

THE AFRICAN CLIMATE AWARENESS

REPORT

2023

A bird story agency project

The African Climate Awareness Report 2023.

A bird story agency project

The Africa Climate Awareness Report 2023 was prepared by bird story agency's Data & Insights team. The team was led by Seth Onyango and further comprised of Conrad Onyango and Bonface Orucho, with editing by Tom Kirkwood.

Stickybeak research was conducted by a team led by founding partner and senior research, David Talbot.

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Foreword

Tom Kirkwood

Founding Editor and Managing Director,
bird story agency

Africa is often represented in the international media as a continent without agency. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over 8 months from July 2022, journalists engaged by bird story agency - a specialist news agency funded by Africa No Filter - built a rich tapestry of climate stories. The stories featured extensive and diverse activities undertaken by Africans combating climate change. Africa, very clearly, is taking action.

It comes as no surprise, then, to discover from two studies conducted by Stickybeak during that same period, that the level of awareness of Climate Change among respondents was surprisingly high. As were several other indicators suggesting that respondents were not only aware of climate change but also receptive to solutions - and were ready to take personal action.

Until now there have been few, if any, baseline studies measuring levels of climate awareness across the continent. The two studies reported on here now offer a benchmark.

While the Stickybeak research is selective in that respondents all communicated digitally, in English, the results are nevertheless, startling.

Perhaps the most impactful result and one that opens up stunning opportunities, is that the vast majority of respondents - 81% - believe that they can personally play an active role in improving the environment.

Two remarks by lead researcher and Stickybeak co-founder and director, David Talbot, stand out for me:

"We see a very strong sense of personal agency combined with the belief that environmental action can create jobs and have positive economic impacts... strong preconditions for support for further eco-investment and government action."

"It was really encouraging to see a majority of respondents expressing a positive view of electric vehicles - well over twice the levels of diesel and petrol vehicles - suggesting a strong demand to switch."

This report on the Stickybeak studies, then, is a crucial first step - offering a means of study and measurement - as we share the long journey ahead and learn to collectively deal with a dangerously warming environment.

Nairobi, KENYA



Methodology

When bird story agency began producing climate content it became clear that a baseline indicator was required to establish whether climate-related content would impact African content consumers, over time.

The research was commissioned by Africa No Filter and conducted by a team at Stickybeak via two surveys, the first in August 2022 and the second in April 2023. Stickybeak was required to gauge general awareness and perceptions in Africa of the environment and climate change.

The survey audience, recruited via social media in 8 countries – Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Egypt, Ghana and Cameroon – included a subgrouping of “Climate Aware” respondents. The focus in this report is mainly the wider, or “Genpop” group. The Genpop group also included two age sub-groupings: “younger” = 18-34 and “older” = 35+.

The audience size was 6916, with 2205 making up the “climate focus” group.

An online, English-language study by its nature under-represents those who do not speak English and are not online; consequently this study cannot be said to represent entire populations.

Given the respondents’ numbers, the margin for error is significant enough to require that comparative data differences of less than several percentage points not be treated as statistically significant, with the base level survey intended to provide a benchmark for establishing trends over time. Nevertheless, the data was sufficient to provide statistically significant results, both individually and comparatively, across the two studies.

More on the methodology can be found at www.aboutbird.africanofilter.org along with surveys.

Executive Summary

With less than 20% of the population surveyed believing that climate change is not a natural occurrence or that human activities play no role in it, climate change skepticism is notably low in Africa” - Stickybeak

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing the world today and Africa is particularly vulnerable to its impact, despite the continent’s relatively low contribution to industrial greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change also offers an opportunity for Africa to transform its economy, society, and environment by adopting climate-resilient practices and pathways that enhance its resilience and prosperity.

A growing body of stories published and broadcast in Africa’s media shows societies and individuals responding actively, with agency, to climate change. However, a better understanding - and baseline measure - of the general perceptions of climate change on the continent is crucial to efforts to measure change in attitudes and engagement, over time.

This report is a project of bird story agency, a specialist news agency designed to change the narrative on, and in, Africa and sponsored by Africa No Filter. The report is based on two surveys by researchers at Stickybeak, the first conducted in August 2022 and the second in April 2023 - before and after, COP 27 - covering 6,916 respondents across 8 English-speaking countries in Africa.

The studies engaged a general population “genpop” group and also identified a “climate focus” subgroup made up of respondents with enhanced interest in climate change and the environment.



“Awareness of negative food supply impacts, extinction, floods and droughts and hotter summers/colder winters was typically over half of respondents, with rising sea levels some way further back. Very few respondents reported not noting any changes.” – Stickybeak.

The research is intended to provide a baseline summary of awareness of and attitudes to climate change in Africa.

A key finding of the research was the high level of awareness of climate change, across all geographies covered. While a small, though significant increase in awareness was captured between the two studies, the base level astounded the researchers as did the level of perceived agency.

One explanation is that Africa’s digital communities are actively harnessing the power of social media platforms and virtual communities to discover and amplify the message of environmental stewardship, facilitating the rapid dissemination of information on climate change and its multifaceted impacts. Another is that given the focus on a “just” response to the climate crisis, African governments, and organisations have ensured heightened coverage of the topic in both state-funded and private media.

A factor driving further public awareness of climate change - as witnessed by higher (a small rise, though significant, given the timescale) levels of awareness in the second survey – was the impact of COP 27. Billed as “Africa’s Cop”, the impact of the event on climate consciousness in Africa cannot be overstated. COP27 served as a rallying cry for politicians, civil society, environmentalists and activists across the continent to focus attention on a kaleidoscope of issues linked to climate change – past, current and future - that impact every corner of Africa.

Comparisons with other regions would be useful; however, this baseline study can already be considered groundbreaking.

“Awareness of environment and climate stories is very high with around three quarters having noticed coverage - and overwhelmingly people are picking up negative stories.” - Stickybeak

The survey also shows the media playing a significant role in advancing awareness of climate change. However, the focus is primarily on the negative aspects of climate change; awareness of positive climate reports is far lower than that of negative reports.

Finally, awareness of climate impacts is higher amongst older people than the youth – a trend that needs to be unpacked further, but which calls for a more focused approach to media engagement.

