

When climate hits home

Public attitudes to adaptation across six continents







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Foreword

When climate hits home

People across the world worry about climate impacts, which they believe will affect the issues they care about the most, such as the cost of living. Voters across the political spectrum now expect their governments to take action.

2026 may be remembered as the year climate change ‘went global’, as rich economies suffer from the kinds of climate-driven impacts they have largely ignored in other countries for decades. Wildfires, droughts, heatwaves and floods have dominated the news, forcing political engagement and serious policy and business responses.

Even climate sceptics have woken up. In a summer that yielded apocalyptic headlines from the tragic events in Nepal and China to potatoes boiling in the ground, it was striking to see France’s National Rally cite the IPCC, its longstanding *bête noire*, in calling for air conditioning. In Austria, a broadcaster known for anti-net zero messaging sought to platform climate scientists it previously criticised, while governments in Argentina and the US have faced pressure from within their supporter base to respond to extreme weather.

You no longer have to accept the science to act on the weather.

This is not the first time extreme weather has destroyed lives and livelihoods. Climate protests are commonplace. Expert warnings are increasingly dire: the United Nations climate report, *Limiting Overshoot*, is one of a long string of publications calling for urgent action.

But public opinion has now crossed a critical threshold. A new survey of over 18,000 people across 18 countries – one of the most extensive public polls on adaptation – finds that people across the political spectrum are deeply concerned about climate impacts. There may be political fractures over the net zero climate agenda, but these

differences narrow when it comes to the urgent need for adaptation.

Moreover, the poll finds that people believe climate will affect their primary concerns: their jobs and the cost of living, in the here and now as well as the longer term. The economics of adaptation is firmly on people’s minds, turning general concern about climate impacts into politically salient demands.

Politicians should take note. The poll finds that people believe governments are responsible for advancing adaptation – but that they are falling short. They expect governments to plan for public health, protect people from extreme weather and keep public spaces liveable. Businesses are expected to step up on new technologies, though government is still named most often.

Finally, the poll finds that people see adaptation as a complement to, not a substitute for, emissions reductions. This directly challenges the emerging political narrative that we cannot and should not try to influence climate change but should focus exclusively on coping with its impacts.

It also challenges the reluctance of proponents of ambitious climate action to talk about adaptation, for fear that it might delay or prevent action on reducing carbon emissions. Quite the reverse: a majority believe that more ambitious action on adaptation would make efforts to reduce emissions more ambitious. The experts agree with the public: the *Limiting Overshoot* report calls for adaptation and mitigation to advance together.

Societies can and do respond dramatically to certain types of crises, in so doing often setting aside conventional views and norms. After the 2008 financial crisis, central banks abandoned their own orthodoxy and began printing money on an industrial scale to avoid global economic contagion and meltdown. After COVID-19 struck, many G20



governments financed household and business incomes to a level that would have been previously dismissed as fantasy.

In both cases, slow-building vulnerabilities ignored by the powerful turned suddenly into losses that could not be deferred. Decades of resistance collapsed and the impossible became the obvious step to take.

Now, the pressing need to adapt to extreme weather can convert our irresponsible neglect of climate change into action. The risk is that climate impacts fall victim to headline politics, prompting fragmented, ad hoc responses by politicians and businesses. Worse still, they could be weaponised. Adaptation is already subject to political agendas and tethered to a complex array of special interests.

What we need is informed public debate across all countries, demographics and political persuasions. That means looking at how to support the most vulnerable, domestically and internationally, beyond emergency response. It means creating the economic conditions to deliver affordable solutions and reduce emissions. It means balancing short-lived economic opportunities with building decent jobs into the future.

With a 'super' El Niño underway, we are likely to see more extreme weather in 2027. We have months, not years, to prepare.

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When climate hits home: Public attitudes to adaptation across six continents



