

DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Net Zero and Climate Change Spring 2023, UK

22 June 2023

Official Statistics

This report covers results from the quarterly questions on awareness of Net Zero and concern about climate change which have been asked in each wave of the DESNZ (formerly BEIS) Public Attitudes Tracker since Autumn 2021.

The report also includes results from Summer 2022 on behaviours related to, and attitudes towards, climate change.

What you need to know about these statistics: These results from the DESNZ (formerly BEIS) Public Attitudes Tracker (PAT) were collected using the Address Based Online Surveying (ABOS) methodology introduced in Autumn 2021, which uses random probability sampling. The results should not be compared with previous PAT surveys, which used different data collection methods. For details, see the [Technical Report](#).

The table below shows the topics covered in this report and when these questions were included in the Public Attitudes Tracker. Links are included to the findings for each topic within this report.

Topic	When included	Link to findings
Awareness of Net Zero	Quarterly	Link
Concern about climate change	Quarterly	Link
Behaviours to tackle climate change	Summer 2022	Link
Trust in information sources	Summer 2022	Link
Attitudes towards climate change	Summer 2022	Link

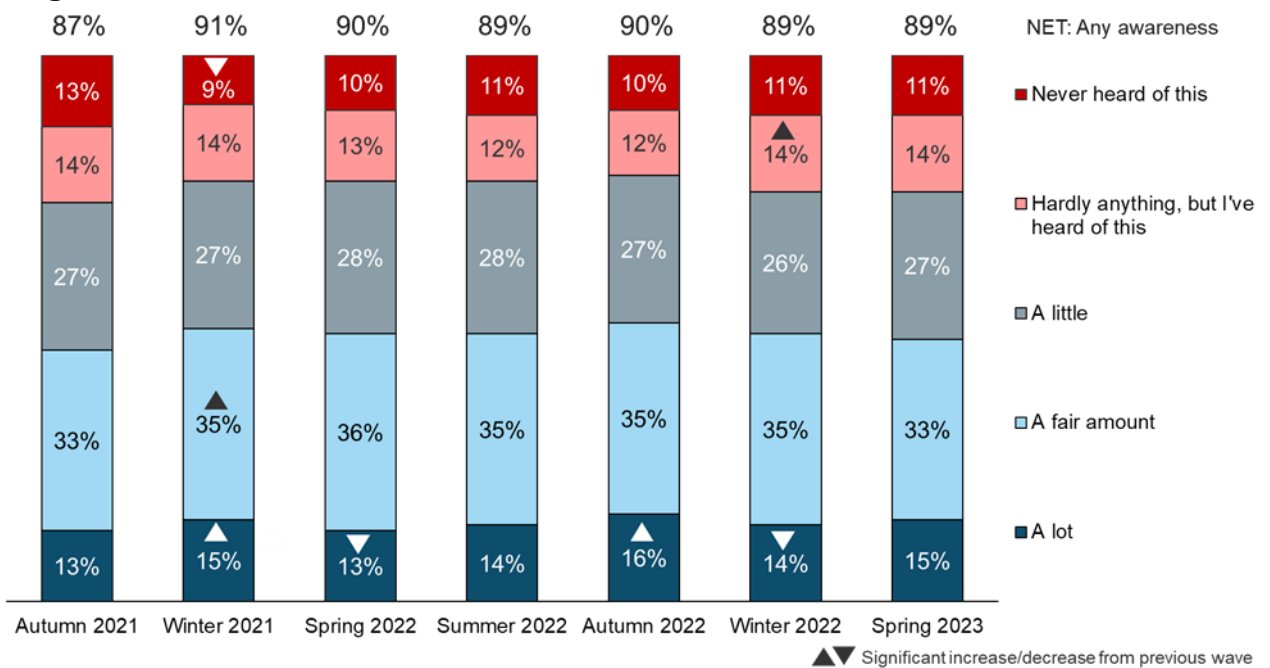
Awareness of Net Zero

In June 2019, the government announced a new target which will require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero by 2050. Before asking level of awareness, respondents were provided with a brief description as follows: *'The UK government is aiming to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to 'net zero' by 2050. This will involve significantly reducing emissions produced by our industries, transport, food, and homes. Any remaining emissions will be balanced by actions that reduce greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere, such as planting trees.'*

In Spring 2023, total awareness of the concept of Net Zero remained stable compared to Winter 2022 (89%). The level of perceived knowledge also remained stable overall, with almost half of people (48%) saying they knew at least a fair amount about Net Zero (compared with 49% in Winter 2022) and 15% saying they knew a lot.

