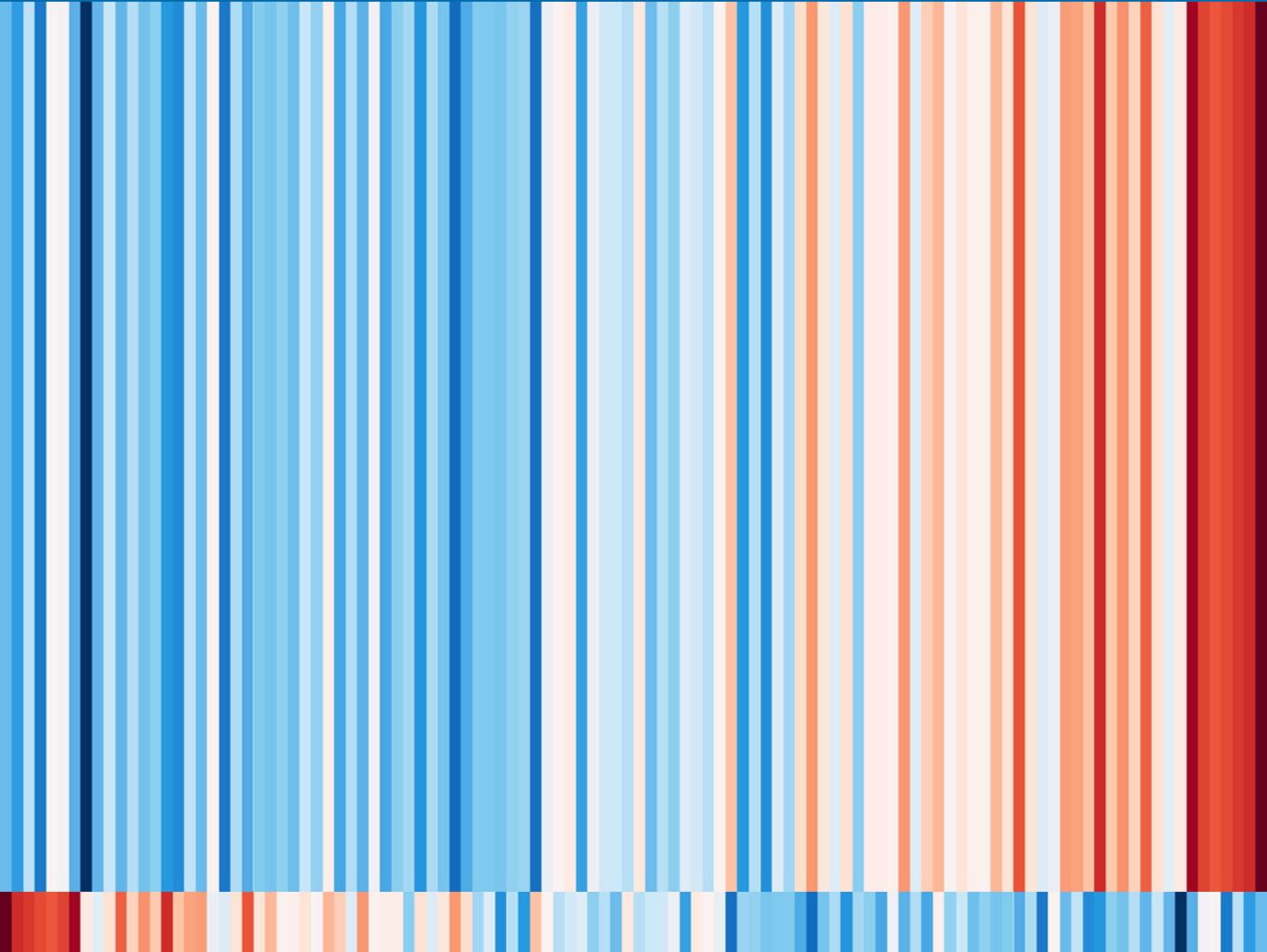


# **A SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN TV AUDIENCES' VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE: KEY FINDINGS**



## **KEY FINDINGS**

- A significant majority of Australians accept the scientific consensus that climate change is happening, with only 1 out of 10 Australians rejecting this belief.**
- There is a considerable national appetite for climate information on broadcast television, with an overwhelming majority of Australians expressing interest in learning about the impacts of climate change in a weather report.**
- Australian television audiences have a strong preference for local climate trends and projections over information relating to national or global changes.**
- When it comes to trusted sources of climate information, scientists emerged as the most trusted, followed by farmers, firefighters, weather presenters and doctors and nurses. Politicians were the least trusted on climate change, followed by business leaders and religious leaders.**

## INTRODUCTION

This report documents the key findings of a national survey of television audiences' views of climate change in Australia. This study was conducted by the Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub with the assistance of the panel survey company Qualtrics. The full survey can be made available upon request to the MCCRHR.