At a glance

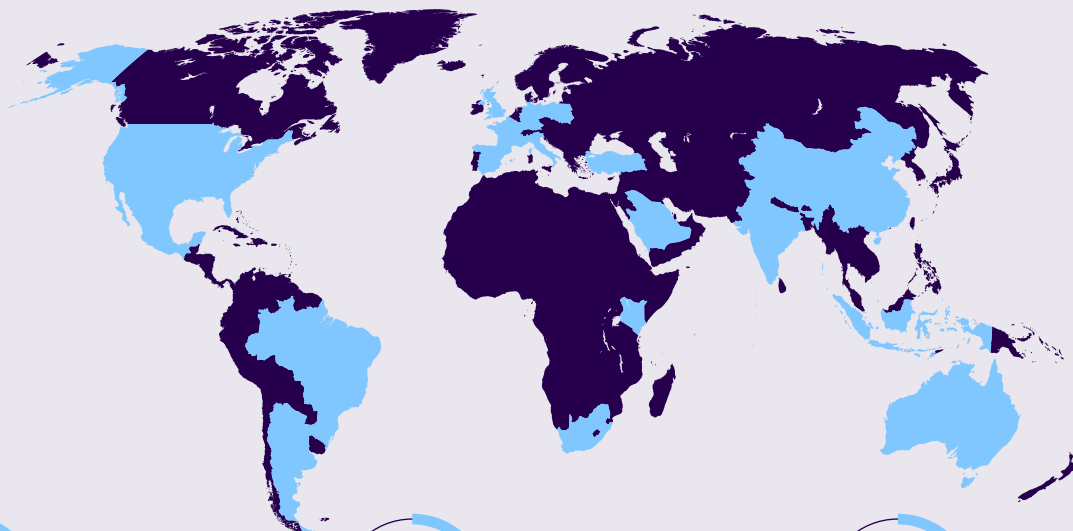


18,000+
Respondents

18
Countries

55%
World's Population

71%
Gross Domestic Product



72%

72% **expect** climate change to push up prices in their country over the next five years. Cost of living is the issue people rank first for their country across the 18 countries as a whole.

2/3

Two-thirds want their government to do more to adapt to climate-related impacts, regardless of their political views. **But over half** don't think their government has a clear plan

65%

65% want a combination of **adaptation and mitigation policies**; just 13 percent want to focus entirely on mitigation, and 11 percent entirely on adaptation

Concern for climate impacts is widespread...

Three in four respondents (76 percent) are concerned about climate impacts, including 35 percent who are very concerned. Climate denial is rare, at three percent overall. This broad pattern holds across countries, and across the political spectrum within countries.

...and linked to the economy. Over half (53 percent) expect climate change to increase their cost of living, 55 percent believe it will harm their safety and security, and 45 percent expect it to disrupt how they earn a living.

Government is expected to lead... People believe governments bear the primary responsibility to act on adaptation across all policy domains, and two-thirds want their government to do more.

...but few think they have a plan. Majorities in 16 of the 18 countries polled do not think their government has a clear plan to adapt to climate impacts.

People want adaptation *and* mitigation...

Asked whether their country should focus on cutting emissions or adapting, the most popular answer in all 18 countries was "We should focus equally on both".

...and they believe one amplifies the other.

Over half (53 percent) believe that action on adaptation will make efforts to reduce or prevent carbon emissions more ambitious.



Main Findings

Key findings and charts are presented below. The full set of charts can be accessed at climateopinion.org/when-climate-hits-home-public-attitudes-to-adaptation-across-six-continents/ In addition, the data platform hosted by the Climate Opinion Research Exchange allows for deeper exploration by country, question and demographic group.



