



**JECO**  
The Jewish Ecological Coalition  
ABN 52 768 480 221

## JECO survey on attitudes and opinions about sustainability and climate change

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### Background

JECO conducted a survey of attitudes, behaviours and opinions around Climate Change and sustainability at the In One Voice (IOV) festival held in Elsternwick in March 2016. This was a festival of Melbourne Jewish culture involving arts performances by different communal groups, plus 90 stalls representing different Jewish organisations in Melbourne and Victoria.

The purpose of the survey was threefold:

1. To gain insight into how concerned the community were about environmental issues, and the extent to which they engage in pro-environmental behaviours.
2. As a focal point for the JECO stall and to assist with engaging with passersby.
3. To educate festival-goers. Some of the items in the survey were regarding issues about which there is scant awareness. It was hoped that inclusion of these items would encourage questions and discussion.

### Method

#### Recruitment

The JECO stand volunteers asked people walking by the stand, or those who stopped at the stand, to fill in a survey. The introduction varied but was along the lines of "The Jewish Ecological Coalition are carrying out a survey today of the community's opinions and attitudes about sustainability and climate change, and we would be very grateful if you could spend a few minutes completing the survey." As an incentive, all those who completed the survey were offered an energy saving device (eg light globe, water-saving shower head), donated by Port Phillip Council.

Although it is recognized that survey respondents were not selected at random, it is hoped that the strategy of asking those who were walking straight by the

stall, as well as those who stopped to take an interest, meant that decision to participate wasn't too strongly related to interest in the subject matter.

## Questions

The survey length was limited to two-sides of A4 paper as this was felt to be the maximum festival-goers could be expected to complete on the spot. The time required to complete the survey was estimated to be five minutes.

As far as possible, the questions were copied from the CSIRO surveys on [Australian attitudes to climate change and adaptation: 2010-2014](#). This was in order to enable comparisons between the attitudes of Australians in general and those who attended the IOV festival (assumed to be mainly, although not exclusively, members of the Melbourne Jewish community).

There were four sections on the survey:

### **Section 1: Concern about social awareness issues**

Participants were given a list of 16 social awareness issues and asked to indicate how concerned they were about these issues on a scale of 1 (not at all concerned) to 10 (extremely concerned).

Four were environmental issues: Climate change; Pollution; Deforestation; Climate Justice. Of these, three were included in the CSIRO survey and the fourth, Climate Justice<sup>1</sup>, was included to encourage discussion about this relatively new term, as it was expected that few people would have heard of it.

Another five items were included in the CSIRO survey and were unrelated to climate change or the environment: The Australian economy, terrorism (split into terrorism in Australia and terrorism in the rest of the world, in the current survey but not in the CSIRO survey), drug problems; the cost of living.

The remaining seven items were added as they were thought to be issues of relevance to the Jewish community, or generally important issues which had not been included in the CSIRO survey: Israeli security; Middle East politics; people smuggling/trafficking; anti-Semitism and racism; women's rights; indigenous welfare; asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Section 2: Pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes**

Respondents were asked which of 13 pro-environment behaviours they engage in. Again, some were taken directly from the CSIRO study, to enable comparison

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<sup>1</sup> "Climate Justice" is the need to address the fact that those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are usually those who have done least to cause it.

with the general population, and others were added or adapted on the basis of their relevance to the target audience.

Those behaviours taken from the CSIRO study were:

- I recycle/compost as much household waste as possible
- I switch lights off around the house whenever possible
- I have installed a solar hot water system, or solar panels, in my house
- I am a member of an environmental group or movement
- I have taken part in a conservation activity
- I have contacted a Government member about climate change

The additional behaviour items included in this survey were:

- I recycle plastic packaging in the bins provided in supermarkets
- I recycle used batteries in the bins provided in Aldi stores, or elsewhere
- I avoid using disposable plastic goods eg plates
- I re-use grey water as much as possible
- I take reusable bags when I go shopping

The first two items in the second list above were included with the intention that they would educate respondents as well as elicit information on current behaviours. That is, it was used as an opportunity to increase awareness of the battery recycling facility in Aldi, and the plastic packaging recycling in most supermarkets.

The two attitude items were:

- I feel a moral duty to do something about climate change
- As a Jew I have a religious duty to act on climate change.

For most of these statements the response options were dichotomized into Yes or No. However, there was a 'not applicable' option for the statement about solar panels (for those living in an apartment or in rented accommodation), and for the statement "As a Jew I have a religious duty to act on climate change" for respondents who do not identify as Jewish.

