



## Headlines

- » 96% of people agreed that the aim of environmental regulations should be to improve the environment.
- » A majority (68%) believed regulation does not restrict growth of the NSW economy but 23% think it does.
- » 77% rejected the idea of lowering regulation in NSW.
- » A majority (55%) knew that environmental laws have not been relaxed.
- » The proportion of people surveyed who think environmental regulation is too lax decreased by 5–10% from 2003 to 2006 for most sectors.
- » 20% of people thought that regulations are too strict for the farming and agriculture sector.
- » People wanted regulatory tools used to improve environmental problems.
- » The demand for all levels of government to do a lot more to protect the environment increased by 4–5% from 2003 to 2006.
- » Men were less in favour of regulation than women.

*"I don't think voluntary stuff works; I think you've got to have the big stick. Take a place like Singapore; it's the cleanest place you've ever seen."*

Man (40), Hurstville

*"Self-regulation doesn't work. You've got to have an independent umpire."*

Woman, mid-40s, Sydney.

### Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?

- Contains the results of two telephone surveys with a representative sample of 1721 people from across NSW
- Includes analysis of demographic differences with all questions
- Includes findings from focus group discussions about people's views of the environment and their own environmental activities

## The most important environmental initiative for the NSW Government

There is some support for increasing environmental regulation. People were asked what the most important initiatives for the NSW government were in relation to environmental problems. Tools for achieving change, such as regulation and education, received a similar level of separate mentions to the major environmental issues apart from water, though these issues also included some mention of such tools.

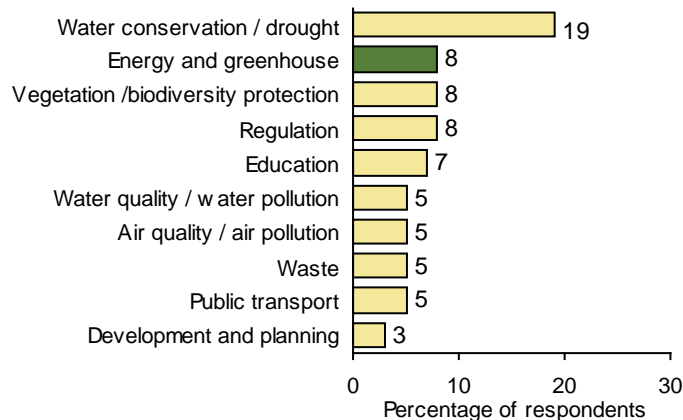
Use of regulation was the equal second most mentioned initiative, with 8% of all responses. However, with the ascendancy of water issues in the 2006 survey, this support has declined (from a high of 14% in 2000).

Particular initiatives mentioned include:

- Increasing regulation- making laws harsher or increasing fines
- Increasing enforcement- enforcing laws more strictly
- Increasing regulation of industries.

More men than women nominated increasing regulation to solve environmental problems (10% compared to 6%). More Sydney residents (10%) nominated increasing regulation than Hunter/Illawarra residents (3%).<sup>1</sup>

### Most important environmental initiative for the NSW Government in the next few years



<sup>1</sup> Only those groups between which differences are statistically significant are reported throughout this fact sheet



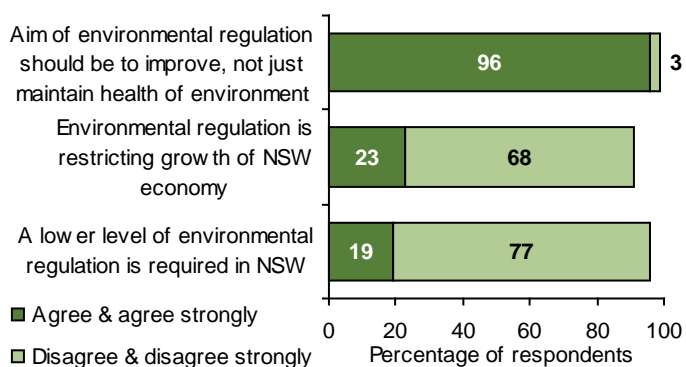


## Knowledge about environmental laws

55% knew that laws affecting environmental offenders have not been relaxed. This question has the highest number of correct responses of all the knowledge questions in the survey but is at a slightly lower level than in surveys since 1997 (60% correct in 2003).

