



Headlines

- » Air quality was rated the **second most important environmental issue** (20%) after water conservation, supply and management/ drought (57%).
- » In 2006 **perceptions of air measures were more negative** than in previous years. Since 2003 those seeing deterioration in air quality, dealing with industrial emissions and encouraging alternatives to motor vehicles increased by 7–11% from 2003.
- » The number of people **taking active steps to reduce fuel consumption/ vehicle air pollution** increased by 10% from 2003–2006 (38% to 48%). However, the proportion who never tried to reduce fuel consumption is still high at 18%.
- » 5% of people mentioned **air quality initiatives** as the most important for NSW government action
- » Residents of **Sydney** were much more likely to see air pollution as one of the two most important environmental issues compared to all other areas (24% compared with 9–14%).

"It's a big concern for me, for my children. For them as children it doesn't look good. Air pollution, industrial pollution destroying the air"

Focus group participant, Sydney

Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?

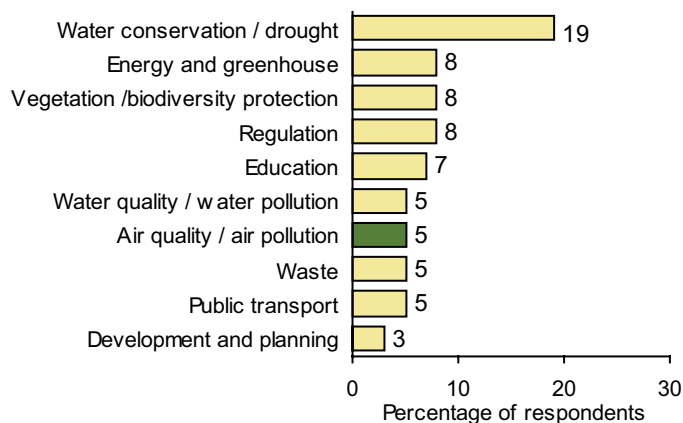
- Contains the results of two telephone surveys with a representative sample of 1721 people from across NSW
- Includes analysis of demographic differences with all questions
- Includes findings from focus group discussions about people's views of the environment and their own environmental activities

Priority issues for the NSW Government now and in the future

Although air quality was not specifically mentioned as a priority issue, 9% of those who mentioned public transport as a present issue, and 10% who mentioned it as a future issue, also mentioned addressing public transport issues as an important initiative to protect the environment in the question shown below. It is likely these people were making a connection between public transport and air quality. Taking roads and traffic and public transport/ railways together, 41% of respondents identified transport as a priority issue, rating it ahead of all issues except the health system at 43%.

The most important environmental initiative for the NSW Government

5% of people mentioned air quality initiatives as the most important for NSW government action. A further 8% identified energy/greenhouse issues and 5% identified public transport initiatives as the most important. There is a strong convergence across these priorities, as common initiatives may improve public transport, improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Specific measures mentioned to deal with air quality and pollution were:

- reduce air pollution - general
- reduce vehicle emissions
- (general or specific solutions)
- reduce industrial emissions

Sydney residents and those aged 35-44 were more likely to suggest specific solutions to reduce vehicle emissions.



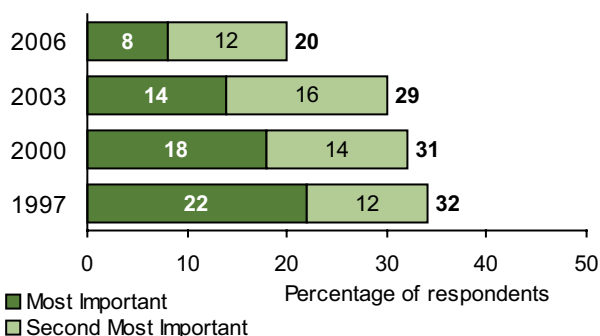
The most important environmental issues

One fifth of those surveyed rated air pollution/air quality as one of the two most important environmental issues in NSW. Since 1994 air quality/air pollution has consistently ranked as the second most important environmental issue after water issues (predominantly water quality before 2006).

Two most important environmental issues combined	%
Water conservation & management/drought	57
Air pollution/air quality	20
Forest/bushland/ biodiversity issues	16
Climate change	13
Energy	12
Water pollution/water quality	11
Other pollution	10
Waste	8
Development and planning	7
Land degradation/ soil/ erosion/ salinity etc	4

Sydney residents were most likely to say air pollution/air quality is an important issue in NSW (24% compared to 9-14% for residents of other areas). People from non-English speaking backgrounds were more likely to nominate it as the most important issue (28% compared to 19%), including motor vehicle emissions (14% compared to 7%).¹

Air pollution/air quality as the most important environmental issue



Water supply/conservation may have overtaken air quality as an environmental issue because drought affected very broad areas of the state, compared with air quality issues which are more confined to the larger urban areas.

