DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Renewable Energy Spring 2024, UK

03 July 2024 **Official Statistics**

The DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker is a nationally representative annual survey of adults (aged 16+) in the UK that tracks public awareness, attitudes and behaviours relating to the policies of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), such as energy and climate change.

This report provides a summary of the headline findings relating to renewable energy from the Spring 2024 wave of the Tracker, which ran from 18 March to 22 April 2024.

Differences between groups are only reported where they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval level.

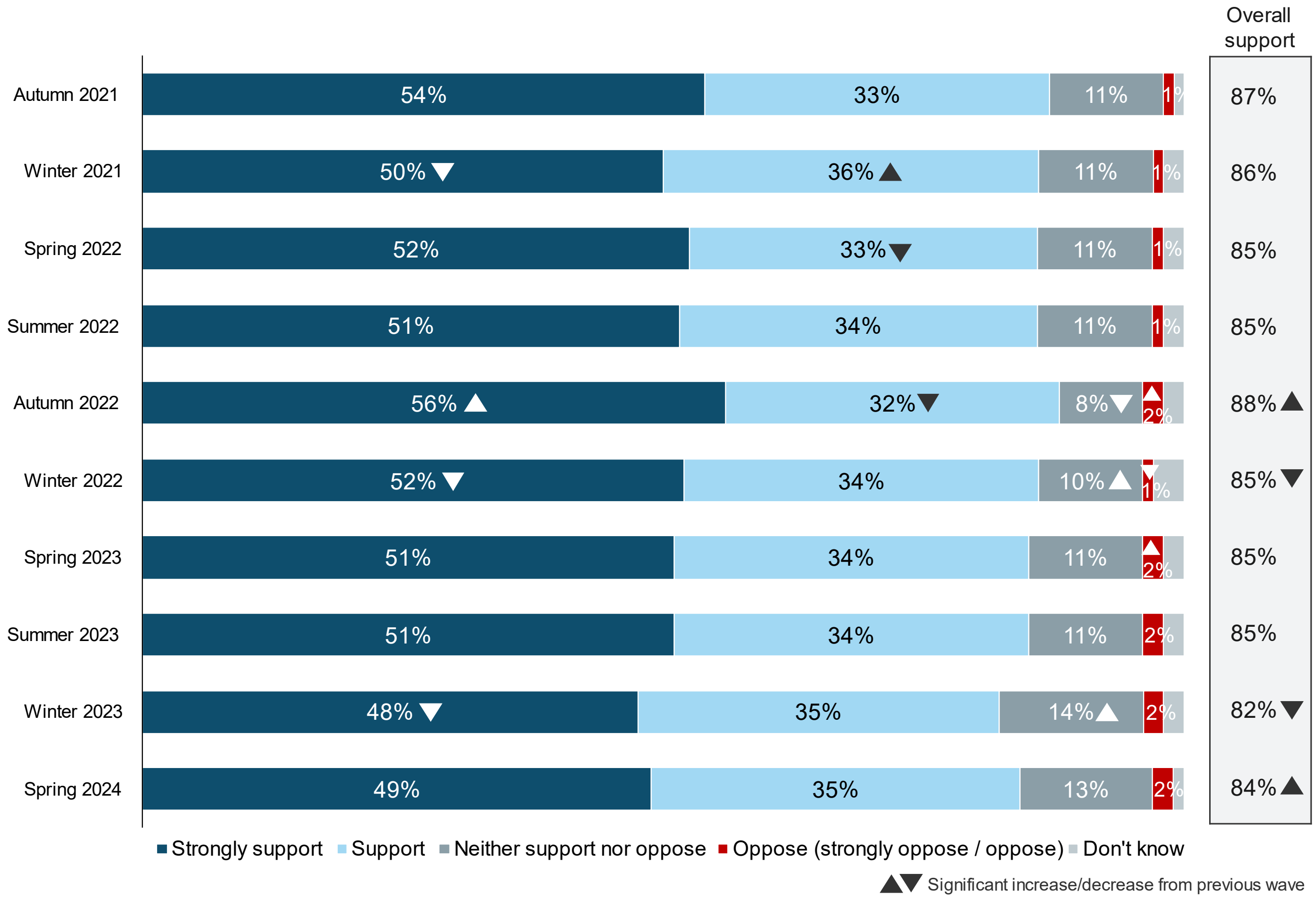
Two summary self-reported measures are used in this report:

- **'Awareness'** encompasses all respondents who said they had heard of a particular concept or technology, including those who said 'hardly anything but I've heard of this', 'a little', 'a fair amount' or 'a lot'.
- **'Knowledge'** encompasses those who said that they know 'a fair amount' or 'a lot'.