## Views on environmental regulation in NSW

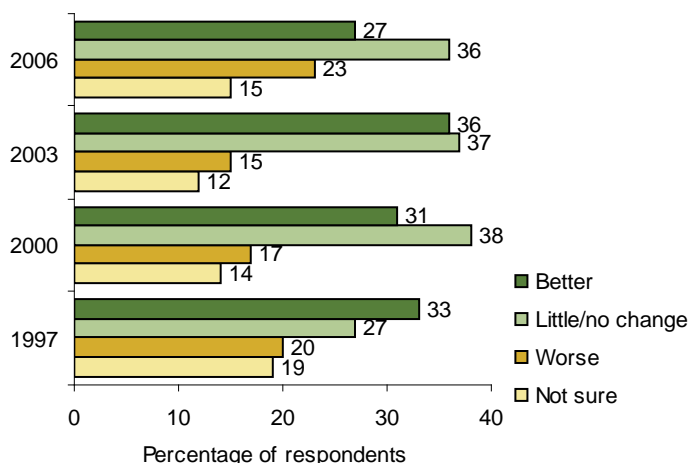
There was a strong consensus that the aim of regulation should be to improve the environment, not merely to maintain it (96% agree, 42% strongly). A large majority rejected propositions that lower levels of environmental regulation are required (77%) and that environmental regulation is restricting the NSW economy (68%). While there is strong support for the use of regulation to improve the NSW environment, around 20% considered such regulation affects economic growth and preferred lower levels of regulation.



## Views on improvement or deterioration in enforcing environmental regulation in NSW

In 2006, belief that things are getting better in prosecuting environmental offenders was at its lowest level (27%) since the question was first asked in 1997, and the belief that it is getting worse at its highest (23%). However, a majority (51%) think there has been no change or are not sure.

### Prosecuting environmental offenders



## Demand for government to do more

Doing more (a little or a lot more) to protect the environment was most likely to be considered necessary for all levels of government, manufacturing industry and individuals, and least necessary for community groups (40%) and farmers (52%).

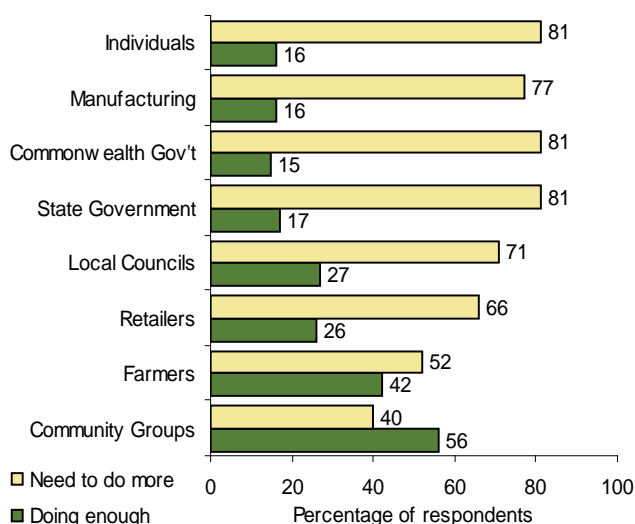
Should do more:

- State government – 81%
- Individuals – 81%
- Commonwealth government – 80%
- Manufacturing industry – 77%
- Local Councils – 71%

The demand for government to do a lot more increased from 2003 to 2006: Commonwealth government 50% to 54%, State government 43% to 50% and local government 32% to 38%. On the other hand, recognition that individuals need to do more (a little or a lot) has declined slightly from 84% in 2003 to 81%, although the emphasis shifted to needing to do 'a lot' more.

However, people's desire for governments to do more to protect the environment covered a range of measures including education, economic incentives and infrastructure, as well as regulation.

