

AMERIN Update

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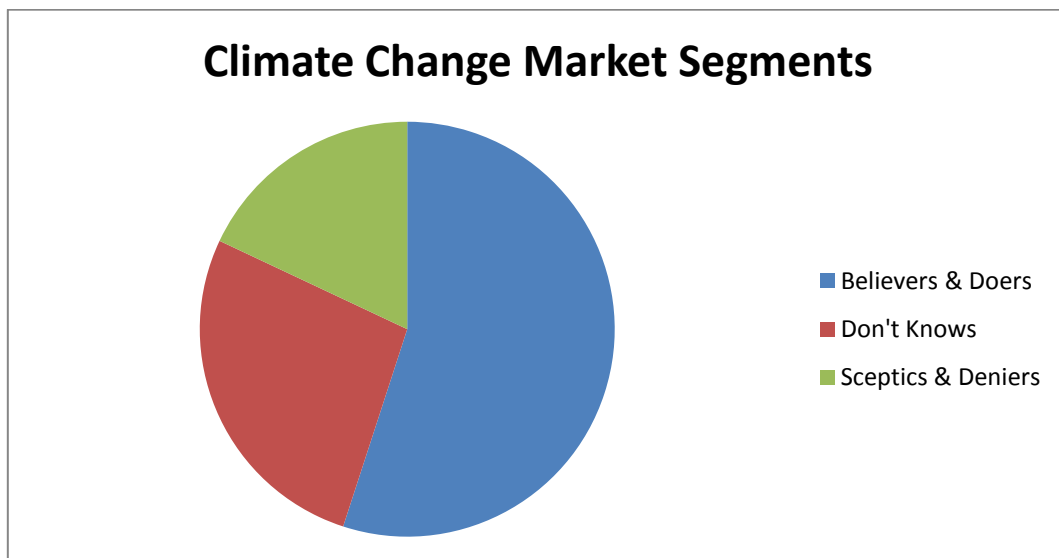
Essential reading for leaders and policy makers responsible for developing strategies to reverse the effects of climate change and reduce carbon, energy & water costs

This update features groundbreaking research on **'Beliefs and Actions about Climate Change'** recently undertaken by AMERIN associate and social systems scientist, Dr Merrelyn Emery. We believe this study *is the first report of its kind researching the belief systems and actions surrounding climate change.*

It is a key component of AMERIN's **'Sustainable Future Planning'** program, which is also discussed in this update. Both have important implications for those attempting to develop solutions and widespread commitment to reversing the effects of climate change and in doing so help reduce the carbon, energy & water costs of organisations and communities.

"For people to be motivated to fight climate change they must believe that the phenomenon is real and they must be able to conceive of a world in at least 20 years time. Previous experiences showed that both sources of motivation appeared to be in doubt." Merrelyn Emery, November 2009

The outcomes from Merrelyn's segmentation pilot study of a diverse sample from South-East Australia are summarised as follows. Firstly, a strategic overview of the interrelationships in the survey data shows that there are 3 key climate change market segments, as depicted here.



Each segment is characterised by different beliefs and actions about climate change and therefore requires different strategies to reverse its effects. Understanding these segments provides an essential piece of the systemic puzzle that is presented by climate change. These segments are discussed further below.

Climate change market segment beliefs

Believers & Doers

- Are older, of higher socioeconomic status (SES) and women are probably in the majority.
- They believe in human made climate change because they have noticed the changes taking place around them. These observations are supplemented by the ABC and SBS but not the commercial media.
- In terms of personality, they thrive on their own ideas rather than conventions and prefer to act on the world rather than change themselves.
- Because they believe in their own perceptions, they reject denials of climate change and also arguments that there is no point in doing anything.
- They put their hope in science and think we should move quickly to clean green power and are primarily acting to be safe.
- They see the polluting industries as losers from the threat of climate change.

Don't Knows

- About 30% of this sample didn't know a great deal about climate change and had difficulty answering many of the questions.
- A flat carbon tax solution attracted mainly 'don't knows' as it has not been fully debated
- This group is only shown here to give an indication of the size of the other two clear segments

Sceptics & Deniers

- Are younger, of lower SES and probably mostly male
- They deny the changes taking place around them and use commercial media
- They accept many of the claims of the deniers and believe that the media is hyping up the issue
- They also accept that there is no point in doing anything at the moment because, for example the international community cannot agree on targets
- They are not interested in being safe or taking action as an insurance policy, put little hope in science and do not believe we should be moving quickly to alternative clean energy sources
- They see the polluting industries as winners rather than losers
- In terms of personality, they change their beliefs in response to the world around them, probably to fit in with their crowd

The divisiveness of climate change

This analysis shows that there are only two real segments as the population is split between believers and non-believers. The segmentation is very clear and stark and illustrates the divisiveness of the issue.

Actions taken by different climate change segments

Many of the most popular actions revolve around water and basic commonsense behaviours such as turning lights and appliances off. The least popular actions included taking fewer showers a week, eating less fish, having a worm farm and joining a green group. Only a minority has gone solar so far but about another third is considering installing panels or a water heater.

The patterns of action were very different for **'Believers & Doers'** and **'Sceptic & Deniers'**. **'Believers & Doers'** are aiming for self sufficiency and taking a wide range of actions using clean power, getting back to natural products and processes and attempting to persuade others to go green.

