



Foundation

World Risk Poll 2024 Report

What the world worries about:
global perceptions and
experiences of risk and harm

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Foreword



Dr Ruth Bounphrey
Chief Executive
Lloyd's Register Foundation



The Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, conducted every two years, provides a crucial platform for people around the world to voice concerns about their safety by systematically gathering data on everyday risks and harms. By amplifying the voices of those who are often marginalised or underrepresented, the Poll offers invaluable insights that can and should be used to guide interventions aimed at protecting the most vulnerable.

Now in its third edition, the Poll has spanned major periods of global and regional change and provides unique insight into emerging trends in people's perceptions and experiences of risk in turbulent times. However, the consistency of worry and experience of some of these risks – despite different global circumstances – suggests that existing measures are not sufficiently addressing them.

Across all editions of the Poll, concern about road safety has consistently been the most common 'top of mind' risk, with personal experience of road accidents associated with increased worry about future harm. In this edition of the Poll, people are more worried about all forms of everyday risk compared to results 2021. Going back further to 2019, we can see there has been a continued increase in worry about harm from mental health, a concern with distinct regional and demographic variations.

While everyday risks such as road accidents are often more top of mind, it is also important to reflect on how people's perceptions and experiences can influence their views on more existential global threats.

In this report, we show that more people now express an opinion, whether worried or unworried, about the future threat of climate change than in previous years. It is also notable that people who are worried about experiencing harm from severe weather events are significantly more likely to be concerned about the impact of climate change. Understanding this contextualisation of risk may be key in adjusting messaging around climate change to encourage action.

We hope that this report, along with the underlying data, empowers policymakers and other stakeholders to inform and target policies and interventions that address both people's worry about, and experience of, risks to their safety. The unique breadth and depth of the Poll allows for the identification of at-risk communities, from the global to the sub-national scale, providing a powerful tool to direct action.

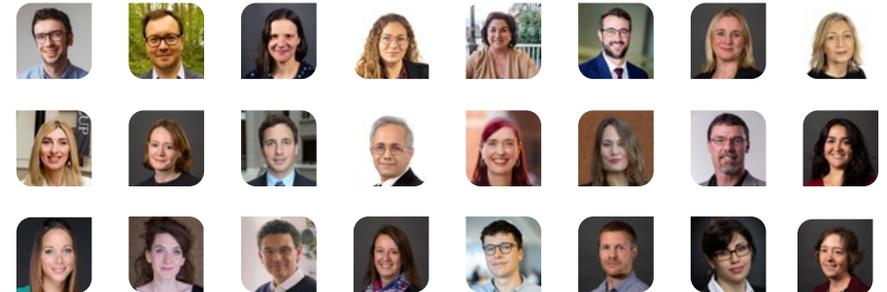
Acknowledgements

The World Risk Poll is a huge undertaking powered by multidisciplinary teams working across organisations. Lloyd's Register Foundation is grateful to everyone who has contributed to this and previous versions of the World Risk Poll, and the collaborative spirit in which they work.

We are continually inspired by the enthusiasm of our strategic impact partners who have invested time in developing the questionnaire and are now embedding the data in their work, inspiring and galvanising people to take action. You can follow their journeys, and the change created, through the Poll website at wrp.lrfoundation.org.uk.

The Technical Advisory Group for the World Risk Poll was first convened in early 2019, and we are indebted to the ongoing time and effort voluntarily invested by the members in the analysis, planning and reviewing of all our outputs.

Finally, our thanks are extended to the team at Gallup for their efforts in constructing and testing the Poll, and to the local staff in countries across the globe who undertook the fieldwork, often under difficult circumstances. We are particularly grateful to the World Risk Poll delivery and analytical team at Gallup for their ongoing contributions and support.



Executive summary

The World Risk Poll is the first and only global, nationally representative study of worry about, and harm from, risks to people's safety. The Poll is based on nearly 147,000 interviews conducted by Gallup in 142 countries and territories throughout 2023 and covers places with little to no official data on safety and risks. The 2023 World Risk Poll is the third iteration of a dataset that offers a unique insight into people's experiences with and perceptions of different risks in their lives. These range from the everyday risks facing millions around the world, such as harm from their food and water or safety on the roads, to the generational and existential risk of climate change.

The Poll is a unique resource for defining the nature and scale of safety challenges across the world, as reported first-hand by those who experience them. Governments, regulators, businesses, NGOs and international bodies can use these freely available datasets and insights to inform and target policies and interventions that make people safer.

Key findings

The World Risk Poll has asked people around the world about the biggest risk to their safety on three occasions. Each time, the answer has been the same: road traffic accidents.

- Sixteen percent of the world's adult population said road-related accidents were the single greatest risk to safety in their daily lives, compared to 13% in 2021 and 16% in 2019.
- People who have experienced harm from a road accident and people who know others who have are more likely to worry about being harmed in a road accident than those who have no experience of them. However, when people have close personal proximity to serious harm from road accidents (i.e., they have experienced harm and know someone else who has), they are less worried, suggesting that they consider such accidents less of a risk to their safety and more of a simple fact of life. This suggests a form of risk habituation towards high-risk road environments.
- Worry about harm from traffic accidents is closely linked to how people feel about their roads and highways. There is a strong correlation between the two: as satisfaction with roads and highways increases, worry about being harmed on the road decreases. That said, there is no meaningful relationship between satisfaction with roads and lived experiences of harm, again showing how feeling safe and being safe are not always aligned.

Public perceptions of the threat posed by climate change in the next 20 years have shifted in complex ways relative to previous iterations of the World Risk Poll in 2019 and 2021.

- More people now express an opinion on the topic than in previous years, with some growing to feel more threatened and others feeling increasingly like climate change is not a threat at all.
- In total, 72% of the world's adult population now say they feel 'very' or 'somewhat' threatened by climate change in the next 20 years.
- Many high-income countries across Europe see the highest levels of concern over climate change, while other countries whose economies are heavily dependent on fossil fuels see the highest levels of scepticism.

Global statistical analysis highlights which factors are most closely associated with feeling very threatened by climate change:

- Controlling for other factors, the odds that someone believes climate change is a very serious threat are 3.6 times greater if they are very worried about being harmed by severe weather events than if they are not worried about severe weather events.
- Being highly educated, male and living in a city are all related to significantly higher odds of feeling very threatened by climate change.
- The analysis also highlights factors that share no meaningful relationship with feeling very threatened by climate change while controlling for other factors. These include age as well as financial factors, such as feelings about household income and ability to afford basic needs.

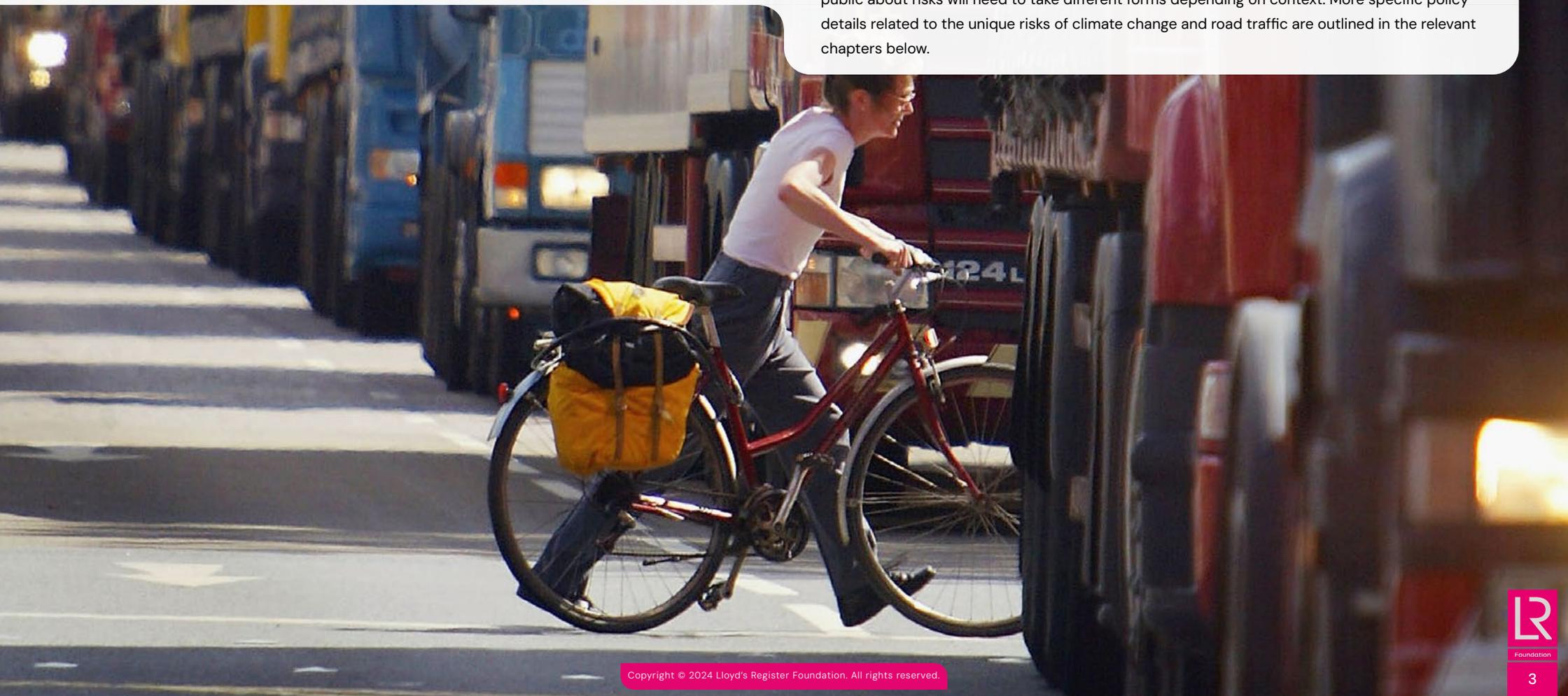
Globally, overall feelings of safety are largely unchanged compared to 2019 — before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In 2023, as many people say they feel 'more safe' than they did five years ago (37%) as say 'about as safe' (37%), with 26% feeling 'less safe'.
- Although more people globally worry about certain risks such as road accidents or severe weather events, worry about mental health issues has increased the most since the first iteration of the World Risk Poll, from 48% (very or somewhat worried) initially to 52% in 2021 and 55% in 2023.
- In every region, more people worry about harm than experience it, but there is considerable variation across the world. The gap between worry and experience of harm is narrowest in Australia and New Zealand and Northern/Western Europe, and widest in Southern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Insight to action

This report ties together many recurring themes of the World Risk Poll, from overall feelings of safety to everyday risks and worries to long-term perceptions of the threat of climate change. While varied in scope, different areas of risk share many similarities. This report reiterates critical insights from past releases of the World Risk Poll, particularly that how people experience and perceive risk often does not align, and this must be born in mind when constructing interventions and communications to keep them safe.

It is important to pay close attention to how people think about risk. To make the world safer for all, change must come at all levels, from legislation to communication. In many parts of the world, there is more to do to increase awareness of certain risks to safety in daily life and make it easier for people to avoid them. In addition to highlighting risks in everyday life that are most dangerous to populations in certain regions, this report also demonstrates that communicating with the public about risks will need to take different forms depending on context. More specific policy details related to the unique risks of climate change and road traffic are outlined in the relevant chapters below.



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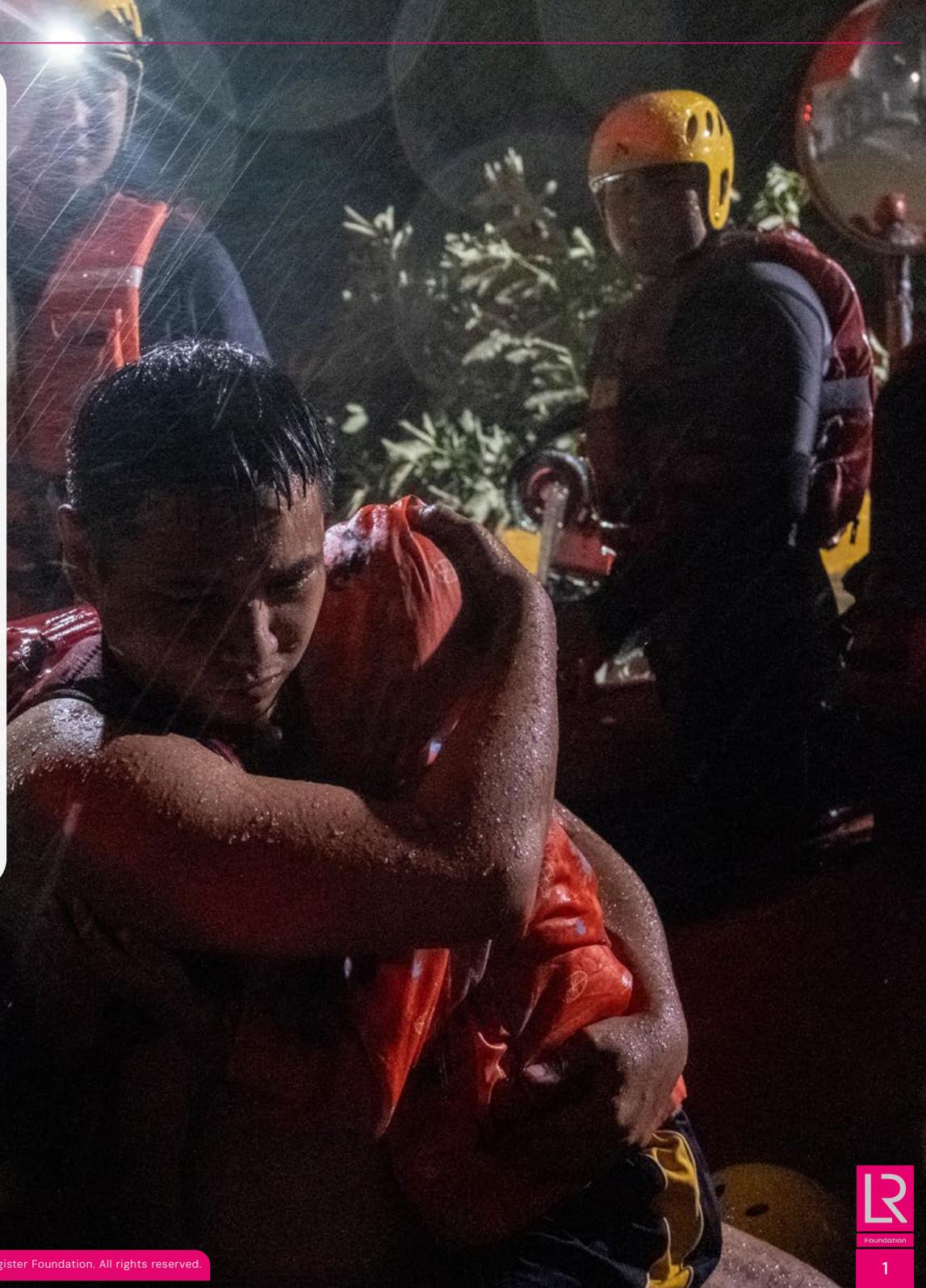
1. Introduction

Since the World Risk Poll first took the global pulse of people's experiences and perceptions of risk in 2019, the world has been through a series of shocks. Hugely significant global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, major armed conflicts, rising inflation and record-high temperatures, have threatened people's safety in many ways.

