

DEC Social Research Series

Who Cares about the Environment in 2003? ... at a glance



Department of
Environment and Conservation (NSW)

our environment

it's a living thing

Who Cares about the Environment in 2003?



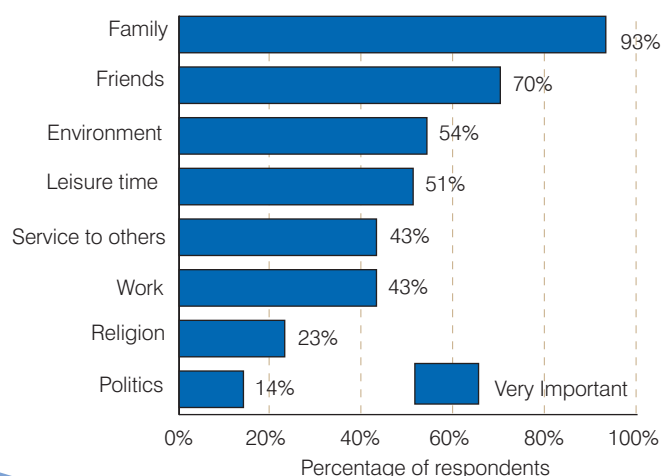
Headlines

- NSW people have more sophisticated environmental knowledge. They identify specific environmental issues more often than previously, rather than 'the environment' or 'pollution' in a generic sense. They are able to discuss environmental issues in more detail and the number of people who are unsure/don't know about environmental issues has decreased.
- Water conservation, population increase, and urban development and management are issues growing in importance.
- People value the environment as part of their lives and they are willing to pay to protect it. They also support compulsory environmental regulation.

- *Who Cares about the Environment?* is social research conducted every three years since 1994.
- It measures environmental knowledge, views, attitudes and behaviour of people across NSW.
- This brochure presents the key results of surveys with 1421 NSW residents aged 18–70 in 2003.
See back page for more details.

The environment is very important to people

People value the environment as part of their lives, placing it third after family and friends.



*The environment is
an everyday issue now.*

Woman, aged 31–40, Epping (Sydney)

... at a glance

People are concerned about environmental problems

87% of people say they are concerned a great deal or a fair amount about environmental problems, similar to the previous three surveys. The major reason for concern is for future generations.

Concern for future generations	42%
Maintaining ecosystems	17%
Quality of life	16%
Long-term economic sustainability	12%
Health effects of pollution	12%
Other	1%

People are willing to pay for a better environment

We tax cigarettes to the hilt. I think we should seriously look at taxing environmentally damaging products more so than those that are less damaging.

Man, aged over 50,
Newcastle

People say they would pay to help fix environmental problems or to prevent damage:

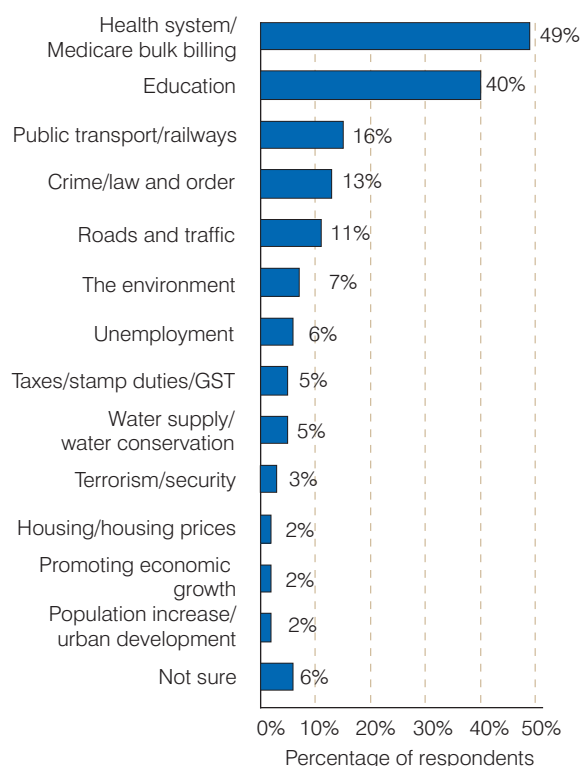
- **81%** agree or strongly agree that products that cause environmental problems should cost more
- **64%** agree or strongly agree they would give part of their income if the money was used to fix environmental problems
- **59%** agree or strongly agree with an increase in taxes if the extra money was used to fix environmental problems.

