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

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Published by the **Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub**

Authors: David C Holmes, Nathalie Solano and Hannah Hill. Please cite

this report as:

Holmes D, Solano N and Hill H (2017) A Survey of Australian TV audience's views of climate change, Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub, Monash University, Melbourne, 44 pp.

URL for this report is:

[www.monash.edu/mcccrh/research/a-survey-of-australian-tv-audiences-views-on-climate-change](http://www.monash.edu/mcccrh/research/a-survey-of-australian-tv-audiences-views-on-climate-change)

### **Acknowledgements**

This work was carried out with financial support from Monash University, Faculty of Arts and assistance from Monash Professional Pathways Program.

The Hub would like to thank Suchismita Chowdhury, Brooke Garas, Stephanie Hall, Ed Maibach, Alicia McMillan, Judith Rodriguez & Jack Thompson for their assistance in the production of this report.

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Cover Design: Tahnee Burgess



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# 1 Introduction

This report documents the findings of a national survey of TV audiences' views of climate change in Australia. This study was conducted by the Climate Change Communication Research Hub at Monash University (MCCCRH) with the assistance of the panel survey company Qualtrics.

This survey sought to evaluate how receptive Australian television audiences were to having climate change information delivered to them in television weather segments. According to the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, Australia is experiencing more intense heatwaves, firestorms, floods, cyclones and drought and sea level rises, which are having impacts on health, agriculture, water, forest, coastal regions, transport and infrastructure. In the wake of noticing more and more extreme weather, Australians have important decisions to make about how to protect themselves, their families and their communities in a world impacted by climate change. Helping Australians understand the risks that climate change brings to them personally and collectively is important in and enabling them to make effective decisions about how best to manage those risks. As such, this survey sought to collect information on the kinds of climate information audiences were interested in, and in particular, answer the following questions:

- Are local impacts of more interest to audiences than national ones?
- What kinds of historical and projected trends are audiences interested in?
- Do audiences have preferences on how climate information is presented to them? For example with graphs, diagrams, photographs etc.?
- Which sources do viewers trust the most in delivering such information?

## 1.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The survey recorded the views of 750 Australians living in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. These cities constitute the five capital city media markets in Australia out of a total of 31 media markets nationwide. Television viewers were the primary focus of this survey because television remains the single largest source from where Australians get their news from.

The researchers asked Qualtrics to filter out respondents who did not consider television be a source of their news. Therefore, the first question of the survey asked 'How often do you watch the news on TV? If the answer was 'Never', the survey was terminated at that point. Only respondents who answered either: 'Everyday', 'Once or twice a week', 'Three or four times a week' or 'Five or Six times a week' progressed with the survey.

Respondents were targeted according to the known audience share of capital cities. For the period January to October 2017, the average audience share for Australian capital cities was:

- Channel 7 - 29.39%
- Channel 9 - 28.39%
- ABC - 16.81%
- Channel 10 - 18.18%
- SBS - 7.23%

\*Source OzTam

When the percentage of each quote was reached, respondents were screened in terms of their compliance with channels with incomplete quotas. The process was repeated until all quotas were filled.

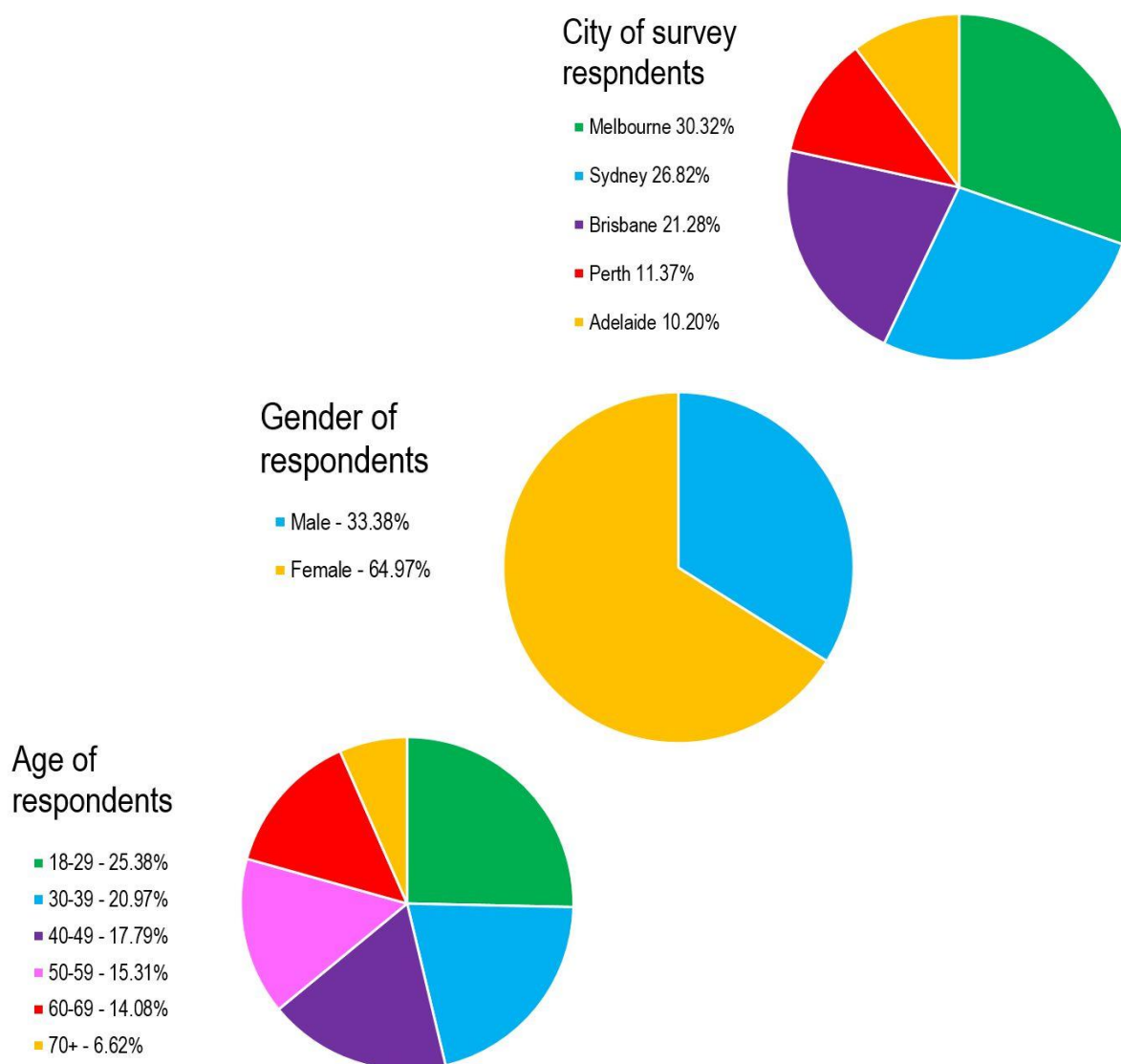
## 1.2 Market Research

Capital city audiences were chosen for this survey as they constitute the largest media markets in Australia that are of interest to major broadcasters. A follow up survey of regional Australia will be conducted in subsequent surveys.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Demographics of Respondents

The survey of five capital cities was conducted randomly, without quotas for cities, but respondents came from the following cities, and were of the following ages and genders:



### 2.2 Media usage habits for obtaining weather information.

Besides television the next most popular sources of weather information, were: weather app on phone (55.32%), radio (46.55%), weather websites (45.55%), google searches (36.21%), and newspapers (28.88%).

### 3 Executive Summary

The results of the survey highlighted that 74.9% of respondents were interested in learning about the impacts of climate change in a weather bulletin. 84.65% of respondents indicated they would continue watching their main news program if it started presenting information on climate change.

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, 57.43% of the audiences said they would switch.

The survey then asked respondents to preference the types of climate information they were interested in having presented to them in a weather bulletin. The results indicated a strong interest in receiving information on extreme weather events, particularly on the following:

- Powerful storms (63.62%)
- Heatwaves (63.05%)
- Floods (61.77%)
- Bushfires (61.48%)
- Tropical Cyclones (53.50%).

It also emerged that audiences had a preference for local information, with 46.79% of respondents expressing interest in local climate projections and 45.22% in historical data (45.22%). In contrast, global climate information didn't register as much interest, with only 37.38% expressing interest in future global projections and 34.66% for historical global information.

The survey also highlighted that the two leading reasons why viewers were interested in having weather presenters present 'impartial information' about climate change were:

- 'Because information about climate change is too politicized in Australia' (49.07%)
- 'Because there isn't enough information about climate change' (44.76%)

Of particular note was that only 3.16% of respondents viewed their TV weather forecast as unimportant.

With regards to viewing habits, viewers tended to have a high degree of loyalty to their news program with approximately 64% being loyal to a particular channel. Programming 'flow' also emerged as an important factor in channel loyalty with 39.89% of viewers saying the news comes on before or after another program they like.

When it came to respondents' attitudes to climate change, 79.89% accepted that climate change is happening, with just under 11% saying they did not know. When asked how sure they were about this, just under 75% of respondents were either 'very sure' or 'somewhat sure' that climate change is happening. Similarly, 72.36% said they were 'very concerned' or 'somewhat concerned' about climate change.

92.5% of respondents felt that climate change was affecting weather in Australia, with only 7.4% believing there was no connection at all.

A further 82.53% claimed to have personally experienced the effects of climate change, leading 65.16% of respondents to consider climate change important to them personally.

Just over 81% of Australians claimed to speak about climate change with family and friends more than once a year, with the most common responses being '2-3 times per month', 'once a month' and 'once per quarter.'

When asked about preferred terminology, 'Climate Change' emerged as the most preferred with 44.9% of respondents selecting it as their first choice. This was compared to 'Global Warming' which only received 25.07% of first preference choices. Other terms to receive minor first preferences were 'Extreme Weather' (14.29%) and 'Climate Variability' (8.75%).

Politicians were the least trusted on climate change (0.93%), followed by business leaders (1.73%) and religious leaders (2.79%).

With regards to the trust that respondents had in weather presenters to present climate information, 77.16% of respondents expressed strong, moderate or slight trust. Further, 71% of viewers expressed they were satisfied with the weather forecasts on their news channels.

Evening news forecasts also emerged as the most common and most watched source of weather information at 67%.

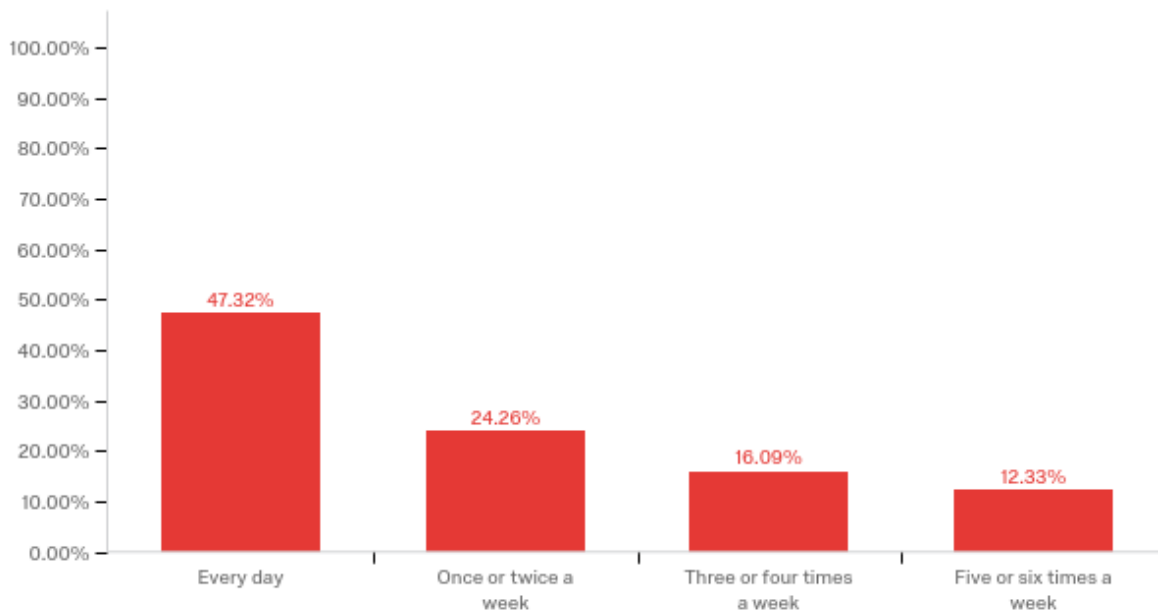
Lastly, when it came to the preferred types of visual aids that weather presenters could use in their climate change segments, maps, photographs, and diagrams were given almost equal preference. Explanation by a weather presenter with all the above including graphs was also preferred alongside the other aids.