Against this backdrop, the World Risk Poll offers a unique perspective on how safe people feel amid such challenges, and their experiences of harm from a range of risks faced in daily life. In an ever-changing world, understanding the risks people face and how they perceive them is paramount to increasing safety for all. While these risks include major global events like those mentioned above, they also extend into everyday life, including people's experiences of harm from using transport or consuming the basic needs of food and water. For stakeholders focusing on promoting public safety, these data can be a useful resource to improve risk mitigation efforts.

This report covers a wide array of topics featured in the previous World Risk Poll data from 2021 and 2019. It begins with a focus on road accidents, which have consistently been the top-reported risk to safety in each of the three iterations of the World Risk Poll to date. The next chapter examines public perceptions of climate change and how much of a threat it poses to different countries in the next two decades, before moving on to a discussion of broader trends in feelings of safety and risk perception.

Although this report covers a variety of risks, from the perceptions of the daily risk of traffic accidents to the generational threat of climate change, the one thread running through it is how people think about risks to their safety. We hope the data will help governments and other policymakers better understand how people think and feel about the risks that surround them and how they experience harm from various risks in daily life so that better interventions can be designed to engineer a safer world for all.



2. Road-related accidents continue to be seen as the greatest risk to safety

One core question in the World Risk Poll that has been asked in all three iterations is what people see as the greatest risk to safety in their daily lives. This open-ended question allows people to explain the greatest risk to their safety in their own words. The interviewer then codes these risks into a wide range of categories.

Now, I have a few questions about risk. By RISK, I mean something that may be dangerous or that could cause harm or the loss of something. Risk could also result in a reward or something good ... In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?

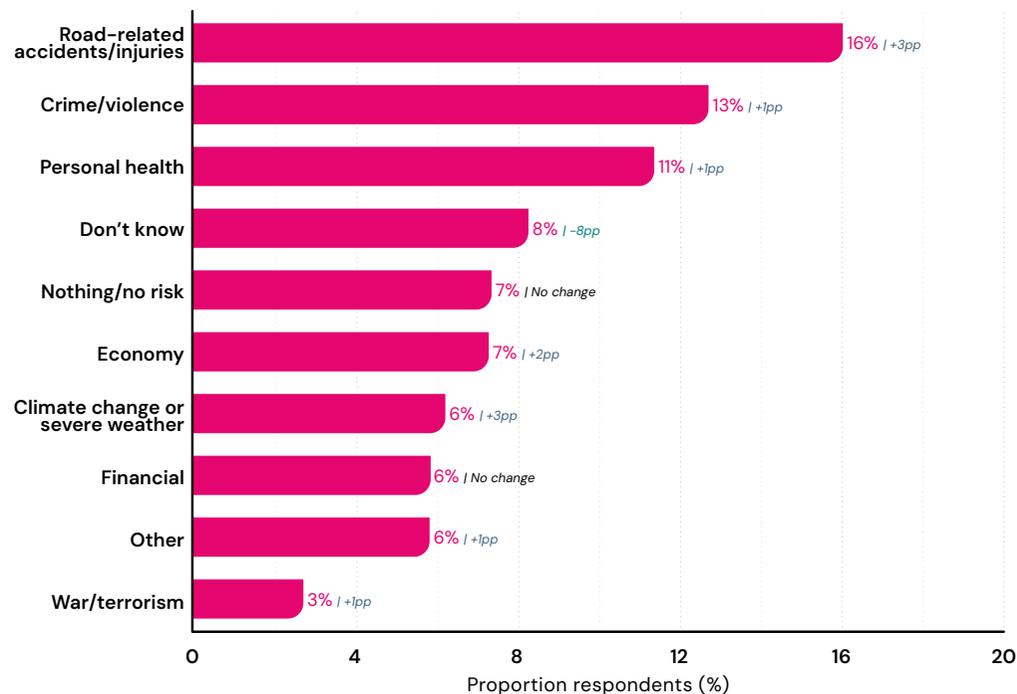
Much like in 2019 and 2021, road-related accidents/injuriesⁱ remain the perceived greatest risk to life globally. Even amid major global upheaval, including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic and cost-of-living crises and more current armed conflicts than at any time since World War II, people continue to feel most exposed to risk from everyday transportation.

In 2023, 16% of the world's adult population said road-related accidents were the single greatest risk to safety in their daily lives, compared to 13% in 2021 and 16% in 2019. Road-related accidents continue to rank higher globally than the next most-cited risks, such as the security-related risk of crime and violence (13%) and personal health conditions (11%). Even though many express concern about climate change when asked about it directly, it doesn't rank among the top five risks to safety in daily life. That said, the proportion of people who cite climate change or severe weather events as the top risk to their safety in daily life has doubled in 2023 to 6%, from 3% in 2019 and 2021ⁱⁱ.

ⁱ - The World Risk Poll classed people's open-ended responses about the greatest risk to their safety in daily life as 'road-related accidents/injuries'. From henceforth, this report refers to them as road-related accidents for simplicity. However, there is a growing sense that as many instances of road-related harm are preventable, the term 'injuries' is more appropriate than 'accidents'.

ⁱⁱ - Global and regional trends in this report are calculated exclusively from countries or territories surveyed in 2023. In contrast, for previous waves, statistics include all countries surveyed in those years, regardless of whether they were part of the most recent wave. This approach differs from the methodology used in the prior report, *World Risk Poll 2021: A Changed World?*, where trends were calculated based only on countries or territories which appeared in both the 2019 and 2021 surveys.

Chart 2.1. Top 10 risks to safety in daily life globally, 2023



Survey question: In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?

Notes: Risks mentioned by fewer than 3% of the global adult population are not shown on this chart.

Percentage-point (pp) change vs. 2021 shown in italics.



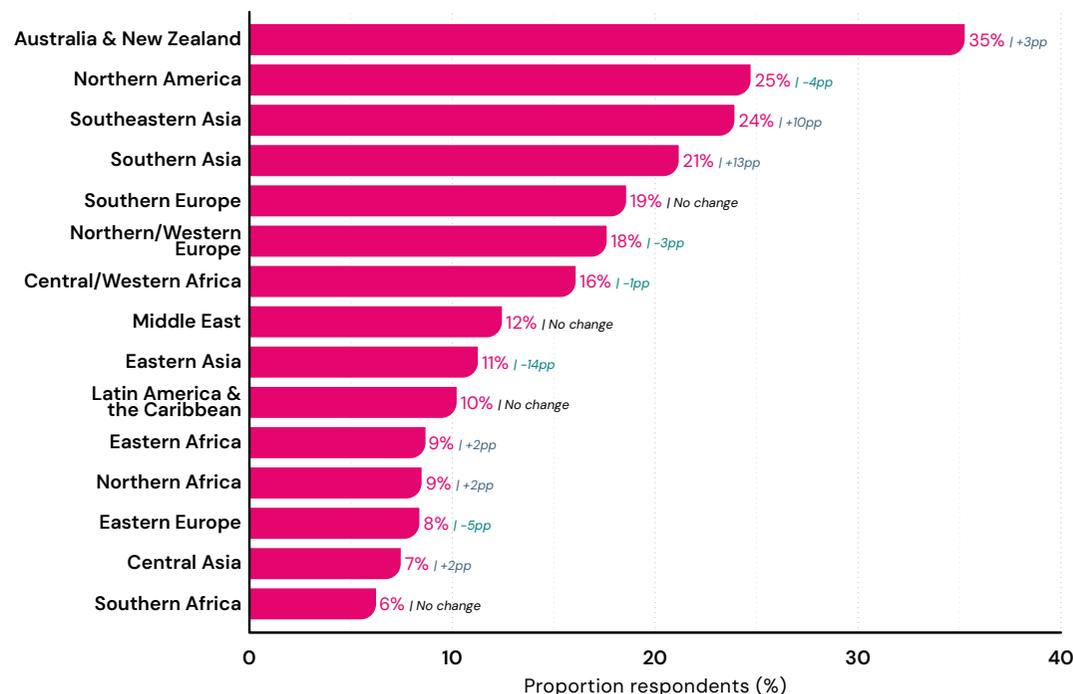
People in high-income countries are most likely to name road-related accidents as the number one risk to safety in their daily lives (21%), around twice as likely as those in low-income countries (9%), even though people in high-income countries are far less likely to die on the roads. According to the WHO, road traffic crashes kill around 1.2 million people every year. The vast majority (92%) of fatalities on the road happen in low- and middle-income countries, even though they only have slightly over half (60%) of the world's vehicles¹. The global burden of road traffic injuries is borne by those who can least afford to meet the healthcare and economic costs.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), road injuries were the 14th top cause of death around the world in 2021 (accounting for 1.7% of all deaths), but by far the leading cause of preventable deaths². The causes of death higher than road injuries were all related to personal health conditions. In total, non-communicable diseases (63%) and communicable conditions (27%) accounted for nine in 10 deaths worldwide in 2021. However, people continue to see road-related accidents as the top risk to their safety in daily life – five percentage points higher than all personal health conditions.

Since 2019, the frequency of naming road-related accidents as the number one risk to people's safety has remained fairly consistent across global regions. In all three iterations of the World Risk Poll, people in Australia and New Zealand have been most likely to name this as the top risk in their daily lives, with 35% doing so in 2023. This percentage is far higher than in the next highest-ranked regions of Northern America (25%) and Southeastern Asia (24%). Conversely, less-affluent regions like Central Asia (7%) and Southern Africa (6%) place far less emphasis on the risk from road-related accidents.

The relatively low levels of worry about road-related accidents in Africa are notable, as road traffic deaths have risen faster across the African continent in the last decade than in any other region of the world. Africa also has the highest proportion of pedestrian deaths globally, and no countries on the continent have national legislation that can be classified as best practice across all main road safety risk factors, according to the WHO³.

Chart 2.2. Percentage who name road-related accidents as the main risk to safety in their daily lives by region, 2023



Survey question: In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?
 Note: Percentage-point (pp) change vs. 2021 shown in italics.

Harm from — and worry about — road-related accidents increased in 2023

In addition to the core World Risk Poll question about the greatest risk to safety in people’s daily lives, the survey also asks two questions about people’s experience of harm from and worry about a number of specific risks to safety. These include being in a traffic or roadside accident, violent crime, severe weather events and others.

Worry: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

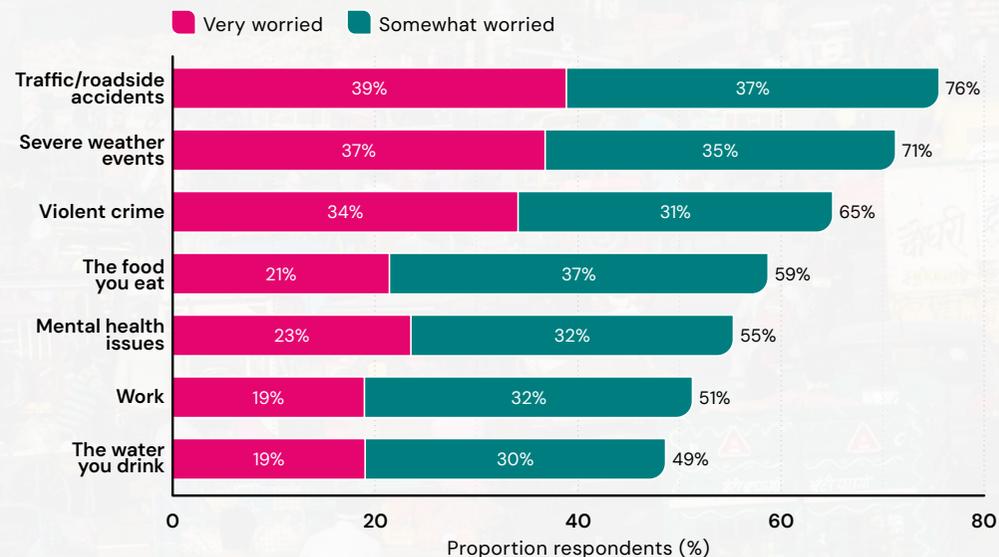
Harm: Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

A similar finding emerges when asking people how much they worry about specific types of risks as when asking about the one primary risk to their safety in daily life. In both questions, traffic accidents stand out above other risks. In 2023, 76% of adults say they are worried that traffic accidents could cause them serious harm (39% are ‘very worried’, and 37% are ‘somewhat worried’). This represents an increase of five percentage points in overall worry compared to 2021 (71%).

In comparison, a total of 71% of people globally worry about being harmed by severe weather events, and just under two-thirds (65%) worry about harm from violent crime. These three risks remain the top three for overall rates of worry, just as they did in 2021.

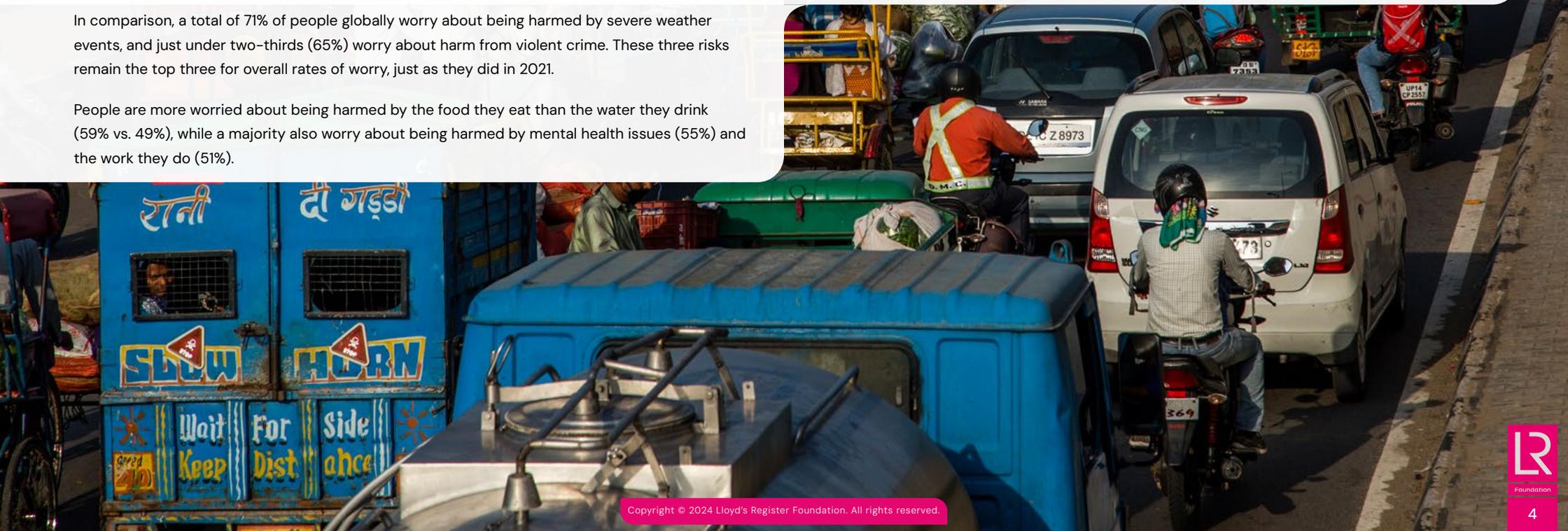
People are more worried about being harmed by the food they eat than the water they drink (59% vs. 49%), while a majority also worry about being harmed by mental health issues (55%) and the work they do (51%).

