

Health and Climate Change

Do people understand the connection?

Sustainability Victoria's
Social Research

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Introduction

Victorians' Perceptions of Climate Change

- Social research conducted in 2017
- Reliable statistics on the public mindset in relation to climate change
- Designed to ensure good coverage of regions
- Results projectable to broader population



The proportion who rank climate change in the top 3 issues of importance

30%

Victorians

rank climate change as one of the top 3 issues facing the state



56%

Young people

15-17 year-olds

For young people, climate change was the second most important issue, following education



Causation of climate change

91% Some level of human causation

- 12% ■ Entirely human activity
- 34% ■ Mainly human activity
- 38% ■ Partly human activity, partly natural processes
- 7% ■ Mainly natural processes



7% Scepticism

7% Australia / 5% UK / 9% Germany

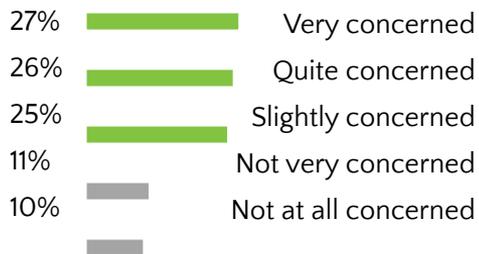


- 3% ■ There is no such thing as climate change
- 4% ■ Entirely due to natural processes



4 in 5

78% concerned about
climate change



Concern
about climate change



**What are they
concerned about ?**

- The impact upon future generations
- The state of the planet
- Potential impacts on quality of life
- Potential impacts on health



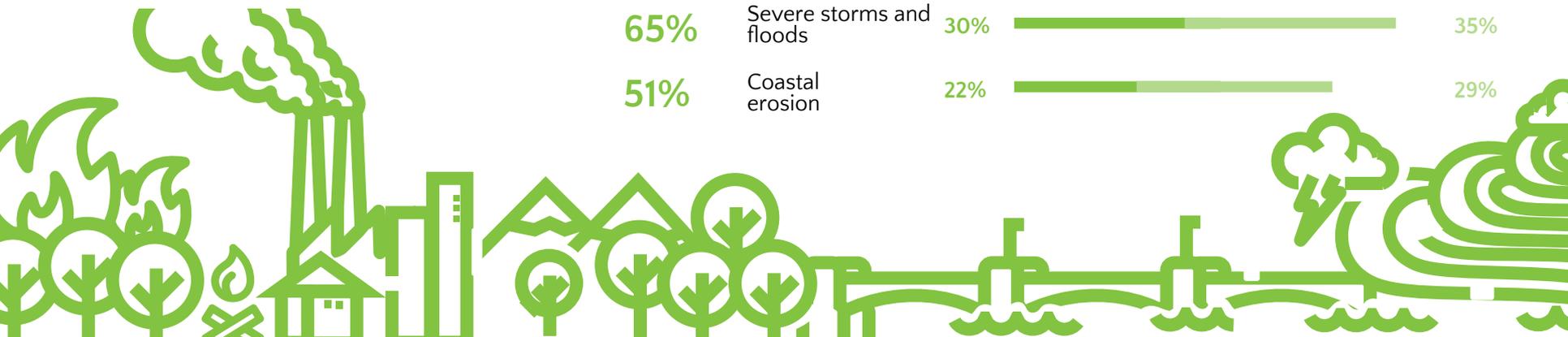
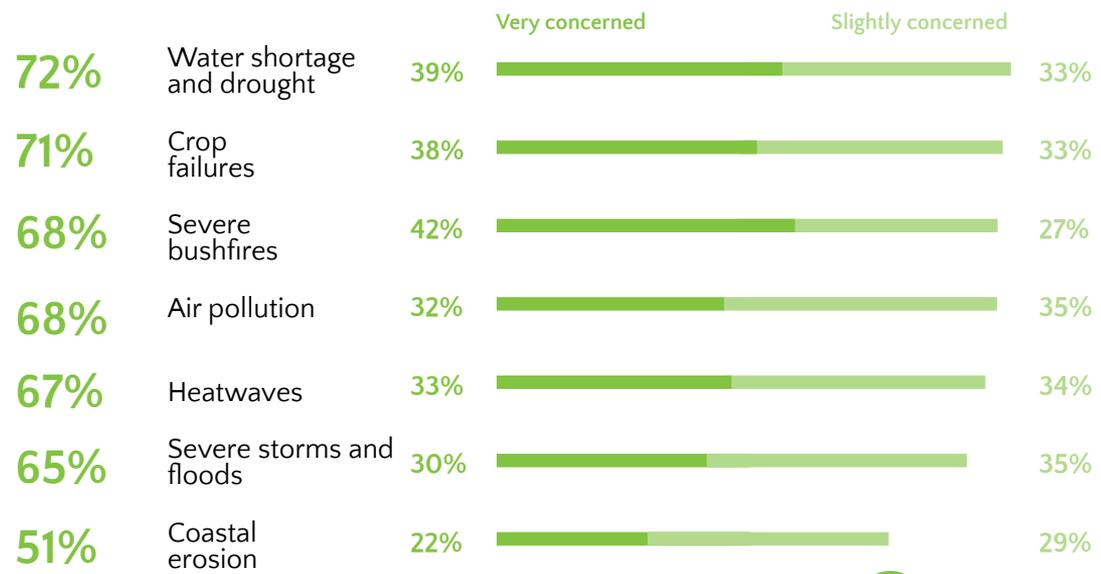
Misperceptions