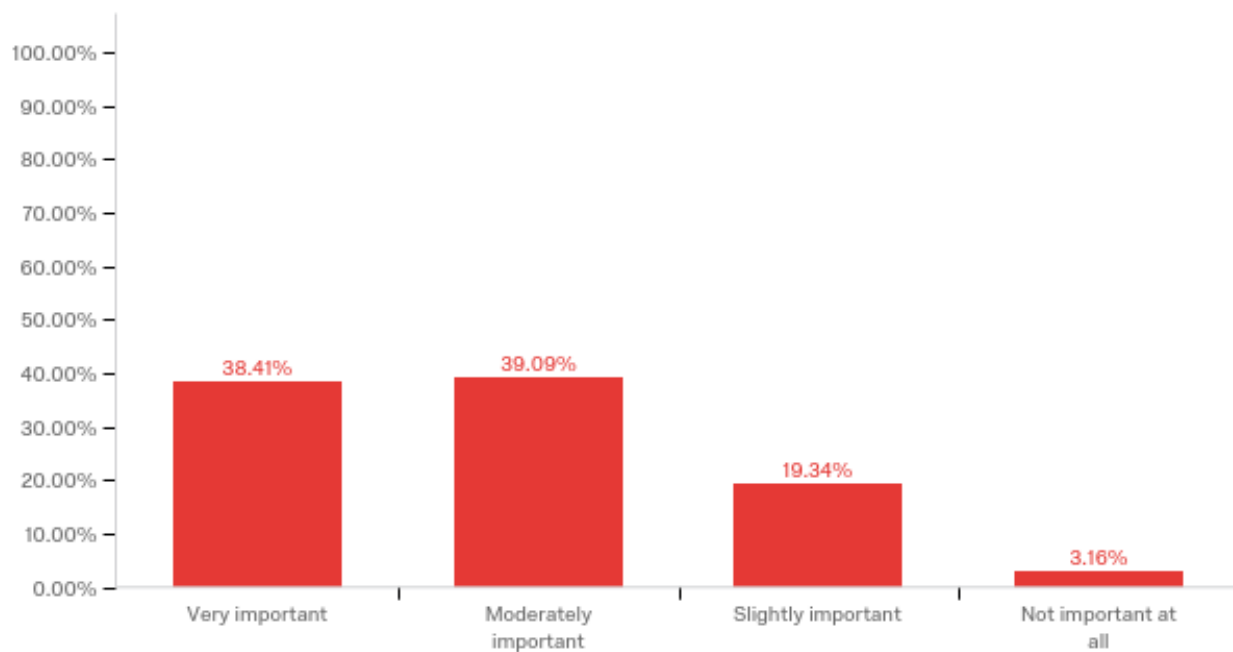


## 4 Survey Results

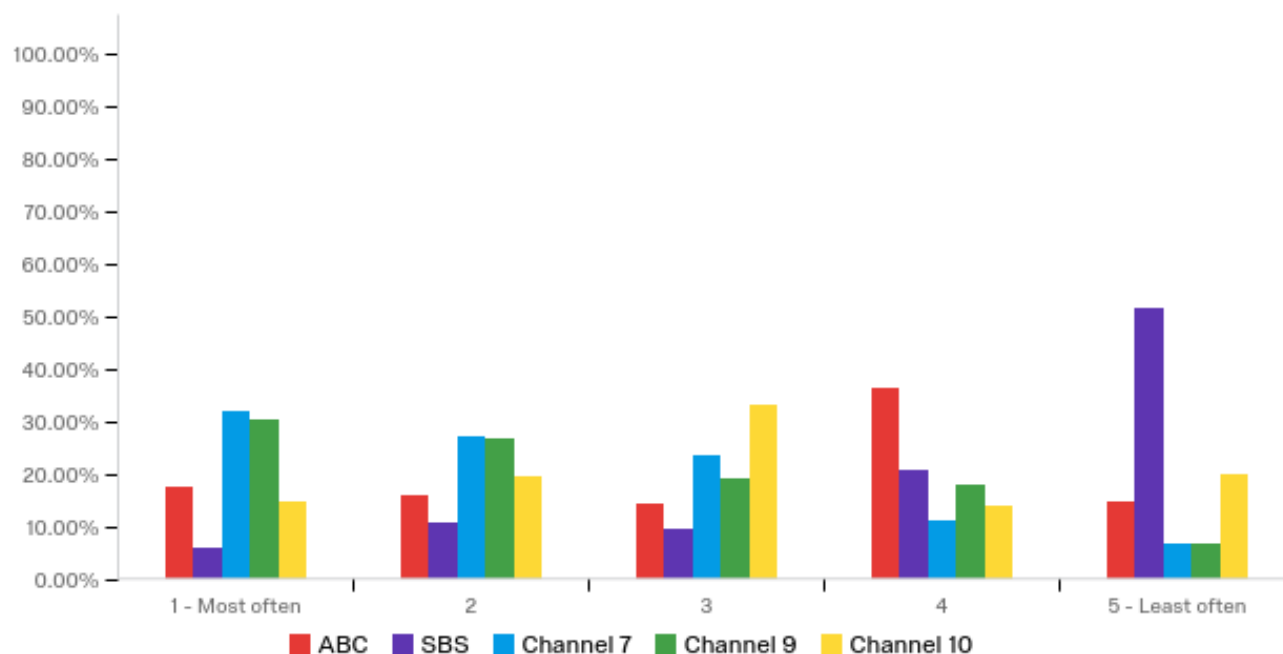
Q1 - How often do you watch the news on TV?



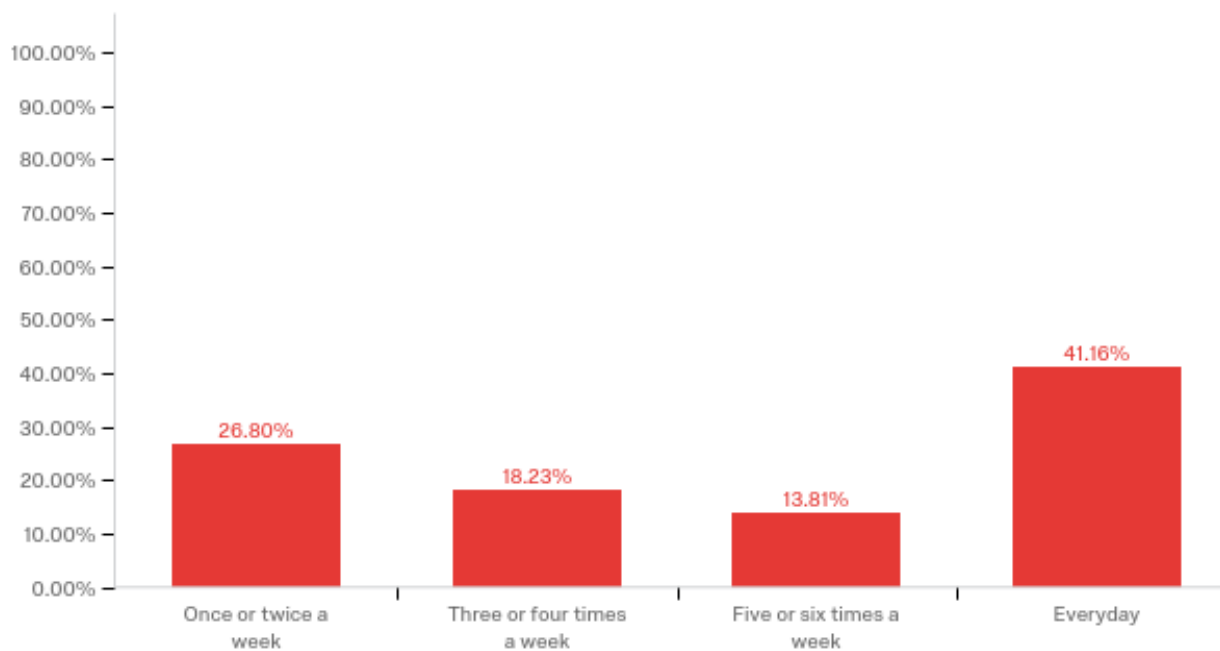
Q2 - When you watch news on TV, how important is the weather forecast to you?



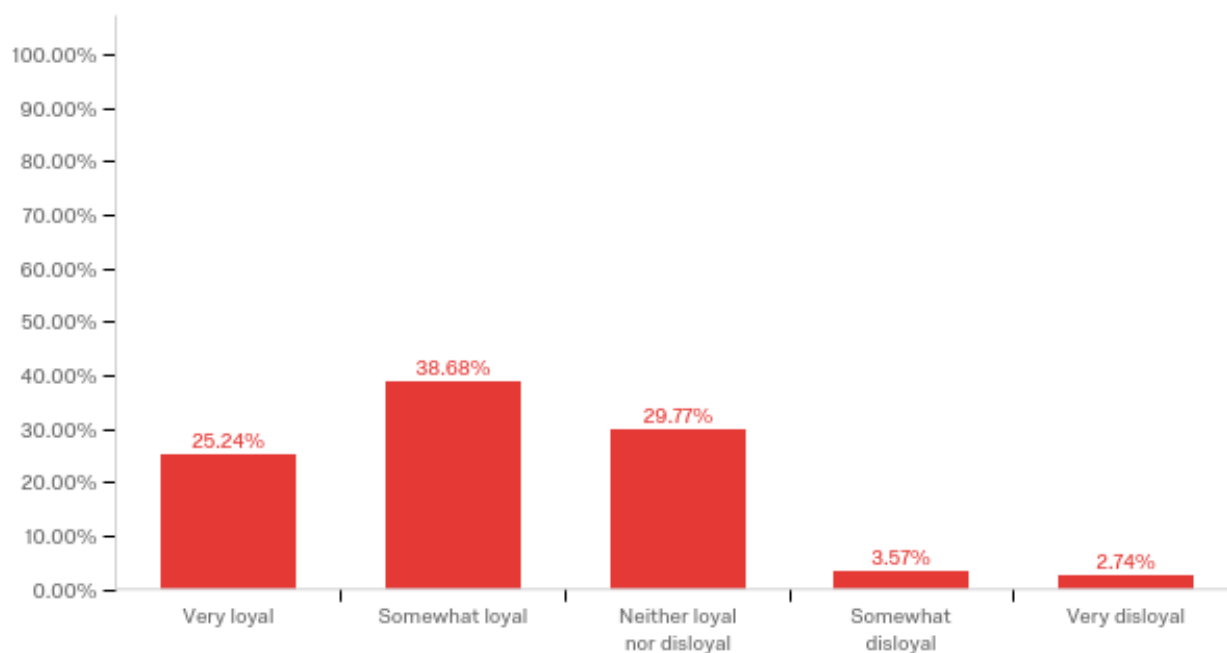
Q3 - Which channel's news do you watch? Please number to rank in descending order, with 'one' being the channel whose news you watch most often.