People want compulsory environmental regulations

88% of people say there should definitely or probably be compulsory requirements for environmental performance of new homes, building developments and renovations.

Priority issues for the NSW Government

Compared to other issues, the environment is ranked sixth in 2003.

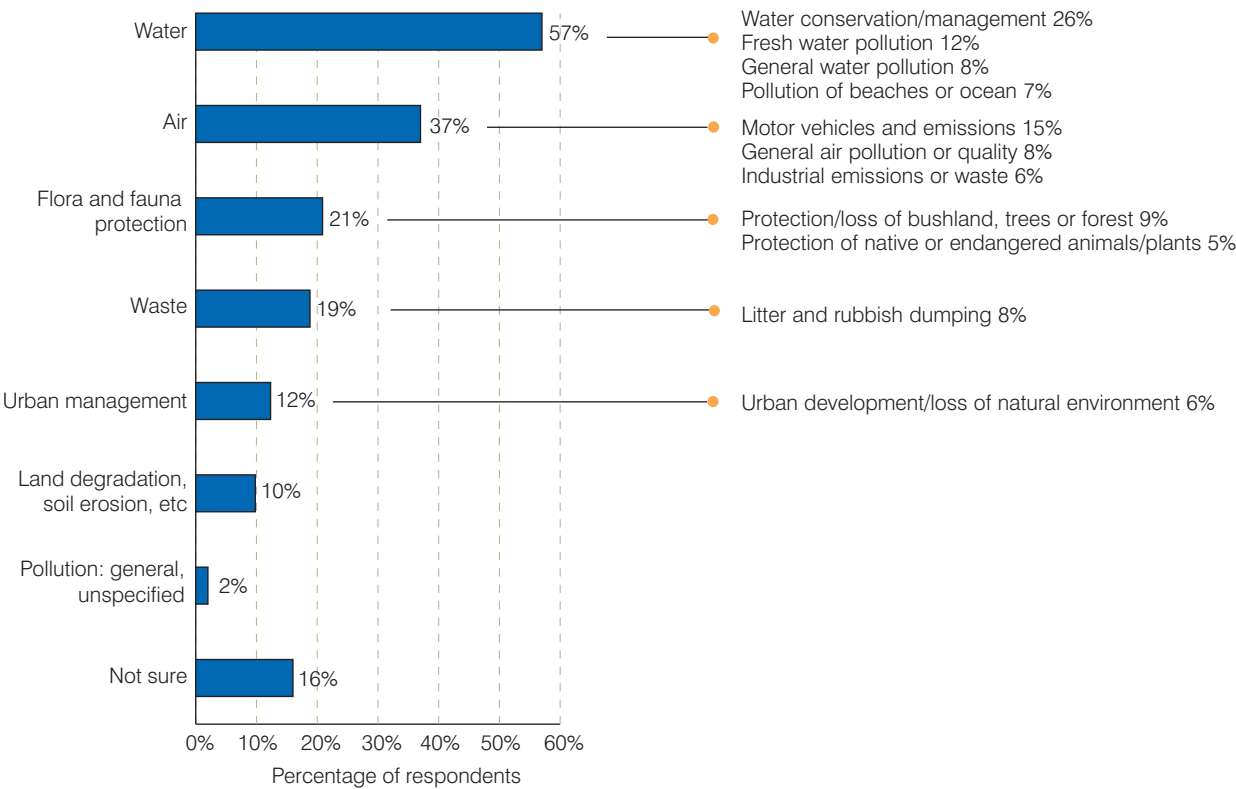


People were also asked what the two most important issues for attention by the State Government should be in ten years' time. The environment, water conservation and urban development are seen as more important future issues. Health, education, public transport/railways, and roads and traffic are seen as more important current issues.



