

DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Technical Overview Summer 2023, UK

21 September 2023

Official Statistics

This report covers general information about the Public Attitudes Tracker (PAT) survey completed in Summer 2023. More detailed technical information on the survey series, including details of the new data collection methodology adopted in Autumn 2021 and previous methodologies, is available in the annual [Technical Report](#).

Introduction

In February 2023, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) was created, focusing on the energy and net zero portfolio from the former Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). At the same time, the BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker (PAT) was renamed the DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker, focusing on measuring public awareness, attitudes and behaviours relating to the policies of the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), such as energy and climate change. Results from questions on other topics previously within the remit of BEIS, such as artificial intelligence, consumer issues and workers' rights, are still available in the relevant topic reports published with earlier waves of the BEIS PAT.

This report presents a technical overview of the Summer 2023 survey wave, conducted by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The results from this wave are based on a representative sample of 4,003 adults aged 16 or over in the UK. Data collection ran from 9 June 2023 to 10 July 2023.

This is the eighth wave in a series of surveys, which began in Autumn 2021. Earlier waves have been conducted as follows:

- Autumn 2021 (15 September to 17 October 2021)
- Winter 2021 (24 November to 22 December 2021)
- Spring 2022 (24 February to 24 March 2022)
- Summer 2022 (9 June to 7 July 2022)
- Autumn 2022 (1 September to 3 October 2022)
- Winter 2022 (17 November to 19 December 2022)
- Spring 2023 (9 March to 6 April 2023)

Before Autumn 2021, previous tracker surveys had been conducted covering many of the same topics. In Autumn 2021 the BEIS PAT moved to a 'push-to-web' survey method referred to as Address Based Online Surveying (ABOS). The Summer 2023 wave of the PAT, which was issued under the new department, DESNZ, represents the eighth wave of the new time series following this change in methodology. Significant changes affecting both survey sample and mode mean that the results from this wave are not directly comparable with results collected via surveys conducted using the previous methodology. Where questions have been included in more than one wave under the new methodology, comparisons between waves are made.

A summary of the methodology is provided below. Full details of the methodology are provided in the annual Technical Report. The most recent version has been published alongside the Summer 2023 results.

Summer 2023 survey

The Summer 2023 questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Net Zero
- Climate change
- Renewables
- Energy security
- Electricity network infrastructure
- Energy saving and wasting behaviours
- Energy use and efficiency
- Energy bills
- Smart meters

Interpretation of findings and further resources

In this publication, differences between groups are only reported where they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level.

Alongside this Technical Overview report, we have also provided: individual topic reports covering results from the survey grouped by theme, a set of tables showing the time series for questions asked on multiple occasions since Autumn 2021, a set of tables containing crosstabulations for headline questions by gender, age, highest qualification and geography, and the online and paper versions of the questionnaire.

Introduction to the Address Based Online Surveying (ABOS) data collection model

ABOS is a type of 'push-to-web' survey method.

The basic ABOS design is simple: a **stratified random sample of addresses** is drawn from the Royal Mail's postcode address file and an invitation letter is sent to each one, containing username(s) and password(s) plus the URL of the survey website. Sampled individuals can log on using this information and complete the survey as they might any other web survey. Once the questionnaire is complete, the specific username and password cannot be used again, ensuring data confidentiality from others with access to this information.

It is usual for at least one reminder to be sent to each sampled address and it is also usual for an **alternative mode** (usually a paper questionnaire) to be offered to those who need it or

would prefer it. It is typical for this alternative mode to be available only ‘on request’ at first. However, after nonresponse to one or more web survey reminders, this alternative mode may be given more prominence.

Paper questionnaires ensure coverage of the offline population and are especially effective with sub-populations that respond to online surveys at lower-than-average levels. However, paper questionnaires have measurement limitations that constrain the design of the online questionnaire and also add considerably to overall cost. For the DESNZ PAT, **paper questionnaires are used in a limited and targeted way**, to optimise rather than maximise response.

Summer 2023 sample design

The sampling was designed to yield a respondent sample that was representative with respect to geography, neighbourhood deprivation level, and age group.

Figure 1 shows the (initially issued) sample structure with respect to the major strata. Higher sampling fractions were applied to the two least populous International Territorial Level (ITL)¹ (NE England and Wales²) so that the expected number of completed questionnaires was at least 220 in each one.

Figure 1: Addresses issued by area deprivation and household age structure: Summer 2023

Expected household age structure	Most deprived	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Least deprived
All <=35	1591	1360	951	611	461
Other	4861	3517	3004	2519	2041
All >=65	900	723	672	631	566

Summer 2023 Fieldwork

The data collection took place from 09 June 2023 to 10 July 2023.

All resident adults aged 16+ were invited to complete the survey, although for practical reasons the number of logins was limited to up to four adults per household, with more available on request. The number of logins was based on the estimated number of adults living in the household, based on external data. In Summer 2023, the mean number of logins per address was 2.8.

To ensure the survey was accessible to the offline population, some mailings included paper questionnaire alternatives (based on addresses where external data indicated that all residents were aged 65 or over). Paper questionnaires were also available on request.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/programmesandprojects/europeancitystatistics>

² The boost to the proportion in Northern Ireland was excluded in error from the Spring Wave

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- 21,430 invites were sent out initially and 18,232 reminders were sent in the second week of fieldwork. A further 2,978 invites and 2,255 reminders were sent midway through the fourth week of fieldwork in order to boost the number of responses and to reach the response rate target.
- 272 cases were identified as invalid based on quality assurance checks and were removed from the dataset, representing 6.4% of cases.
- The achieved sample size (after data cleaning) was 4,003 individuals, of which 3,331 were completed online and 672 (17%) on paper.
- The household response rate was 12.8% and the estimated individual response rate was 9.4%.
- The average (median) time to complete the survey online was 15 minutes and 27 seconds.

