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LABarometer

Top 5 Takeaways *from* The Sustainability & Resilience Survey

WAVE 2

Release Date: December 7, 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2021, as California experienced its hottest and driest summer yet, the United Nations released a troubling [report](#) on climate change, warning of even deadlier heat waves to come in the absence of immediate global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In Los Angeles, the climate forecast is just as grim. The ripple effects of rising temperatures have already been felt in the form of record-breaking heat waves, rolling blackouts, wildfires, and a drought emergency. According to a [climate vulnerability assessment](#) recently released by the County's Chief Sustainability Office, Los Angeles may, by the year 2050, experience up to a tenfold increase in the frequency of extreme heat waves and up to a 40% increase in the size of the areas burned by wildfires.

Each year, the USC Dornsife-Union Bank LABarometer Sustainability and Resilience survey examines how Los Angeles County residents experience and interact with their natural environment in the midst of this climate crisis, with an eye towards tracking environmental sustainability and community resilience. The survey covers a number of topics, including heat and pollution exposure, natural disaster preparedness, environmentally friendly consumption behaviors, transportation behavior, and the steps residents are taking to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

This report draws on data from Wave 2 of the survey, which was fielded from July 19, 2021, to September 5, 2021, and completed by a sample of 1,244 respondents.

With Wave 1 as our reference point, Wave 2 reveals a marked increase in the percentage of Angelenos who have been impacted in the last year by adverse environmental conditions or extreme weather. Most notably, 50% of Angelenos avoided going outdoors at some point during the last 12 months due to air quality concerns related to wildfires – an increase of 30% since 2020.

Vulnerability to the effects of climate change varies substantially across different segments of the population. While over 1 in 4 residents experienced some form of psychological distress in the last 12 months due to a natural disaster, rates increase to 1 in 3 among lower-income as well as younger residents. Black residents are also more likely than other racial or ethnic groups to live and work in conditions that increase their vulnerability to rising temperatures and extreme weather.

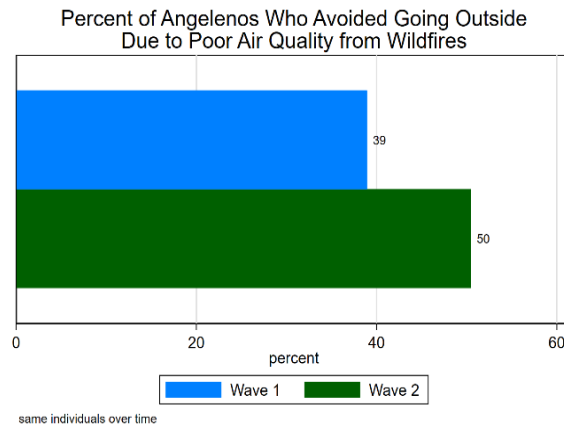
As environmental impacts have increased over the last year, so, too, have concerns about climate change. According to our survey, 77% of Angelenos perceive climate change as a threat to their well-being and 75% attribute climate change to human behavior, and both percentages are significantly higher than those observed in Wave 1. Likewise, our results reveal a significant increase in the percentage of Angelenos who plan to make their next car purchase or lease a hybrid or electric vehicle, a sign that County residents are on track to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On the next page, you will find the top five takeaways from Wave 2 of the LABarometer Sustainability and Resilience survey. To learn more about this survey and other LABarometer surveys, please visit <https://cesr.usc.edu/labarometer/overview>.

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

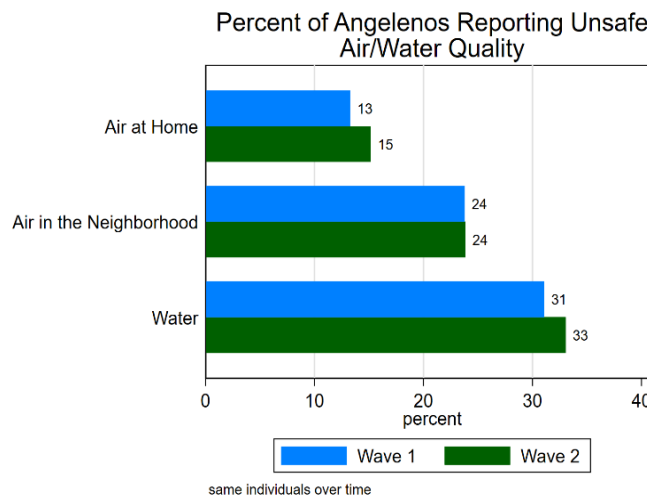
1. 50% of Angelenos avoided going outside at some point in 2021 due to a wildfire – a 30% increase from 2020.

