

Climate Change in the British Mind



YALE PROGRAM ON
Climate Change
Communication

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This report is based on findings from a nationally representative survey of residents ages 16+ in the United Kingdom, conducted by the [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#) (YPCCC). Interview dates: 7 November 2024 – 13 November 2024. Interviews: 10,660 residents of the UK (ages 16 and older). Average margin of error: +/- 0.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This research was conducted with support from the Bezos Earth Fund.

Principal Investigators:

Anthony Leiserowitz, PhD
Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Jennifer Carman, PhD
Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Seth Rosenthal, PhD
Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Jennifer Marlon, PhD
Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

For all media and other inquiries, please email:

Yale Program on Climate Change Communication:

Michaela Hobbs (michaela.hobbs@yale.edu) and Eric Fine (eric.fine@yale.edu)

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Executive Summary

From 7 November to 13 November 2024, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication conducted a nationally representative survey of 10,660 British residents (ages 16+). The study was designed to investigate the British public's awareness of climate change, their perceptions of climate change risks and impacts, and their experiences with extreme weather. The report also investigates public attitudes toward climate policies and renewable energy.

Among the key findings of this report:

Climate Change Beliefs

- People in the United Kingdom who think climate change is happening outnumber those who think it is not happening by a ratio of more than 14 to 1 (86% to 6%).
- A majority of people in the UK (75%) understand that climate change is mostly human-caused. By contrast, 17% think it is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment.

Climate Change Risk Perceptions and Engagement

- A majority of people in the UK (80%) say they are at least “somewhat worried” about climate change. This includes 35% of people in the UK who say they are “very worried.”
- A large majority of people in the UK think climate change will harm future generations of people (85%). Fewer people in the UK, but still a majority, think climate change will harm them personally (56%).
- About eight in ten people in the UK (82%) say the issue of climate change is either “extremely,” “very,” or “somewhat” important to them personally, while 18% say climate change is either “not too” or “not at all” personally important.
- 62% of people in the UK say they have personally experienced climate change.

Climate Change and Renewable Energy Policy Support

- 68% of people in the UK think climate change should be a high or very high priority for the government of the United Kingdom.
- Most people in the UK (82%) support the use of renewable energy for providing their electricity, fuel, and heat.

Impacts of Climate Change

- About two-thirds of people in the UK (68%) say their local area has experienced at least one environmental problem in the past 12 months. This included severe storms (34%), flooding (32%), air pollution (31%), water pollution (29%), extreme heat (16%), agricultural pests and diseases (9%), rising sea levels (8%), water shortages (6%), droughts (4%), or wildfires (3%).
- Majorities of people in the UK are either “very worried” or “moderately worried” that water pollution (57%), severe storms (54%), and air pollution (53%) might harm their local area, while nearly half are worried about flooding (49%). Many people in the UK are worried about extreme heat (36%), water shortages (36%), and agricultural pests and diseases (31%), droughts (28%), or rising sea levels (27%) in their local area, while fewer are worried about wildfires (16%).
- Most people in the UK think climate change is affecting environmental problems in the United Kingdom, including flooding (88%), severe storms (85%), rising sea levels (80%), air pollution

(79%), extreme heat (79%), water pollution (74%), water shortages (73%), droughts (71%), agricultural pests and diseases (65%), and wildfires (62%).

Introduction

The United Kingdom, home to more than 69 million people, ranks among the world's leading economies and plays a significant role in international climate negotiations. In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to pass [a law](#) requiring net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. However, the UK's carbon footprint remains substantial, particularly due to its historical contributions to global emissions and the complexity of its current energy system. The country has made considerable progress in reducing its emissions, and recently closed its last coal-fired power plant. However, the UK's ongoing reliance on fossil fuels for transportation and heating poses continued challenges to achieving its net-zero climate goals.

The UK is also increasingly feeling [the impacts of climate change](#). More intense and prolonged rainfall, heightened risks of flooding, increasing temperatures, and more frequent and intense heat waves are affecting communities across the country. The UK's coastal regions are vulnerable to sea level rise, and urban areas face mounting threats from extreme weather. These changes are already disrupting local economies, public health, and infrastructure. As the British government [continues to implement policies](#) aimed at achieving net-zero emissions, public opinion will play a crucial role in shaping the country's climate strategy.

This report, "Climate Change in the British Mind," presents findings from a nationally representative survey conducted in November 2024, with a specific focus on the British public's awareness of climate change, their perceptions of its risks and impacts, and their experiences with extreme weather. The report also investigates public attitudes toward climate policies and renewable energy. These insights into public beliefs, attitudes, and policy preferences can help inform communication and education strategies designed to foster greater support for the country's transition to a low-carbon future.

References

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<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/climate-change-in-the-uk>

UK Parliament. (2019, June 26). The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. Legislation.gov.uk. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/1056/introduction/made>

