BAPTIST WORLD AID

BE SLAVERY FREE

The Australian Ethical Consumer Report

Exploring the ethical attitudes and consumption behaviours of Australians



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are privileged to work and live. We pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging.

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Introduction



In recent years, efforts have been underway to transform supply chains into more ethical, equitable, and sustainable parts of our global economy. However, much work remains to be done as millions of workers in the supply chain still face abuse, low wages, injustice, and modern slavery. Environmental degradation similarly persists, with habitat destruction, plastic pollution, toxic chemicals, and overproduction commonplace in global supply chains. Mahatma Gandhi's words still resonate today: "There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness."

Addressing this global issue, Baptist World Aid Australia has spent the last decade raising standards for workers in the fashion supply chain through the Ethical Fashion Report. Rooted in its mission as a Christian international aid and development organisation, its vision is to create a world free from poverty where all people can enjoy the fullness of life intended by God.

Be Slavery Free, a partner in this research, is a coalition of civil society groups which seeks to end modern slavery. Since 2006 they have been raising awareness on the presence of child and forced labour in products such as chocolate, tea, fashion, seafood, and personal protective equipment. They are also engaged in working for policy and legislative change to end modern slavery.

The Australian Ethical Consumer Report builds on the 2021 edition of the same report. It delves into the attitudes of Australian consumers regarding ethical consumption with a focus on the fashion industry, comparing the findings to 2021 to assess any changes. It examines the key motivations driving Australians' purchasing decisions and gauges their progress toward becoming more ethical global citizens using the Ethical Global Citizen Index (EGCI).

The report draws upon data collected by McCrindle through an online survey of 1,001 Australians, ensuring national representation across age, gender, and state demographics. The survey was conducted from 7 September to 14 September, 2023.

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Key Insights

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS PRIORITISE VALUE FOR MONEY, QUALITY, AND AFFORDABILITY WHEN MAKING PURCHASING DECISIONS.







66%

54%

AUSTRALIA'S ETHICAL GLOBAL CITIZEN INDEX SCORE 2023 2021 SCORE: 63

First steps	F	air	Good	Great	Excellent	Outstanding	ı
	50	60	7	0 8	0 9	0	100

YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE THE MOST ACTIVE IN ENGAGING WITH ETHICAL CONSUMPTION, AS INDICATED BY THEIR EGCI SCORES.

Gen Z Age 18 - 28

66

Gen Y Age 29 - 43

71

Gen X Age 44 - 58 **Boomers**

Age 59 - 77

61

54

AUSTRALIANS ARE AWARE OF THE PERSISTENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY, A REALITY FOR 49.6 MILLION PEOPLE.



80%

have heard of situations involving forced labour



63%

disagree that slavery was

AUSTRALIANS ARE INCREASINGLY FAMILIAR WITH THE TERM 'ETHICAL FASHION' AND SEVEN IN TEN WANT TO CHANGE THEIR SHOPPING HABITS TO REFLECT **ETHICAL VALUES.**



70%



51%



TWO IN FIVE **AUSTRALIANS** (42%) **ENGAGE** WITH INFORMATION **ON ETHICAL** CONSUMPTION **THROUGH VARIOUS SOURCES AT LEAST** FORTNIGHTLY.

CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF THEIR FASHION HABITS, IN THE NEXT YEAR, AUSTRALIANS ARE MOST LIKELY TO:



52%

Reduce the amount of products they buy



51%

Research how to responsibly dispose of their fashion



50%

Learn to repair something they own



Key Recommendations

GOVERNMENT

- 1. Implement all 30 recommendations from the statutory review of the Modern Slavery Act to strengthen reporting and due diligence practices of businesses operating in Australia, and significantly improve Australia's ability to prevent and tackle modern slavery.
- 2. In keeping with its recent Labor National Platform commitments, include a commitment to enacting a ban on the importation of goods produced with forced labour as a key reform required to strengthen Australia's approach to combatting modern slavery in global supply chains.
- **3.** Support a transition to a more sustainable fashion industry by increasing and regulating textile transparency, traceability and verification; and incentivising the use of more sustainable materials.