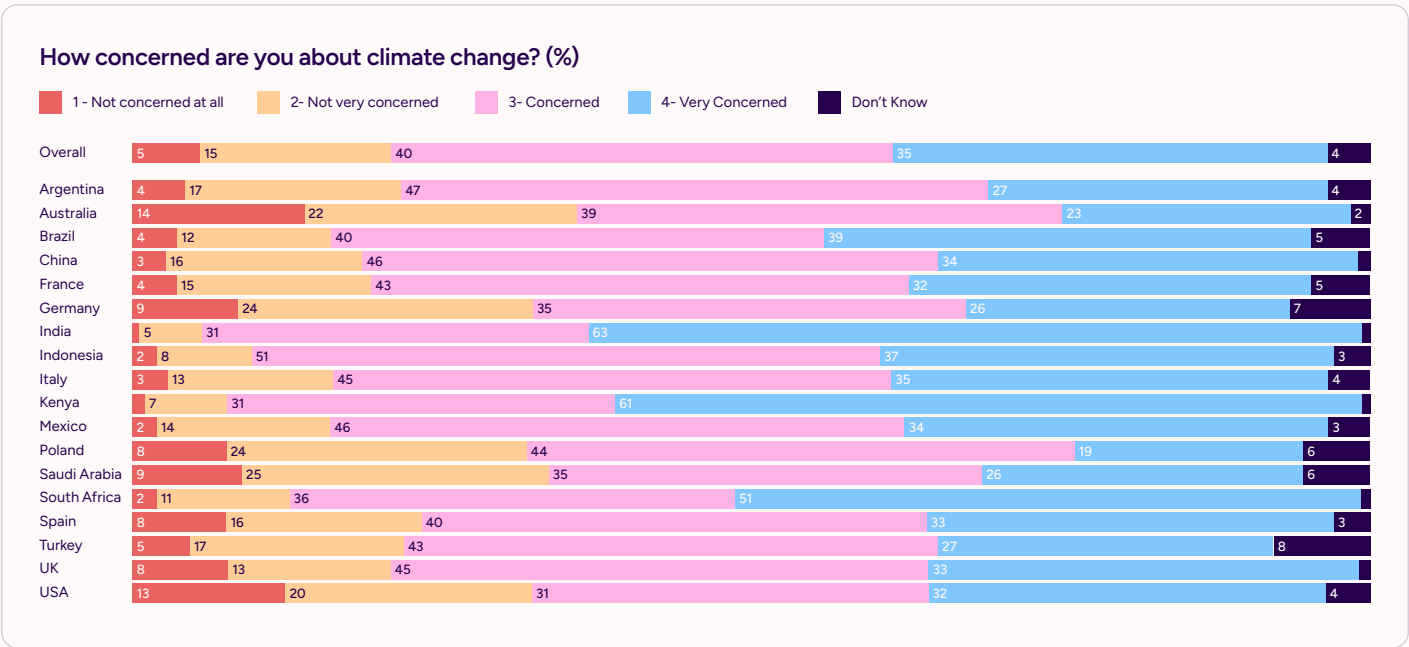
Main Findings

People are concerned

Asked how concerned they are about climate change, 40 percent of respondents across the 18 countries say they are “concerned” and 35 percent say they are “very concerned”. Combined, 76* percent are concerned, and concern is the majority view in every country. Concern is close to universal in India (94 percent), Kenya (92 percent), Indonesia (88 percent) and South Africa (87 percent), and reaches 80 percent in Italy, Mexico and China.

Denial barely registers – even among those who support political parties that take sceptical stances on climate science. Offered the statement “climate change is not real, so there is no need to do anything”, just three percent of respondents chose it.

*Unrounded Figure





Main Findings

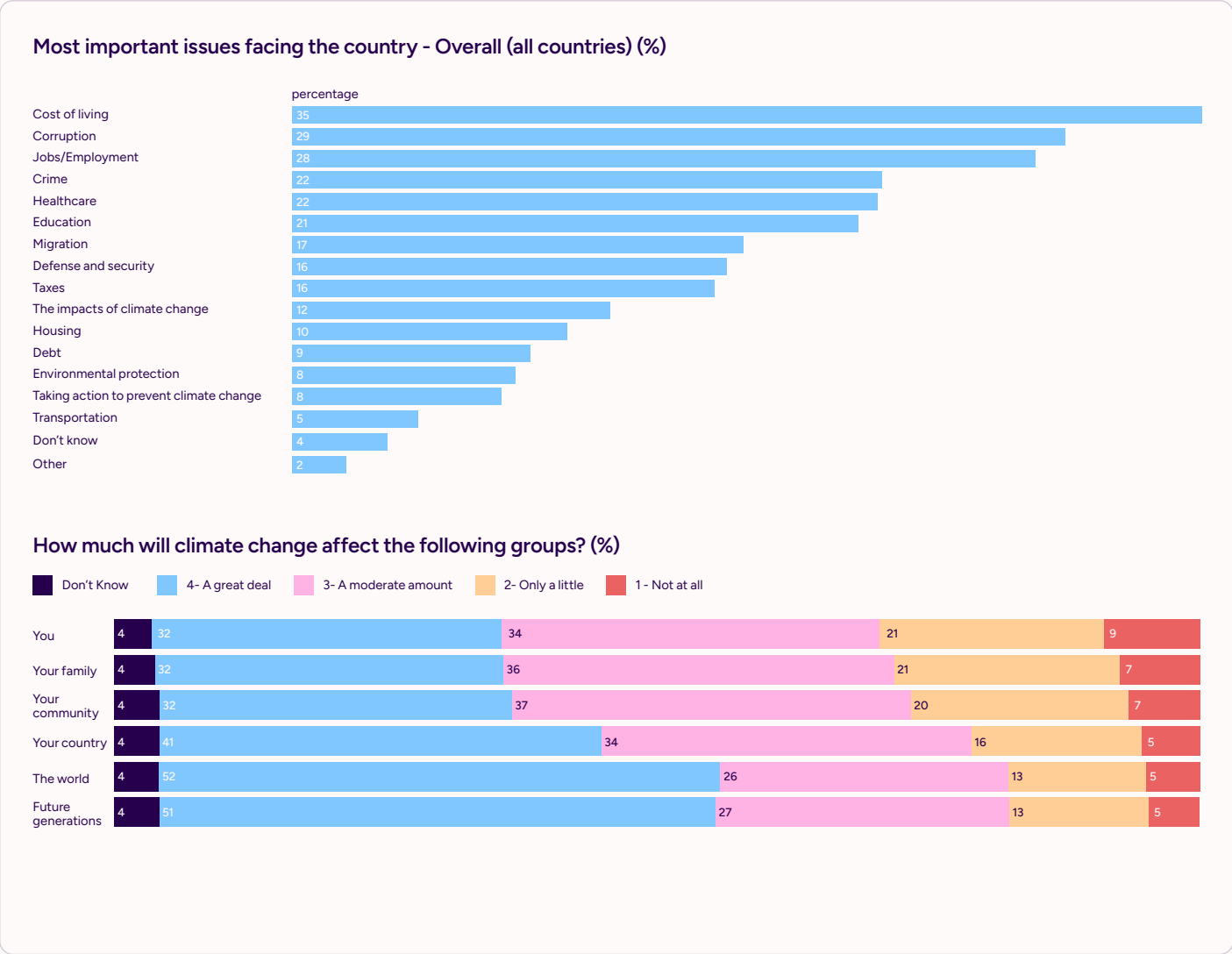
People believe climate will affect them

Two-thirds (66 percent) of people polled believe climate change will substantially affect them. That rises to 75 percent for their country and almost 80 percent for the wider world and future generations.

