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Global Climate Strike: Greta Thunberg And Huge Crowds Protest



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Leadership Strategy



16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has become the face of the climate movement, ... [\[+\]](#) AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Thousands of students and adults converged on hundreds of American cities Friday — and an estimated four million did so [around the globe](#). The young [Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg](#) led the charge and spoke at the end of the day at the strike in New York City, where the city's 1.1 million school public school students were granted excused absences from school (although their [teachers were forbidden from striking](#)).

Today's strike comes at a time when scientists have discovered [North America has lost 29% of its birds](#) since 1970, Bermuda is still reeling from Hurricane Humberto and the city of Houston is recovering from Tropical Depression Imelda's severe rains and flash flooding only two years after Hurricane Harvey.

In an unprecedented turnout across nations, international strikes took place across the globe from [Manila in the Philippines to Melbourne, Australia](#).

The New York strike officially began at 12:30, with a march to Battery Park, where the main rally was held from 3 to 5 p.m. With an expected total 10,000-12,000 marching, organizers estimate that 300,000 turned out.

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"Today was unbelievable," said student organizer Shiv Soin, a sophomore at New York University. "This march was made and executed by a core team of 15 young people, ranging from ages 14-19. That alone shows how much power young people have and the changemakers we truly are."

Thunberg echoed his sentiment as [she spoke at the close of the strike](#), after a week of meeting with public figures and [testifying before Congress](#). "We are doing this to wake the leaders up; we are doing this to get them to act," she said Friday.

Their remarks – and the strike itself – were set against the backdrop of the United Nation's Climate Action Summit beginning on Monday in New York.

"New York City made it so much more difficult for world leaders to come here on Monday for the United Nations General Assembly and make false promises," said Soin. "We aren't going away until our demands are met. Until they are, we'll be flooding the streets, using our voices, and – when our team and the crowd reaches voting age – voting them out if they don't comply."

In Boston, an estimated 7,000 people turned out to rally in City Hall Plaza, according to the city's mayor Marty Walsh, who briefly spoke at the rally. He was joined by other politicians, like city Councilor Michelle Wu and former EPA director Gina McCarthy. Onstage with them were a handful of youth activists, the power behind the protest. [Say](#)

[Ameli Hajebi](#), 17, an activist with [Sunrise](#), the youth-driven movement calling attention to the importance of just environmental action, led off the student speeches this morning with a rousing personal story of her family's move to America from Iran.

In the city known for its student population, buses full of students emptied onto the plaza, creating a crowd that grew throughout the day to fill the area by noon. The overwhelming majority of the group was college-age or younger.

Among those gathered was Massachusetts Senator and Green New Deal cosponsor Ed Markey. Noticeably absent from the group was his [recent primary challenger](#), Representative Joe Kennedy.

After gathering for over an hour of speeches, protesters marched from city hall to the state house, a march aptly placed along Boston's Freedom Trail, requiring otherwise busy downtown roads to close.

In Seattle, change is already in the air; after hundreds of Amazon employees walked out of work today, the [company announced](#) it would make a \$100 million donation to The Nature Conservancy, adopt 100,000 electric delivery vans into its fleet and shift to carbon neutrality by 2030.

Internationally, strikers have [a set of demands](#) that tie broadly to those of the Green New Deal in the U.S. They include a shift away from fossil fuels, appropriate accountability for polluters, and a "just" transition (which addresses income inequality in the move away from fossil fuels).

The road ahead is long, especially in the U.S. where fossil fuels remain entrenched in politics and climate disasters batter the coast, yet Friday's movement – which will continue momentum through the end of the month in "Climate Week" – brought a glimmer of hope to environmentalists and activists alike.



Hundreds gather at the Boston climate strike this morning, listening to chants and songs from ... [+] OLIVIA GIEGER



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