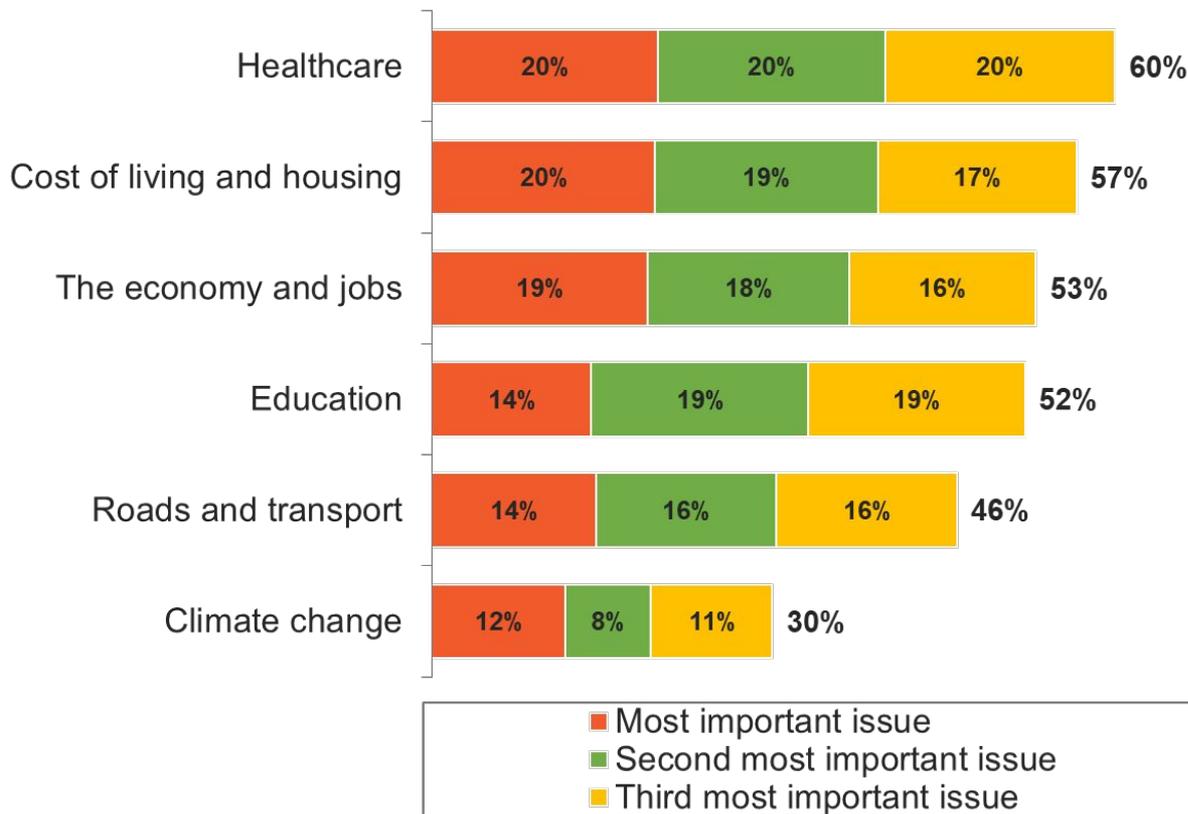
- Only 48% think that others are concerned.
- Sceptics think their opinion is held by 50% of population