Support for renewable energy

In Spring 2024, 84% of people said they supported the use of renewable energy such as wind power, solar energy and biomass to provide electricity, fuel and heat (Figure 2.1). This has increased slightly from 82% in Winter 2023, but remains below the Autumn 2022 peak (88%). The proportion who strongly supported this (49%) also remained unchanged since Winter 2023, again below the peak of 56% in Autumn 2022. Overall opposition remained stable over time at just 2%.

Figure 2.1: Whether support use of renewable energy (based on all people), Autumn 2021 to Spring 2024



RENEWSUPPORT. 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?
Base: All wave respondents – Autumn 2021 (5,558), Winter 2021 (3,705), Spring 2022 (4,373), Summer 2022 (4,489), Autumn 2022 (4,160), Winter 2022 (3,572), Spring 2023 (4,403), Summer 2023 (3,997), Winter 2023 (3,724), Spring 2024 (4,087) (Asked each wave)

While there was little difference in levels of overall support for renewable energy by age, younger people were more likely to strongly support this: between 53% and 57% of those aged 16-34 compared with 43% to 44% of those aged 55+.

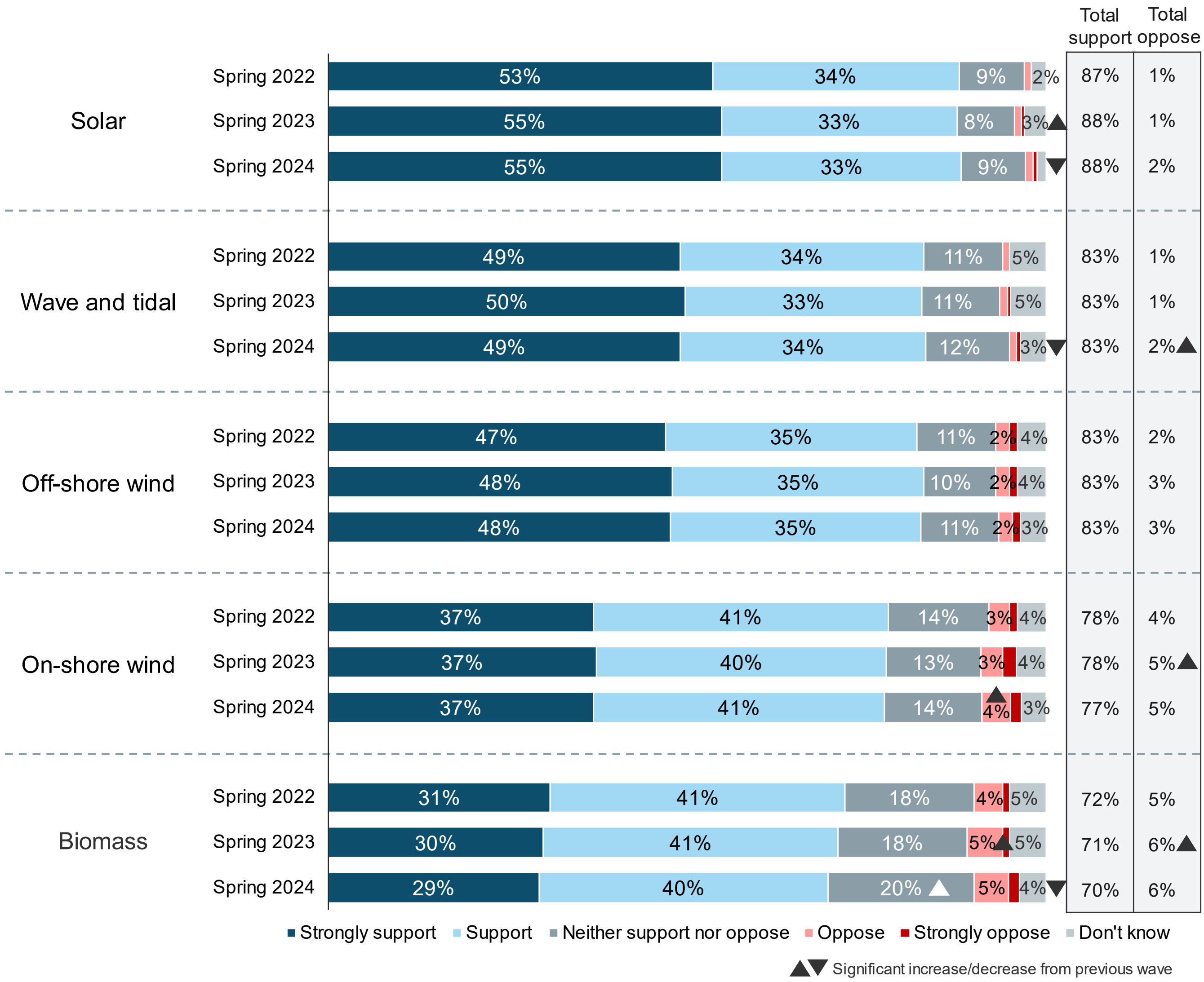
By geography, strong support was highest in Wales (58%), the South West (55%) and London (53%) and lowest in Northern Ireland (41%) and the East Midlands (39%).

