



2-2023

## World Less than Satisfied with Climate Efforts

Julie Ray

Mary C. Evans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni>



Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Ray, Julie and Evans, Mary C. (2023) "World Less than Satisfied with Climate Efforts," *Journal of Nonprofit Innovation*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/joni/vol3/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Nonprofit Innovation by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

## Article: Thought Paper

---

Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

**TITLE**

World Less than Satisfied with  
Climate Efforts

---

**AUTHOR**

Julie Ray and Mary C. Evans

---

**TOPICS**

Climate Summit,  
Preservation, Attitudes, Paris  
Agreement, Public Opinion,  
Public Policy

---



## World Less than Satisfied with Climate Efforts

Julie Ray and Mary C. Evans

**Overview:** At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) summit that took place in Egypt from November 6 to 18, 2022, nearly 200 nations rushed to seek deals to keep climate goals moving forward. The summit ended with minimal progress and many criticisms that more needs to be done.

To measure how people feel about their country's efforts to preserve the environment, the Gallup World Poll asks people worldwide if they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with those efforts. Below, we explore the global data from this question and dive into the trend on this question in the United States (U.S.) from 2006 to 2022.



---

**About the Authors:** Julie Ray is a writer and managing editor for World News at Gallup. Mary Claire Evans is a research consultant at Gallup.

---

## Introduction

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) summit that took place in Egypt from November 6 to 18, 2022, nearly 200 nations rushed to seek deals to keep climate goals moving forward. The summit ended with minimal progress and many criticisms that more needs to be done. This likely disappointed but did not surprise much of the world's population that Gallup data show was already dissatisfied with current efforts to safeguard the environment.

Events such as the COP27 bring leaders together to agree on policies and make pledges for future action for their countries, but many past COP agreements have failed to turn into real action. For example, all countries agreed at the COP26 summit to set tougher climate targets, but by the time of the 2022 conference, only about 30 had. Further, global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are projected to rise this year.

To measure how people feel about their country's efforts to preserve the environment, the Gallup World Poll asks people worldwide if they felt satisfied or dissatisfied with those efforts. Below, we explore the global data from this question and dive into the trend on this question in the United States (U.S.) from 2006 to 2022.

Against this backdrop, the world is as divided as its leaders and highly skeptical: A median of 49% of adults across 123 countries surveyed in 2021 and 2022 (which, at the time of this writing was the latest data available for the World Poll) are satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the

environment and about as many—48%—are dissatisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

## Methods

Results are based on surveys of cross-sectional, nationally representative, probability-based samples of adults aged 15 and older in over 120 countries and territories in 2021 and 2022. At the time of this analysis, the World Poll survey—which is conducted on an annual basis—was in the field in dozens of countries. Whenever possible, 2022 data were used if already available.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine Gallup's most recent public opinion data on how people feel about their country's efforts to preserve the environment in the larger context of the annual event of COP27.

In English, the binary survey question that Gallup asks is: "In this country, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment?" Gallup translates this and all other questions that it asks in its World Poll survey into more than 140 languages. Surveys are offered to respondents in the most common languages spoken in their country. This question is asked to be inclusive of many different aspects of the environment, and not specific aspects such as carbon emissions, global warming, or climate change.

To further explore the hypothesized political differences in Americans' attitudes about the environment, Gallup researchers used another World Poll question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the leader/head/President of this country is handling his/her job as leader/head/President?" In the U.S., the name of the president at the time of the survey is used.

The surveys are nationally representative of each country. Gallup conducts surveys via telephone or face to face with approximately 1,000 adults in each of these countries or territories (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). For telephones numbers are selected

randomly and Gallup employs dual-frame computer-assisted telephone interviewing, and in countries where the survey is conducted face-to-face the survey employs an area-frame design to interview randomly selected households.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error ranges from ±2.0 to ±5.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). The margin of error reflects the influence of data weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

### Findings

At the country-level, in 66 countries out of the total 123, less than half of people report being satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment.