Concern

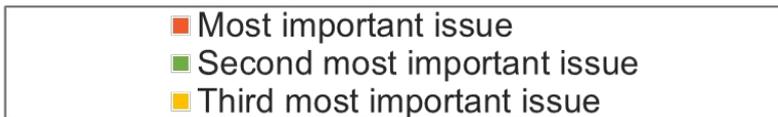
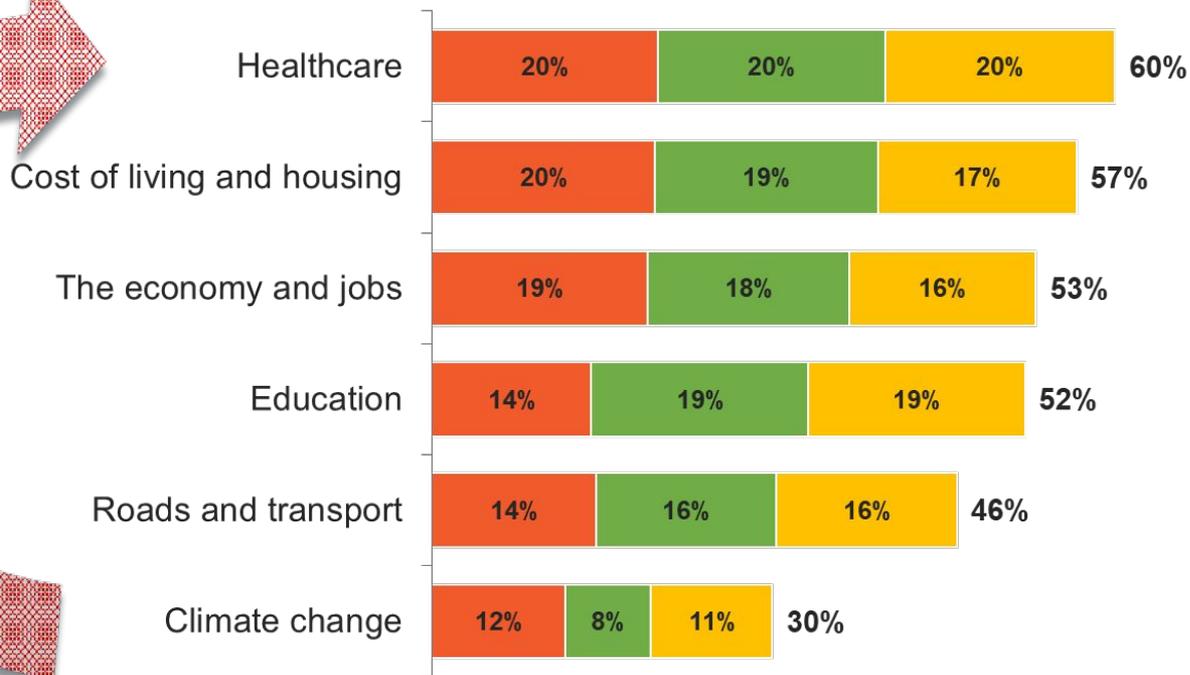
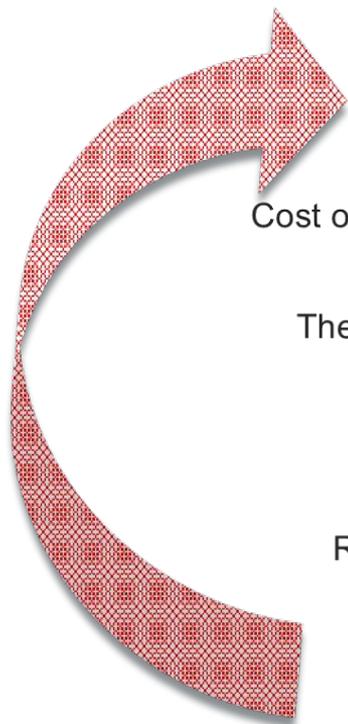
about future impacts directly affecting them and their family