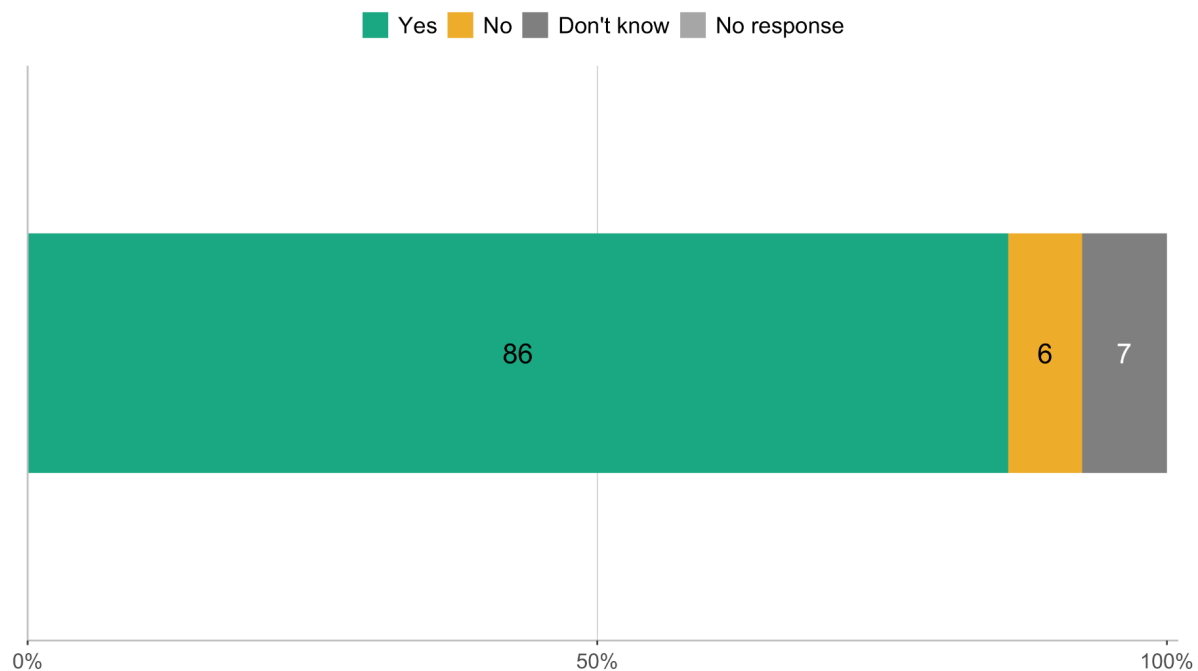
1 Climate Change Beliefs

1.1 A large majority of people in the UK think climate change is happening.

People in the United Kingdom who think climate change is happening outnumber those who think it is not happening by a ratio of more than 14 to 1.

More than eight in ten people in the UK (86%) think climate change is happening. By contrast, only 6% of people in the UK think climate change is not happening, and 7% say they don't know whether climate change is happening.

A large majority of people in the UK think climate change is happening



The following questions ask about climate change. Climate change refers to the idea that the world's average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that the world's climate and weather patterns may change as a result. What do you think? Do you think that climate change is happening?

November 2024

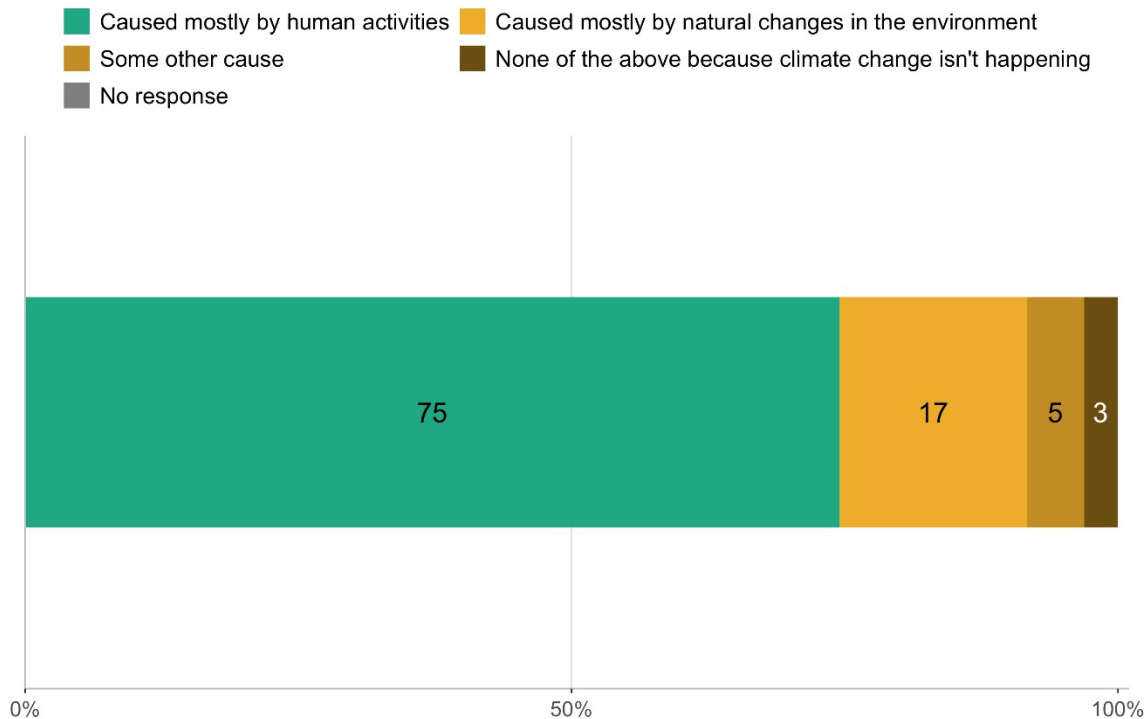
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

1.2 A majority of people in the UK think climate change is primarily human-caused.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment [synthesis report](#), summarising the work of thousands of climate experts worldwide, states: "Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming."¹

A majority of people in the UK (75%) understand that climate change is mostly human-caused. By contrast, 17% think it is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment.

A majority of people in the UK think climate change is primarily human-caused



Assuming climate change is happening, do you think it is...