BUSINESS

- 1. Strengthen and embed worker voice in all decisionmaking processes, and ensure that worker unions, direct worker voice and grievance mechanisms are present in all factories. Where possible, leverage existing mechanisms built by expert agencies or other brands to ensure best practice approach.
- 2. Ensure supply chain due diligence measures reach beyond final stage facilities by working with existing suppliers and certifiers to invest in tracing, supplier and worker education, and robust monitoring of human rights and environmental risks. For companies starting this process, we encourage you to begin tracing your fibre of greatest volume or greatest risk first.

GLOBAL CITIZENS

- 1. With awareness of the issues, individuals can be powerful advocates for change by contacting brands and asking them to do more to improve conditions for workers, remove modern slavery and reduce environmental degradation in their supply chain.
- 2. Anyone can help Australians become more aware of human rights and environmental issues in global supply chains. In person, or on social media, individuals can share our research and what they've learnt about shopping more ethically.
- **3.** Baptist World Aid's Ethical Fashion Guide and Be Slavery Free's Chocolate Scorecard are great places for individuals to start becoming more informed about products and changing their consumption practices.



Australian Consumption Habits



Cost is front of mind for many Australians.

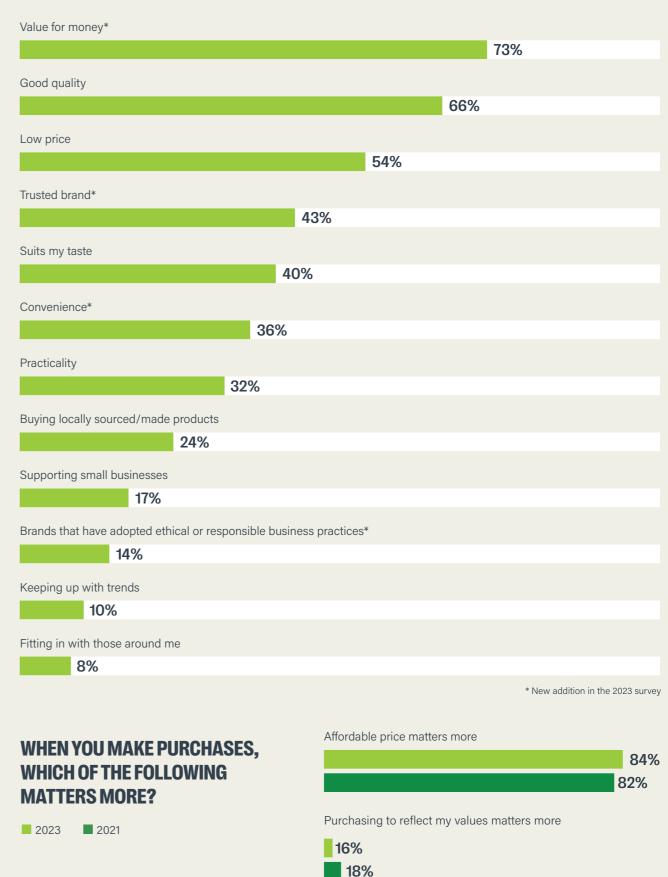
Australian consumers prioritise value for money, quality, and affordability when making purchasing decisions. Value for money was a new addition to the survey in 2023, and three in four Australians (73%) identified it as an influence. Quality ranks second, influencing 66% of Australians, while 54% consider low prices as a factor.

Trusted brands are a key factor for 42% of Australians, while more idealistic factors such as buying local (24%), supporting small businesses (17% cf. 33% in 2021), and choosing brands with ethical or responsible practices (14%) have a lower influence on purchasing behaviours.

Baby Boomers (aged 59-77) (81%) and Gen X (44-58) (78%), and regional residents (76%) are more likely to be influenced most by a perceived value for money. Gen Y (29-43) (67%) and Gen Z (18-28) (62%), and metropolitan residents (72%) are less influenced in this regard.

While ethical considerations hold significance for many Australians, when push comes to shove, affordability takes precedence in their overall purchasing behaviour. In today's socio-economic landscape, marked by a cost of living crisis and other economic pressures, it's unsurprising that 84% of Australians prioritise affordability over aligning their purchases with their values.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST INFLUENCE YOUR PURCHASING DECISIONS?