According to our latest survey, half of Angelenos avoided going outdoors at some point in the last 12 months due to concerns about air quality from a nearby wildfire. This is a statistically significant, 30% increase from the percentage who avoided the outdoors due to wildfire concerns in 2020.



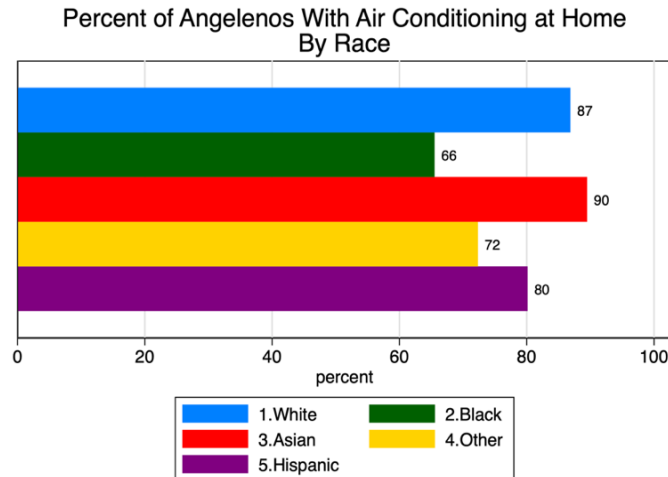
Despite this increase in the prevalence of wildfire-related air quality concerns, ratings of neighborhood-level air quality “most times of the year” remained steady in the population. This result suggests that residents do not currently incorporate wildfires into their general assessment of neighborhood conditions, although reports of unsafe air quality continue to afflict 1 in 4 residents.

We also observe a two-percentage-point increase in reports of unsafe air and water quality at home. However, these increases are within the margin of error and may not reflect meaningful changes in level of concern among residents. Additional waves of data should offer more insight.

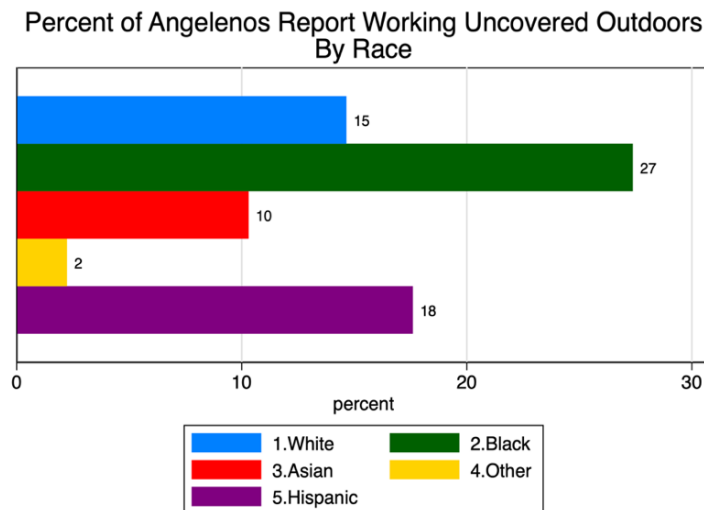


2. Black residents are more likely than White residents to live and work in conditions with significant exposure to heat and other climate conditions.

Our data reveal that Black residents are significantly more vulnerable than white residents to heat exposure at home and at work. Although the majority of Angelenos have access to air conditioning at home, rates of access are stratified by race. Asian and White residents are the most likely to report air conditioning (i.e., central air or another type of AC unit) in their homes (89.5% and 86.9%, respectively), while Black (65.5%) residents are the least likely to have this amenity and Hispanics (80.1%) fall in the middle.