Over the longer term, awareness of and perceived knowledge about Net Zero has remained largely stable since Winter 2021, following the more substantive increase in overall awareness observed between Autumn 2021 and Winter 2021.

Figure 1.1: Awareness of the concept of 'Net Zero' (based on all people), Autumn 2021 to Spring 2023



NZKNOW. The UK government is aiming to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to 'net zero' by 2050. This will involve significantly reducing emissions produced by our industries, transport, food, and homes. Any remaining emissions will be balanced by actions that reduce greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere, such as planting trees. Before today, how much, if anything, did you know about the concept of 'Net Zero'?

Base: All wave respondents – Autumn 2021 (5,558), Winter 2021 (3,705), Spring 2022 (4,374), Summer 2022 (4,489), Autumn 2022 (4,158), Winter 2022 (3,572), Spring 2023 (4,405) (Asked Quarterly)

Overall awareness of Net Zero was high among most subgroups. However, it was relatively higher among certain subgroups including men (93%, compared with 86% of women). Overall awareness of Net Zero was also higher among people aged 45 or over compared with those aged under 45: 92% of 45 to 54 year olds, 94% of 55 to 64 year olds and 92% of those aged 65 and over had heard of Net Zero compared with 88% of 16 to 24 year olds, 84% of 25 to 34

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year olds and 86% of 35 to 44 year olds. Overall awareness of Net Zero was also higher among those educated to degree level (95%, compared with 89% of those with other qualifications and 84% of people with no qualifications). Patterns of difference in levels of perceived knowledge reflected those seen for overall awareness.

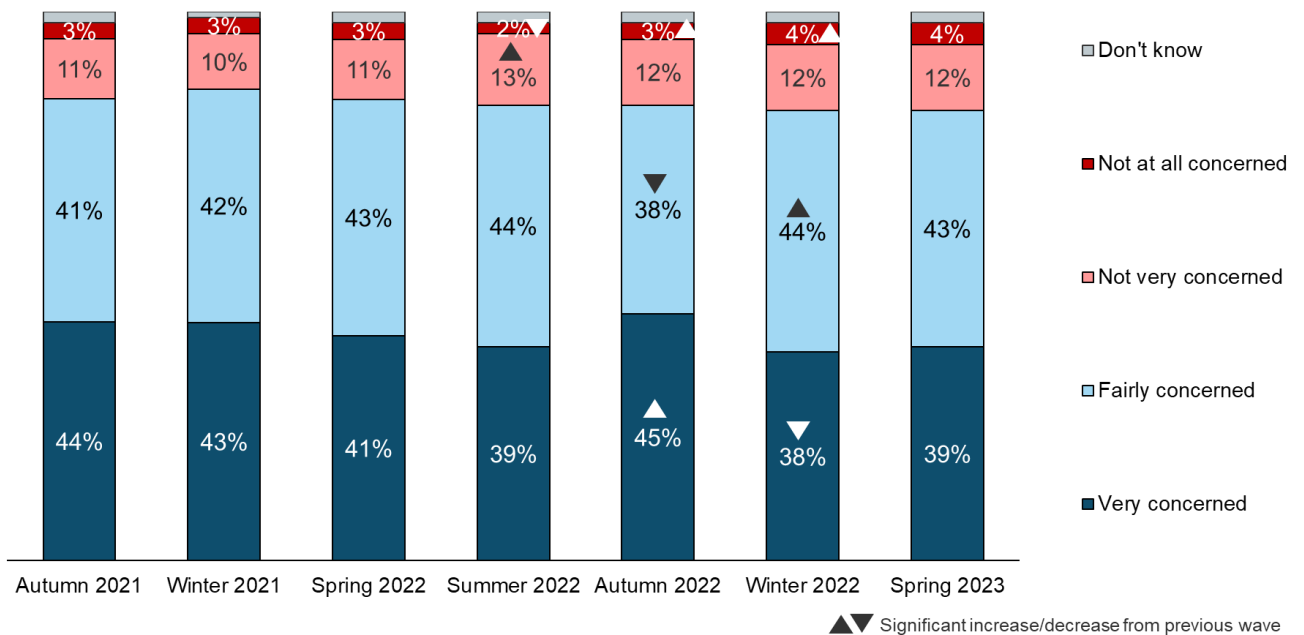
The proportion who said they had least a fair amount of knowledge about Net Zero was higher in rural areas (57%) compared with urban areas (46%). By geography, the proportion who said they knew at least a fair amount was highest in the South West (55%), the South East (54%), London (51%) and the East of England (51%), and lowest in the North West (40%) and Northern Ireland (37%).