People also believe that climate change will affect the issues they care most about over the next five years. This includes the cost of living, which was ranked as the most important issue across the 18 countries (35 percent). Some 72 percent expect increased prices to affect their country over the next five years, and a majority foresee major impacts on their country's economy.

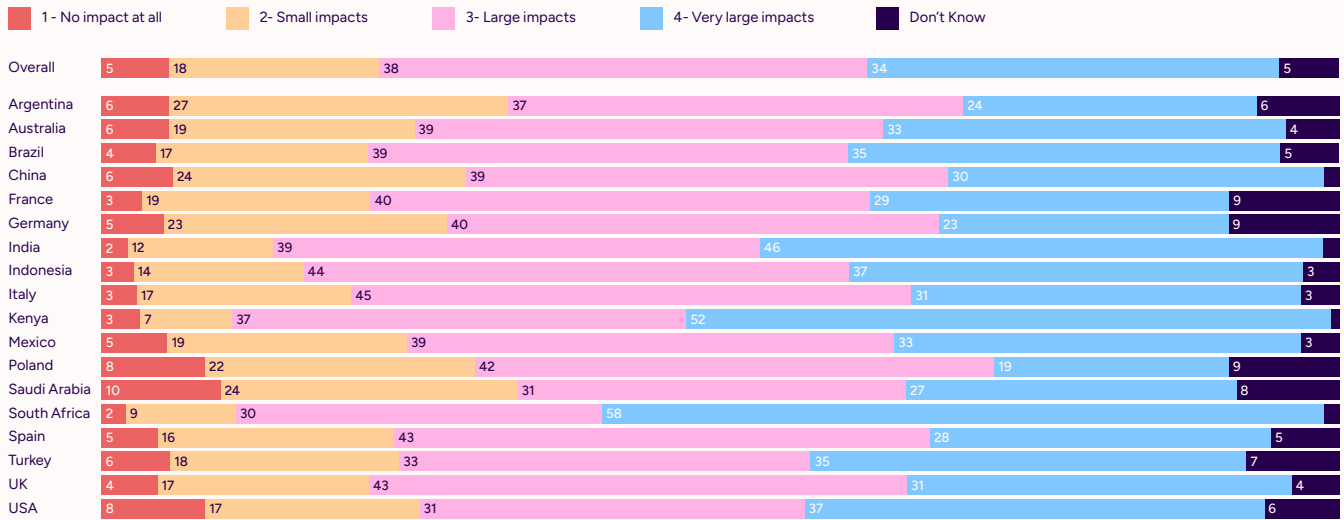
This fear extends to the employment market: 45 percent of those polled believe that a changing climate will disrupt how they earn a living. In countries such as India, Indonesia, South Africa and Kenya, that figure rises to a clear majority.

Adding to the economic stakes, majorities (between 59 and 71 percent) expect climate change to affect migration, health problems, health infrastructure, energy and water shortages, and international conflict.

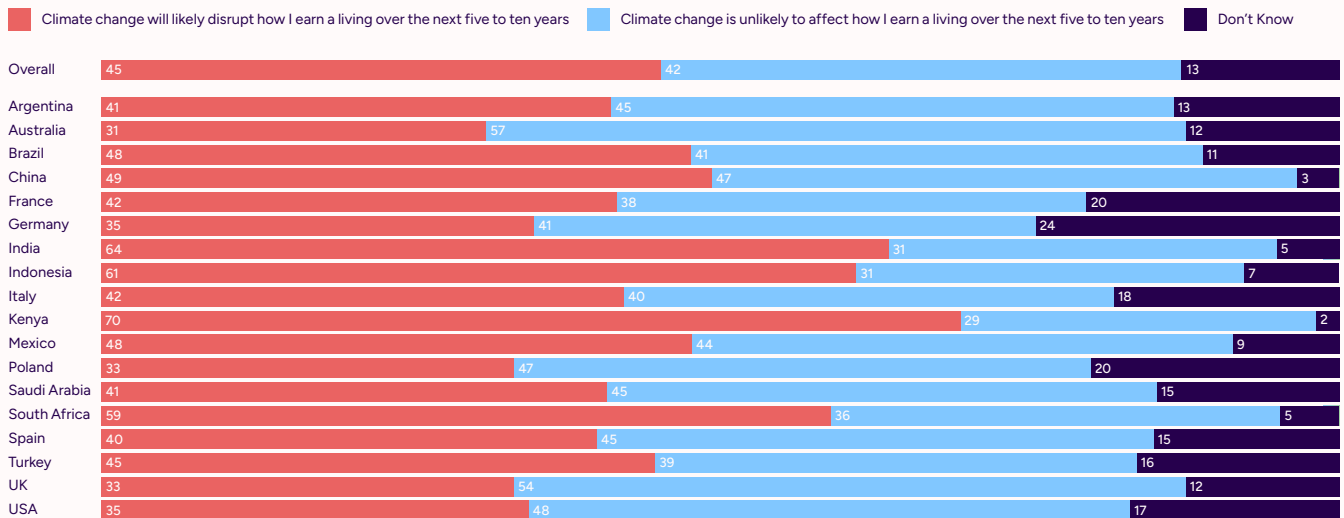




Increased prices - How much do you believe the following issues related to climate change will affect [country] over the next five years? (%)



Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? (%)





Main Findings

People demand action

Across the world, people point to the urgency of ambitious action to adapt to climate impacts, irrespective of their age, gender or income.

