



# SURVEY OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES ON **Climate Change**



## INTRODUCTION

Around the world, **climate change** is making life nearly impossible for vulnerable communities as erratic rainfall, more frequent and catastrophic storms, and more prolonged droughts **decimate lives and livelihoods**. The World Bank estimates that climate change could push more than 100 million people into poverty by 2030 if action isn't taken to limit its effects.

To address this grave new threat, **CRS has launched a new climate change campaign to garner support among Catholics in the U.S.**, and others concerned with climate change, to join in the effort to help communities on the frontlines of the crisis adapt to the changing reality. In this context, in August of 2022, CRS commissioned the following survey of American attitudes about climate change conducted by Big Village, a New York City-based survey company.

*“Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.”*

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 119

## SURVEY FINDINGS



### Concern About Climate Change in U.S. and Other Countries Runs High

A majority of Americans are very or somewhat concerned about the impact of climate change in the United States (81%) and other countries (75%). Over half (53%) say they are “very concerned” about the effects of climate change in the U.S., while 43% express this same level of concern with respect to other countries.

Gen Z (84%) and Millennials (87%) are the most likely to voice concerns about the impact of climate change in the U.S., particularly compared to Gen X (76%). The same applies to other countries, with concern levels highest among Gen Z (80%) and Millennials (78%) and lowest among members of Gen X (70%).

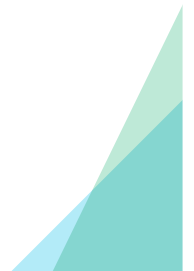
Concern levels also vary by race/ethnicity, with the vast majority of Hispanic (92%) and Black (86%) respondents expressing concern about the impact of climate change in the U.S. compared to three in four (76%) White respondents. These two groups are also more likely to demonstrate concern for other countries (82% Hispanic and 79% Black vs. 72% White).

In addition, concern skews higher among Catholic vs. non-Catholic respondents regarding climate change’s effects in the U.S. (85% vs. 79%) and, to a lesser extent, in other countries (78% vs. 74%).

**AMERICAN  
CATHOLICS** **5x**  
ARE

---

MORE LIKELY TO EXPRESS THAT **CLIMATE CHANGE** IS A  
**shared responsibility**  
THAN THEIR NON-CATHOLIC COUNTERPARTS





Mannan (31), Sultana (26) and their children; Ripa (7), Mohamad Sohag (2) and Mohamad Ador (2) stand near eroded land in Monpura Union, Bangladesh. This area experiences a high number of natural disasters, including almost constant river erosion. (Ismail Ferdous for CRS)

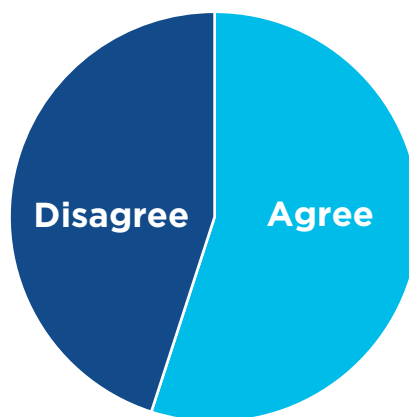


## Majority Agree Action Must be Taken to Combat Climate Change in the U.S. and Other Countries

Three in four Americans (75%) strongly or somewhat agree that action must be taken immediately to limit the impact of climate change within the United States, with half (50%) stating they “strongly agree”.

Roughly seven in ten (69%) express the same sentiment when it comes to taking action in other countries, including 42% who are in strong agreement.

The **United States** has a **responsibility** to other countries suffering from the effects of **climate change**



Additionally, more than half (55%) of adults feel the United States has a responsibility to help countries suffering from the effects of climate change. One-quarter (26%) of respondents “strongly agree” that the U.S. bears this responsibility. Millennials, followed by Gen Z, are the most likely to agree that action must be taken immediately to limit the impact of climate change within the U.S. (82% Millennials, 79% Gen Z) and in other countries (75% Millennials, 72% Gen Z). When asked if the U.S. has a responsibility to help countries suffering from the effects of climate change, Gen Z (68%) and Millennials (62%) were far more inclined than Gen X (51%) and Baby Boomers (49%) to agree with the statement.