Support for different types of renewables

As noted in Figure 2.1 above, 84% of people in Spring 2024 supported renewable energy as an overall concept. However, levels of support vary when asked about specific types of renewables

Over time, levels of support for different types of renewable energy have remained stable (Figure 2.2). In Spring 2024, at least 70% supported each type of renewable. Support remained highest for solar (88% supported overall, 55% strongly supported), wave and tidal (83%, 49%) and off-shore wind (83%, 48%). Slightly lower levels of support were reported for onshore wind (77%, 37%) and biomass (70%, 29%).

Figure 2.2: Whether support use of specific renewable energy developments (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024



RENEW2SUPPORTA-RENEW2SUPPORTE. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the use of the following renewable energy developments…
*Biomass fuller wording: this refers to any plant or animal-based material (for example food waste, branches, sawdust) or purposely grown crops which can be burned to produce heat and electricity
Base: All wave respondents (Asked annually): Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: Solar (4,317/4,380/4,062), wave and tidal (4,311/4,366/4,064), off-shore wind (4,3204,373/4,075), onshore wind (4,327/4,390/4,069), Biomass (4,296/4,369/4,065)

There were no consistent trends by age in levels of support for different renewables. However, the level of strong support for onshore wind was higher among those aged 25 to 34 (44%) compared with those aged 55 and over (from 33% to 35%). Strong support for solar power was higher for those aged under 35 (between 60% and 63%) when compared to those aged 35 and over (49% to 56%).