The survey served a dual purpose; firstly, to gain an insight into how Australian television audiences' think and feel about climate change, and secondly, to assess their receptiveness to having climate information delivered in television weather segments.

According to the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, Australia is increasingly experiencing the impacts of climate change. Heatwaves, drought, flood and sea level rise are all projected to increase in the future, which in turn will have a considerable impact upon community health, agriculture, water management, biodiversity, coastal regions, transport and infrastructure. As the nation begins to deal with these impacts, we all have important decisions to make about how to protect ourselves, our families and our communities.

Helping Australians understand the personal and collective risks of climate change is important in enabling them to make effective decisions about how best to manage those risks. As such, this survey collected information on the kinds of climate information audiences were interested in, and in particular, answer the following questions:

**Are local climate impacts of more interest to audiences than national ones?**

**What kinds of historical and projected climate trends are audiences interested in?**

**Do audiences have preferences on how climate information is presented to them?**

**Who do Australians trust to deliver them climate information?**

## METHODOLOGY

### Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

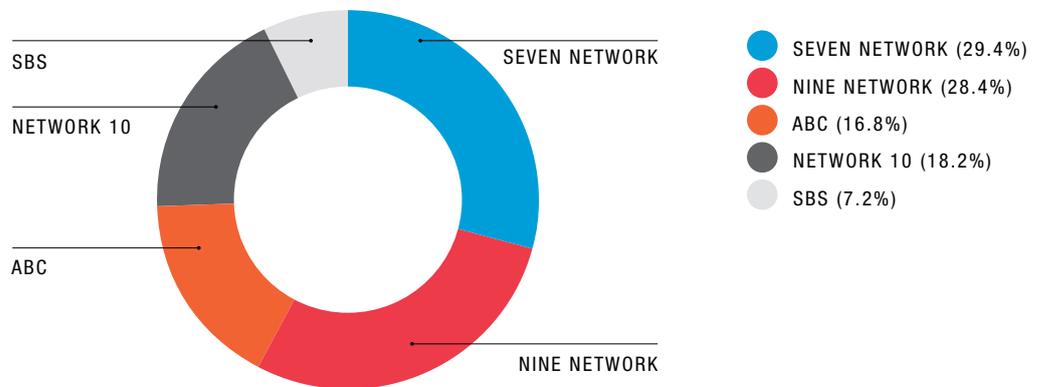
The survey recorded the views of 750 Australians living in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Television viewers were the primary focus as television remains the single largest news source in Australia. Respondents who did not watch television news were excluded from the survey.

Qualtrics chose respondents according to their preferred television news source, in proportion to the known audience share of Australian capital cities. The sources included in the analysis were Seven Network, Nine Network, Network Ten, SBS and ABC.

For the period January to October 2017, the average audience share for Australian capital cities was as shown below. When the percentage of each quota was reached, respondents were screened in terms of their compliance with channels with incomplete quotas. The process was repeated until all quotas were filled.