The belief that action must be taken immediately to combat climate change—within the U.S. and other countries—and that the U.S. has a responsibility to aid other countries is much more prevalent in the Northeast and West versus the Midwest and South. Agreement levels are significantly higher across all three statements in the Northeast and West.

While there are few differences of opinion by religious affiliation, there are many by race/ethnicity. Agreement levels skew higher among Hispanic and Black respondents versus their White counterparts on all statements. Over four in five Black (83%) and Hispanic (82%) adults agree action must be taken immediately to combat climate change within the U.S., compared

to 71% of White adults. Hispanic (77%) and Black (72%) respondents are also more likely than White respondents (66%) to believe immediate action is necessary in other countries. Additionally, both groups are significantly more inclined to feel a sense of responsibility to other countries suffering the effects of climate change (62% Black and 60% Hispanic vs. 52% White).

A young girl named Ojufa wades through the flooded waters outside her home after Cyclone Amphan raged through Munshigong, Bangladesh in May 2020.

(Amit Rudro for CRS)





## Heat Waves are the #1 Association with Climate Change

Extreme weather events are top of mind for respondents when asked what words or phrases come to mind when they think of climate change. Melting ice caps and the consequences of that are mentioned most, followed by more extreme and less predictable weather events such as extreme cold, snowstorms, tornados, droughts, floods, and fires. Respondents discuss the immediacy, severity, and danger of climate change which they recognize as needing urgent attention. The causes of climate change are also top of mind for respondents, with the impact of pollution, fossil fuels, and carbon/CO<sub>2</sub> referenced by respondents when reporting what comes to mind when they think of climate change.

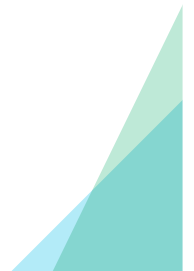
**GENERATION Z** IS  
**12x** MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER GENERATIONS TO SAY THEY'RE FEARFUL OF THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE USING  
**fear AND impending doom**  
TO DESCRIBE CLIMATE CHANGE

Gen Z is 12 times more likely than other generations to volunteer they are fearful of the effects of climate change, choosing words like “fear” and phrases such as “impending doom” to describe climate change in their own words. Compared to non-Catholics, Catholics’ open-ended responses more often refer to the need for solutions and action. Catholics are 5 times more likely to express that climate change is

a shared responsibility that requires a collective response. Hispanics are 14 times more likely than non-Hispanics to volunteer that humanity’s response to climate change is insufficient and 6 times more likely to share concern about the severity and longevity of the issue.

When presented with a list of words that may be associated with climate change, more than three-quarters (77%) of adults chose *heat waves*, while roughly two in three associated climate change with *drought* (68%) and/or *flooding* (66%). Nearly as many (62%) cited *rising sea levels*, and half (49%) associated it with *not enough food and water*. Rounding out the list of climate change impacts is *people needing to leave their homes*, selected by 36%. Just 9% of Americans stated none of these come to mind when they think about climate change.

Nearly all Gen Z (97%) and Millennial (95%) respondents associate one or more of the aforementioned events with climate change, compared to 89% of Gen X and 87% of Baby Boomers. While Gen Z (82%) and Millennials (79%)





Women in Ethiopia's Oromia state collect what little water they can find. In 2016, the region experienced its worst drought in 50 years, which left rivers and lakes completely dried out.

(Petterik Wiggers for CRS)

are the most likely to think of *heat waves* in connection with climate change, Baby Boomers are significantly more inclined than all other generations to associate it with *drought* (74%).

