

DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Energy Infrastructure and energy security, Summer 2024, UK

29 October 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 energy infrastructure and energy security from the Summer 2024 wave of the Tracker, which ran from 11 July to 15 August 2024.

Notes for interpretation of findings

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

The annual personal income referred to in the report is a self-reported measure.

The age-related findings are reported using six age groups (16 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years and those age 65 years and over). In some cases, findings across age groups have been combined to describe a general trend. In these situations, a range of the percentages for these combined age groups is provided for reference. For example, 'Between 78% and 88% of people aged 45 and above' refers to the range of percentages for the three age groups 45-54, 55-64 and 65+.

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' about a topic.

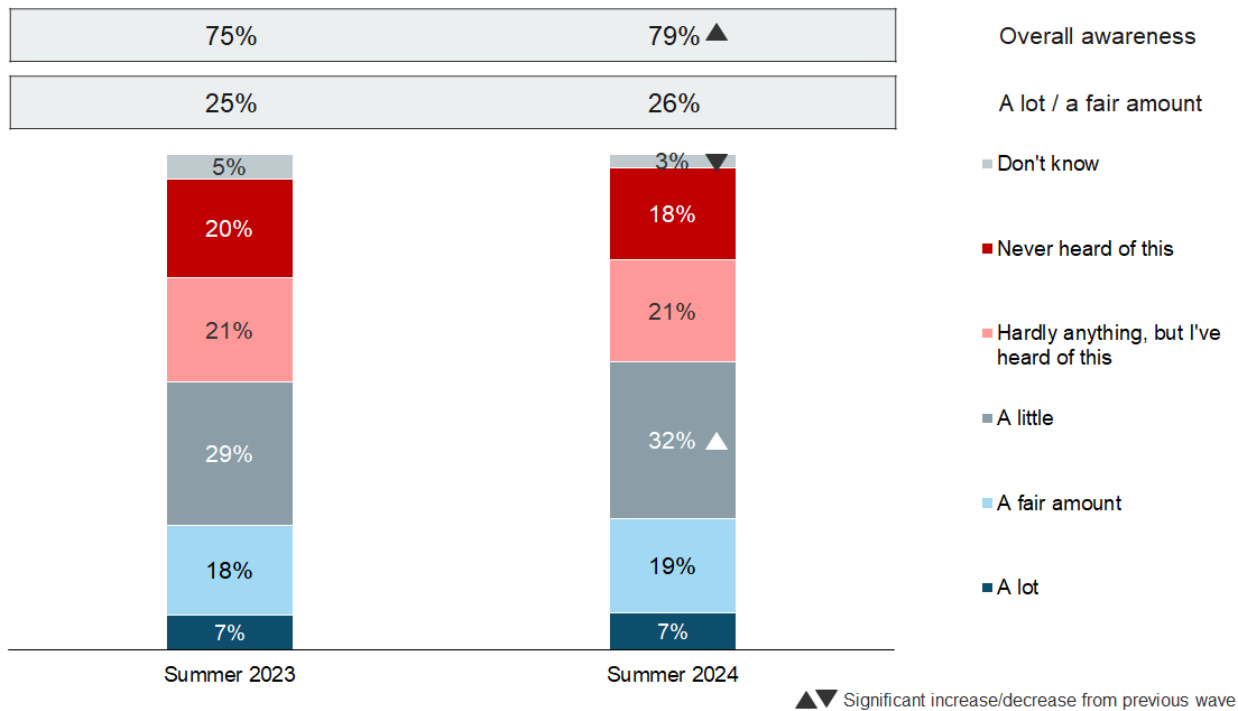
Awareness and support for new electricity network infrastructure

Questions were asked in Summer 2023 and Summer 2024 about new electricity network infrastructure.

