

Climate change among top 3 concerns for South Africans

Epson's latest Climate Barometer survey found that climate change is the third most pressing concern facing South Africans, after poverty (68.4%) and the rising prices of goods and services (64.2%). 58% of respondents cited climate concerns as one of the biggest issues facing the world today.

The predominant sentiment among South Africans regarding climate change is one of fear, with 36.7% expressing fearfulness and a third expressing anxiety.



Source: kamchatka via [Freepik](#)

“With challenges such as power cuts and record unemployment levels in the country stunting economic growth, it’s no surprise that South Africans’ main concerns centre on issues like poverty and inflation for a second year in a row,” says Timothy Thomas, country manager at Epson South Africa. “The fact that climate change remains a major concern in our market is also telling of a growing environmental awareness among South Africans.”

With perceptions of those born after the first COP conference in 1995 explored in greater depth in the 2023 Barometer, statistics revealed an interesting discrepancy between people aged 29 and under, and other generations. Gen COP for instance were less likely to cite climate change as one of the biggest issues facing the world today (55.6%) than those aged 30 and over (58.9%). Those in the 55+ age group were the most likely (74.2%).

Gen COP are also notably more optimistic, with 71.7% believing in averting a climate crisis in their lifetime compared to 59.6% of those aged 30 and over. When compared to 2022 statistics, the overall proportion of South Africans who share this optimism has increased from 56.6% to 62.5% in this year's Barometer.

Addressing the climate emergency

There is a promising trend of increased awareness and action among both individuals and businesses in South Africa when it comes to addressing the looming climate emergency. Many South Africans are recognising their role and responsibility in making a positive impact, not only in their personal lives but also within their social and professional circles.

"It's heartening to see South Africans adopting more environmentally conscious practices and advocating for change. From making sustainable shopping choices to becoming champions for change among their peers, South Africans are stepping up to make a meaningful difference," he says.

Comparing the findings of Epson's Climate Barometer from 2021 to this year, there has been notable progress. In 2021, 63.3% of respondents were already taking steps to reduce their plastic use, 62% were improving their recycling habits, and 60.3% were opting for walking and cycling over driving. In 2023, a higher percentage, 85.1% of South Africans, have committed to using recyclable goods, 71.3% are actively working to reduce plastic usage, and 65% are choosing sustainable transportation options like walking or cycling.

Climate change, an individual responsibility

South African businesses are also expected to play their part in reducing their carbon footprint and actively contributing to the fight against climate change. The 2023 Barometer results reveal that 60% of South African respondents anticipate local businesses and companies to invest more in environmental technologies, and nearly 55% believe that companies should prioritise efforts to improve recycling and the reuse of products.

"South African businesses have a crucial role to play in mitigating the impact of climate change. We must make a greater effort to reduce the environmental impact of our manufacturing and internal processes while also setting an example by adopting eco-friendly practices," he explains.

As South African businesses step up to the plate, they have an opportunity to lead by example. By investing in eco-friendly technologies and embracing sustainable practices, they will not only reduce their carbon footprint but also inspire others to follow suit. This proactive approach aligns with the global call for greater corporate responsibility in the face of climate change.

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