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Americans' Extreme Weather Policy Views and Personal Experiences

Majorities who have experienced extreme weather see a link to climate change

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand Americans' experiences with extreme weather and views on policies related to extreme weather. For this analysis, we surveyed 8,638 U.S. adults from May 13 to 19, 2024. Everyone who took part in the survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way, nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#).

Here are the [questions used for this report](#), along with responses, and its [methodology](#).

Americans' Extreme Weather Policy Views and Personal Experiences

Majorities who have experienced extreme weather see a link to climate change

The year 2023 brought record-breaking [billion-dollar weather disasters](#), which took a tremendous financial and [personal toll on Americans nationwide](#). As extreme weather continues to make headlines, a new Pew Research Center survey asks Americans what policies they support to address weather-related damage. We also ask people who recently lived through extreme weather events if they think climate change contributed to them, and how their lives were affected.

Key takeaways

Support for regulating construction, but not for bans or mandates. Most Americans (73%) want stricter building standards in areas vulnerable to extreme weather. But more aggressive steps, like requiring people to move out of these areas, are unpopular (just 13% approve).

Reports of extreme weather are common, though they vary by party. About seven-in-ten Americans say that in the past year, they've experienced at least one of five types of extreme weather we asked about: severe weather, like floods or intense storms; unusually hot weather; droughts; wildfires; or rising sea levels. Democrats are more likely to report these experiences than Republicans, across each type of extreme weather, though the size of these differences vary by type.

Climate change seen as a factor. Among those who say they've experienced any of these extreme weather events, a large majority say climate change contributed at least a little. Most Republicans – and nearly all Democrats – say climate change played a role.

Hardships caused by extreme weather are wide-ranging. Those who say they suffered negative impacts of extreme weather events describe a host of challenges, in their own words. These include property damage, elevated utility and insurance bills, disruptions to daily life, and anxiety.

Jump to read more about: [Views on extreme weather policies for places at high risk](#) | [Personal experiences with extreme weather](#) | [Climate change's contribution to extreme weather](#) | [Negative personal impacts of extreme weather](#)

Views on extreme weather policies for places at high risk

In response to extreme weather, [home insurers are hiking premiums](#) and [governments are weighing construction restrictions in high-risk zones](#), among other proposals. Our survey finds some areas of consensus around policies that respondents like – and do not like – to deal with extreme weather.

Building regulations

Respondents like more oversight of construction in areas vulnerable to weather disasters but are much less supportive of outright building bans. When asked about government setting stricter building standards in these high-risk communities, 73% say this is a good idea. In contrast, just 37% say the same of measures to ban new construction.

Financial assistance

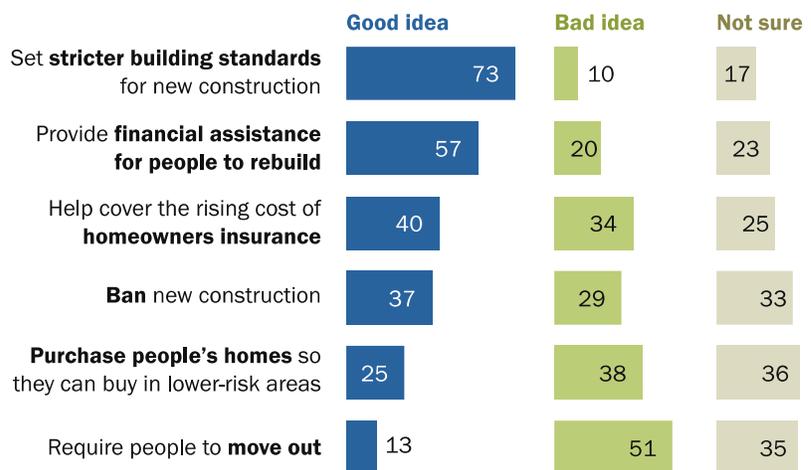
Americans have mixed views about government financial assistance, depending on the kind of support. More than half (57%) support aid for communities to rebuild after extreme weather events, with a far smaller share (20%) saying this is a bad idea. Views on providing support to pay rising home insurance costs are more divided, with 40% saying this is a good idea and 34% saying this is a bad idea. But when asked about government buying people's homes in high-risk areas so they can purchase ones in lower-risk areas, more say this is a bad (38%) than good (25%) idea.