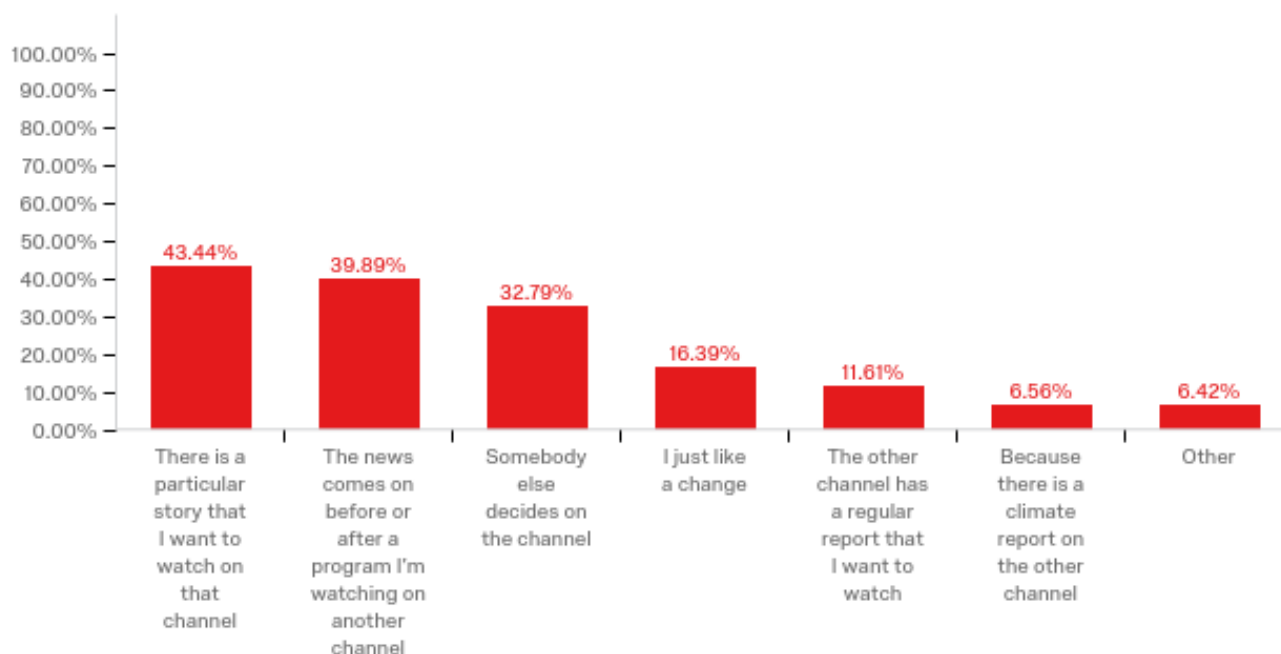
Q4 - How often do you watch the news on a main channel?



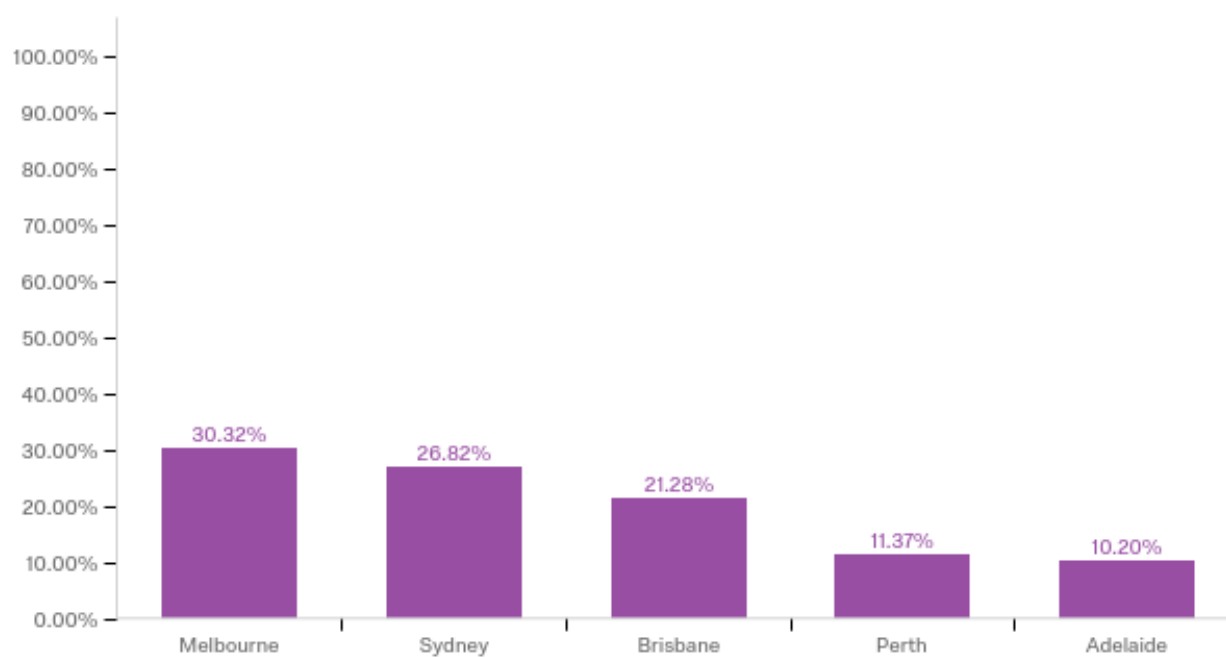
Q5 - How loyal are you to your main news program?



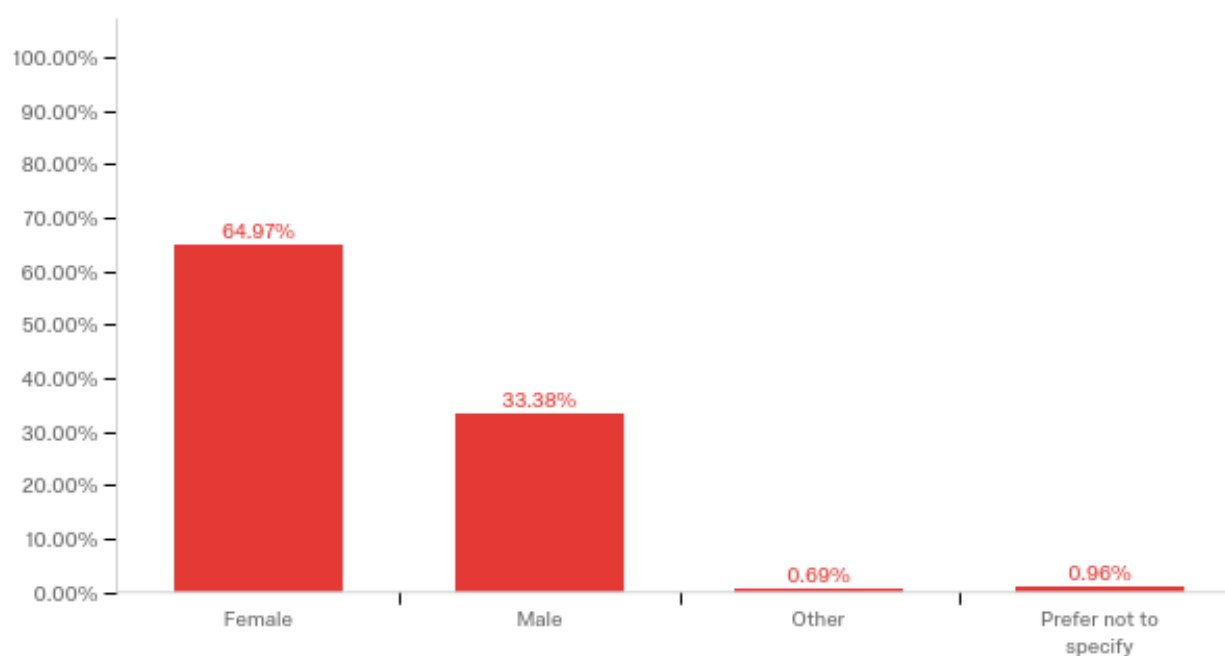
Q6 - What are some of the reasons you would choose to watch the news on a different channel to your main channel? Select all that apply.



Q7 - What city do you live in?

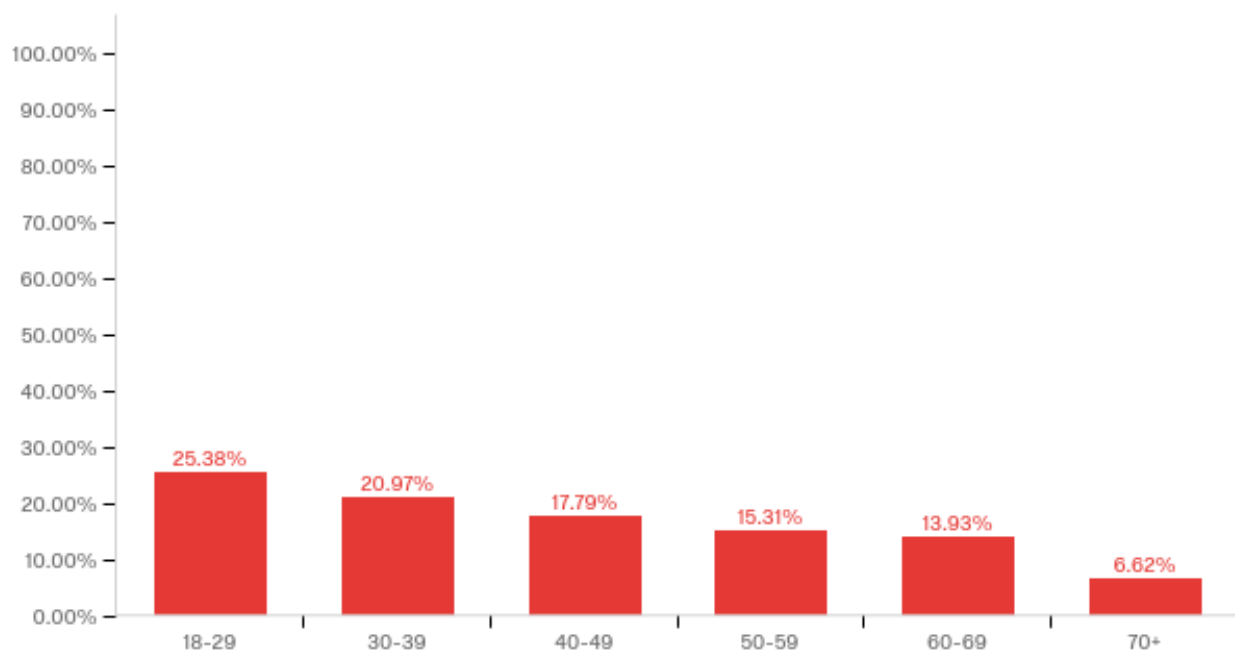


Q8 - What is your gender?

