Environmental issues, awareness and action

MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



Obtaining clarity on how the Ministry for the Environment can ensure its work can reach and resonate with New Zealanders Looking specifically at Public awareness of key environmental issues. Focused on five specific areas: waste, climate, freshwater, biodiversity, urban planning*.

To inform how MfE should promote key policy initiatives to the public including insight to inform audience, channel, message, and partnerships.

Methodology

A 15 minute online survey of 1,215 New **Zealanders**

The survey was live in field from Friday 17th June to Wednesday 6th July.

The data was then post-weighted to be a nationally representative sample of the New Zealand population.

KEY SAMPLE GROUPS

GENDER

Female n=581 Male n=629

AGE

18-24 years n=156 25-29 years n=99

ETHNICITY

Māori n=193 Pasifika n=75 Asian n=253

REGION

North Island n=911 South Island n=304 1

Environmental issues

Channels and sources

Environmental Issues

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - UNPROMPTED



These top of mind issues dominate the media too

Housing crisis: Many homeowners couldn't afford their own properties if they were buying now



Editorial: Ram-raiders need stopping in their tracks



Cost of living: Benefit and Working for Families changes could soften blow of inflation rise, advocates say



Cheree Kinnear takes to the streets of Auckland city to find out how Kiwis are being affected by the lates increases to inflation. Video / NZ Herald

Increased cost of living inching towards 'crisis' as Kiwis pay hundreds more for basic items this year

How the cost of living has ballooned during the Covid-19 pandemic

Esther Taunton . 05:00, Mar 18 2022







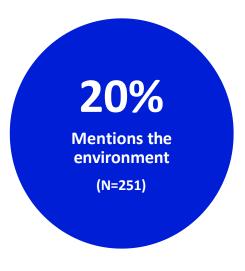




Climate dominates for the few who have environmental concerns top of mind

Issues around waste, freshwater and biodiversity barely register in the face of other concerns

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - UNPROMPTED



Mentions of:

- Climate n=141
- Urban planning n=73
- Waste n=21
- Freshwater n=12
- Biodiversity n=4
- Other n=41



Climate change effects, flooding etc.

Homelessness with the increasing property market.

Tackling excessive rubbish and plastics pollution.

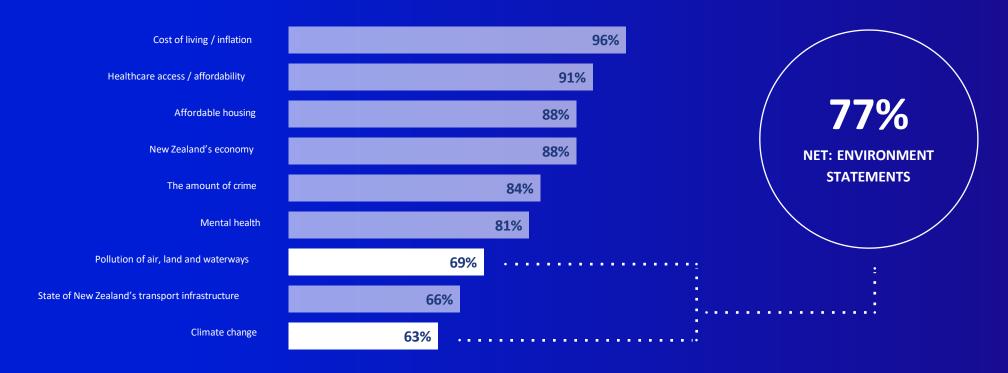
Freshwater pollution.

Depletion of fish stocks.

Environmental issues, sustainability.

But when prompted, 3 in 4 New Zealanders agree environmental issues are important – just not as important as other issues

TOP OF MIND ISSUES FOR NEW ZEALANDERS - PROMPTED





Specific issues MfE is trying to address, while acknowledged, do not compete with other pressing concerns

AWARENESS OF SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

URBAN PLANNING	WASTE	FRESHWATER	CLIMATE	BIODIVERSITY
6% Unprompted awareness	2% Unprompted awareness	1% Unprompted awareness	12% Unprompted awareness	0% Unprompted awareness
78% Prompted awareness	74% Prompted awareness	69% Prompted awareness	62% Prompted awareness	54% Prompted awareness



And when we drill further into specific on issues, awareness is even lower

NET: Urban Planning 78%

- 1. There is a significant housing problem in New Zealand's main cities (73%)
- 2. The Resource Management Act is not working (32%)

NFT: Waste 74%

- 1. The majority of waste generated in New Zealand goes to landfill rather than being composted or recycled (55%)
- 2. Rubbish ending up in landfills contributes to our carbon emissions (50%)
- 3. Large amounts of valuable resources are lost to landfill (35%)

NFT: Freshwater **69%**

- 1. Poor water quality is affecting where we can swim and recreate in our rivers and lakes (55%)
- 2. Freshwater quality is declining in urban and farmed areas (44%)
- 3. There is a lack of understanding of what needs to be done to ensure healthy freshwater in both urban and rural areas (34%)