Support for action on adaptation is found right across the political spectrum for all countries with multi-party governing arrangements, and broadly across age and gender. Respondents tend to believe their preferred political party is best placed to adapt to climate impacts, even if that party has adopted sceptical stances on climate action and science.

People want governments to take the lead – especially in areas such as public health, the planning of public spaces and protection from extreme weather. In areas such as new technologies, business is expected to step up. In France, Germany, Poland and the UK, business is named as often as or more often than

government. On home improvements, people look partly to themselves, although government is still named most often.

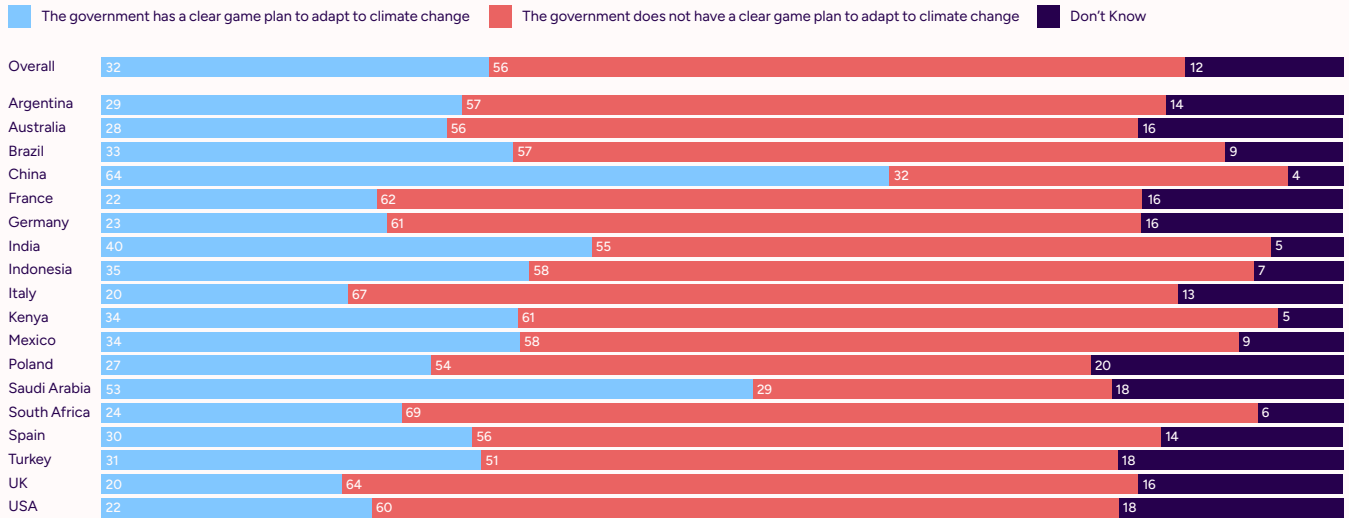
Yet respondents are unconvinced by their government’s response to date: 43 percent rate their current government’s efforts to adapt to climate change as “ineffective” or “entirely ineffective”, and 56 percent do not believe their government has a clear plan to adapt.

A clear majority of those polled (66 percent) want their government to do “more” or “much more” to help adapt their country to climate-related impacts. In countries that face some of the most acute climate-driven risks, such as South Africa and Kenya, that sentiment rises to 88 percent and 92 percent respectively.

