

A majority of people around the world are concerned about climate change, says poll

July 28 2022, by Wändi Bruine de Bruin



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A majority of people—69%—around the world say that climate change is "a somewhat serious threat" or "a very serious threat," according an analysis I published in April 2022 in the journal *Climatic Change*. The

analysis was based on the 2019 Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll.

Surprisingly, figures released this week from the [2021 Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk](#) Poll show virtually the same level of concern: 67%. That's notwithstanding that the figures from the latter period were gathered during the pandemic, when concern about [climate change](#) would have presumably been much lower.

The worldwide recognition of the threat of [climate](#) change signals a shift from 2007–2008, when there was still [worldwide apathy or lack of awareness](#) about climate change.

Americans are also showing increased concerns about climate change. In 2021, a majority of people [in every U.S. state](#) reported being concerned about climate change. This was after years of Americans showing [little to no concern](#) about climate change, even though [climate scientists](#) have been ringing the warning bell since at least the 1950s.

Moreover, a 2021 [Pew Research Center poll](#) found that 74% of people in the U.S. were willing to make "some changes" or "a lot of changes" in how they live and work to combat the effects of climate change. Similarly, [a majority across 16 other countries](#) in North America, Europe and Asia was willing to do so.

Why are people more concerned than ever before?

Psychologists have identified two main ways in which people learn about new topics: First, through information and, second, through their own experience.

People can get information about climate change through the media and climate reports. But information about climate change can be hard to

understand, thanks to [complex terms](#) such as "adaptation" and "mitigation." Perhaps it's no surprise that analyses of the [World Risk Poll](#) found that people with a [college education](#) are more likely to report concerns about climate change.

Experience with [severe weather](#) may also inform people's climate change concerns. And it doesn't require a [college degree](#) to see that the weather has gotten worse. It is increasingly evident that [climate change is happening](#): Heat waves, wildfires, and floods are becoming more severe and more common in the U.S. and around the world.

Now that most of us are concerned, what do we do about it?

Notwithstanding growing concern about climate change and a willingness to take action, several recent studies in the [U.S.](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) have suggested that people do not always know how to reduce their climate impact. Below are three recommendations that will make the biggest difference, in terms of reducing your climate impact:

Eat less meat.

Animal agriculture, especially the cattle industry, is a leading source of greenhouse gas emissions. The more meat we consume, the more we contribute to climate change. [Giving up meat](#) entirely is the single biggest step most people can take to reduce their carbon footprint. But if you find that difficult, replacing red meat with chicken and foregoing meat when you can also make a big difference.

Use the heater and air conditioner less.

In most homes, electric [heating and cooling](#) uses the most energy. Set the

thermostat to a [lower temperature](#) when heating and wear a sweater instead. Close blinds or curtains during the day and use fans when it's hot, so that you need the [air conditioner](#) less. If you can, adding insulation, switching to a programmable thermostat and installing more effective heaters and air conditioners will make an even bigger difference.

Vote climate-focused politicians into office.

While individual action can make a difference, the biggest climate impact is made by [companies and governments](#). Getting those companies and governments to act will require a change in climate policy. When going to the polls, vote for candidates who commit to implementing climate-friendly policies.

More information: Wändi Bruine de Bruin et al, On the differential correlates of climate change concerns and severe weather concerns: evidence from the World Risk Poll, *Climatic Change* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s10584-022-03353-8](#)

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