Concern about climate change

In Spring 2023, the majority of people (82%) said they were at least fairly concerned about climate change, unchanged since Summer 2022 (83%) and slightly lower than the highest levels reported in Autumn and Winter 2021 (85%).

There was no change in reported levels of concern since Winter 2022 (Figure 2.1), with 39% saying they were very concerned. In total, 16% said they were not very or not at all concerned about climate change, including 4% who said they were not at all concerned. Since this time series started, there has been a slight decline in concern about climate change from Autumn 2021 (85%) to Spring 2023 (82%).

Figure 2.1: Concern about climate change (based on all people), Autumn 2021 to Spring 2023



CLIMCONCERN. How concerned, if at all, are you about climate change, sometimes referred to as 'global warming'?

Base: All wave respondents – Autumn 2021 (5,557), Winter 2021 (3,701), Spring 2022 (4,375), Summer 2022 (4,490), Autumn 2022 (4,158), Winter 2022 (3,571), Spring 2023 (4,405) (Asked Quarterly)

Overall concern about climate change was higher for women (85%, compared with 80% of men) and people educated to degree level (88%, compared with 81% of those with other qualifications and 76% of people with no qualifications). By age, the proportion of those 'very concerned' about climate change was relatively higher among those aged over 65 (47%) and lower among those aged 25 to 34 (32%), with those in other age groups in line with the total for the UK.

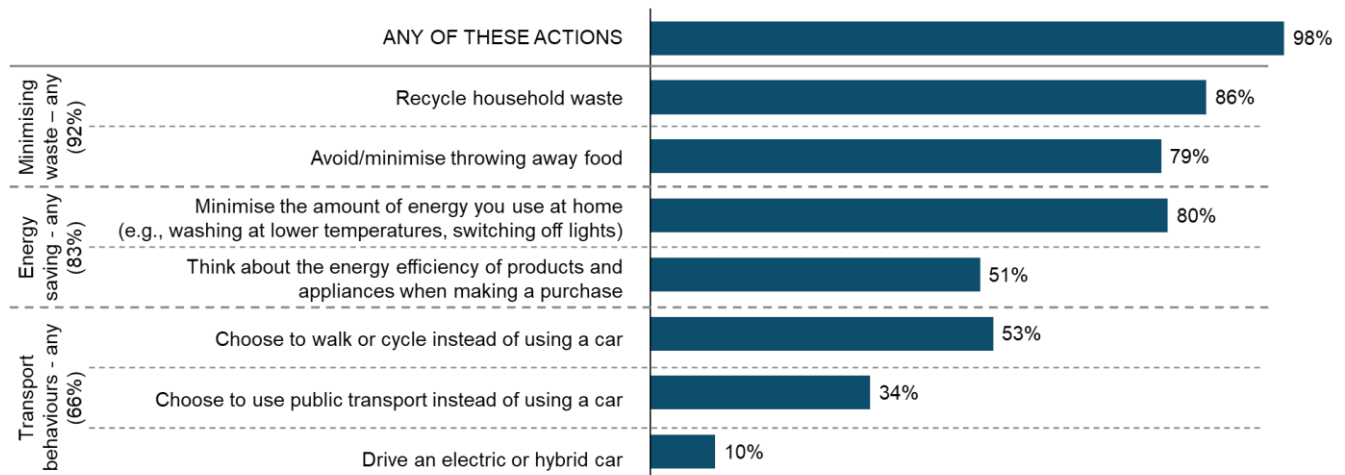
The proportion who said they were very concerned about climate change was higher in rural areas (44%) compared with urban areas (38%). By geography, the proportion who said they were very concerned about climate change was relatively higher in London (45%) and the South West (48%), and lower in the North East (30%), the West Midlands (34%) and Wales (35%).