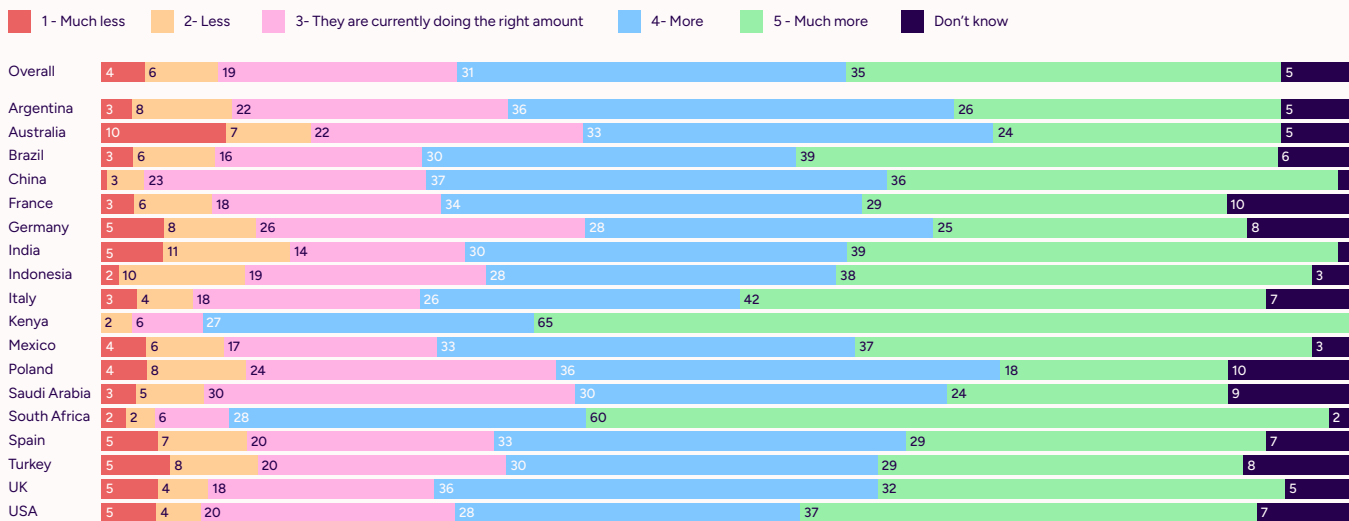




Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? (%)



Do you believe that the government should be doing more or less to help the country adapt to climate change? (%)





Main Findings

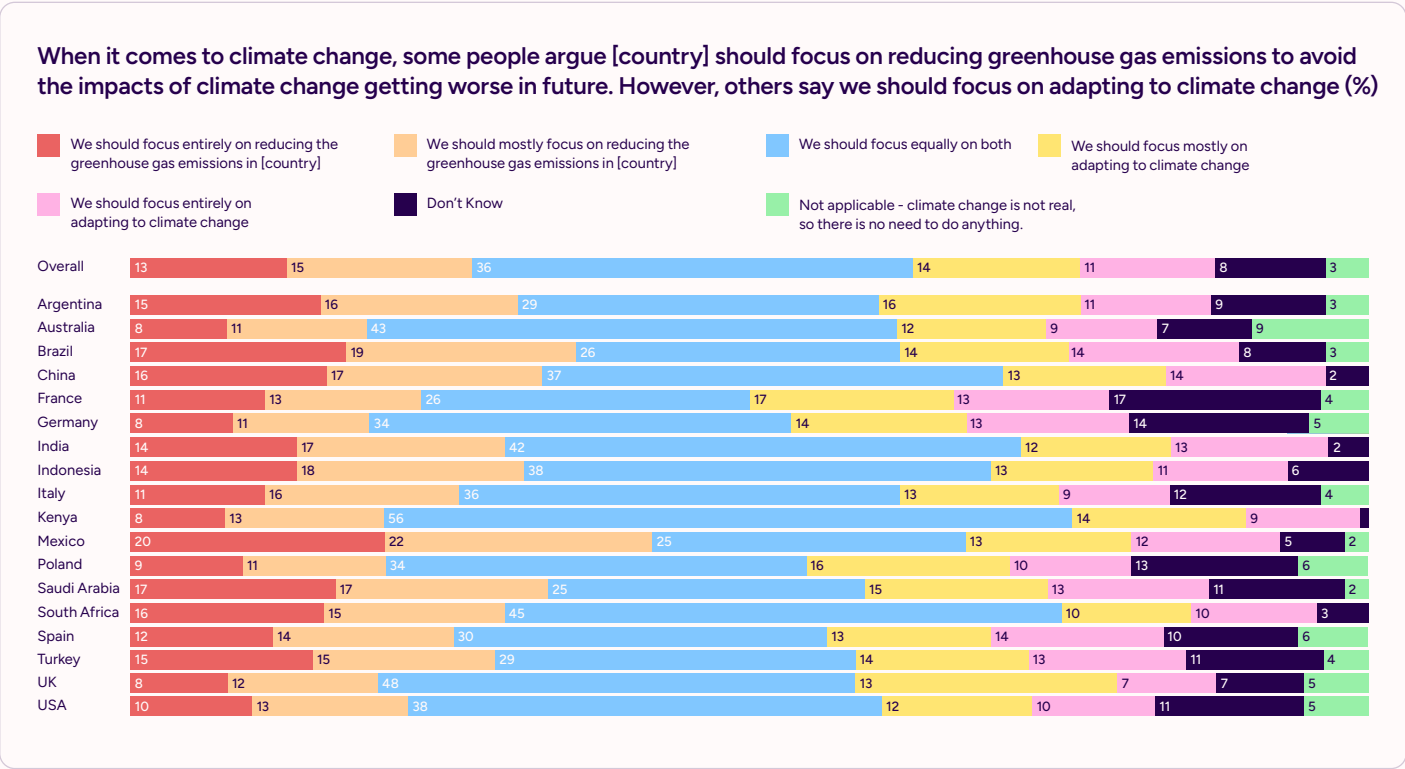
People want both

The survey finds that people want action on adaptation and mitigation. Indeed, they see more action on adaptation as a route to accelerating efforts to reduce and prevent carbon emissions.

Asked whether their country should focus on cutting emissions or adapting to the impacts of climate change, around two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents say they prefer a combination of the two. Over a third (36 percent) chose “We should focus equally on both”, the most popular answer in every country polled.

