



Special Eurobarometer 538

Climate Change

Executive Summary

Fieldwork: May – June 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change ranks as the third most serious problem facing the world as a whole, and more than three quarters of Europeans think climate change is a very serious problem in its own right

- According to respondents, when selecting one option, the three most serious problems facing the world as a whole are poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water (20%), armed conflicts (19%) and climate change (17%).
- Climate change is considered the most serious problem facing the world by respondents in seven countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland and Sweden. It ranks among the top three in 16 of the 27 countries.
- When given the opportunity to mention more than one problem, 46% of respondents think climate change is one of the most serious problems facing the world, ranking third behind poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water (58%) and armed conflicts (52%). More than one in five respondents in each Member State think climate change is one of the most serious problems facing the world.
- More than three quarters (77%) of all respondents think climate change is a very serious problem at this moment – ranking the seriousness of climate change between 7 and 10 on a scale to 10. This is the case for the majority of respondents in every Member State. In fact, 31% give it the maximum score of 10 indicating they think it is an extremely serious problem.

More than nine in ten Europeans have taken at least one action to help tackle climate change, although the majority think governments, business and industry are responsible in this area

- A majority of Europeans think that the European Union (56%), national governments (56%) and business and industry (53%) are responsible for tackling climate change. More than one third think that regional and local authorities are responsible (36%) or hold themselves personally responsible (35%), while 29% think environmental groups are responsible. Respondents could select multiple answers.
- More than six in ten (63%) say they have taken action to fight climate change in the last six months, and in 21 Member States the majority say they have taken such action.
- More than nine in ten respondents have taken at least one action that would help tackle climate change, with at least eight in ten in each Member State taking at least one action.
- The only actions taken by at least half are trying to reduce waste and regularly separating it for recycling (70%) and trying to cut down on consumption of disposable items (53%). Both actions have declined since 2021.

- Almost four in ten (37%) say that when buying a new household appliance, lower energy consumption is an important factor in their choice. This result represents the second consecutive decline since 2019.
- Other actions taken by at least one in five are buying and eating less meat (31%), regularly using environmentally-friendly alternatives to their private car such as walking, cycling, taking public transport or car-sharing (28%) or buying and eating more organic food (28%).

A majority of Europeans agree that taking action on climate change can have benefits

- More than eight in ten respondents (84%) agree that tackling climate change and environmental issues should be a priority to improve public health (41% totally agree, 43% tend to agree).
- Almost eight in ten (78%) agree that more public financial support should be allocated to the transition for clean energies, even if it means subsidies to fossil fuels should be reduced (36% totally agree, 42% tend to agree).
- Three quarters of respondents (75%) agree that taking action on climate change will lead to innovation that will make EU companies more competitive (29% totally agree, 46% tend to agree).
- Almost as many (73%) agree that the cost of the damage caused by climate change is much higher than the cost of investing in a green transition (33% totally agree, 40% tend to agree).
- Seven in ten respondents (70%) agree that reducing fossil fuel imports from outside the EU can increase energy security and benefit the EU economically (27% totally agree, 43% tend to agree).
- More than six in ten (63%) agree that adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change can benefit citizens in the EU.

There is strong support for national governments and the EU to set renewable energy targets and take action to improve energy efficiency by 2030

- 67% of respondents think their national government is not doing enough to tackle climate change, a decline of eight percentage points since March-April 2021. Still, with exception to respondents in Finland, the majority in every Member State think their government is not doing enough.
- Almost nine in ten think it is important that their national government (87%) and the European Union (87%) take action to increase the amount of renewable energy used by 2030. In the case of the national government, this is the lowest ever level of support compared to previous surveys.

- More than eight in ten respondents think that it is important that their national government (86%) and the European Union (85%) take action to improve energy efficiency by 2030 (e.g. by encouraging people to insulate their home, install solar panels or buy electric cars). Once again, in the case of the national government, this is the lowest ever level of support.
- Almost nine in ten (88%) agree with the statement that greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced to a minimum while offsetting the remaining emissions to make the EU economy climate neutral by 2050. At least seven in ten respondents in each Member State think this way.

