

Australians increasingly concerned about climate change, but resist a diet change to help the planet

November 29 2022

**CLIMATE CHANGE:
CONCERN, BEHAVIOUR AND
THE SIX AUSTRALIAS**



Credit: Monash University

Australians are overwhelmingly changing their attitudes towards climate change but are reluctant to change their diets to help the environment, a Monash University study reveals.

More than double the number of Australians have become alarmed about climate change in the past decade, with women more likely to adopt a more climate-friendly diet than men, according to the "Climate Change: Concern, Behavior and The Six Australias" [report](#).

This report compares data with studies conducted in [2011](#), [2016](#) and [2020](#) to determine whether there have been changes in attitudes towards climate change and behaviors of Australians.

The report draws from the Six Americas framework, developed by Yale, to group audiences on a spectrum based on their climate change beliefs, attitudes and actions—from Alarmed to Dismissive.

Released this week by the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub, it found more than 80% of the Australians surveyed are either Cautious, Concerned or Alarmed about climate change.

Of those, 31% of the respondents are in the Alarmed climate segment—up from 25% in 2020 and 14% in 2011.

Women lead the way compared to men on voting based on environmental issues, respectively 50 and 36%, while men are more likely to take a practical approach to reduce their footprint by using less petrol or putting in home insulation.

Unsurprisingly, younger adults are more likely than older Australians to vote based on environmental issues, give money to environment groups and take part in civic activities.

The report also captures the behaviors people are willing to amend for climate change—with 40% having no intention of changing to a more sustainable diet. While respondents were most resistant to make a dietary change, 26% wish to but are yet to action it.

Yet 32% of women surveyed had changed their diet compared to just 18% of men, contributing to the 24% of the total respondents who have already changed their [diet](#).

Author and Research Fellow Lucy Richardson said a big shift in community attitudes is needed for Australians to adopt sustainable, healthy diets which includes eating less meat and more plant-based foods, and ensuring food is sustainably produced with low greenhouse gas emissions, to help address climate change.

"We really need to better understand this resistance to changing our diets—especially around eating less meat, and how communities can be better supported to be more sustainable," Dr. Richardson said.

"While there is growing alarm over climate change, this doesn't always translate into action. People tend to do the easiest things, which is understandable, but a lot more needs to be done.

"The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report on mitigating climate change released earlier this year also says that moving to sustainable diets is a critical way we can all help address climate change, but this new report shows Australians have a long way to go."

While 80% of the 3098 respondents have acted on climate change, just 10% have done "a great deal of action" compared to 30 and 40% respectively, engaging in "moderate" or "little action."

Turning off lights at home was the most common change in behavior

within the home at 86%, followed by a joint 76% of people reducing gas and electricity use, and food waste.

Forty-five percent of respondents have switched to environmentally-friendly products in their homes, while just 13% of respondents have bought carbon-offsets to reduce their carbon footprint.

But there's been a shift towards green power with more than 35% of [respondents](#) planning to or already buying renewable energy, 17% would like to use it while 20% don't plan to.

The report also reveals the Dismissive segment has remained below 10% since 2011.

The 2022 study identified further shifts within these segments:

- 2022 recorded the highest proportion, to date, of Australians Alarmed about [climate](#) change, coming in at 31% compared with 25% in 2020 and 14% in 2011.
- The number of Australians disengaged with [climate change](#) has decreased from 6% in 2011 to 2% in 2022.
- There are fewer Doubtful Australians in 2022 at 9%, compared to 15% in 2011.

More information: Climate Change: Concern, Behaviour and the Six Australias. [www.monash.edu/mcccrh/research ... d-the-six-australias](http://www.monash.edu/mcccrh/research...d-the-six-australias)

Provided by Monash University

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