Black, Hispanic, and Asian residents are also less likely than white residents to report living in neighborhoods with adequate amounts of shade. When asked whether their neighborhood had enough trees to provide adequate shade for walking on a hot sunny day, just over half (51%) of Hispanic, Asian residents, and Black residents agreed, compared to 62% of White residents.

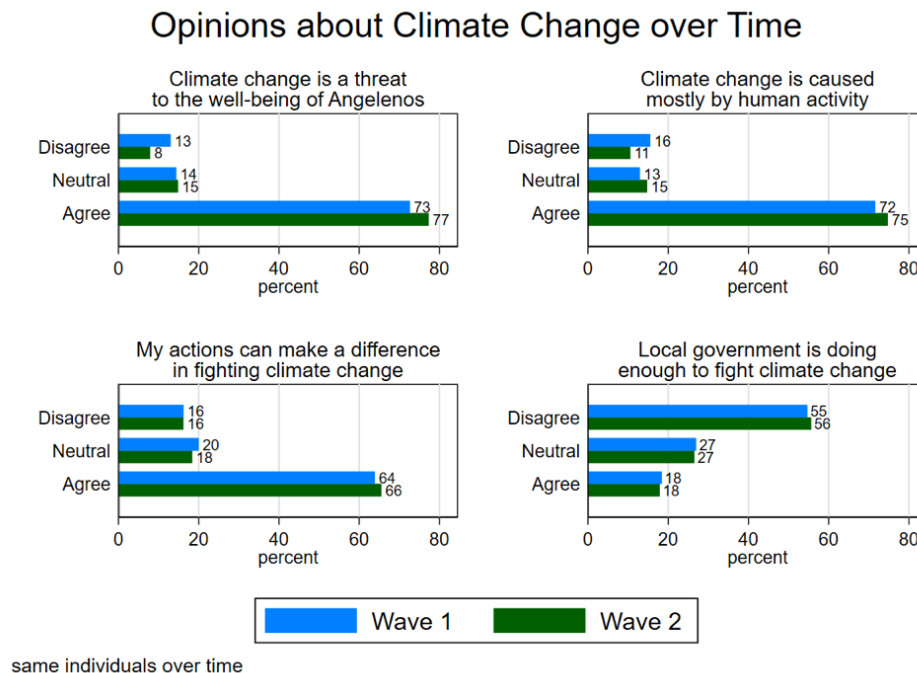


At work, Black residents again appear to work in conditions that increase their vulnerability to heat. Among residents who are currently working, 27% have jobs(s) that require them to spend some or

all of their work time outdoors without cover (e.g., from a booth or a tent) and Black residents are disproportionately more likely than other racial groups to work in these types of jobs. Approximately 27% of Black residents report working outdoors without cover, compared to 18% of Hispanic residents, 15% of White residents, and 10% of Asian residents.

3. The already-high percentage of Angelenos who view climate change as a threat to their well-being increased slightly over the last year.

Residents are more likely than they were a year ago to agree that climate change is caused mostly by human activity (75% of residents) and that climate change is a threat to the well-being of Angelenos (77% of residents). Notably, in a county that passed one of the most ambitious sustainability plans in the United States, perceptions of local efforts to combat climate change remain unchanged – only 18% agree that their local government is doing enough.