### **Section 3: Comments**

The third section was a comments box with the instruction "Please use the space below to tell us what kind of events you think JECO should be arranging, or make any other comments relevant to this survey or our work."

### **Section 4: Demographic questions**

This included questions on age, gender and religious affiliation.

The question on religious affiliation, "As far as your present feelings about the Jewish religion are concerned, which of these best describes you?" was adapted

from the Gen08 survey (Markus et al, 2011)<sup>2</sup>. The Gen08 survey included two options for identifying as Orthodox – Modern Orthodox and Strictly Orthodox. It was felt this much detail was unnecessary in the current survey, with its anticipated small sample size, and could be misinterpreted. The current survey included a ‘none of the above’ option, which had been unnecessary in Gen08 as it was only for those who “saw themselves as Jewish in any way at all.” It was assumed that not all those attending the In One Voice festival would identify as Jewish.

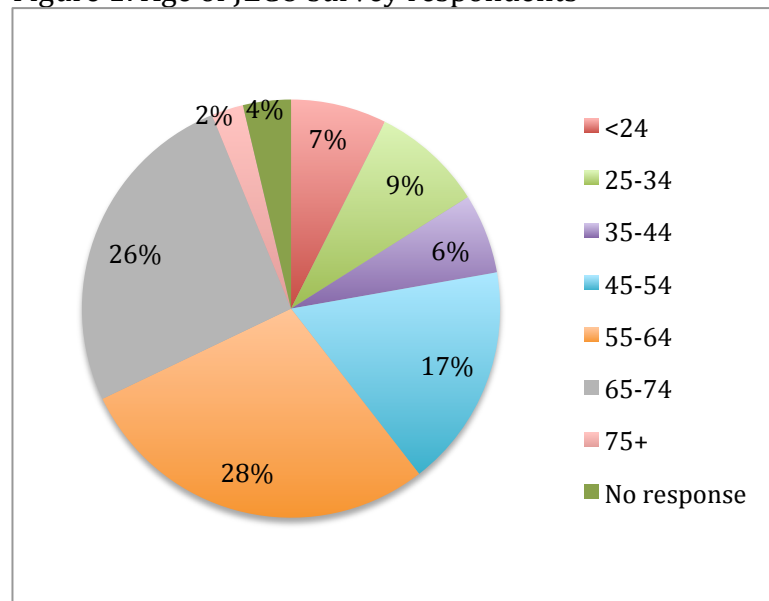
## Results

### Respondents

81 people responded to the survey, of which 51% were female, 43% were male and the remainder did not state their gender.

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of respondents. More than half (53%) were between 45 and 64 years old. It is unknown whether the age distribution was representative of In One Voice festival-goers.

Figure 1: Age of JECO survey respondents



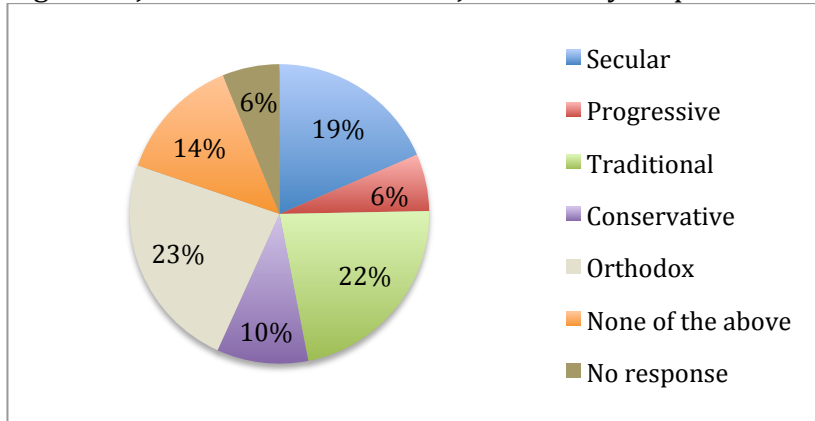
The responses to the question on religious affiliation are shown in Figure 2. The majority (80%) of respondents identified with one of the Jewish affiliation categories provided, with only 20% not responding to the question or selecting

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<sup>2</sup> Markus, Andrew (2011) Jewish Continuity: Report Series on the GEN08 Survey. Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

'none of the above'. It is therefore reasonable to assume that most respondents were members of the Melbourne/Victorian Jewish Community.

Figure 2: Jewish identification of JECO survey respondents



### Concern about Social awareness issues

A mean score was calculated for each of the social awareness issues listed. Table 1 shows the issues ranked by mean score (a higher score indicates greater concern).