Before being presented with the questions, the topic was introduced as follows: *'As the UK increases the amount of electricity generated from low carbon and renewable sources, more electricity network infrastructure will be required to transfer electricity from where it is generated to where it is needed. This will include pylons, overhead power lines, and substations. Substations are sites which connect the main network to the distribution networks that supply homes and businesses. This includes sites that connect the offshore electricity transmission network onshore.'*

In Summer 2024, 79% of people said they were aware of the need to build more electricity network infrastructure, up from 75% in Summer 2023 (Figure 3.1). There was, however, no significant increase in knowledge with 26% saying they knew a lot or a fair amount about this issue. Just 7% of people said they knew a lot.

Figure 3.1: Awareness of the need to build more electricity network infrastructure (based on all people), Summer 2023, Summer 2024



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?

Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2023 (4,000), Summer 2024 (3,642)

Awareness of the need for more electricity infrastructure was higher among those aged 65 and over (85%) compared with those in age groups under 55 (from 73% to 79%). A similar pattern was observed among those who reported knowing a lot or a fair amount, with 35% of people aged 65 and over indicating this level of knowledge, compared to 20% to 23% of those in age groups under 55.

People with a degree were more likely to be aware of the need for more electricity infrastructure (83% compared with 79% of those with other qualifications and 75% with no qualifications), and to say they know a lot or a fair amount about this (34% compared with 25% and 17%, respectively).

By geography, awareness of the need for increased electricity infrastructure was highest in the South East and South West (83%) and the East of England (82%) and lowest in Yorkshire and the Humber (75%), the West Midlands (73%) and Northern Ireland (72%). People were most likely to say they know a lot or a fair amount about this in the East of England (32%) and Scotland (31%) and least likely to do so in Northern Ireland (17%).

More generally, those living in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to report both awareness (83% compared with 78%) and knowing a lot or a fair amount (35% compared with 24%) about electricity infrastructure.

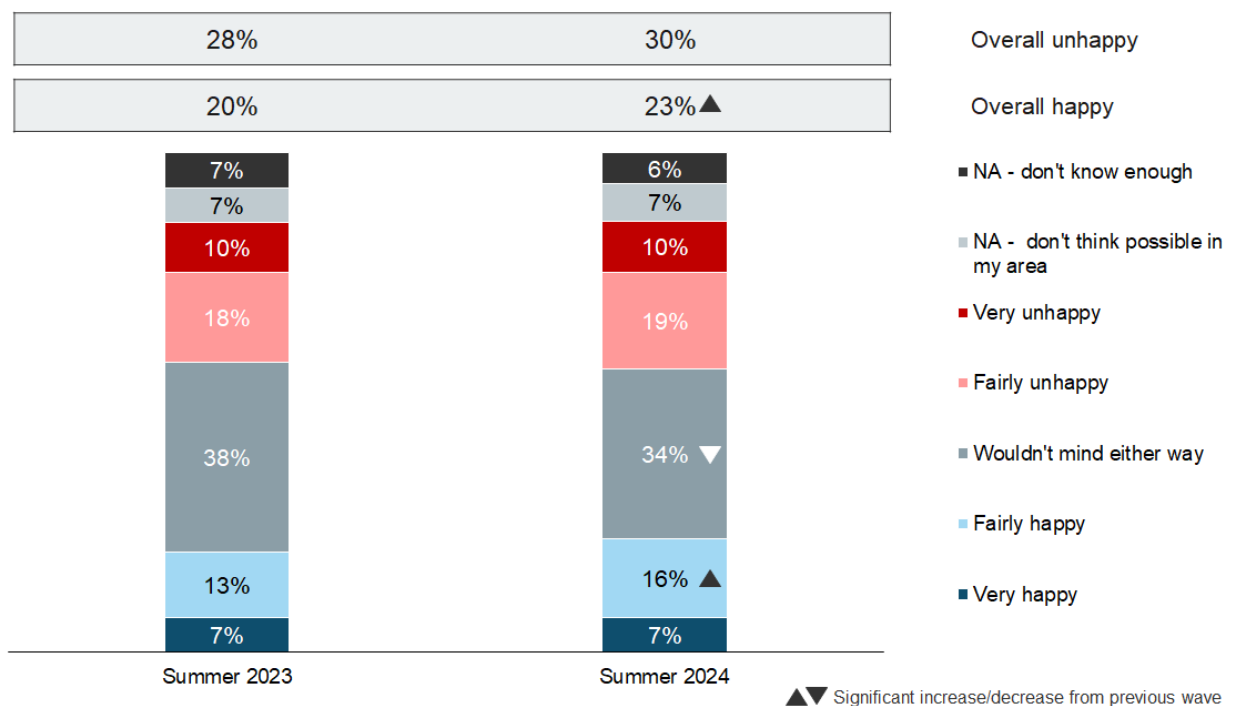
The following introduction was then provided as context to a further question on attitudes towards new electricity infrastructure being built locally: *'Now imagine that there are plans for*