4 in 5  **Victorians** say these weather events are due to the influence of climate change





Priority issues for Victorians





World Health Organization

... wilder weather linked to climate change make it **“the biggest global health threat of the 21st century”**....

“A rapidly changing climate **has dire implications for every aspect of human life**..... (Lancet)

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) report that there are **already noticeable health impacts occurring** from environmental changes.

The **AMA** recognises climate change as a **health emergency** with clear scientific evidence indicating severe impacts for our patients





Method – qualitative research



12 in-depth interviews

People with health conditions selected



7 Focus groups

Metro/regional locations

Key research question

- Could linking **health** (high priority) to **climate change** (lower priority) help bolster the perceived importance of climate change?
- Could messaging through a health framework better motivate action?

No / low connection

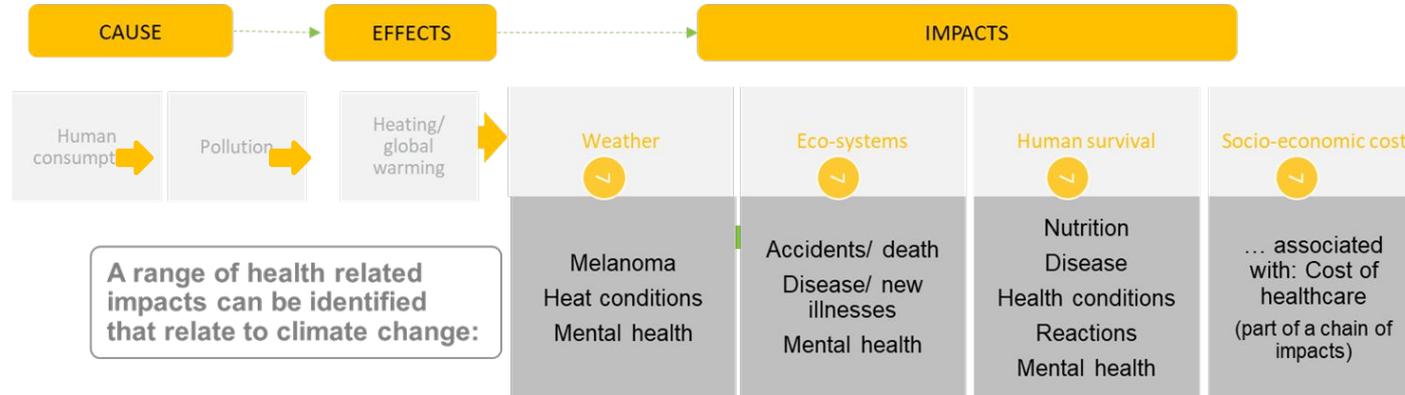
People are unlikely to make a solid link between climate change and health without explicit guidance.

"I have never thought there is direct influence between climate change and health – but after reading those statements (from WHO), we need to stop and think."