November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

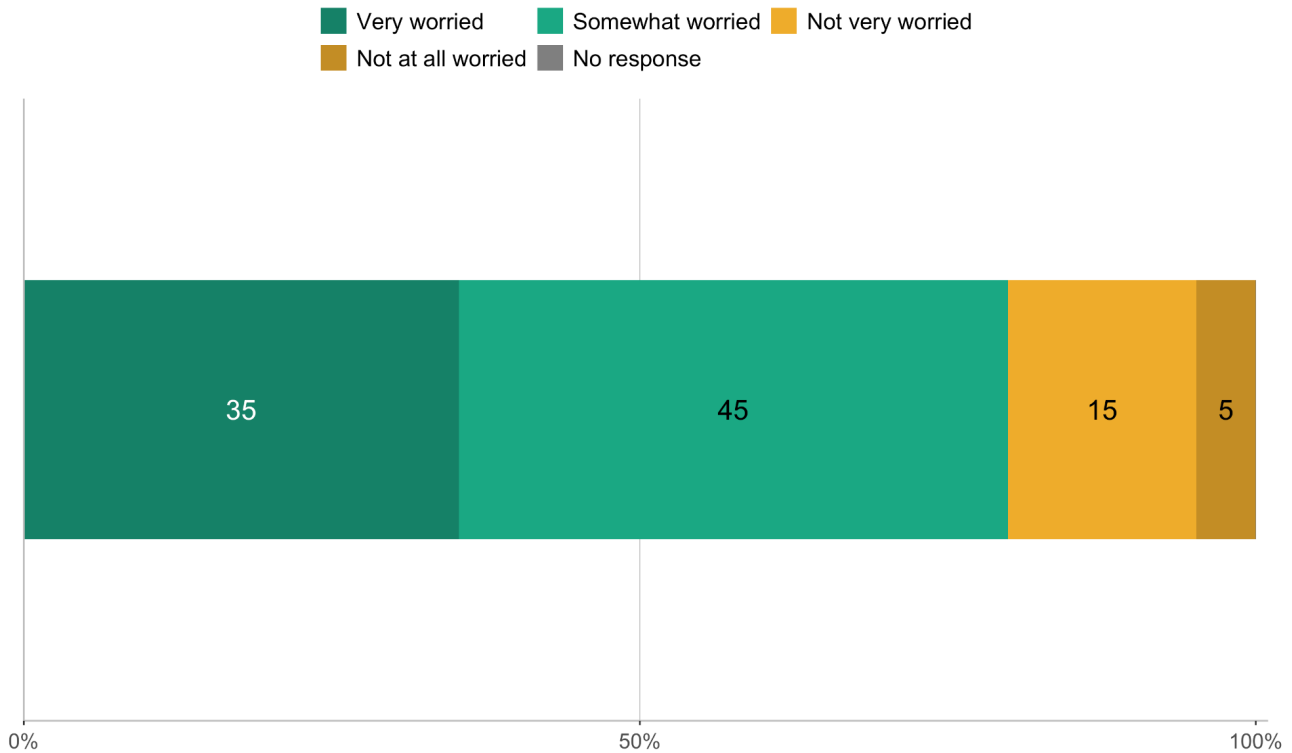
¹ IPCC. (2023). Summary for Policymakers. In Core Writing Team, Lee, H., & Romero, J. (eds.). *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland. doi: [10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001](https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001)

2 Perceived Risks of Climate Change

2.1 Most people in the UK are worried about climate change.

A majority of people in the UK (80%) say they are at least “somewhat worried” about climate change. This includes 35% of people in the UK who say they are “very worried” about climate change.

Most people in the UK are worried about climate change



How worried are you about climate change?

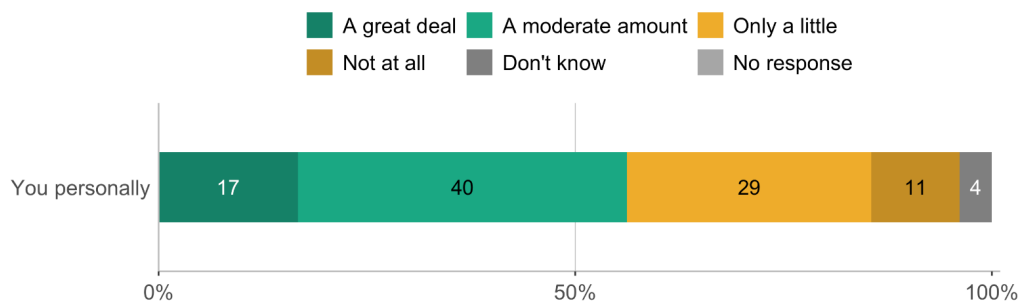
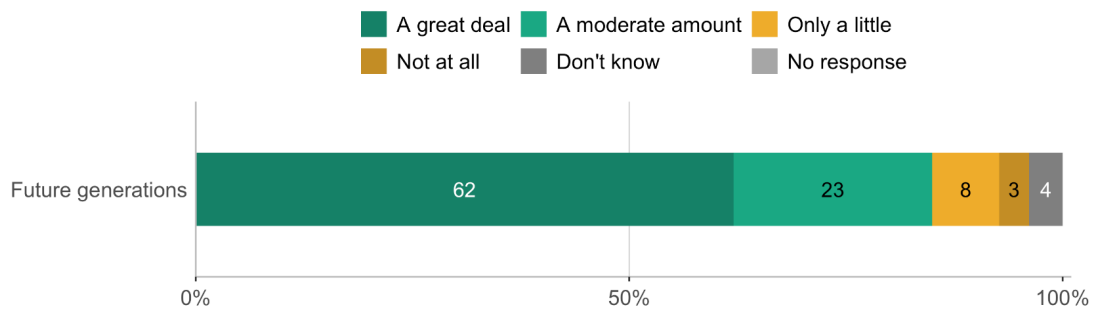
November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

2.2 A majority of people in the UK think climate change will harm them personally.

A majority of people in the UK understand that climate change will cause harm. Half or more people in the UK think climate change will cause either “a great deal” or “a moderate amount” of harm to future generations of people (85%). Fewer people in the UK, but still a majority, think climate change will harm them personally (56%), including 17% who think climate change will harm them “a great deal.”

A majority of people in the UK think climate change will harm them personally, but more think climate change will harm future generations



