

Do We Just Give Up or Fight Even Harder for Effective Climate Action?

“Sometimes it is almost impossible not to feel hopeless and broken. After all the flooding, fires and droughts of the last three years worldwide, all related to climate change ... I really thought governments were ready to listen to the science, to act in the people’s best interests.” So opens the recent Guardian Weekly¹ report on a survey of 380 climate scientists, the most informed people about global climate on the planet. The survey results ring the alarm bells on the widening chasm between the science and the political response.

- 77% of respondents believe global temperatures will reach at least a devastating 2.5C above pre-industrial levels.
- 42% think it will be more than 3C.
- Only 6% believe the world will achieve the 1.5C limit.

How do the scientists cope with their growing fears of a dystopian future? Henri Waisman (France) provided one response: “I regularly face moments of despair and guilt of not managing to make things change more rapidly, and these feelings have become even stronger since I became a father. But, in these moments, two things help me: remembering how much progress has happened since I started work on the topic in 2005 and that every tenth of a degree matters a lot – this means that it is still useful to continue the fight.”

And what actions are the climate scientists taking themselves?

- Most backed voting for politicians who pledge urgent climate action.
- The second choice was reducing flying and other fossil-fuel powered transport in favour of electric and public transport.
- More than 60% reported that they are eating less meat, with half of them believing this is the most effective individual action.
- Acting to increase collective awareness of the problem, including participating in protests.
- Shifting the emphasis in their work to mitigating the negative impacts of global heating and how to protect the most vulnerable people.

Taking constructive action, and witnessing others do the same, is the most powerful antidote to losing hope, said many of those surveyed. “There are so many people on the ground who care and want to make a difference; that is truly encouraging and really drives me.”

¹ Carrington, D. ‘Hopeless and Broken: We asked 380 climate scientists what they felt about the future,’ in The Guardian Weekly, 17 May 2024, pp34 – 39.

