

Australians strongly back renewable energy and a plan to manage the phase-out of coal stations

Climate of the Nation 2016 • September 2016

Nearly three-quarters of Australians (73 per cent) think that tackling climate change will create opportunities for new jobs and investments in clean energy.

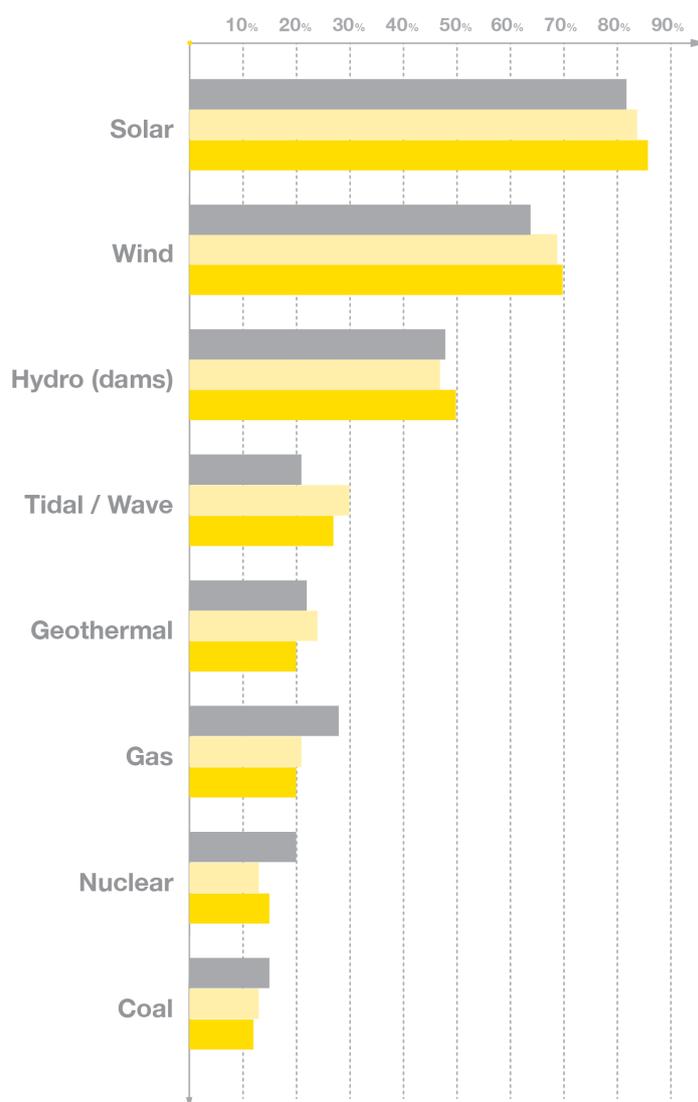
Australians increasingly prefer renewable energy, while the popularity of coal continues to decline.

- + When asked to choose their **most preferred energy source**:
 - + A strong majority – 59 per cent – choose solar, up from 51 per cent last year
 - + 11 per cent choose wind
 - + 4 per cent choose gas, and
 - + Only 3 per cent choose coal.
- + When asked to list their **top three preferred sources of energy**:
 - + 86 per cent include solar, up from 82 per cent in 2014
 - + 70 per cent include wind, up from 64 per cent in 2013
 - + 20 per cent include gas, down from 28 per cent in 2014
 - + 12 per cent include coal, down from 15 per cent in 2014

Differences between the states when it comes to preferred sources of energy:

- + More people in Queensland choose solar as their most preferred energy source than does the nation as a whole (Qld 66, nation 59 per cent).
- + More Western Australians choose tidal/wave energy as their most preferred (WA 10, nation 3 per cent).
- + More South Australians choose nuclear as their most preferred energy source (14 per cent, nation 7 per cent). This may have been influenced by SA's Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission conducted in 2015-16.

FIGURE 1
TOP THREE MOST PREFERRED
SOURCES OF ENERGY FOR AUSTRALIA



Australians expect Australia's current coal-fired power stations to be replaced with clean energy, and want a plan to manage this transition.

- + 72 per cent think that the replacement of coal generation with clean energy is “inevitable”. More Australians aged 55 and over agree (78 per cent), than those aged 18-34 (65 per cent).
- + Only 23 per cent believe that “the market and energy companies should be the ones to decide when old coal plants should be closed down”. 46 per cent disagree, up from 35 per cent in 2015.
- + 75 per cent think that governments need to implement a plan to ensure orderly closure and replacement of coal stations; only 8 per cent disagree.

Australians believe we need to start phasing coal stations out gradually so we can manage the costs over time.

- + 70 per cent agree with this statement.
- + Another 21 per cent agree that we should “start phasing out coal generation as soon as possible so we can make a rapid shift to clean energy, even if it costs more in the short term”.
- + Only 8 per cent agree that we should keep coal stations running “for as long as possible and we will deal with the costs and negative impacts in the future”.

Australians think both state and federal governments need to plan for the transition from coal to clean energy.

- + 67 per cent of people think the lead responsibility for taking action on climate change sits with federal government.
- + But 78 per cent agree that state governments need a plan for the orderly phase out of coal so that workers and communities can prepare, and 74 per cent think that the federal government needs a plan.
- + 77 per cent of Australians agree that state governments should be putting in place incentives for more renewable energy.
- + Only 28 per cent agree with the statement that “State governments shouldn't act ahead of the federal government on renewable energy”.

When it comes to both climate action and the implementation of strong energy policy, the majority of Australians do not support delays or half measures. 61 per cent think delayed or inadequate action now will urgent action becomes necessary in the future, increasing the likelihood of shocks and sudden negative adjustments to jobs, electricity prices and energy security.

This year's results are based on a nationally representative online survey conducted by Galaxy Research 29 July–7 August 2016 among 2,015 Australians aged 18+. The maximum margin of error on a sample of 2015 interviews is +/- 2.9% at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error will be larger for sub-samples.

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