The **'Sceptic & Deniers'** are totally different, rejecting self sufficiency, clean power etc but they are making changes that indicate basic savings and what now seem habitual behaviour for Australians. They are wedded to their cars and convenience and not being 'greenies'.

The study proposed 6 separate solutions to climate change which fell into two groups. The first consists of an emission trading scheme (ETS), clean coal and new technology and the second consists of individuals reducing pollution, moving quickly to green power and a flat tax on carbon. The first group finds favour with the **'Sceptic & Deniers'** while the second is favoured by the **'Believers & Doers'**.

However, in terms of percentages, a majority rejects the ETS, clean coal and almost 50% reject new technology as a solution. The biggest majorities were for individuals doing what they can and moving to green power quickly.

Strategies to reverse the effects of climate change

Each of these market segments requires different strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change. The data from this study makes it clear that one can target either belief systems or people's propensity to take action.

Strategies that change belief systems

The most popular strategy adopted so far seems to be providing information to increase belief. But as Merrelyn Emery points out in her report the problem with this strategy is that information does not change beliefs or behaviour.

If it did, we would all be slim and healthy and there would be no behaviour such as drink driving or domestic violence. *Information theory is a theory failed.*

Merrelyn's study and action research from AMERIN's **'Sustainable Future Planning'** program show that to effectively transform climate change belief systems people need to be able to develop their own sustainable futures.

This was the primary reason we initiated the **'Sustainable Future Planning'** program. It centres on a participative planning workshop specifically designed for organisations and communities that engender effective cultural change for a more resilient and genuinely sustainable future.

The workshop produces people motivated to innovate not only for *ecological sustainability*, but also for *sustainable productivity*. It is designed to enable people to share their perceptions about climate change and work together with shared responsibility to develop and implement their sustainable future plans.

When people are given the opportunity to share their perceptions and reach their own conclusions about climate change in a group they are more likely to change their belief systems than when given information.

Strategies that centre on people's propensity to take action

Acting directly on people's propensity to take action is another strategy that is suggested by the survey data. Even those not inclined to take action because of climate change are making some basic changes to their lifestyle. For instance, some actions appear to be economically motivated or have simply become habitual because of such pressures as water restrictions.

The '**Sustainable Future Planning**' workshops give people the opportunity to discuss what they are doing at home or at work and the savings they have made through such changes.

In community planning workshops where people share their improvement initiatives, some can become very uncomfortable when they see they are in a minority and as such attempt to conform to the group. They want to fit in with their neighbours.

Other strategies

There are other strategies suggested by the segmentation survey data but they are less feasible to implement. How does one convince people, especially those who are hung up on the celebrity cult or titillation and entertainment more generally, to change the channel to the ABC or SBS?

This study suggests that the major target group in terms of both belief and taking action is younger, lower SES males. They are enjoying their lives, their cars and their luxuries such as the heater and the air conditioner and generally have little or no experience of real hardship or the necessity of keeping their eyes and ears open to the real world around them.

As many of our young people are segregated into a subculture that engages in risky behaviour such as binge drinking, communicates extensively both face to face and by electronic gadgets and spends significant amounts of time playing electronic games or watching TV, they have little time to experience the environment first hand or even their close communities. Some feel alienated from their families.

The most obvious strategy is to find those who straddle both the subculture and the mainstream and invite them to workshops like the AMERIN '**Sustainable Future Planning**' workshop that re-unite the two. Their personalities or behavioural preferences indicate that they are likely to change their behaviour in response to what they hear around them.

Developing unique strategies for organisational and community sustainability

The above strategies relating to this particular segmentation study are not detailed or exhaustive. They are merely suggestive as befits a pilot study.

To develop unique strategies for sustainability an organisation or community needs to participate in a participative strategic planning event like the AMERIN '**Sustainable Future Planning**' workshop that is informed by a tailored organisational or community health and climate change survey.

These health surveys incorporate questions that are reliable measures of organisational and community health as well as the climate change segmentation questions.

A tailored organisational or community health survey is designed to:

- Measure people's attitudes towards and knowledge about climate change by providing a coherent illustration of why and how people either believe climate change is happening or are denying it for each participating organisation or community
- Provide an understanding of how public opinion is coming together around the many issues involved in climate change and the actions that people are or are not prepared to take to deal with it
- Produce profiles of those who believe or don't believe in the reality of anthropogenic climate change and outline the sources of these beliefs systems including personal observations of change, media, scientific wisdom and the claims of climate change deniers.
- Detail the different pattern of actions the believers and non-believers are taking together with views of national actions currently being debated
- Identify which factors are encouraging people to work together for mutual learning, and the achievement of high motivation and productivity; and
- Identify the current factors that foster, as well as inhibit, the growth of creativity, systemic innovation and a healthy resilient culture that better equips an organisation or community to deal with the effects of climate change

When people from communities and organisations are given a practical set of participative planning tools that enable them to work together with shared responsibility to develop **their** sustainable future plans they can quickly make a difference because:

- Only when there is psychological ownership of a course of action is there high motivation to pursue it; and
- Therefore, the best strategies are those devised by the people who have to live with the outcomes

The AMERIN '**Sustainable Future Planning**' workshop that is informed by a tailored organisational health or community health survey is a process that enables people from all walks of life to start making a difference now and produce profound and sustainable benefits for their communities and organisations.

It is participative planning processes like this that are an essential step needed by governments, communities and organisations in their efforts to generate the commitment required to deal with the complexities of climate change, vested interests and long timeframes. Giving people more information and/or telling them what to do is counterproductive.

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