### Environmental protection by community sector



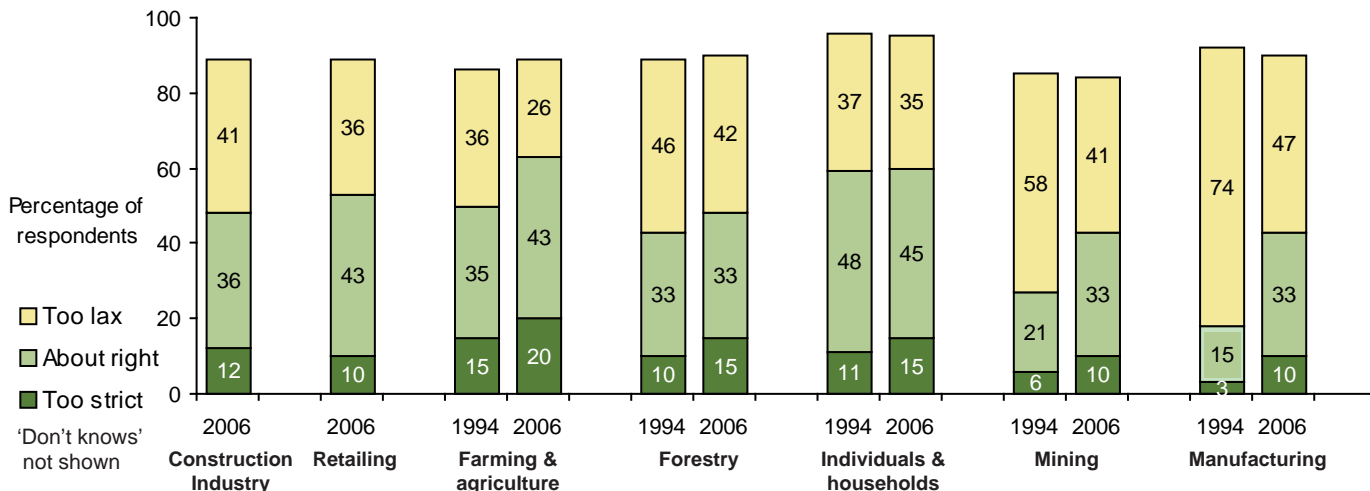
Women were more likely than men to believe that the State Government (83% compared to 78%), local councils (74% compared to 67%), and individuals (84% compared to 78%) should do much more to protect the environment in NSW.

Those with a degree or trade qualification, and those from an English speaking background, were also more likely to believe this.



## Strictness of environmental regulations for community sectors

For each of the seven groups in the graph below, people were asked whether the environmental regulations that apply to these groups are much too strict, about right, a bit too lax or much too lax. Views in 2006 are compared to the first survey in 1994.

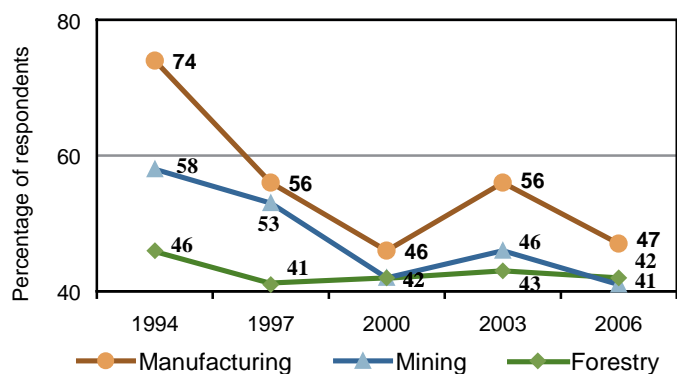


Relatively low numbers thought regulations too strict for any sector, with farming and agriculture highest at 20%, up from 15% in 1994.

While less than half believed that regulation is about right for any sector, for most sectors this belief increased slightly in 2006 (increase of 3–5% from 2003). Farming and agriculture, retailing, and individuals and households are the only sectors for which regulation was considered about right or too strict by over 50%.

Across most sectors, there were less people indicating that regulation is too lax (decrease of 5–10% since 2003) with an overall substantial decline since 1994 in people thinking this about the manufacturing, mining and farming sectors.

Regulation is 'too lax'



Despite this decline, in 2006 the greatest proportion of people considered environmental regulations to be too lax for the manufacturing (47%), forestry (42%), mining (41%) and construction industries (41%).

Women were more likely than men to believe that the government should increase the strictness of environmental regulations for the mining as well as construction industries.

## Views on controls in National Parks in NSW

70% agreed that there should be more controls on the things people are allowed to do in national parks.

In a further question about strictness of controls in national parks, 20% thought existing controls are too lax, similar to the proportion (22%) who strongly agreed that there should be more controls in national parks. However, 57% thought strictness of controls regulating what people can do in national parks is about right.

## Demographic segments and trends

There are some overall trends in the responses of some demographic groups about regulation.

**Gender** – More men mentioned regulation as an environmental initiative in an unprompted question, but when asked directly men were less likely than women to favour regulation. They were more likely to say environmental regulations are restricting the economy (27% compared to 20%) and to agree that a lower level of regulation is required in NSW (22% to 16%). More men believed that controls are too strict in national parks and were more likely to say regulation is too strict for all sectors, especially in forestry (17% compared to 12%), mining (13% to 7%) and manufacturing (13% to 8%).