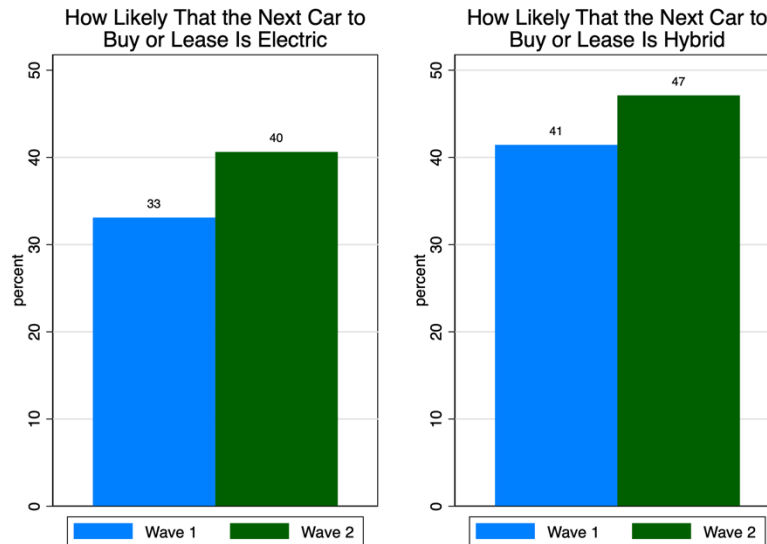


Some residents may be more inclined to take matters into their own hands; for instance, the percentage of Angelenos who feel their actions make a difference in fighting climate change increased by 2 percentage points over the last 12 months, a statistically significant change.

A closer look: Young people, aged 18-39, are significantly more likely than older people, aged 60+, to view climate change as human-induced, yet they are significantly less likely to believe that individual actions make a difference. This may reflect the greater support [observed among young people](#) for large-scale political change as a solution to the climate crisis. In Los Angeles, young people are the least likely to believe their local government is doing enough to fight climate change.

4. Angelenos are more likely than they were in 2020 to report that their next car purchase or lease will be an electric or hybrid car.

Enthusiasm regarding electric and hybrid cars has increased since Wave 1 of the survey. Within our sample, 41% of respondents in Wave 2 indicated that their next car purchase or lease was likely to be electric, compared to 33% in Wave 1. Similarly, nearly half of respondents (47%) indicated that they would likely buy or lease a hybrid vehicle in Wave 2, up from 41% in Wave 1. Notably, these increases over time were higher among men compared to women and among residents aged 18-39 compared to those aged 60+.



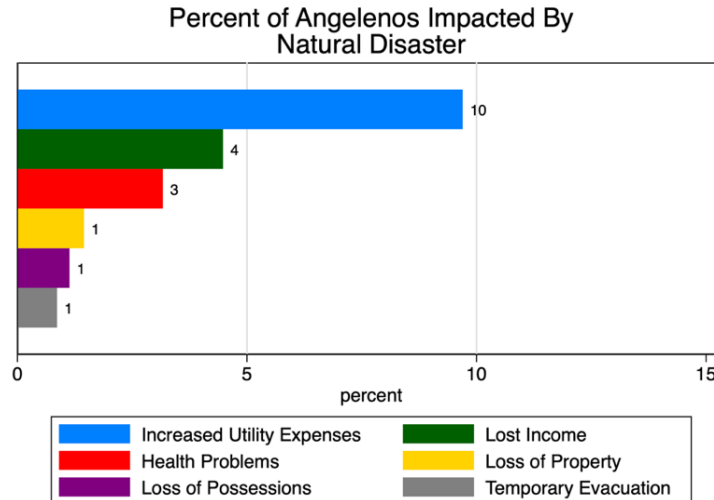
For comparison, a recent [national survey](#) reported that 39% of U.S. adults are very or somewhat likely to consider an electric car for their next vehicle purchase.

A closer look: Across survey waves, plans to buy or lease an electric or hybrid car vary significantly across demographic groups. Residents who are non-Hispanic white, under 40, male, college-educated, or high-income are significantly more likely than their peers to report future plans to purchase or lease an electric or hybrid vehicle.

