

# Exploring Australians' climate change views, practices, and capabilities

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Over the past decade, Australians have highlighted the importance of climate change action to their future survival with movements such as Extinction Rebellion and School Strikes for Climate .

Children, too, have been calling for urgent change by skipping school and taking to the streets in School Strike 4 Climate events, as well as partaking in the Climate Change and Me project.

Although individuals involved in such movements are well-informed about [climate change](#) issues, the level of understanding of people in the [general public](#) isn't clear, especially in the face of an abundance of conflicting information and misinformation.

[Eight out of 10](#) Australians are concerned about [climate](#) change, and have a clear expectation of the government to take up a bigger role and take conclusive action. Indeed, climate-damaging actions are often taken because of governmental inaction and policy indecision.

The results of the federal election in May this year further showed that Australians were willing to alter their political alignment to make climate change and the environment a priority. In the generally conservative state of Queensland, Greens members were elected in Griffith, Ryan, and Brisbane, as well as an additional Greens senator.

This surprise change came after increasing concerns about the [impact of climate change](#) on the daily lives of Queenslanders. The state was devastated by flooding in February this year, and the electorates that voted for Greens over their usual Liberal and Labor preferences were directly impacted by the Brisbane River flooding.

The rise of the Climate 200-backed teal independents in Melbourne and Sydney was also a sign voters were making climate change their main concern. Climate 200-commissioned polling of the teals' target seats showed voters' main concern was climate change.

## **Cutting through the climate change information**

## **overload**

Although a general awareness of the impacts of climate change is evident in society, do people have the skills to interpret and critically analyze the information they encounter to cut through to the facts, and avoid the spread of misinformation?

Research has been conducted in Australia and internationally about the climate change practices and views of certain groups, such as teachers and [healthcare professionals](#), but there's limited understanding about the Australian general public's interactions with climate change information.

It's important to understand the views, practices, and numeracy capabilities of the public in relation to climate change to get a better sense of the current situation. Policymakers and practitioners will be able to use this information to support future climate change education.

## **How can we address the problem?**

At Monash University's Faculty of Education, the Climate Change in the Community project is being undertaken to capture the general public's connections with climate change.

We'll survey Australian adults about their climate change views, practices, and numeracy capabilities. Participants will complete a short online questionnaire about these topics. As part of the questionnaire, participants will provide basic demographic information (such as gender, age group) so comparisons based on demographics can be made.

Participants will also be asked if they're teachers. If so, they'll complete a few teaching-specific questions, in addition to the general climate change questions that will be answered by all participants.

We'll therefore be able to make comparisons between teachers and non-teachers in terms of their climate change views, practices, and numeracy capabilities.

## **What outcomes do we expect?**

By completing this project, we'll be able to develop an understanding of the general public's views of climate change, including climate change education, and approaches to accessing and evaluating climate change information.

We'll also be able to discern if there are patterns by demographic group, as well as any differences in the response patterns of teachers compared to non-teachers.

Findings will be used to better-inform climate change education policies and practices at both the school and university levels, as well as to make suggestions to improve the presentation and dissemination of climate change information to the public.

Provided by Monash University

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