Key findings

- Respondents demonstrated an unexpectedly high level of awareness of climate change (both before and after COP 27).
- Recognition of the benefits of renewable energy and sustainable practices, such as solar power and electric cars is widespread, with a prevalence of negative attitudes towards diesel and petrol vehicles, as well as plastic bags and plastic bottles.
- While respondents recognised the consequences of climate change, such as food supply issues, floods, droughts, and rising sea levels, an encouraging 81% believe they can play an active role in improving the environment.
- 76% of respondents attributed the negative impacts of climate change to human actions and inactions - such as poor environmental treatment and lack of intervention by government.
- Belief in the natural origin of climate change was extremely low and actually decreased between the two studies - from 13% to 10%.
- Most respondents (61%) believe investments in climate change initiatives are driven primarily by environmental considerations.
- The outlook for Africa's future weather, climate, and environment is pessimistic, with more respondents expecting worsening conditions.

While awareness levels across geographies in Africa did show significant variances, the overall response shows a heightened concern for the continent's environmental future and a demand for more concerted action to address these challenges.

Africa's changing narrative offers a compelling opportunity for governments, organisations, and even individuals to harness a heightened level of environmental awareness and concern for the environment to implement robust and comprehensive strategies, promote sustainability and resilience, and accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices and policies that safeguard Africa's environment and contribute to global climate change mitigation efforts.

The General Population Report

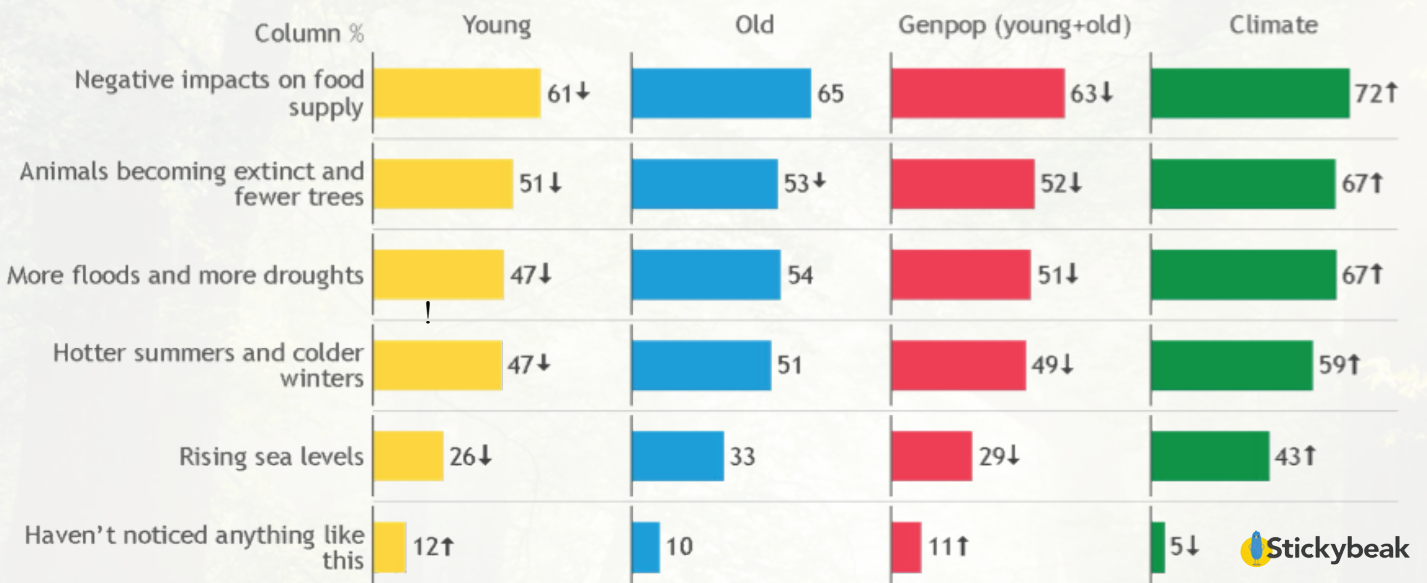
(results from studies 1&2)

HEIGHTENED CONCERN

At 69% the combined percentage of respondents who are concerned (including very concerned, concerned and moderately concerned) about the environment and climate to some degree, is significant. On the other hand, 19% have minor concerns, and 12% have no concerns about the environment and climate.

Older respondents were generally more aware of the impact of climate change than young people, amongst both the general population and the “climate-aware” focus group.

(Figure 1) Are you aware of any of these happening in your country?



ATTITUDES TOWARDS RENEWABLE POWER SOURCES

Recognition of the benefits of renewable energy and sustainable practices not only increased between August 2022 and April 2023 but was generally high. High positive perceptions of solar power (64% in August 2022 and 67% in April 2023) and electric cars (53% and 54%) suggests growing awareness of these options and their potential impact. Conversely, the perceived positive impact of diesel and petrol vehicles (22% and 19%) and plastic bags and bottles (from 21% to 18%) was low, indicating a growing understanding of the negative environmental impacts of those items.

AWARENESS OF CLIMATE IMPACTS

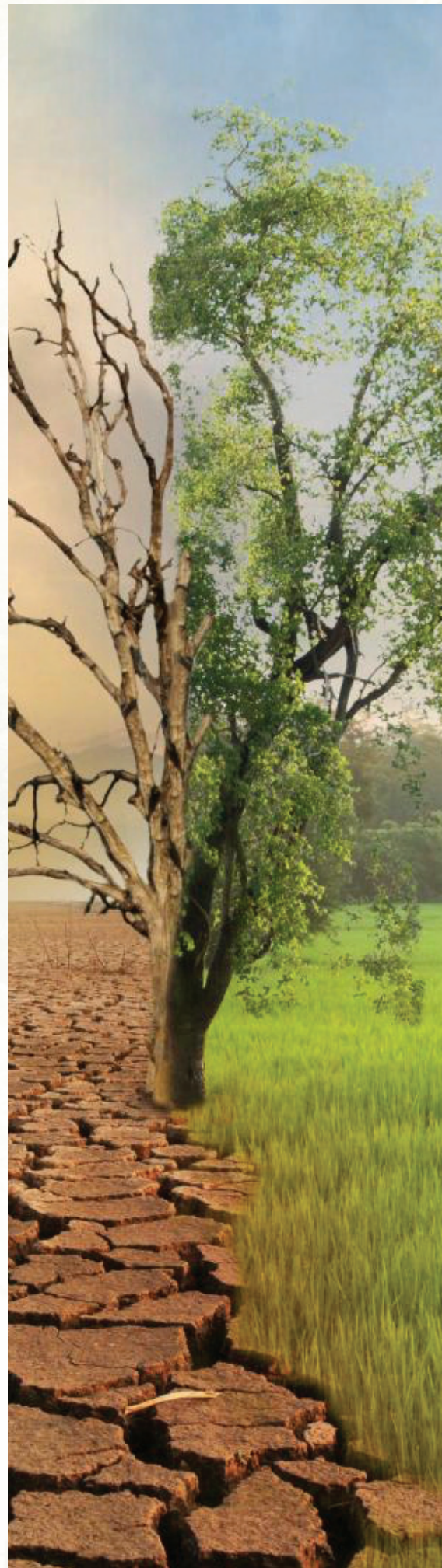
Most respondents were aware of climate change impacts on their own country, with 65% noticing negative impacts on food supply by April 2023. Awareness of more floods and droughts reached 57% in April 2023.