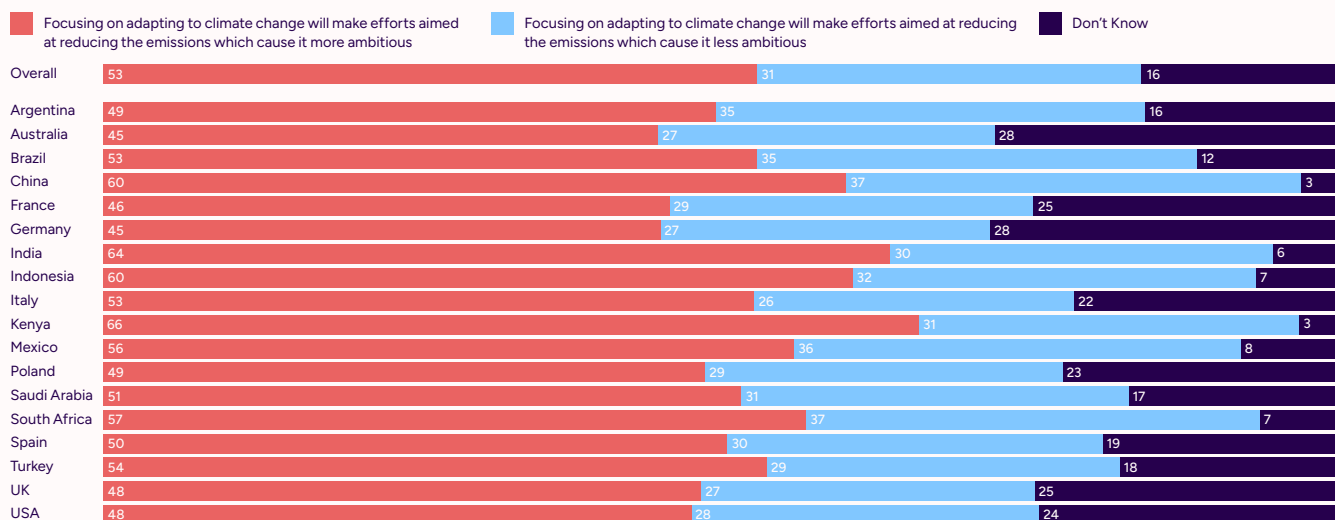
Across all countries, only 11 percent want their country to focus entirely on adaptation – roughly the same as the 13 percent who want to focus entirely on reducing emissions.

Over half of respondents (53 percent) believe that action on adaptation will have a positive effect on efforts to reduce emissions. In every country surveyed, more people expect adaptation to make mitigation more ambitious than less ambitious.





Which of the following statements do you agree with more? (%)



Main Findings

The G20

The G20 has a key role to play in coordinating economic and financial policy action on adaptation. This survey captured public opinion in 15 members and Spain, representing all four World Bank income bands. Views on climate change and its impacts were wide-ranging: 39 percent of those polled in Saudi Arabia believe climate impacts will raise the cost of living, compared with 68 percent in South Africa.

But across all 16 countries, people are most worried about the economic consequences of climate impacts. Where they differ is who they believe is responsible for managing these consequences.

When it comes to new adaptation technologies, the same pattern appears between and within the countries surveyed: respondents with above-average incomes are more likely than those below to say business, rather than government, should take the lead. Demand for such technologies is higher (63 percent) in middle-income G20 members than in higher-income members of the group (57 percent), yet the share looking to business to provide them moves the other way, from 31 percent to 33 percent. Where the demand is deepest, the route to market is least commercial.

Drawn from the 15 sovereign G20 members surveyed, together with Spain, a permanent guest of the G20 (n = 16,217). Those 15 members represent 92 percent of the population of the G20's sovereign members. Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Russia are not included; nor are the African Union or European Union, which are members as blocs; figures are the unweighted average of the national samples.



Methodology

The survey was conducted between 22 July and 10 August 2026 in 18 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Around 1,000 respondents were interviewed online in each country, giving a theoretical margin of ± 3.1 points at the national level and ± 0.73 points for the merged figures. The merged figures represent the 18 countries in the study, not the world. The data were weighted to be nationally representative. In countries with lower levels of internet penetration, the data skew towards respondents who are more urban, educated and politically engaged.

The survey was conducted by Norstat and commissioned by Morphosis and Vibe Fund, with support from the Climate Opinion Research Exchange.

To access the full set of charts, visit climateopinion.org/when-climate-hits-home-public-attitudes-to-adaptation-across-six-continents/



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About the report

When Climate Hits Home presents the findings of a public opinion survey commissioned by Morphosis and Vibe Fund, with support from the Climate Opinion Research Exchange, and conducted by Norstat in July and August 2026. Around 1,000 people were interviewed in 18 countries across six continents, together home to 55 percent of the world's population and 71 percent of global GDP, making this one of the most extensive public polls on climate adaptation yet undertaken. It asks what people expect climate change to do to the things they care about most, who they hold responsible for preparing, and whether they see adapting to climate change as a substitute for cutting emissions or a spur to it. The report draws on initial findings from the survey, focused on a global level, and is published to inform public, policy and business debate at a moment when extreme weather is forcing decisions faster than the evidence to guide them.