Chart 2.3. World’s adult population most worried about being harmed by road accidents and severe weather events, 2023



Survey question: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

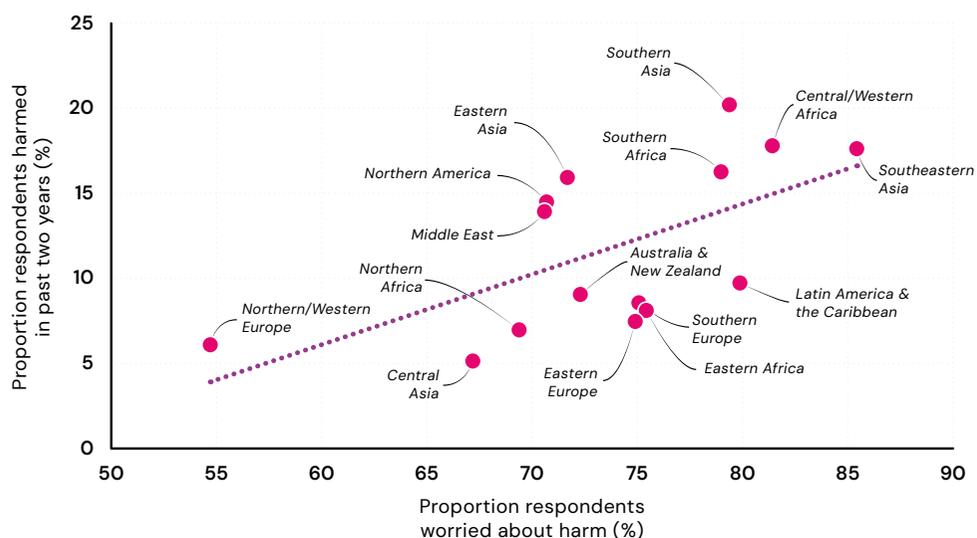
Note: Due to rounding, totals may equal +/- 1



Fifteen percent (or about one in seven) of the world’s adult population say they have personally experienced serious harm from traffic/roadside accidents in the past two years, with a further 25% knowing someone who has been affected (a total of 40% have either experienced harm or know someone who has). This represents an increase compared to 2021, when 13% had personally been harmed in a traffic accident, and 20% knew someone who had been.

Broadly speaking, the regions with the highest personal experience of harm from traffic accidents also worry the most about them. Four regions in particular stand out for having high levels of harm and worry: Southern and Southeastern Asia and Central/Western and Southern Africa. Latin America and the Caribbean has a high level of worry (80%) relative to its experience (10%), while Northern/Western Europe has the second lowest personal experience of harm (6%) and the lowest level of worry (55%). These regional statistics for worry differ somewhat from Chart 11, which was asked in an open-ended fashion about the single greatest risk to people’s safety.

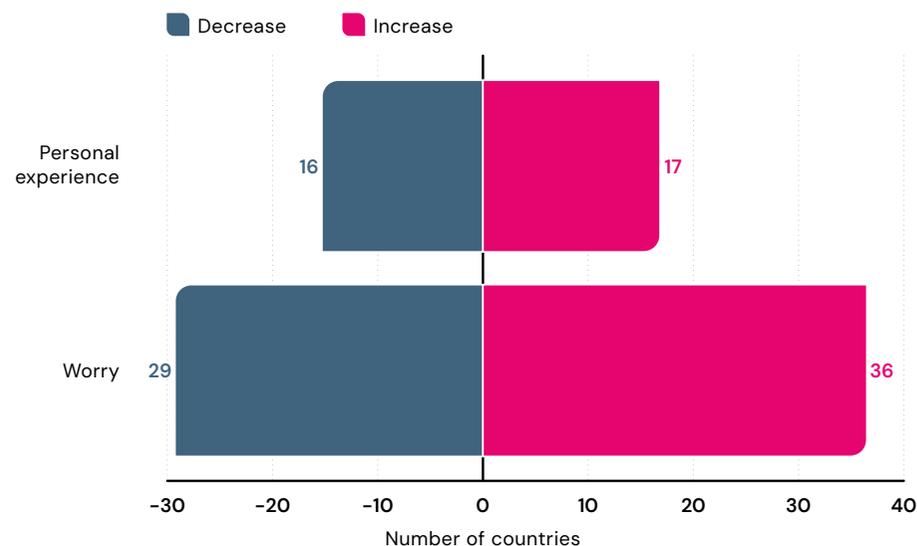
Chart 2.4. Relationship between personal experience of harm from traffic accidents and worry about them by region



Survey questions: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?
 Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?
 Note: Worry includes those who stated 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'

In general, worry about harm from traffic accidents fluctuates more over time than rates of personal experience. Chart 2.5. shows the number of countries that saw changes of four percentage pointsⁱ or more in experience of harm and worry compared to 2021. An almost identical number of countries saw positive and negative changes in the experience of harm compared to 2021, with slightly more increases than decreases (17 vs. 16). But roughly twice as many countries changed by four points or more in worry, demonstrating that people’s feelings about safety and risk on the roads are much more volatile than their lived experiences of harm.

Chart 2.5. Number of countries with changes of four percentage points or more in personal experience of, and worry about, harm from traffic accidents compared to 2021



Survey questions: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?
 Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?
 Note: Worry includes those who stated 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'

ⁱ - We are using four-percentage-point changes as a threshold as the average margin of error across countries in the World Risk Poll is plus or minus 3.9 points. See the methodology document for more details.

Not only is worry about traffic accidents more volatile over time than rates of harm, but worry and harm do not always change over time in ways that might seem expected. For example, Chart 2.6 shows countries with the largest changes in harm from and worry about traffic accidents between 2021 and 2023. China and Sierra Leone top the list with increases of 10 percentage points in self-reported personal experience of harm from traffic accidents since 2021. While China has also seen an increase of similar magnitude in worry about harm from traffic accidents, Sierra Leone has gone in the opposite direction and grown less worried (-9 points).

Survey questions: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

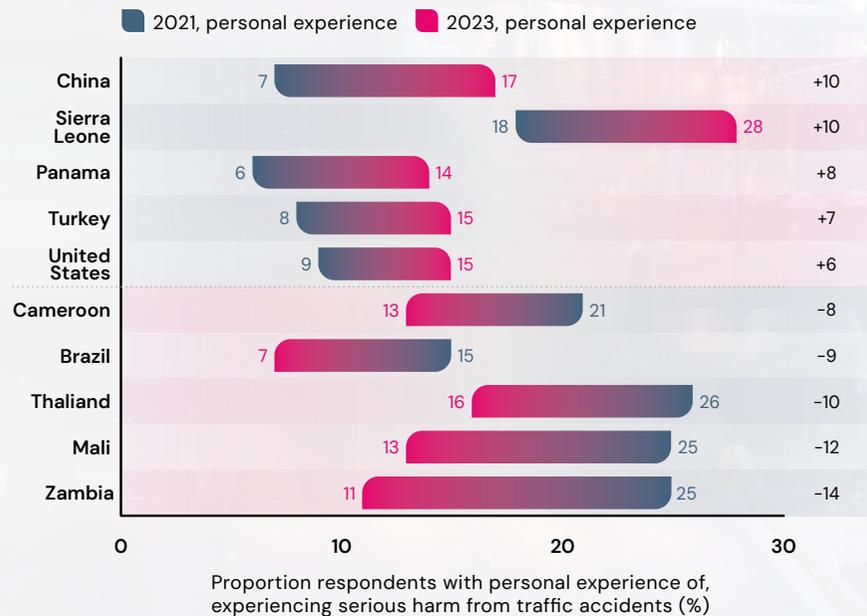
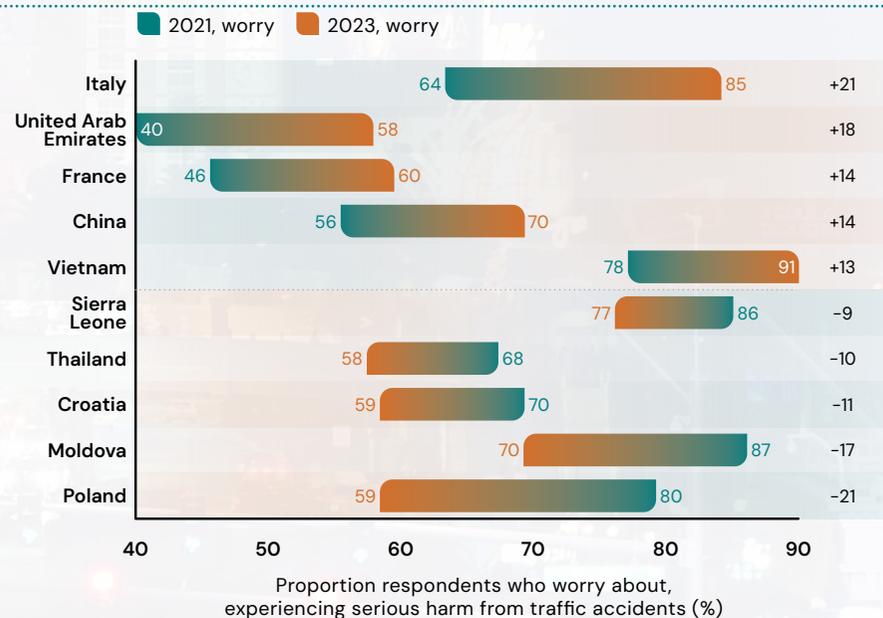
Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

Notes: Due to rounding, % pt. changes may equal +/- 1.

Worry includes those who stated 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'



Chart 2.6. Top five biggest increases and decreases in personal experience of harm from, and worry about, traffic accidents, 2021-2023

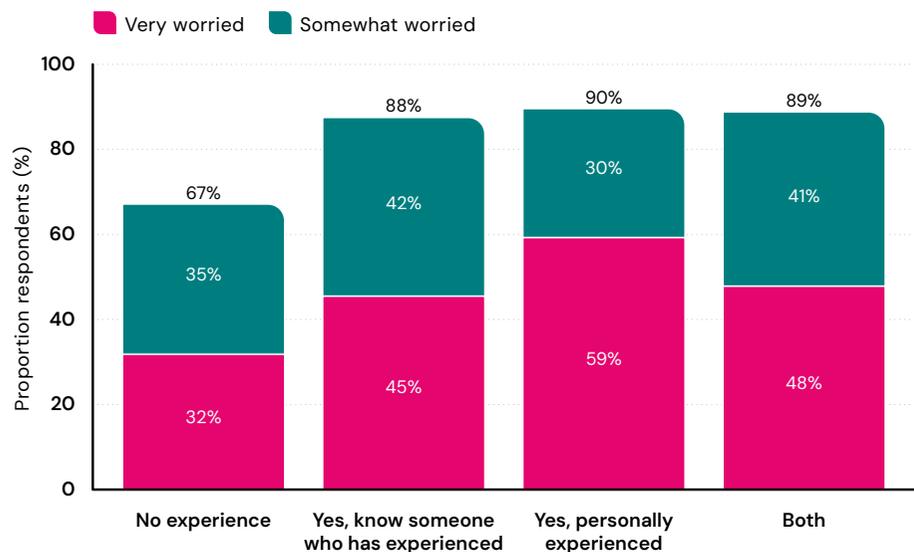


Exposure to traffic-related harms and the perception of risk of future accidents

Evidence from the World Risk Poll suggests that greater proximity to experiences of road accidents does not always have a direct linear relationship with increasing worry about the issue. People who have not experienced any harm from traffic accidents are least likely to be worried about it (67% worried, comprised of 32% very worried and 35% somewhat worried). Meanwhile, total levels of worry about traffic accidents are similar for, people who know someone who has experienced harm, those who have personally experienced harm, or both (88%, 90% and 89%, respectively).

However, the gradient of this worry varies. People who have only personally experienced harm from a traffic accident are much more likely to be very worried about it (59%) than people who only know someone who has experienced it (45%). Interestingly, levels of being ‘very worried’ among people who have experienced personal harm from a traffic accident and also know someone else who has experienced it are more in line with those who only know someone but have no personal experience, at 48%.

Chart 2.7. Global levels of worry about road accidents by experience of them



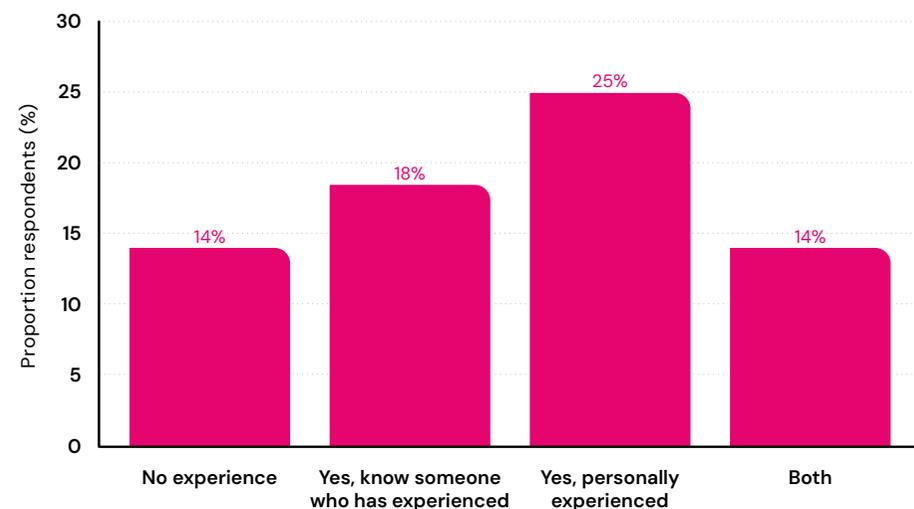
Survey questions: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

Note: Due to rounding, totals may equal +/- 1

Findings are similar when it comes to what people view as the main risk to their safety in daily life. Among people who have not experienced recent harm from a traffic accident, one in seven (14%) cite road-related injuries as the biggest perceived threat to their safety in daily life. This rises to 18% among those who know someone who has experienced harm from a traffic accident and 25% among those who have personally experienced traffic-related harm. Yet, among the group most exposed to traffic-related harm — i.e., those who have personally experienced it in the past two years and know someone else who has — just 14% cite road-related accidents as the primary risk to their safety in daily life. This finding applies across most regions of the world.

Chart 2.8. Percentage who cite road-related accidents as the primary risk to their safety in daily life, by personal experience of harm from a traffic accident in the past two years

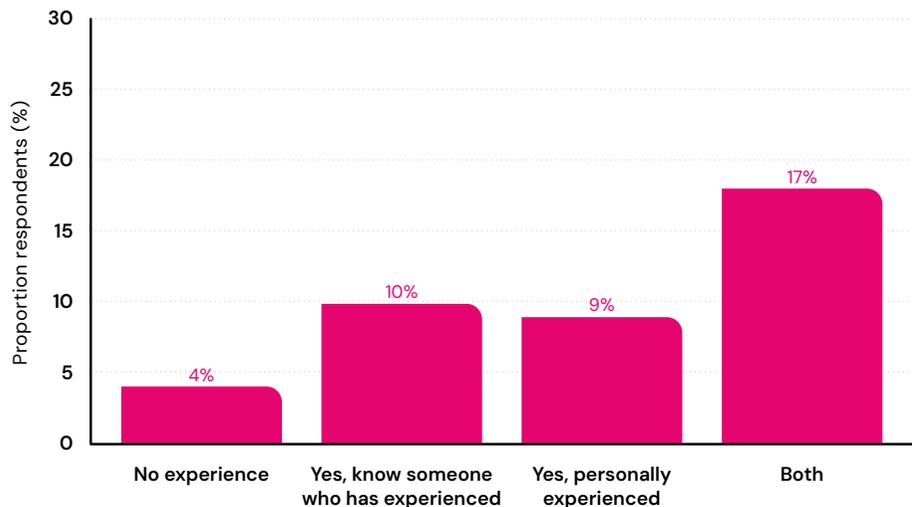


Survey questions: In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?

Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

In this sense, how people think about the risk of road accidents after having personally experienced one differs from other types of risks. For example, just 4% of people who have not experienced harm from a severe weather event in the past two years cite them as the primary risk to safety in their daily lives. This figure rises to 10% among people who know someone affected by a severe weather event, 9% for people personally affected, and keeps rising to 17% for people both personally affected and who also know someone affected.

Chart 2.9. Percentage who cite severe weather events as the primary risk to their safety in daily life, by personal experience of harm from severe weather events in the past two years

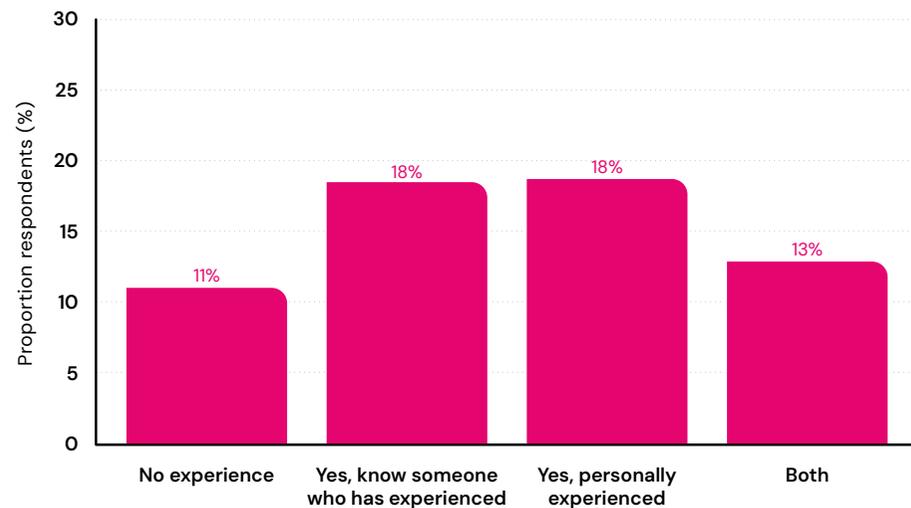


Survey questions: In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?

Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

The perceived risk of harm from road accidents is more akin to that of violent crime when analysed by personal experience of harm. People who have experienced harm from violent crime in the past two years and also know someone else who has are less likely to cite violent crime as the primary risk to their everyday safety than those who have lesser degrees of personal experience.

Chart 2.10. Percentage who cite violent crime as the primary risk to their safety in daily life, by personal experience of harm from violent crime in the past two years



Survey questions: In your own words, what is the greatest source of RISK TO YOUR SAFETY in your daily life?

Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

Findings presented in Charts 2.8 to 2.10 suggest that there may be a form of risk habituation or normalisation when it comes to road traffic accidents and other security-related risks like violent crime. This may be due, in part, to most road accidents not being as bad as initially feared (i.e., ‘fender benders’)⁴.

For many reasons, understanding public worry and risk perceptions about traffic accidents is important for policymakers. For one, perceptions can influence behaviours, and people’s level of worry can mediate how they act on the roads. In areas where harm from road accidents is most widespread (affecting individuals and those known to them), people may feel that road accidents are a simple fact of life and, therefore, worry relatively less about them and be less likely to name them as the primary risk to their daily safety. If people worry less about being harmed on the roads in places where rates of traffic-related harm are high, it may cause them to travel less carefully or take fewer safety precautions, placing them at greater risk.

Other factors also play a role in risk on the roads beyond a lack of care from drivers, including the importance of the built environment.

Many of the same lower-income regions where road deaths are highest are least likely to name roads as the top risk to their everyday safety. This poses a challenge to policymakers seeking to change how people behave on the roads and encourage them to follow safety rules and regulations. The World Risk Poll finding that people in low-income countries are least likely to cite road accidents as the top risk to their safety, even though they are considerably more likely to die on the roads, demonstrates the need to promote risk literacy in high-risk countries to save lives. Addressing public risk perception is crucial to achieving the UN’s target of reducing road-traffic deaths by 50% by 2030⁵.

“In areas where harm from road accidents is most widespread, people may feel that road accidents are a simple fact of life.”

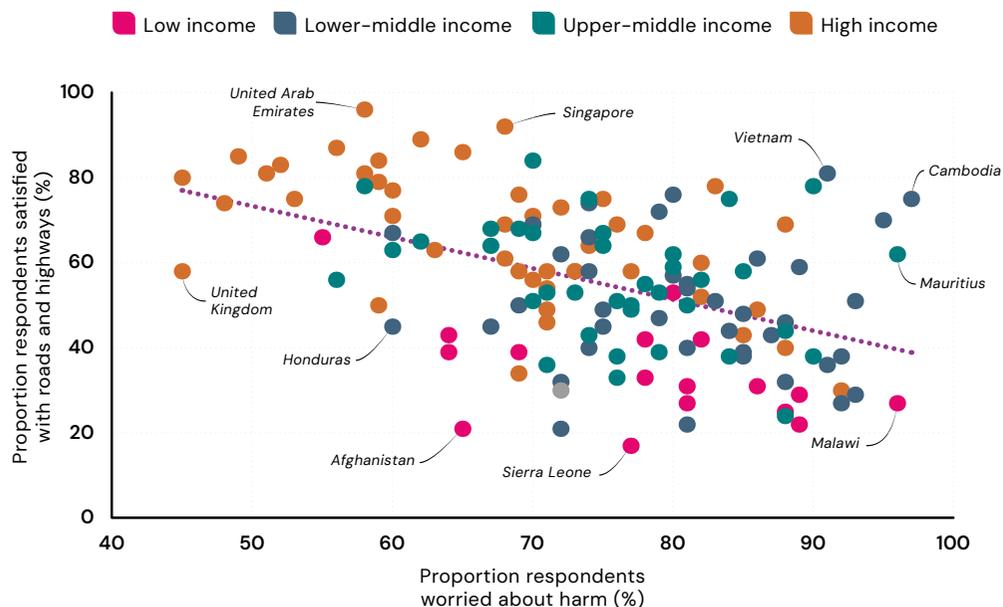


People are less worried about traffic accidents when they are satisfied with road infrastructure

Data on people’s worry about traffic accidents can also help with communication efforts and inform policy design that is likely to receive public support, such as stricter laws or improved road infrastructure.

The World Risk Poll finds that, at the national level, worry about harm from traffic accidents is closely linked to how people feel about their roads and highways more broadly. There is a correlationⁱ between the two: as satisfaction with roads and highways increases, worry about being harmed on the road decreases. However, the relationship between satisfaction with roads and highways and rates of personally being harmed in a traffic accident is far weakerⁱⁱ, suggesting again that feeling more satisfied and being safer are not always aligned. While higher levels of satisfaction with roads are far from being the only factor causing lower worry about traffic harm, the finding suggests that improving road infrastructure quality is likely to play some role in changing people’s perceptions of risk on the road.

Chart 2.11. Correlation between satisfaction with roads and highways and worry about being harmed by traffic accidents



Survey questions: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the roads and highways?

Note: Worry includes those who stated 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'

i - R=-0.47
ii - R=-0.14

Insight to action

The World Risk Poll has asked people around the world about the biggest risk to their safety on three occasions. Each time, the answer has come back the same: road traffic accidents. Harm on the road consistently outranks other risks from things like food, water, violent crime and severe weather events. There is also some evidence of risk habituation among people most exposed to harm from road accidents (people who have personally experienced one in the last two years and know someone else who has been affected).

Those findings over the years show that much more needs to be done to reduce the serious harms resulting from road traffic accidents, including at the legislative, regulatory and communication levels. As the WHO advises, “Governments must take action to address road safety in a holistic manner. This requires involvement from multiple sectors such as transport, police, health and education, as well as the private sector and civil society organisations. It requires actions that address the safety of roads, vehicles and all road users. Effective interventions include designing safer infrastructure and incorporating road safety features into land-use and transport planning; improving the safety features of vehicles; enhancing post-crash care for victims of road traffic crashes; setting and enforcing laws relating to key risks; and raising public awareness⁶.”

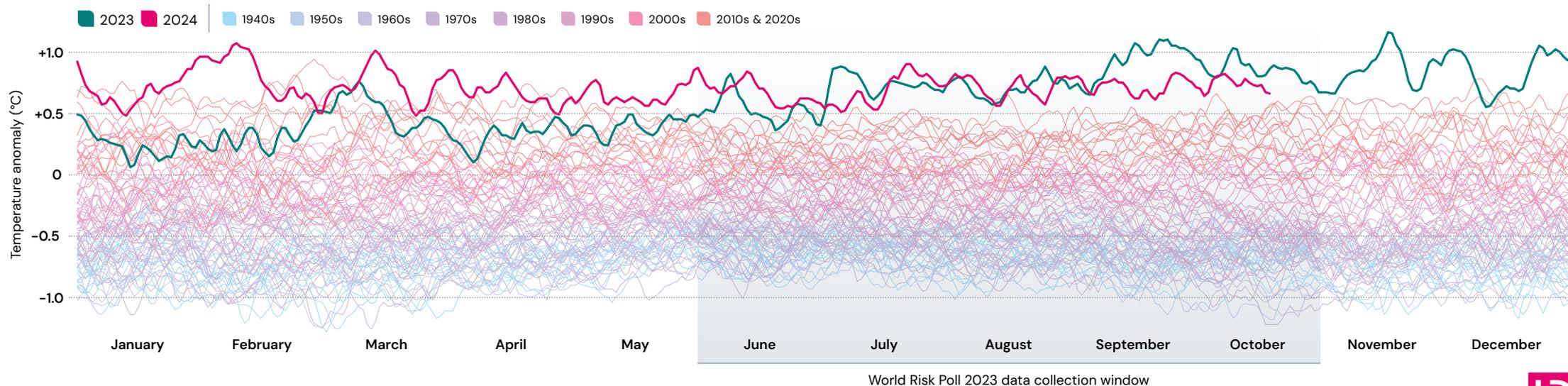
The ‘Safe System’ approach to road safety — which seeks a world free from road fatalities — places people at the centre of road safety efforts. It acknowledges that humans are fallible and prone to making mistakes on the road, but while these mistakes cannot be avoided, fatalities can be. It stresses that road systems need to be designed to build layers of protection around the fallible, vulnerable human⁷. Therefore, understanding the humans who use roads, and their perceptions of risk, is crucial to building safe road systems in the future.

3. As the world warms, the perceived threat of climate change remains steady

“Our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres⁸

Chart 3.1. Monthly global surface temperature anomalies increase over last decades



Note: Data represents the deviation of each month's average surface temperature from the average between 1991 and 2020. Data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), implemented by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) on behalf of the European Commission is part of the European Union's space programme⁹.

The world is heating up. As Chart 3.1 demonstrates, the average surface air temperature is steadily climbing, and climate change is now arguably the biggest challenge facing humanity¹⁰ and an acute risk to people's safety. According to the WHO, climate change will cause around 250,000 additional deaths annually between the years 2030 and 2050, mostly from health impacts of malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress¹¹.

Climate change has also been linked to the increased frequency and severity of severe weather events. While the science linking long-term climate change to specific weather events is complex¹², there is widespread evidence of changes in extreme weather and climate events since the 1950s¹³.

Sea level rise is set to put numerous ports and coastal infrastructure out of action and make many settlements uninhabitable, with higher sea temperatures also leading to more severe tropical storms. In many parts of the world, homes and property will be at greater risk of damage, and those that remain standing may become uninsurable, making people more vulnerable to future disasters¹⁴. Climate change is also linked to biodiversity loss and a higher likelihood of the spread of infectious diseases¹⁵. In short, it is a significant danger to human wellbeing and the future health of the planet.

While people around the world increasingly report experiencing this 'new normal', are perceptions towards climate change itself adapting? The World Risk Poll has measured public opinion towards climate change on three occasions. The 2023 Poll was fielded during a period of unprecedented surface temperature anomalies, in the hottest year to date. 2024 is on track to break that temperature record.

Is public opinion changing with the climate?

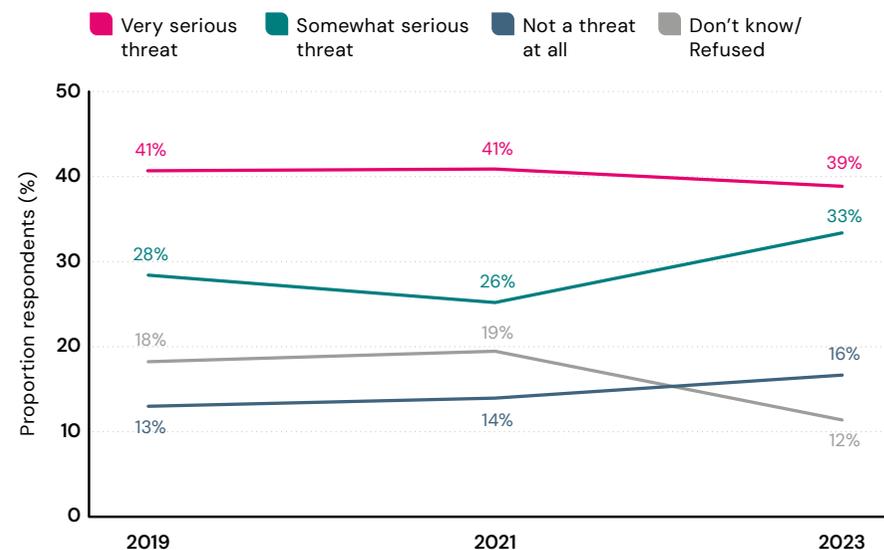
The World Risk Poll measures changes over time in how people worldwide experience disasters related to natural hazards. Between 2021 and 2023, the proportion of people who reported experiencing such a disaster rose from 27% to 30%. This increase is driven by a rise in the number of people experiencing disasters related to flooding, which rose from 10% to 13% globally and signals how people's experiences are changing in a changing climate. As the United Nations Environment Programme notes, climate change is making record-breaking flooding 'the new normal'¹⁶.

When asked in 2019 how threatened they feel by climate change, 41% of people worldwide said it was a 'very serious threat' to people in their country in the next 20 years, 28% said a 'somewhat serious threat', 13% 'not a threat at all', and 18% said they didn't know. In 2021, these figures remained largely unchanged, but in 2023, they have shifted more significantly.

While the proportion of people viewing climate change as a very serious threat to their country in the next 20 years dipped by two percentage points from 41% to 39%, the proportion who said it is a somewhat serious threat increased by seven percentage points (from 26% in 2021 to 33% in 2023). In total, almost three-quarters (72%) of the world's adult population feel at least somewhat threatened by climate change — five percentage points higher than the 67% measured in 2021 and 69% in 2019.