Required relocation

One policy idea that is unpopular among Americans is requiring people in high-risk areas to move out of their communities: Far larger shares say this is a bad rather than good idea (51% vs. 13%).

Broad support for stricter building standards for communities at high risk of extreme weather

% of U.S. adults who say it is a ___ for government to do each of the following for communities in places at high risk of extreme weather



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Policy views by party

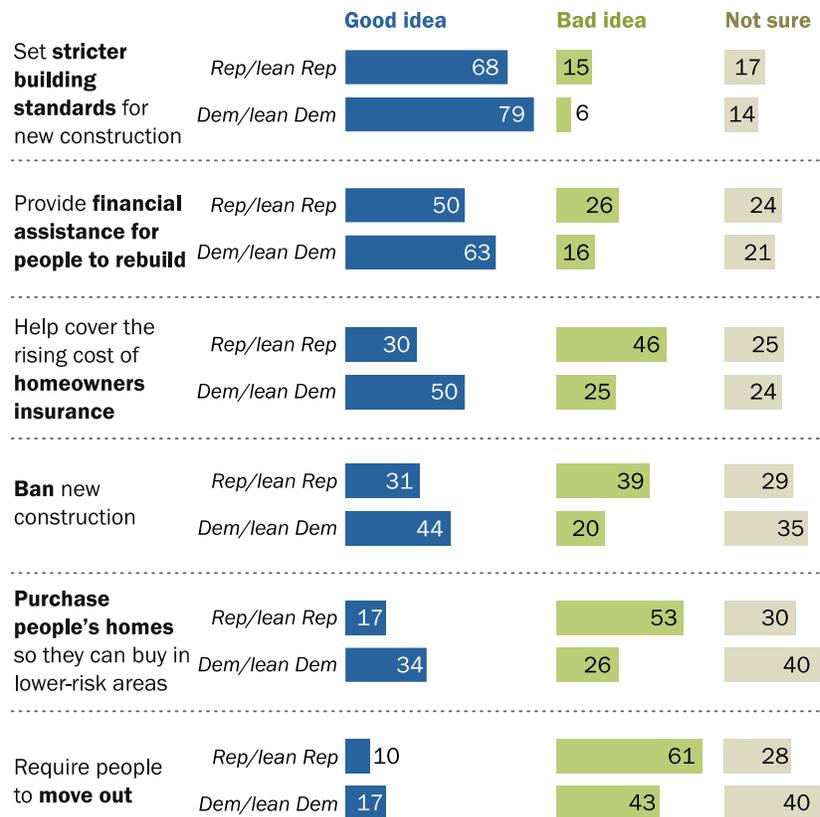
There's general bipartisan support for policies to set higher building standards, and to help pay rebuilding costs.

Majorities of both Democrats (79%) and Republicans (68%) share the view that stricter standards for new construction in high-risk areas are a good idea. Just 15% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and 6% of Democrats and Democratic leaners say this is a bad idea.

Similarly, across parties, when it comes to **financial assistance to rebuild**, larger shares say this is a good idea than bad. Half of Republicans say this is a good idea, compared with 26% who say it's a bad idea. But the spread is much wider among Democrats, with 63% saying it's a good idea and 16% saying it's a bad idea.

Bipartisan support for stricter building standards in high-risk communities

% of U.S. adults who say it is a ___ for government to do each of the following for communities in places at high risk of extreme weather



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Republicans and Democrats also are fairly united in their disapproval of requiring people to move out of high-risk areas. Very small shares of Republicans (10%) and Democrats (17%) say this is a good idea, while 61% of Republicans and 43% of Democrats say this is a bad idea.