Climate awareness extended into perceptions regarding the general environment. The percentage of respondents who were aware of animals becoming extinct and fewer trees was 52% in August 2022. Awareness of hotter summers and colder winters (despite most African states not having four distinct weather seasons) was 49% across August 2022 and April 2023.

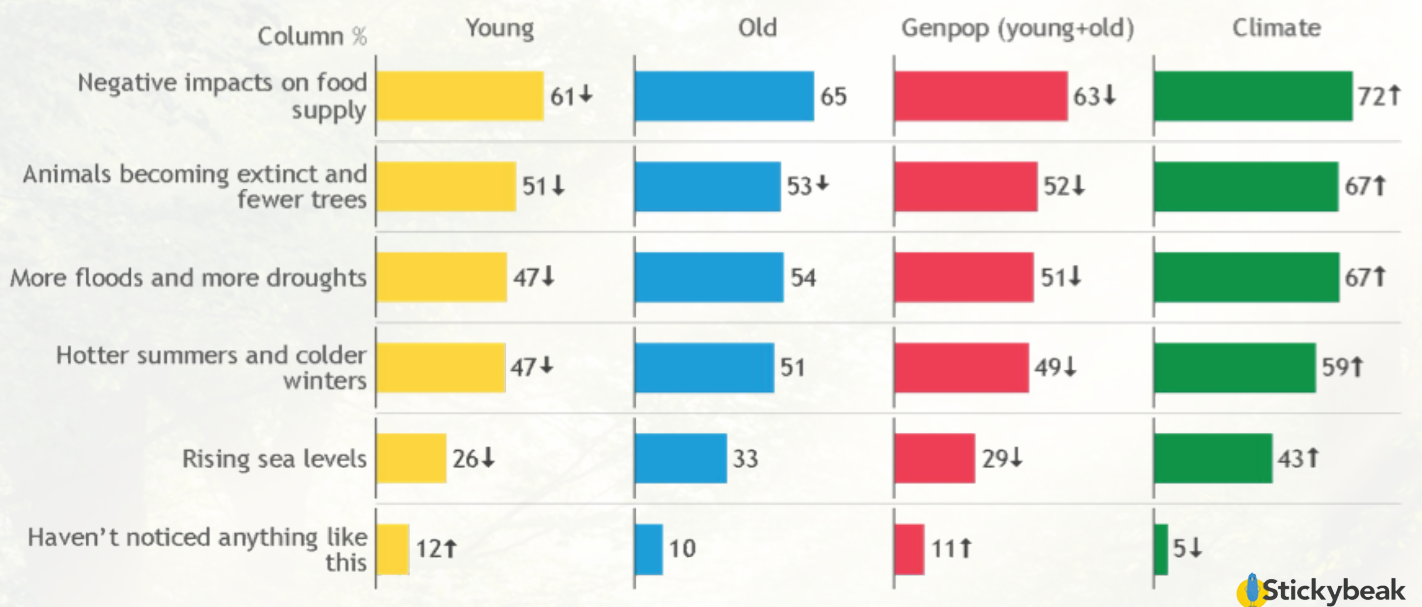
While not statistically significant the percentage of respondents who did not notice any of these climate-related changes dropped from 11% in August 2022 to 9% in April 2023.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES

Most Africans surveyed attributed the negative impacts of climate change to human actions and inactions. The most commonly reported cause was the poor treatment of the environment by people, which stood at 75% and 76% in the two surveys. The second most common cause was the lack of government intervention to stop the problems that are causing these issues, which climbed slightly from 57% to 60%. Very significantly (particularly if one was to consider this a vote on climate change denial) the third most common cause - the natural origin of these impacts – stood at just 10% in April 2023 (down from 13% in August). The least common cause was the inevitability and insignificance of these impacts, which stood at 5% in April 2023. Only a small (and decreasing) percentage of respondents - 10% in April 2023 - reported that they did not think there was any human cause for these impacts. The findings suggest that most Africans are aware of and concerned about human responsibility for climate change. something that may open the door to future demands for accountability and action. It would be very useful to be able to track these indicators further.



(Figure 2) What do you think is causing these things to happen?



AWARENESS OF INTERVENTIONS AND INITIATIVES

Respondents had varying levels of awareness of different mitigation initiatives occurring in their country.

A consistent recognition of renewable energy adoption, such as wind and solar, is observed, maintaining a 50% awareness level throughout the period. In contrast, there is a marginal dip in (low, overall) awareness regarding improved waste management and recycling practices, descending from 30% in August 2022 to 29% in April 2023.

A slight decline in awareness is also evident of (again, low) cleaner tap water initiatives, as the percentage drops from 23% in August 2022 to 21% in April 2023. More notably, awareness of reduced diesel and petrol consumption for electricity generation declined from 19% in August 2022 to 16% in April 2023. Furthermore, awareness about food and fish stock preservation was also low overall (16% in August 2022 and 15% in April 2023).

An upward (though low) trend in respondents unaware of any climate change initiatives is also seen, climbing from 28% in August 2022 to 31% in April 2023.

While the data may suggest limited actual climate change mitigation efforts across the region, diverse levels of awareness across geographies offers an opportunity for more effective awareness campaigning and communication.

APPRECIATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The studies showed there is widespread belief among respondents that investment in climate change initiatives by governments and organisations is driven primarily by environmental considerations (59% to 61% across the two studies).

Consideration of other motivates, such as job creation (38%), profit-making opportunities (28%), cost reduction for the public (20%), and external pressures from wealthier countries (14%), was lower, and stable across the studies.