The proportion of people who do not view climate change as a threat at all to their country in the next 20 years also increased by two percentage points to 16% in 2023. Perhaps most significantly, fewer people now sit on the fence when it comes to their views on climate change. In 2023, just 12% say they do not know how much of a threat it is — a significant seven-percentage-point decline from 19% in 2021 and 18% in 2019. While some of these people now say they do not feel threatened by climate change, others appear to feel more threatened.

Chart 3.2. Perceived threat of climate change stable overall between 2019–2023, globally



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

* It is worth noting that the composition of countries included across the three iterations of the World Risk Poll varies somewhat, particularly in 2021, when slightly fewer countries were surveyed due to COVID-19.

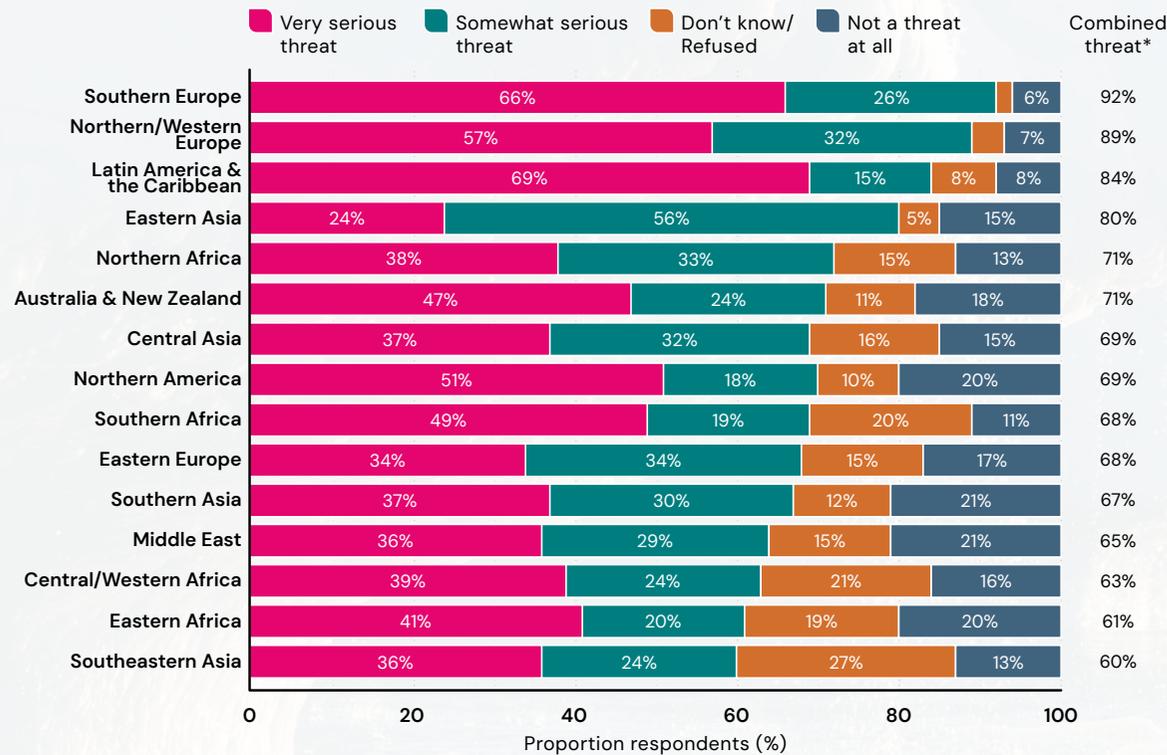
“ Perhaps most significantly, fewer people now sit on the fence when it comes to their views on climate change. ”

Majorities in every region perceive climate change as a threat

Chart 3.3 shows current variations across global regions in concern about climate change. Southern and Northern/Western Europe rank highest globally, with 92% and 89% of adults, respectively, saying climate change is a very or somewhat serious threat to their respective countries in the next 20 years. That said, Latin America and the Caribbean has the highest percentage of people who say it is a very serious threat (69%). Eastern Asia ranks fourth overall, although this is influenced heavily by China and the many people there who say climate change is a somewhat serious threat (59%).

Northern America stands out for its high level of belief that climate change is a very serious threat (51%); however, one in five people in the region feel climate change is not a threat at all — a figure only exceeded slightly by Southern Asia and the Middle East (21% each). And while uncertainty (saying ‘don’t know’ or refused) at a global level has declined compared to previous years, it remains high in Southeastern Asia (27%), Central/Western Africa (21%) and Southern Africa (20%).

Chart 3.3. Significant regional variation in the perceived threat of climate change, 2023



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. 'Very' + 'Somewhat' figures are based on rounded numbers.



The picture of how opinions on climate change across regions have changed over time is nuanced. Compared to the first World Risk Poll in 2019 — a more ‘like-for-like’ comparison than with 2021 due to the smaller number of countries surveyed and changes in survey mode necessitated by COVID-19 in some jurisdictions that year — regional views have changed in different ways.

For instance, Northern Africa is the only region to see a decisive increase (12 percentage points) in views of climate change as a very serious threat, from 26% in 2019 to 38% in 2023. In Southern Europe, the overall level of perceived threat has remained stable from 2019 to 2023, at 93% and 92%, respectively, but the composition of this perception has changed. The percentage of people in Southern Europe who see climate change as a very serious threat has fallen by seven percentage points, shifting almost entirely to a somewhat serious threat, which has increased by six points. A similar trend is seen in Eastern Europe, where ‘very serious threat’ has declined by 14 points, resulting in relatively even increases in ‘somewhat serious threat’ and ‘don’t know’. Finally, in Australia and New Zealand, the overall perceived threat of climate change has declined by 10 points since 2019, with a corresponding four-point increase in ‘not a threat at all’ and a six-point increase in ‘don’t know’.



Table 3.1. Complex changes in how regions perceive the threat of climate change in 2023 relative to 2019

| Region | Change in 'very serious threat' | Change in 'somewhat serious threat' | Change in 'not a threat at all' | Change in 'DK' |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Northern Africa | 12 | -1 | -5 | -7 |
| Central Asia | 3 | 2 | -4 | -2 |
| Southern Asia | 2 | 2 | 4 | -8 |
| Northern/Western Europe | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Middle East | 1 | -1 | 5 | -4 |
| Northern America | 1 | -7 | 0 | 4 |
| Eastern Africa | 0 | -2 | 0 | 2 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | -2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Eastern Asia | -4 | 20 | 4 | -20 |
| Australia & New Zealand | -4 | -6 | 4 | 6 |
| Southeastern Asia | -5 | -1 | 0 | 6 |
| Central/Western Africa | -6 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Southern Europe | -7 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Southern Africa | -10 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| Eastern Europe | -14 | 8 | 7 | -1 |

Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

Note: Calculation of changes between 2019 and 2023 are based on rounded numbers.

China's role in World Risk Poll global statistics on climate change

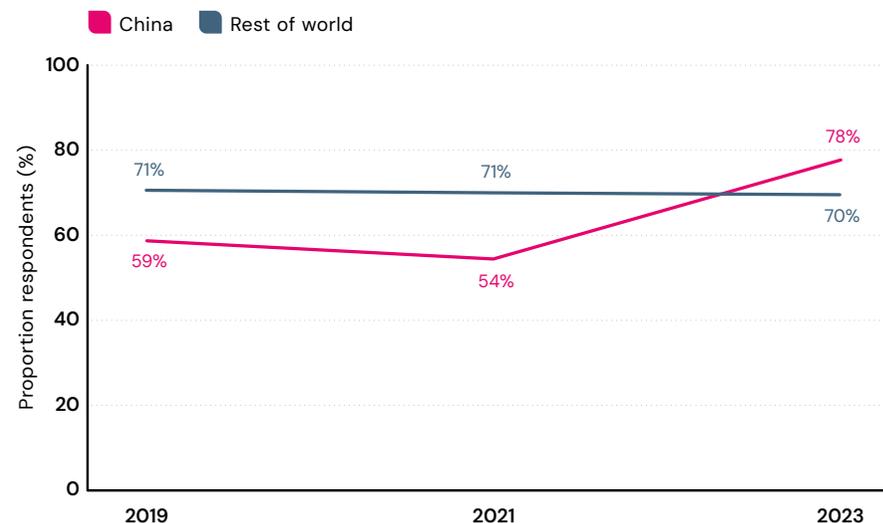
The increase in the overall perceived threat of climate change in Eastern Asia (shown in Chart 3.4) is largely due to China's outsized impact on regional figures. Overall (very + somewhat serious) threat stands at 78% in China, compared to 54% in 2021 and 59% in 2019. China's increase in perceived threat in 2023 drove up the regional figure for Eastern Asia and caused the global figure for overall threat to move up slightly to 72%. However, the rest of the world, excluding China, feels much the same about climate change in 2023 (70% view it as a very or somewhat serious threatⁱ) as it did in 2019 and 2021 (71% each).

The change in views on the overall threat of climate change in China is partly due to a significant decrease in 'don't know' responses, which dropped from 31% in 2021 and 29% in 2019 to just 5% in 2023 — a decline likely related, in part, to the change in survey mode administration.

In 2023, Gallup was only able to survey China using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) as opposed to computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), which was used in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, or computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI, or face-to-face) in 2019. As such, across the three iterations of the World Risk Poll, China has been measured via three different modes. While CATI and CAPI methods provide nationally representative samples because of their probability-based random sampling approaches, the 2023 CAWI survey was conducted through an opt-in panel — i.e., respondents sign up for a system in which they can complete the surveys.

ⁱ = 'Very' + 'Somewhat' figures are based on rounded numbers.

Chart 3.4. Perceived overall threat of climate change, 2019–2023*



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

* Overall threat = Very serious threat + Somewhat serious threat

China was the only one of the 142 countries and territories surveyed in 2023 that used CAWI. As this was the only method possible in China and given China's importance to global perceptions and experiences of risk and resilience, it is included in the analysis throughout this report. Because this report adjusts global and other cross-country statistics to account for differences in the age 15+ populations (meaning that countries with larger populations 'count' more towards global averages), results from China — one of the world's two most populous countries — are influential in assessing overall or regional averages.

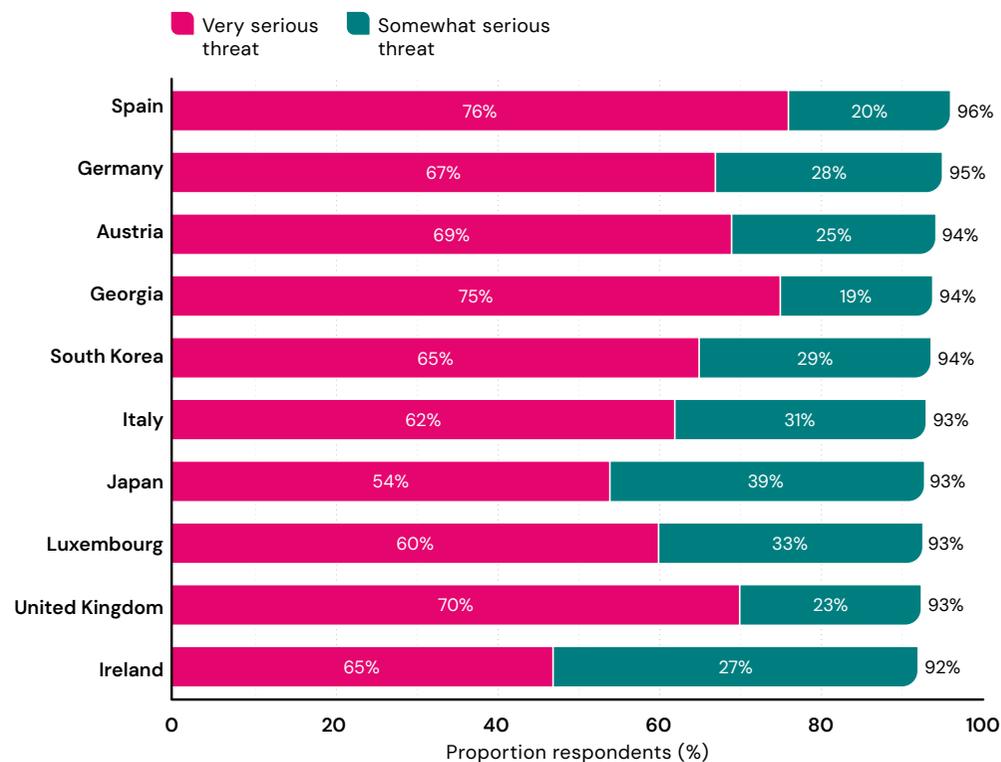
Which countries feel most threatened, sceptical and unsure about climate change?

It is important that the public appreciate the severity of the threat posed by climate change, as this drives support for stronger policy action. How threatened people feel by climate change is often closely related to their worldviews, values and beliefs. Climate change is also a risk with which cognitive dissonance and biases can flourish¹⁷, in that things people do in everyday life (such as driving a petrol vehicle or eating red meat – both known to contribute to climate change) may conflict with their beliefs. Additionally, people tend to overstate some risks, such as those that seem spectacular and are highly visible, at the expense of others that they downplay, such as those that feel long-term, distant, slow-moving and abstract¹⁸.

The top 10 list of countries that report the highest levels of perceived overall threat – i.e., feel most threatened by climate change – is predominantly a high-income, European one. Spain ranks as feeling the most threatened, with an overall threat (very + somewhat) total of 96%. Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, Georgia, Italy, the United Kingdom and Ireland also feature on this list, alongside South Korea and Japan. In these countries, the vast majority of people are convinced of the severity of climate change.



Chart 3.5. Top 10 countries ranked by perceived threat of climate change, 2023



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

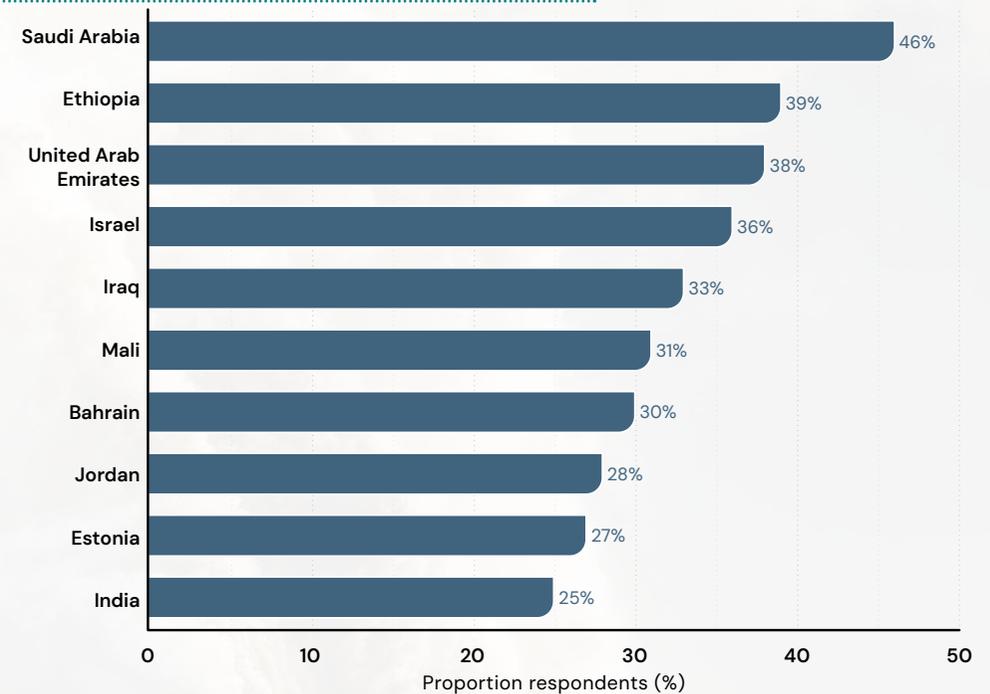
* Overall threat = Very serious threat + Somewhat serious threat. Totals are based on rounded figures.