Air issues 2003 and 2006

Issue	% 2006	% 2003
Air pollution/quality	20	29
Air pollution or quality in general	10	8
Motor vehicle or vehicle emission	8	15
Industrial emissions or waste	2	6
Greenhouse effect, global warming or climate change	13	5

Knowledge about climate change is increasing but still needs improvement

41% of those surveyed knew that the greenhouse effect is not caused by a hole in the atmosphere. There has been a steady improvement in knowledge on this question, up from 24% in 1994. However, over half of the population (53%) is still confused about this issue; and gave the wrong answer to this question. 5% did not know enough to give an answer. This suggests that there is a need for further education on climate change science in the community. Demographic trends:

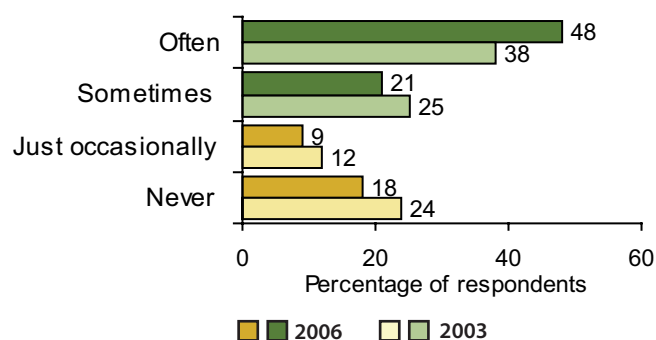
- Men were far more likely than women to give the correct answer (50% compared to 34%)
- More Sydney residents (44%) were correct about the greenhouse effect compared to residents of Hunter/ Illawarra (36%) or small country towns (39%)

What are people doing?

Those who said that in the past year they had often taken steps to reduce their fuel consumption and air pollution (by for example driving a smaller/more fuel efficient car, car-pooling, using public transport, walking or cycling) increased by 10% from 38% in 2003 to 48% in 2006. While this behaviour ultimately results in cleaner air, saving money was the most common reason given (by 51%) for starting to do this.

The proportion who never tried to reduce fuel consumption was high (18%) compared with many other pro-environmental behaviours included in the survey.

Reduced fuel consumption/vehicle air pollution



Reasons given for not trying to reduce fuel consumption included a lack of available infrastructure such as public transport (28%), not having any alternative but to use their car e.g. for their work (19%), and the inconvenience and time spent using alternatives (14%).

Women were more likely than men to reduce fuel consumption (72% compared to 66%). It was more common in Sydney and the Hunter/ Illawarra (70-71%) than in large towns (62%).

¹ Only those groups between which differences are statistically significant are reported throughout this fact sheet



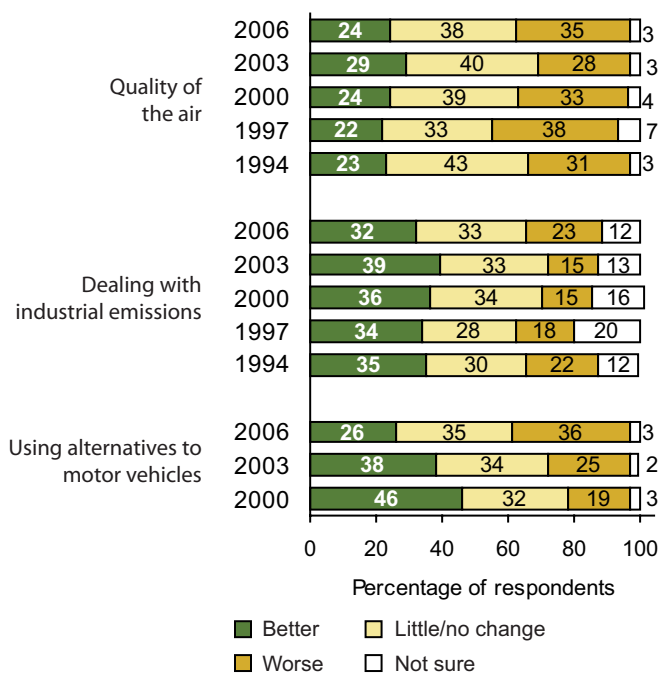
Views on improvement or deterioration in air quality issues in NSW

Responses on the two air quality measures have been similar since the Who Cares? survey began in 1994. In general **quality of the air**, about one quarter (22-29%) have consistently seen improvements, 33-40% have seen deterioration, with a greater range (28-38%) seeing no change.

In views on **reducing industrial emissions** 32-39% have seen improvements, 15-23% deterioration and 28-34% no change. Both measures show small increases in positive perceptions and decline in negative perceptions up to 2003 but a minor reversal of this trend in 2006.

However, there has been significant change in community perceptions since 2000 regarding **using alternatives to motor vehicles** where perception of improvement almost halved (from 46% in 2000 to 26% in 2006) and perception of deterioration almost doubled (19% to 36% in 2006).

Perceptions of air quality issues



Men were more likely than women in 2006 to think that the quality of air (26% compared to 22%) and industrial emissions (35% compared to 29%) had improved.