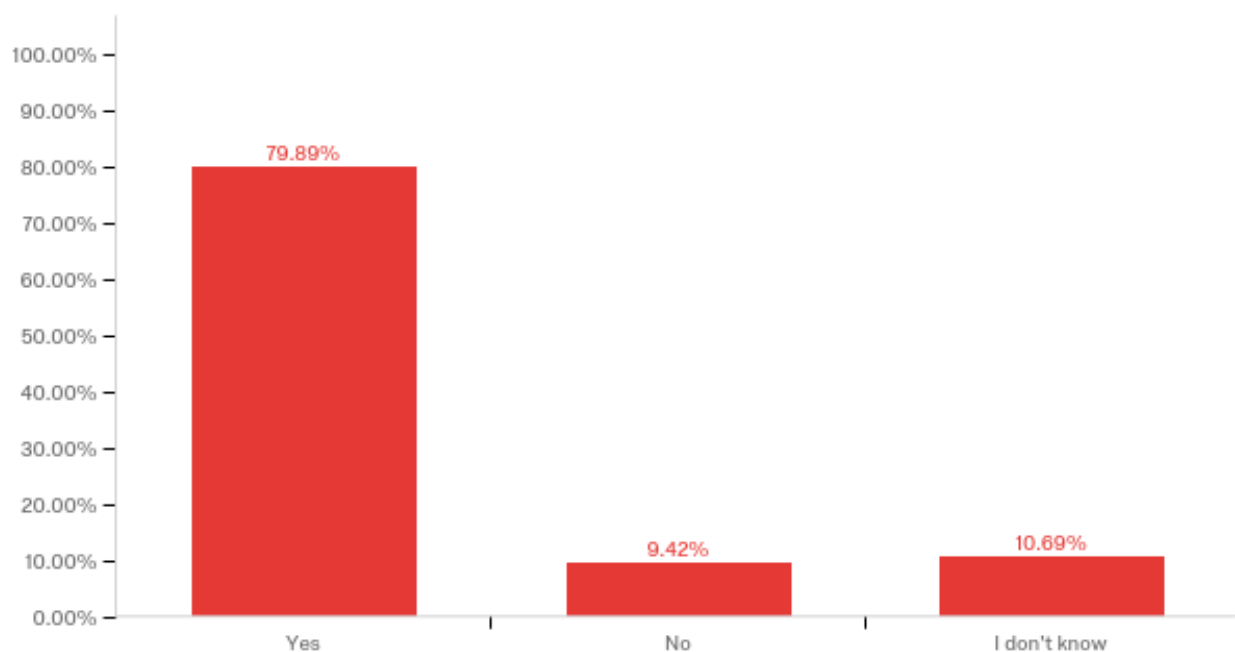




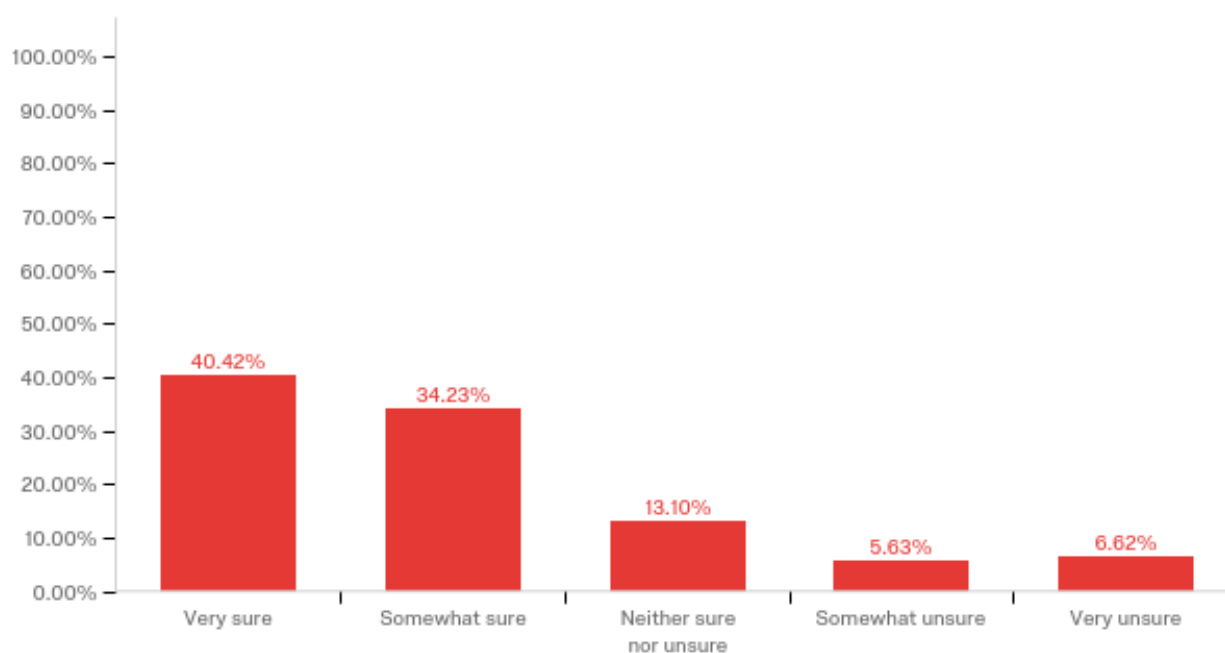
Q9 - What is your age?



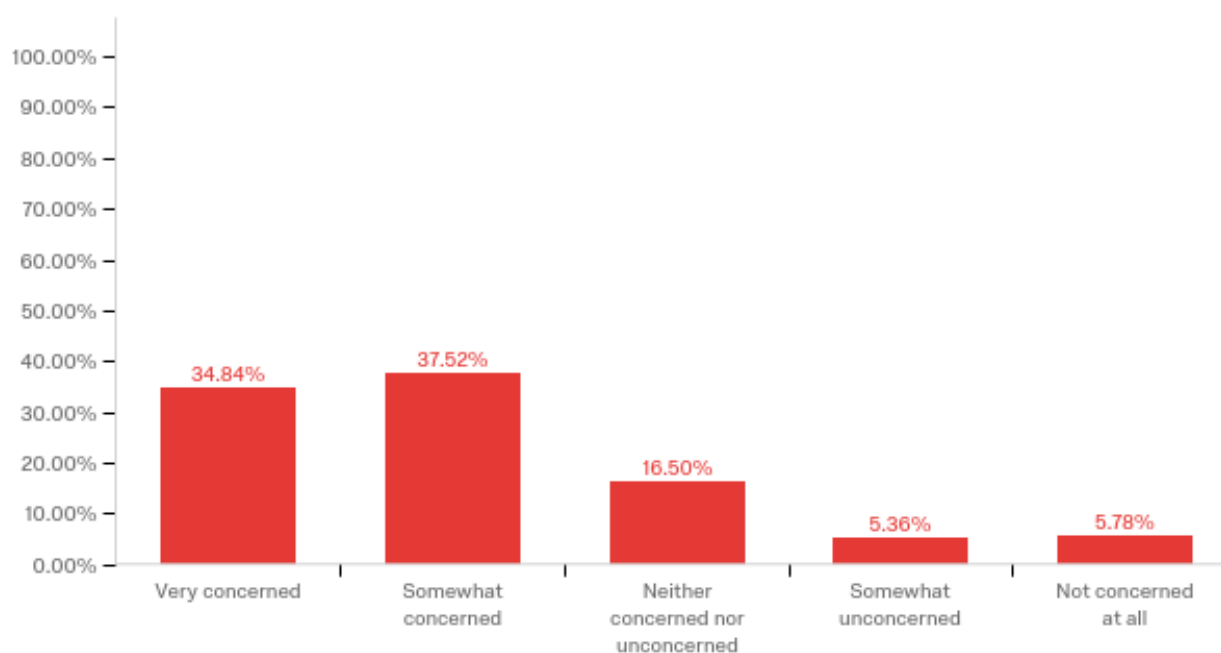
Q10 - Do you think that climate change is happening?



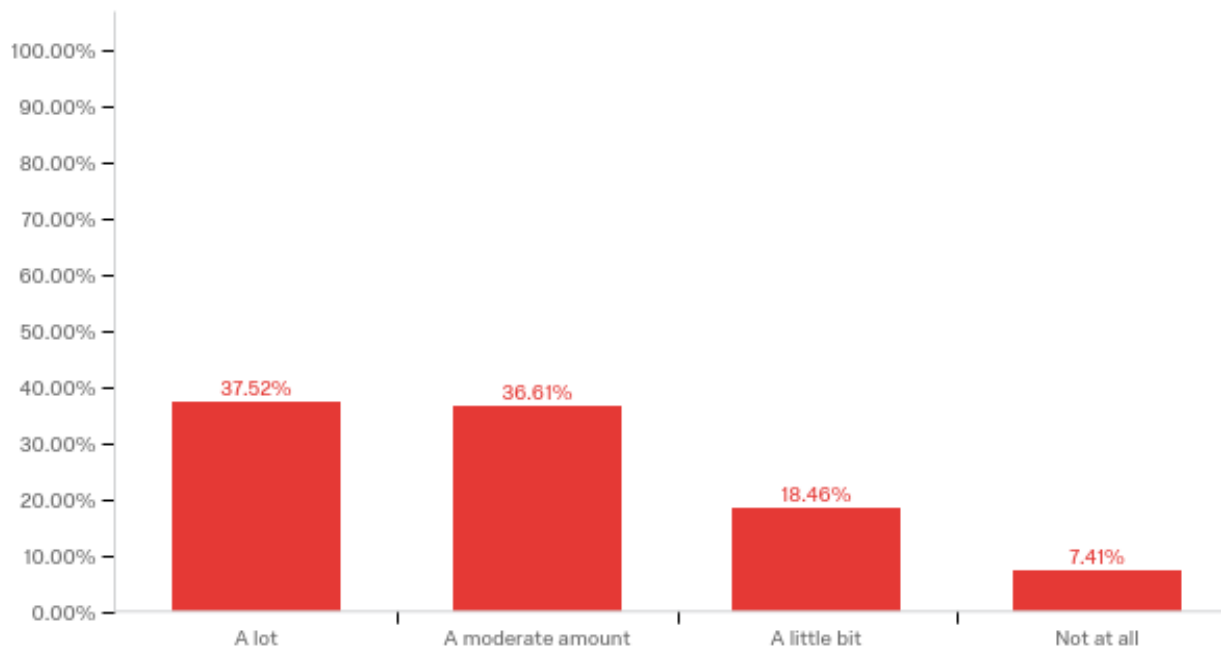
Q11 - How sure are you that climate change is happening?



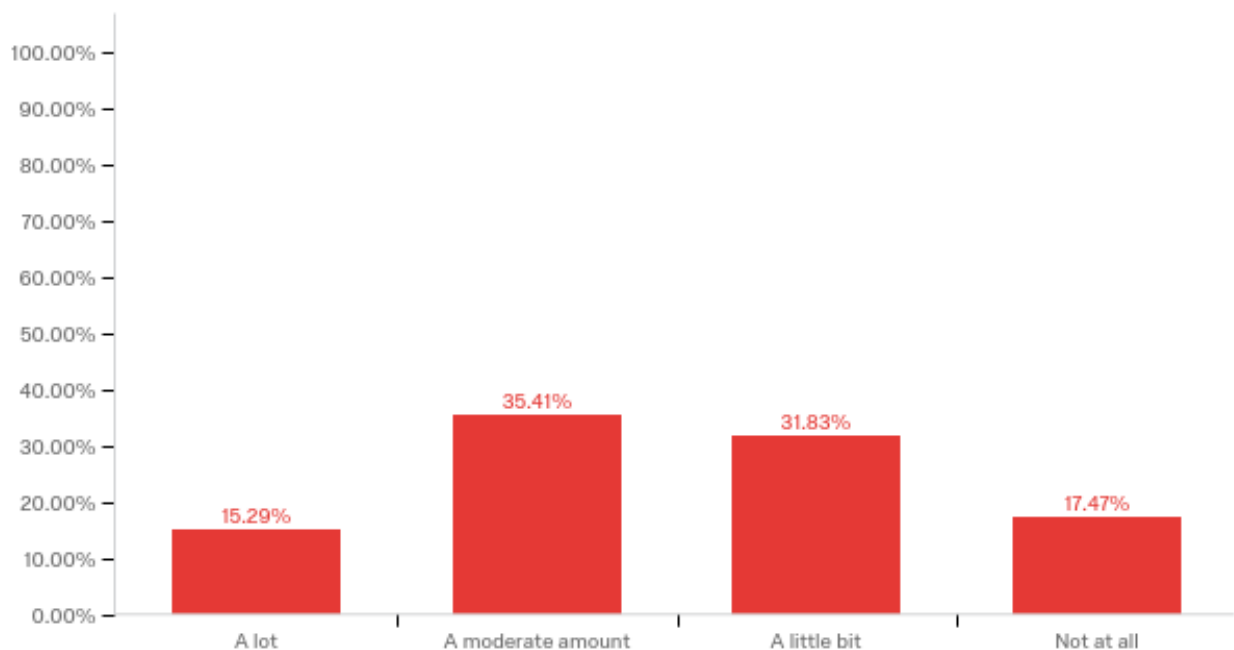
Q12 - How concerned are you about climate change?