About the partners

Morphosis is an adaptation solutions investment business for a severely climate-impacted world 'beyond 1.5°C'. Our purpose is to deliver affordable transformative adaptation solutions to low- and middle-income households by catalysing the adaptation economy through investment, policy engagement, research and advisory work.

Morphosis orchestrates a network of private investors, market, policy and other stakeholders, and invests in a growing portfolio of adaptation solution businesses. contactus@morphosis.solutions

Vibe Fund is a strategic re-grantor working to build a better political climate to advance action across national and global challenges. We prioritise work on just transitions – economic, environmental, political and social. We strive to make good policies politically resilient, championed by people from all walks of life, including the communities most affected by climate, energy and nature impacts. vibefund.org

Climate Opinion Research Exchange shares high-quality opinion research related to climate change and the energy transition. We believe in accurately measuring trends in opinion and sharing this information openly with the public, researchers, civil society and the media, so we can all better understand the social, community, policy and business dynamics influencing opinion around these issues. climateopinion.org

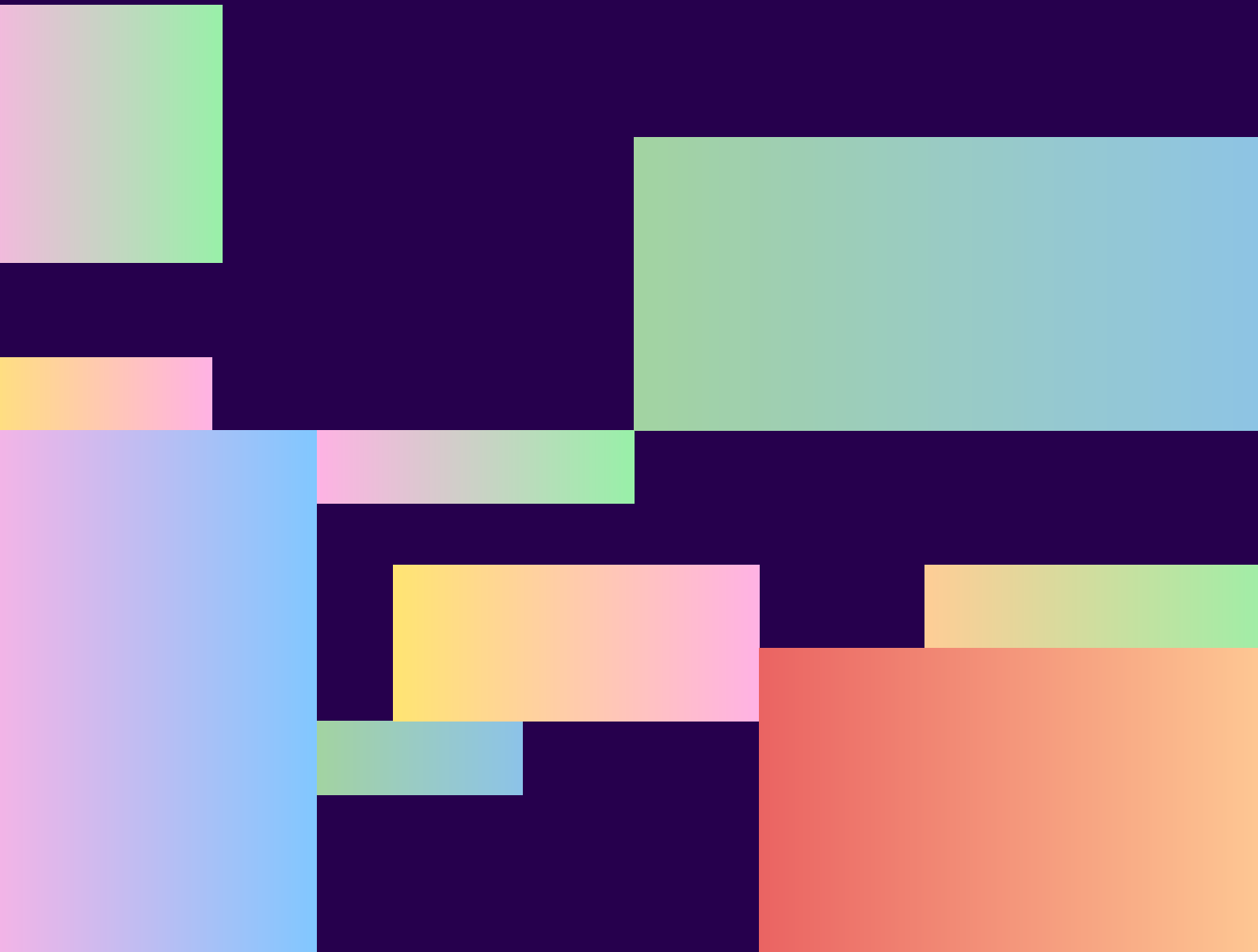
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All errors and omissions in this report are the responsibility of the authors and partner institutions.



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