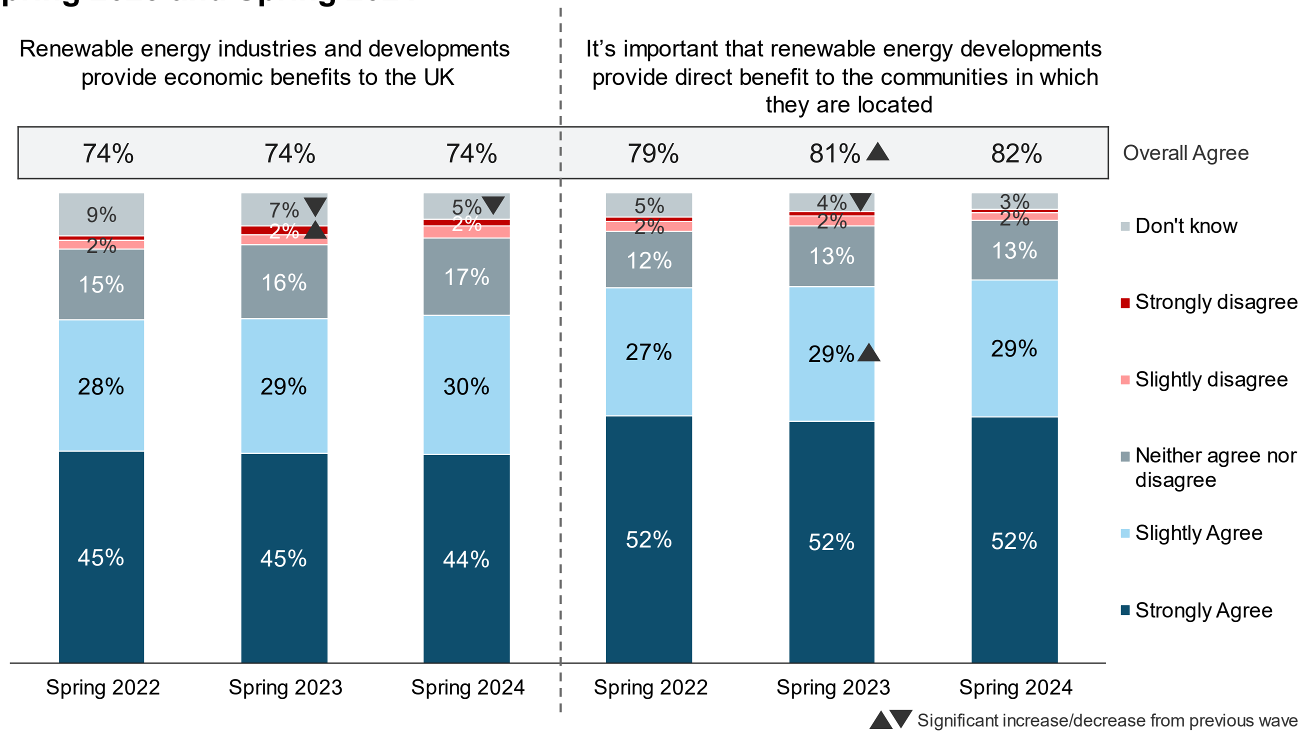
By geography, some consistent patterns were observed. For onshore and off-shore wind energy, as well as wave and tidal energy, there tended to be higher levels of support in the West Midlands and South East (for all three), Yorkshire and Humberside (onshore wind, off-shore wind) and the East of England (off-shore wind, wave and tidal). For onshore wind energy, overall support was highest in the West Midlands (84%), South East (82%), South West (80%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (79%); for off-shore wind energy, support was highest in the South East (88%), Yorkshire and Humberside and West Midlands (both 87%) and the East of England (86%); and for wave and tidal energy, support was highest in West Midlands (86%) and East of England (85%).

Solar energy had more strong support in London (62%) the South East (58%) and West Midlands (57%).

Attitudes towards renewable energy

Results for Spring 2024 were broadly in line with previous waves, with 74% of respondents agreeing that renewable energy provides benefits to the national economy (Figure 2.3). Most (82%) also agreed that renewable energy should directly benefit communities where they are located.

Figure 2.3: Attitudes towards renewable energy (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023 and Spring 2024



RENEWATT. As mentioned, renewable energy covers a number of different forms, including wind power, solar energy and biomass. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: Renewable energy industries and developments provide economic benefits to the UK (4,344/4,395/4,079); It's important that renewable energy developments provide direct benefit to the communities in which they are located (4,328/4,386/4,067)

