

Making the Connections: Severe Weather, Climate Change, and Americans

Scientists are calling the increases in severe weather the “[new normal](#)” but there is nothing normal about “[bomb cyclones](#)”, uncontrolled [wildfires devastating California](#) and [Greece](#), unprecedented [heat waves](#) in Japan so hot that public pools are unsafe, and the [rapid melting](#) of the polar icecaps. American news outlets are covering these events, but not often the [science](#).

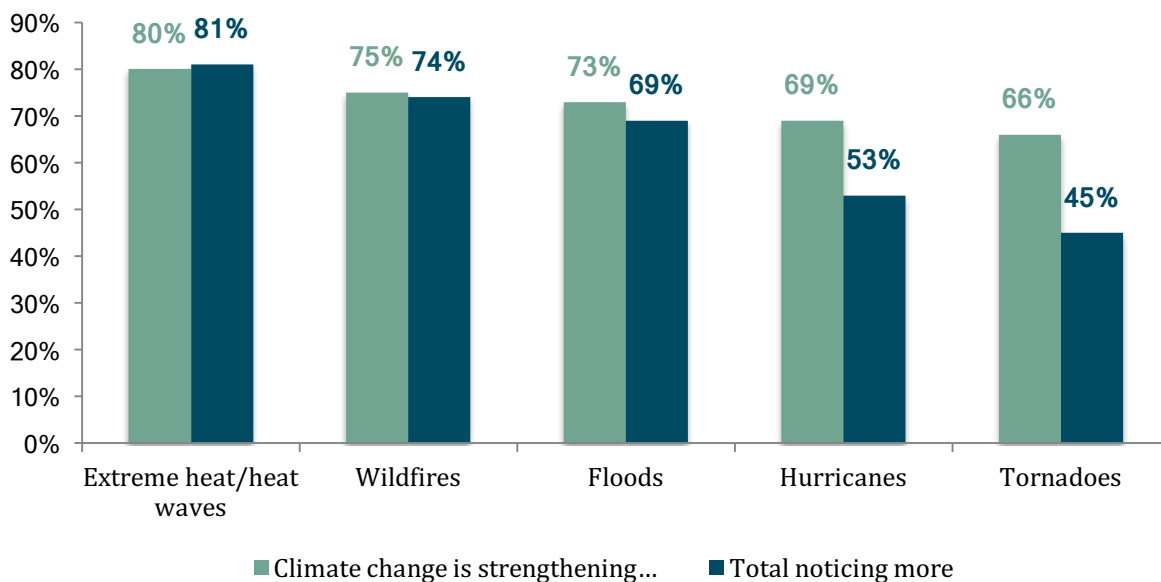
So, what do Americans think about the connection between climate and extreme weather? **ecoAmerica** sought this answer in their August 2018 **American Climate Perspective Survey**.

For Americans, severe weather and climate change go hand in hand

A majority of Americans across all age groups, regions, and political persuasions are noticing more extreme weather events, and even more of us recognize that climate change is strengthening or increasing the frequency of these events. Extreme heat and heat waves garner the most awareness (81% noticing), and 80% of us think they are becoming more frequent because of climate change. 74% of Americans are noticing more wildfires and 75% attribute increases to climate change. For floods, it is 69% awareness and 73% attribution to climate change. Hurricanes and tornadoes directly impact fewer Americans (53% and 45% respectively) but even here, majorities (69% and 66%) attribute these events to climate change.

Have you noticed more severe weather (either locally or nationally) in the past few years? How much do you think climate change is strengthening or increasing the frequency of these extreme weather events?

860 respondent(s) total nationally, % Total “A lot more and Somewhat more” and “A lot and Somewhat”



Women and Dems most notice extreme weather and attribute it to climate change

ecoAmerica examined five types of severe weather events and found that females both notice the increased frequency of these events and attribute them to climate change more than men. Differences in awareness and attribution across political lines is even greater, with Democrats noticing and attributing at variances well over 30 points higher than Republicans.

