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Two thirds of citizens around the world agree climate change is as serious a crisis as Covid-19 – Ipsos survey

Most Australians support a green economic recovery from COVID-19

Citizens want economic recovery actions to prioritise climate change

April 24, 2020 — A new Ipsos poll conducted in 14 countries shows widespread support for government actions to prioritise climate change in the economic recovery after COVID-19 with 65% globally agreeing that this is important. For Australia, 57% agreed climate change should be prioritised in the economic recovery actions.

Furthermore, the survey finds that 71% of adults globally agree that, in the long term, climate change is as serious a crisis as COVID-19. While the majority of Australians (59%) agree climate change is as serious a crisis as COVID-19, this is well below the global average.

The survey was conducted online among more than 28,000 adults between April 16th and April 19th 2020.

A second Ipsos survey commissioned for Earth Day found that while climate change remains the most important environmental issue for citizens globally, they are no more likely to say they plan to make changes to their own environmental behaviours than they were six years ago. The second survey was carried out online among more than 20,000 adults across 29 countries between Friday, February 21st and March 6th 2020.

Key Australian findings include:

- Climate change remains the most important environmental issue to **Australians**. Two-in-five (42%) cited it as one of the three most important environmental issues facing the nation. This was consistent with the global trend; climate change is the number one environmental issue globally too (37% identified it as a top issue).
- Also of concern to **Australians** are dealing with the amount of waste we generate (37%); future energy sources and supplies (29%); wildlife conservation (25%); and overpopulation (24%).
- Globally, other environmental issues that are important to citizens are air pollution (33%) and dealing with the amount of waste we generate (32%), followed by deforestation (26%) and water pollution (25%). Concern for the top four issues has increased since two years ago.



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- A majority of the public globally (68%) agrees that if their governments do not act now to combat climate change, they will be failing their citizens. **Australians** feel similarly, 65% agreed Government inaction on climate change would be failing citizens.
- More than half of **Australians** (55%) say they would be put off from voting for a political party whose policies do not take climate change seriously.

Comparison of this year's findings highlight changing environmental priorities for Australians. In 2018, future energy sources and supplies was a top-three environmental concern for Australians (40% identified it as a top environmental issue, compared with 29% this year). Climate change was the third most commonly mentioned issue for Australians in 2018 at 35%; and is the number one environmental issue this year, up by 7 points to 42%.

Of all the countries' citizens surveyed in 2020, Australians placed the greatest concern on wildlife conservation. A quarter (25%) of Australians identify it as a top-three issue compared with an average of 15% globally. It is likely this concern has been shaped by the loss of Australian wildlife during the bushfire crisis over summer. However, concern was also relatively high in 2018 compared with the rest of the world. In 2018, 22% of Australians selected this issue (14% globally).

Across a range of environmental behaviours, as many as two fifths globally feel they are already contributing as much as they possibly can by undertaking specific behaviours. Australians feel they are already doing much to limit their impact on climate change including recycling (54% report they are already doing as much as they possibly can); saving energy at home (e.g. through insulation, 43% already doing as much as they possibly can); and saving water at home (40% already doing as much as they possibly can).

Australians are divided on whether the environment should have to endure some setbacks in order to help the economy to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Half (50%) agree that the Government should focus on helping the economy to recover first and foremost, even if that means taking some actions that are bad for the environment. Two-in-five (41%) disagree.

Ipsos Australia Public Affairs Director, Jennifer Brook, said: "It's not surprising Australians feel conflicted about the potential of environmental sacrifices for economic recovery. In another of our monthly Ipsos Issues Monitor surveys, we have seen the environment get pushed out as the number one issue facing the nation at the start of 2020 to be replaced by healthcare, the economy and unemployment.

"These three issues have all experienced a dramatic surge in concern during the coronavirus pandemic. At the beginning of the year, it was the bushfire crisis that put the environment at the top of the list, but clearly COVID-19 is driving concern about these other issues at the moment.



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“Despite the environment taking a back seat compared with other current issues, it’s still important to people. There is strong support among the public for a green economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The importance of staying at home as much as possible is having major impacts on our consumption and travel patterns at present. What remains to be seen is how sticky these behaviour changes are as the economy opens up again in post-pandemic life.”

Technical notes

- The findings come from two surveys conducted by Ipsos on the Global Advisor online platform.
- One is a 14-country survey conducted April 16-19, 2020 among 28,029 adults aged 18-74 in Canada and the United States and 16-74 in Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia and Spain. The sample consisted of approximately 2,000+ individuals in each of the 14 countries.
- The other is a 29-country survey conducted February 21 - March 6, 2020 among 20,590 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Turkey and aged 16-74 in 23 other markets. The sample for this survey included approximately 1000+ individuals in each of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland), France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S.; and approximately 500+ individuals in each of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey.
- The precision of Ipsos online polls are calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.1 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 4.5 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.
- 17 of the 29 countries surveyed online generate nationally representative samples in their countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and United States). Brazil, China, Chile, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey produce a national sample that is more urban & educated, and with higher incomes than their fellow citizens. We refer to these respondents as “Upper Deck Consumer Citizens”. They are not nationally representative of their country.
- Weighting was employed in both surveys to balance demographics and ensure that the sample’s composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country Census data, and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe.





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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP www.ipsos.com