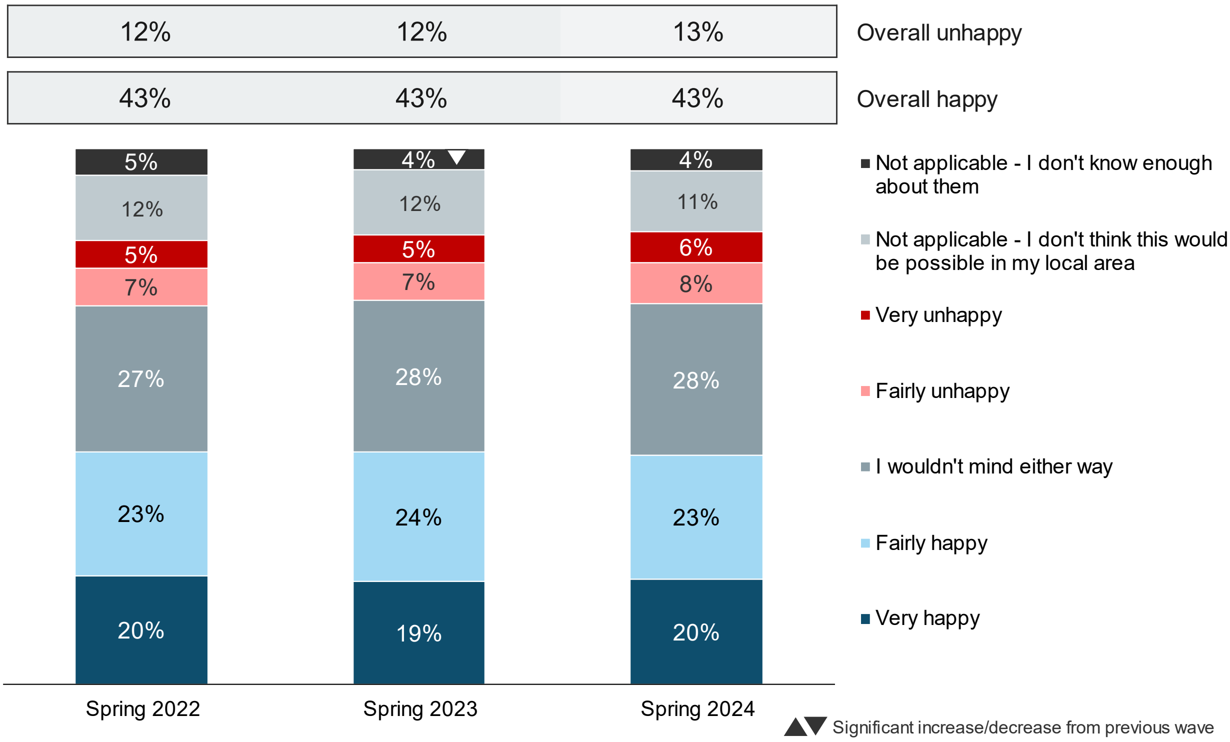
Overall agreement that renewable energy provides economic benefits to the UK was higher among people aged 25 to 44 (between 77% and 80%) and lower for those aged 45 and over (between 69% and 74%). However, there were no age differences in overall agreement that renewables should provide benefits to local communities.

Those who said they knew at least 'a fair amount' about Net Zero were more likely to agree that renewable energy provides economic benefits to the UK (81%), compared to those that know 'hardly anything/a little' (67%) and those that are not aware (59%). A similar trend was observed for the statement that renewable energy developments should provide direct benefits to local communities, with 84% of those who know at least 'a fair amount' about Net Zero agreeing compared to 81% of those that know 'hardly anything/a little' and 68% of those not aware.

Attitudes towards windfarms

In Spring 2024, 43% of people said they would be very happy (20%) or fairly happy (23%) for an onshore wind farm to be constructed in their local area, which remains consistent with Spring 2022 and 2023 (Figure 2.4). Relatively few said they would be fairly or very unhappy (13%), but a substantial proportion (28%) offered no opinion either way, and 11% felt this would not be possible in their local area.

Figure 2.4: Whether would be happy for an onshore wind farm to be constructed in their local area (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023 and Spring 2024



WINDFARM. Now imagine that there are plans for an onshore wind farm to be constructed in your local area. How happy or unhappy would you be about this? If you already have this in your local area, answer on the basis of how you feel about this now?
Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: (4,361/4,398/4,076)

People aged 35 and over were more likely to say they would be unhappy to have a windfarm constructed locally (14% to 19% compared with 7% to 9% of people aged under 34).