Behaviours to tackle climate change

Self-reported behaviours

In Summer 2022, people were shown a list of behaviours and asked whether they did any of them in their everyday life. Almost all people (98%) said they did one or more of the behaviours shown in Figure 3.1. Behaviours related to minimising waste were reported most often, including recycling household waste (86%) and minimising food waste (79%). A similar proportion (80%) said they minimised energy use at home, while around half of respondents said they thought about energy efficiency when purchasing products or appliances (51%). In relation to transport, 53% chose to walk or cycle instead of using a car, a third (34%) said they chose public transport instead of using a car and 10% said they drove an electric or hybrid car.

Figure 3.1: Behaviours related to reducing climate change adopted in everyday life (based on all people), Summer 2022



CCBEHAVE. Thinking now about your everyday life, do you do any of these things? Please select all that apply. Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022 (4,488)

There were some relatively small differences by gender, with women more likely to report minimising energy use in the home (85%, compared with 76% of men) and avoiding or minimising food waste (81%, compared with 77%).

Those educated to degree level were more likely than those with no qualifications to report doing each behaviour included in the question.

People living in owner-occupier households were more likely than renters to report most behaviours, with the exception of using public transport (40% of renters compared with 32% of owners), and choosing to walk or cycle, for which there was no difference.

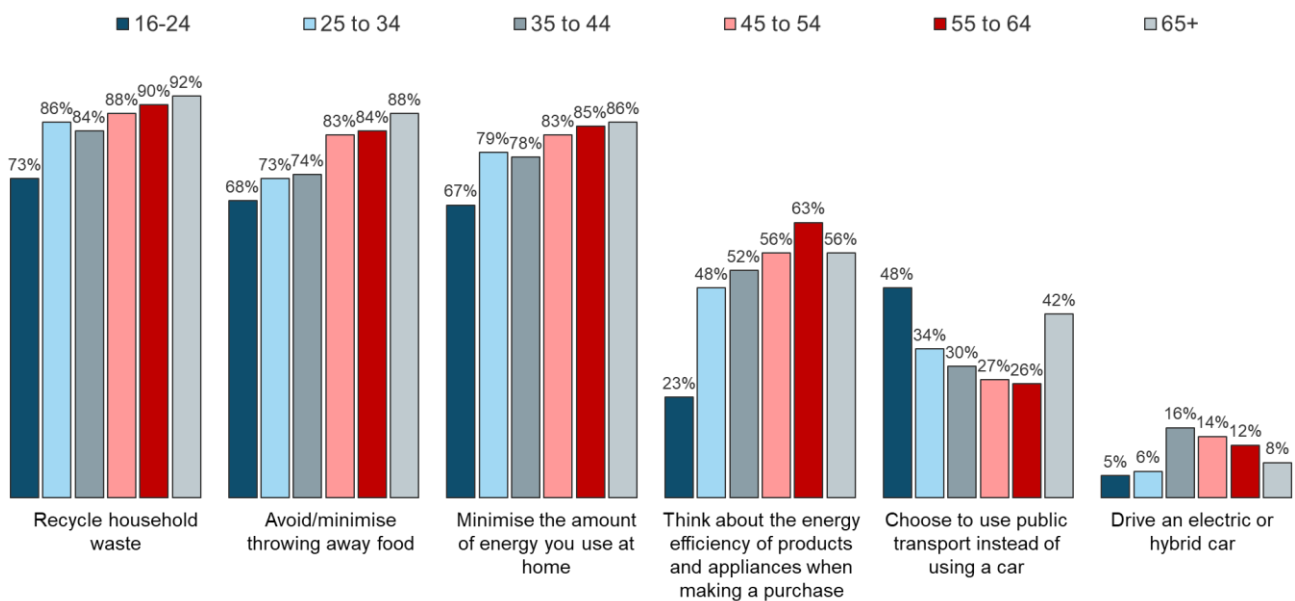
People who said they were very concerned about climate change were more likely than people who were not concerned to report doing each behaviour listed in Figure 3.1. The differences were largest in relation to thinking about energy efficiency when making a purchase (65% of those who were very concerned about climate change compared with 32% of those not concerned) and choosing to walk or cycle (64%, compared with 36%).