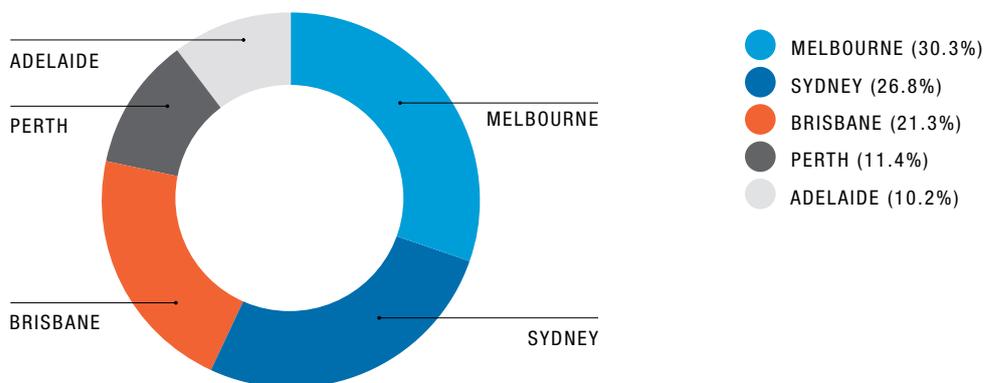
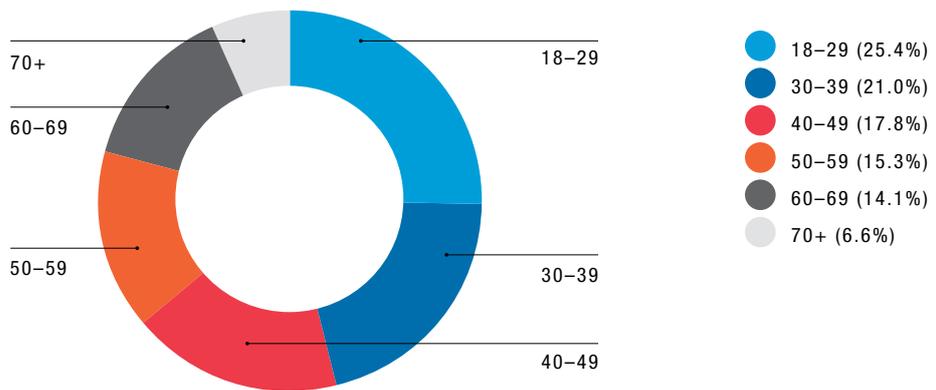
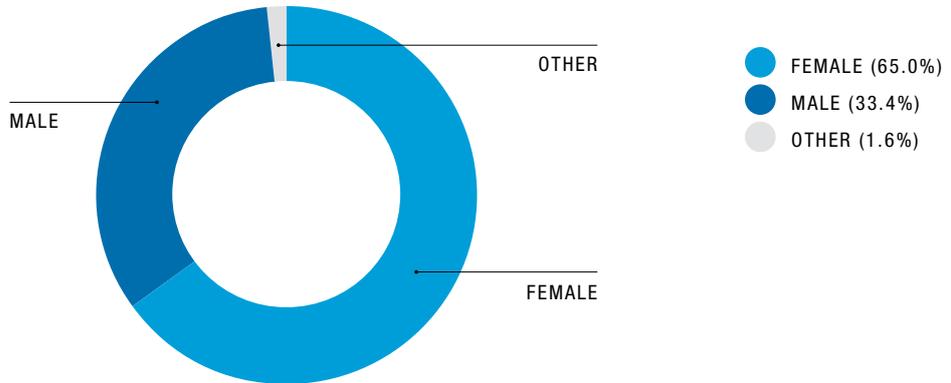
### Australian Capital City Audience Share

Source: OzTam Australian Capital City Audience Share



## Demographics of respondents

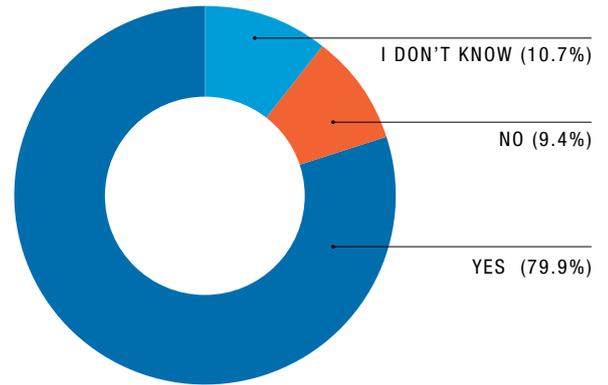
Respondents were of the following genders and ages and came from the following cities:



**The following questions examine the climate change perceptions of Australian capital city television audiences and explore their receptiveness to television-based climate communication initiatives.**

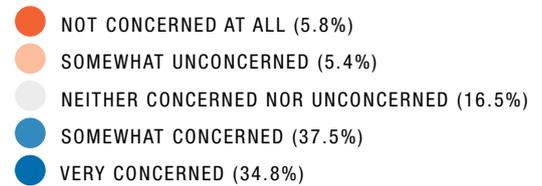
**Do you think climate change is happening?**

A majority of Australians accepted the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change. As can be seen below, just under 80% of Australians agreed that climate change is happening, with just under 1 in 10 (9.4%) rejecting the scientific consensus.



**How concerned are you about climate change?**

When it came to the level of concern Australians had about climate change, almost three out of every four Australians were either very or somewhat concerned. These findings mirror that of other recent Australian studies, such as the 2019 Climate of the Nation.