Views differ somewhat by party when it comes to **banning new construction**. Larger shares of Democrats feel this is a good idea (44%) than a bad idea (20%). But among Republicans, these views are flipped, with 39% saying these bans are a bad idea and 31% saying they are a good idea.

There's also a **partisan split when it comes to helping people cover the rising cost of home insurance**. Larger shares of Republicans say this is a bad idea (46%) than a good idea (30%). But for Democrats, 50% feel this is a good idea, versus 25% who say it's a bad idea.

Related: Read our 2024 report [How Americans View National, Local and Personal Energy Choices](#)

Personal experiences with extreme weather

About seven-in-ten Americans (72%) report that their local community experienced at least one of the five types of extreme weather events we asked about in the past 12 months: severe weather, like floods or intense storms; long stretches of unusually hot weather; droughts or water shortages; rising sea levels; or major wildfires.

Regional differences

We found pronounced regional differences in reported extreme weather. Half of Westerners and 54% of Southerners say they experienced stretches of unusually hot weather in the past year, compared with roughly a third each in the Northeast or Midwest. And major wildfires are reported by 38% of respondents in the West, but only by 8% in the Northeast and Midwest.

Partisan reporting

Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to say they've experienced extreme weather events. For example, 57% of Democrats say they've lived through long periods of unusually hot weather, compared with 34% of Republicans. These partisan gaps hold even among Democrats and Republicans who live in the same region.

Reported extreme weather experiences vary by region

% who say that their local community has experienced each of the following in the past 12 months

	Severe weather, like floods or intense storms	Long periods of unusually hot weather	Droughts or water shortages	Major wildfires	Rising sea levels that erode beaches and shorelines
U.S. adults	51	46	27	17	17
Northeast	50	36	13	8	25
Midwest	49	35	22	8	7
South	59	54	27	14	19
West	39	50	41	38	17

Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Climate change's contribution to extreme weather

According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [climate change is driving increased extreme weather](#).

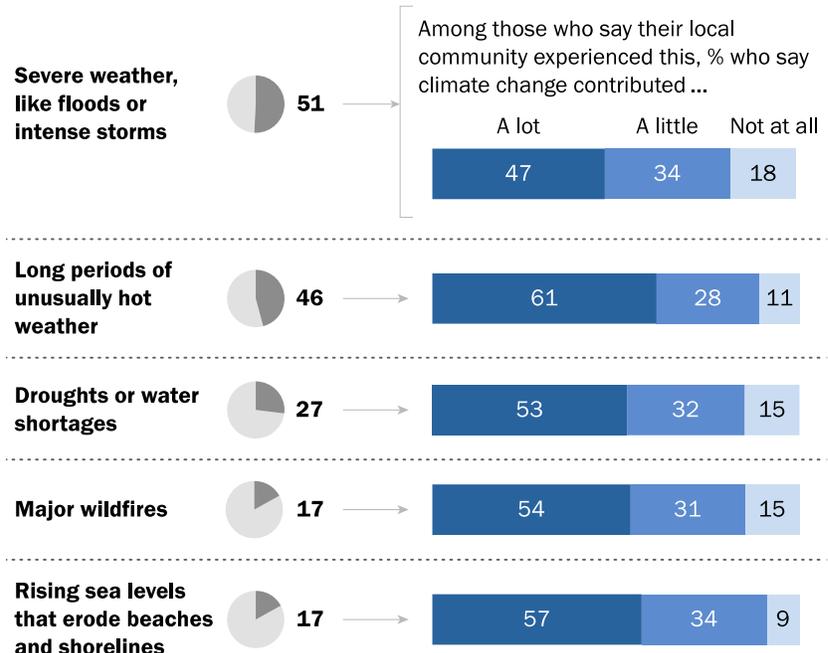
Among respondents who say they've lived through any of the extreme weather events we asked about, there is broad agreement that climate change is a contributor.

For instance, an overwhelming majority (91%) make this link for rising sea levels, with 57% saying climate change contributed a lot and 28% saying it contributed a little.

The same goes for long periods of unusually hot weather, with 61% saying climate change contributed a lot and 28% saying it contributed a little.