At the other end of the scale, some countries feel far less threatened by climate change, posing a challenge to how they adapt to it. In each of the 10 countries shown in Chart 3.6, at least one-quarter of the adult population says they do not feel threatened at all by climate change. Several countries in the Middle East feature in this list, chief among which is Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter of oil¹⁹. In Saudi Arabia, almost seven times as many people perceive climate change as not a threat at all (46%) as perceive it as a very serious one (7%). Its neighbour, the United Arab Emirates, also makes the lists of greatest sceptics and biggest oil producers (eighth globally). Other countries from the region, including Israel, Iraq, Bahrain and Jordan, also rank among the highest in the world for climate change scepticism.

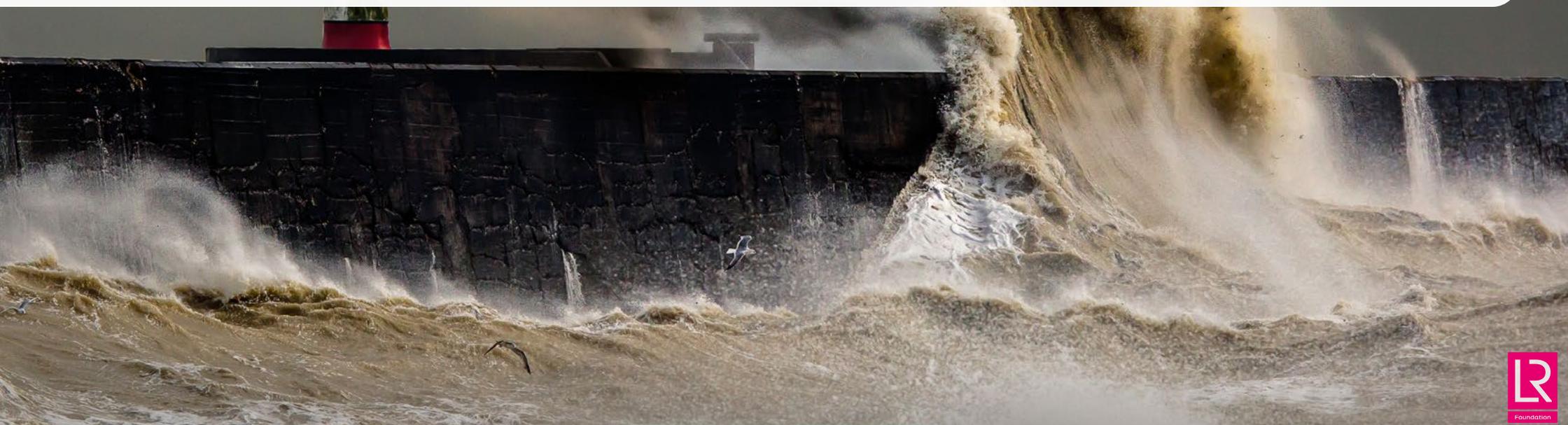
Ethiopia ranks second, with 39% of adults believing climate change is not a threat at all — more than double the 16% who think it is a very serious threat. Ethiopia is one of the world's most populous countries, with climate change set to have a significant negative impact on its prospects for development²⁰.

Thirty-six percent of Israelis say climate change is not a threat to their country in the next 20 years. But this has not always been the case. In 2019 and 2021, less than half this number (15%) said climate change was not a threat at all. The World Risk Poll surveyed Israel in the weeks following the Hamas attacks of 7 October, which may have played a role in the decline in the perceived threat of climate change, likely due to what may be regarded as existential security threats being more front-of-mind. This interpretation would fit within the 'finite pool of worry' hypothesis, which states that as people become more worried by one threat, they feel less worried by others²¹.

Chart 3.6. Top 10 countries who say climate change is 'not a threat at all', 2023



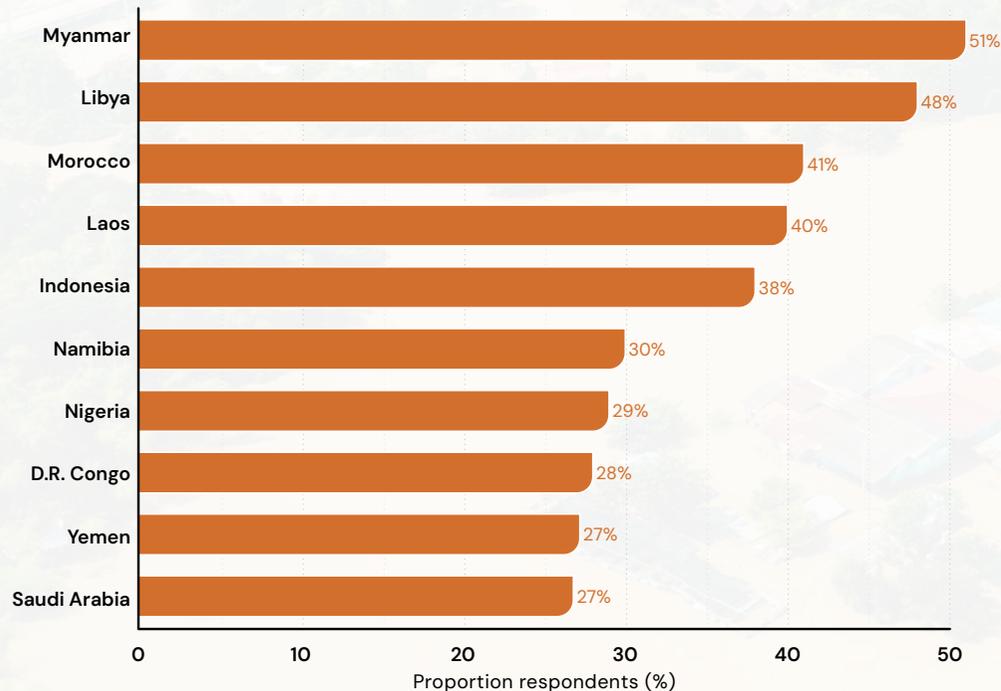
Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?



Another way to analyse this question that poses an alternative viewpoint to policymakers is to look at the countries where not knowing about the threat of climate change (i.e., uncertainty) is highest. There is a significant opportunity in these countries to communicate the risks of climate change more effectively. Myanmar and Libya top the list for uncertainty about climate change, with around half of their adult populations offering no opinion on the level of threat they feel (52% and 48%, respectively) to their countries in the next 20 years. Many of the world's most populous countries, such as Nigeria, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, also feature on this list. So, too, does Saudi Arabia, with 27% saying they do not know if climate change is a threat to their country. While this is significantly lower than the 46% of adults in Saudi Arabia who say climate change is not a threat at all, it does signal that there is a dual challenge of misinformation (thinking climate change poses no threat at all) and a lack of reliable information in some countries.

Providing more targeted information to those least sure about the threat posed by climate change may be key to unlocking greater public support for the decisive policy action needed to tackle this generational challenge.

Chart 3.7. Top 10 countries ranked by 'don't know' if climate change is a threat, 2023



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

“Providing more targeted information to those least sure about the threat posed by climate change may be key to unlocking greater public support for the decisive policy action needed to tackle this generational challenge.”



Which factors are most closely related to feeling threatened by climate change?

Previous research suggests that how people feel about climate change is related to a wide range of factors, including one's worldview, values and demographics, as well as broader structural and institutional factors like the economy, local weather conditions, sociopolitical trends and the wider media landscape²². From an analytical perspective, when seeking to unpack which factors are most closely linked to attitudes towards climate change, it makes sense to examine a range of factors in combination, not in isolation.

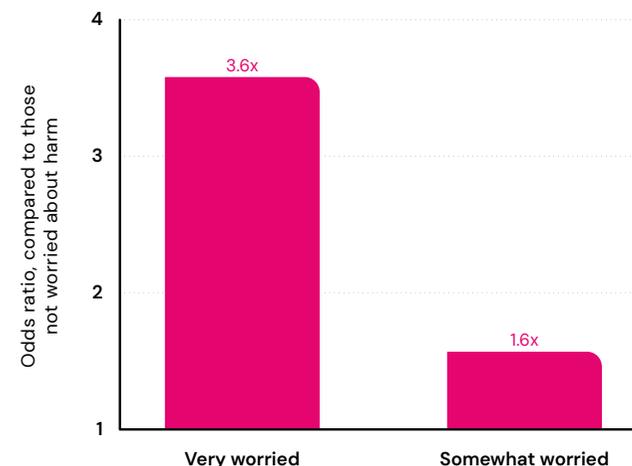
The World Risk Poll is valuable in this respect. Based on global data from 2023, it is possible to construct a statistical model (using multi-level regression) that identifies which factors are most closely linked to people saying climate change is a very serious threat. This model includes a range of demographic factors (like age, sex and education level), as well as attitudinal questions and broader structural factors (such as which region a person lives in and how affluent their country is), to account for the wide range of traits that can influence attitudes towards climate changeⁱ. Significant factors in the model include:

Worry about harm from severe weather events

Results from the statistical analytical model show that concern about harm from severe weather events has by far the strongest connection to people saying climate change is a very serious threat. Controlling for other factors, the odds that someone believes climate change is a very serious threat are 3.6 times greater when they are very worried about being harmed by severe weather events than the odds when they are not worried about severe weather events. This relationship holds for people who are somewhat worried about severe weather, although the effect is less than half as strong (1.6 times more likely). This finding suggests a link between short-term worry about one of the key effects of climate change (more severe weather events) and feeling very threatened longer-term by the underlying issue.

ⁱ – Model output comes in the form of 'odds ratios', which, put simply, explain how much more likely one group of people is to feel very threatened by climate change compared to another group. Crucially, these relative likelihoods account for the effects of other factors. This means that if you took two people who share the same characteristics across all other factors in the model – i.e., are the same sex, age, live in the same country, etc. – but are different in just one regard (e.g., have different levels of education), the model is able to give a value to the size (and significance) of the effect of education on feeling very threatened by climate change.

Chart 3.8. Likelihood of believing climate change is a 'very serious threat' by levels of worry about being harmed by severe weather events



Survey questions: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

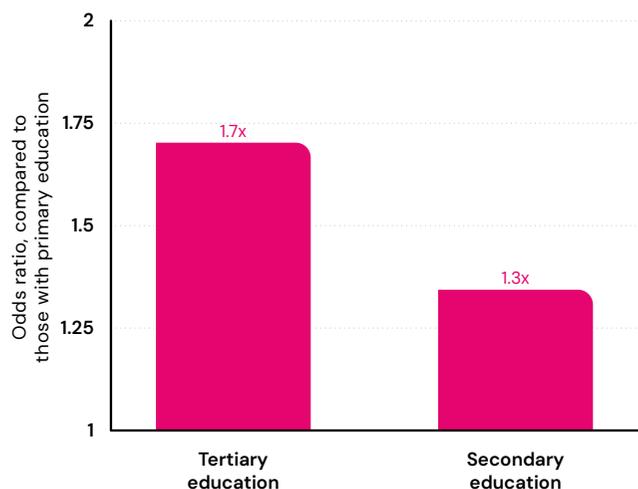
Note: Odds ratios are compared to the baseline for people who are not worried about being harmed by severe weather events.



Education

There is a clear relationship between education levels and feeling very threatened by climate change. The odds that someone believes climate change is a very serious threat are 1.7 times greater when they have completed tertiary education than the odds when they have only completed primary education, while controlling for other factors. These odds drop to 1.3 times among those with secondary education.

Chart 3.9. Likelihood of believing climate change is a 'very serious threat' by educational attainment



Survey question: Do you think that climate change is a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, or not a threat at all to the people in this country in the next 20 years?

Note: Odds ratios are compared to the baseline for people who have primary level education only.

Gender and urbanicity

A person's gender also appears to play a role in shaping attitudes towards climate change, although to a lesser degree than education. The odds that someone believes climate change is a very serious threat are 1.15 times greater when they are male than the odds when they are female while controlling for other factors. There is a similar-sized effect when comparing people who live in cities to those who live in rural areas. The former are 1.1 times as likely to say climate change is a very serious threat as the latter.

The region of the world where a person lives also significantly affects how threatened they feel by climate change, as shown in Chart 3.3.

Factors with no relationship to seeing climate change as a very serious threat

In addition to identifying which factors have significant links to feeling threatened by climate change, the model sheds light on which factors are relatively 'less important' in shaping views towards climate change.

These include things like struggling to afford food and feeling cared about by neighbours as well as how people feel about their household income (whether they are getting by or finding things difficult). While some studies have suggested that people worry less about the long-term threat of climate change when faced with more immediate daily risks and challenges like poverty, this model suggests that these daily financial troubles play no meaningful role — compared to other factors like worry about severe weather or education level — in a person's likelihood of saying climate change is a very serious threat. At the global level, age also seems to play no meaningful role in the likelihood of people saying climate change is a very serious threat, other things being constant.

Insight to action

Minimising future harm from climate change requires systemic change at all levels, from the global to the local, across politics, economies and society. Academic research finds evidence linking heightened concern over climate change with greater support for regulation and policy interventions²³. When people are more concerned about the impact of climate change, they are more likely to support political change regarding the issue. On the other hand, if governments and policymakers know that people in their country feel very threatened by climate change, they may be more inclined to push through policies they believe will have strong public backing.

This is supported by data from the World Risk Poll, which finds that people who consider climate change a very serious threat are less likely to be satisfied (57%) with efforts to protect the environment in their respective countries than people who do not consider climate change a threat (62%) or are unsure on the issue (66%). The most worried people are also the ones who most want their countries to do better in protecting the environment.

For policymakers focusing on the issue, communicating the risks of climate change effectively with the public becomes an important consideration in enacting legislative change. Yet communicating about climate change is notoriously challenging, as the topic is often seen as abstract, distant from daily life and filled with uncertainties²⁴. Therefore, it is vitally important that those wishing to enact change are aware of trends in public opinion among the people they are trying to communicate with. It is also vital that climate change is discussed and framed in a way that is understandable to as many as possible, given the links between concern towards the issue and levels of education. Climate change communications should use everyday language²⁵ and simple graphics²⁶ while avoiding jargon²⁷.

In addition to the link between concern over climate change and support for legislative change, there are also links with behavioural changes. For instance, another recent World Risk Poll report on household waste²⁸ finds that people who feel very threatened by climate change are much more likely than people who do not feel threatened at all to live in a household that separates their household waste before disposing of it (58% vs. 48%, respectively), a key step in the recycling process. This behavioural difference is most present in high- and upper-middle-income countries, where concern about climate change is highest.

In summary, understanding public opinion on climate change is important for policymakers looking to enact legislative and behavioural change to mitigate against it. This applies at the national level; for example, understanding how countries differ in their composition of attitudes towards climate change and their relative levels of certainty and scepticism. But it also applies at the individual level, with some communication strategies likely to be more effective with some groups than others, such as the least educated, those in rural areas and people who are not worried about severe weather events, who are all less likely to view climate change as a very serious threat.