By age, those aged 16 to 24 were less likely than older people to report all of the behaviours listed in Figure 3.1 apart from choosing to walk or cycle instead of using the car, which was similar across all age bands, and choosing to use public transport, which was highest for those

in the youngest and oldest age groups (48% of 16 to 24 year olds and 42% of those aged over 65). There was a general pattern by age for recycling, minimising food waste and minimising energy use in the home, with the proportion adopting these behaviours highest for those aged 65 and over, and lowest for those aged 16 to 24 (Figure 3.2).

Compared with other age groups, young people aged 16 to 24 were particularly unlikely to consider energy efficiency when purchasing appliances (23%, compared with 51% overall) although this is likely to be related to a lower rate of purchasing appliances in general for this group.

Figure 3.2: Reported behaviours taken in everyday life by age (based on all people), Summer 2022



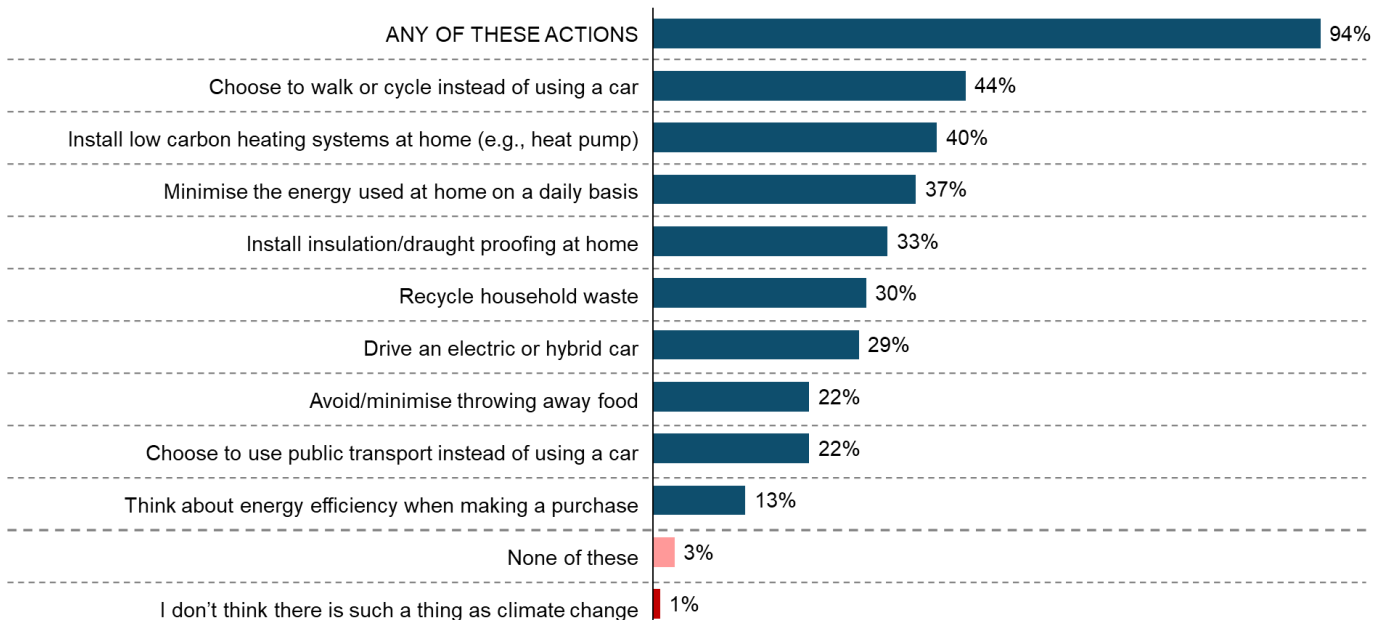
CCBEHAVE. Thinking now about your everyday life, do you do any of these things? Please select all that apply. Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022: 16 to 24 (264), 25 to 34 (583), 35 to 44 (707), 45 to 54 (680), 55 to 64 (847), 65+ (1,357)