The overall level of happiness for local construction of a wind farm was similar across all regions (ranging between 39%-50%), with those from London reporting a lower level of happiness (36%). However, those living in London were more likely to say a windfarm would not be possible in their local area (27% compared with a range of 6% to 13% in all other geographical areas).

Overall opposition to a local wind farm was highest in the East of England (19%) and South East (17%), and lowest in the North East (10%), London and Northern Ireland (both 9%). Those living in rural areas were more likely to object to a local wind farm, with 20% saying they would be unhappy compared with 12% of those living in urban areas.

Reasons for attitudes towards construction of windfarms

Respondents who said they would be happy or unhappy about the construction of a wind farm in their local area were prompted to choose their reasons for this opinion from a list of options.

In Spring 2024, the key reasons for supporting a local wind farm were that it would provide a sustainable source of power (77%) and would be important for reducing emissions (68%, down from 74% in Spring 2023). Around half (51%, down from 55% in Spring 2023) felt it would lead to lower dependence on foreign energy sources.

Other reasons for being happy to have windfarms built in their local area centred around economic factors such as cheaper energy production (35%), job creation (34%), and benefitting the local economy (29% down from 32% in Spring 2023), while 26% (down from 29% in Spring 2023) cited improved air quality.

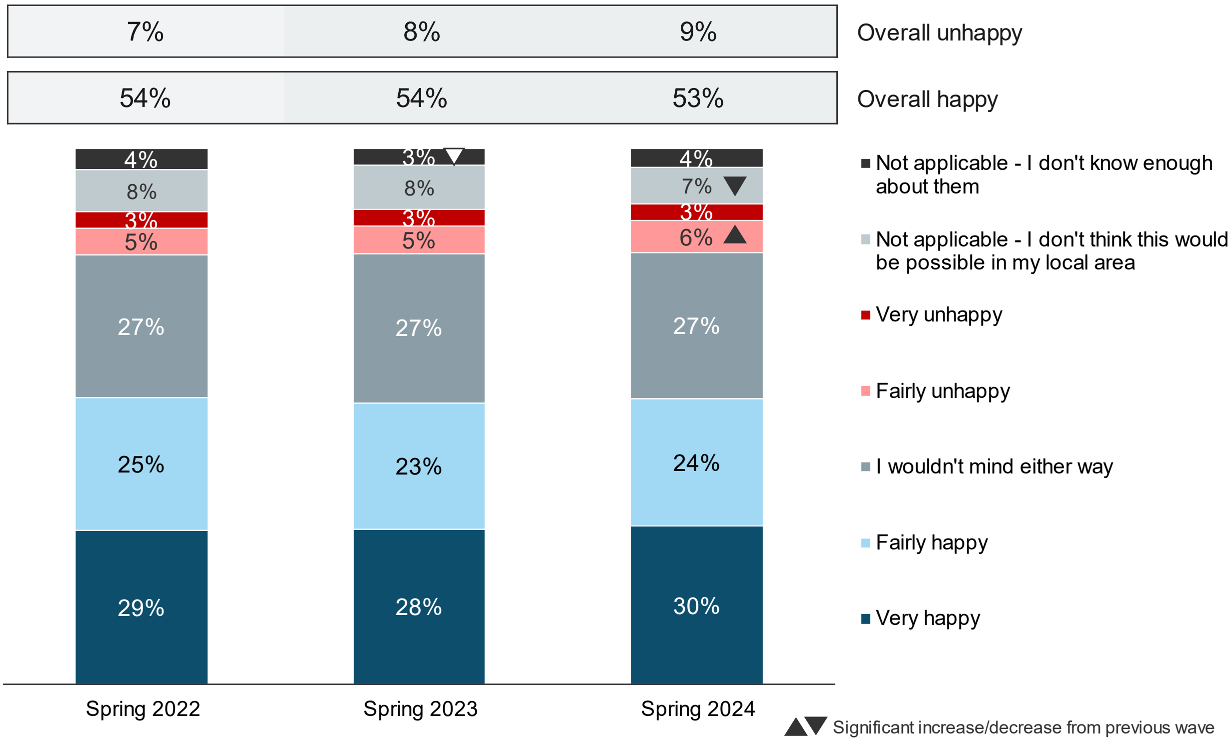
The main reasons for being unhappy about windfarms being constructed in their local area were broadly in line with Spring 2023 results. The key reasons for opposition were concerns about appearance or impact on views (64%) and impact on local plant and animal life (56%). Other reasons for opposing a local wind farm included impact on local house prices (38%), no benefit to the local community (31%), unreliability of energy supply (29%), lack of benefit to the local economy (23%) and the potential for the energy to be expensive to produce (20%).