4. Global trends in safety and risk

A core question asked in each of the three iterations of the World Risk Poll to date is about how safe people feel relative to five years ago. New global data from 2023 now provides three point-in-time measurements of this question, allowing us to see trends in the data.

Overall, compared to five years ago, do you feel more safe, less safe, or about as safe as you did five years ago?

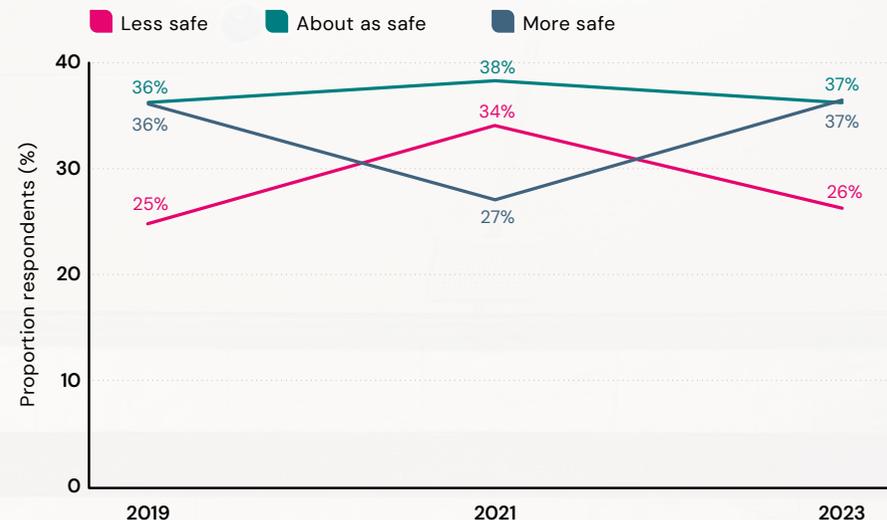
Feeling safe is an integral part of people's security²⁹, wellbeing and resilience and is linked to many areas of life, including how people relate to others, experience local communities and seek employment. It is a deep psychological need on which humans can build happy, thriving lives. The opposite of feeling safe — feeling fearful — has paralysing and polarising effects on societies. Countries with higher levels of perceived insecurity also tend to be more polarised³⁰.

Globally, feelings of safety are largely unchanged compared to 2019 — before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, as many people say they feel 'more safe' than they did five years ago (37%) as say 'about as safe' (37%), with 26% feeling 'less safe'.

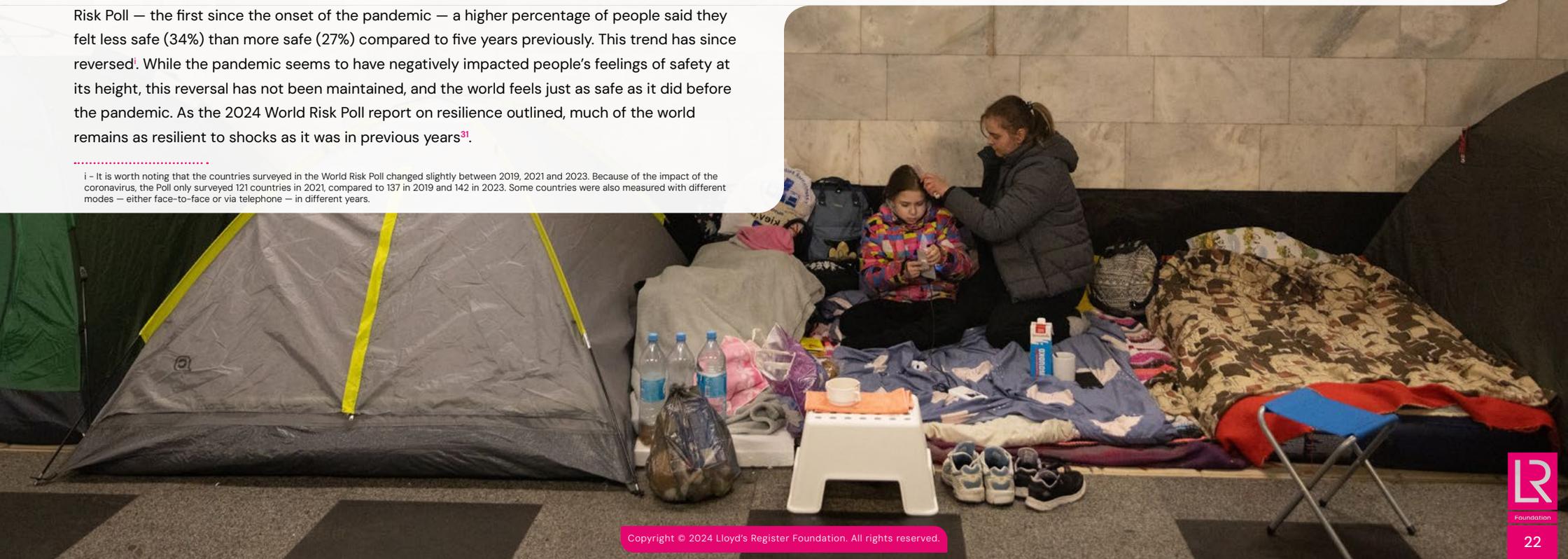
These percentages are almost exactly in line with the global figures from 2019. In the 2021 World Risk Poll — the first since the onset of the pandemic — a higher percentage of people said they felt less safe (34%) than more safe (27%) compared to five years previously. This trend has since reversed! While the pandemic seems to have negatively impacted people's feelings of safety at its height, this reversal has not been maintained, and the world feels just as safe as it did before the pandemic. As the 2024 World Risk Poll report on resilience outlined, much of the world remains as resilient to shocks as it was in previous years³¹.

ⁱ - It is worth noting that the countries surveyed in the World Risk Poll changed slightly between 2019, 2021 and 2023. Because of the impact of the coronavirus, the Poll only surveyed 121 countries in 2021, compared to 137 in 2019 and 142 in 2023. Some countries were also measured with different modes — either face-to-face or via telephone — in different years.

Chart 4.1. Changes in global feelings of safety relative to five years ago, 2019–2023



Survey question: Overall, compared to five years ago, do you feel more safe, less safe, or about as safe as you did five years ago?

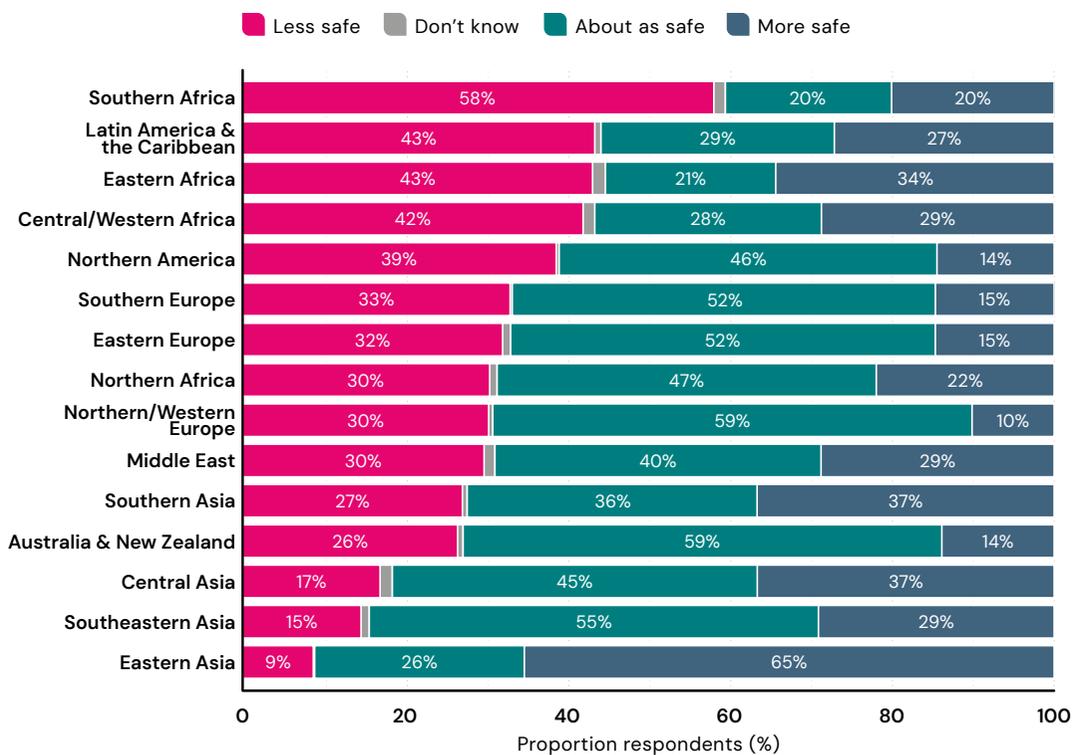


Global realignment hides significant geographic changes in feelings of safety

While globally, the world feels just as safe as in 2019, the picture becomes more nuanced at the regional level. In 2023, more people in each of Asia's four main regions report feeling more safe than say they feel less safe relative to five years ago. Eastern Asia stands out for the highest proportion of people feeling more safe (65%).

By contrast, the higher-income regions of Europe and Northern America all exhibit the opposite relationship, with more people saying they feel less safe than saying they feel more safe. Only Southern Africa scores lower than these regions for relative feelings of growing less safe.

Chart 4.2. Feelings of safety relative to five years ago by region, 2023

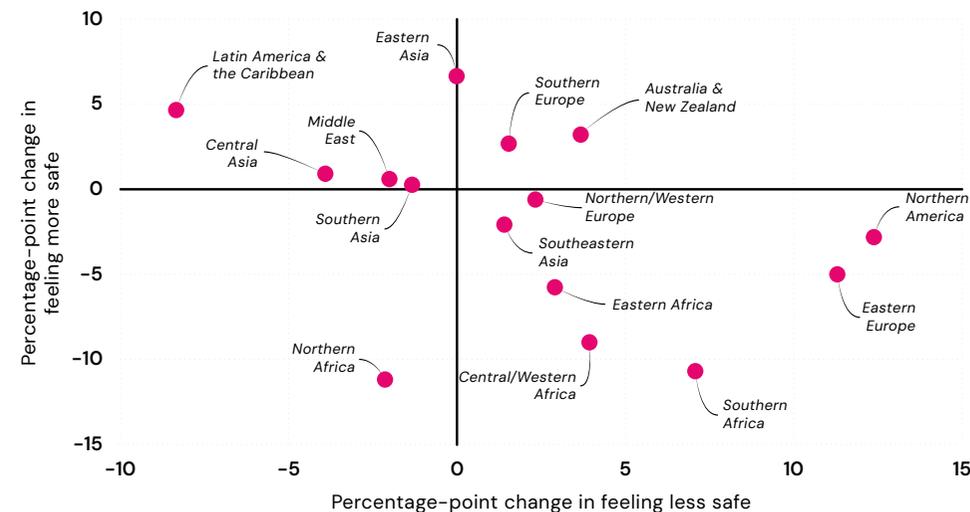


Survey question: Overall, compared to five years ago, do you feel more safe, less safe, or about as safe as you did five years ago?
 Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Values under 5% are not displayed.

Compared to 2019, no other region has come to feel less safe than Northern America, with an increase of 12 points in feeling less safe, or Eastern Europe (an increase of 11 points, likely related to the war in Ukraine). The former is driven by the United States, where feeling less safe has increased from 27% in 2019 to 40% in 2023ⁱ. Rising feelings of insecurity have affected people in lower-income countries as well as those in more affluent regions.

In most regions, increases in people feeling less safe are often accompanied by decreases in people feeling more safe, and vice versa. Interestingly, some regions, such as Australia and New Zealand and Southern Europe have seen increases in people feeling both more and less safe. By extension, these same regions have seen declines in people feeling about as safe as five years ago.

Chart 4.3. Change in feelings of safety relative to five years ago by region, 2019–2023



Survey question: Overall, compared to five years ago, do you feel more safe, less safe, or about as safe as you did five years ago?

ⁱ - Other World Risk Poll findings from 2023 highlight how even though the United States scores among the highest in the world for individual resilience, it also scores among the lowest in the world for societal resilience. See more here: <https://wrp.lfoundation.org.uk/news/united-states-resilient-individuals-fragile-society>

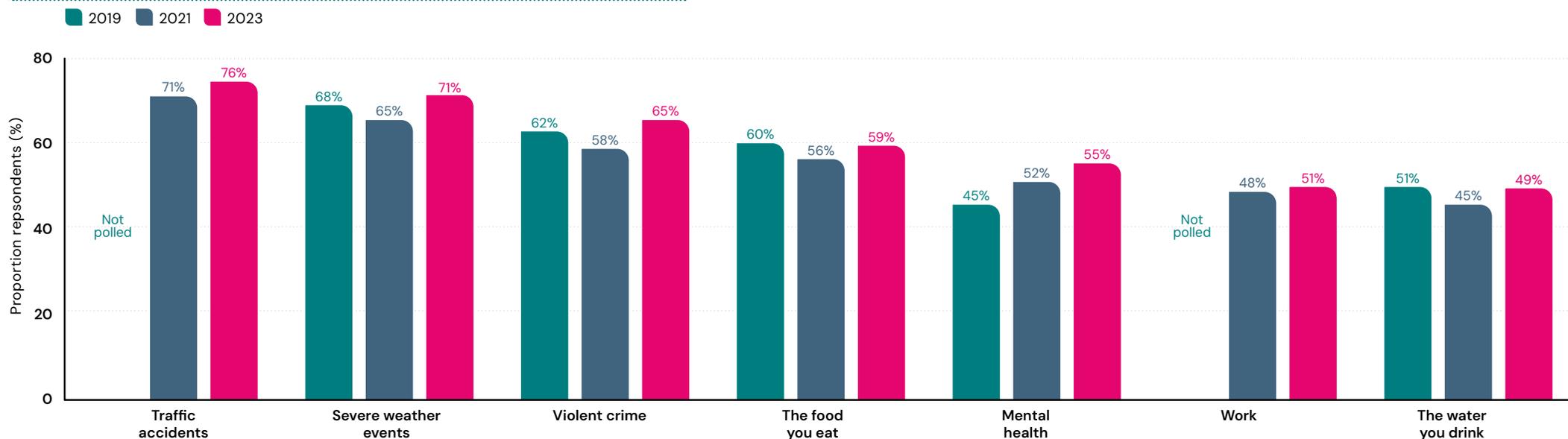
How are worry about and experience of risks changing?

As previously established, traffic accidents remain the number one risk people around the world worry about, with three in four (76%) very or somewhat worried about being harmed in this way – a significant increase compared to 2021 (71%). The next most worrisome risks – severe weather events and violent crime – have followed a similar trend. In 2021 (during the pandemic), worry about these risks dipped compared to 2019 but has since rebounded to slightly higher totals in 2023. Worry about water and food has also followed a similar trend, though worry is now slightly lower than in 2019.

The standout change over time in worry is about harm from mental health. Unlike other risks, worry about mental health has increased on each iteration of the World Risk Poll, from 48% initially to 52% in 2021 and 55% in 2023.

“Traffic accidents remain the number one risk people around the world worry about.”

