

PRESS RELEASE

Two thirds of citizens around the world agree climate change is as serious a crisis as Covid-19

Citizens want economic recovery actions to prioritise climate change

April 22, 2020 — More people across 15 major countries say they are now wearing a face mask to protect themselves from the coronavirus pandemic.

A new Ipsos poll conducted in 14 countries finds that 71% of adults globally agree that, in the long term, climate change is as serious a crisis as Covid-19 is. The survey shows widespread support for government actions to prioritise climate change in the economic recovery after Covid-19 with 65% globally agreeing that this is important. The survey was conducted online among more than 28,000 adults between April 16th and April 19th 2020.

Another Ipsos survey, carried out online among more than 20,000 adults across 29 countries between Friday, February 21st and March 6th 2020, finds that while climate change remains the most important environmental issue for citizens globally, citizens are no more likely to say they plan to make changes to their own environmental behaviours than they were six years ago.

The top findings include:

- Climate change remains the most important environmental issue globally, with 37% citing it as one of their three top environmental issues. Other environmental issues that are important to citizens are air pollution (33%) and dealing with the amount of waste we generate (32%), followed by deforestation (26%) and water pollution (25%). Concern for the top four issues has increased since two years ago.
- A majority of the public globally (68%) agree that if their governments do not act now to combat climate change, they will be failing their citizens. Nearly six in ten (57%) say they would be put off from voting for a political party whose policies do not take climate change seriously.
- Across a range of environmental behaviours, as many as two fifths globally feel they are already doing as much as they possibly can on specific behaviours. Areas where some feel they have no room to improve include recycling (40% state 'I am already doing this as much as I possibly can'), saving energy at home (37%), and saving water at home (33%).

Agreement that human activity contributes to climate change has fallen in some European countries between 2014 and 2020 (by 14 percentage points in Germany, 9 percentage points in Italy and 8 percentage points in France), as well as elsewhere in the world (by 17 percentage points in Brazil, 16 percentage points in China and Japan, and 12 percentage points in Russia) . In other countries such as Great Britain and the US, however, there has been no significant change.

PRESS RELEASE

A majority of citizens feel they are likely to make changes to their own behaviour to limit personal contribution to climate change. However, the proportion saying they are likely to make such changes has not increased since Ipsos last asked this question six years ago. Citizens remain more likely to plan to take actions which are convenient and easier to achieve than they are to plan changes which are more far-reaching - such as avoiding flying or making changes to their diet.

- The public are willing to exercise their spending power: avoiding products which have a lot of packaging is the most popular change, with 57% globally saying they are 'likely' to change their behaviour on this in the next year.
- This is followed by avoiding buying new goods, mending what you have or buying used products instead (52%), saving energy at home (50%), recycling (49%) and saving water at home (49%).

Citizens are divided on how likely they are to undertake less comfortable and convenient lifestyle changes.

- 41% say they are likely to avoid flying in the next year to limit their personal contribution to climate change, while a third (33%) say they are unlikely to make this change.
- 41% say they are likely to eat less meat, or replace the meat in some meals with alternatives such as beans, in the next year. However, a similar proportion (39%) say they are unlikely to do this.
- 35% say they are likely to eat fewer dairy products or replacing dairy products with alternatives such as soya milk. Nearly half (49%) say they are unlikely to do this.

There has been very little change since 2014 in how likely the public are to say they plan to change their behaviours to limit their personal contribution to climate change, across the 12 countries where Ipsos has trend data.

- The lack of change is not because the public in these 12 countries have already taken action: rather, the proportion who report that 'I am already doing this as much as I can' across most behaviours has decreased since 2014. This lack of movement may relate to a heightened sense among the public of the difficulty of changing behaviours - increasing awareness of an issue can be accompanied by an increasing sense that little can be done to improve the situation.
- Diet is the one area where there has been some movement (albeit small) since 2014. 18% in 2020 say they are reducing meat in their diets as much as they can, up from 14% in 2014, and the proportion who say they are unlikely to make this change has also fallen – from 44% in 2014 to 39% in 2020. Fewer now say they are unlikely to reduce their dairy product consumption in the next year – from 55% in 2014 to 49% in 2020.



PRESS RELEASE

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director of Public Affairs in the UK, said:

“There is real support among the public for a green economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis, and climate change remains the single biggest environmental concern globally. What remains to be seen, however, is whether and how people plan to change their behaviour to combat climate change when they adjust to a new life once the Covid-19 pandemic passes.

A strong positive is that people believe that governments around the world should be acting now to avoid failing their citizens on combating climate change. Nearly six in ten would be put off from voting for a party if they didn't take climate change seriously, sending a strong message to all political parties around the world about the importance of this topic to voters.”

About the Study

The findings come from two surveys conducted by Ipsos on the Global Advisor online platform.

One is a 14-country survey conducted April 16-19, 2020 among 28,029 adults aged 18-74 in Canada and the United States and 16-74 in Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia and Spain. The sample consisted of approximately 2,000+ individuals in each of the 14 countries.

The other is a 29-country survey conducted February 21 - March 6, 2020 among 20,590 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Turkey and aged 16-74 in 23 other markets. The sample for this survey included approximately 1000+ individuals in each of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland), France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S.; and approximately 500+ individuals in each of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey.

The precision of Ipsos online polls are calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.1 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 4.5 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

17 of the 29 countries surveyed online generate nationally representative samples in their countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and United States). Brazil, China, Chile, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey produce a national sample that is more urban & educated, and with higher incomes than their fellow citizens. We refer to these respondents as “Upper Deck Consumer Citizens”. They are not nationally representative of their country.

Weighting was employed in both surveys to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country Census data, and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe.

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PRESS RELEASE

About Ipsos

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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