Table 1: General and environment concerns

Rank	Issue	Mean score
1	Israeli security	8.5
2	Antisemitism and racism	8.5
3	Pollution	8.2
4	Deforestation	8.1
5	Middle East politics	8.1
6	Terrorism in the rest of the world	8.0
7	Women's rights	7.9
8	Climate Change	7.8
9	Indigenous welfare	7.7
10	People smuggling/trafficking	7.6
11	Drug problems	7.6
12	The cost of living	7.5
13	Other social concerns. Please state.....	7.4
14	Climate justice	7.4
15	Terrorism in Australia	7.4
16	The Australian Economy	7.3
17	Asylum Seekers and Refugees	7.1

Climate change ranked half way down the list of concerns. Pollution and Deforestation were of greater concern to the respondents (in third and fourth place respectively). The fourth environmental issue, Climate Justice, ranked much lower in 14<sup>th</sup> place. This was possibly because respondents weren't clear as to its meaning, and indeed several respondents queried its definition.

Israeli security was the issue that respondents were most concerned about. The other two issues included for their possible relevance to the Jewish community (anti-Semitism and racism, and Middle East politics) were also amongst the top five concerns.

16 respondents selected the 'other' item and five clarified what they were referring to.

- *Increasing disparity between rich and poor*
- *Uneven wealth distribution*
- *Governments not addressing long-term effects of automation*
- *Safety*
- *Media bias*

The first two essentially refer to the same issue.

#### *Comparisons with findings from the CSIRO survey*

Detailed comparisons with the CSIRO survey are difficult as the only concerns which appear in the CSIROs list of general concerns, and in the JECO list are: Cost of living; The Australian economy; drug problems; climate change.

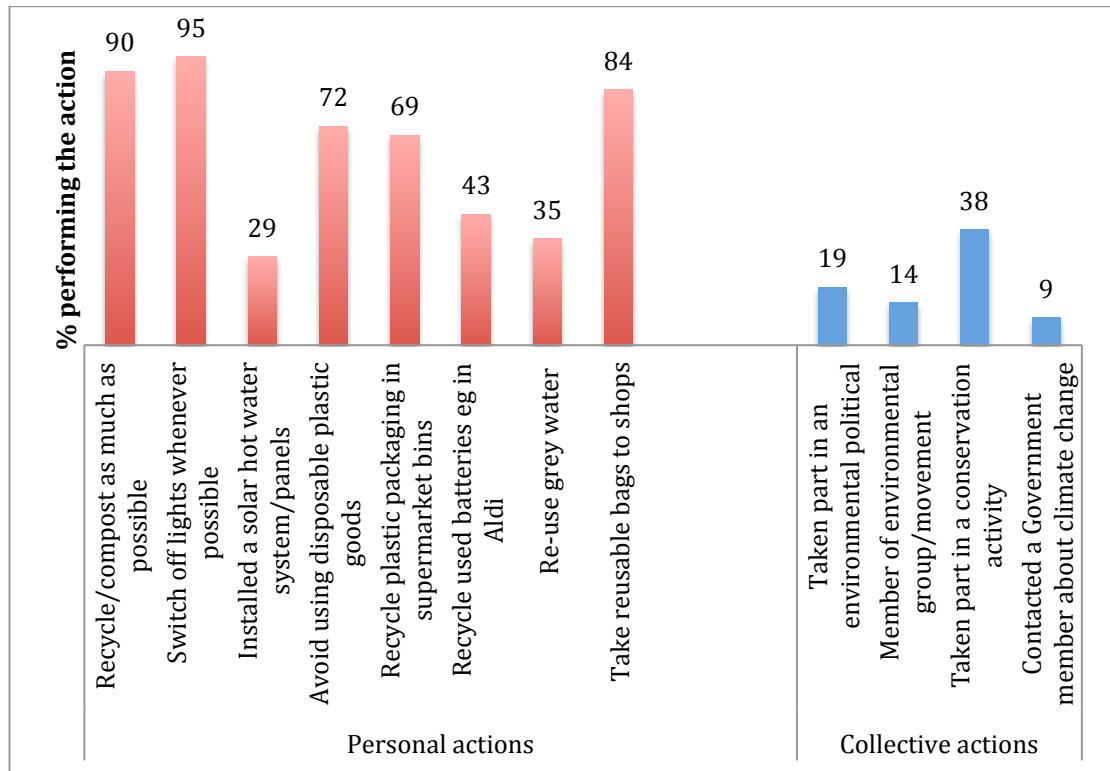
Of those four, climate change was the top concern for JECO survey respondents and the bottom concern for CSIRO respondents. The cost of living and Australian economy were the bottom two concerns for JECO survey respondents and the top two for CSIRO respondents.