The majority of Europeans think that the transition to a green economy should be sped up

- Considering energy price spikes and restrictions on gas supply due to the actions of Russia, 58% of respondents think the use of renewable energy sources should be accelerated, energy efficiency increased, and the transition to a green economy sped up. One quarter (25%) think the pace of transition should be maintained. 12% think that more fossil fuels should be used during the energy crisis and the transition to the green economy slowed down.
- Accelerating the roll-out of renewable energy sources in the EU to bring down the cost of energy and become more energy independent (29%), and taking economic measures to limit the price of energy bills for households such as taxing energy companies' profits and imposing energy price caps (29%), are the preferred measures to relieve the economic pressure caused by the energy crisis, and the only measures mentioned by at least one in four.

More than one third feel personally exposed to environmental and climate related risks and threats

- Almost four in ten (37%) say they are personally exposed to environmental and climate-related risks and threats (7% very exposed, 30% somewhat exposed). There is a considerable variation at the national level, with the proportions who feel exposed ranging from 64% in Portugal to 9% in Finland.

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Methodology used for this survey

This Special Eurobarometer 538 on Climate change was part of the Eurobarometer wave 99.3 and was conducted between 10 May and 5 June 2023. The methodology used was that of the Standard Eurobarometer surveys carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Media monitoring and Eurobarometer" Unit)¹. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face interviews, either physically in people's homes or through remote video interaction in the appropriate national language. Interviews with remote video interaction ("online face-to-face" or CAVI, Computer Assisted Video Interviewing) were conducted only in Czechia, Denmark, Malta, and Finland. A technical note concerning the interviews conducted by the member institutes of the Kantar network is annexed to the full report. It also specifies the confidence intervals.

Throughout the report, results are compared to Special Eurobarometer 513 of 2021². However, due to the impact of COVID-19, in some countries the methodology used in 2021 was the Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI). The countries where the methodology differs completely compared to 2021 are Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Finland, Sweden. The countries where the methodology differs partially compared to 2021 are Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Slovakia. Therefore, evolutions compared to 2021 should be interpreted with caution. When possible, results have been compared to Special Eurobarometer 490 of 2019³. The technical note annexed to the full report also specifies the differences in methodologies between 2023 and 2021.

In accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation⁴ (GDPR), respondents were asked whether they would agree to be asked questions on issues that could be considered "sensitive".

**We would like to thank the people across the
European Union who have offered their time to take
part in this survey.**

**Without their active participation, this study would
not have been possible.**

Note: In this report, EU countries are referred to by their official abbreviations. The abbreviations used in this report are:

Belgium	BE	Lithuania	LT
Bulgaria	BG	Luxembourg	LU
Czechia	CZ	Hungary	HU
Denmark	DK	Malta	MT
Germany	DE	The Netherlands	NL
Estonia	EE	Austria	AT
Ireland	IE	Poland	PL
Greece	EL	Portugal	PT
Spain	ES	Romania	RO
France	FR	Slovenia	SI
Croatia	HR	Slovakia	SK
Italy	IT	Finland	FI
Republic of Cyprus	CY *	Sweden	SE
Latvia	LV		

European Union – weighted average for the 27 Member States	EU27
BE, FR, IT, LU, DE, AT, ES, PT, IE, NL, FI, EL, EE, SI, CY, MT, SK, LV, LT	euro area
BG, CZ, DK, HR, HU, PL, RO, SE	Non- euro area

* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 European Union Member States. However, the *acquis communautaire* has been suspended in the part of the country not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are included in the 'CY' category and in the EU27 average.

¹ <https://www.europa.eu/eurobarometer>

² [Climate Change - July 2021 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [Climate change - September 2019 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ 2016/679

