

Synovate and BBC World unveil global attitudes to climate change

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International market research firm Synovate have announced the key findings of its first global opinion survey carried out in conjunction with the 24-hour international news and information channel BBC World.

The survey which was carried out across 21 markets on six continents during February 2007 looks at global attitudes to climate change. BBC World will be covering this topic extensively throughout April in its *Climate Watch* season of news, business, documentary and factual programming.

Steve Garton, global head of media research at Synovate says, "We set out to find what the world thinks about some of the most important issues facing our planet today. The survey shows some strikingly common views, but also illustrates how the climate issues facing specific countries influence their views about how they can tackle the problem. There does appear to be a need for better education about the matter across all markets."

More than two-thirds of the world are concerned about climate change. South Africans have emerged as one of the most worried countries – 82% of respondents state that they are very concerned or somewhat concerned about the effect of climate change. South Africans registered the world's highest score of those being "very concerned" at 55%. As a result they are amongst the countries most likely to encourage their friends to become greener.

Amongst people indicating some level of concern with climate change, almost one fifth of South African respondents (17%) believe that cars are a contributing force to the climate change effects that we are now experiencing. More than a third (37%) stated that they had already bought or that they plan to buy a smaller car.

Jon Salters, Managing Director of Synovate Sub-Saharan Africa, states, "With the ever-increasing number of cars on the road, buying more fuel efficient vehicles is a key focus point in the drive to do our bit for climate change. As NAAMSA has indicated, the recent hitch in petrol prices should also motivate vehicle owners to start using more fuel-efficient cars."

Key findings:

* Respondents in the two major industrialised nations not to have signed the Kyoto Protocol are well ahead of their leaders, with 84% of Australians and 57% of Americans concerned about climate change.

* People are unclear as to the consequences of climate change. One in seven who had an opinion on climate change did not know what the main danger would be, such as desertification, drought, flooding or hunger. Asians (Koreans, Chinese and Singaporeans) especially remain uninformed about the dangers of climate change. South Africans believe that the major danger is flooding (26%) and drought (21%).

* 41% believe one country is responsible and almost all of those look at the United States. Two-thirds of all respondents blame the US before any other country including 63% of respondents from South Africa and 89% of respondents from the UK. Almost four in five Americans however think that no one country is to blame while more than 40% of Indians think that India is most responsible. Approximately one tenth (11%) of South Africans believe that South Africa is to blame.

* There is a significant section of the population that does not back the prevailing scientific view. A quarter of Americans either do not believe climate change is man-made or are unconcerned about it. 1.2% of all respondents are pleased with the results of climate change – most of who live in Poland and Russia.

* To reduce the effects of climate change, more than two-thirds of South Africans who have some level of concern about climate change have reduced packaging. 61% of South Africans report buying green products and recycling waste.

* The island nations of Japan and the UK, and the low-lying Denmark are most worried about flooding. The Japanese are also most likely to be worried about erratic weather in the future.

Amongst those who have some level of concern about climate change,

- More than 20% believe human causes including pollution are the main factors causing climate change. South Africans believe that the major cause is global warming and pollution.
- Only 1.4% blames divine intervention, except in Dubai where the number of respondents increased to one in five.
- People tend to attack climate change through their consumption patterns. More than half have bought green products; energy efficient devices; reduced packaging; or saved power. Relatively few, have done anything more proactive with only 5% joining a lobby group and 28% encouraging friends to be green.
- People are unlikely to let their treasured possessions go. Only 20% have bought or plan to buy a smaller car and 28% have changed their travel plans.
- It's some of the larger English-speaking countries where Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* has been seen by more than just a handful of people. A higher proportion of Australians - 12% - had seen the movie than in Canada and the US - both 10%. In the UK, where all schools are being provided with a copy of the film, only 4% had seen the film.

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