Chart 4.4. Global change in worry about different risks, 2019–2023



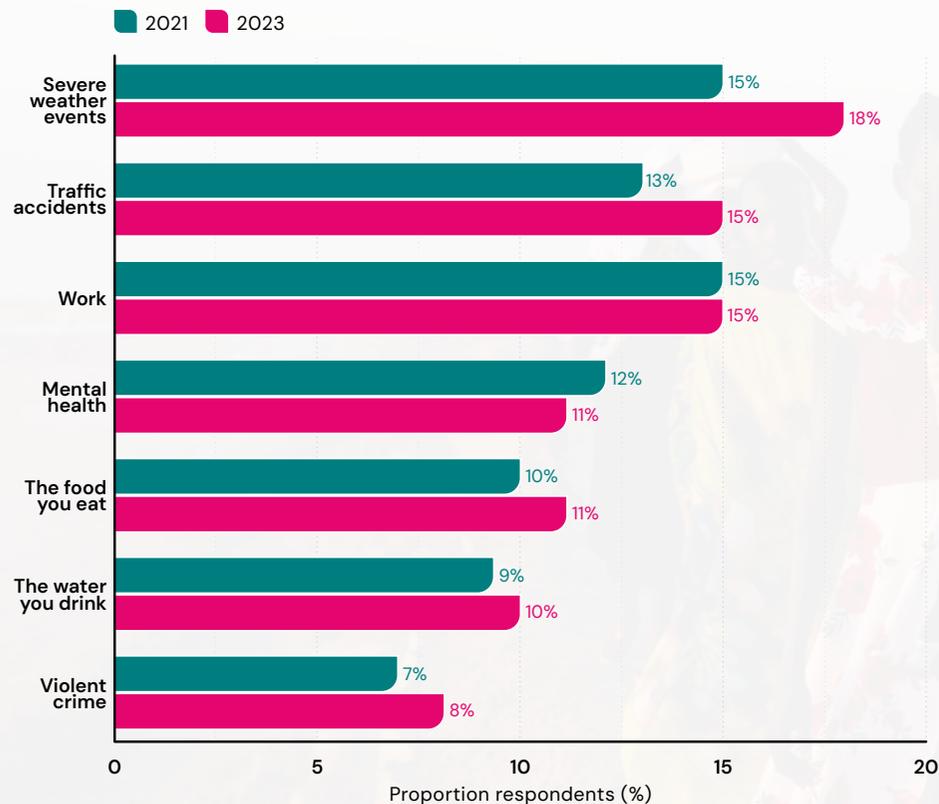
Survey question: In general, how WORRIED are you that each of the following things could cause you serious harm? Are you very worried, somewhat worried, or not worried?

Note: Traffic accidents and work were not asked about in 2019. Percentages shown are the sum of Very worried + Somewhat worried.

Worry includes those who stated 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried'

A slightly different picture emerges when it comes to personal experience of harm from these risks in the past two years. The most notable changes over the past two years are the increases in the experience of harm from traffic accidents and severe weather events, up by two and three percentage points, respectively.

Chart 4.5. Global change in personal experience of different risks, 2021–2023



Survey question: Have you or someone you PERSONALLY know, EXPERIENCED serious harm from any of the following things in the past TWO years?

Note: Data trended to 2021 for consistency. Personal experience is defined as i) those who said they have been harmed in this way in the last two years, and ii) people who have been harmed in this way in the last two years AND also know someone who has experienced harm.

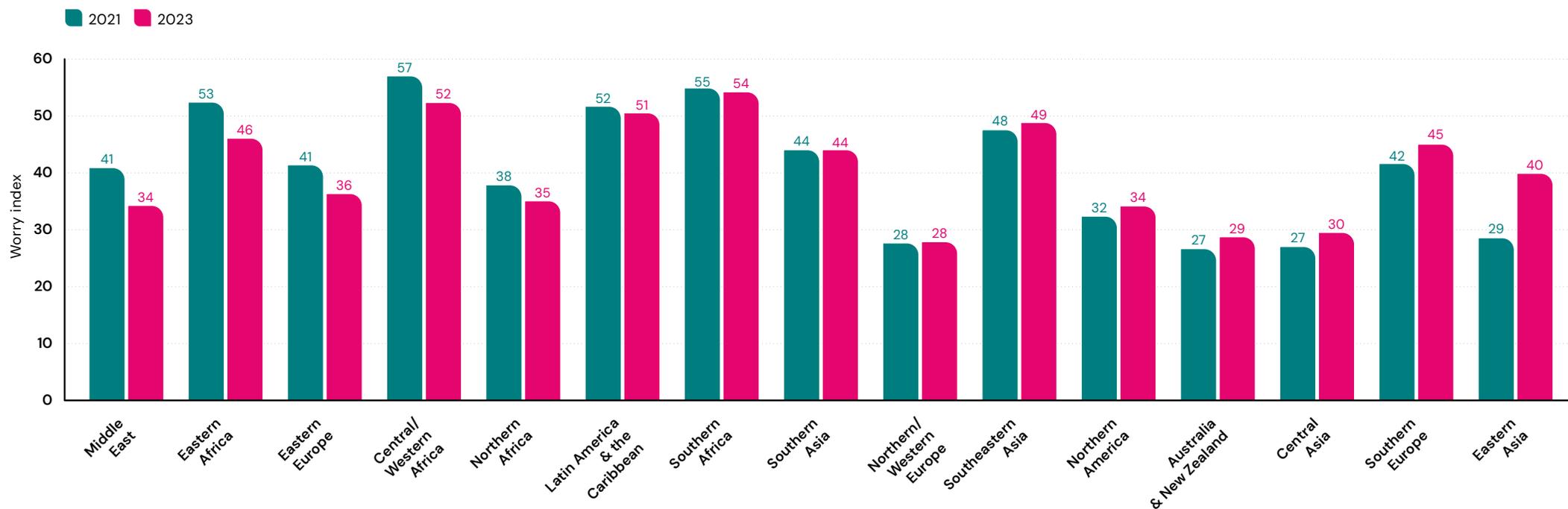
Harm from violent crime and work offer useful illustrations of how people’s worry about risks does not always align with their personal experience of them. Violent crime ranks lowest of these daily risks globally for rates of personal experience of harm but is the third most worried about risk behind traffic accidents and severe weather. Violent crime has a significant effect on personal wellbeing, as well as on broader community and societal level resilience³². On the other hand, workplace harm has been consistently high since 2021 but generates among the lowest levels of worry relative to other risks.



The World Risk Poll's *Worry Index* and *Experience of Harm Index* — both measured on a scale from 0–100 — shed light on which countries score highest and lowest overall for experiencing harm and feeling worried and how these change over time.

Chart 4.6 shows how overall worry levels about the seven risks asked about in the Poll have changed over time across regions. The biggest declines in the Worry Index have been in the Middle East, Eastern Africa and Eastern Europe, while the largest increases have been in Central Asia, Southern Europe and Eastern Asia (driven mainly by China). Overall, regions are relatively split in their changes in overall worry compared to 2021.

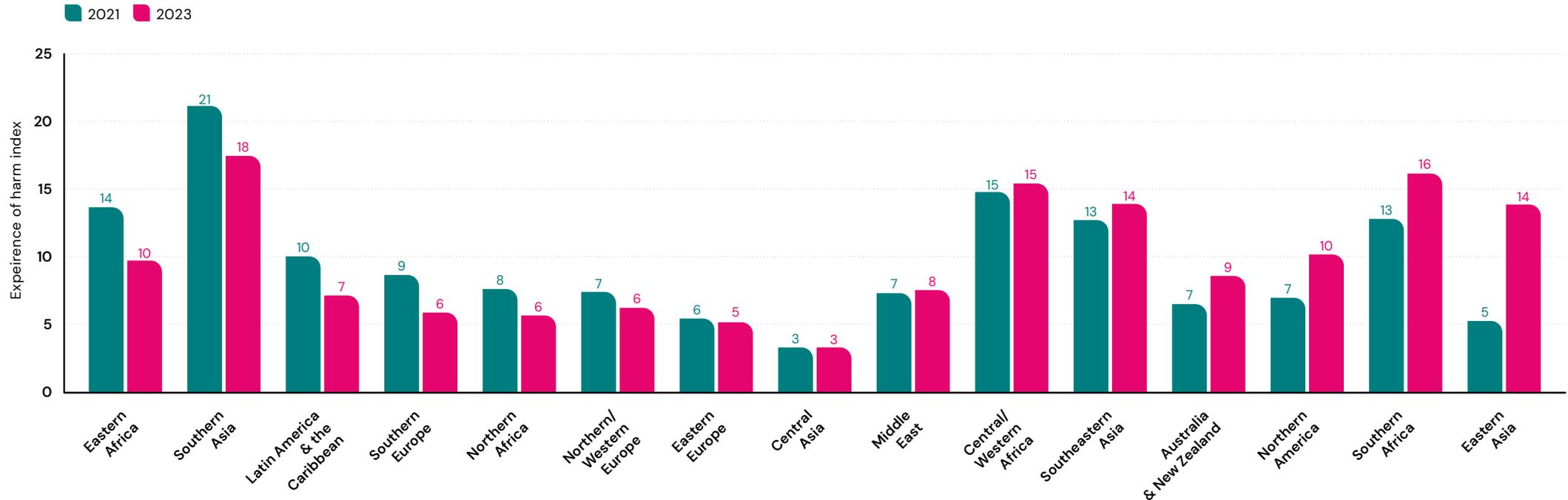
Chart 4.6. Worry Index by region, 2021–2023



Note: The Worry Index was calculated as the average worry about seven risks, reverse-coded ('Very worried' as 2, 'Somewhat worried' as 1 and 'Not at all worried' as 0) and re-scaled to 0-100.

The Experience of Harm Index results are similar in that they are roughly evenly split between regions that have seen an increase or decrease in people experiencing harm. Eastern Africa, Southern Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean have seen the biggest declines in overall experience of harm since 2021, while Northern America, Southern Africa and Eastern Asia have seen the largest increases.

Chart 4.7. Experience of Harm Index by region, 2021-2023

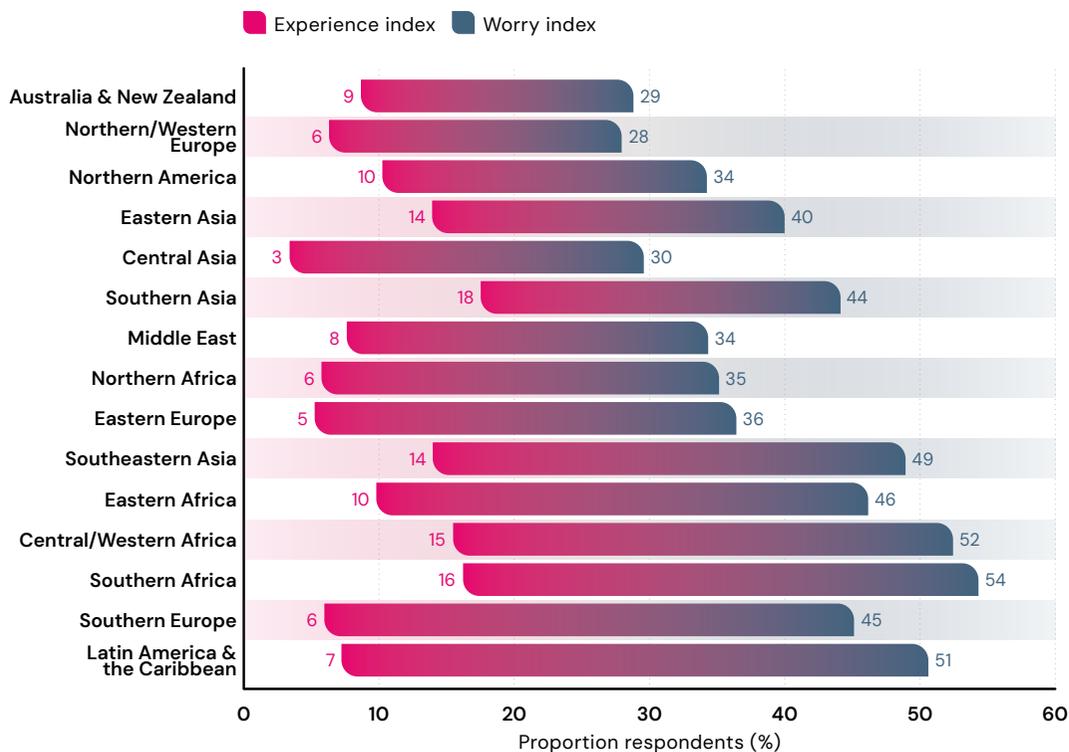


Note: The Experience of Harm Index was calculated as the average of personal experience with seven risks, rescaled to 0-100.

Using both indexes together also highlights the regions and countries where the gap between worry about harm and actual experiences of harm is largest. Chart 4.8 shows that in every region, more people worry about harm than experience it, but the gap between the two indexes varies considerably.

The gap between worry and experience of harm is narrowest in Australia and New Zealand and Northern/Western Europe, and widest in Southern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. When compared side by side, these two indexes show that there can be considerable differences between the way people feel about risks and the actual harm they experience, particularly in some parts of the world. This knowledge can be hugely important in informing risk communication and mitigation efforts in different regions.

Chart 4.8. Gaps between the Experience Index and Worry Index by region, 2023



Notes: The Worry Index was calculated as the average worry about seven risks, reverse-coded ('Very worried' as 2, 'Somewhat worried' as 1 and 'Not at all worried' as 0) and re-scaled to 0-100.

The Experience of Harm Index was calculated as the average of personal experience with seven risks, rescaled to 0-100.

Insight to action

The way we perceive risk is a result of a complex set of contextual, factual and emotive factors. The gap between the way we perceive various risks we face in daily life and our experiences of harm from those risks (whether personally, through someone we know or through a wider perception) is important to track and understand, given that our attitudes and behaviours to mitigate risks is a function of how threatened we feel by different hazards.

Understanding these gaps and what drives them is vital for policymakers and safety professionals so that interventions to reduce harm from specific risks can be tailored to be more effective. This includes designing more effective risk communication and mitigation strategies that raise awareness and empower communities to better deal with the risks they face, taking into account demographic and socioeconomic contexts.



7. Conclusion

The World Risk Poll has asked the world about risk and safety on three occasions, covering major periods of global and regional upheaval. Over this period, the Poll has tracked both the shifting sands of the global risk landscape and the steadier trends that continue to shape everyday life for billions around the world.

On the one hand, it has measured the perceived health risks from the pandemic, the ever-increasing levels of worry about being harmed by mental health issues, and the higher levels of harm from severe weather events as the climate changes.

On the other hand, the Poll continues to highlight the stubbornly high levels of harm from, and worry about, road traffic accidents, the ongoing importance of road safety to everyday life, and the persistent gaps between how people worry about risks relative to their actual experiences of harm from them. These trends are consistent with previous iterations of the World Risk Poll in 2019 and 2021, suggesting that policymakers and safety professionals have yet to tackle those issues sufficiently to reduce harm from those risks.

We hope that highlighting these dimensions of global risk will help policymakers, governments and safety professionals design more effective, tailored solutions to make the world safer.

“...the Poll continues to highlight the stubbornly high levels of harm from, and worry about, road traffic accidents ...”

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Additional information

About Lloyd's Register Foundation

Lloyd's Register Foundation is an independent global safety charity that supports research, innovation, and education to make the world a safer place. Its mission is to use the best evidence and insight, such as the World Risk Poll, to help the global community focus on tackling the world's most pressing safety and risk challenges.

Lloyd's Register Foundation, 71 Fenchurch Street, London, EC3M 4BS, United Kingdom

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