

As I discussed in a September 9th [post](#), public opinion has been shifting toward greater recognition of climate change and the need to respond. Much of the evidence came from polls dating back a few months. Further evidence is provided by two polls released this week. People do seem to be waking up to the problem.

One [poll](#) was conducted by the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation. Here's how the Post summarizes the results:

“The poll finds that a strong majority of Americans — about 8 in 10 — say that human activity is fueling climate change, and roughly half believe action is urgently needed within the next decade if humanity is to avert its worst effects. Nearly 4 in 10 now say climate change is a “crisis,” up from less than a quarter five years ago.”

More specifically, 38% say it's a crisis, and another 38% think it's a major problem but not a crisis. Notwithstanding that, relatively few are willing to pay as much as \$10 a month in higher electricity bills or to pay a higher gasoline tax, while the majority prefer to fund climate action by taxing the rich or corporations using fossil fuels. Notably, 60% of Republicans think climate change is caused by humans, and 23% think that Trump is mishandling the issue. Teenagers are [especially committed](#) to climate action, with one in seven claiming to have participated in a climate-change walkout. Over half say they feel afraid and angry about climate change, while about four in ten say they feel helpless.

The other [poll](#) comes from CBS News. Seventy-two percent of Democrats listed climate change as number 2 or above on the list of issues that concern them. Only about 20% of Republicans ranked the problem as a priority. Thirty-six percent of the public (presumably Trump's base) considered Trump's handling of the environment as “good” while nearly all the remainder ranked it as fair or poor. It doesn't look as if the Green New Deal is getting a lot of traction, at least as yet:

“Even among Democrats, few endorse the plan completely. Just 25% say the Green New Deal is what's needed to address climate change, while 36% think it is a mix of good and bad, even if it could start discussions. Many haven't heard enough about it yet to form an opinion. The plan finds the greatest support from the most liberal wing of the Democratic Party.”

Feelings about climate change are especially strong in younger Americans. Seventy percent of those under age 45 — that seems like “younger” to me, though maybe not to you — say they feel a personal responsibility to take action on climate change. Among Republicans under 45, half consider climate change a crisis or serious problem, and two-thirds say they feel a responsibility to address it. About seventy percent of Americans say they feel they should do something about climate change, although about half of those say they don’t have the time or money.

We should never put absolute trust in any one poll (or even two or three). But these polls are consistent with a trend that was already available. They help to explain why Democratic presidential candidates are talking so much about climate action right now. They also help explain the fear of Republican strategists that climate denialism could alienate their younger supporters permanently. Let’s hope that current trends in public opinion continue to build support for climate action.

Addendum: This morning, after the initial version of this post went live, AP issued results from another [survey](#). It found that “[w]hile 44% of Americans say they’re very or extremely concerned about climate change’s effects on them personally, two-thirds say they are very or extremely concerned about future generations.”