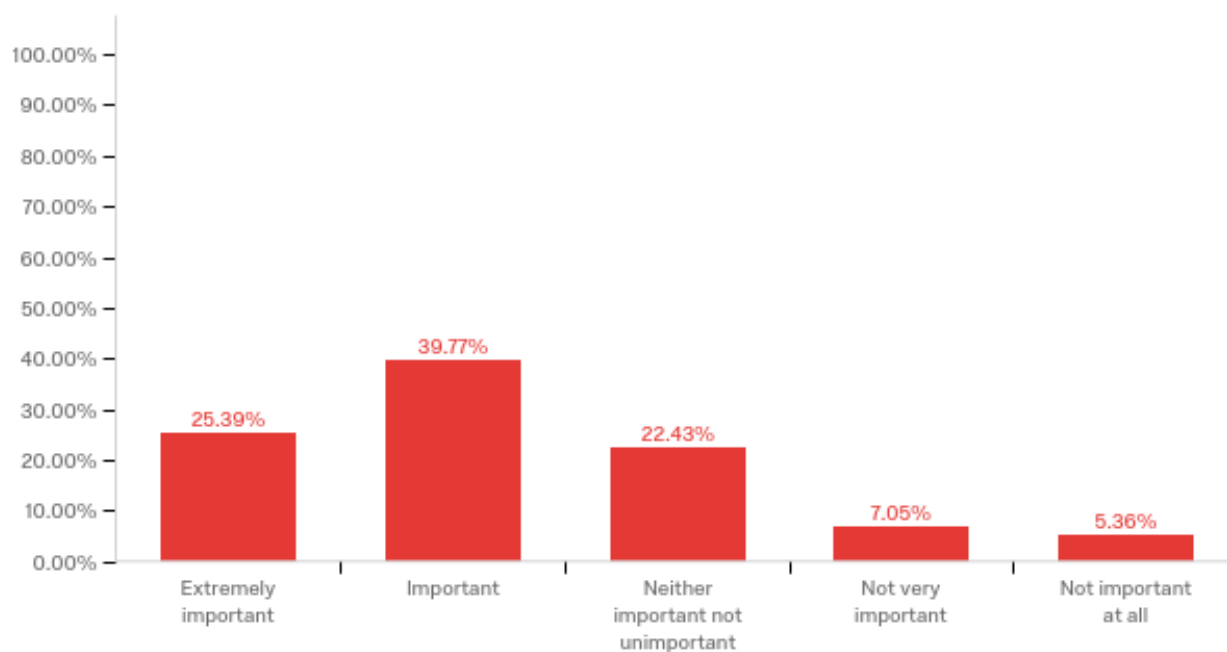
Q13 - How much do you think climate change is affecting weather in Australia?



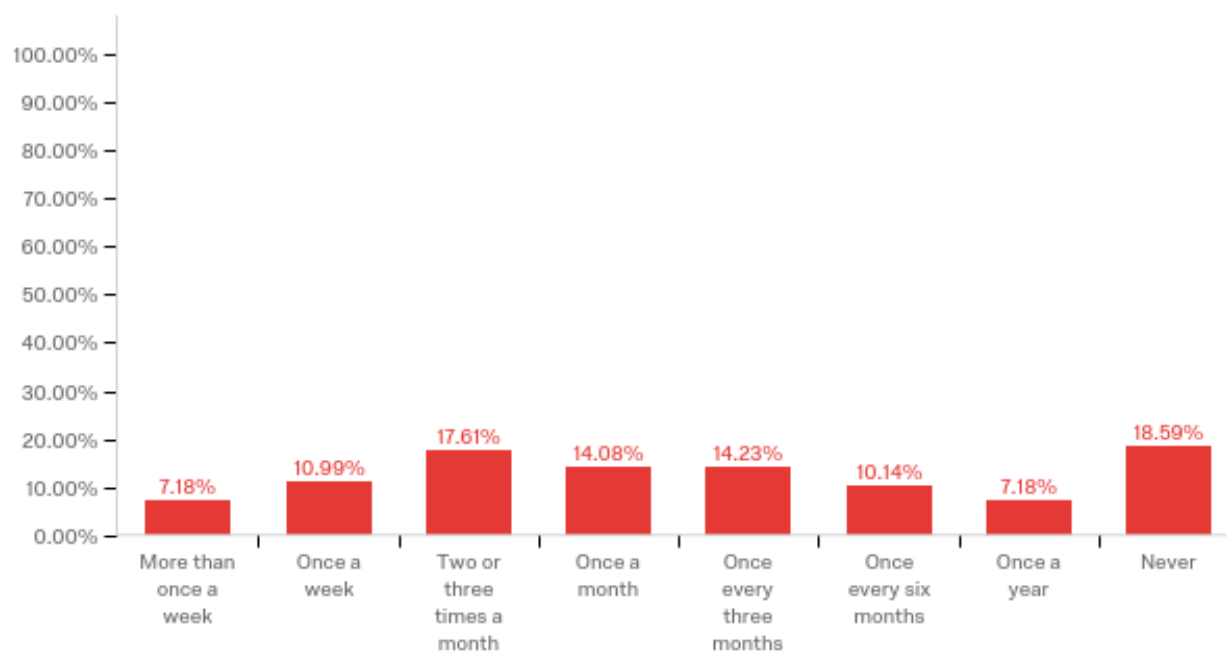
Q14 - How much have you personally experienced the effects of climate change?



Q15 - How important is the issue of climate change to you personally?

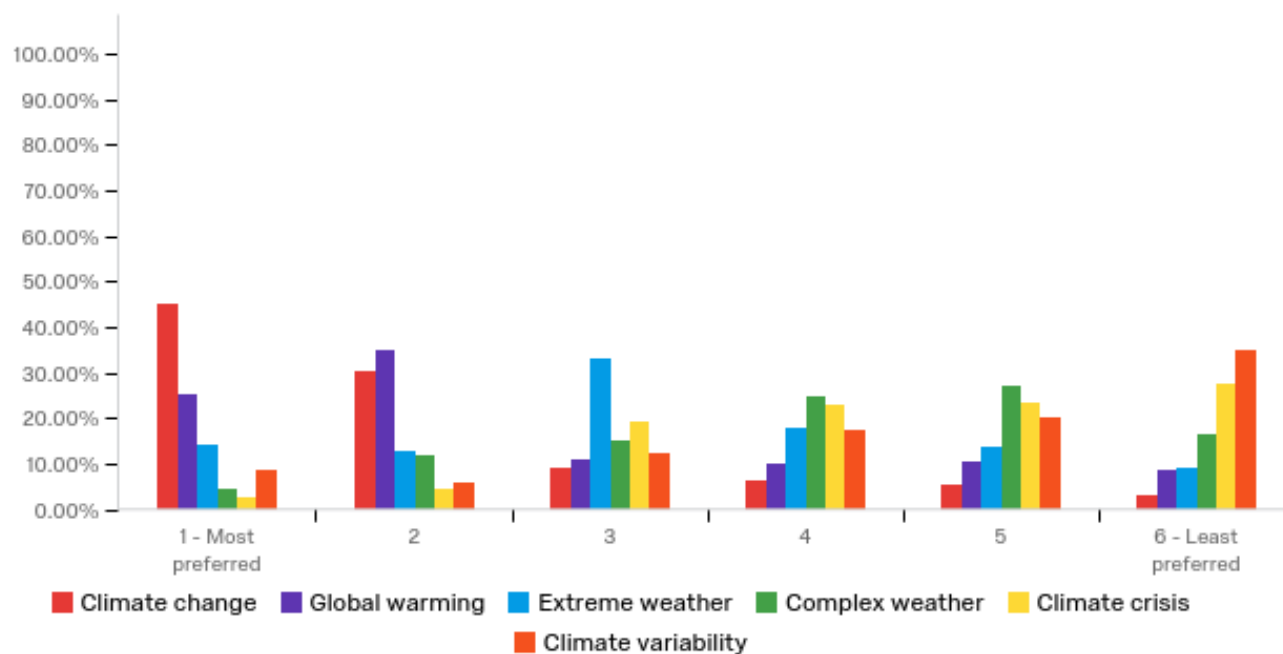


Q16 - How often do you discuss climate change with your family and friends?