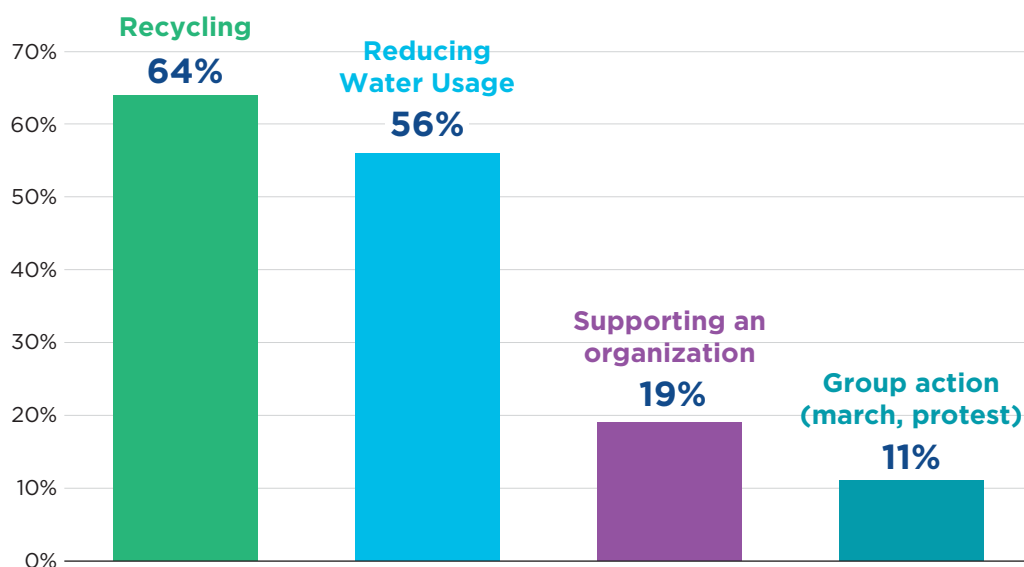
When viewed by race/ethnicity, Black (95%) and Hispanic (94%) adults are more inclined than White (89%) respondents to relate one or more of these events to climate change. However, when it comes to *not enough food and water*, Hispanics (55%) are significantly more likely than both their White (48%) and Black (44%) counterparts to make a connection to climate change.



## Many Take Small Steps, Fewer Take Collective Action to Reduce the Impact of Climate Change

Most Americans (85%) have taken one or more steps to reduce the impact of climate change, the most common being that they *separated trash from items that can be recycled* (64%). Over half (56%) have *reduced water usage*, and 38% have *changed the brands they buy to more eco-friendly brands*. Roughly one in five say they have *composted* (22%) and/or *supported an organization that fights climate change* (19%). Fewer *bought a hybrid or electric vehicle* (12%) and/or *participated in a group action to call attention to the impact of climate change, such as a march, protest, or boycott* (11%).

### Actions Americans Report Taking to Combat Climate Change:



Across generations, Baby Boomers (68%) are significantly more likely than Millennials (60%) and Gen Z (57%) to say they have separated trash from recyclable items. However, when it comes to bigger or more collective steps, Gen Z and Millennials are the most likely to act. Examples include having *supported an organization that fights climate change* (30% Gen Z and 25% Millennials vs. 16% Gen X and 14% Baby Boomers); *bought a hybrid or electric vehicle* (20% Gen Z and 16% Millennials vs. 11% Gen X and 7% Baby Boomers); and *participated in a group action to call attention to the impact of climate change* (20% Gen Z and 18% Millennials vs. 10% Gen X and 3% Baby Boomers).

Hispanic respondents (92%) are significantly more inclined than their Black (84%) and White (83%) counterparts to have taken steps to reduce

the impact of climate change. In particular, Hispanic adults are much more likely to have *separated trash from items that can be recycled* (70% Hispanic / 63% White / 53% Black); *changed the brands they buy to more eco-friendly brands* (50% Hispanic / 35% White / 35% Black); *composted* (26% Hispanic / 21% White / 16% Black); and *bought a hybrid or electric vehicle* (17% Hispanic / 10% White / 9% Black). Black (23%) and Hispanic (22%) respondents are equally inclined to have *supported an organization that fights climate change*, and they are nearly twice as likely as their White counterparts to have *participated in a group action to call attention to the impact of climate change* (17% Hispanic and 16% Black vs. 9% White).

