

News Release

Contacts:

Marisa Grimes, +1646-654-5759

GLOBAL CONCERN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE COOLS OFF

Concern for climate change has declined in the past two years with many countries recording a double digit fall, according to new research released today by The Nielsen Company and the Oxford University Institute of Climate Change. In the latest round of the survey, conducted in October 2009, 37 percent of global consumers said they were very concerned about climate change (compared to 41 percent in 2007), with the highest levels of concern expressed in Latin America (57%) and Asia Pacific (42%). However, North America lagged global regions with 25 percent of respondents saying they were “very concerned” about climate change.

Thirty five out of the fifty four countries surveyed recorded a decline in climate change concern, led by Poland (23%) and Canada (22%). Climate Change concern also fell by 18 percent in Portugal and 17 percent in Taiwan, Spain and Sweden.

“The global recession and economic woes temporarily knocked the climate change issue off the top line agenda, but as the recession is now beginning to recede, we expect the Copenhagen Summit may push this important issue to the forefront again,” said Jonathan Banks, Business Insights Director Europe, The Nielsen Company. Nielsen/Oxford University research shows that concern and awareness for climate change and the environment peaked in 2007 at the time of the Live Earth concerts and the launch of Al Gore’s acclaimed documentary ‘An Inconvenient Truth’.

The nations most concerned about climate change were Philippines (78%), Indonesia (66%), Thailand and Mexico (62%). The Philippines posted the highest increase in climate change concern in the past two years, up 14 percent, followed by Vietnam (+9%).

“These are countries which have all experienced the direct effects of climate change through freak weather conditions and natural disasters,” said Banks. Typhoon Ketsana devastated both the Philippines and Vietnam in September, while Indonesia has been struck by two earthquakes and tsunami warnings this year.

Concern for climate change in Indonesia and Brazil, the two most concerned countries in 2007, has decreased by 10 and 18 percent respectively in the most recent survey.

Globally, air and water pollution followed by climate change are the top three environmental concerns for the global population. “It’s not surprising that water and air pollution top consumers’ environmental concerns as these are measurable and visible to the population compared with the concept of climate change, which unfortunately many people only take seriously when human lives are endangered through freak weather patterns,” said Banks.

Concern for climate change in China and India increased six and one percent respectively in the last two years. "These countries are among the world's largest emitters and this study shows that actions by their governments are responding to citizen concerns," said Timmons Roberts, Director of Environmental Studies at Brown University, USA.

GOVERNMENT VS. INDIVIDUALS: DIVIDED VIEWS ON SOLUTIONS

Globally, the majority of consumers still believe that the main responsibility for solving climate change should lie with their governments. In October 2009, 36 percent of global consumers said that governments should restrict companies' emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollution, closely followed by 34 percent who said there should be major government-led initiatives for research into scientific and technological solutions such as low emission cars, houses and renewable energy. About one in three global consumers also believe there should be government incentives (tax breaks or subsidies) to individuals for good, less or non-polluting behavior and that the population should recycle waste when possible.

"Regional differences prevail with respect to how consumers feel about the capability of their own governments to handle these issues," observed Banks. Europeans and Latin Americans feel most favourable about major government-led research into climate change solutions, while in Asia Pacific, consumers prefer that governments restrict companies' emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants. Consumers in Middle East/Africa are most in favour of major government investment into improving public transport systems. North Americans, however, are the least in favour of government intervention or action towards climate change and top regional rankings for personal actions to combat climate change such as recycling waste, decreasing personal energy usage and switching to more efficient light bulbs, fixtures and electrical appliances.

WHO DOES THE PUBLIC TRUST?

Climate scientists remain the most trusted source of information about climate change, with 58 percent of global consumers believing climate scientists more than any other source. "Trust in scientists has been reported consistently and frequently across these 54 responding nations of the world. This is an important finding as the intensely policy-relevant work of climate scientists - both natural and social - informs negotiations in Copenhagen at the UN Conference of Parties meeting," said Max Boykoff, Assistant Professor of Environmental studies, University of Colorado-Boulder, USA.

The Nielsen/Oxford University Environment and Climate Change Barometer is an annual survey which measures consumer attitudes towards the environment and climate change, trust of information sources and climate change solutions among 27,548 online consumers in 54 countries.

#

About The Nielsen Company

The Nielsen Company is a global information and media company with leading market positions in marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement, online intelligence, mobile measurement, trade shows and business publications (Billboard, The Hollywood Reporter, Adweek). The privately held company is active in more than 100 countries, with headquarters in New York, USA. For more information, please visit, www.nielsen.com

The Environment Change Institute at Oxford University focuses on environmental change across the natural and social sciences with an orientation to applied and public policy. ECI plays a leading role in three of the UK Government's main climate research initiatives: the UK Climate Impacts Programmes (UKCIP), the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, and the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC). ECI increasingly engages with the public through Oxfordshire ClimateXchange, GhostForest, the Tipping Point Arts & Culture project, and media analysis. www.eci.ox.ac.uk