Large majorities of those who have experienced extreme weather say climate change contributed

% of U.S. adults who say that their local community has experienced the following in the past 12 months



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Views by party on role of climate change

Among those who report experiencing extreme weather in the past year, **large shares in both parties say that climate change contributes to these events at least a little.** But while nearly all Democrats make this connection for each of the five types of extreme weather we asked about, smaller shares of Republicans share this view.

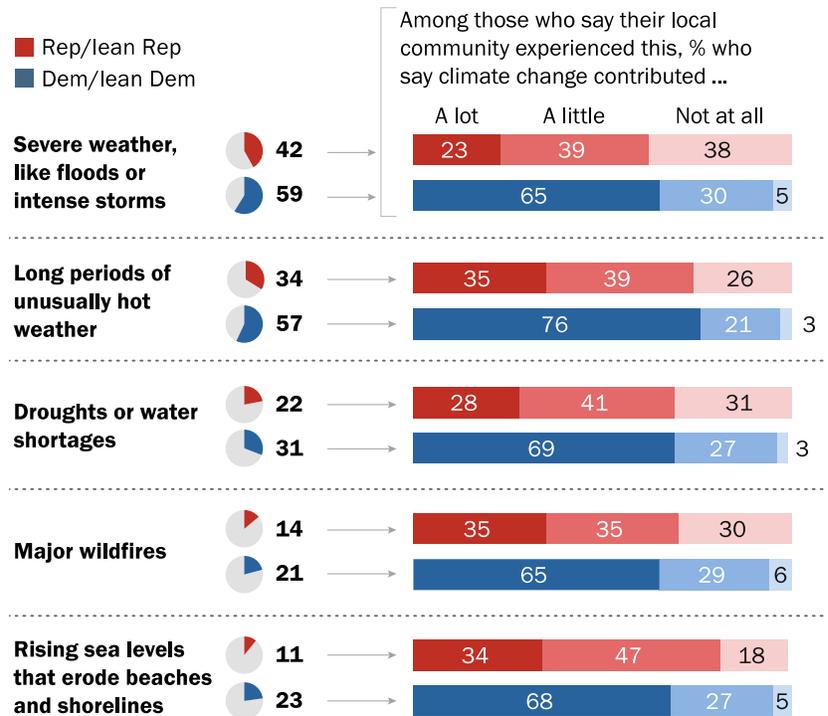
For example, 97% of Democrats see climate change as a contributor to long periods of unusually hot weather, compared with 74% of Republicans.

Democrats also hold stronger convictions than Republicans about the relationship between climate change and extreme weather. For

instance, 65% of Democrats say climate change contributed a lot to the severe weather, like floods or intense storms, that they experienced, and 30% say it contributed a little. In contrast, among Republicans, 23% say that climate change contributed a lot, while 39% say it contributed a little.

Majorities of Republicans who have experienced extreme weather make a link to climate change

% who say that their local community has experienced the following in the past 12 months



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.
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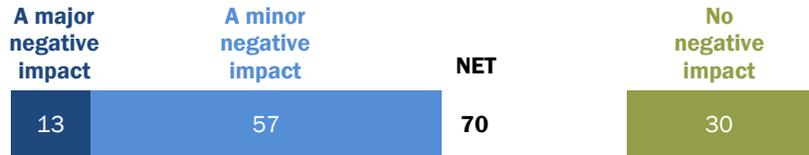
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Negative personal impacts of extreme weather

Extreme weather events can be devastating, [straining household finances](#), [damaging mental health](#) and [threatening lives](#). Among those who say they've experienced at least one of the extreme weather events asked about in our survey during the past 12 months, 70% say it had a negative impact on their own life. This includes 57% who say it had a minor negative impact and 13% who say it had a major negative impact.

Most Americans who have experienced extreme weather events say it negatively impacted their lives

Among U.S. adults who say that their local community has **experienced at least one extreme weather event in the past 12 months**, % who say it had ___ on their own life



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Refer to the Topline for details on how this question was asked.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Extreme weather’s impact, in their own words

We asked the respondents who said they’ve experienced negative impacts from extreme weather to answer an open-ended question about *how* these events negatively impacted their lives.

