.1K Comments, with some users on Facebook claiming the reports were exaggerated and seeking to spread fear.

4 The Guardian

The daily newspaper came in fourth, with a reach of 29.8B. On 18 July, amid the heatwave in the UK, it reported that according to UN secretary general António Guterres, humanity faced a **“collective suicide”** due to climate change. The article received 4.2K Shares and 9K Likes on Facebook, where most users criticised the lack of action from authorities.

5 The Independent

The online newspaper had a reach of 14.3B during the monitored period.

On 17 July, The Independent reported on Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s plans to skip a **cabinet meeting** on the then-upcoming heatwave in the UK in order to host a private party at his Chequers rural retreat. The article gathered just under 1K comments, with some users writing that a short spell of high temperatures is not a crisis.

TOP INFLUENCERS



[@JILLDAMATAC](#)

4.26K FOLLOWERS

WRITER AND FILMMAKER

Jill Damatac became the most influential author for the period, with 130.9K interactions, thanks to a thread on Twitter with a 10-step plan on staying cool during a heatwave. Her **posts** sparked further discussions about food and dress.

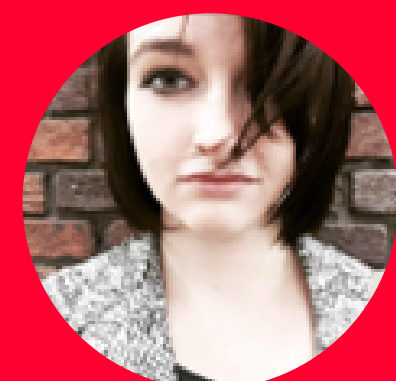


[@SCOTTDUNCANWX](#)

85.8K FOLLOWERS

METEOROLOGIST

Meteorologist Scott Duncan tweeted about **heatwaves** across Europe and insisted that **climate change** was behind the increasingly higher temperatures being recorded. His posts gathered more than 54.8K interactions.



[HELENA HORTON](#)

THE GUARDIAN

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Helena Horton wrote about several topics linked to the UK **heatwave** and climate, with her pieces gathering over 53.1K interactions. Her article on the passing of scientist James Lovelock, known for the **Gaia theory** and advocating for climate measures, received 31.3K interactions, with many comments praising Lovelock's work.

APPENDIX

Period: 10 July 2022 – 8 August 2022

Market: the UK

Sources: Online news, Blogs, Forums, Twitter

Platform: Talkwalker

Search query:

("global warming" OR "human-induced warming" OR "climate change" OR "global heating" OR "climate crisis" OR "extreme heat" OR "extreme weather" OR "hot weather" OR "hottest ever temperature" OR heatwave OR "heat wave" OR "record high temperature*" OR "temperatures of 40°C" OR "40C temperature" OR "over 40C" OR "hit 40C" OR "blistering sun" OR "highest temperature" OR "heat record" OR "temperature rise" OR "solar storm" OR "exceptional heat" OR "heat emergency" OR "sweltering highs" OR "amber weather warning" OR "warm weather" OR "getting hot" OR "hottest days") AND (UK OR "United Kingdom" OR brits OR Britain OR England OR "British Isles" OR "British Island" OR Europe OR European OR EU OR "European Union") AND sourcecountry:uk*

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