Geography	Survey conducted	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
China	2021	89%	11%
India	2021	78%	20%
United Kingdom	2022	52%	48%
Canada	2022	50%	50%
Germany	2021	49%	50%
United States	2022	48%	52%
France	2022	47%	50%
Japan	2022	46%	45%
Russian Federation	2021	35%	65%
Ukraine	2022	30%	66%

Table 1 Satisfaction with Efforts to Preserve the Environment

This list of 66 countries includes many, but not all, of the world's cumulative top emitters of carbon dioxide, which is linked to global warming. For example, while less than half of adults in one of the countries with the largest amount of carbon emissions—the U.S.—are satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment, strong majorities in other big emitters such as China (89%) and India (78%) are satisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

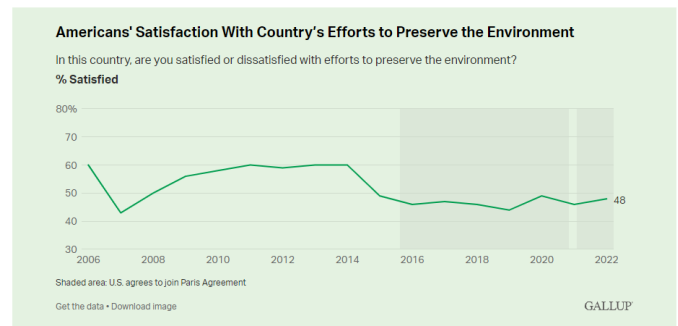
### United States' Climate History More Complicated Since the Paris Agreement

From 1750 to 2020, the U.S. is estimated to have emitted 417 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide. The U.S. is the largest emitter of CO2 across that period—about twice that of the next highest country during the same time, China, at 236 billion tons (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). This cumulative measurement helps to show the long-standing environmental impact over time by different countries, as carbon emissions themselves are essentially cumulative.

The 48% of Americans who are satisfied in 2022 is characteristic of the relatively lower satisfaction levels of Americans since the U.S. first agreed to join the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

This question has been asked in the United States since 2006 (Graph 1). From 2006 to 2014, most Americans were satisfied with U.S. efforts to preserve the environment. Satisfaction mostly remained between 50% and 60%, with one outlier in 2007 when 43% of Americans said they were satisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022).

In 2015, 49% of Americans were satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment (Saad, 2022). This marked the beginning of a trend in which Americans' satisfaction failed to crack 50%. This period (2015) also aligns with when the U.S. joined the Paris Agreement (which it briefly left under President Donald Trump in 2020 and returned when President Joe Biden took office).



Graph 1 Americans' Satisfaction with Country's Efforts to Preserve the Environment

The 107 days between the U.S. withdrawing from/rejoining the Paris climate accord represents an ongoing trend of partisan polarization between worry about the environment, climate change and global warming in the U.S. To further explore the partisan differences in opinions, researchers compared the difference between satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment and leadership approval.

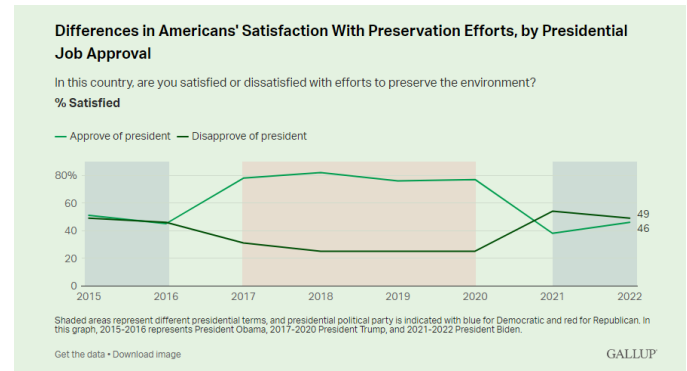
Approval of their country's leader did not factor into whether Americans were satisfied with their country's efforts to preserve the environment in 2015 and 2016, with President Barack Obama in office. This changed between 2017 and 2020, under Trump, when there was about a 50-percentage-point difference in satisfaction with efforts to preserve the environment between those who approved and those who disapproved of Trump's overall job performance (Saad, 2022).

This difference in attitudes toward the environment by presidential approval is only apparent from 2017 to 2020, during the Trump administration, which rolled back many environmental actions taken by previous administrations. The Brookings Institution counted 74 actions in August of 2020 that Trump had taken to weaken environmental protection (Gross, 2021).

While environmental satisfaction rates remained below 50% between 2017 and 2020, adults who approved of Trump were between 47 and 57 points more satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment than individuals who did not approve of the job Trump was doing. This flipped in 2021 when Biden took office. Those who approved of Biden were 16 points less likely to be satisfied than those who disapproved (Saad, 2022). These divides largely disappeared in 2022.

When Biden addressed COP27, he explained actions that the United States had been trying to take in the last two years to address the environment. His major plans included increasing clean energy and investment in new technologies

as well as decreasing production and consumption of greenhouse gases. He also mentioned the Inflation Reduction Act, an ambitious policy setting the country's emissions toward the goal of half of 2005 levels by 2030 (The White House, 2022).