People living in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to oppose wind farms due to concerns about local plant and animal life (66% compared with 52%), house prices (47% compared with 34%), not benefiting the local community (45% compared with 26%) and not benefiting the local economy (33% compared with 19%).

Attitudes towards solar panel farms

Attitudes towards a solar panel farm being constructed in their local area remained slightly more positive than those for wind farms and remained in line with previous results. In Spring 2024, 53% of people said they would be happy about it, with 30% very happy (Figure 2.5). Opposition was low, and just 9% said they would be very or fairly unhappy. Similar to the findings for windfarms, over a quarter (27%) said they would not mind either way.

Figure 2.5: Whether would be happy for a solar panel farm to be constructed in their local area (based on all people), Spring 2022, Spring 2023 and Spring 2024



SOLARFARM. Now imagine that there are plans for a solar panel farm to be constructed in your local area. How happy or unhappy would you be about this? If you already have this in your local area, answer on the basis of how you feel about this now?
Base: All wave respondents – Spring 2022 / Spring 2023 / Spring 2024: (4,369/4,396/4,080)

People aged 25 to 54 were more likely to say they would be ‘very happy’ to see a local solar panel farm constructed (from 32% to 37% by age group) compared with those aged under 25 (29%) and 55 and over (22% to 26%). Those over 65 were also more likely to be ‘very unhappy’ if a solar farm was constructed in their local area (6% compared with 1% to 3% for those aged below 55).

By geography, overall support for a local solar panel farm was highest in Wales (62%), the South East (57%) and West Midlands (57%) and lowest in the North West (49%), Scotland (49%), Yorkshire and the Humber (49%), Northern Ireland (48%) and the North East (46%). However, people in London were more likely to say they would be very happy for a solar panel farm to be constructed in their local area (35%) compared with 25% in the East of England and 26% in Northern Ireland.

Opposition to a local solar panel farm was higher in the East Midlands (17%) and East of England (16%) and lower in the West Midlands (4%) and London (3%). As seen for wind farms, overall unhappiness was higher for those in rural areas (17%) than in urban areas (7%).

Reasons for attitudes towards construction of solar farms

Respondents who said they would be happy or unhappy about the construction of a solar panel farm in their local area were prompted to choose their reasons for this opinion from a list of options. The reasons given largely aligned with reasons for being supportive of a wind farm.

In Spring 2024, the main reasons for supporting a local solar panel farm were because it would provide a sustainable source of power (79%), and that it would be important for reducing emissions (67%, down from 72% in Spring 2023). Half felt it would lead to lower dependence on foreign energy sources (50%, down from 54% in Spring 2024) while other reasons for support included cheaper energy production (38% down from 41% in Spring 2023), benefitting the local economy (30%, down from 33%), job creation (29%) and improved air quality (25%, down from 29%).

In Spring 2024, the main reasons given by those unhappy about a solar panel farm being constructed in their local area remained aligned with Spring 2023. Similar to opposition to wind farms, the key reasons were concern about the impact on local plant and animal life (57%) and about appearance or impact on views (51%), with other reasons including a lack of benefit to both to the local community (35%) and to the local economy (33%), the impact on house prices (30%), and the cost of energy production (21%).

People living in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to oppose the construction of a local solar panel farm due to a perceived lack of benefit to the local community (45% compared with 29%) and to the local economy (40% compared with 29%), as well as concern about the loss of fertile and agricultural land (20% compared with 10%)[1].

[1] The code 'I'm concerned about the loss in fertile and agricultural land' was added in Spring 2024 from the open text data collected in 'Other reason' for the question SOLWHYNO.

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

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