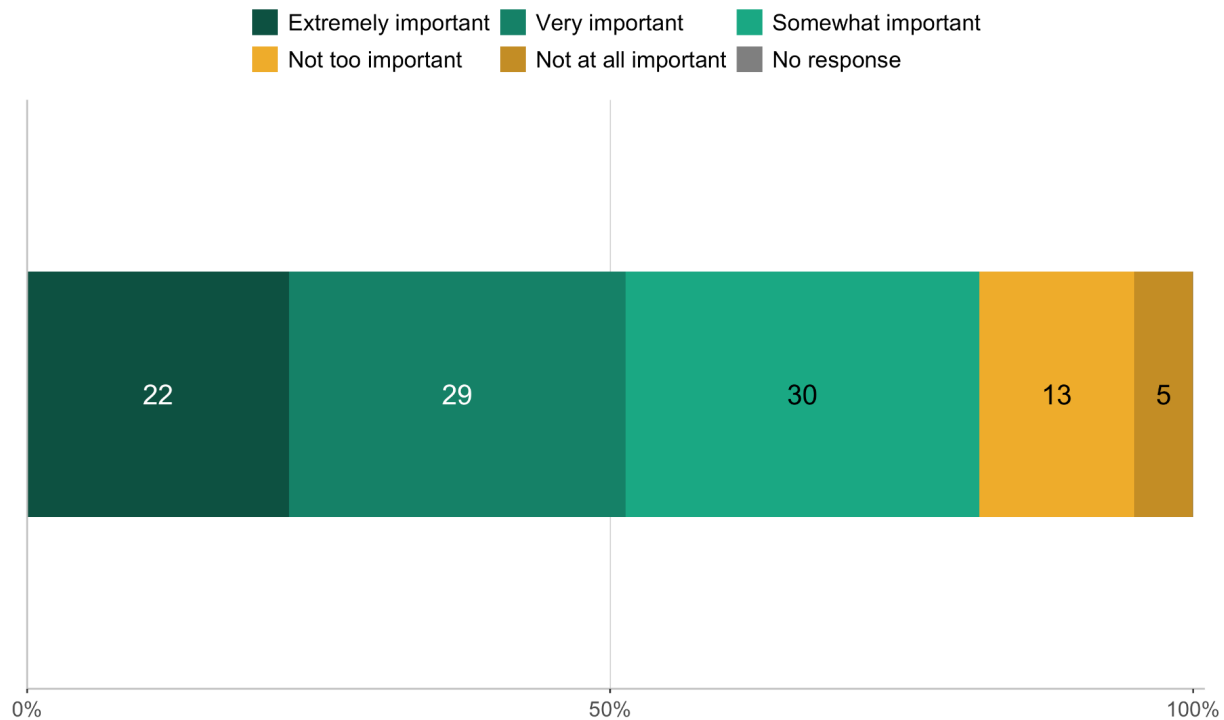
November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

2.3 A large majority of people in the UK say the issue of climate change is personally important.

More than eight in ten people in the UK (82%) say the issue of climate change is either “extremely” (22%), “very” (29%), or “somewhat” (30%) important to them personally. In contrast, only about one in five (18%) say climate change is either “not too” (13%) or “not at all” (5%) personally important.

A large majority of people in the UK say the issue of climate change is personally important



How important is the issue of climate change to you personally?

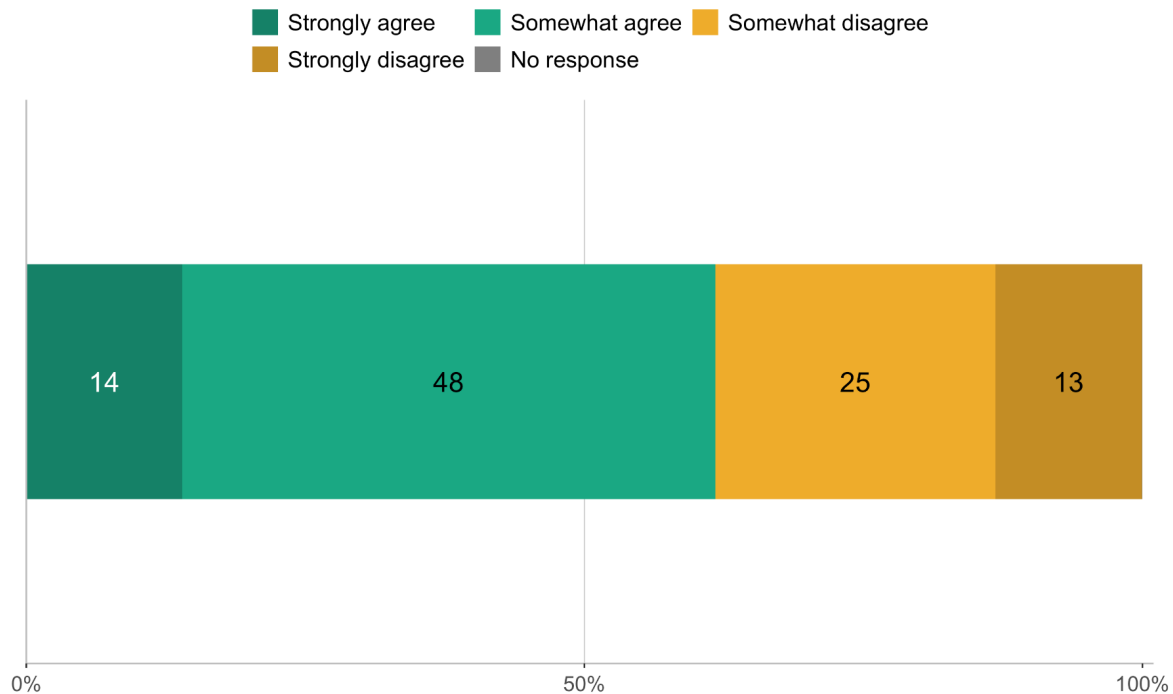
November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

2.4 A majority of people in the UK say they have personally experienced the effects of climate change.

A majority of people in the UK (62%) agree with the statement “I have personally experienced the effects of climate change,” including 14% who “strongly agree.” By contrast, 38% of people in the UK disagree with this statement.

A majority of people in the UK say they have personally experienced the effects of climate change



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I have personally experienced the effects of climate change.