Pollution, deforestation and climate change all appeared in the CSIRO lists of environmental concerns (but not general concerns), and in the JECO list of concerns. In both surveys pollution was the greatest concern of the three, and climate change was the lowest concern.

#### **Pro-environmental behaviours**

Figure 3 shows the proportion of respondents who do each of the 12 pro-environmental behaviours, with personal actions on the left and actions taken collectively on the right. With the exception of taking part in a conservation activity, respondents were more likely to engage in personal than collective actions.

Figure 3: Proportion of JECO respondents engaging in different pro-environmental behaviours.

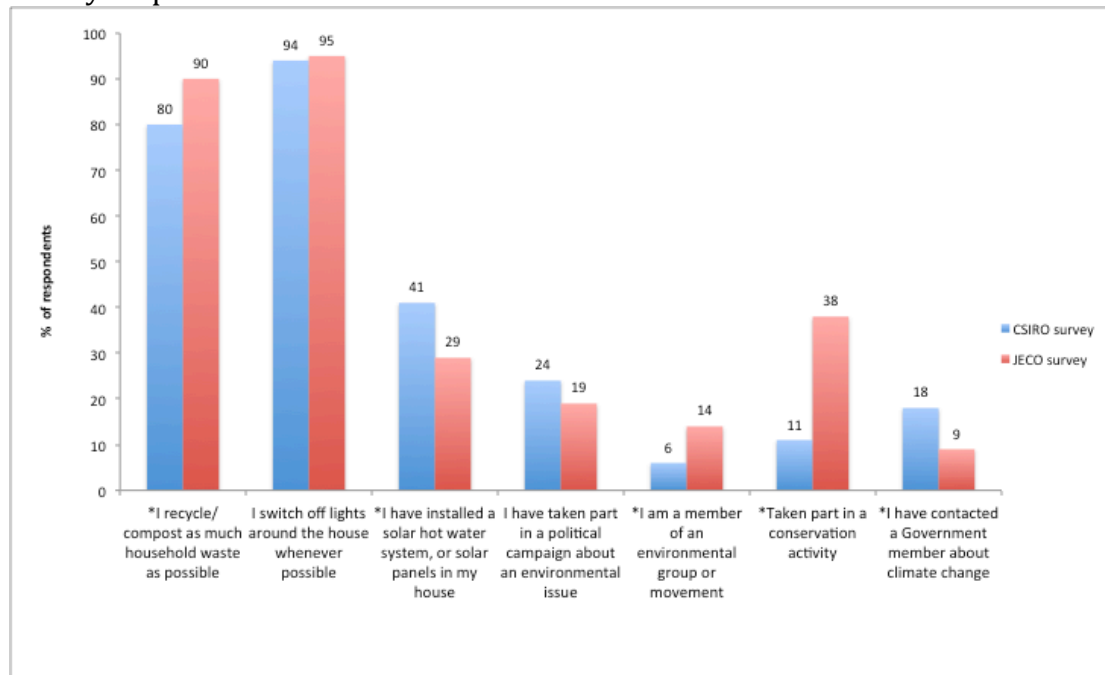


The vast majority of the surveyed group ‘switch off lights around the house whenever possible’ (95%), ‘recycled/composted as much household waste as possible’ (90%) and ‘take reusable bags to shops’ (84%). Nearly three-quarters (72%) avoid using disposable plastic goods. Actions requiring a change to infrastructure were carried out by a smaller proportion of respondents, such as installing solar panels or hot water system (29%) or reusing grey water (35%). A still smaller proportion were involved in activism such as taking part in an environmental political campaign (19%), joining a environmental group (14%) or contacting a government member about climate change (9%).

Respondents on average performed half (six) of the pro-environmental behaviours listed.



Figure 4: Proportion engaging in pro-environmental behaviours: CSIRO and JECO survey respondents



An asterisk by a label indicates that the difference between the proportion of CSIRO respondents and JECO survey respondent is statistically significant (chi-square,  $p < 0.05$ ).

In comparison to CSIRO respondents (the general Australian population (see footnote 1)), more JECO survey respondents recycle/compost household waste, belong to an environmental movement or group and have taken part in conservation activity. However, in comparison to CSIRO responders, fewer of JECO survey respondents have installed solar hot water/solar panels, or contacted a Government member about climate change.

