Factsheet

Geographic differences in views on climate change and carbon pricing
Climate of the Nation 2013 • July 2013

Belief in and concern about climate change, support for carbon pricing, and general appetite for action on climate change vary state to state and between cities and regional/rural areas. Here are some highlights of variation in attitudes held by Australians.

City dwellers are:

+ Significantly more likely (50%) to agree that they trust the science that suggests the climate is changing due to human activities compared to those living in regional or rural areas (38%).

+ Slightly more likely (59%) to agree that climate change poses a serious threat to our way of life over the coming decades compared to people living in regional or rural areas (52%).

+ Also slightly more likely (54%) to agree that governments need to do more to address climate change, compared to 47% of rural and regional Australians.

+ More likely (64%) than those living in regional or rural areas (58%) to agree that ignoring climate change is simply not an answer, as it increases the risk of the situation getting worse.

Regional and rural Australians are:

+ More likely to believe that climate change is due to a mixture of human causes and natural cycles (63% compared to 52% of metropolitan residents).

+ Most likely to rate solar as their number one preferred energy source (61% compared to 54% of metropolitan residents).

+ More supportive of wind (70% place it in their top three) than urban residents (65%), despite vigorous campaigns against wind in some of the regions.

+ More likely to agree that the seriousness of climate change is exaggerated, with 45% of this view compared to 38% of urban dwellers.

Queensland

- Most likely to believe that a 5% reduction on carbon emissions is too low.
- Least likely to believe that the things they do on a daily basis contribute to climate change.
- Most likely to say they are worse off under carbon pricing.

Victoria

- Most likely to include the environment among their top five most important issues.
- Most hopeful that humans will come up with solutions to tackle climate change.
- Most likely to agree that tackling climate change creates opportunities for new jobs and investment in clean energy.

New South Wales

- Most likely to agree that carbon pricing is encouraging individuals to reduce their electricity use.
- Least hopeful that humans will come up with solutions to tackle climate change.
- Least concerned about the impacts of climate change on crop production and food supply.
New South Wales residents are:
+ Least hopeful (38%) that humans will come up with solutions to tackle climate change compared to a national average of 42%.
+ Most likely to agree that carbon pricing is encouraging individuals to reduce their electricity use (52%).
+ Most likely to agree (30%) that if we get rid of carbon pricing, electricity prices will go back to where they were before the laws were enacted. That compares to 24% nationally.

Victorian residents are:
+ Most likely to include the environment among their top five most important issues (34% compared to 25% of New South Wales residents and 28% of Queenslanders).
+ Among those who believe climate change is occurring, least likely to believe that natural cycles are the main cause of climate change (7% compared to 13% of New South Wales residents and Queenslanders).
+ Most likely to agree that there are too many conflicting opinions for the public to be sure about claims made around climate change (64% compared to 56% of New South Wales residents and 58% of Queenslanders).
+ Most hopeful (45%) that humans will come up with solutions to tackle climate change compared to a national average of 42%.
+ Most likely to agree that tackling climate change creates opportunities for new jobs and investment in clean energy, e.g. solar, wind, geothermal (75% compared to 68% of New South Wales residents and 70% of Queenslanders).
+ Most likely to think that responding to climate change presents a unique economic opportunity for Australia in the development and sale of renewable energy technology (71% compared to 63% nationally).
+ Most likely to agree that if we get rid of carbon pricing, we lose the opportunity to get ahead of other countries in the development of smarter and cleaner technologies (36%).
+ Least likely to agree (18%) that if we get rid of carbon pricing, electricity prices will go back to where they were before carbon pricing was introduced. That’s compared to 24% nationally.

Queenslanders are:
+ Least likely to agree that Australia shouldn’t act on climate change until other major emitters like the United States and China do (22%), and they are also most likely to believe that a 5% reduction on carbon emissions is too low (53%).
+ Least likely to agree that they trust the science the climate is changing due to human activities (41% compared to 46% of New South Wales residents and 48% of Victorians).
+ Least likely to believe that the things they do on a daily basis contribute to climate change (42% compared to 47% of New South Wales residents and 49% of Victorians).
+ Least concerned about more droughts and flooding affecting crop production and food supply as an impact of climate change (71% compared to 78% of New South Wales and Victorian residents).
+ Least concerned about more bushfires as an impact of climate change (67% compared to 73% of New South Wales residents and 76% of Victorians).
+ Least likely to agree that carbon pricing will have a positive impact on the environment (30%), that carbon pricing will help reduce Australia’s carbon emissions (30%) and that Carbon pricing is better than taking no action (34%).
+ Also least likely to agree that now that carbon pricing has been introduced, it should be given a chance to work for at least a few years (38%). They are also least likely to express support for the carbon pricing laws (22% compared to 33% of Victorians).
+ Most likely to say they are worse off under carbon pricing (61% compared to 52% of NSW residents).

This year’s results are based on a nationally representative online survey conducted by JWS Research between June 1-7, 2013 among 1,009 Australians aged 18+. The maximum margin of error on a sample of 1,009 interviews is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error will be larger for sub-samples. Where possible we have compared results to the 2012 quantitative research conducted by Ipsos, involving a nationally representative online survey of 1,131 Australians aged 18+ conducted between May 23-30, 2012.