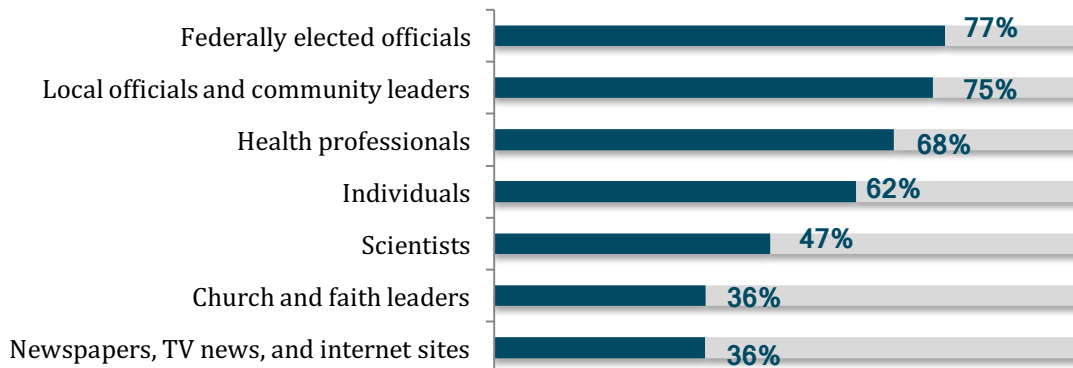
	Noticing increases in strength or frequency					Attributing events to climate change				
	Extreme heat/waves	Wildfires	Floods	Hurricanes	Tornadoes	Extreme heat/waves	Wildfires	Floods	Hurricanes	Tornadoes
Women	86%	78%	77%	60%	50%	84%	81%	78%	77%	74%
Men	76%	69%	60%	46%	38%	76%	70%	68%	60%	57%
Diff W-M	9 pts	9 pts	17 pts	14 pts	12 pts	8 pts	11 pts	10 pts	17 pts	17 pts
Dem	89%	81%	78%	65%	55%	92%	90%	87%	83%	81%
Rep	72%	67%	57%	43%	35%	65%	58%	56%	52%	44%
Diff D-R	17 pts	14 pts	21 pts	23 pts	20 pts	26 pts	32 pts	31 pts	31 pts	37 pts

Are we prepared for extreme weather and other climate impacts?

60% of Americans feel *personally prepared* for increased extreme weather events and other climate impacts, but only half believe their community is prepared. Americans hold federally elected officials (77%), local community leaders (75%), health professionals including first responders, doctors and nurses (68%) and individual homeowners (62%) responsible for being prepared.

Whose responsibility is it to prepare for extreme weather events and climate change? Please rank who you believe is most responsible to least responsible.

860 respondent(s) total nationally, % Total top 3 ranked choice



Feeling a range of emotions about severe weather events

Science shows that human decision and behavior are rooted in emotion. To begin to understand how Americans feel about extreme weather, ecoAmerica asked them to rank the emotions they feel when they witness extreme weather events. 30% say they feel sad, 20% motivated to help, and 16% scared and frightened. Only 10% say they feel apathetic.

When you learn about an extreme weather event (such as wildfires, floods, droughts or water shortages, hurricanes, tornadoes, severe storms) devastating another town in America, how do you feel? Choose the answer that best describes how you feel.

861 respondent(s) total nationally, % Total

Sad	30%
Motivated to help	20%
Scared/frightened/anxious	16%
Frustrated or angry	13%
Hopeless/overwhelmed	11%
No emotion in particular/apathetic	10%

Most Americans now notice increasing impacts of extreme weather, especially heat waves, wildfires and floods – and attribute them to climate change. They want our federal, state and local officials to take responsibility and act. We need to encourage and support Americans, to help them turn concern and awareness about extreme weather into support for climate change solutions.

Methodology

ecoAmerica designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online July 27th, 2018 using Survey Monkey. The survey yielded a total of 861 adult responses. The sample was drawn from an online panel and the respondents were screened to ensure that they were over the age of 18. The margin of error for the sample is +/-3.5%. In interpreting the survey results, it is important to note that all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error. Thus, the results of a survey may differ from the results that would be obtained if the entire population was interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of the responses to a particular question. For example, if 50% of the respondents in a sample of 802 respondents answered, "Yes" to a particular question, we can be 95% confident that the true percentage would fall within 3.5 points, or range from 46.5% to 53.5%.

Special Thanks

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