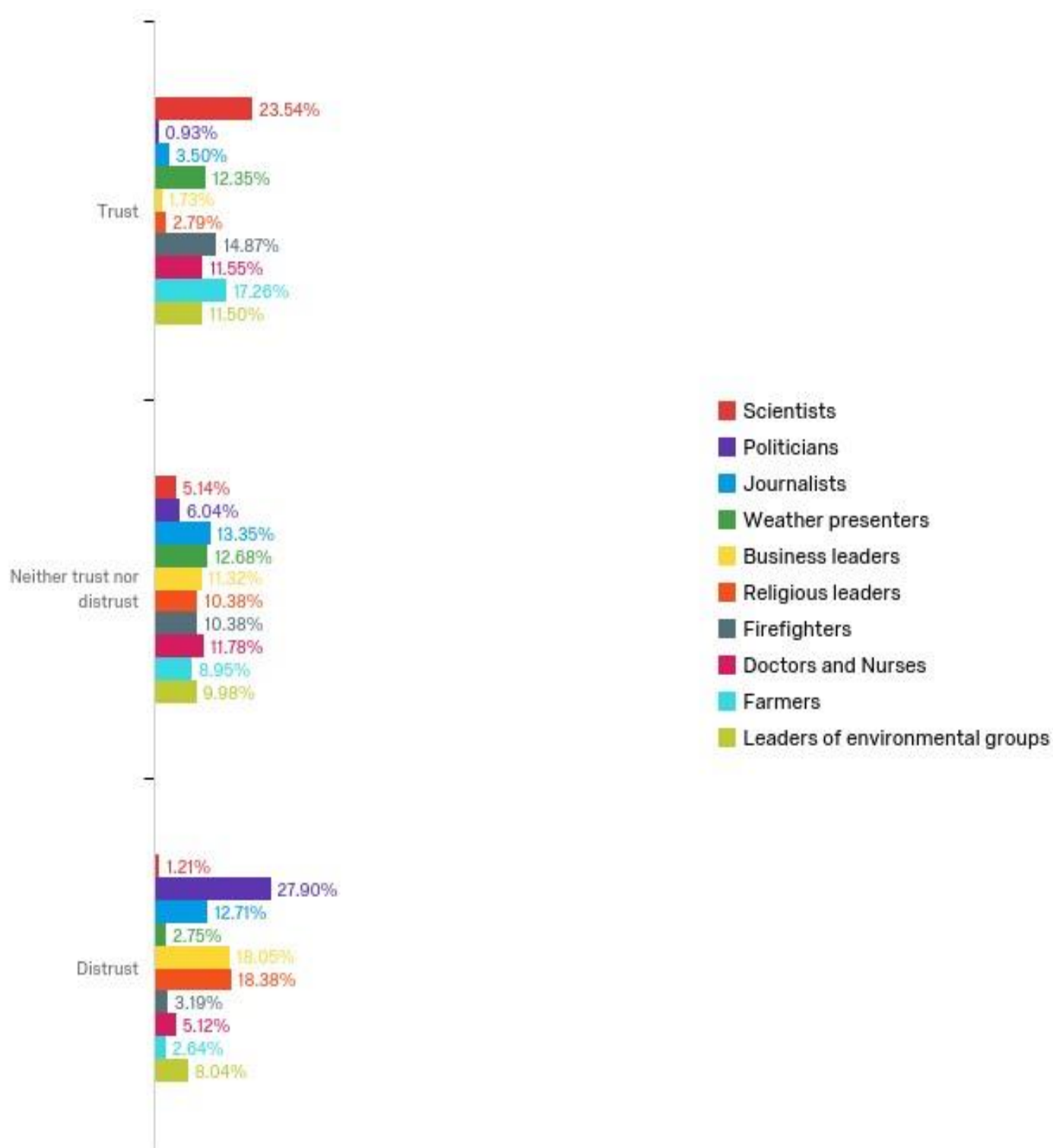




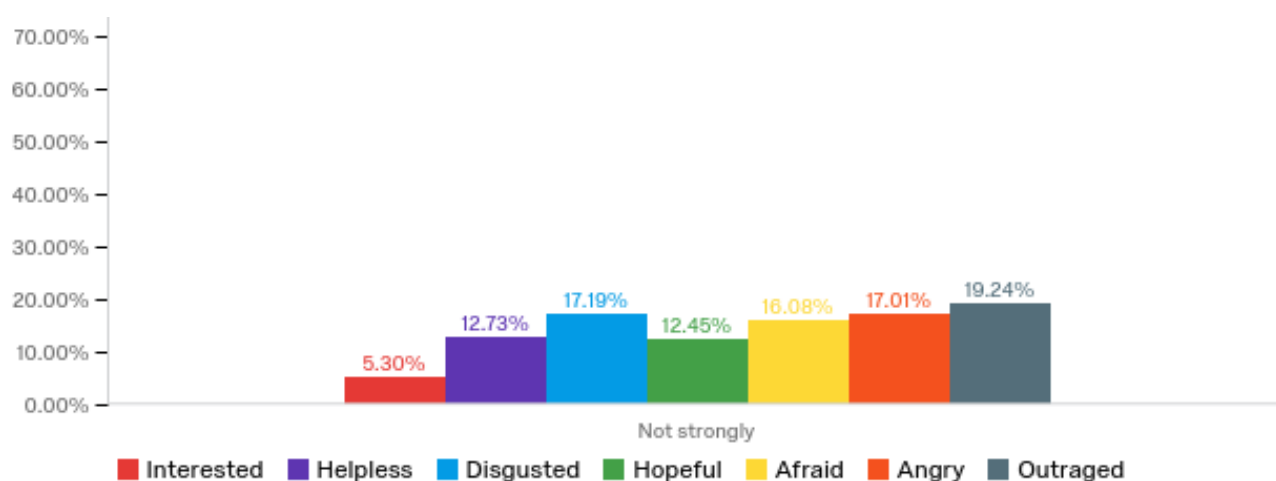
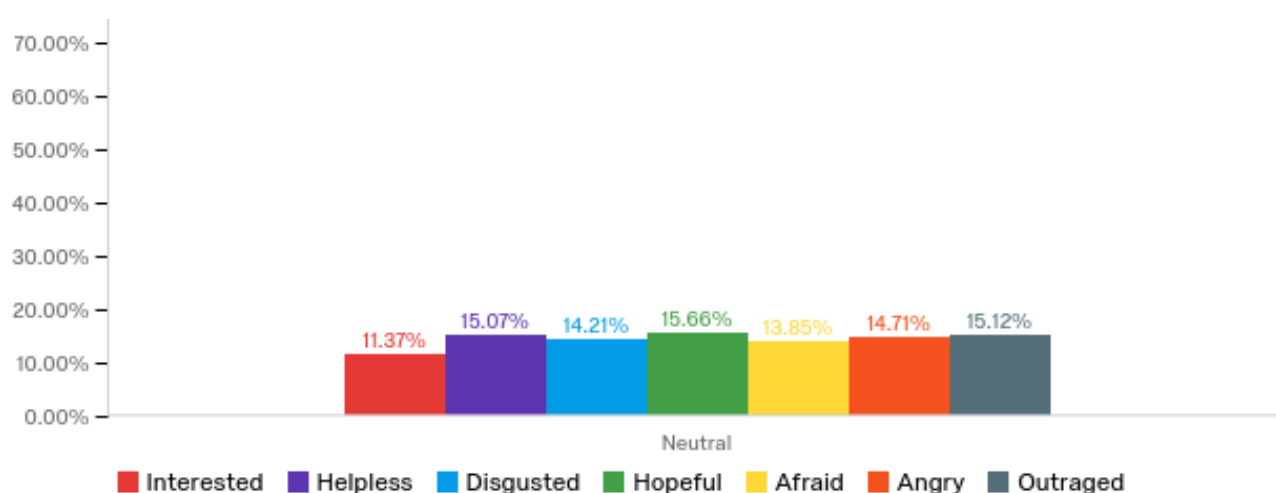
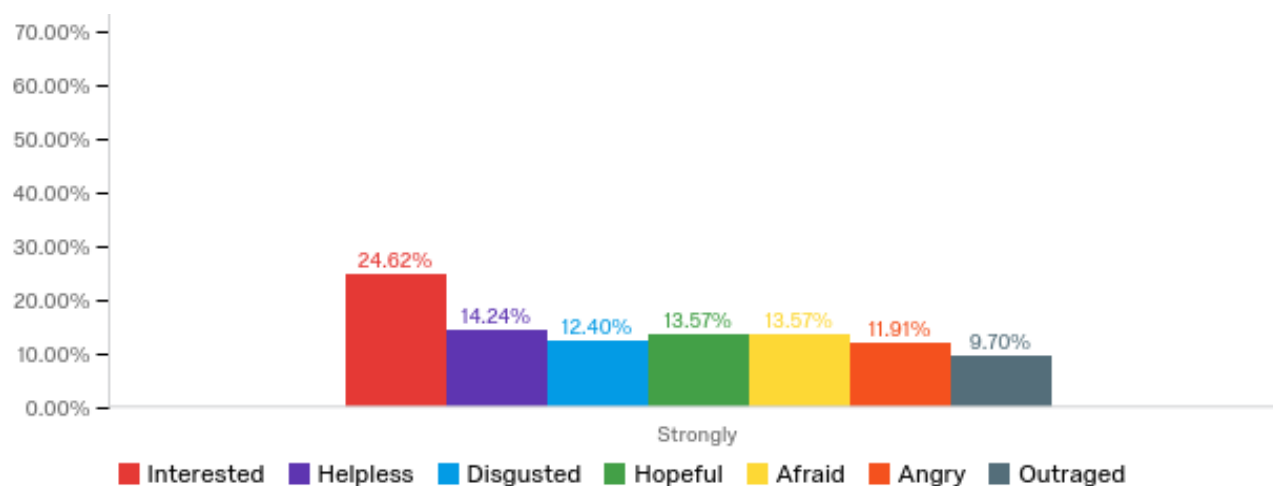
Q17 - Which of the following terms do you prefer? Please rank from one to six in order of preference, with 'one' being the most preferred.



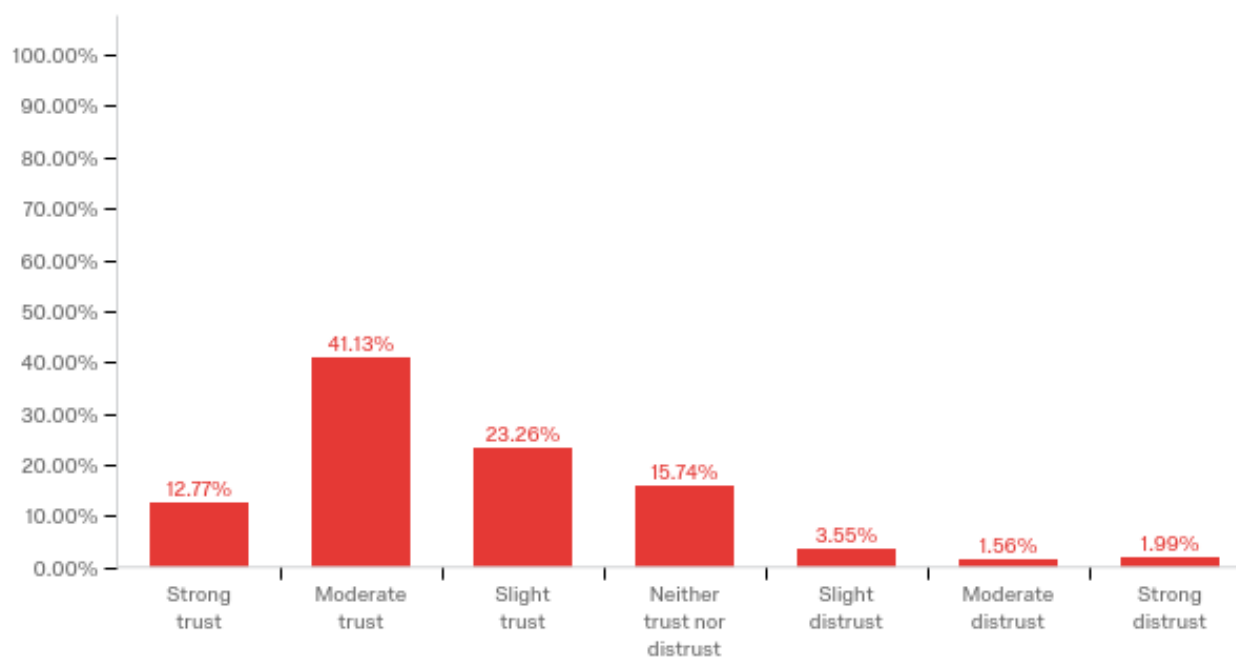
Q18- How much would you trust the following when it comes to climate change?



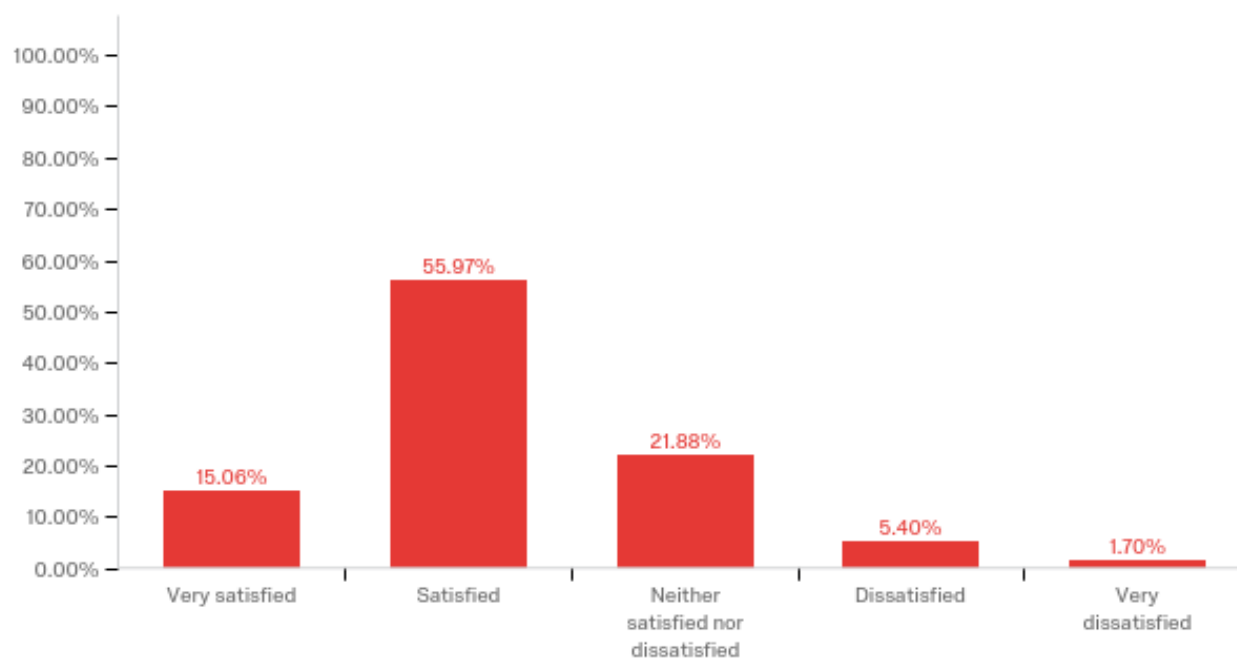
Q19 - How strongly do you feel each of the following emotions when you think about climate change?



Q20 - To what extent do you trust television weather presenters as a reliable source of weather information?