Taking action to combat climate change is also more prevalent among Catholic (90%) versus non-Catholic (83%) respondents. More specifically, Catholic adults are significantly more likely than non-Catholics to have done the following: *separated trash from items that can be recycled* (71% vs. 61%); *changed the brands they buy to more eco-friendly brands* (45% vs. 36%); *supported an organization that fights climate change* (24% vs. 18%); *bought a hybrid or electric vehicle* (17% vs. 11%); and *participated in a group action to call attention to the impact of climate change* (15% vs. 10%).

A scooper distributes rations of wheat at a Joint Emergency Operation Program (JEOP) distribution point in Ejianeni, in rural Dire Dawa administration, Ethiopia in February 2019.

(Will Baxter/CRS)





## For Nearly Half, Climate Change Adaptation Strategies Rank Among Top 2 Ways to Help Other Countries

Respondents were presented with a list of five ways the U.S. can help countries adapt to the effects of climate change and asked to rank them in the order they would like to see them implemented. Ranking highest on the list of “top 2” actions Americans want to see implemented is *reducing emissions*, chosen by three in five (60%). Close to half (47%) ranked *helping people live with and adapt to climate change (for example, providing drought-resistant seeds to farmers, education, etc.)* among their top 2 choices, with *creating public policies that address climate change adaptation in the world* (45%) following closely behind. Ranking lower on the list of “top 2” preferred actions are *paying for damages when/after climate change impacts communities in other countries* (25%) and *increasing foreign aid funding to help the countries most affected by climate change* (24%).

---

**Close to half (47%) ranked helping people live with and adapt to climate change (for example, providing drought-resistant seeds to farmers, education, etc.) among their top 2 choices...**

With respect to *helping people live with and adapt to climate change*, Baby Boomers (53%) are significantly more inclined than all other generations (38% Gen Z / 44% Millennials / 45% Gen X) to consider it one of the top 2 ways they would like to see the U.S. helping other countries. On the other hand, Baby Boomers (20%) are the least likely—and Gen Z (32%) the most likely—to support monetary aid in the form of payment for damages caused by climate change. The same is true of increasing foreign aid funding to the countries most affected by climate change (17% Baby Boomers vs. 30% Gen Z).

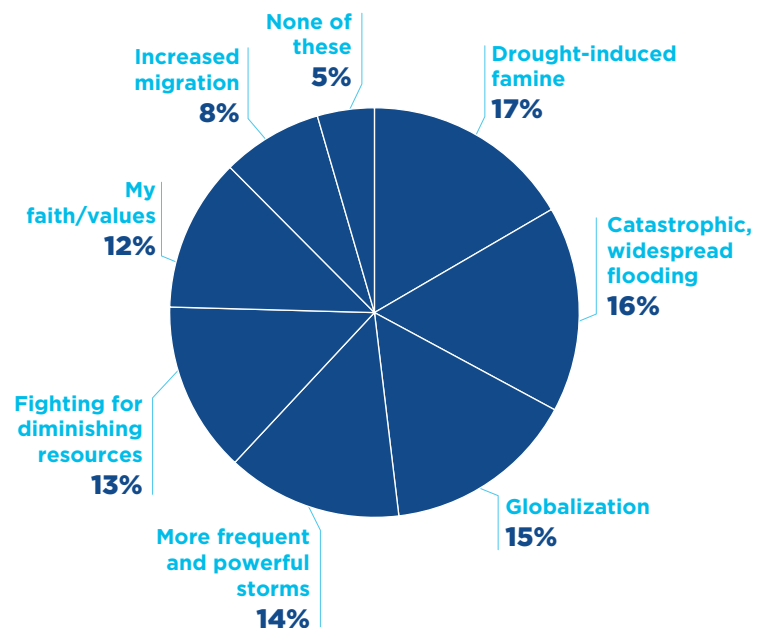
Opinions vary little by region and religious affiliation. When viewed by race/ethnicity, Hispanic and Black respondents (both 29%) are more inclined than their White counterparts (22%) to choose paying for damages among their top 2 preferred ways to help other countries deal with the effects of climate change. Similarly, Black adults (30%) are more likely than White adults (22%) to indicate a preference for increasing foreign aid funding to help countries most in need.