November 2024

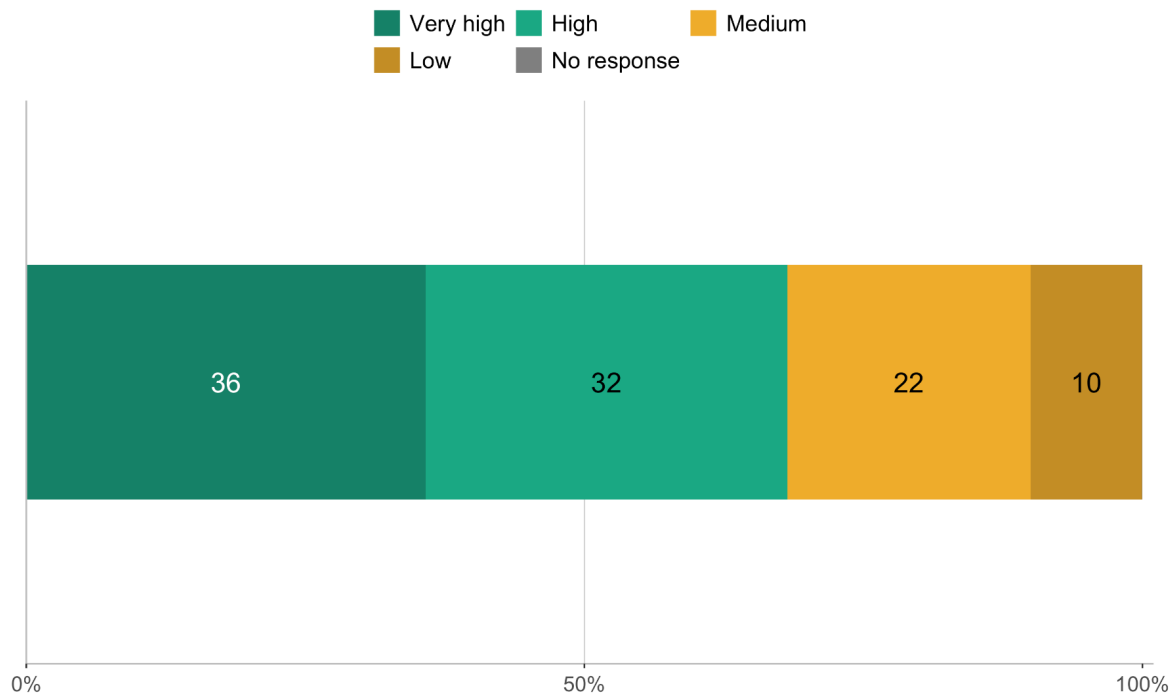
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

3 Support for Climate Policy and Renewable Energy

3.1 A majority of people in the UK think climate change should be a priority for the government.

About two-thirds of people in the UK (68%) think climate change should be a “very high” or “high” priority for the government of the United Kingdom, including 36% who say it should be a “very high” priority.

A majority of people in the UK think climate change should be a priority for the government



Do you think climate change should be a very high, high, medium, or low priority for the government of the United Kingdom?

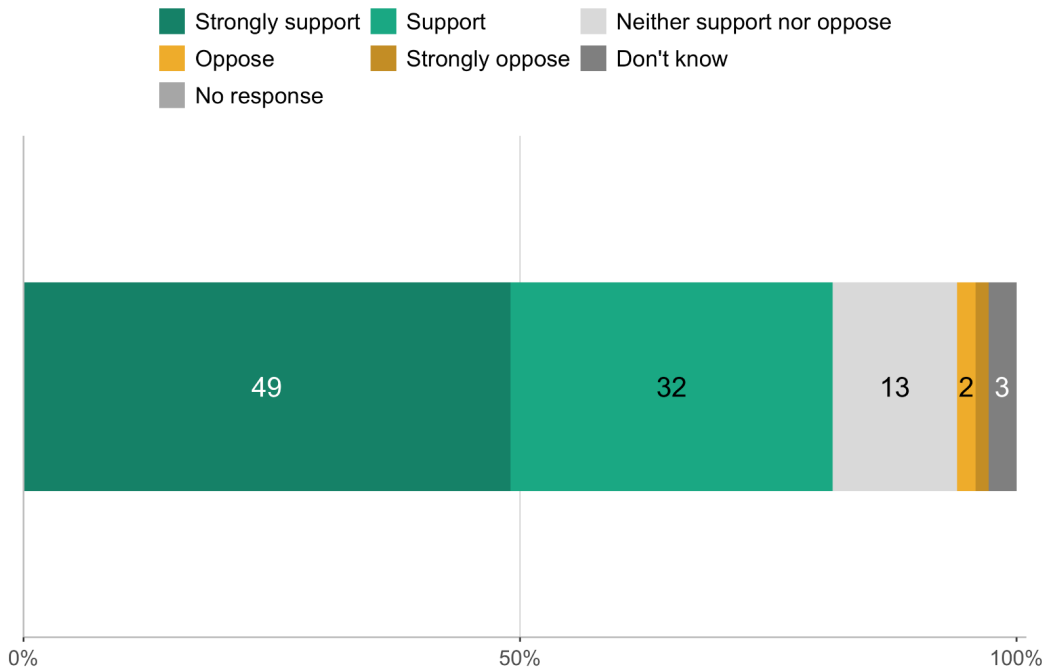
November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

3.2 A large majority of people in the UK support the use of renewable energy.

Most people in the UK (82%) support the use of renewable energy, including different forms of energy such as wind power, solar energy, and biomass, for providing their electricity, fuel, and heat. This includes nearly half of people in the UK (49%) who say they “strongly support” it.

A large majority of people in the UK support the use of renewable energy



The next question is about renewable energy. This includes a number of different forms of energy, such as wind power, solar energy and biomass. Do you support or oppose the use of renewable energy for providing our electricity, fuel and heat?