What are the environmental issues?

People were asked what the two most important environmental issues are in NSW today.



People know more about environmental issues in 2003

I am concerned about overdevelopment in Sydney... the more people... the more problems you cause in transport, air pollution, use of water, all the services people need in a city

Woman, aged 41–50
Illawong (Sydney)

- The number of people who know that the greenhouse effect is not caused by a hole in the earth's atmosphere has increased from 24% in 1994 to 40%
- 67% know that gas hot water systems use less energy than electrical storage systems.



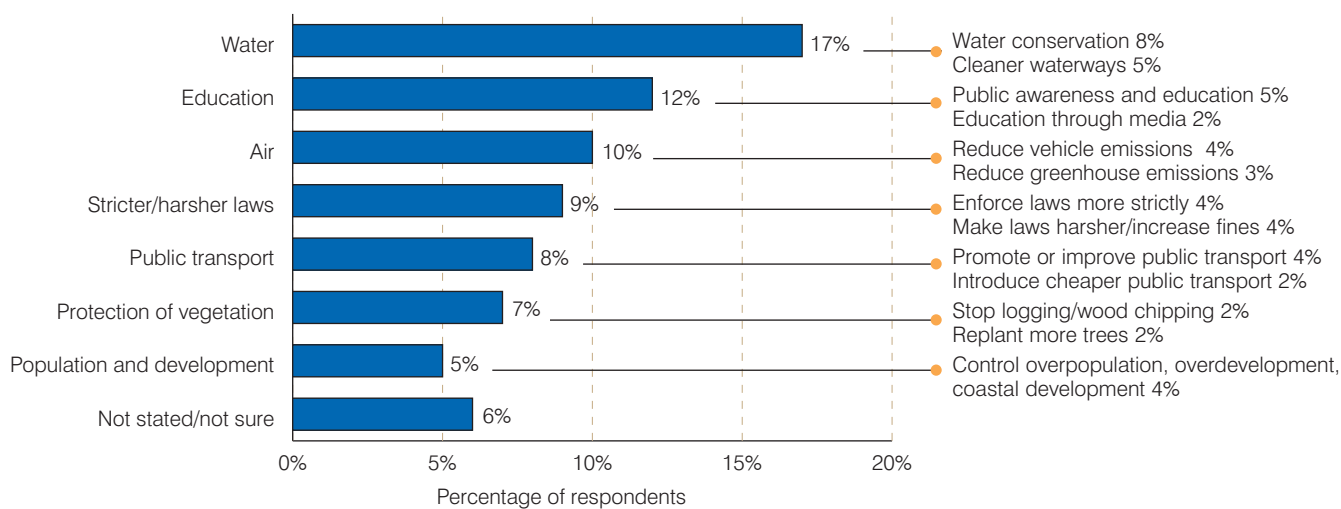
I pay more attention to it (the environment) because I'd just like there to be something there for my children and grandchildren.

Man, aged 41–50, Newcastle

... at a glance



The most important thing the NSW Government can do to protect the environment



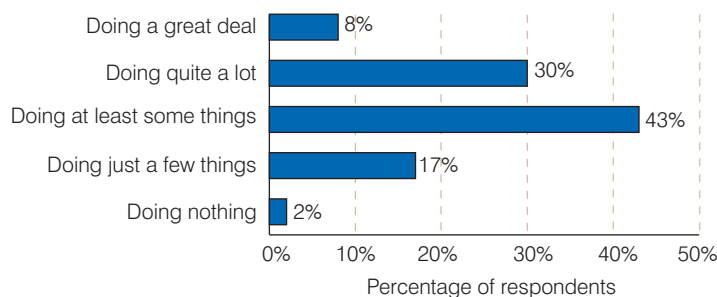
We all need to do more to protect the environment

People were asked whether different groups were doing enough to protect the environment.