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PURCHASING ITEMS IS A PERSONAL CONSIDERATION.

Over four in five Australians (82%) say they consider purchasing an item for their personal benefit more than the impact that purchase may have on others (18%).

To a lesser though still significant extent, 71% of Australians are more likely to view their current needs as more important than their future needs (29%).

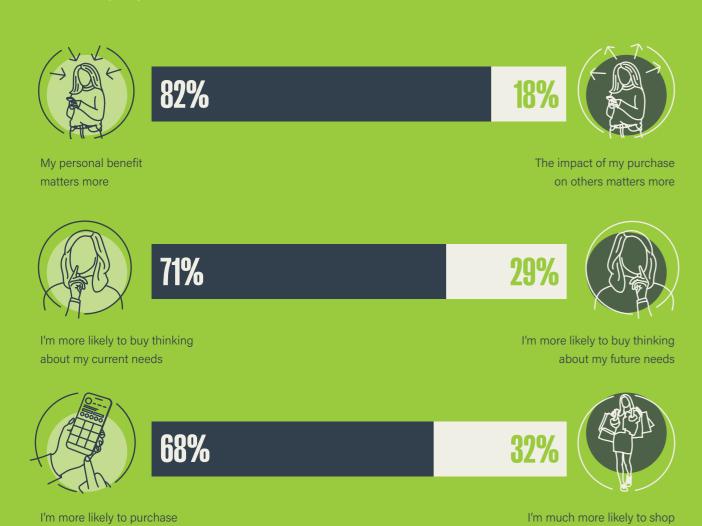
Similarly, 68% are more likely to purchase from brands they know over shopping around (32%).

While affordability, personal impact, and current needs continue to be top priorities for Australians, there are encouraging signs of growing awareness regarding the impacts of personal purchasing decisions compared to two years ago.

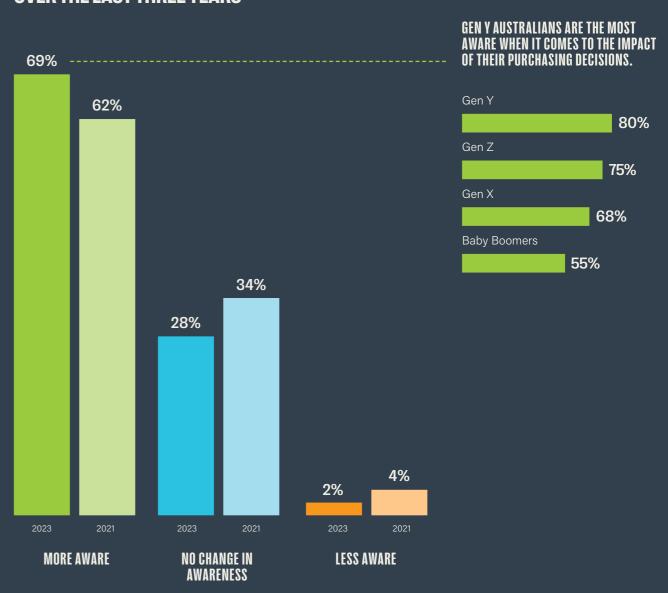
Notably, nearly seven in ten Australians (69%) report that their awareness of the impacts of their purchasing behaviours has increased to some extent over the last three years. This percentage has risen from 62% in 2021. In 2023, only 28% indicate that their awareness has not changed, which is 6 percentage-points down from 34% in 2021. Significantly, only 2% (down from 4% in 2021) state that they are now less aware than they were three years ago, which is a positive shift in sentiment.

WHEN YOU MAKE PURCHASES, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MATTERS MORE?

from brands I know well



CHANGE IN AWARENESS OF THE IMPACTS OF PURCHASING DECISIONS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS



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around to find what I'm looking for



Modern Slavery: A Persistent Global Issue

Australians are aware of and concerned about modern slavery.

