

Italians: the climate crisis is the greatest concern

- Nearly 4 out of 5 Italians consider the climate the main global challenge, while in the 18-24 bracket the ratio rises to 9 out of 10
- Compared to a year ago, the number of those who consider the climate issue as a problem of utmost gravity increases: from 49% to 54%.
- Between the need to improve the environment and increase employment, for the first time concern for the environment outweighs concern for the employment situation, for 54% of Italians
- At 84%, the proportion of Italians in favour of increasing wind and solar power in the energy mix of the future remains high

With the United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP26) organised by the UK in collaboration with Italy now behind us, the second SWG survey commissioned by the British Embassy confirms the green soul of Italians, recording a growing concern compared to a year ago for the devastating effects of the climate crisis.

[Italians and climate change presented online on YouTube – in Italian only](#)

The challenge of climate change

While concern about the spread of infectious diseases has tended to remain stable (from 74% to 72%), concern about climate change has risen from 74% to 79%, with 75% of respondents considering poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water the second most urgent problem. The figure for those who consider climate change to be a problem of the utmost gravity is also growing, for more than 1 Italian in 2 (54% compared to 49% in 2020). Young people (18-24 year-olds) are particularly sensitive, with 89% concerned about climate change. Among the global challenges, in terms of seriousness, the economic situation (58%) and wars (36%) follow.

The role of the individual

The number of people who believe it is important to protect the environment and preserve it from damage caused by pollution remains stable and very high. Nearly 9 out of 10 Italians (85%) would like to see greater involvement by the individual in protecting nature, which is currently considered insufficient.

Global warming

The percentage of those who fear global warming is stable at around 85%, an issue of even greater concern among the unemployed and centre-left voters (91%). The high level of concern leads a clear majority of Italians (8 out of 10) to believe that there is no excessive alarmism about the fate of the planet, with the over-64s (85%) and university graduates (87%) more aware of the risks arising from the current situation.

Environmental protection

Environmental protection is a real necessity for 3 Italians out of 5 (61%, a decrease of 4 percentage points compared to the previous survey). This is especially true for younger people (67%) and university graduates (67%). Only 16% consider protecting the environment as a hope that is not compatible with economic development. To underline the environmentalism of Italians, between improving the environment and increasing employment, for the first time more than half of Italians choose the environment (56% vs. 44%).

Sustainable lifestyles and consumption

Among the choices they are willing to make in the direction of greater environmental sustainability, Italians confirm their propensity to reduce the use of disposable plastic items (67%) while the proportion of those who claim to pay more attention to the choice of household appliances based on their energy class increases (from 60% to 66%). There has been a significant increase in the number of people who have bought a hybrid or electric car in the last twelve months, from 6% to 10%. There has also been a rise in the number of those (from 83% to 85%) who say that the level of CO2 emissions plays a role in their choice of new car to buy and, of these, half indicate the hybrid engine as their preferred solution. It is in the 34-44 age group that this percentage increases to 57%, while the attractiveness of gas cars and conventional engines decreases. With regard to the adoption of more sustainable lifestyles in the future, the willingness of more than 9 out of 10 Italians to recycle more and reduce waste production and, at the same time, to use fewer disposable items, is confirmed as increasing slightly. Almost 8 out of 10 also say they are more inclined to buy less clothing to reduce their impact on the environment (from 72% to 78%).

The energy mix

The figure from the last survey confirms that 84% of Italians are in favour of increasing the share of renewable energy sources (wind and solar) in the energy mix to meet future needs, while there is a slight increase in those who agree with the need for the country to prepare for future extreme climate events (72%). More than half of respondents (57%) agree with stopping government subsidies for fossil fuels. Familiarity and attitude towards COP26 Nearly 8 in 10 Italians (77%) say they know what COP26, hosted by the UK in Glasgow in partnership with Italy, is all about, with men and over-55s the most aware (86%), compared to just 25% in the previous survey.

Commenting on the survey data, the Chargé d'Affaires, Eleanor Sanders said:

after a year that has seen Italy and the UK working side by side with the G7, G20 and COP26 Presidencies, it is important to note how the sensitivity of Italians, already very high at the end of 2020, to climate and sustainability issues, has increased. In particular, environmental protection and the development of more sustainable and resilient economic growth models and lifestyles are key areas in which our countries have shown they can play a leading role. I am sure that these issues will remain high on our bilateral agenda with Italy in the months and years to come.