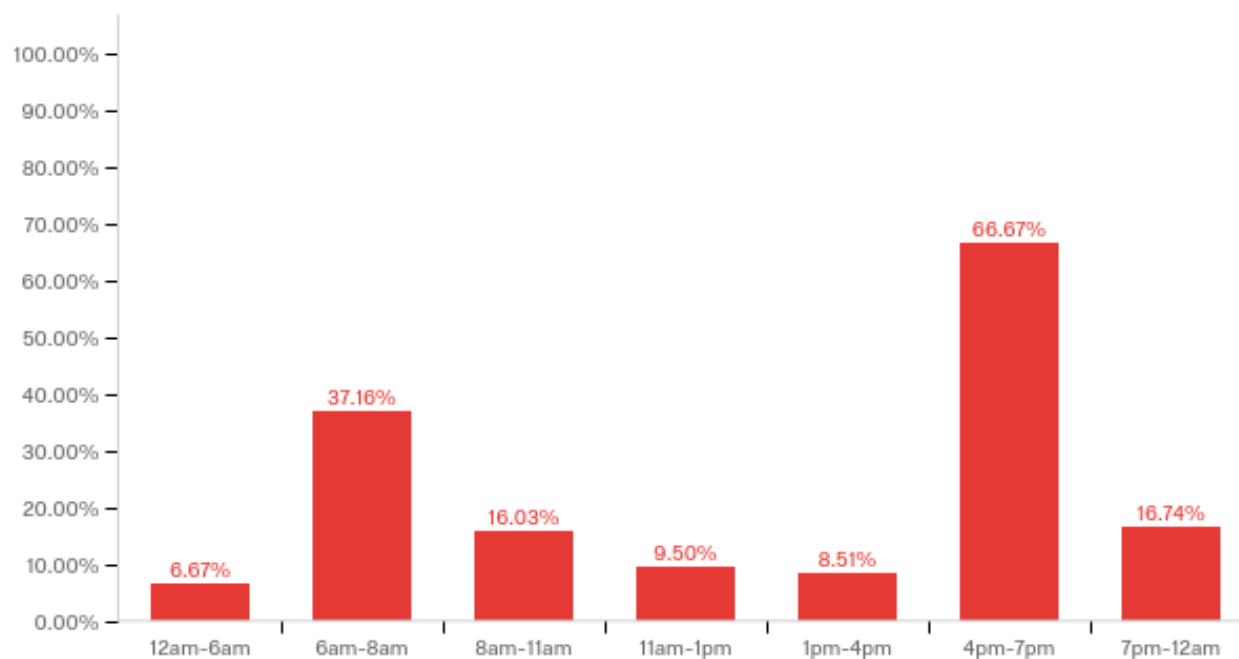


Q21 - Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the weather forecast information that you currently receive?

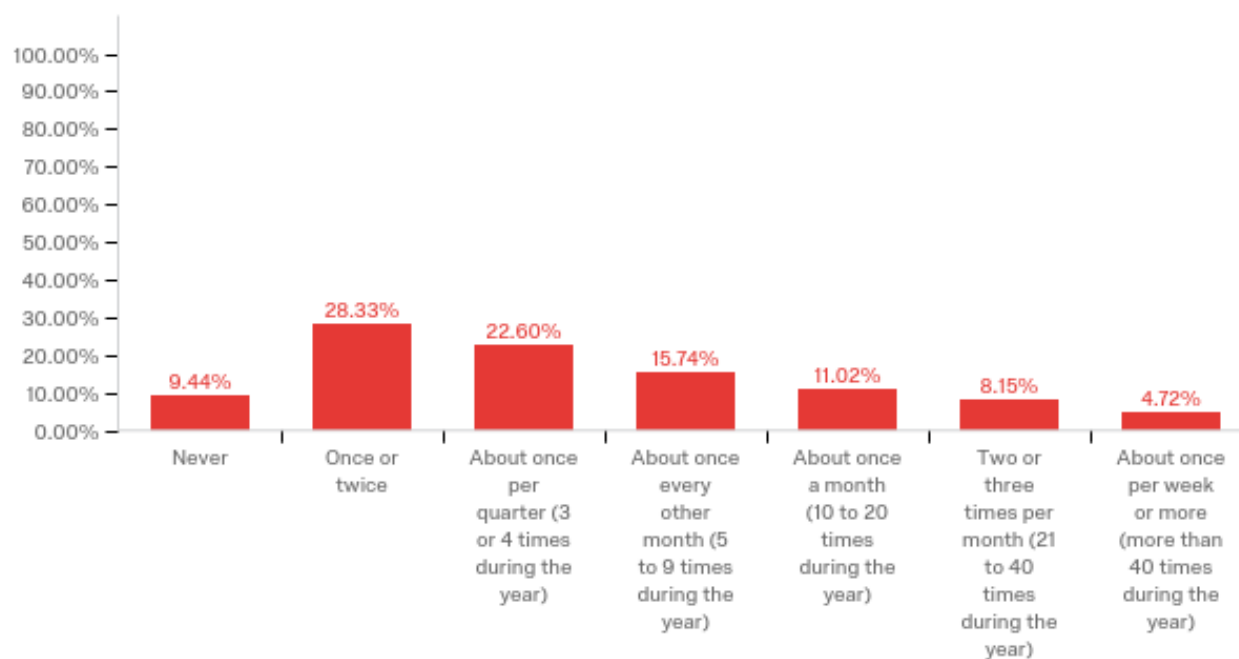




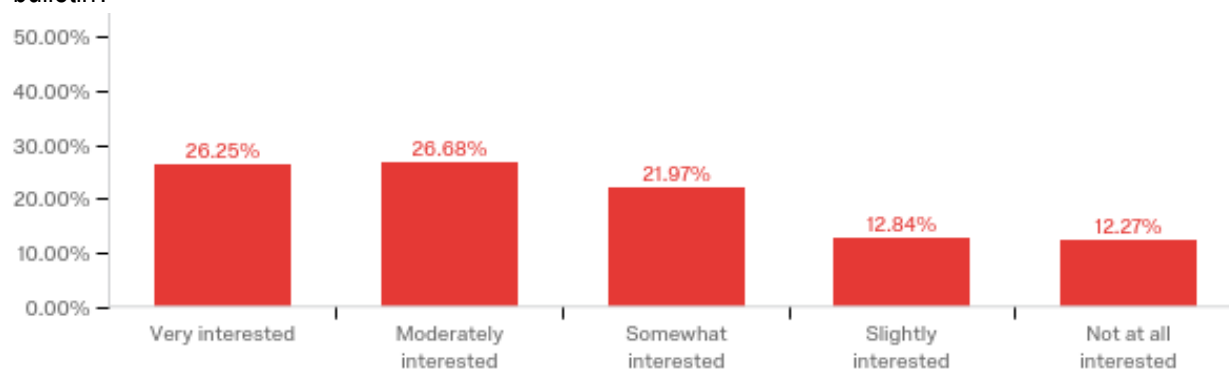
Q22 - What time of day do you usually get weather forecasts? Please select all that apply.



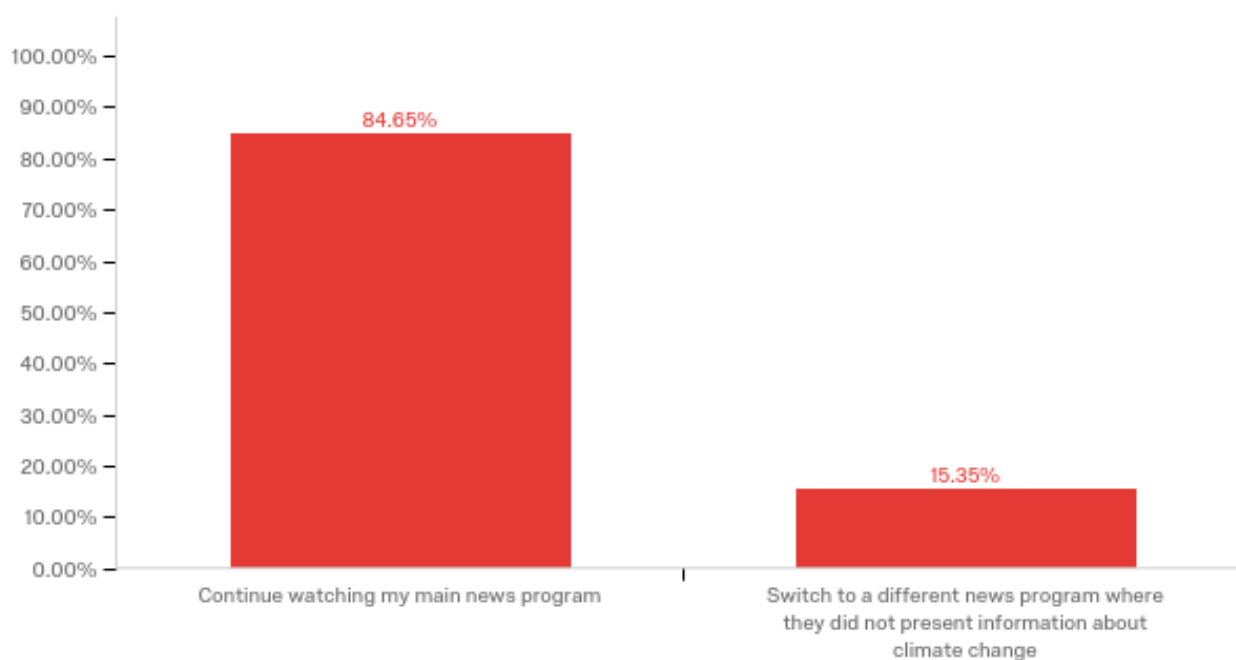
Q23 - Over the past 12 months, about how often did you see a report on the impacts of climate change on television?



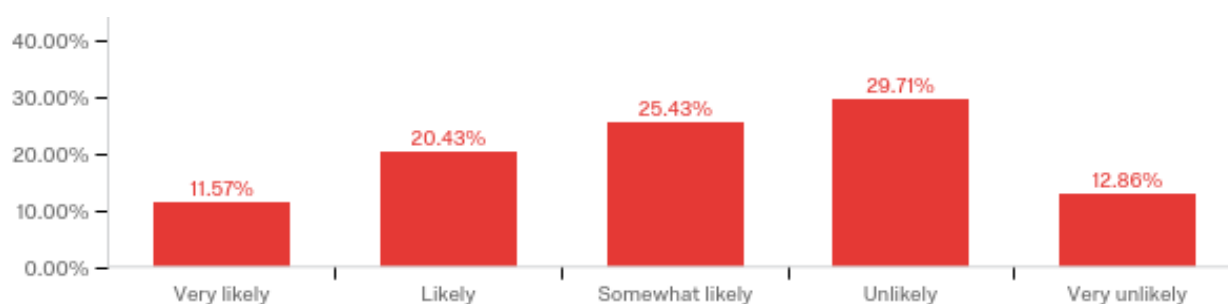
Q24 - How interested would you be in learning about the impacts of climate change in a weather bulletin?



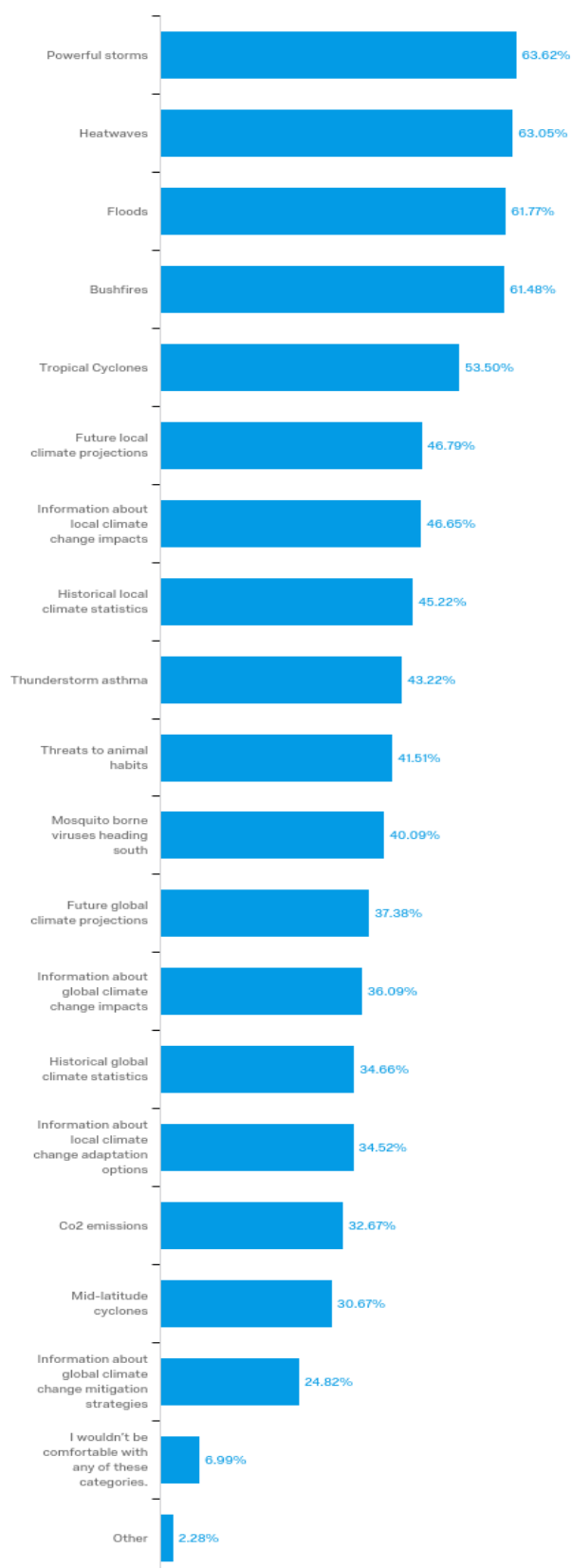
Q25 - If the weather presenters on your main news program started presenting information about climate change, what would you be most likely to do?