Sydney residents were more likely to think the following matters have become worse over the past 3 years:

- quality of the air (41% compared to 21-30% for all other areas)
- using alternatives to motor vehicles (40% compared to 26-33%).

Demographic segments and trends

There are some overall trends in the responses of some demographic groups about air pollution or air quality.

Gender – Men and women equally nominated air issues in the two most important environmental issues but more men mention general air quality (13% compared to 7%) and more women mention vehicle emissions (10% to 6%). This may account for women being more likely to have taken active steps to reduce fuel use/vehicle air pollution often or sometimes (72% compared to 66%) while men were more likely to never do this (32% compared with 23%).

Location - Residents of Sydney were much more likely to see air pollution as one of the two most important environmental issues compared to all other areas (25% compared with 9-15%). They were more likely to perceive deterioration in air quality (41% compared to 21-30% for other areas). This concern translates into action, with residents of Sydney being the more likely to have reduced fuel consumption than any other area except for the Hunter/ Illawarra.

Language – Those who speak a language other than English at home were much more likely to say that air quality issues are one of the two most important environmental issues (30% compared to 19%). They were especially concerned about vehicle emissions. However, this concern did not translate into high levels of reducing fuel use/vehicle emissions.

Ecological orientation - Those who are strongly pro-environmental were much more likely to view air quality as getting worse (52% compared to 24-34% in all other groups). They were more likely to take active steps to reduce fuel consumption and vehicle air pollution.

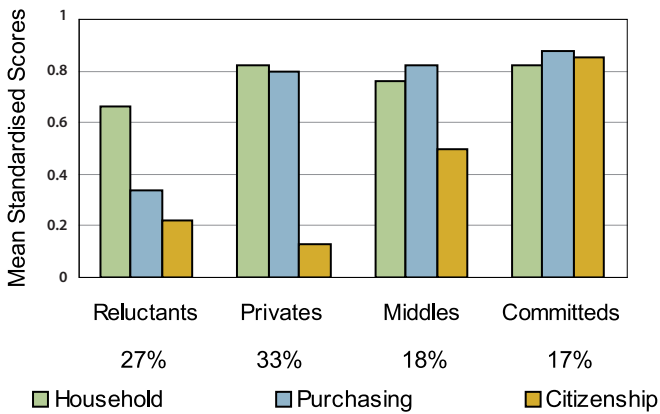


Community behaviour segments

Pro-environmental behaviours surveyed in *Who Cares?* cluster into three types: in-household behaviours (e.g. saving water, energy, avoiding stormwater pollution), green purchasing (shopping decisions) and environmental citizenship (e.g. Landcare, community participation, advocacy).

Based on the extent to which they engaged in behaviours of these different types, those surveyed were allocated to four segments, called *Reluctants*, *Privates*, *Middles* and *Committeds**. The graph shows the level of involvement in each behaviour type for those in each segment and the proportion of the population falling into each segment.

Behaviour profiles for community segments



* Different names to the focus group research are used to avoid confusion with the findings of that part of the research.

Responses on air quality

In views on using alternatives to motor vehicles over the past three years, there was a clear gradation with the level of engagement with pro-environmental behaviour, with 31% of *Reluctants* thinking it was getting better, falling to 20% of *Committeds*. Conversely 45% of *Committeds* thought this was getting worse, falling to 34% of *Reluctants*.

Committeds were more likely to believe that dealing with industrial emissions had become worse (30%) than other groups (21-23%) while *Privates* were the most likely to think this measure had improved (36% compared to 27% of *Middles* and 29% of *Committeds*).

On general air quality *Middles* and *Committeds* were similar with 39-40% considering it had deteriorated compared to 32-34% of *Reluctants* and *Privates*.

A much higher percentage of *Committeds* (81%) had often or sometimes taken active steps to reduce fuel consumption and vehicle air pollution than other groups (57-73%). *Reluctants* are the group most likely to have never undertaken this activity (40%).

Qualitative research - focus groups

Focus group discussions were also held with people grouped on the basis of their level of environmental interest, knowledge and behaviours. These groups, called *Limiteds*, *Moderates* and *Strongs*, were quite different in their perceptions of the environment, understanding of environmental concepts and commitment to behaviours and activities that protect the environment.



Responses on air quality

Obvious environmental issues such as pollution were top of mind for many *Limiteds* participants. They tended to focus on the aesthetic impacts on their immediate surroundings, and the health problems that members of their family have suffered as a result of exposure to air pollution. These issues tended to be viewed in isolation, however, with little appreciation of how they might link to broader environmental problems. If it was visible (such as smog) and immediate it was an 'environmental' problem.

In discussion related to air issues, *Middles* and *Committeds* tended to focus more on the aspects of global warming and climate change, rather than air quality and pollution.

More details

Who Cares about the Environment in 2006? is available in print from the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW on 131 555 and online at:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/

The Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW is pleased to allow this material to be reproduced in whole or part, provided the meaning is unchanged and it's source, publisher and authorship are acknowledged.

ISBN 978 1 74122 480 1 DECC 2007/306 Published August 2007