Environmental pressures from households are significant, and without continued policy efforts their impacts are likely to intensify over the coming years. Developing growth strategies that promote greener lifestyles and consumption patterns is receiving increasing attention. Recent OECD work offers new insights on how best to meet this challenge by helping governments to better understand households’ behaviour towards the environment and how policies affect their decisions in the real world.

## Objectives

Environmental pressures from households are significant, and without continued policy efforts their impacts are likely to intensify over the coming years. Developing growth strategies that promote greener lifestyles and consumption patterns is receiving increasing attention. Recent OECD work offers new insights on how best to meet this challenge by helping governments to better understand households’ behaviour towards the environment and how policies affect their decisions in the real world.

## Main phases

This work is based on large-scale periodic surveys on Environmental Policy and Individual Behaviour Change (EPIC). The first two rounds involved more than 10,000 households across a number of countries.

These surveys represent a breakthrough by providing a common framework to collect comparable data which can be used in order to design more effective and efficient policies while taking into account social aspects. Five areas where households exert particular environmental pressures are examined: residential energy and water use, transport choices, food consumption, and waste generation and recycling.

The latest survey was implemented in 2011 and covered eleven countries: Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Israel, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. An overview of the survey responses is now available OECD (2014). The results of the first round, carried out in 2008 in ten countries, are published in OECD (2011).

The questionnaire used in the EPIC surveys is developed by the OECD with inputs from an Advisory Committee composed of experts. The design of each new survey builds on the experience gained in previous rounds. The core of the questionnaire is repeated in order to track behavioural changes over time. The surveys are implemented via the Internet using online household panels with a total of more than 1,000 households in each participating country. Efforts are made to ensure representativity of the sample across different age groups, gender, regions and socio-economic status.

Analysis comparing the data across countries, environmental domains and policy conditions reveals which measures are likely to be the most effective in changing behaviour. Each new round of the survey allows for the analysis of trends and emerging issues, as well as for the refinement of policy lessons.
Contributors

- Environment Canada
- The Australian Department of the Environment and Water Resources
- The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany
- The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, the Netherlands
- The Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (MEDDE), France
- The Ministry of the Environment, Czech Republic
- The Ministry of the Environment, Japan
- The Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico
- The Ministry of the Environment, Norway
- The Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea
- The Ministry of Environmental Protection, Israel
- The Region Emilia Romagna, Italy
- The Swedish Energy Agency (STEM)

Assisted Research Institutes and Experts

Several research institutes and experts coordinated by the OECD Environment Directorate are currently, or have already contributed, to the project including:

- Catholic University, Piacenza – Italy (Stefano Boccaletti)
- Charles University in Prague – Czech Republic (Milan Ščasný, Jan Urban)
- CNRS-University Panthéon-Sorbonne – France (Katrin Millock)
- INRA – France, University of Queensland - Australia (Céline Nauges)
- Korean Environment Institute (KEI) – Korea (Kwang-yim Kim)
- SLU University – Sweden (Bengt Kriström)
- Statistics Norway – Norway (Bente Halvorsen)
- Swiss Federal Institute of Technology - Switzerland (Kay W. Axhausen, Ilka Ehreke, Boris Jaeggi, Claude Weis)
- The Australian National University – Australia (Quentin Grafton)
- Universidad Iberoamericana – Mexico (Alejandro Guevara-Sangines, José Alberto Lara-Pulido)
- University of Haifa – Israel (Ofira Ayalon, Sharon Brody, Ruslana Rachel Palatnik and Mordechai Shechter)
- York University – Canada (Ida Ferrara)

Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee composed of national experts, including government representatives from the participating countries, was set up to help inform this work and to ensure a high degree of policy relevance for the outcome of the analysis.
Publications


Contact

OECD Environment Directorate
Environment and Economy Integration Division
ENVEII@oecd.org

More information available at:
www.oecd.org/env/consumption-innovation/households.htm