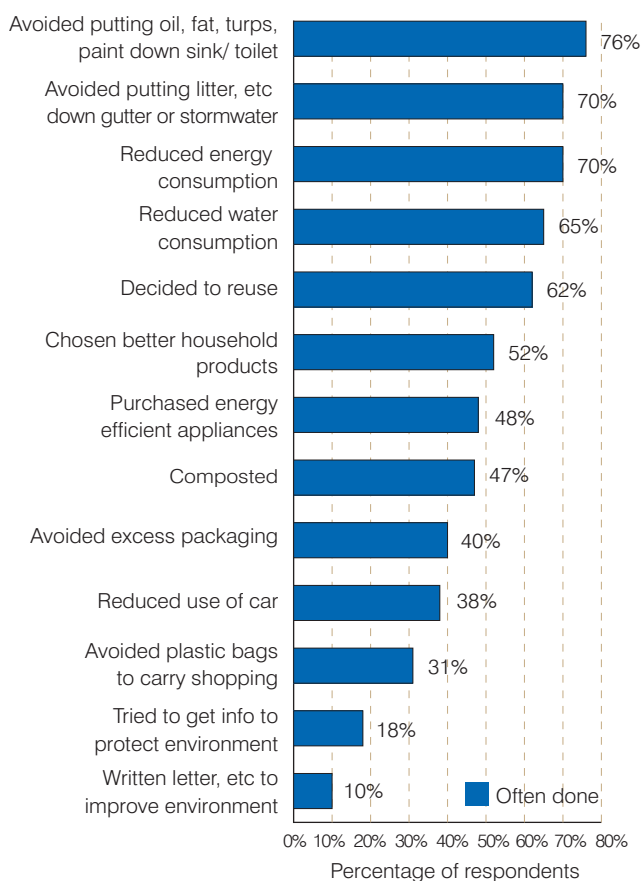
Sector	% think doing enough	% think need to do more
Farmers	43	53
Local councils	32	66
Retailers	23	71
State Government	22	76
Commonwealth Government	20	77
Manufacturing industry	16	80
Individuals	14	85

How much are people doing?

People were asked how much they felt they were doing in their everyday life to help protect the environment.



What have people done in the last 12 months?



I am always very careful with water. I never let things drip and I try not to waste water.

Woman,
aged 31–40,
Tamworth

There's more in the full report

- People in NSW have different views on the most important environmental initiative for the State Government:
 - rural NSW – water issues
 - Newcastle/Wollongong – air quality
 - Sydneysiders – public transport.
- **65%** of people from non-English speaking households rate the environment as very important in their lives, compared to **53%** of English speaking households.

- **80%** of people support environmental rating schemes for cars.
- Using the car too much or not using public transport enough are the main things people say they do which damage the environment.
- More than **86%** of people consider scientists, technical specialists and conservation groups reliable sources of environmental information, whereas **60%** think media personalities, and business and industry, are not reliable.
- About **45%** of people think environmental regulations are too lax for mining, forestry, retailing and individual households and **56%** say they are too lax for manufacturing.

More details

Who Cares about the Environment in 2003?:

- contains the results of telephone surveys with people from Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong/ Illawarra, country towns and rural areas, and focus groups which explored specific issues in more detail. It includes core questions to provide comparisons, and some new questions on current issues.
- has complete results, including demographic analysis of answers to all questions by age and sex, residential location and education level, and comparisons with previous years' results.

Who Cares about the Environment in 2003?:

is available from the Department of Environment and Conservation on 131 555 and online at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares. Printed copies of the 1997 and 2000 reports are also available, and the 2000 report is online.

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Photos on front cover of farmer, lorikeet and people running through the Blue Mountains, and inside brochure of kangaroos in Warrumbungles and cyclists, reproduced courtesy of Tourism New South Wales.