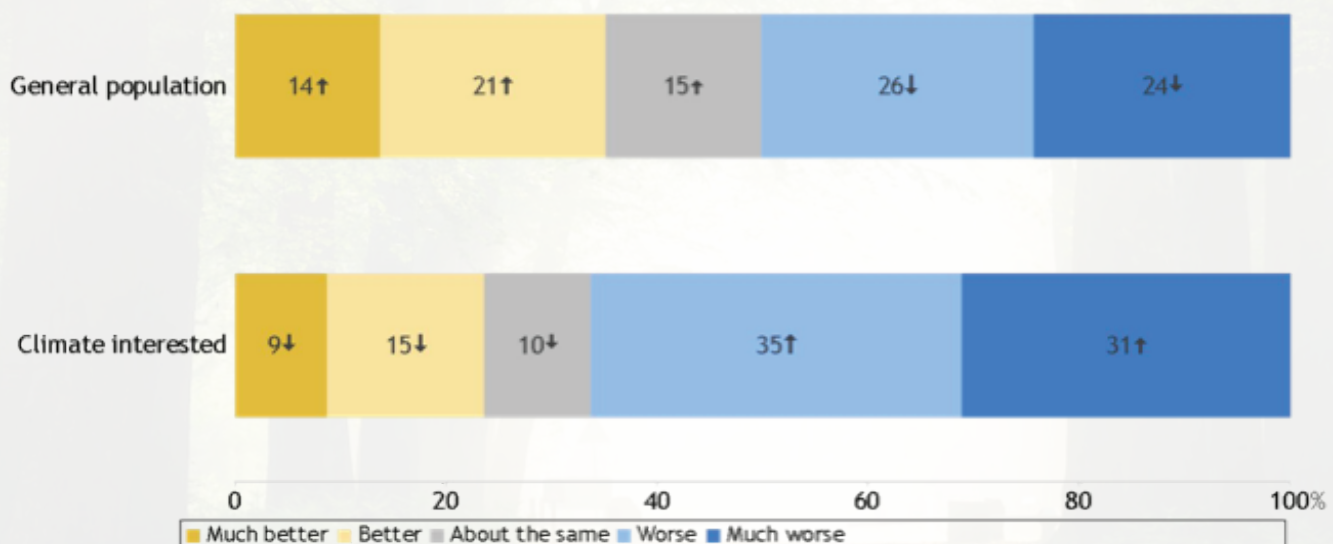
THE FUTURE

There is growing concern from Africans about the future of Africa's weather, climate, and environment. The percentage of respondents expecting conditions to be much worse unless there are interventions increased from 24% in the first survey to 25% in poll conducted in April 2023, while those anticipating worse conditions rose from 26% to 28%. The belief that the environment would remain the same also experienced a slight increase from 15% to 16% in the review period.

Optimism regarding environmental improvement declined. The percentage of respondents foreseeing better conditions dropped from 21% in August 2022 to 18% in April 2023. Additionally, the percentage of those expecting much better conditions dipped from 14% to 12% in April.

Overall, the trend between August 2022 and April 2023 indicates a growing concern for the future state of Africa's weather, climate, and environment, accompanied by a decline in optimism over positive change.

(Figure 3) In the future, do you think your country's weather, climate and environment will be....



AWARENESS OF MEDIA FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

A trend between August 2022 and April 2023 indicates a heightened awareness of environmental and climate change narratives in the media and on social platforms.

Most respondents said they had been exposed to media or social media content about the environment and climate, and that this exposure increased or remained stable from August 2022 to April 2023. The majority of respondents (77% in April, up from 76% in August) reported that they had noticed stories or posts about these topics. A smaller proportion of respondents (16% in April 2023) reported that they had not really noticed such content. A very small and decreasing proportion of respondents (7%, down from 9%) reported that they had not noticed any content about the environment and climate.

THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE

Most respondents indicated they had noticed media content highlighting the negative or problematic aspects of climate change. This tendency persisted or intensified from August 2022 to April 2023. The prevalence of the topics of climate change and environmental damage in the content consumed saw an increase across the period, rising from 57% and 54% to 59% and 60% respectively in the two surveys.

The topic of changing weather patterns was the third most prevalent and slightly increasing, rising from 47% to 49%.

The topic of positive environment projects was the least prevalent and remained stable through the period, at 26%.

A very small and stable percentage of respondents (5% in both surveys) reported that they noticed content about something else other than the core topics mentioned above, related to climate and the environment.

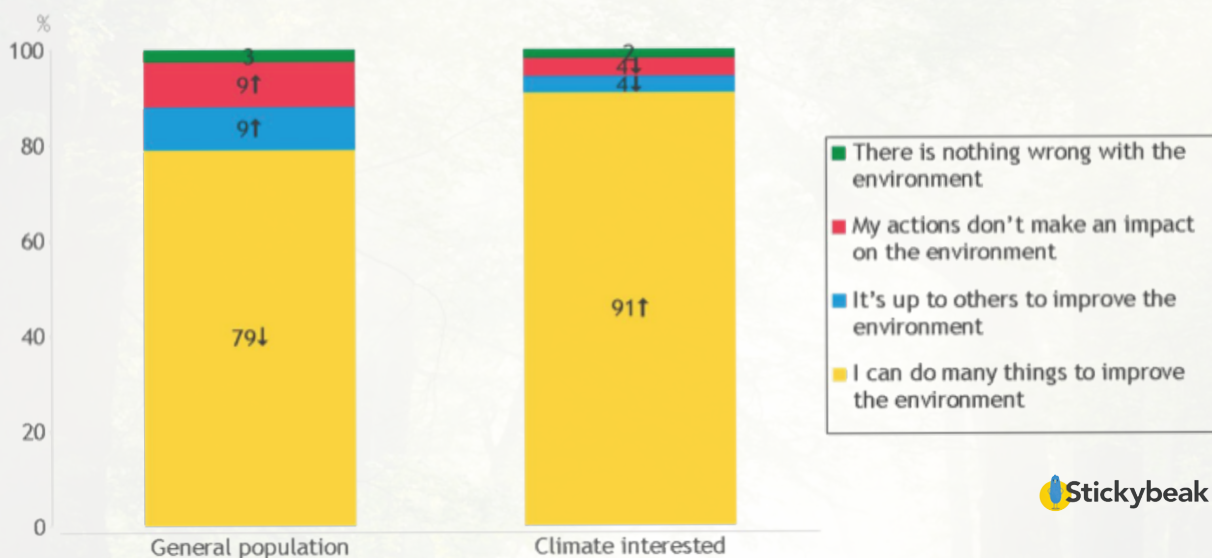
The findings suggest that African audiences are exposed and attentive to the negative or problematic aspects of climate and the environment in media / social media content, and that they may have concern about these issues.