NFT: Climate 62%

- 1. The need to make big changes to the way we live to tackle climate change (transport, energy, construction, food) (48%)
- 2. How Aotearoa New Zealand might reduce emissions using the Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) (32%)
- 3. A national plan is being put together to help New Zealand minimize damage from a changing climate (27%)

NET: Biodiversity 54%

- 1. Habitat destruction means many of our unique birds, reptiles and plants are close to extinction (40%)
- 2. A majority of our non or low flying birds are threatened with extinction or at risk of becoming threatened (32%)
- 3. There has been significant losses in indigenous land cover area (e.g. indigenous forest, tussock grassland) (29%)

The urban planning statements splits suggest New Zealanders care about only the impact (supply and prices) of urban planning decisions



People are motivated to reduce their environmental impact, but the strongest motivators are linked to personal benefit

MOTIVATORS FOR ACTION – TOP 8

To me living in a warm, dry house is critical to the general wellbeing of ourselves and our family

I want to contribute to a better life in New Zealand for my family and community

I want cleaner air, cleaner waterways and more energy efficient ways to travel

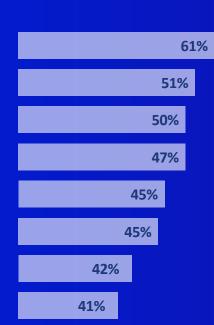
I want to play my part to make a difference for the environment

I want to live in a quality house in a thriving community.

I want to make use of our valuable resources instead of wasting them

Because making good environmental decisions is better for my quality of life

I want to do something that aligns with my personal values and belief



MOTIVATORS FOR ACTION – BOTTOM 8

I understand the risks we face because of a warming climate, and also what I can do to limit the damage

I feel the actions I'm taking to reduce waste, emissions and protect waterways are effort in my community.

Seeing the impacts of climate change in my daily

Seeing friends and family take steps to reduce their environmental impact

Government-led incentives to support my environmental actions

Seeing relatable stories in the news and social media of others being impacted by a warming climate etc

I can see what others are doing to reduce their emissions and prepare for a changing climate.

I see our Government is taking action and I feel encouraged to do the same



38%

31%

30%

28%

28%

AVERAGE

NUMBER OF MOTIVATORS

25%

21%





The primary barrier to action is cost, but otherwise there are no significant other barriers to action

BARRIERS TO ACTION - TOP 8

I feel like it costs too much to make good environmental decisions e.g. buying an electric car

There are other significant and more pressing issues we should be dealing with such as COVID, rising living costs

There is a lack of on the ground/financial support from the government to aid effort in reducing my environmental impact

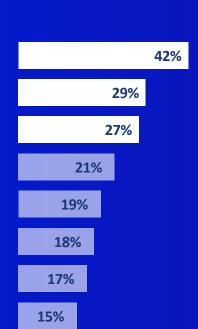
I feel overwhelmed by these environmental issues

I'm overwhelmed by the amount of information out there, some of it is difficult to understand

I don't see the government is taking actions to help reduce our environmental impact

I don't see others taking actions to reduce their environmental impact

New Zealand is too small for our actions to make a difference



BARRIERS TO ACTION – BOTTOM 8

I didn't cause these environmental problems, why

biodiversity.

should I get involved?

I don't think my actions make a difference 14% I don't understand the public submission process 13% I don't know how to get involved or who to contact to learn more 11% These things don't affect my daily life or the lives of those around me 10% Providing my view is too hard 9% I don't have time to think about how I could reduce my 8% It's too late to do anything that can make a difference for climate warming, our waterways and our native

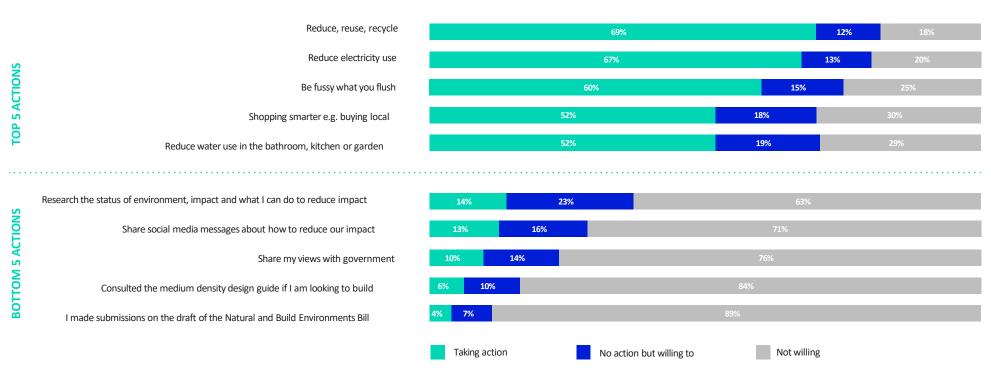


7%

The top actions taken to reduce environmental impact provide secondary benefits e.g. saving money

While the actions done least require time and effort, but provide no immediate additional benefit

ACTIONS TAKEN AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ACTION



Linking the environment to other top of mind concerns will help elevate awareness and encourage action

Environmental concerns are not top of mind. This is unlikely to change in the future if there are always more immediate concerns (e.g. cost of living, health).

People do care, but what is missing is the trigger to act.