November 2024

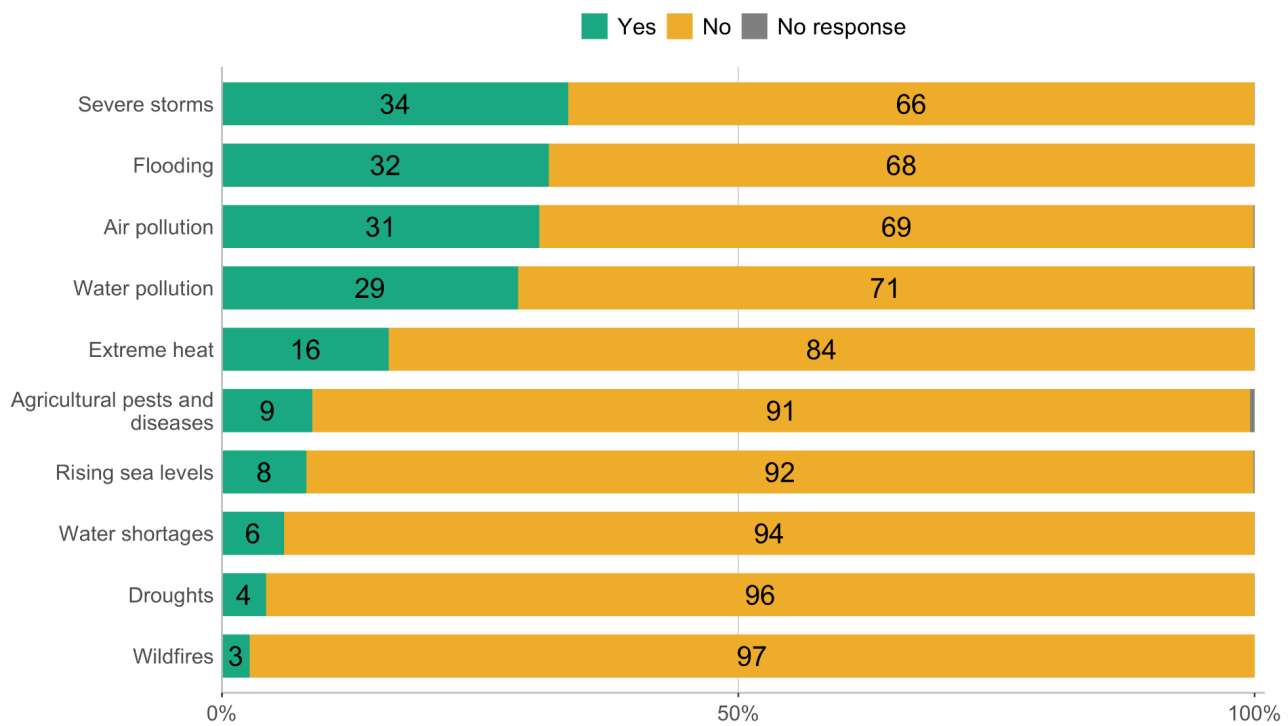
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

4 Impacts of Climate Change

4.1 About two-thirds of people in the UK have experienced at least one environmental problem in the past 12 months. The specific events varied.

About two-thirds of people in the UK (68%) say their local area has experienced at least one environmental problem in the past 12 months, but the specific events varied.² This included people who said their local area had experienced severe storms (34%), flooding (32%), air pollution (31%), or water pollution (29%) in the past year. Fewer people said their area had experienced extreme heat (16%), agricultural pests and diseases (9%), rising sea levels (8%), water shortages (6%), droughts (4%), or wildfires (3%) in the past 12 months.

About two-thirds of people in the UK have experienced at least one environmental problem in the past 12 months



In the past 12 months, has your local area experienced...

November 2024

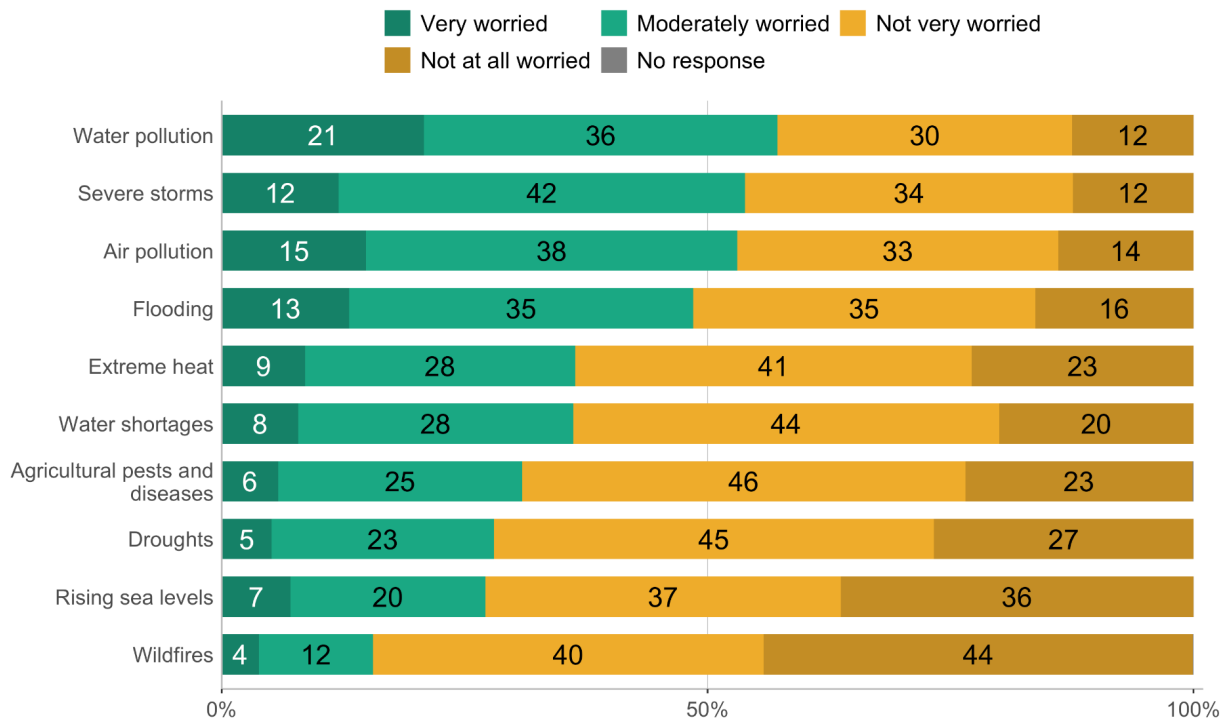
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

² Note: Respondents answered these questions before they were asked any questions about climate change in the survey.

4.2 A majority of people in the UK are worried about harm from environmental problems in their local area.

Majorities of people in the UK are “very” or “moderately worried” that water pollution (57%), severe storms (54%), and air pollution (53%) might harm their local area, and nearly half are worried about flooding (49%).³ About one-third are worried about extreme heat (36%), water shortages (36%), or agricultural pests and diseases (31%). About one in four are worried that droughts (28%) or rising sea levels (27%) might harm their local area, while fewer are worried about wildfires (16%).

A majority of people in the UK are worried about harm from environmental problems in their local area



How worried are you that the following might harm your local area?

