

RESULTS OF GREENWEEK SURVEY ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

European Public Health Alliance – Environment Network

During Greenweek 2004, the EPHA Environment Network (EEN) used a brief questionnaire to gather information from visitors and stand holders on their knowledge and views on current environment and health issues.

Respondents were told that the survey was part of EEN's preparation for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest in June, which focuses on children's health. The results would be presented to participants at the Ministerial meeting.

All those who completed the survey were invited to sample an organic apple from the EEN because "five fruits a day" is best for your health, and organic apples have not been sprayed with pesticides! When survey respondents visited the stand to collect up their apple, it offered them an opportunity to become better acquainted with EEN's work.

Respondents

The typical interviewee was female, young and green.

- 38 out of the 56 (67.8%) total were female,
- 39 (69.6%) were not yet parents, and
- given their attendance at Greenweek, we can assume their interest in the environment.

Summary of results

The survey indicates that European citizens are well aware of the health threats to children and adults stemming from environmental causes. They are particularly concerned about asthma and allergies in children, and cancer and obesity in the population as a whole. Almost everyone said they would pay more for environmentally friendly products – and well over half would pay more than 10%. A majority favoured stricter regulations on industry as the best means to addressing the problem.

Details of results

The survey provided information on knowledge, concerns and views of how to address their fears.

Levels of awareness

Respondents were surprisingly well informed about children's environmental health issues.

- The vast majority knew that child cancer rates were rising (52 out of 56 or 92.8%)
- Half knew that asthma was the leading cause of hospitalisation in children worldwide and the main reason why children miss school. (26 out of 56 or 46.4%)
- Well over half knew that accidents were the top cause of childhood deaths (33 out of 56 or 59%)
- Just under half knew that a major cause of brain development problems in children was caused by lead in the water supply. (27 out of 56 or 45.7%)

Concerns

- For children, the biggest health problem was considered to be asthma and allergies (37 or 66%) with cancer the second biggest worry (9 or 16%)
- For adults, cancer (26 or 46.4%) and obesity (22 or 39.2%) were causing the greatest concern to European citizens, according to indications from this survey.

What do citizens want?

- More information on water safety - A staggering 55 out of 56 (98.2%) respondents would welcome more information on the quality of water testing in their area.
- More "green" products – All but two respondents said that they would pay more for consumer items (54 or 96.4%), and well over half (28 + 8 or 64.3%) said they would pay at least 10% more for environmentally-friendly products.
- More restrictions on industry - When it came to views on how concerns should be addressed, well over half the respondents (29 or 51.8%) wanted stricter national and EU regulations on industry, with heavier fines for offenders. This compared with 25% (14) respondents who wanted more awareness raising among citizens so that they can change their behaviour, and 10 who favoured more open and transparent public debate to identify the root causes.

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9 June 2004