Behaviours thought to have the biggest impact on tackling climate change

Respondents were then presented with a list that was similar to the list in the previous self-reported behaviours section and asked which **three** they thought would have the biggest impact on tackling climate change in the UK (Figure 3.3). The behaviour most likely to be associated with mitigation of climate change was choosing to walk or cycle rather than using a car (44%), followed by installing low carbon heating systems (41%), minimising energy use in the home (38%), installing home insulation (33%), recycling (31%), and driving an electric or hybrid car (29%). Thinking about energy efficiency when making a purchase was the action least likely to be associated with climate change mitigation (14%).

A small minority (4%) either did not believe in climate change at all or did not think any of the options would have an impact.

Figure 3.3: Behaviours thought to have the biggest impact on tackling climate change in the UK - up to three responses were selected (based on all people), Summer 2022



CCIMPORT. If most people in the UK did the following, which three of these do you think would have the biggest impact on tackling climate change in the UK? Please select up to three responses.
Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022 (4,491)

People who were very concerned about climate change were more likely than those not concerned about this to mention use of public transport (26%, compared with 17%), installing low carbon heating (51%, compared with 21%), driving an electric car (31%, compared with 22%) and installing insulation (39%, compared with 25%) as the main ways of mitigating climate change.

People with degree level qualifications were more likely than those with no qualifications to mention installing low carbon heating (49%, compared with 27%) and installing insulation (41%, compared with 20%), while people with no qualifications were more likely than those with a degree level qualification to select recycling as a mitigating factor against climate change (41%, compared with 23%).

Some issues were selected more frequently by women than men, such as minimising energy use at home (41%, compared with 35%) and choosing to walk or cycle (47%, compared with 41%), while men were more likely to mention installing home insulation (36%, compared with 31%) and choosing public transport over the car (25%, compared with 20%).

