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Most Portuguese care about the environment

The vast majority of Portuguese people over 45 are concerned about the environment (96%), but a third admit to ignoring sustainable behaviours, and a large percentage limit themselves to actions such as separating waste and reusing bags.



The results are part of a study by the Centre for Research and Social Intervention at ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon. Respondents cited the lack of efficient public transportation, the absence of effective public

policies, and the associated costs as obstacles to more environmentally responsible behaviour. The study analysed the environmental habits and perceptions of Portuguese people over 45, with the results highlighting a disconnect between environmental awareness and action.

“There is widespread environmental awareness among the elderly Portuguese population, but there is a lack of practical capacity to transform this concern into action,” said Sandra Godinho, researcher and professor at ISCTE, who coordinated the study, “Take Action for Future Generations,” with researcher Margarida Garrido, quoted in a statement announcing the study. According to Sandra Godinho, “most recognise the gravity of environmental problems, but feel that their isolated actions have little impact. There is a recurring idea that it is up to the government and companies to lead this transition, creating conditions that make it easier—and more financially accessible—to adopt sustainable behaviours in everyday life.” When asked about responsible behaviours, respondents primarily cited waste separation, water con-

servation, and bag reuse. However, according to the study’s results, when asked about concrete behaviours adopted in the previous week, 42% failed to separate waste, 43% failed to save water, and 38% said they had not reused bags. Specifically, 39% of respondents cited economic difficulties as a reason for not adopting sustainable practices, 33% cited a lack of adequate infrastructure, 30% cited a lack of effective public policies, 18% cited a lack of information, and 15% cited a lack of habit or convenience. The authors of the study note that measures that entail additional financial burdens are widely rejected by respondents, with 70% opposing taxes on meat and dairy products and 67% rejecting taxes on fossil fuels. And although the environment is among the main concerns, only 6% of respondents, when asked directly,

expressed high sensitivity to the issue. The issues of greatest concern are water shortages, air pollution, and the depletion of natural resources. Given the results, Sandra Godinho warns that more awareness campaigns for seniors are needed. “People over 45 play a decisive role because, on the one hand, they constitute the majority of the population and therefore the choices they make can have effective results,” and on the other, “they are an age group that influences family habits, consumption habits, and the formation of public opinion.” The study authors suggest more and better awareness campaigns, with practical examples of sustainable behaviours that do not involve additional costs, such as avoiding food waste or reducing the consumption of other resources.