Weighting was used to compensate for differences in both sampling probability and response probability.

Changes to the survey in Summer 2023

A list of changes to the Summer 2023 questionnaire, in comparison to previous versions of these questions, is provided below. This is largely the addition of questions on new topics:

- A new set of questions was added on Net Zero:
 - NZTRANSIT, 'What impact do you think the UK's transition to Net Zero might have on the UK economy?' (in both the short and long term)
 - NZFINANCE, 'And what impact do you think that the UK's transition to Net Zero might have on your regular living expenses (for example energy, food, travel)? (in both the short and long term)
 - NZCONF, 'How confident are you that the UK is on track to meet its Net zero target by 2050?'
- A new question was added to the set on energy security':
 - ENSECOWN, 'How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The UK should produce less of its own oil and gas, even if that means we need to buy more fuel from other countries.'
- A new set of questions on building electricity network infrastructure was added:
 - INFRAKNOW, 'Before today how much, if anything, did you know about the need to build more electricity network infrastructure as part of the UK's transition to low carbon and renewable energy?'
 - INFRAHAPP, 'Now imagine that there are plans for new electricity network infrastructure to be constructed in your local area. This could include building a substation and large visible steel pylons supporting overhead power lines. How happy or unhappy would you be about this?'
 - INFRAWHYHAPP, 'You said you would be very or fairly happy for electricity network infrastructure to be built in your local area. Why is this?'
 - INFRAWHYNO, 'You said you would be very or fairly unhappy for electricity transmission network infrastructure to be built in your local area. Why is this?'
- A subset of the questions on energy saving and wasting, ENSAVFREQ, which were asked in Spring 2022 and 2023, were repeated in Summer 2023:
 - 'How often, if at all, do you personally do any of the following?'
 - a) Leave the lights on when you are not in the room
 - b) Boil the kettle with more water than you are going to use
 - c) Wash clothes at 30 degrees or lower

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- New questions were added to the set of questions on 'Energy Bills' covering energy efficiency and energy use:
 - BILLPAY, 'How does your household usually pay for the energy supplied to your home? If you pay using different methods for electricity and gas, please select both.'
 - ENSUFFIC2Y, 'Which of these statements comes closest to your view? Compared to two years ago, I use energy... (answers on a scale from much more efficiently to much less efficiently)
 - ENCHANGE2Y, 'And within the last two years, have you made any of the following changes to your home to reduce your energy use at home?'
 - ENCHANGEREASON, 'And did you make these changes as a result of a rise in energy prices?'
 - ENEFFKNOW, 'How much would you say you know about the most effective ways to reduce energy use in your home?'
 - ENEFFMORE, 'And do you feel you know enough about the most effective ways to reduce energy use in your home, or would you like to know more?'
 - GOVSUPPORTEN, 'Which of the following statements comes closest to your viewpoint? If energy prices were to remain high....' (answer list relating to amount and basis of support that government should provide to households)

Further information

Future updates to these statistics

Results from the Public Attitudes Tracker are published quarterly. However, following the creation of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, we have dropped the Autumn 2023 wave, which mainly included policy areas covered by the former BEIS and which are not within the remit of DESNZ. Therefore, the next release will cover Winter 2023 and is scheduled to be published in March 2024. Note that not all tracker questions are included in each wave.

Revisions policy

The [Department's statistical revisions policy](#) sets out the revisions policy for these statistics, which has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Related Statistics

There are various other surveys which seek the general public's opinion on topics related to those covered by the DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker. These include:

[Public Attitudes to Science](#)

A collection of studies looking at the UK public's attitudes to science, scientists and science policy.

[National Travel Attitudes Study \(NTAS\)](#)

The Department for Transport publishes a wide range of reports on the public's attitude to various modes of transport.

[Transport and Transport Technology: Public Attitudes Tracker](#)

The Department for Transport also publishes an attitudes tracker to monitor trends in public attitudes to and awareness of transport technologies in England.

[Public Attitudes to Trade Tracker](#)

The Department for Business and Trade runs a survey twice a year to collect data on public attitudes towards trade and government trade policy.

[The English Housing Survey](#)

The English Housing Survey is a continuous national survey commissioned by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (formerly Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). It collects information about people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England.

A wealth of energy statistics, which provide context for the attitude data collected by the PAT are available on the [Statistics at DESNZ](#) website.

Uses of these statistics

These statistics were commissioned by DESNZ to guide departmental policy, and are also used by other government departments, academics, ministers and the general public. Some examples on the uses of previous waves of the PAT include:

- Monitoring attitudes towards energy sources such as fracking and nuclear by policy makers, the media and local groups to understand how this is changing over time and the reasons why people support or oppose it.
- Understanding public awareness of key DESNZ policies such as the concept of Net Zero.
- Monitoring public attitudes to climate change and government policies associated with this and understanding how concern varies between demographic groups.
- Understanding public acceptability of different renewable energy sources which contribute to the Government's aim to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.

User engagement

Users are encouraged to provide comments and feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and should be sent to: PAT@energysecurity.gov.uk

The Department's statement on [statistical public engagement and data standards](#) sets out the department's commitments on public engagement and data standards as outlined by the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Pre-release access to statistics

Some ministers and officials receive access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release. Details of the arrangements for doing this and a list of the ministers and officials that receive pre-release access to these statistics can be found in the Department's [statement of compliance](#) with the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

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This publication is available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-attitudes-tracking-survey>

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