In Australia, Modern Slavery is used as an umbrella term to describe a group of crimes (defined in the Australian Criminal Code) where offenders use coercion, threats or deception to exploit victims and undermine their freedom. These practices include human trafficking, slavery, forced labour, child labour, and other forms of slavery-like exploitation. Significantly, modern slavery in its diverse forms continues to exert a lasting impact on families, communities, and nations, dispelling any notion that it is solely a historical issue that the world has moved beyond. Modern slavery insidiously pervades the global supply chains of the products that we purchase, particularly fashion, electronics, seafood and palm oil, found commonly in chocolate, cosmetics and cleaning products.

According to Walk Free and the International Labour Organization's recent publication, 'Global Estimates of Modern Slavery', approximately 49.6 million people are currently trapped in modern slavery. Among them, 27.6 million individuals endure forced labour against their will, while 22 million are coerced into marriages without their consent,2



49.6 MILLION PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED IN MODERN SLAVERY.²

Australians demonstrate a notable awareness of the persistence of modern slavery, with 80% acknowledging that they have heard of situations involving forced labour or modern slavery. Moreover, 63% disagree with the notion that slavery was eradicated hundreds of years ago.

Closer to home, just over half of Australians also recognise that this issue is a reality for some of our own citizens, with 55% disagreeing that no one experiences modern slavery in Australia. Similarly, 52% disagree modern slavery only exists in poor or developing countries, understanding that citizens in developed nations such as Australia can experience such realities.



have heard of situations



disagree that slavery





While Australians are largely aware and informed about the persistence of modern slavery, their beliefs and sentiments vary.

Over two in five Australians (45%) strongly or somewhat agree they have probably purchased products that have been made in part by people in modern slavery situations. Similarly, just over two in five Australians (43%) strongly or somewhat agree that Australia is importing products made in conditions of modern slavery.

Regarding their ability to contribute to ending modern slavery through their purchasing behaviours, Australians are somewhat uncertain.

While 42% strongly or somewhat agree that their purchasing practices can make a difference, a third (33%) only slightly agree, and one in four (25%) disagree with the notion that they can effect change through their buying choices.

Likewise, 42% strongly or somewhat agree that people in modern slavery conditions are sometimes forced to commit crimes but should not be regarded as criminals.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

The perecentage of respondents who 'strongly/somewhat agree':



57%

Modern slavery is more likely to be a part of cheaper products

45%

I have probably purchased products that have been made in part by people in modern slavery situations

43%

Australia is importing products made in conditions of modern slavery

42%

People in modern slavery conditions are sometimes forced to commit crimes but they should not be regarded as criminals

42%

My purchasing practices can contribute to ending modern slavery

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Awareness Of Ethical Fashion



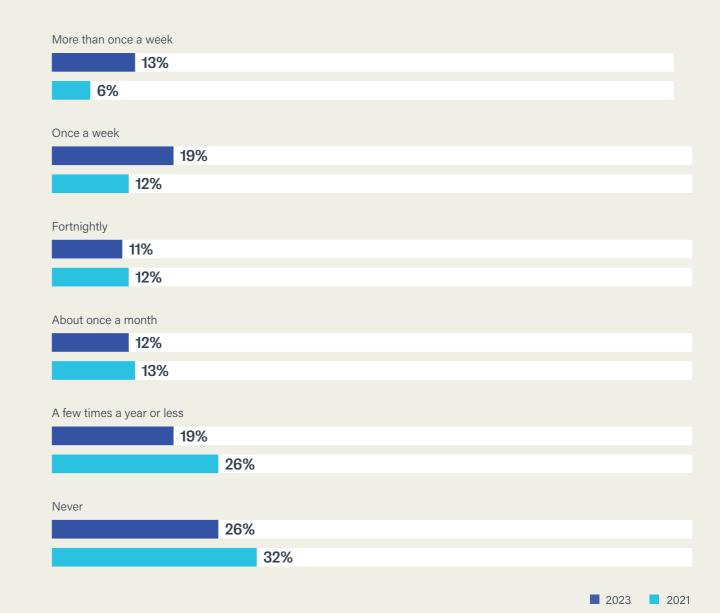
Australians are growing in their awareness of ethical fashion.

