

## One-Third of Americans Faced Extreme Weather in Recent Years, Survey Finds

Hurricanes and winter weather, such as snow, ice storms and blizzards, were the most common events cited, according to a Gallup poll.



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One in three Americans say they have personally been affected by an extreme weather event in the last two years, according to a Gallup poll released on Wednesday, reflecting a period that included a paralyzing ice storm in Texas, one of the largest wildfires in California's history and a powerful storm that killed dozens of people in the New York region.

Thirty-three percent of U.S. adults said they had been affected by extreme weather since 2020, most commonly extreme cold, according to the survey, which was based on interviews conducted last month with about 1,000 adults living in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Hurricanes and winter weather, such as snow, ice storms and blizzards, were the most common extreme weather events cited, followed by extreme heat and floods. Two-thirds of respondents — 67 percent — said they had not been affected by extreme weather.

People living in the South and West were more likely to say they had lived through an extreme weather event, according to the poll, which has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Those living in the South were most likely to say they had been affected by extreme cold, hurricanes or tornadoes. Residents in the West cited wildfires, extreme heat and drought as the extreme weather events they were most likely to have faced. Floods and hurricanes were the most common responses from Easterners, while Midwesterners cited snow or ice storms, along with floods and tornadoes.

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While not all extreme weather is climate related, the researchers found that attitudes about climate change were closely associated with personal experience with an extreme weather event. Sixty-three percent of those who had been affected by extreme weather said they worried “a great deal” about global warming, compared with 33 percent who had not been affected by extreme weather.

Sixty-four percent of those who had been affected by extreme weather said that climate change would pose “a serious threat” to their way of life during their lifetime, compared with 36 percent who had not been affected by extreme weather. Sixty-seven percent of people who had lived through an extreme weather event, and 48 percent of those who had not, said that the government was not doing enough to protect the environment.

There have been dozens of severe weather events in the United States over the last two years that have each caused \$1 billion or more in damages, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. There were 20 such climate disasters in 2021, and 22, a record, in 2020.

Last year, those climate disasters caused a combined \$145 billion in damages and at least 688 deaths, according to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.



Storm damage in Austin, Texas, in February 2021. More than 200 people died as a result of freezing winter weather that battered Texas from Feb. 11 to March 5 that year. Tamir Kalifa for The New York Times

They included a deadly ice storm that paralyzed much of Texas for days; a heat wave that killed hundreds in Oregon and Washington; Hurricane Nicholas, which swept states along the Gulf of Mexico; Hurricane Ida, which made landfall in Louisiana before its remnants killed more than 40 people in the New York region; and major wildfires in California, Oregon, Washington and Colorado.

Last summer, experts said that the recent surge of climate disasters made it clear that the United States was not ready to handle extreme weather events as they occur more frequently as a result of a warming planet.

“These events tell us we’re not prepared,” Alice Hill, who oversaw planning for climate risks on the National Security Council during the Obama administration, said at the time. “We have built our cities, our communities, to a climate that no longer exists.”

Climate experts say that governments have not spent enough time or money preparing for climate disasters, and that there is a limit to how much the country, and the world, can adapt. If nations don’t move quickly enough to cut greenhouse gas emissions, which drive climate change, experts say, they will soon find themselves at the outer edges of resilience.