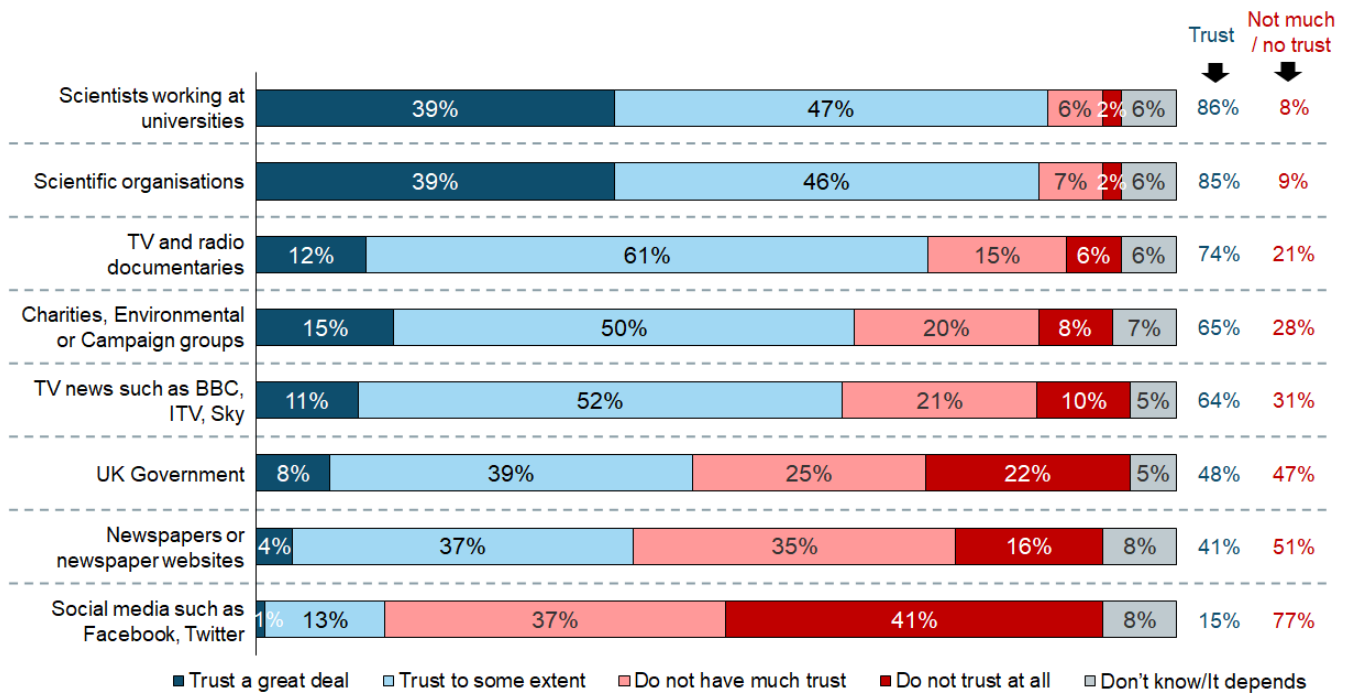
Trust in information sources

In Summer 2022, people were asked about a range of potential sources of information about climate change (Figure 4.1):

- Newspapers or newspaper websites
- TV news such as BBC, ITV, Sky
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter
- TV and radio documentaries
- UK Government
- Scientists working at universities
- Scientific organisations such as Royal Society, Met Office
- Charities, Environmental or Campaign groups such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth

People were asked about their level of trust in these to provide accurate information about climate change. In Summer 2022, levels of trust in relation to climate change information were highest for scientists at universities (86% trusted, with 39% trusting them a great deal), and scientific organisations (85% trusted, with 39% trusting them a great deal). Just under half (48%) trusted the UK government to provide accurate information on this.

Figure 4.1: Trust in sources of information to provide accurate information on climate change (based on all people), Summer 2022



CCTRUSTA-H. How much do you trust each of the following to provide accurate information about climate change?

Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022: Scientists at universities (4,464), Scientific organisations (4,463), TV & radio documentaries (4,464), Charities and environmental groups (4,458), TV news (4,468), UK Government (4,457), Newspapers (4,456), Social media (4,443)

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In terms of media, TV and radio documentaries (74%) and TV news (64%) were trusted more than newspapers (41%) to provide accurate information about climate change. However, only around one in ten said they trusted TV/radio documentaries and TV news a great deal. Trust in social media was notably low, with 77% saying they did not trust it as an information source about climate change.

Trust in TV and radio documentaries to provide accurate climate change information was slightly higher for those aged 45 and over (77%) than those aged under 45 (70%). On the other hand, trust in social media in relation to climate change information was much higher amongst those aged 16 to 24 (29%) than those aged 25 and over (13%).

With the exception of social media, those concerned about climate change were more likely than those who were not concerned to trust all sources of information to provide accurate climate change information.

People with degree level qualifications were more likely than those with no qualifications to trust most sources in their reporting of climate change, with the exception of the UK government and social media.

There were few differences by gender, although women were somewhat more likely than men to trust charities and environmental groups to provide accurate climate change information (69%, compared with 61%).