**Location** – Sydney residents were most likely to nominate regulation the most important environmental initiative for the NSW government (10%, Hunter/Illawarra 3%). Those in rural areas were most likely to say environmental regulations are restricting the economy (38% compared to 19–23%), and that a lower regulation is required. Sydneysiders were least likely (15%) and residents of small towns most likely (27%) to say that controls are too strict in national parks. People in Sydney and small towns wanted state government to do more for the environment, those in the Hunter and Illawarra thought local councils should do more.

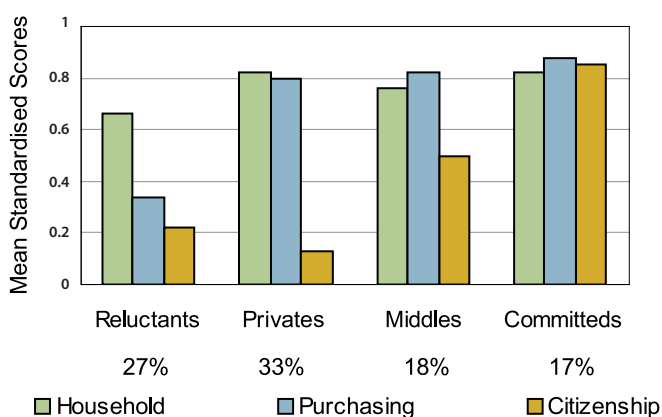


## Community behaviour segments

Pro-environmental behaviours surveyed in *Who Cares?* cluster into three types: in-household behaviours (e.g. saving water, energy, avoiding stormwater pollution), green purchasing (shopping decisions) and environmental citizenship (e.g. Landcare, community participation, advocacy).

Based on the extent to which they engaged in behaviours of these different types, those surveyed were allocated to four segments, called *Reluctants*, *Privates*, *Middles* and *Committeds*\*. The graph shows the level of involvement in each behaviour type for those in each segment and the proportion of the population falling into each segment.

Behaviour profiles for community segments



\* Different names to the focus group research are used to avoid confusion with the findings of that part of the research.

## Responses on regulation

While people from all segments thought that governments and industry are not doing enough for the environment, there was a clear gradation with the level and breadth of engagement with pro-environmental behaviour. Considerably fewer *Reluctants* believed the various community sectors needed to do more, while the *Committeds* segment was more likely than others to believe all sectors need to do a lot more.

There is a similar trend in beliefs about strictness of regulation in various industries. *Committeds* were most likely to think that regulation is too lax for all industries, with *Reluctants* and *Privates* least likely to say this.

*Committeds* (31%) were also more likely to think that things had become worse over the previous three years in prosecution of environmental offenders than the *Reluctants* and *Middles* (18%).

In knowledge about environmental regulation, *Middles* (59%) were the most likely to know that laws affecting environmental offenders have not been relaxed and *Privates* (52%) were the least likely.

*Reluctants* (23%) were the most likely to cite the water restrictions as the reason they reduced their water consumption

## Qualitative research - focus groups

Focus group discussions were also held with people grouped on the basis of their level of environmental interest, knowledge and behaviours. These groups, called *Limiteds*, *Moderates* and *Strongs*, were quite different in their perceptions of the environment, understanding of environmental concepts and commitment to behaviours and activities that protect the environment.

Degree of environmental interest, knowledge and behaviours



## Responses on regulation

These discussions indicated that for the less environmentally motivated segments (the *Limiteds* and *Moderates*), regulation is a motivator to adopt pro-environmental behaviours such as water conservation and not littering. The *Limiteds*, in particular, were not really concerned about environmental issues, and were reluctant to engage in what they considered to be 'green' behaviour. As a result, they tended only to engage in behaviours that either had personal benefits or were enforced, such as water conservation.

This research also found people from all groups thought that governments and industry were not doing enough for the environment, and were not showing real commitment to achieving substantial outcomes.

## Achieving Change

Various measures in the *Who Cares?* research indicate support for a range of tools in effecting change, including economic incentives, education, infrastructure provision, and regulation and enforcement, either directly in response to specific questions or as key motivators or barriers for specific behaviours.

Each of these strategies are not 'stand-alone' answers to any given issue. All issues need to draw on as many different tools and means as are appropriate to the problem and the particular audience(s).

Although some people will continue to be reluctant about adopting any behaviour involving additional cost or effort, it is possible to gain a relatively high level of compliance if, for example, regulation is combined with steps to make the behaviour easier, or if it is shown to be important or to save money without a high level of initial outlay. Regulation appears to be effective across all groups, even if they are reluctant to engage in the behaviour for other reasons.

## More details

*Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?* is available in print from the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW on 131 555 and online at:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/)

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