## Famines and Flooding Would Most Motivate Americans to Take Action to Address Climate Change in Other Countries

Most Americans (85%) cite at least one event that would motivate them to take action to combat the effects of climate change in other countries. Topping the list of motivating factors are drought-induced famines (48%) and catastrophic, widespread flooding (47%), followed closely by globalization (44%). Two in five feel they would be motivated to act by more frequent and powerful storms (40%) and/or fighting for diminishing resources (39%). Nearly as many cite their faith/values (35%), while increased migration (23%) is least likely to spur Americans into action to help other countries fight the effects of climate change.

Which of these events would  
**motivate you**  
**to take action**  
to combat the effects of  
climate change in countries  
outside of the U.S.?



Gen Z and Millennials (both 91%) are significantly more likely than Gen X (82%) and Baby Boomers (80%) to cite one or more factors that would motivate them to take action to combat the effects of climate change in other countries. Millennials are particularly inclined to view many of these events as an incentive to help, although Baby Boomers are just as likely to be motivated by *drought-induced famines*; *catastrophic, widespread flooding*; and *more frequent and powerful storms*. On the other hand, it is Gen Z and Millennials who are most influenced by *globalization* and *increased migration*. And when it comes to *their faith/values*, Millennials (41%) are significantly more inclined than both Gen Z (32%) and Baby Boomers (31%) to cite it as a motivating factor.

**Most Americans (85%) say that at least one event would motivate them to take action to combat the effects of climate change in other countries. Topping the list of motivating events are drought-induced famines (48%) and catastrophic, widespread flooding (47%).**

% motivated by...	Generation			
	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Drought-induced famines	46%	50%	43%	51%
Catastrophic, widespread flooding	42%	49%	43%	50%
Globalization (i.e., what happens overseas can impact the U.S.)	51%	47%	40%	43%
More frequent and powerful storms	35%	45%	34%	44%
My faith/values	32%	41%	36%	31%
Increased migration	27%	29%	18%	20%

Over nine in ten (92%) Hispanic respondents cite at least one factor that would inspire them to aid other countries in fighting the effects of climate change, compared to 83% of their White counterparts. Although White adults are the most likely to view *drought-induced famines* (50%) as a motivator, Hispanic respondents (54%) are significantly more inclined than White (47%) and especially Black (34%) adults to say *catastrophic, widespread flooding* would prompt them to act. The same is true of *globalization* for Hispanic (50%) versus White (42%) respondents. However, it is Black adults (46%) who are most likely to select *their faith/values* as a motivating factor in helping other countries battle the aftermaths of climate change.

Catholic respondents (90%) are more inclined than non-Catholics (83%) to cite at least one event that would encourage them to aid other countries. While most events have a comparable impact on both groups, Catholics (52%) are significantly more likely than non-Catholics (45%) to feel *catastrophic, widespread flooding* would prompt them to help other countries fight the effects of climate change.



## CONCLUSION

Most Americans demonstrate an understanding of the impacts of climate change and express concern about its effects in the United States as well as other countries. In addition, a majority agree immediate action is needed to limit the impact of climate change in the U.S. (75%) and other countries (69%), and over half (55%) feel the U.S. has a responsibility to help countries suffering from the effects of climate change. Gen Z and Millennials are particularly inclined to feel this sense of responsibility to other countries.