There is an opportunity to leverage these other concerns and link specific environmental issues and actions to a dual benefit, in order to give people a greater incentive to take action.

There are tailwinds to improve how people view these environmental issues:

Minimal barriers

Multiple motivations

Small, daily, doable actions (most common actions have immediate and/or dual benefits)

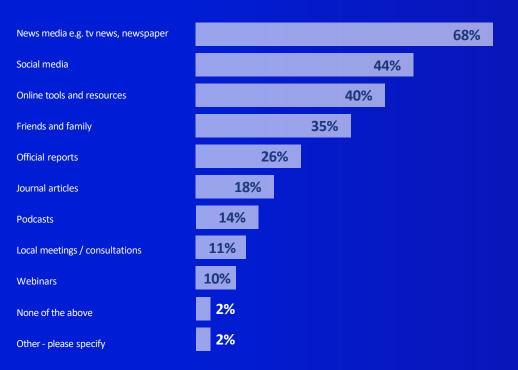
Channels and sources



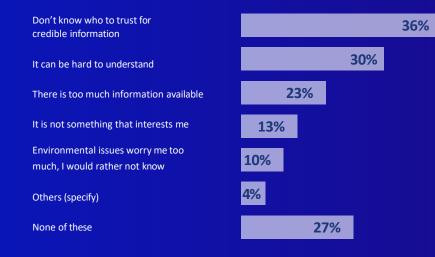
News and social media dominate as information sources

But for a third of New Zealanders trusting a source or understanding information is a barrier to engage further

PREFERRED INFORMATION SOURCES



BARRIERS TO ENGAGING WITH INFORMATION



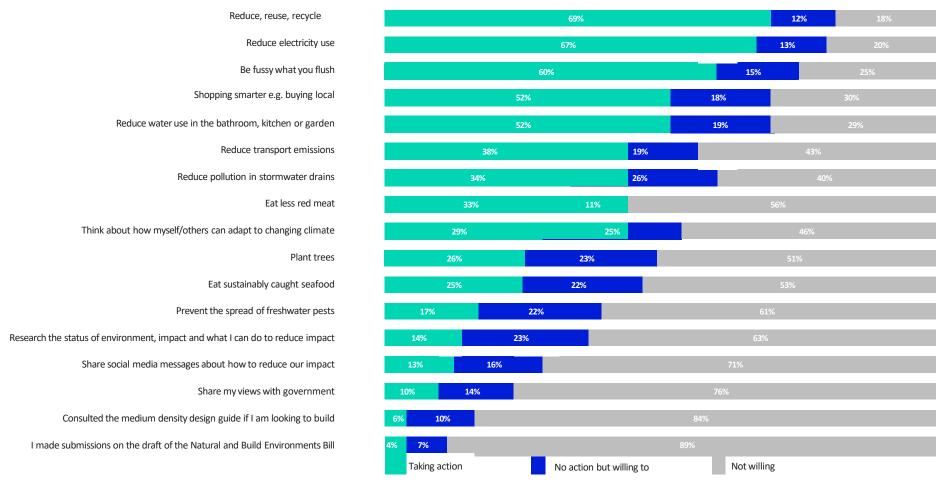
Q: Which of the following ways to do you prefer to access information on environmental issues in New Zealand?

Q: Which, if any, of the following stop you from engaging with information and news about the environment? Base: total sample, n=1215

Appendix



Actions taken and willingness to take action – full list





Actions taken – expanded list

ABBREVIATED VERSION FOR CHARTING	ORIGINAL ANSWER OPTION		
I made submissions to the select committee on the draft of the Natural and Built Environments Bill	I made submissions to the select committee on the draft of the Natural and Built Environments Bill		
I am aware of and consulted the medium density design guide if I am looking to build more housing on my land	I am aware of and consulted the medium density design guide if I am looking to build more housing on my land		
Share my views with government	Share my views with government (directly or via other groups) on how to reduce my environmental impact		
Share social media messages about how to reduce our impact	Share social media messages about how to reduce our impact such as cleaning our waterways		
Research the status of our environment	Research the status of our environment, how it is impacting me and my family and what I can do to reduce our impact		
Prevent the spread of freshwater pests	Prevent the spread of freshwater pests e.g. clean your gear (kayaks, wetsuits) before using them in another waterway		
Eat sustainably caught seafood	Eat sustainably caught seafood e.g. buy seafood locally		
Plant trees	Plant trees e.g. on your property, in a community planting programme, donating		
Think about how myself or others can adapt to the changing climate	Think about how myself or others can adapt to the changing climate		
Eat less red meat	Eat less red meat		
Reduce pollution in stormwater drains	Reduce pollution in stormwater drains e.g. washing your car on the lawn (avoiding drains), disposing of chemicals like paint responsibly		
Reduce transport emissions	Reduce transport emissions e.g. walk, cycle or take public transport where possible, use an electric car, reduce number of flights		
Reduce water use in the bathroom, kitchen or garden	Reduce water use in the bathroom, kitchen or garden e.g. taking shorter showers		
Shopping smarter	Shopping smarter e.g. buying local, buy only what you need, buying reusable or recycled items		

