

Roy Morgan

— Research —

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Are threats to the environment really exaggerated?

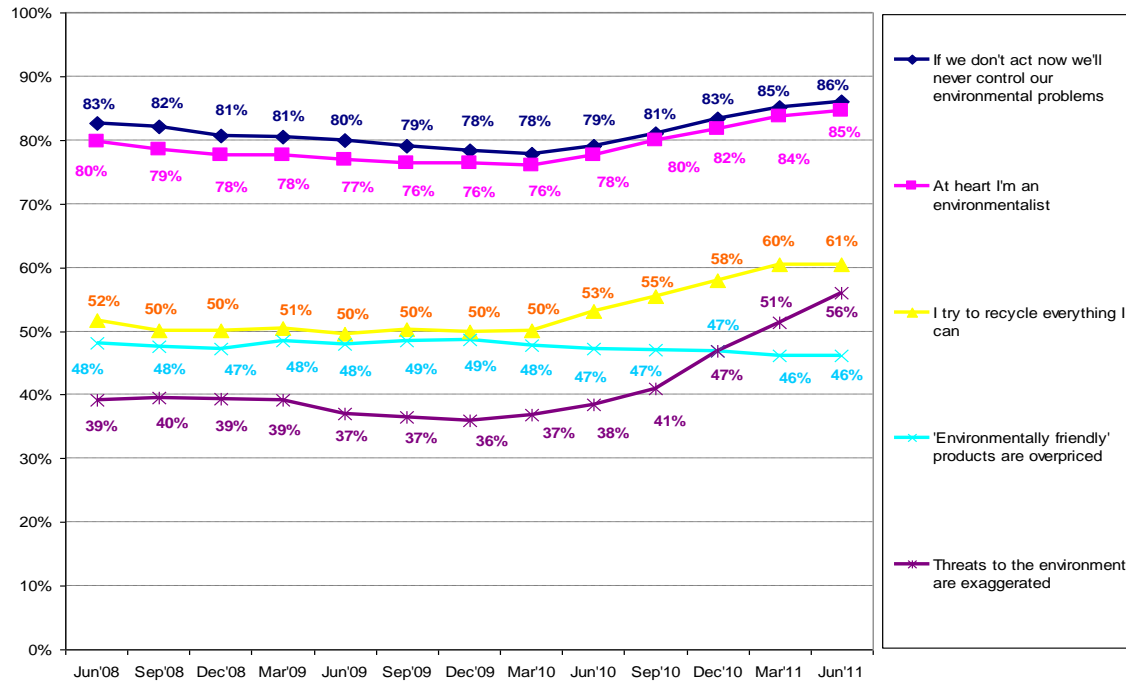
For several years now, the overwhelming majority of climate change scientists have remained convinced that the planet is warming, sea levels will rise. As a consequence, there may well be all sorts of serious repercussions which will wreak increasing levels of mayhem on the everyday lives of the human race. Most people, except for climate-change deniers on the fringe, accept this as a likely scenario. Where the gap in the mainstream debate is beginning to widen is what we can do about it, if anything. That's where the renewable energies industry is doing a rather bad job of selling their wares.

Personally, I have spent so much time listening to all sides of this debate that it makes my head hurt. I really have no time for the deniers, because the painful impact of climate change is already being felt by significant numbers of people in different parts of the world. Even if I were to agree with the conservatives that climate change is a cyclical and inescapable reality recorded since time immemorial, I do not think we should sit on our hands and wait for all the oil to run out. Or all the ice to melt. I know, without any doubt, that my nose feels a lot better after a week on the beach in Bali than it does after a week on the roads of Jakarta. I am deeply attached to my nose. I believe that future generations should also have the right to like their noses.

Those pesky little particles from petrol engines and coal-fired generators irritate my nose. And I know from all my friends and colleagues that my nose is not alone. None of us would want our cars taken off the roads tomorrow, or our homes plunged into darkness forever. But I think we would all be happy to explore other options, so we can transition over time. For the sake of our kids, and theirs.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHANGING MINDS ON CLIMATE CHANGE



This is not a big stretch for the minds of most people, knowing that fossil fuels cannot last forever. But it is obviously anathema to those who remain committed to digging many more and much deeper holes in the ground, in the sea, or in the ice, for as long as they can. They aren't fussy. The trouble is that we are not just running out of oil, we have run out of courage. Most of our leaders certainly have. It takes courage to recognize issues, face them and deal with them. Urbanisation is a major player in the fight against poverty. Cities need electricity and transport. Urbanisation is also a major player in deteriorating health. Carbon particles make a major contribution to the way our lungs behave. And how our noses feel.

Anybody who resists the development of clean energy has got to have either a vested interest or a twisted mind. That would be equally true of anybody who would like to see all fossil fuels banned tomorrow morning. It should be plain to all that we are running out of time while we have these unending debates about who is right and who is wrong about what to do with climate change. It amazes me that the same people who buy just about every kind of insurance available for home, health, car and travel won't even consider any insurance for Planet Earth, just in case they've got it all wrong. Even if they see insurance for the planet as a waste of money, what's the prognosis? Coal-powered cars? On the other hand, an exciting new future that can create an endless number of new jobs, new wealth and new health is staring at us in the face. Bring it on: solar, wind, water, algae, geo-thermal *et al.*

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Fortunately, public opinion in Indonesia is tracking well. Clearly, more and more people are concerned about climate change. The percentage of people who believe “if we don’t act now we’ll never control our environmental problems” has risen to an all-time high of 86 percent. The path for the government couldn’t be more obvious. But at the same time, swelling to 56 percent, there are growing numbers of people who believe that “threats to the environment are exaggerated”. Will the TV stations please take note? The audience doesn’t need any more convincing. Attention on the actions being taken, or not being taken, would be appreciated.

“At heart I am an environmentalist” say a reassuring 85 percent of Indonesians today. This is complemented by a growing number, now 61 percent, who say they “try to recycle everything I can”. It doesn’t really matter whether these sentiments are driven by economic hardship or not. An environment-friendly recycling-conscious people can’t be doing any harm to the only planet we have. Thought is gradually leading to action. The 48 percent who three years ago felt that “environmentally friendly products are over-priced” are gradually trending downwards, now at 46. If these numbers were as robust around the world as they are in this country, the climate change debate would have ended in more action and less talk, a long time ago. Even if there is a real chance that the scientists may have got it wrong.

These opinions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, a syndicated survey with over 25,000 Indonesians 14 years and older interviewed each year. The national database is updated every quarter. Almost 90 per cent of the population is covered across this large marketplace.

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