Graph 2 Differences in Americans' Satisfaction with Preservation Efforts, by Presidential Job Approval

### Bottom Line

At the opening of the COP27 climate summit, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated the stakes of reaching a deal on climate change: "We are in the fight of our lives—and we are losing."

In the U.S, the world's largest emitter over time of carbon dioxide, the relationship between public opinion and political policy is complex. Americans have taken a somewhat dim view of efforts to preserve the environment since 2015—most recently 48% are satisfied, and 52% are dissatisfied (Gallup, 2021 & 2022). During Trump's presidency (notably 2017-2020) there were gulfs in opinions between people who did and did not approve of the country's leadership. These swings illustrate the political polarization between perceptions about the environment and country wide policies that seek to enact change for that same topic.

The polarization of opinion, particularly between 2017 and 2020 suggests that Americans' perceptions about the environment may be more politically driven than based on policy alone. There is almost a rally effect among Americans who approve of their president that artificially

changes the score regardless of the political policy on the environment that the country is enacting.

## References

Friedlingstein, P., O'Sullivan, M., Jones, M. W., Andrew, R. M., Gregor, L., Hauck, J., Le Quéré, C., Luijckx, I. T., Olsen, A., Peters, G. P., Peters, W., Pongratz, J., Schwingshackl, C., Sitch, S., Canadell, J. G., Ciais, P., Jackson, R. B., Alin, S. R., Alkama, R., Arneeth, A., Arora, V. K., Bates, N. R., Becker, M., Bellouin, N., Bittig, H. C., Bopp, L., Chevallier, F., Chini, L. P., Cronin, M., Evans, W., Falk, S., Feely, R. A., Gasser, T., Gehlen, M., Gkritzalis, T., Gloege, L., Grassi, G., Gruber, N., Gürses, Ö., Harris, I., Hefner, M., Houghton, R. A., Hurtt, G. C., Iida, Y., Ilyina, T., Jain, A. K., Jersild, A., Kadono, K., Kato, E., Kennedy, D., Klein Goldewijk, K., Knauer, J., Korsbakken, J. I., Landschützer, P., Lefèvre, N., Lindsay, K., Liu, J., Liu, Z., Marland, G., Mayot, N., McGrath, M. J., Metzl, N., Monacci, N. M., Munro, D. R., Nakaoka, S.-I., Niwa, Y., O'Brien, K., Ono, T., Palmer, P. I., Pan, N., Pierrot, D., Pocock, K., Poulter, B., Resplandy, L., Robertson, E., Rödenbeck, C., Rodriguez, C., Rosan, T. M., Schwinger, J., Séférian, R., Shutler, J. D., Skjelvan, I., Steinhoff, T., Sun, Q., Sutton, A. J., Sweeney, C., Takao, S., Tanhua, T., Tans, P. P., Tian, X., Tian, H., Tilbrook, B., Tsujino, H., Tubiello, F., van der Werf, G. R., Walker, A. P., Wanninkhof, R., Whitehead, C., Willstrand Wranne, A., Wright, R., Yuan, W., Yue, C., Yue, X., Zaehle, S., Zeng, J., and Zheng, B.: Global Carbon Budget 2022, *Earth Syst. Sci. Data*, 14, 4811–4900, <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-14-4811-2022>, 2022.

Funk, C., & Kennedy, B. (2016). *The politics of climate change in the United States*. Washington, DC.

Gallup. (2021 & 2022). Gallup World Poll. [Data file]. Washington, D.C.: Gallup.

Gross, Samantha. "What Is the Trump Administration's Track Record on the Environment?" Brookings, Brookings, 16 June 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/what-is-the-trump-administrations-track-record-on-the-environment>.

"Remarks by President Biden at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27)." The White House, The United States Government, 11 Nov. 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/11/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-27th-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-framework-convention-on-climate-change-cop27-sharm-el-sheikh-egypt/>.

Saad, L. "A Seven-Year Stretch of Elevated Environmental Concern." Gallup.com, Gallup, 21 Sept. 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/391547/seven-year-stretch-elevated-environmental-concern.aspx>.

Taylor, C. "'We Are on a Highway to Climate Hell,' UN Chief Warns." *Fortune*, Fortune, 16 Nov. 2022, <https://fortune.com/2022/11/07/cop27-un-chief-warns-world-on-a-highway-to-climate-hell/>.

Weber, E. U., & Stern, P. C. (2011). Public understanding of climate change in the United States. *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 315.

