

# Nature readers share growing climate fears

As the governments of almost 200 nations prepare for a pivotal meeting on climate change, scientists have expressed their fears over global warming and lacklustre efforts to curb greenhouse-gas emissions.

With just a few days to go until the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow, UK, 76% of the more than 650 readers who responded to a *Nature* survey said they were extremely worried about climate change. Nearly 60% said their worries had greatly increased since the last major climate accord, reached in Paris in 2015 (see 'Taking the temperature').

Responses to the reader poll, which were solicited on *Nature's* website, through the Nature Briefing e-mail newsletter and on social media, came from nearly 60 nations.

Respondents included a variety of scientists working across different disciplines, as well as some non-scientists.

The results tally with those of larger surveys of the general public this year, including ones conducted in the United Kingdom and the United States, which suggest that concerns over climate change are at an all-time high.

"People are increasingly worried but don't know what to do about it," says Cameron Brick, an environmental psychologist at the University of Amsterdam, who has studied the attitudes of people in the United Kingdom to climate change.

In Paris in 2015, 196 governments agreed to limit global warming to below 2°C, and preferably below 1.5°C, relative to pre-industrial temperatures. In Glasgow, governments are expected to adjust their Paris pledges in line with the best available science.

But the world has already warmed by about 1.2°C compared with pre-industrial times, and scientists think 1.5°C could be exceeded in just 15 years — meaning that without immediate, drastic cuts in greenhouse gases, the Paris goal is

very probably out of reach.

Respondents to the survey also expressed a lack of confidence in government pledges on climate change. Fewer than 50% said they are either somewhat hopeful or extremely hopeful of the Glasgow meeting boosting global efforts to tackle the issue.

"The *Nature* poll results show that concern is rising, but hope for COP26 lags way behind," says Brick, who adds that a recent spike in climate concerns has been driven by protests — such as those led by the global grassroots group Extinction Rebellion — and by the release of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest alarming report in August (see [go.nature.com/3iu12nn](http://go.nature.com/3iu12nn)).

Widespread uncertainty over how governments should tackle climate change, and the part that individual citizens and households can play, is adding to public confusion and fears, says Brick.

He argues that "there has been a real failure of governments" in terms of effectively communicating positive actions that people can take.

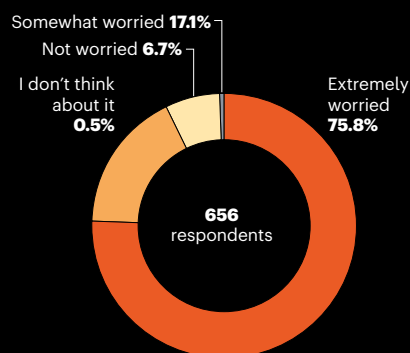
By Quirin Schiermeier

## TAKING THE TEMPERATURE

*Nature* asked readers how worried they are about climate change, whether their fears are growing and how hopeful they are about the upcoming COP26 summit.

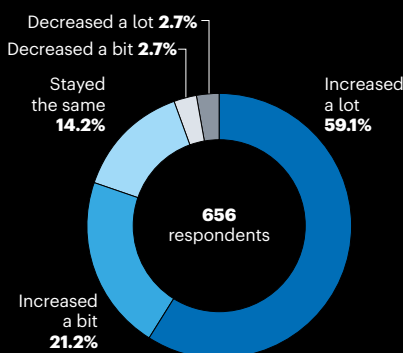
### Extreme concerns

A great majority of poll respondents say they are extremely worried about climate change.



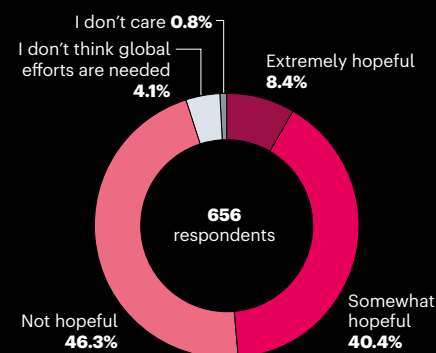
### Growing fears

80% of respondents say their level of worry has increased since the last major international climate summit in Paris in 2015.



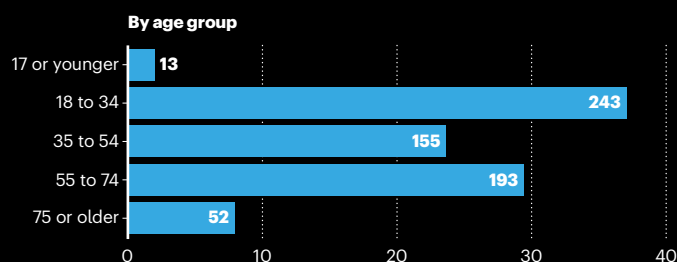
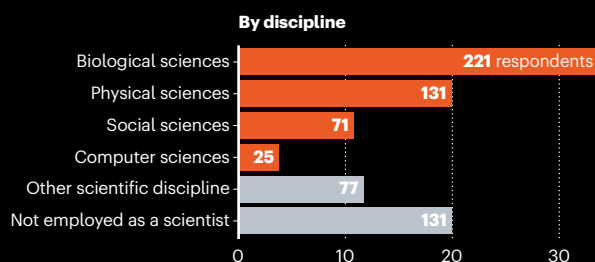
### Hanging on to hope

Just under half of respondents are hopeful that the upcoming COP26 meeting will significantly boost global efforts to tackle climate change.



### Breakdown of respondents

The 656 readers who participated in *Nature's* survey came from many disciplines and age groups.



Because of rounding, totals might not add up to 100.

Percentage of respondents