

## Australians on Climate Change: Attitudes and Behaviours

McCrindle Research has just released its research into the attitudes of Australians towards climate change and the measures they are taking to reduce its impact. The results show that Australians, particularly women and Gen Y, are convinced about climate change and are concerned about its future impacts, but costs are stopping many from being as environmentally friendly as they would like to be.

### Most Australians accept that the climate is changing

This is particularly the case amongst young Australians. Almost 100% of Gen Y (aged 18-28), 91% of Gen X (aged 29-43), 85% of Boomers (aged 44-62) and 50% of Builders (aged 63+) believe climate change is real. However when it comes to attributing cause, there is less consensus. Just over half believe humans activities are the main cause of it. Most Australians believe that climate change will have a “significant impact” on Australia’s future and 40% believe it will have an “extreme impact”.

*“There has rarely been an issue that has risen up the ranks of societal awareness as quickly as climate change. While scientists have been tracking global warming for a few decades it has only been in the last 2 years that it has got traction in the community” writes Mark McCrindle. “Yet what got the cutthrough was not the cognitive argument but the emotive portrayal. While ever it remained a scientific debate there was no connection but when the message moved to the visual and the visceral, the community became engaged.”*

### However, we don’t want to make too many sacrifices

Just over 65% of Australians don’t want to have to pay more than 10% for environmentally friendly products and services, and one-third of Australians don’t want to have to pay anything at all. 40% are willing to do a bit as long as it’s not too expensive or arduous. 10% are willing to pay “whatever it costs”.

90% of Australians say they recycle, 44% try to reduce air conditioner use, and 35% limit clothes dryer use. However, relatively few of us engage in energy saving practices that involve increased costs. 80.1% use no solar heating, and 40.5% use no green energy.

### Respondents commonly mentioned cost as the major obstacle in being more environmentally friendly:

*“Everything that is not environmentally friendly should cost more and all things good for the environment should cost less.”*

*“I believe environmentally friendly items should be cheaper so everyone can buy them. If they were we could all do a lot more.”*

Particularly with the increasing costs of living, and economic instability, the willingness to pay for environmental sustainability has been reduced:

*"It is difficult to make any change which incurs extra cost when interest rates are already biting into families at present."*

(Survey respondent, September 2008)

***"We have consistently found in research over the last two years that when it comes to spending more for environmental reasons 1 in 5 Australians will resist paying anything extra and 1 in 5 will bear a significant cost. It is the other 3 in 5 that waver and need a compelling case if they are to be convinced" stated Mark McCrindle. "To win the hearts, minds, and wallets of this group will take more carrot than stick. The challenge is to offer structures without burning off the enormous environmental good-will that has been generated across the community."***

## Women and Ys leading community change

80% of men and 98% are convinced climate change is real. 2 in 5 men are prepared to pay more for environmental reasons compared to nearly 4 in 5 women, and one-third of men and half of women are prepared to "make lifestyle changes" for the planet.

More Gen Y females than Gen Y males are prepared to "do all they can" to save our planet – 63%, compared to 58% of Gen Y males. Almost 100% are prepared to pay "a bit more", compared to 75% of Gen Y males.

***"Older Australians are a little harder to convince when it comes to climate change as they have lived through other perceived crises which never fully eventuated- from the cold war to the Y2K "bug" to bird flu" writes Mark McCrindle. "They have a broader life-context within which to place the current discussion compared to younger Australians who see this as the issue of their time, defining their generation and impacting their future".***

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