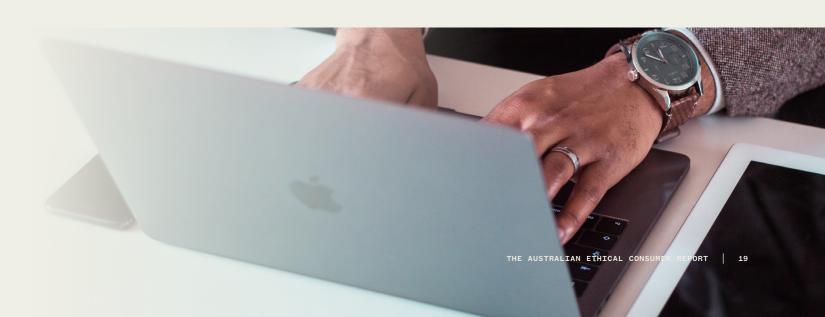
Positive trends in awareness and engagement with ethical fashion are emerging among Australians, with more than half (51%) now familiar with the term 'ethical fashion,' a slight increase from 48% in 2021.

Though not specific to fashion, it is evident that Australians are taking an active approach in learning more about ethical consumption in general. Over two

in five Australians (43%) are engaging with information on ethical consumption through sources like articles, podcasts, and scorecards at least fortnightly. Additionally, 31% engage with such sources monthly or a few times a year. Significantly, only one in four Australians (26%) now report never engaging with such sources, down from 32% two years ago. This indicates a growing trend of regular engagement with information on ethical consumption.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU ENGAGE WITH ARTICLES, REPORTS, BLOGS, DATABASES, SCORECARDS, PODCASTS OR OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES TO LEARN ABOUT ISSUES RELATING TO ETHICAL CONSUMPTION?







Australians recognise the importance of ethical fashion.

Awareness paves the way for action, and belief in the importance of an issue is often the bridge between the two. In this context, over half of Australians are now familiar with the concept of ethical fashion, and a substantial 70% strongly or somewhat agree that ethical fashion holds importance (73% in 2021).

Half of Australians (50%) often buy from fashion brands specifically known for their ethical and sustainable practices, with only 29% rarely or never considering this factor when making fashion purchases, but given cost pressures and lack of understanding about what constitutes an ethical brand, this may be aspirational.



SEVEN IN TEN AUSTRALIANS STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE THAT ETHICAL FASHION HOLDS IMPORTANCE.

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Ethical Global Citizen Index

The Ethical Global Citizen Index (EGCI, formerly Ethical Consumer Index) developed by McCrindle, measures an individual's position on the journey towards becoming an ethical global citizen, from recognising the impact of their decisions on others, to becoming a public advocate for the cause.

For the purposes of this report, the Ethical Global Citizen Index explores general attitudes and practices relating to purchasing behaviours.





THE INDEX IS BASED ON FIVE KEY MEASURES COINED 'THE 5 A'S'

Overall, the 5 A's comprise 18 unique measures. Each question uses a 6-point Likert scale measuring how strongly individuals agree with certain statements or how often they perform certain activities.

An average score is provided for each of the 5 A's, and the average across the 5 A's provides the overall EGCI. The EGCI can range from a score of 0 to 100. The diagram below provides a benchmark for different score brackets to show an individual's position on the journey towards becoming an ethical global citizen.

AUSTRALIA'S ETHICAL GLOBAL CITIZEN INDEX SCORE 2023
2021 SCORE: 63

First steps	Fair	Good	Great	Excellent	Outstanding	
5	0 6	0 7	70 8	30 9	90	100

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AGENCY: 64

2021:63

Agency measures the extent to which individuals recognise that their purchasing decisions have an impact on others, and want their purchasing decisions to have a positive impact.

Almost half of Australians (48%) strongly or somewhat agree that they want their purchasing decisions to positively impact others, a slight increase from 46% in 2021. Similarly, 47% (consistent with 47% in 2021) strongly or somewhat agree that their purchasing decisions affect people beyond themselves and the retailer. Encouragingly, there's an increasing awareness of these sentiments among Australians, with close to two in five (39%) strongly or somewhat agreeing they actively think about the impacts their purchases have on others — up from 32% in 2021.