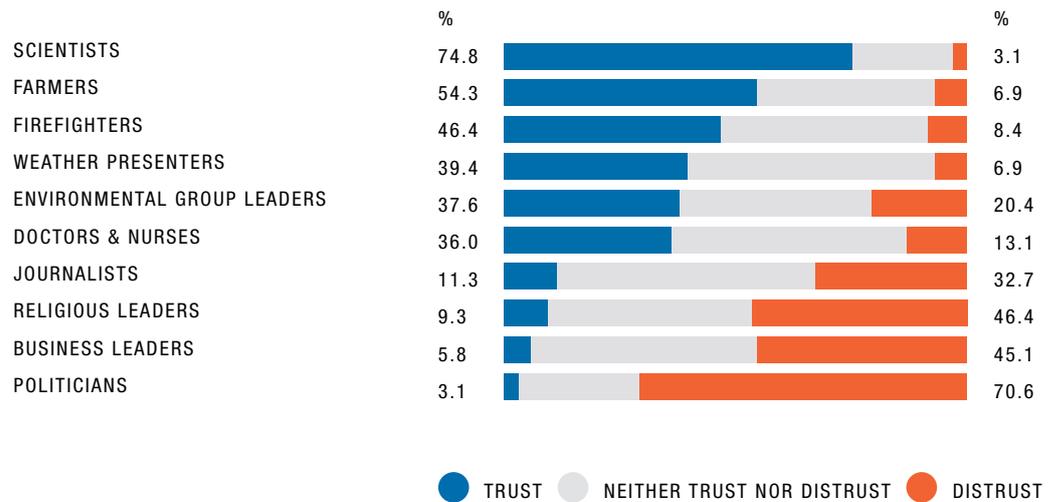
LEVEL OF CONCERN

More than 65% of Australians further identified that climate change was personally important to them. Combined, only 12.4% of Australians felt that climate change was either not very important or not important at all.

It is also pertinent to note that in the years following this survey, and in the wake of Australia experiencing its worst ever bushfires in the summer of 2019/20, an increase in concern on climate change has been documented in several studies.

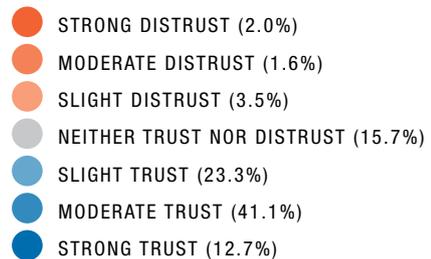
## How much would you trust the following when it comes to climate change?

When asked which members of society they trusted in relation to climate change, scientists emerged as the most trusted, with 75% of Australian audiences expressing they held trust in them. This was followed by farmers at 55%, firefighters at 48%, weather presenters at 39% and doctors and nurses at 37%. At the other end of the scale, politicians, business leaders and religious leaders are the least trusted when it comes to climate change, tallying 3%, 5% and 9% respectively.



## To what extent do you trust television weather presenters as a reliable source of weather information?

Weather presenters emerged as the fourth most trusted source of climate change information when ranked against a broad selection of members of society. As to be expected, the research also found that weather presenters were widely trusted as reliable sources of weather information, with 77% of respondents expressing either strong, moderate or slight trust.



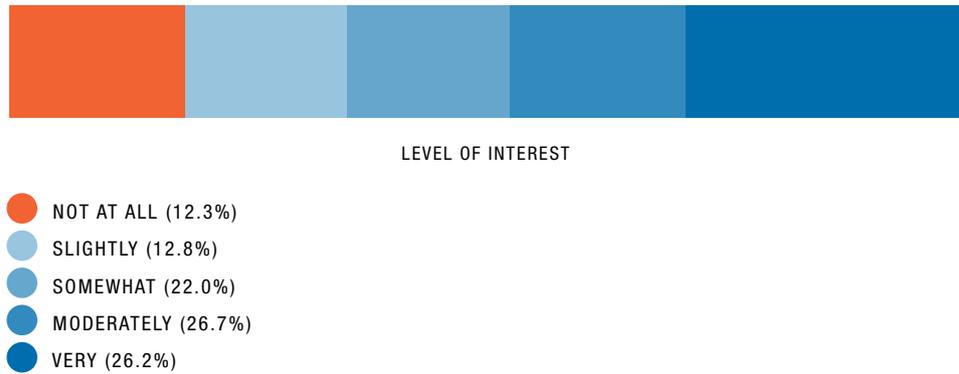
LEVEL OF TRUST

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## How interested would you be in learning about the impacts of climate change in a weather bulletin?