---

### **...a majority agree immediate action is needed to limit the impact of climate change in the U.S. (75%) and other countries (69%)...**

When it comes to turning thoughts into actions, many Americans have taken small steps to reduce the impact of climate change, such as separating trash from items that can be recycled and reducing water usage. However, just one in five (19%) have supported an organization that fights climate change, and fewer (11%) have participated in a group action to call attention to its impacts—although these numbers are considerably higher among Gen Z and Millennials.

Nearly half of Americans rank adaptation strategies among their top 2 choices for helping other countries affected by climate change—more specifically, *helping people live with and adapt to climate change* (47%) and *creating public policies that address climate change adaptation in the world* (45%). Baby Boomers are significantly more likely than all other generations, particularly Gen Z, to prefer the former strategy, potentially representing an opportunity to educate younger generations on the role adaptation can play in mitigation strategies.

The top three events motivating Americans to fight the effects of climate change in other countries are *drought-induced famines*; *catastrophic, widespread flooding*; and *globalization*. Sadly, these issues are becoming increasingly familiar to Americans through recent events, but perhaps a positive byproduct will be renewed motivation to help those suffering from the effects of climate change in other countries.

## METHODOLOGY

This report presents the findings of an Online CARAVAN® survey conducted among 2,009 U.S. adults. Broken down regionally, the total sample was made up of 351 respondents in the Northeast, 408 in the Midwest, 781 in the South, and 469 in the West. The survey was live on August 24-30, 2022.

Throughout this report, results are analyzed in total as well as by generation, region, race/ethnicity, and religious affiliation (Catholic vs. non-Catholic) where statistically significant differences exist at a 95% confidence level. Generations are defined as Gen Z, ages 18-25 (N=255); Millennials, ages 26-41 (N=715); Gen X, ages 42-57 (N=454); and Baby Boomers, ages 58-76 (N=519). To analyze results by race/ethnicity, respondents are classified as White Only, Non-Hispanic (N=1,293); Black Only, Non-Hispanic (N=236); and Hispanic, Any Race (N=290).

Roughly one in four survey participants (24%) described their religious affiliation as Catholic. Results for Catholic respondents (N=473) will be compared against results for all non-Catholics (N=1,536).

The margin of error for the total sample of 2,009 adults is +/- 2.2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

In El Ciprés, Opoatoro, Honduras, Elías Esaú García Martínez (13) and his father, Nery García Martínez (46), look over a plot of corn and beans with stubble used as soil cover to conserve moisture in the soil during the dry season.

(Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS)





## ABOUT CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. The agency alleviates suffering and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding. For more information, visit [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org) or [www.crsespanol.org](http://www.crsespanol.org) and follow Catholic Relief Services on social media in English at [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#); and in Spanish at: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

## ABOUT BIG VILLAGE

This survey was conducted by Big Village, a collaborative and consultative research partner to hundreds of organizations around the globe. Big Village possess a wide variety of resources, tools and technologies to collect and analyse information for its clients. As a member of the Insights Association and ESOMAR (the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research), Big Village adheres to industry ethics and best practices, including maintaining the anonymity of its respondents. The company's authorization is required for any publication of the research findings or their implications.

Cover photo by Nancy McNally/CRS

A child in Zimbabwe in 2016 walks across a stark landscape that used to be a watering hole. People were still driving their animals here, where only the last dregs could be found by digging meters into the last remaining spots of mud.

---

Catholic Relief Services | 228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, USA | [crs.org](http://crs.org) | [crsespanol.org](http://crsespanol.org)  
For more information, [nikki.gamer@crs.org](mailto:nikki.gamer@crs.org) or [brittany.wichtendahl@crs.org](mailto:brittany.wichtendahl@crs.org).

©2022 Catholic Relief Services. All Rights Reserved. 22MK-798976

This document is protected by copyright and cannot be completely or partially reproduced in whole without authorization. Please contact [brittany.wichtendahl@crs.org](mailto:brittany.wichtendahl@crs.org) for authorization. Any "fair use" under US rights law must contain the appropriate reference to Catholic Relief Services.