### Attitudes

Most (80%) of respondents agreed with the statement “I feel a moral duty to do something about climate change”, but fewer than half (48%) agreed with the statement “As a Jew I have a religious duty to act on climate change” (excluding those responding ‘n/a’ to this item).

These attitudes seem unrelated to performance of pro-environmental behaviours: Those who feel a moral duty to act on climate change reported a mean of six pro-environmental actions, whereas those who did not feel a moral duty reported a mean of five pro-environmental behaviours. This finding was exactly the same for the question on a religious duty (those who felt a duty performed an average of six behaviours and those who didn’t performed an average of five behaviours).

## Comments

17 respondents made comments in the box provided. The substantive ones are as follows.

*“More for youth: in schools, weekend events/family, contact all religious community sectors”*

*“Teach kids and families about recycling and cleaning up rubbish and respect the land we live in.”*

*“Happy to help” (phone number supplied)*

*“Contacting the council to offer green bins”*

*“If we all stopped driving our cars on just one day a week (Friday for Muslims, Saturday for Jews and Sunday for Christians) we would be 1/7 on the way to limiting fossil fuel consumption. “*

*“Workshops, activities “*

*“Something hands on kids/families “*

*“Keep going especially with young people. And Jews are dreadful ie plastics/recycling etc”*

*“Perhaps partnering with student scientists and organisations at Monash or Melbourne “*

*“Young professional meetups, green space making, gardening, community garden”*

*“Films, talks, discussions, info about wider community eco events, talks, talks articles to Jewish groups”*

## Discussion

Due to the informal sampling procedure used in this survey, it is difficult to draw absolute conclusions regarding the findings. It is not unreasonable to assume that those who were prepared to complete a survey about sustainability and climate change already had some interest in these topics. Furthermore, the incentive of energy-saving devices is also more likely to appeal to those who recognize the environmental benefits of using such devices (although of course many of them have co-benefits such as reducing energy bills).

Nevertheless, the survey was completed by festival-goers from across the demographic and religious spectrum, and it was encouraging to discover that members of the community are concerned about climate change and engage in behaviours to protect the environment. It was interesting that a sense of moral or religious duty to act on climate change was not related to the number of actions respondents undertook to protect the environment. It is possible that pro-environmental actions were taken for economic reasons, or to protect the environment in ways no directly related to climate change for example waste reduction.

The fact that fewer than half felt a religious duty to act on climate change but 80% felt a moral duty indicates that this isn't seen as a specifically "Jewish" issue even to those who see it as an important issue. This may be important for

understanding why the profile of JECO remains low in the community. It also points to the importance of religious leaders talking to their communities about the Jewish imperative to protect our planet. This would promote a sense of religious responsibility to do so, which may be a strong motivator for some in the community to act.

It was unsurprising that Israeli security and Middle-East politics ranked high in the list of concerns, and validates the assumption that the respondents were typical of the Jewish Community. It is worthy of note, though, that not all respondents shared these concerns, even amongst those who identified as Jewish.

Contacting a government member about climate change is one of the most effective actions that people can take in the fight against climate change. The fact that fewer JECO survey respondents have done so in comparison to the general Australian population suggests that a Jewish environmental organization could be useful by encouraging the community to take more action of this sort, for example by producing sample letters.

There is widespread use of disposable plastic goods at community events, most of which are sent to landfill after a very small period of usefulness. This practice is detrimental to the environment due to the materials and energy required to make the goods (plates, cups, tablecloths etc). The barriers to using reusable crockery are likely to be related to Kashrut issues, storage space and burden of washing up after large events. However, three-quarters of respondents in this survey avoid using disposable plastics which indicates there is a real desire to move away from them at communal events.

There was no rigorous evaluation of the second and third aims of this study (to use the survey to engage festival-goers in discussion, and to inform festival goers about issues such as climate justice and the facility to recycle batteries in Aldi stores. However, anecdotally the survey was successful in these aims, and JECO representatives recall interesting and lively discussions with respondents.

## **Acknowledgments**

JECO wishes to thank all the In One Voice festival-goers who kindly took the time to complete the survey.

Thank you also to Evelyn Flitman, Tom Osborn, Jonathan Keren-Black, Helen Gardner and Paul Gardner for assisting with the content of the survey and commenting on drafts of the report.

## **Correspondence**

Queries and correspondence regarding this survey should be directed to [info@jeco.org.au](mailto:info@jeco.org.au).