Combined with their existing science communication skills and importantly, their positions as highly visible, apolitical media personalities, the researchers determined that weather presenters held significant potential to be effective communicators of climate information. As such, the survey sought to understand how receptive audiences would be to receiving climate information from their local weather presenter in a television broadcast.

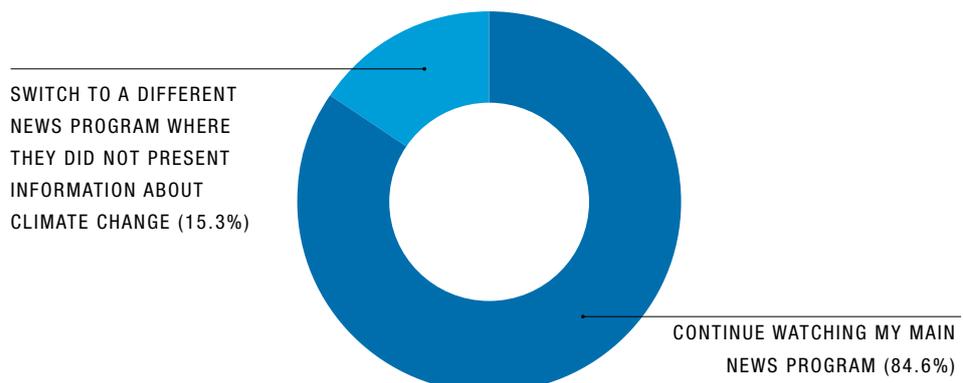
Combined, just under 88% of audiences expressed some level of interest in learning about the impacts of climate change in a weather bulletin, with more than 50% expressing either strong or moderate interest. Only 12% of those surveyed expressed that they had no interest in such a proposal.



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## If the weather presenters on your main news program started presenting information about climate change what would you be the most likely to do?

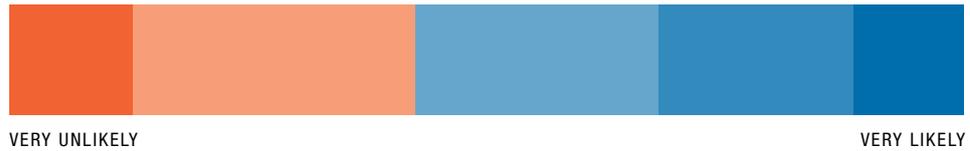
Respondents were then asked if the weather presenters on their main news program started presenting information about climate change, what would they be most likely to do? As can be seen below, approximately 85% respondents indicated they would continue watching their main news program if it started presenting information on climate change.



**If the weather presenters on your main news program did not present information about climate change, how likely would you be to switch to a news program where they did?**

Perhaps most notably, when asked if they would switch from their regular news program that wasn't presenting on climate change to a rival channel that did present information on climate change, 57% of respondents said they would switch. Given how entrenched media consumption habits are, this is a significant finding.

- VERY UNLIKELY (12.9%)
- UNLIKELY (29.7%)
- SOMEWHAT LIKELY (25.4%)
- LIKELY (20.4%)
- VERY LIKELY (11.6%)



Delving further than simply gauging interest in receiving climate information in weather broadcasts, the survey also sought to understand the specific types of information audiences would be interested in learning about.

In addition to considerable interest in explanations of extreme weather, national audiences expressed their preference for local climate information over that with a global focus. There was most interest in local climate projections and local climate observations at just under 47% and 45% respectively.

In contrast, global climate information didn't register as much interest, with only 37% expressing interest in future global projections and 35% for historical global information.

Audiences also expressed their interest in receiving climate information with the assistance of visual aids — whether a map, graph, diagram, or photo — than to no visual aid.

**Which visual aids would you prefer to be used by weather presenters to explain climate change?**



Lastly, the survey highlighted that the three leading reasons why viewers were interested in having weather presenters present 'impartial information' about climate change were:

- 'Because information about climate change is too politicised in Australia' (49.07%)
- 'Because there isn't enough information about climate change' (44.76%)
- 'Because this information will help me understand the weather better' (41.75%)

COVER & BACK COVER:

This warming stripes graphic is a visual representation of average temperature changes over the last 119 years in Australia. The visualisation, which can be applied to most major cities across the world, was developed by Professor Ed Hawkins of the University of Reading. The stripes have become a commonly used tool to show how climate change is affecting the globe. Further details can be found at <https://showyourstripes.info/>

**A survey of Australian TV audiences' views on climate change: Key Findings**

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