ATTITUDE: 78

2021:81

Attitude measures the extent to which individuals believe ethical fashion is important, and care about various issues relating to ethical fashion, such as human rights and environmental impacts.

Australians believe ethical fashion is important and care about the issues within the fashion industry. When provided with a definition of ethical fashion, seven in ten Australians (70%) strongly or somewhat agree that ethical fashion is important. Australians are most likely to care about products being made without child labour (74%, 80% in 2021) and being made in safe working conditions (72%, 76% in 2021).



AWARENESS: 61

2021:56

Awareness measures the degree to which individuals are motivated to learn about ethical fashion, are informed about specific human rights and environmental issues relating to ethical fashion, and the extent to which Australians agree it is important to be informed about the impact of purchases.

Similar to 2021 findings, Australians are lacking in knowledge about the issues within the fashion industry. While many believe in the importance of ethical fashion, just under half (49%) believe it's important to be informed about the impacts of their purchasing decisions. Significantly, this has decreased by 18 percentage points from 67% in 2021. The proportion of Australians motivated to learn about the impacts of their purchasing decisions has also decreased substantially (44%, 58% in 2021).



ACTION: 55

2021:57

Action measures the extent to which individuals want to change their consumption habits to consume more ethically, purchase from brands they know are ethical, and make purchases that positively impact human rights and/or the environment.

Seven in ten Australians (70%) agree that they would like to change their shopping habits to align more with ethical practices. However, this has decreased since 2021 by 17 percentage points, indicating that Australians are less inclined to take action in this regard. Inversely, with a slight increase, 50% of Australians (47% in 2021) say they regularly purchase from clothing and fashion brands because they know they are sustainable (always/most of the time/often).



ADVOCACY: 56

2021:59

Advocacy measures the extent to which individuals believe it is important for others to be educated about ethical consumption, engage in conversations about ethical consumption, actively support initiatives encouraging ethical fashion, and ask brands about their ethical policies and practices.

Over half of Australians (51%) believe it's important for everyone to be educated about ethical consumption, indicating a recognition of its significance.

However, a considerably smaller proportion actively engage in advocacy. Two in five Australians (39%) strongly or somewhat agree that they actively support initiatives and organisations promoting ethical consumption (compared to 42% in 2021). One in three (33%) have conversations about ethical consumption with others, and just a quarter (25%) strongly or somewhat agree that they have inquired about a brand's ethical policies and practices (consistent with 25% in 2021).

Ethical fashion is an umbrella term to describe ethical fashion design, production, retail and purchasing. It covers a range of issues such as working conditions, exploitation, reasonable income for workers, sustainable production, the environment, and animal welfare. The term 'ethical fashion' is at times used interchangeably with 'sustainable fashion' and 'responsible fashion'.

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THE WORLD."





Australians are growing in their agency and awareness.

Since 2021, Australians have grown in their sense of agency, recognising the impact of their purchasing decisions on others. More Australians today (39%) strongly or somewhat agree that they consider the impact of their purchases on others, up from 32% in 2021. Additionally, awareness about ethical fashion has grown, primarily because of the rise in the proportion of Australians who regularly engage with information about ethical consumption (42% compared to 30% in 2021).

In contrast, the other three sections of the EGCI have seen a decrease in overall scores. This may indicate that while positive efforts have contributed to raising awareness and fostering a sense of agency among Australian global citizens, translating this into changes in attitude, behaviour, and advocacy remains an area with opportunities for Australians to further evolve.

YOUNGER GENERATION AUSTRALIANS ARE THE MOST ACTIVE IN ENGAGING WITH ETHICAL FASHION, AS INDICATED BY THEIR EGCI SCORES.









Areas of most concern among Australians

While agency and awareness saw an increase in their respective scores since 2021, attitude is the highest scoring section in the EGCl in 2023 at 78 (versus 81 in 2021). Attitude measures the extent to which individuals believe ethical fashion is important, and care about various issues relating to human rights and the environment.

When it comes to human rights issues relating to ethical consumption, in this instance fashion consumption, three in four Australians (74%) strongly or somewhat agree they care that products they purchase are made without child labour. This is followed closely by seven in ten (70%) Australians strongly or somewhat agreeing they care about the products they purchase being made without forced labour or modern slavery and workers earn a wage substantial enough to meet their basic needs.