November 2024

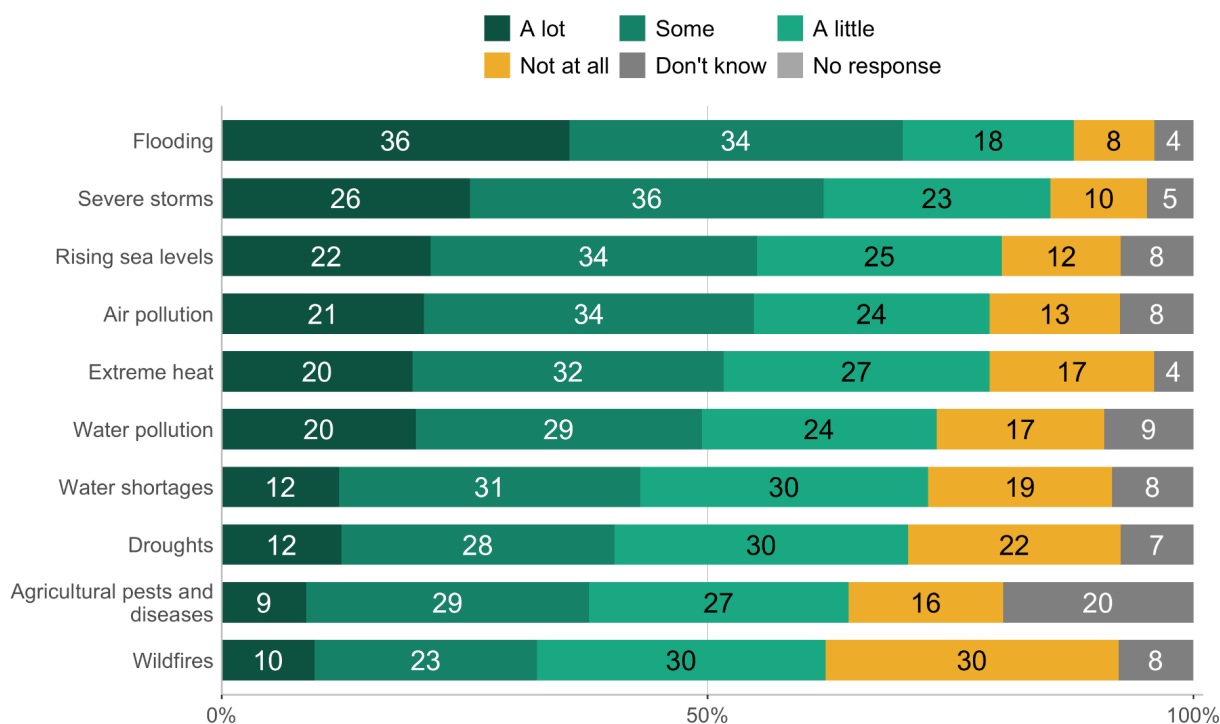
Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

³ Note: Respondents answered these questions before they were asked any questions about climate change in the survey.

4.3 A majority of people in the UK think climate change is affecting environmental problems in the United Kingdom.

Most people in the UK think climate change is affecting many environmental problems in the United Kingdom at least “a little.” About eight in ten or more think climate change is affecting flooding (88%), severe storms (85%), and rising sea levels (80%). Seven in ten or more think climate change is affecting air pollution (79%), extreme heat (79%), water pollution (74%), water shortages (73%), and droughts (71%), while more than six in ten think climate change is affecting agricultural pests and diseases (65%) and wildfires (62%).

A majority of people in the UK think that climate change is affecting environmental problems



How much do you think climate change is affecting the following in the United Kingdom?

November 2024

Source: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Appendix I: Data Tables

Table Notes:

- In all tables, the base is all people in the UK age 16+.
- In the first row of each table, “Unweighted Base” refers to the unweighted number of respondents in each column.
- Percentages reported are weighted to match UK Office of National Statistics parameters.
- A dash (“-”) denotes that there were no responses in that cell, and “0” denotes that the cell value is greater than 0 but less than 0.50.

1.1 The following questions ask about climate change. Climate change refers to the idea that the world’s average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, may be increasing more in the future, and that the world’s climate and weather patterns may change as a result.

What do you think? Do you think that climate change is happening?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	86
No (%)	6
Don’t know (%)	7
No response (%)	0

1.2 Assuming climate change is happening, do you think it is...

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Caused mostly by human activities (%)	75
Caused mostly by natural changes in the environment (%)	17
None of the above because climate change isn’t happening (%)	3
Some other cause (%)	5
No response (%)	0

2.1 How worried are you about climate change?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	35
Somewhat worried (%)	45
Not very worried (%)	15
Not at all worried (%)	5
No response (%)	0

2.2 How much do you think climate change will harm you personally?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A great deal (%)	17
A moderate amount (%)	40
Only a little (%)	29
Not at all (%)	11
Don't know (%)	4

2.2 How much do you think climate change will harm future generations of people?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A great deal (%)	62
A moderate amount (%)	23
Only a little (%)	8
Not at all (%)	3
Don't know (%)	4
No response (%)	0

2.3 How important is the issue of climate change to you personally?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Extremely important (%)	22
Very important (%)	29
Somewhat important (%)	30
Not too important (%)	13
Not at all important (%)	5
No response (%)	0

2.4 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

I have personally experienced the effects of climate change.

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Strongly agree (%)	14
Somewhat agree (%)	48
Somewhat disagree (%)	25
Strongly disagree (%)	13
No response (%)	0

3.1 Do you think climate change should be a very high, high, medium, or low priority for the government of the United Kingdom?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very high (%)	36
High (%)	32
Medium (%)	22
Low (%)	10
No response (%)	0

3.2 The next question is about renewable energy. This includes a number of different forms of energy, such as wind power, solar energy and biomass. Do you support or oppose the use of renewable energy for providing our electricity, fuel and heat?

