

Summary of Results

Environmental Protection Gaining Further Importance for Citizens

In response to an open-ended question regarding today's most significant problems in Germany, 25% of respondents spontaneously name environmental protection (2004: 18%, 2002: 14%). Environmental protection has climbed in the rankings from fourth place in 2000 and 2002 to third place in 2004 to its current position in second place. The increasing importance of environmental protection can be traced back most clearly to the fact that the general public is more and more conscious of the worldwide climate change.

When confronted with a variety of political fields of duty, 50% of the German population perceives environmental protection as "very important" (2004: 45%). Thus, environmental protection is ranked seventh among the most important political duties and responsibilities (2004: Rank 8).

Germany Should be on the Cutting Edge of International Climate Protection Policies

That's what 67% of Germans are demanding. In comparison to the last few years, the number of people who support Germany's role on the cutting edge has increased dramatically (2002: 47%, 2004: 56%). The problem of global warming is growing more and more important to the general public. 62% of Germans believe that Germany cannot overcome the problems that result from climate change.

Development of Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency, and a Phasing-out of Nuclear Power Widely Accepted

For 59% of German citizens, gaining independence from oil and gas by using renewable energy sources is one of the major environmental tasks at hand. 87% demand a consistent upgrade to renewable energy sources. Close to 90% favor further developments in solar energy sources and over 70% would like to see expansions in offshore wind power.

The majority would like to put nuclear power to rest. Two-thirds of German citizens would like to maintain the previously agreed upon phase-out of nuclear power or even expedite it.

In addition, according to close to 100% of the population, the industry should be required to offer more energy-saving products.

The Government Should Do More for the Environment

70% of Germans are of the opinion that the government should do more to protect the environment (2004: 63%). As a result, Germans are hoping for a stronger economy: nearly 70% believe that a consistent environmental policy would have a positive effect on the competitive capabilities of the economy.

Most people answered the open question regarding what the German government can do to protect the environment today rather generally by saying that the government should legislate further laws and guidelines for environmental protection. The second most popular wish of the citizens is that the government advance alternative and renewable energy sources. This confirms that Germans have a strong preference for a modern energy policy in comparison to other environmental tasks.

Umweltbewusstsein 2006

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Critical View of Environmental Quality

One-third of Germans rate the quality of the environment in Germany as “rather poor,” which is almost double the number in 2004. While two-thirds of the respondents rate Germany with a “very good” or even “quite good” environmental quality, this score was significantly higher in 2004 (at 82%).

The estimations for the environment’s global proportions are rather negative. 91% consider the worldwide quality of the environment “rather poor” or “very bad.” Broad perceptions of climate change seem to play a critical role in this assessment.

The number of those who hold environmental problems responsible for significant strains on physical health and well-being has increased. A little more than one out of four Germans considers him- or herself to be suffering under environmental problems.

Among all of the diverse health stressors, particulate matter, or dust pollution, is seen as the No. 1 health hazard. One out of five people holds chemicals prevalent in everyday products and harmful substances in food responsible for the strains on physical health.

Diversity of Species and Nature are Important to People

Many people are conscious of the loss of biological diversity. 95% of the respondents see the loss of biological diversity as a very big problem. 92% find that the state should act immediately in order to prevent such losses.

Environmental protection maintains a high rating. Tourist opportunities that are close to nature, such as visiting national parks, enjoy great popularity.

38% of Germans—more than one-third of the population—view growing genetically modified plants as “very dangerous”. 41% deem it “somewhat dangerous.” Almost three-fourths of the respondents would “rather not” or “definitely not” buy genetically modified products.

Interest in Personal Involvement Increasing

Interest in personal, voluntary involvement to protect the environment and natural resources has increased dramatically: 45% of respondents can imagine getting involved accordingly (2004: 33%).

It is becoming a trend to purchase organic products: 41% indicate that they “always” or “often” buy organic products. Compared with 2004, this trend represents an increase of 8%. There has also been an increase in the selective purchase of regional fruits and vegetables.

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