Likewise, Australians are greatly concerned about the environmental impact of their fashion consumption habits. Seven in ten Australians (70%) strongly or somewhat agree that animal welfare is a key concern when purchasing a fashion product. Just over two in three Australians (67%) also strongly or somewhat agree they care about the responsible use of natural resources in the manufacture of their products. Similarly, 65% strongly or somewhat agree they care about the potential environmental harm caused by products they purchase.

TOP 3 HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AUSTRALIANS CARE ABOUT







70%Forced labour



70%Fair Wages

TOP 3 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AUSTRALIANS CARE ABOUT



70%Animal welfare



67%Use of natural resources

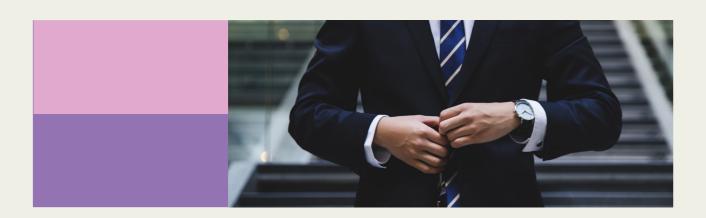


65%Not harming the environment

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Attitudes Towards Responsibility



Australians believe governments and companies are responsible to take action.

Among the five sections of the EGCI, the 'action' section records the lowest scores, with several factors contributing to this result. One such factor could be that Australians tend to view governments and companies, as opposed to not-for-profits and individual consumers, as having the primary responsibility to act on key issues related to the fashion industry.

A significant proportion of Australians believe that governments bear the responsibility for ensuring that products are made without forced labour or modern slavery (70%) and without child labour (69%). Additionally, two in three Australians (66%) believe governments should ensure that the fashion production process considers its potential impact on the climate.

When it comes to ensuring that those making products earn a wage sufficient to meet their basic needs, Australians primarily see companies as responsible (67%). On the other hand, consumers are perceived as responsible for taking action by purchasing locally made products (48%), ensuring animal welfare (43%), and avoiding products that harm the environment (39%).

Not-for-profit organisations are seen as responsible for actions related to animal welfare (36%) and ensuring that products are made without child labour (35%) or forced labour (33%).

THE TOP THREE ISSUES AUSTRALIANS BELIEVE **EACH STAKEHOLDER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:**









Governments

Companies

Consumers

48%

Locally made products

Not-for-Profits

70%

Products made without forced labour or modern slavery

69%

66%

Products made without child labour

Products made without child labour

66%

66%

Climate impact of the Products made in safe production process working conditions

Those making products earn a wage substantial enough to meet their basic needs

67%

Animal welfare

39%

Products not harming the

36%

Animal welfare

35%

Products made without child labour

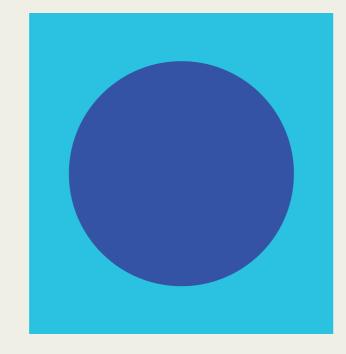
33%

Products made without forced labour or modern slavery





Growing As Global Citizens



Australians are environmentally conscious.

Alongside the human rights issues, the environmental factors of fashion are an important consideration for many Australians. Over half (54%) strongly or somewhat agree that it is important to consider the environmental impact of their purchases more broadly, and over a third (34%) are extremely or very likely to research the environmental impact of a product before they make a purchase.

When it comes to their fashion purchases, Australians prioritise the use of natural fibres (47%), quality garments that last (38%), and the use of more sustainable fibres (30%). These preferences highlight a growing awareness among Australians of the importance of making environmentally conscious choices in their fashion consumption.



OVER HALF (54%)

STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THEIR PURCHASES.

WHEN CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FASHION PURCHASES, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE FEATURES YOU LOOK FOR?