Here’s what they said:

Respondents whose jobs depend on reliable transportation or crop production mentioned how extreme weather events affected their livelihoods and income. One Midwestern woman in her 80s mentioned that “crops were not good so, of course, since we farm, our income was very low.”

“I’ve been earning income as a food delivery driver and, without AC, delivering

during the day on a normally hot day was miserable. When it got over 90 degrees, I had to cut back to only delivering after the sun went down, which reduced the hours I was able to work by a lot.” –Woman, 40s, West

How people describe the negative impacts that extreme weather has had on their lives

Among U.S. adults who say an extreme weather event had a major/minor negative impact on their own life, % who say it impacted them in the following ways

Community impacts	19
<i>Includes damaged roads, loss of power and low water levels in reservoirs</i>	
Lifestyle impacts	16
<i>Includes general inconveniences and being too hot to go outside</i>	
Damage to property or construction costs	15
<i>Includes damage to houses and cars, construction costs for rebuilding and weatherproofing for the future</i>	
Health consequences	11
<i>Includes air quality, breathing difficulties and mental health concerns</i>	
Costs other than personal property damage and construction	10
<i>Includes higher utility bills and insurance costs</i>	
Work and school impacts	5
<i>Includes loss of work and cancelled school</i>	
Relocation (permanent or temporary)	1
Don’t know/Refused	36

Note: Verbatim responses have been coded into categories. Figures add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Refer to the Topline for full category details.

Source: Survey conducted May 13-19, 2024.

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Personal property damage or construction costs were mentioned in 15% of responses, spanning damage to houses, cars and yards. An additional 19% spoke of **community impacts**, like road closures and power outages. One woman in her 70s from the South said, “In the summer of 2023, we had to water the foundation of our home to try to avoid foundation problems like many in our community have had.”

“Our house burned down in 2020 due to major wildfire and it is traumatic seeing it happen again and again to other people in the community and not knowing if it will happen again to us.” –Woman, 40s, West

In addition to the costs to repair personal property, 10% of respondents mentioned being hit with **additional expenses** like escalating utility bills or elevated home insurance premiums. One respondent noted that “the cost of home insurance, even with no claims, has tripled” (woman, 60s, South).

“Prices have skyrocketed on home insurance, water and electricity. The cost of living and working in our area has lowered our quality of life. Many locals are leaving.” –Woman, 60s, South

Lifestyle impacts were reported by 16%, with affected respondents mentioning being stuck inside due to heat or storms. One Southern woman in her 30s noted, “Major storms made it very dangerous for me [to] travel where I need to go, like to work and to medical appointments.” Relatedly, 5% said their **work or schools were limited or even closed entirely**.

“Every summer, we dread wildfire season. The smoke in recent years has been so bad that kids can’t go outside to play. We can’t do regular outdoor activities without using a mask.” –Man, 50s, West

Physical and mental health consequences of extreme weather were reported by 11% of affected respondents. They mentioned how hard it was to be stuck indoors and shared their anxiety about future weather disasters. One said, “It reduced my desire to get outside and exercise, which affected my (and my family’s) mood and physical health” (man, 40s, South).

“I live a block away from the ocean and have many concerns. Insurance prices are extremely high, and I worry all the time about flooding.” –Woman, 50s, Northeast

Acknowledgments

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pewresearch.org/science.