The findings also highlight the potential for a more balanced representation of environmental topics in the media to ensure a more nuanced understanding of climate change and its impacts in Africa and to further encourage “ownership” of both the problem (and of potential or existing solutions to the problem).

TAKING OWNERSHIP

Perhaps the most important finding in the surveys is that the majority of Africans (81% and climbing) believe that they can play an active role in improving the environment. This suggests an awareness of the environmental challenges and a sense of empowerment to take action. Only a small fraction of respondents (2% in April 2023, down from 3% in August 2022) deny that there is anything wrong with the environment, indicating that climate change denial is not widespread on the continent. Similarly, only a few Africans (8% in April 2023, down from 9% in August 2022) think that their actions do not make an impact on the environment, implying widespread recognition of personal responsibility and agency. The relatively small percentage (8% in April 2023, down from 9% in August 2022) who think that it is up to others to improve the environment, is also encouraging. Overall, the data reveals a positive and proactive attitude towards climate change in Africa, with most people taking ownership of, and willing to do their part to protect, the environment.

(Figure 4) What statement best describes the role you can play regarding the environment?



With less than 20% of the population surveyed believing that climate change is not a natural occurrence or that “There is very strong acknowledgement of agency in terms of environmental action, with around 80% saying there are “many things” they can do to improve the environment” – Stickybeak.

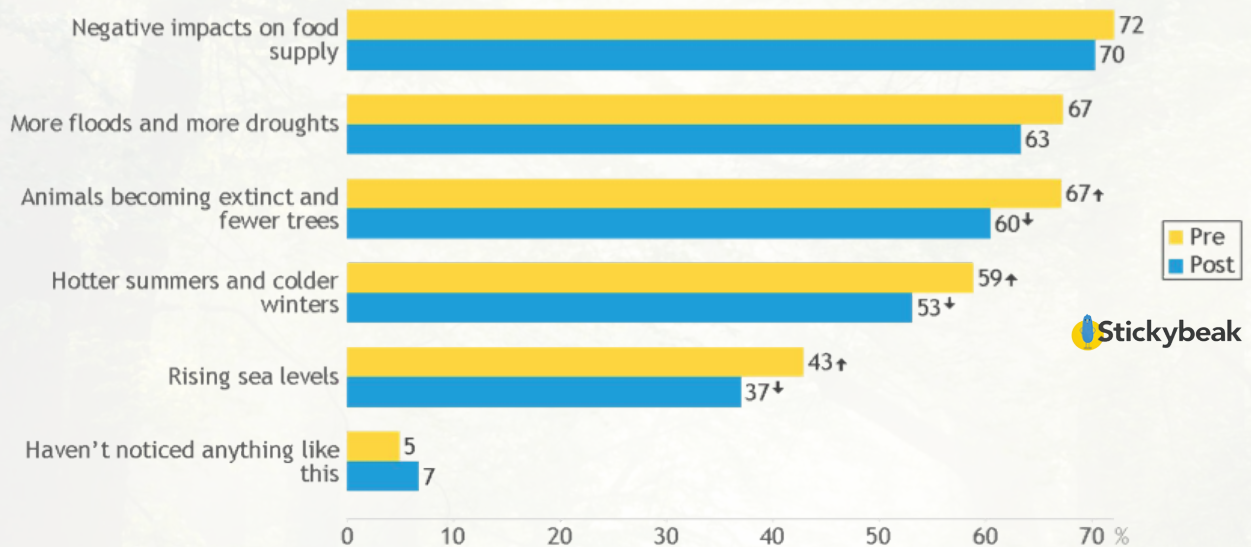
Zooming in to the climate-aware

80% of climate aware respondents are worried about the climate, with 75% (static across both surveys “very worried” (page 4, Slideshow 2 on the website).

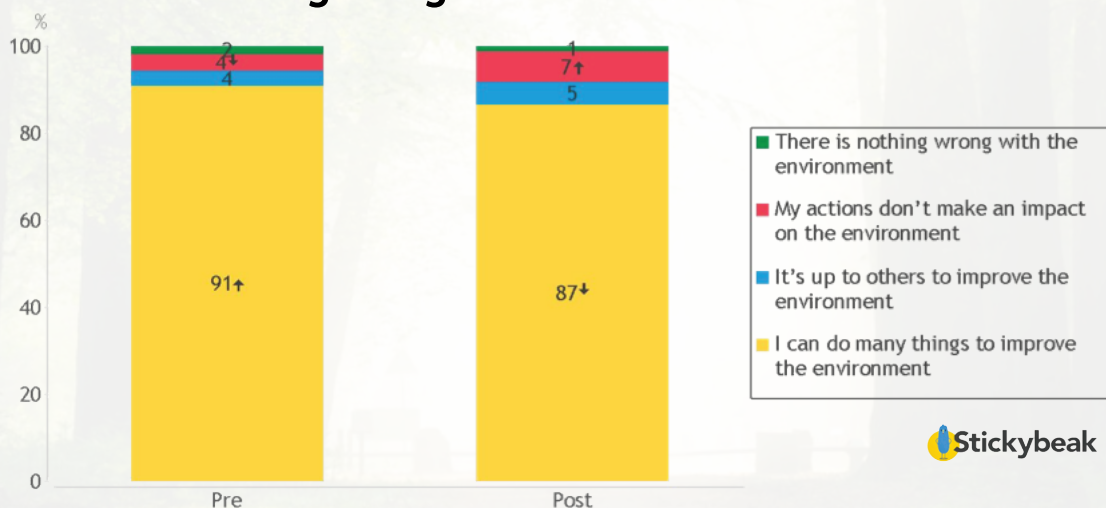
Solar energy (76/70% across the two surveys) and electric cars (67/60%) are seen as having a positive impact on the environment; internal combustion engines and plastic bags rather less so (14 and 12% respectively).

The climate aware group was predictably very aware of the impacts of climate on food supply and extreme weather (below – from Slideshow 2) while this group had a particularly high level of belief in individual agency, at 91% in Survey 1, dropping to 87% in Survey 2 (below, and Slideshow 2).

(Figure 6) Are you aware of any of these happening in your country?



(Figure 7) What statement best describes the role you can play regarding the environment?



HOW COUNTRIES COMPARE

This section provides a comparative analysis of the survey findings in the eight African countries: Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Cameroon. The key objectives of the analysis was to highlight differences in responses to the survey questions across the countries (some of which are significant bird story agency markets) and also, if possible, to isolate any significant changes between the two surveys – ie before and after COP27.