Please select all that apply. Natural fibre use (cotton, linen) 47% Quality commitment (clothes that last) 38% Sustainable fibre use (recycled fibres, organic fibres) Second-hand or vintage 24% A brand's carbon footprint 20% Initiatives to donate profits to environmental causes 16% Repair services 15% Take-back schemes 15% Circular design principles 14% Use of chemicals in production (dyes, bleaches) 13% Biodiversity and deforestation



11%

Australians actively take a variety of measures to reduce their impacts.

Many Australians express a desire to align their purchasing behaviours with more ethical values and practices. Specifically, 70% of Australians agree they want their shopping habits to reflect ethical practices over the next 12 months. While the EGCI highlights opportunities for growth in the 'action' stage, many are already taking meaningful actions to reduce their environmental and human rights impacts.

Over half (52%) are extremely or very likely to reduce the amount of products they buy in the next year. Similarly, half are extremely or very likely to research how to responsibly dispose of items they no longer need (51%), learn how to repair something they own (50%), and change the way they wash and care for their clothes to make them last longer (50%).

These findings indicate Australians' willingness to embrace more sustainable and ethical consumption practices in their daily lives.

Learn to repair

something I own

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO TAKE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING **ACTIONS TO REDUCE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS IN THE NEXT YEAR?**

The percentage of respondents who are "Extremely/very likely" to:



Reduce the amount of products I buy



Change the way I wash and care for clothes to extend their life

50%



Research how to responsibly dispose of something I no longer need

51%



Buy second-hand instead of brand new

41%

Barriers to ethical consumption behaviours

Despite the positive sentiment and the desire among many Australians to be more ethical global citizens in the context of fashion consumption, common barriers hinder their efforts to consume fashion products more ethically. Close to two in five Australians (35%) consider ethically produced fashion items as 'too expensive,' suggesting cost remains a significant concern. The barrier of 'not knowing what brands are ethical' has slightly reduced from 39% in 2021 to 34% in 2023, reflecting a growing awareness among Australians. One in four Australians (27%) believe it is harder to shop ethically in physical stores, indicating a perception that in-store options may be limited, or there is less ethical information available in-store.

More than one in five Australians (23%) feel they know where to look for information on ethical fashion products, while 22% are unsure of how or where to start, suggesting a need for more accessible information and resources to support ethical fashion choices.





AUSTRALIANS (43%) PURCHASE THEIR FASHION ITEMS MOSTLY OR ALWAYS IN STORE, 32% MAKE THEIR **FASHION PURCHASES ALWAYS** OR MOSTLY ONLINE AND 25% USE BOTH EQUALLY.

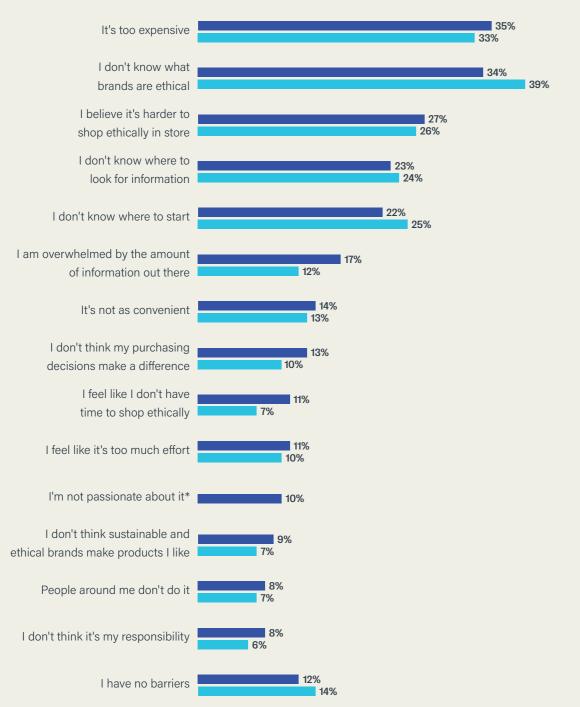


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WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO YOU CHANGING YOUR FASHION CONSUMPTION HABITS, TO CONSUME MORE ETHICALLY?

Please select all that apply.





* New addition in 2023



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