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 148, conducted from May 13 to 19, 2024, and includes an [oversample](#) of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black adults, Hispanic adults, adults ages 18 to 29, and panelists who are using a Center-provided tablet, in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of these smaller demographic subgroups. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population. A total of 8,638 panelists responded out of 9,567 who were sampled, for a response rate of 90%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 8,638 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.²

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an “oversample”) to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic, Black and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 11,897 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which Hispanic men, non-Hispanic Black men, non-Hispanic Asian adults, adults ages 18 to 29, and panelists who are using a Center-provided tablet were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the greatest extent

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	1,389
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	831
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	404
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	3,839
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,385
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,438
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	731
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,448
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	432
	Total	43,580	30,859	11,897

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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² Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was May 13-19, 2024. Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset of ATP panelists with a known residential address on May 13.³

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Seventy panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on May 13. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch comprised of 60 known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation and a random sample of 10 panelists who are using a Center-provided tablet. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on May 14.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

³ Postcard notifications are sent to 1) panelists who have been provided with a tablet to take ATP surveys, 2) panelists who were recruited within the last two years, and 3) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 148

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	May 13, 2024	May 14, 2024
First reminder	May 16, 2024	May 16, 2024
Final reminder	May 18, 2024	May 18, 2024

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Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center’s researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, seven ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year. Finally, the weights are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Black (alone or in combination) x Hispanic	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	
Party affiliation x Voter registration	2022 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	2023 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 2nd and 98th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. This trimming is performed separately among non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic, and all other respondents. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 148

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	8,638	1.5 percentage points
Form 1	4,315	2.2 percentage points
Form 2	4,323	2.2 percentage points
Rep/lean Rep	3,722	2.2 percentage points
Dem/lean Dem	4,614	2.1 percentage points
Northeast	1,418	3.7 percentage points
Midwest	1,750	3.2 percentage points
South	3,538	2.5 percentage points
West	1,929	3.2 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black adults, Hispanic adults, adults ages 18-29, and panelists who are using a Center-provided tablet. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 148

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	8,638
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	115
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	41
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	765
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	1
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		7
Screened out		0
Total panelists sampled for the survey		9,567
Completed interviews	I	8,638
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	921
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	O	7
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		9,567
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		90%
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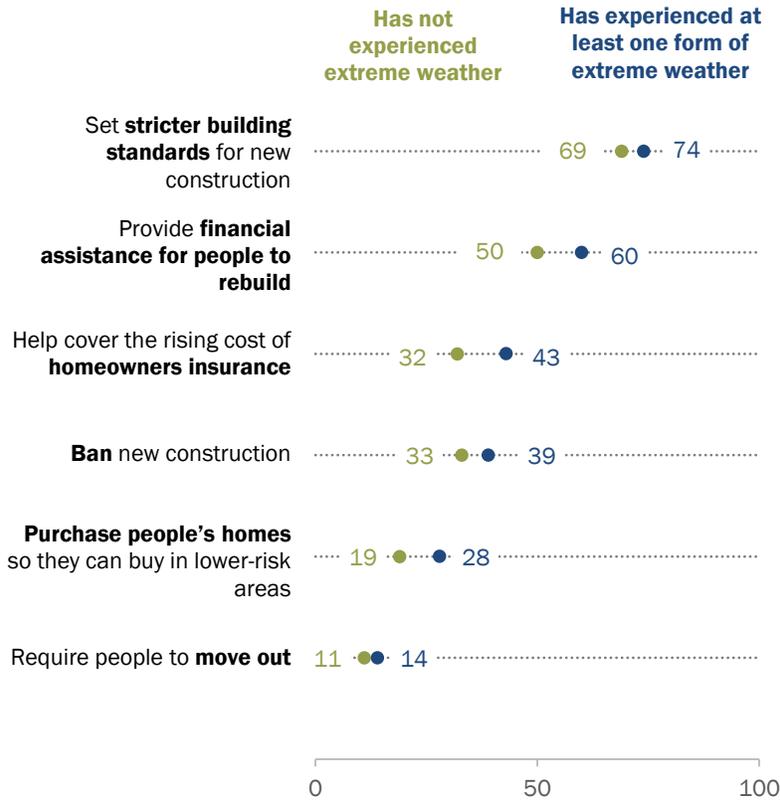
Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 148

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 148	45%
Response rate to Wave 148 survey	90%
Cumulative response rate	3%
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Appendix

Experiences with extreme weather events and views on government policies in high-risk communities

% who say it is a *good idea* for government to do each of the following for communities in places at high risk of extreme weather



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024
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