

Executive summary

Enhancing the accessibility of climate change data visuals

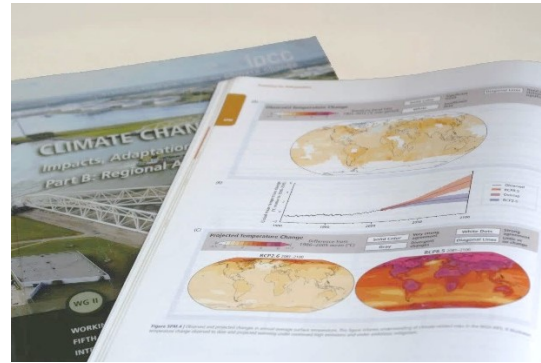
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Enhancing accessibility, maintaining scientific rigour

Data visuals are integral to the communication of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, and to the communication of climate change research more generally. Data visuals often contain important information relevant to diverse stakeholders in society, but they can be difficult for non-experts to understand.



IPCC AR5, Working Group II



Photo by Mokhamad Edliadi / CIFOR

The **'MADE' principle** (see box below), together with 12 guidelines presented in the full report, are provided to help climate researchers enhance the accessibility of their data visuals, while maintaining scientific rigour. Applying the MADE principle and the guidelines can enable climate researchers to better communicate their findings with society.

Recommendations

- 1. Put guidance into practice:** Climate researchers can enhance the accessibility of their data visuals using the **MADE** principle: consider your *Message*, your *Audience*, the *Design* of the visual, and its *Evaluation* (see full report for details).
- 2. Build capacity for communications:** The IPCC has an opportunity to build mechanisms that encourage, support, guide and engage IPCC authors in enhancing the accessibility of data visuals (see overleaf).

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Recommendations to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC Bureau and the IPCC Technical Support Units (TSUs) provide essential support to IPCC authors in undertaking special reports and assessments. The recommendations presented below provide actions that could help IPCC authors enhance the accessibility of data visuals in future reports and assessments. These are particularly relevant to Working Group Co-Chairs and TSU teams. Some aspects of these recommendations are already being implemented by the IPCC (see full report for further details).

1. **Develop a detailed style guide for visual communication** with examples – to support best practice and consistency in communications design across author teams.
2. **Profile and summarise audiences of IPCC reports in ‘user personas’** – to provide clarity to all authors about the target audiences that the content is created for, and/or will be adapted for.
3. **Provide guidance for visuals to authors early in the report writing process** – to enable chapter authors to implement guidance, thus encouraging consistency when visuals are elevated to summaries and outreach materials.
4. **Support discussion and collaboration between authors and communication specialists throughout production** – to bring together expertise from different disciplines to address communication challenges when visualising data and evidence.
5. **Establish focus groups representative of target audiences** – to gain perspectives and feedback on communication at key stages during development of materials.
6. **Partner with climate change communicators across nations and regions** – who could, for example, be trained on unified guidance to provide ‘in country/region’ support to authors.
7. **Test visuals and text during production, and prior to final publication (e.g. during review windows)** – to ensure that information is understood as intended. If not understood as intended, the data visual can be revised to improve comprehension.
8. **Develop ‘explainers’ of how to read key IPCC data visuals** – to provide an extra layer of explanation that can guide and support readers’ understanding.
9. **Encourage, and reflect on, feedback from authors regarding implementation of guidance for data visuals** – to enable evaluation of the application of guidance, and refinements to guidance, so that it can continue to be fit-for-purpose for the IPCC.

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