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Strongly support (%)	49
Support (%)	32
Neither support nor oppose (%)	13
Oppose (%)	2
Strongly oppose (%)	1
Don't know (%)	3
No response (%)	0

4.1 In the past 12 months, has your local area experienced...**Extreme heat**

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	16
No (%)	84
No response (%)	0

Flooding

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	32
No (%)	68
No response (%)	0

Droughts

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	4
No (%)	96
No response (%)	0

Water shortages

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	6
No (%)	94
No response (%)	0

Severe storms

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	34
No (%)	66
No response (%)	0

Wildfires

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	3
No (%)	97
No response (%)	0

Rising sea levels

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	8
No (%)	92
No response (%)	0

Agricultural pests and diseases

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	9
No (%)	91
No response (%)	0

Air pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	31
No (%)	69
No response (%)	0

Water pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Yes (%)	29
No (%)	71
No response (%)	0

4.2 How worried are you that the following might harm your local area?**Extreme heat**

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	9
Moderately worried (%)	28
Not very worried (%)	41
Not at all worried (%)	23
No response (%)	0

Flooding

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	13
Moderately worried (%)	35
Not very worried (%)	35
Not at all worried (%)	16
No response (%)	0

Droughts

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	5
Moderately worried (%)	23
Not very worried (%)	45
Not at all worried (%)	27
No response (%)	0

Water shortages

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	8
Moderately worried (%)	28
Not very worried (%)	44
Not at all worried (%)	20
No response (%)	0

Severe storms

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	12
Moderately worried (%)	42
Not very worried (%)	34
Not at all worried (%)	12
No response (%)	0

Wildfires

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	4
Moderately worried (%)	12
Not very worried (%)	40
Not at all worried (%)	44
No response (%)	0

Rising sea levels

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	7
Moderately worried (%)	20
Not very worried (%)	37
Not at all worried (%)	36
No response (%)	0

Agricultural pests and diseases

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	6
Moderately worried (%)	25
Not very worried (%)	46
Not at all worried (%)	23
No response (%)	0

Air pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	15
Moderately worried (%)	38
Not very worried (%)	33
Not at all worried (%)	14
No response (%)	0

Water pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
Very worried (%)	21
Moderately worried (%)	36
Not very worried (%)	30
Not at all worried (%)	12
No response (%)	0

4.3 How much do you think climate change is affecting the following in the United Kingdom?**Extreme heat**

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	20
Some (%)	32
A little (%)	27
Not at all (%)	17
Don't know (%)	4
No response (%)	0

Flooding

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	36
Some (%)	34
A little (%)	18
Not at all (%)	8
Don't know (%)	4
No response (%)	0

Droughts

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	12
Some (%)	28
A little (%)	30
Not at all (%)	22
Don't know (%)	7
No response (%)	0

Water shortages

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	12
Some (%)	31
A little (%)	30
Not at all (%)	19
Don't know (%)	8
No response (%)	0

Severe storms

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	26
Some (%)	36
A little (%)	23
Not at all (%)	10
Don't know (%)	5
No response (%)	0

Wildfires

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	10
Some (%)	23
A little (%)	30
Not at all (%)	30
Don't know (%)	8
No response (%)	0

Rising sea levels

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	22
Some (%)	34
A little (%)	25
Not at all (%)	12
Don't know (%)	8
No response (%)	0

Agricultural pests and diseases

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	9
Some (%)	29
A little (%)	27
Not at all (%)	16
Don't know (%)	20
No response (%)	0

Air pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	21
Some (%)	34
A little (%)	24
Not at all (%)	13
Don't know (%)	8
No response (%)	0

Water pollution

	Nov 2024
Unweighted Base	10,660
A lot (%)	20
Some (%)	29
A little (%)	24
Not at all (%)	17
Don't know (%)	9

Appendix II: Survey Method

The data in this report are based on a nationally representative survey of 10,660 people in the United Kingdom aged 16 and older. The survey was conducted 7 November –13 November 2024. All questionnaires were self-administered by respondents in a web-based environment. The average margin of error for the sample was +/- 0.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

The sample was drawn from the Ipsos KnowledgePanel®, an online panel of members drawn using probability sampling methods. Prospective members are recruited using a combination of random digit dial and address-based sampling techniques that cover virtually all (non-institutional) residential phone numbers and addresses in the United Kingdom. Those contacted who would choose to join the panel but do not have access to the Internet are loaned computers or tablets and given Internet access so they may participate. The sample therefore includes a representative cross-section of UK residents ages 16 and older –irrespective of whether they have Internet access, use only a cell phone, etc. The sample was weighted, post survey, to match key UK Office of National Statistics demographic norms.

The question item in section 3.2 was originally developed by the UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Public Attitudes Tracker study:

UK DESNZ (2024). *DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker Spring 2024 Questionnaire*. UK Government. London: UK DESNZ.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-spring-2024>

The survey instrument was designed by Anthony Leiserowitz, Jennifer Carman, Seth Rosenthal, and Jennifer Marlon of Yale University. The report text was prepared by Anthony Leiserowitz, Jennifer Carman, Seth Rosenthal, and Marija Verner of Yale University. The figures and tables were constructed by Emily Goddard of Yale University.

Rounding error and tabulation

In data tables, bases specified are unweighted, while percentages are weighted to match national population parameters.

For tabulation purposes, percentage points are rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given chart may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. Summed response categories (e.g., “very worried” + “moderately worried”) are rounded after sums are calculated. For example, in some cases, the sum of 25% + 25% might be reported as 51% (e.g., 25.3% + 25.3% = 50.6%, which, after rounding, would be reported as 25% + 25% = 51%).

Appendix III: Sample Demographics

	<i>n</i> (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Total	10,660	100
Male	4929	47
Female	5558	52
Another gender identity	173	2
Generation Z (1997 or later)	637	16
Millennials (1981 - 1996)	1811	27
Generation X (1965 - 1980)	3167	26
Baby Boomers (1946 - 1964)	4437	27
Silent (1928 - 1945)	606	5
Qualifications at level 1 and below	653	5
GCSE/O level grade A*-C or 4-9, Intermediate 2	2120	19
A levels, Scottish Highers, NVQ level 3 and equivalents	2533	28
Other Higher Education below degree level, SVQ Level 4	512	4
Degree level or above, SVQ Level 5	2947	27
Another type of qualification	738	6
No qualification	489	4
Prefer not to say	668	7
<£26K	2401	20
£26K-<£52K	3096	27
£52K-<£75K	1235	12
£75K-<£100K	716	8
£100K-<£150K	486	6
£150K+	314	3
Don't know	673	10
Prefer not to say	1739	14
White	9582	84
Mixed / Multiple ethnicities	160	3
Asian	449	7
Black / African / Caribbean	167	2
Any other ethnic group	56	1
Don't know	31	0
Prefer not to say	215	2
England	9015	84
Scotland	879	8
Wales	498	5
Northern Ireland	268	3

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