Making the connection

Connecting the dots first requires triggering consideration of climate change impacts generally. Hooking onto environmental impacts and thinking through the flow-on effects.



Making the connection

Once a connection is established, the health impacts of climate change are **highly meaningful**.

- **Universal & pervasive** – potentially experienced by all;
- **Immediate** – more imminent than initially anticipated;
- **Personal** – they will impact self and loved ones;
- **Potentially fatal** – signify high risk
- **Part of a chain reaction** – knock-on effects e.g. increased cost of health care, exacerbation of existing conditions, undermining immunity/increasing susceptibility

Once participants begin to form causal chains, the health specific impacts are then a natural link.





Health connection creates desire for action



People want to
know more

Climate change becomes
more serious and
personally relevant

More motivated to
take action

- Actions centred around self-protection
- Not focussed on mitigation

Expectation of others to
take action

- Government
- Media
- Health institutions

“We need to know this”

Health impacts of climate change are relevant and worth informing the public about – “we need to know this”.

The *public should be made aware ... in a controlled and unbiased way. Even people who get anxious easily*
(Younger)

Health care professionals

- Seen as reliable, professional, trustworthy
- Able to talk with authority on health, *but not necessarily ‘expert’ on climate change*



Further research

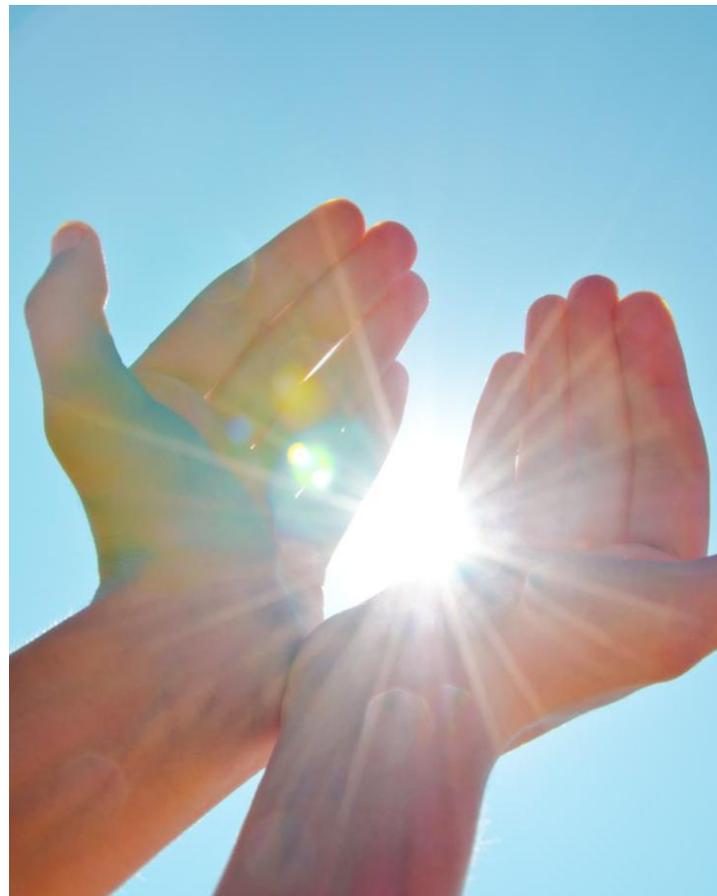
Community Survey

- Survey over 3,000 Victorians to measure awareness and knowledge on climate change and health

Healthcare professionals /community health officers (n=750)

- Level of personal engagement on the issue
- What impacts are they seeing?
- How have their services/org been impacted?
- What are their organisations doing to reduce ghg?
- How well informed are they on the issue?

Survey results will be shared soon.



Thank you

TAKE2

Victoria's climate change pledge

Pledge to TAKE2 and be a part of
Victoria's action on climate change

It's up to all of us
to help shape the
State of the Future



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