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### Ipsos Perils of Perception: climate change

Around the world people say they understand what actions they need to take to combat climate change, but do they really?

**London, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021** — The latest Perils of Perception study by Ipsos looks at how the general public in 30 markets around the world perceive environmental action. We ask them what they might do in their own lives to tackle climate change, and compare the answers to the (sometimes confusing) scientific truth.

Despite high concern about climate change, and high confidence that we know what to do in our own lives to combat it, misperceptions are rife, and on the specifics many often just don't know.

#### What do we think we know?

A Global Market Average of 7 in 10 (69%) agree that, "I understand what action I need to take to play my part in tackling climate change." Confidence is highest in Peru (85%), Colombia (83%), Mexico and Chile (both 82%) and lowest in Japan (40%) and Russia (41%).

#### Behavioural perceptions

Looking at well-known 'green' actions, how does the public rank potential greenhouse gas savings from each? When asked to identify from a list the top three options that would most reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of an individual living in one of the world's richer markets, people around the world were most likely to choose recycling as much as possible (59%), buying energy from renewable sources (49%) and replacing a typical car with an electric or hybrid vehicle (41%).

While all of these are ways of reducing personal climate change impact, none are in fact in the top three most effective measures, according to an academic review from 2017 (although buying energy from renewable sources is close in fourth place). This found that having one fewer child is the most effective way to reduce carbon emissions, followed by not having a car at all and avoiding one long distance flight. Only 1 in 10 (11%) around the world named not having a child as one of their top three measures to cut carbon emissions, 17% chose not having a car and 21% named avoiding one long-distance flight. This is even behind other much less effective actions such as hang-drying clothes (picked by 26%) or replacing traditional light bulbs with low energy ones (36%).

Whilst recycling as much as possible was named as one of the top two options in every Market, those in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden were more likely than average to correctly pick out avoiding a long-distance flight as an effective measure (at 39%, 42%, 33% and 42% respectively).



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Going beyond the (more) obvious, the research also presented a wider range of actions individuals could take, and asked which people thought might appear in a list of the top 30 actions to reduce personal climate change impact. The most chosen actions, 'less packaging' (chosen by 52% on average) and 'buying fewer or more durable items' (46%) are both outside the top 30 (ranked 38th and 46th respectively for reducing personal climate change impact in an academic study).

However, the most effective action on the list, refurbishing and renovating housing for efficiency (which ranks 6th out of 30), was only chosen by 35% - although those in Belgium (61%), Hungary (68%) and the Netherlands (56%) chose this as their number one action, and it was also more likely to be chosen in other European markets such as Switzerland (51%), Spain (50%), France (56%), Germany (48%), Italy (52%) and the USA (43%). The least chosen item, not having pets (chosen by 5% on average) is within the top 30 (ranked 25th for reducing personal climate change impact).

Respondents were more accurate when choosing more energy efficient cooking equipment, using cleaner fuel or renewable energy (46%, real rank: 9th), growing or producing your own food (37%, real rank: 23rd), or carpooling/ sharing (36%, real rank: 27th).

### Impacts of climate change

Climate change already displaces more people than conflict, according to research. Globally, though, people underestimate the level of internal displacement caused by climate change. Two in five (43%) believe conflict to be the greater cause of internal displacement, while a third (32%) chose climate and weather-related disasters. In reality, 9.8 million people were displaced due to changes in weather or climate in the first 6 months of 2020, compared with 4.8 million displaced by conflict.

Of the 28 markets surveyed, only the US (43%), Japan (41%), China (40%), France (39%) and Russia (35%) were more likely to say climate change was the bigger cause of internal displacement.

When asked about the warming we are already experiencing, there is little evidence that the public know that all of the last six years were among the hottest on record. When asked how many years since 2015 have been the hottest year on record, most were too unsure to answer. Those who did answer tended to underestimate. Only 4% of respondents around the world gave the correct answer of all six years. While 73% did not know how many years have been the hottest on record, a further 23% said fewer than 6.

### Climate change and diet

According to research, going to a plant-based diet makes more of a difference to your carbon footprint than eating local, but the public guess this is the other way around. Almost 6 in 10 people around the world (57%) say eating a locally produced diet, including meat and dairy products, is a better way to reduce an individual's greenhouse gas emissions while only 20% say eating a vegetarian diet with some imported products is more effective.



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Only those in India are more likely to choose a vegetarian diet as the more effective option (47%), while those in Hungary (77%), Switzerland (73%) and France (70%) are most likely to choose a local diet as the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Public understanding of relative impact of meat and miles is also low. The public has little idea of the carbon emissions of burgers as an equivalent of driving in a car. Almost 9 in 10 people globally (86%) could not make a guess how far a car would need to drive to match the carbon emissions of making one beef burger. Of those who tried to answer, the mean answer was 43km. Depending on car efficiency data from the IEA, the true journey length is between 38-119km, putting most answers at the lower end of the range.

### Methodology

These are the results of a 30-market survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 21,011 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, and 16-74 in 24 other markets between Friday, February 19 and Friday, March 5, 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, Chile, mainland China, Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these markets should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each Market’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

“The Global Market Average” reflects the average result for all the markets and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each Market or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don't know” or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.



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### About Ipsos

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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