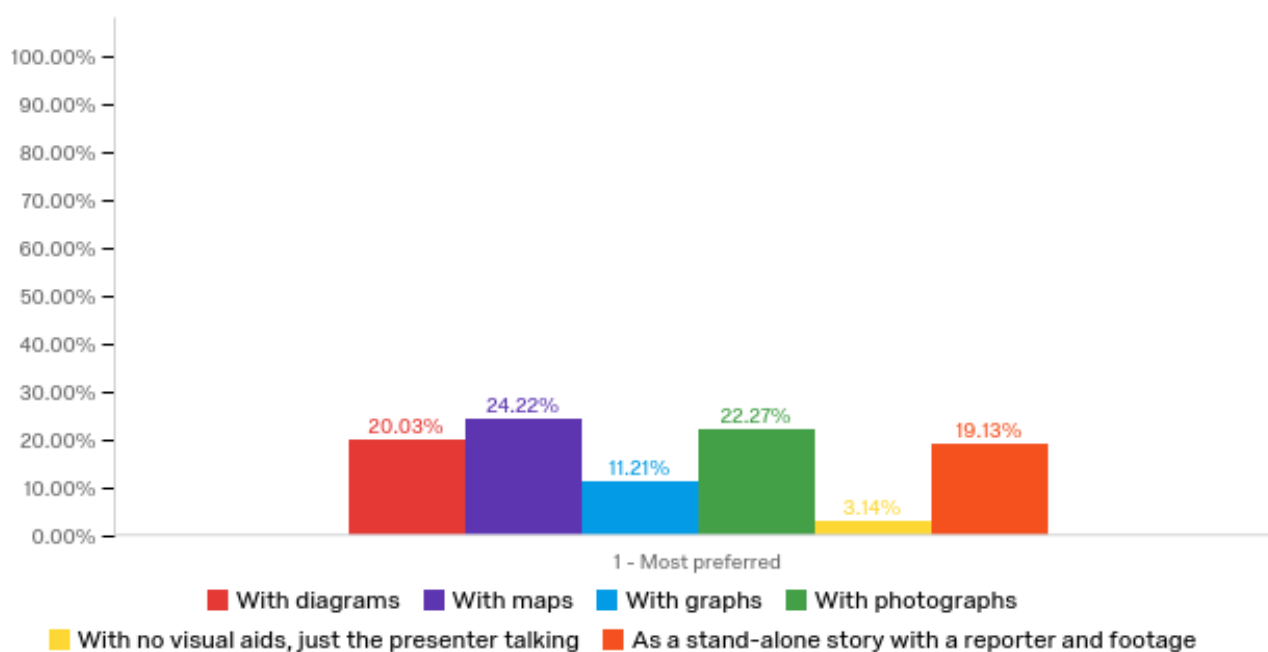
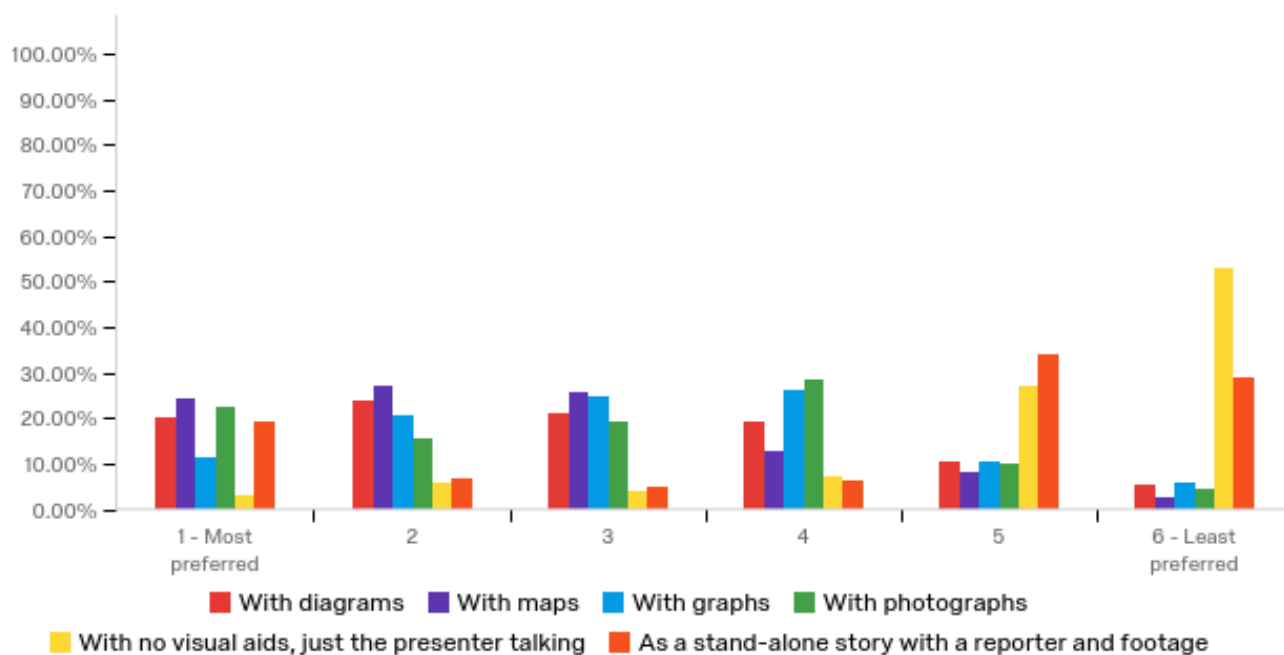
Q26 - If the weather presenters on your main news program did not present information about climate change, how likely would you be to switch to a news program where they did?



Q27 - What types of information would you like weather presenters to present about climate change?  
Please select all that apply.

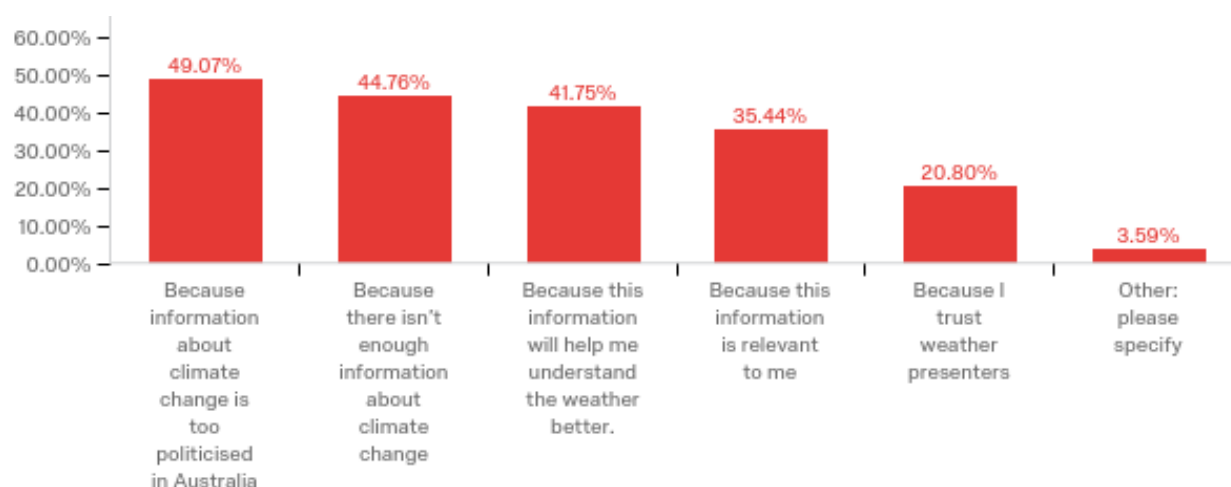


Q28 - What visual aids would you prefer are used by the weather presenter to explain climate change. Please rank from one to six, with one being your most preferred.





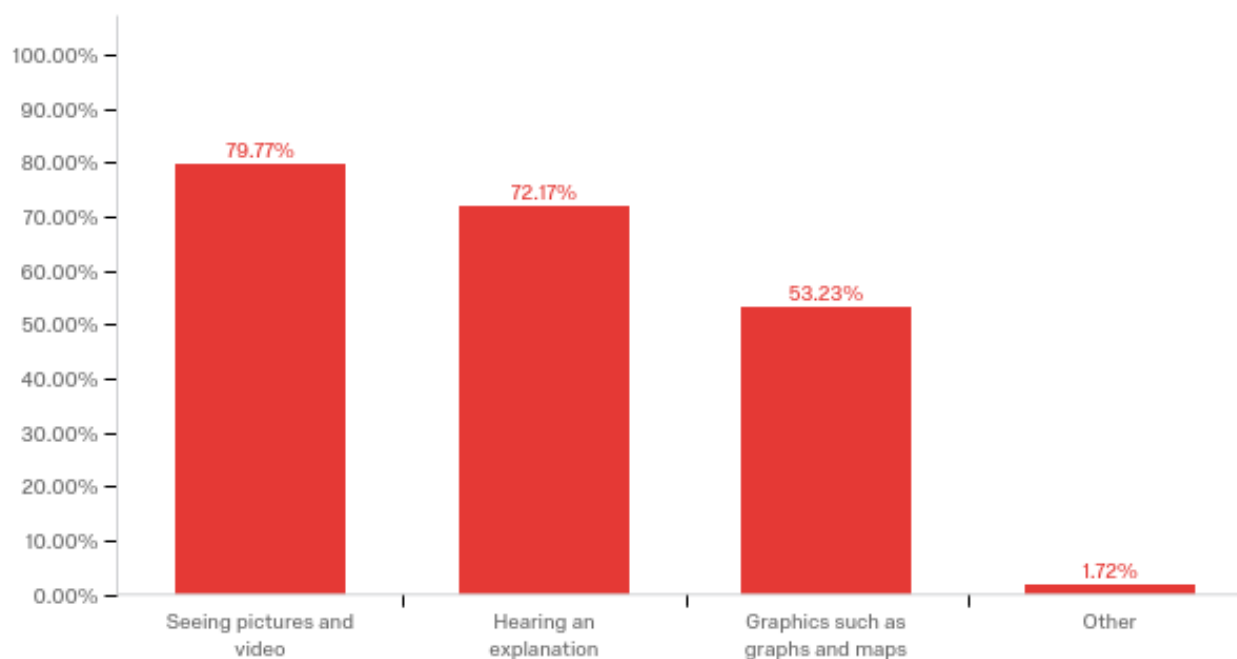
Q29 - Why would you like weather presenters to present impartial information about climate change?  
Please select all that apply.



Q30 - How likely would you be to switch broadcasters for the following reasons?



Q31 - How useful do you find the following to help understand complex news information? Please select all that apply



Q32 - Where else do you get weather information from? Please select all that apply.