The increasing concerns about climate and the environment in the aforementioned economies indicate a growing access to information and localised knowledge on these topics across Africa. This trend can be partly attributed to various events that took place before, during, and after COP 27, including an aggressive media campaign. The event witnessed a sustained effort to mobilize resources for the mitigating of global warming and adapting to its resulting impacts. Aggressive campaigns by activists focusing on 'loss and damage' and intense debates surrounding the concept of a just transition also played a role in raising awareness among the public – with these issues amplified across both traditional and social media.

Continued studies will show the extent to which the awareness campaign focusing on “Africa’s COP” was successful, and whether future campaigns around COP events held in other regions will have similar degrees of impact.

1. How do you feel about the environment and climate around you?

In 5 out of 8 surveyed countries, more people became aware of environmental and climate threats between August 2022 and April 2023. Ghana had the highest increase - of 16%, going from 53% to 69%. South Africa recorded the highest overall awareness figures - at 73% in April 2023 - while Tanzania had the lowest percentage - 42%, recorded in August 2022.

A broad concern for the environment, represented by 61% of respondents in April 2023, signifies a wide public consciousness of, and even engagement with, environmental and climate change issues affecting societies across Africa.



2. What impact do you think these have on your environment? Diesel and petrol vehicles, plastic bags, electric cars, solar power

Well under 30% of those surveyed considered diesel and petrol cars and plastic bags and bottles to be positive for the environment. This dipped to as low as 11% in Kenya, where plastic bags are banned and electric vehicles have made an entrance via ride-hailing companies.

However, Kenya's neighbour Tanzania, along with Cameroon, bucked the trend, with fewer respondents recognizing the damage caused by internal combustion engines and plastic pollution.

However, 75% of participants acknowledged the positive influence of solar power on the environment. The trend is encouraging, with 5 out of 8 countries surveyed also displaying increased awareness, suggesting that Africans are more likely to be accepting of renewable energy sources, such as solar energy, as part of a transition to cleaner energy.



3.Are you aware of any of these happening in your country? Negative impacts on food supply, hotter summers, rising seas

In Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, the majority of respondents indicated they have seen food supply disruptions. Kenya had the highest awareness - at 75%, followed by Nigeria and South Africa with 69%. Key messages around diversity and deforestation seem not to be making much of an impact, with awareness of animal extinction and deforestation low in all countries and Ghana having the highest awareness - at 51% of survey participants, by April 2023.

However, the responsibility for these events, as seen from the next question, was very clearly laid at the door of human agency, except, once again, in Tanzania.

What do you think is causing these things to happen?

i) People are treating the environment badly or, ii) It's just nature - there is no human cause

A substantial majority of those polled - at least 70% - attribute the effects of climate change to harmful human activities. This perspective is considerably more prevalent than in many western countries, where climate change skepticism remains doggedly commonplace.

Although Uganda and Egypt saw a decline in the number of individuals associating human activities with climate change, all other African countries surveyed reported an increase while Nigeria remained steady at 70%.

Furthermore, the majority of Africans surveyed believe that government inaction and delays are exacerbating the effects of climate change.

Except for Cameroon, all countries surveyed saw an increase in the number of respondents associating government inaction with the effects of climate change. Tanzania - at 40% of respondents

– was the lowest. Overall, these findings suggest a widespread acknowledgement of the role of human activities and governmental action (or lack thereof) in contributing to the effects of climate change in Africa.

In some countries - notably Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Egypt - fewer than 10% of the population remains skeptical about human impact on climate change.

In addition, the survey suggested that attitudes towards climate change are marked by increased urgency. Fewer than 10% of Africans surveyed believe that climate change is inevitable and not worth worrying about, suggesting considerable belief in human agency. In some countries, such as Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana, this figure is even lower, ranging from 3% to 5%. These findings signal a growing acknowledgment of the importance of human action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Are you aware of any of these initiatives occurring in your country?

Awareness of alternative energy initiatives varied remarkably across Africa, with reactions in the affirmative to this question ranging from 33% to 62%.

Additionally, awareness of waste management and recycling initiatives was also low, with fewer than 40% of respondents indicating awareness of these options. In Nigeria and Egypt, only 22% of respondents were aware of r waste management and recycling options.

Access to clean tap water also remains a challenge, with 34% or less of all respondents indicating awareness of increased access to cleaner tap water.

Cameroon reported the highest proportion of respondents reporting awareness of initiatives to use less petrol and diesel while South Africa reported the lowest. In Ghana, nearly half of the respondents (46%) were unable to identify any energy transition initiatives, waste management, water purification, reduction in petroleum products use, or measures to ensure the safety of food and fish supplies.





Why do you think governments and organisations are investing in some of these initiatives?

a) It's better for our environment

Most Africans (60%) trust or believe that governmental initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change, are being pursued primarily to benefit the environment. August 2022 to April 2023, saw a rise in this sentiment in Cameroon (53% to 58%), Ghana (59% to 67%), and Nigeria (55% to 62%) potentially reflecting an increase in government awareness campaigns and publicity around COP 27. While Kenya's high level remained more or less constant (73% and 72% respectively) a decline in Uganda, from 69% to 60%, was significant, and suggested a drop in belief that the actions of government or organisations are being pursued in the interest of the environment but rather for more "selfish" reasons (eg commercial interests) – a theory possibly borne out by slight rises in the following segments.

b) It creates jobs in the country

On job creation, increases in Cameroon, Ghana, and Uganda, (41% to 45%, 43% to 46% and 36% to 41%, respectively) were only marginally significant, though they do point to strengthening conviction that these climate initiatives can be significant employment generators. By contrast, Egypt and Tanzania present a decline in this sentiment, with Egypt falling from 27% to 21% (perhaps fueled by a reduction in climate-related employment opportunities after COP ended) and Tanzania also suffering a considerable drop, from 36% to 27% (causes unknown).

While a slightly positive trend emerges here, a rapid decrease in some countries underlines how fragile these advances are.

c) It is a money-making opportunity for all...

In Cameroon, the viewpoint that climate action is a financial opportunity climbed from a low of 19% to 25% over the period. Similar rises were seen in Ghana and Kenya, albeit it off higher base levels, suggesting growing economic optimism associated with climate initiatives.

Conversely, a waning perception is noticeable in Egypt and Nigeria (again, in the case of Egypt, possible the result of COP ending),” while South Africa and Uganda display a marginally upward trend, indicating steady confidence in the economic merits of these initiatives.