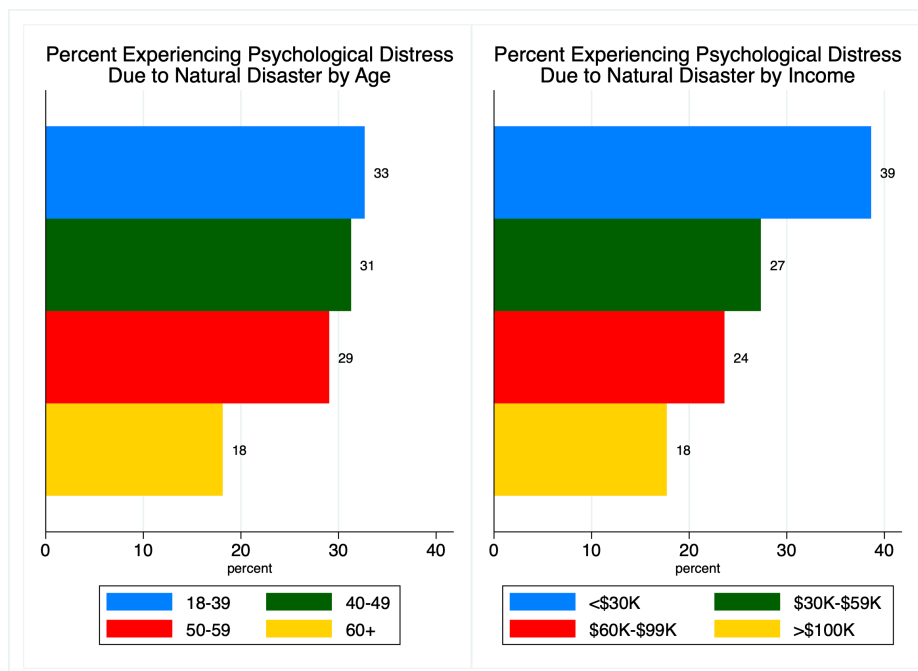
5. 1 in 4 Angelenos experienced psychological distress due to a natural disaster last year, with lower-income and younger residents particularly affected.

Angelenos are already feeling the financial, physical, and mental health impacts of extreme weather. According to self-reports, nearly 10% saw an increase in their utility expenses, 4.4% lost income, and 3.1% suffered health problems due to a natural disaster (e.g., a wildfire, flooding, or extreme heat) in the last year.

Natural disasters triggered various forms of psychological distress in residents. Over 1 in 4 Angelenos report some experience of psychological distress due to a natural disaster in the last year, including anxiety, depression prolonged fatigue, or high stress.



Disaggregating these data by age and income reveals that individuals with household income below \$30,000 per year are almost twice as likely to report psychological distress due to a natural disaster as individuals with household income above \$30,000 per year. Likewise, compared to Angelenos aged 60+ years (15%), more than twice as many Angelenos under age 40 (29%) report experiences of psychological distress due to a natural disaster.



ABOUT US

USC Dornsife LABarometer

LABarometer is a quarterly, internet-based survey of approximately 1,750 randomly selected Los Angeles County residents, designed and administered by the *Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research* at the University of Southern California. The survey monitors social conditions in Los Angeles, with a focus on four key issues: livability, mobility, sustainability & resilience, and affordability & prosperity. By following the same residents over time, LABarometer aims to capture trends and shifts in residents' attitudes and circumstances, allowing decisionmakers in the public and private sectors to better understand the evolving lives and needs of L.A. residents. LABarometer is made possible by the financial support of Union Bank.

About the Sustainability and Resilience Survey

The LABarometer Sustainability and Resilience survey examines how residents experience and interact with their natural environment in the midst of the global climate crisis, with an eye towards tracking environmental sustainability and community resilience in the region. The survey covers a number of topics, including heat and pollution exposure, natural disaster preparedness, pro-environmental consumption, transportation behavior, and the steps residents are taking to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Data and Methods

A total of 1,244 Los Angeles County residents participated in the Livability Survey from July 19, 2021 through September 5, 2021. Participants were recruited from LABarometer's survey panel of 1,692 adults living in randomly selected households throughout Los Angeles County. The participation rate for the survey was 74%. The margin of sampling error[†] is 2.8 percentage points.

The survey was conducted in respondents' choice of English or Spanish. To participate in a survey, respondents could use any computer, cell phone, or tablet with Internet access. Internet-connected tablets were provided to respondents without internet access.

[†]Sampling error is calculated at the 95% confidence level, using a sample proportion of 0.5 to generate an upper bound of uncertainty. Please note that factors other than sampling error, including question wording, question order, sample type, survey method, and population coverage, may affect the results of any survey.

For More Information

For a complete description of our data, methods, and findings, please visit our website at <https://cesr.usc.edu/labarometer/overview>. For more information, contact us at labarometer-l@usc.edu.