Attitudes towards climate change

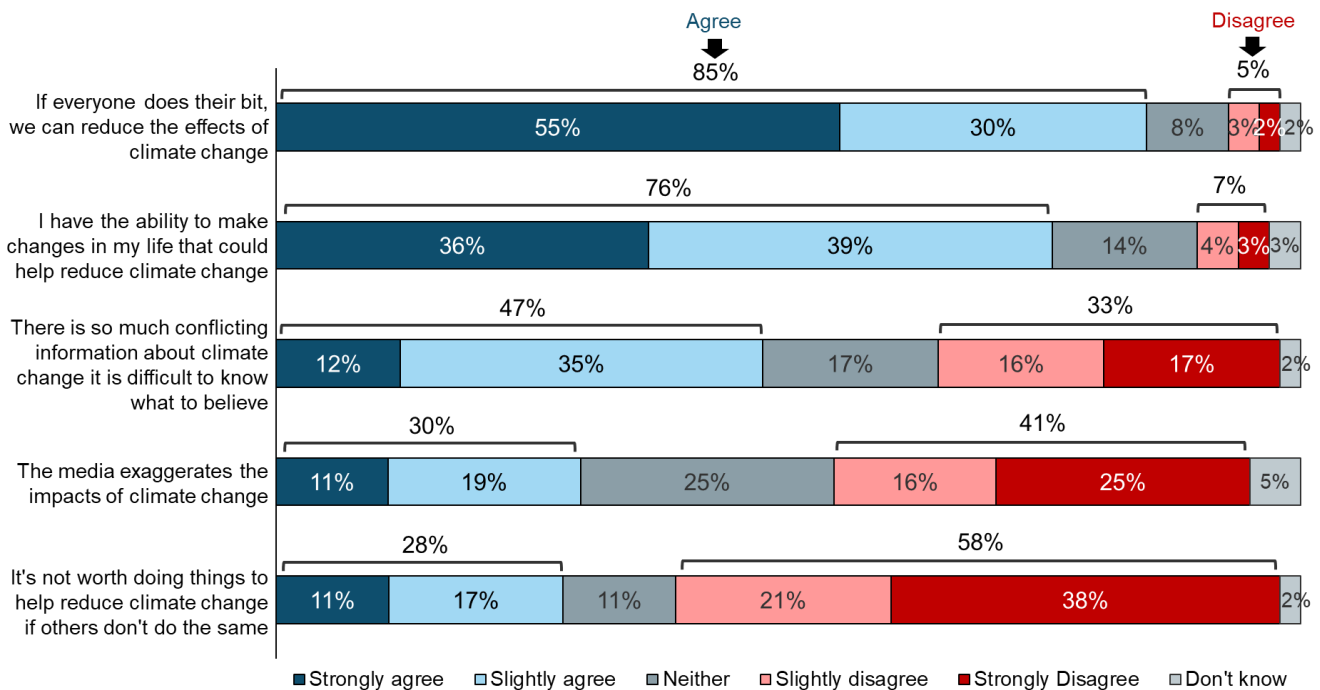
In Summer 2022, people were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about climate change:

- It's not worth doing things to help reduce climate change if others don't do the same
- There is so much conflicting information about climate change it is difficult to know what to believe
- If everyone does their bit, we can reduce the effects of climate change
- I have the ability to make changes in my life that could help reduce climate change
- The media exaggerates the impacts of climate change

There was strong belief in in the potential for individual action to reduce climate change (Figure 5.1). A large majority (85%) agreed that if everyone does their bit, we can reduce the effects of climate change, with over half (55%) agreeing strongly. Three in four (76%) agreed that they personally could make changes that would help reduce climate change, with 36% agreeing strongly. Very few disagreed with either of these statements (5% and 7% respectively).

The lack of action by others was, however, a disincentive for some, with 28% agreeing it is not worth doing things if others do not do the same, although far more disagreed (58%) than agreed (28%) with this statement. Almost half (47%) agreed that there is so much conflicting information about climate change, it is difficult to know what to believe. Although more people disagreed (41%) than agreed (30%) that the media exaggerates the impacts of climate change, this viewpoint is still held by substantial minority.

Figure 5.1: Attitudes towards climate change (based on all people), Summer 2022



CCATTA-E. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022: Everyone does their bit (4,484), I have ability (4,474), So much conflicting information (4,475), Media exaggerates (4,473), Not worth doing (4,470)

People educated to degree level were more likely than those without qualifications to agree that they themselves have the ability to help make a difference (82%, compared with 63%).

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However, those educated to degree level were more likely than those with no qualifications to disagree that it's not worth doing these things if others don't do the same (70%, compared with 41%) that there is too much conflicting information (51%, compared with 13%) and that the media exaggerates climate change (57%, compared with 24%).

People aged 55 and over were more likely to agree with each of these three latter statements than those aged under 35. For example, 36% of those aged 55 and over agreed that the media exaggerates the impacts of climate change compared with 23% of those aged under 35.

Men also tended to be more negative than women: for example, men (34%) were more likely than women (26%) to agree that the media exaggerates the impacts of climate change.



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