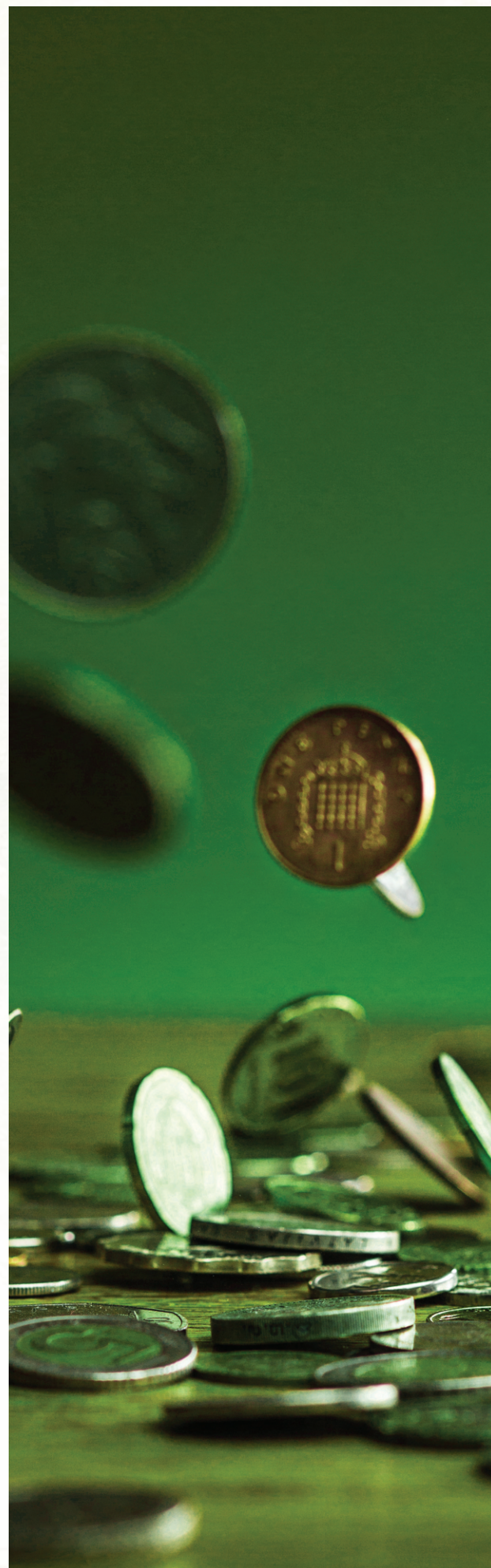
d) It makes things cheaper for us

Recognition that climate-related initiatives can be cost-cutters varies across Africa. An upward trend is seen in Cameroon (17% to 20%), Egypt (16% to 17%), Kenya (24% to 29%), and Uganda (28% to 29%) while a decline was observed in Ghana (20% to 16%) and South Africa (21% to 15%).

With an average of just over 22%, most Africans expressed doubt that climate action initiatives will lead to cost savings for them, suggesting that they perceive the costs associated with these initiatives as not trickling down to them, or, even worse - being transferred to the public purse.

e) Because richer countries want us to...

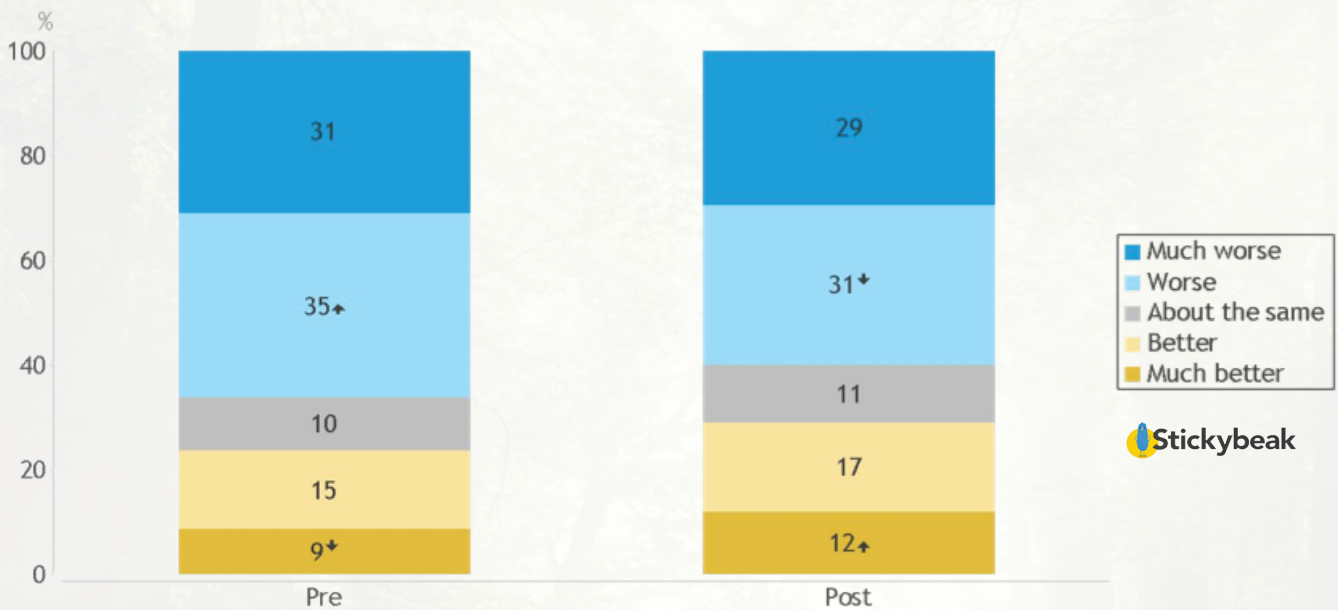
In August 2022, only 14% on average across the eight countries, believed that climate-focused initiatives are the result of pressure from richer countries. By April 2023, this narrative had marginally decreased, to 13%. Egypt, which had the highest percentage in August, showed a 4% drop by April. However, Kenya saw an increase from 8% to 13%.





In the future, do you think your country's weather, climate and environment will be...

Figure 5) In the future, do you think your country's weather, climate and environment will be...



In all countries, except Uganda (where the figure dipped by 2% to 62%), there was an increase in the percentage of people expressing concern that the climate and environment would worsen.

There were, however, some outliers. For example, while only 38% of respondents in Nigeria expressed apprehension, that figure soared to 69% in South Africa.

Overall, the findings suggest that Africans are deeply conscious of the threats posed by climate change and environmental degradation. A still significant proportion of respondents in the same/better/much better category provides useful data for future surveys.

Have you noticed stories in the media or posts on social media about the environment and climate?

The role of media and social media in raising awareness about climate and environmental issues appears significant. Over 60% of respondents have come across stories or posts concerning these matters.

Remarkably, this figure is consistently increasing in five out of the seven countries studied, signifying a growing interest in these subjects. Even in countries like Nigeria and South Africa where the numbers declined, the visibility of related stories remains high, with more than 70% of respondents acknowledging exposure to such content.

Particularly noteworthy is that the populations in Kenya, Ghana, and Tanzania have encountered the highest exposure, with 92%, 80%, and 79% of respondents respectively reporting engagement with climate and environmental narratives in media and on social media.

When you do notice content about climate and the environment is it mostly about? (Climate change)

Of the options provided, climate change emerged as the most prevalent topic in stories and posts from the surveyed countries, with more than half of the respondents (53%) citing it. Notably, Kenya, Ghana, and Cameroon demonstrated even higher levels of exposure (above 60%).

The study further revealed that environmental damage captivated a majority of respondents. Cameroon presented the highest coverage (66%), trailed by South Africa (65%), Ghana (63%), and Kenya and Uganda (both at 60%).





When you do notice content about climate and the environment is it mostly about (Changing weather patterns)

The role of media and social media in raising awareness about climate and environmental issues appears significant. Over 60% of respondents have come across stories or posts concerning these matters.

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What statement best describes the role you can play regarding the environment? (I can do many things to improve the environment)

A significant majority of Africans believe they can make a difference in improving the environment. Encouragingly, in all surveyed countries except Egypt, at least 72% of respondents shared this sentiment. The figures from Kenya (92%), Nigeria (87%), Uganda (84%), Ghana (82%), and Tanzania (81%) demonstrate a high level of agency among Africans concerning climate change mitigation and required actions. This suggests a strong willingness among Africans to participate in environmental protection efforts.

CONCLUSION

What are the early takeaways and (in addition to future studies to compare with this one), that climate organisations, including the media, might draw from this benchmark survey?

High levels of concern about climate and the environment indicate growing access to information and improved knowledge across all geographies in the surveys. What is most clear from this research however, is not just that Africans are already concerned, but that they are ready for change and believe they can make a difference.

In summary, as outlined by Stickybeak:

a) The surveys measured an unexpectedly high base level of concern as well as a considerable sense of agency, suggesting that future climate-related communications would be effective.

b) Everything that was tested with the exception of “rising sea levels” resonated well as impacts, with food supply disruptions the strongest and most widely accepted.

c) People hold both individuals and government to blame for environmental degradation, suggesting they’re up for hearing solutions targeted at both groups.

d) The intrinsic worth of the environment may well be enough of a justification for action, though “job creation” potentially works as well - perhaps a “win-win” message might be possible here.

e) Expectations of environmental improvement are a bit bleak, and people seem to be getting overwhelmingly negative news on the topic – which would suggest a message of action and hope as a motivator within potential future content messaging.





The framing of the 27th meeting of signatories to the United Nations Commission on Climate Change, or COP27, as “Africa’s Cop” set the scene for an event that was designed to draw attention to and to cement Africa’s increasingly important place in the Climate Change narrative.

The event’s location in Egypt already provided the opportunity for a very Africa-focused COP. However, events unfolding across the continent during 2022 made climate responses particularly urgent for people on the continent. Epic floods in Nigeria and South Africa, drought in East Africa and the impact of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on already COVID-strained African food logistics were reminders of the disruptive potential not only of individual warming-fueled events but also of how quickly seemingly unrelated events can escalate into a “perfect storm” for a region that has relatively limited and fragile institutional response and coping mechanisms.

A growing sense of urgency at COP 27 compounded questions over the justness of a transition to a low-carbon world (given the oversized impact of climate change on a continent responsible for only a fraction of global industrial carbon emissions) as well as the issue of reparations for the loss and damage caused by over a century of carbon emissions from industrialised countries. While the event opened new avenues for discussions on both of these issues, what became clear is that Africans need to be (and from the survey it is clear that they are prepared to be) deeply involved in helping shape the global response to climate change, going forward.

While much of the focus has been on the continent’s exposure to climate change, it is the continent’s vast green economy mineral endowment, its potential to provide green energy solutions and its bulging youth demographic, that will have outsized consequences for a future global economy. As a result, the importance of the ability to measure and understand climate-related attitudes on the continent against clear benchmarks cannot be underestimated.



Seth Onyango - Data Journalist, bird

Seth Onyango is a data, investigative and climate action journalist with over a decade of frontline reporting on crucial global events.. He's now a senior writer and international correspondent for bird story agency, with previous roles at the People Daily, Xinhua, the Economic Times and the Financial Fortune. He has also previously partnered with a global cohort of journalists coordinated by Transparency International and Code for Africa (CfA) for investigative projects. He excels in transforming complex subjects into engaging content for diverse global audiences, spanning intranet, internet and B2B contexts. Onyango's multifaceted talent also finds expression through his photography where he contributes to Getty Images. Now based in Düsseldorf, Germany, he is mobile worldwide for bird story agency.



Conrad Onyango - Data Journalist, bird

Conrad Onyango is an experienced writer and editorial manager with a demonstrated history of working in the Media, Public Relations and Marketing industries spanning over 12 years. He has served as a Senior Business Writer with the People Daily Newspaper for six years. He served as Public Relations and Editorial Manager at Professional Marketing Services for two years. He also edited Kenya's World Bank Funded research and survey reports like Digitization of Civil Registration Department (CRD), Digitization of Kenya News Agency and Kenya Open Data Initiatives. The alumnus of the prestigious Bloomberg Media Initiative for Africa is a bird, senior writer leveraging on data to come up with nuanced copies and narrative changing stories across the continent. He has also worked for Tropical Biology Association (TBA) as a consulting writer to develop conservation impacts and lessons learned reports for its 9-year investment project in the East Melanesian Island (EMI) Biodiversity Hotspot.



Bonface Orucho - Nest Writer, bird

Bonface Orucho is a dynamic young journalist with extensive experience covering climate change across the continent for bird. His past work with platforms like Mediamax Digital and Lake Region Bulletin has given him a deep understanding of community-level climate change issues and local perceptions of the subject.