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’.

In Summer 2024, people were more likely to be unhappy (30%) than happy (23%) about the prospect of new electricity infrastructure being built in their local area, with a substantial proportion providing a more neutral answer, either saying they don’t mind either way (34%), that they don’t know enough to form an opinion (6%), or that that don’t feel this would be feasible in their local area (7%).

Since Summer 2023, there has been a small increase in the proportion who said they would be happy about this type of construction (23%, up from 20%) with a corresponding decline in the proportion who did not mind either way (34%, down from 38%).

Figure 3.2: How happy would be to have new electricity network infrastructure built in the local area (based on all people), Summer 2023, Summer 2024



INFRAHAPP. 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 – Summer 2023 (3,987), Summer 2024 (3,627)

People in age groups 35 and over were more likely to say they would be very or fairly unhappy with new local infrastructure (30% to 36%) compared with those in age groups under 35 (17% to 22%).

Owner-occupiers were more likely than renters to feel unhappy about new local electricity infrastructure (35% compared with 18%).

By geography, feeling very or fairly happy about this was highest in Scotland (27%), London (26%) and East Midlands (26%), while being very or fairly unhappy was highest in the South West (39%), Northern Ireland (33%) and East of England (33%). More generally, people living in rural areas were more likely to say they would be very or fairly unhappy (35%) compared with those in urban areas (28%).

Respondents who expressed support for building more local electricity network infrastructure (23% overall) were asked to choose their reasons from a provided list¹. The main sources of support were to enable the use of more sustainable energy sources (62%, down from 71% in Summer 2023) and to update existing infrastructure (51%, no change), while other reasons included the potential to lead to cheaper energy bills (38%, down from 47%), lower dependence on foreign energy sources (35%, down from 50%), benefit to the UK economy (35%, down from 48%) and creation of jobs (31%, down from 43%).

Those who said they would be unhappy to see more electricity network infrastructure built locally (30% overall) were also asked to select their reasons from a list². In Summer 2024, the main concerns associated with this were impact on the view (61% no change in Summer 2023), impact on local plant and animal life (58%, no change), and concerns about the impact on health (45%, no change). Other concerns mentioned by around four in ten included noisy infrastructure (40%, no change), and disruption during construction (38%, no change).

Those who live in rural areas were more likely than urban dwellers to express concern about several issues. This included the impact on the view (68% rural vs 59% urban), the effect on local plant and animal life (67% vs 55%), and concerns about the local economy (21% vs 12%).

Concerns about energy security

Annually, in summer waves, people are asked about their level of concern regarding a range of issues relating to energy security in the next 10-20 years (Figure 3.3).

The findings in this section relating to energy costs and security should be viewed in the light of volatile energy prices and supply over the period between the Summer 2022 and Summer 2024 survey waves. When these questions were first asked in Summer 2022, this was following the war in Ukraine starting which caused oil and gas prices to rise due to concerns about disruption to supply. Energy prices were at their peak in Spring 2023, but by Summer 2023 decreases in the energy price cap had reduced household bills for most people, with prices remaining relatively stable (although above pre 'energy crisis' prices) in the period up until the Summer 2024 survey³.

In Summer 2024, at least eight in ten were concerned (very or fairly concerned) about various issues related to energy security including 'steep rises in energy prices' (90% concerned), the 'UK not investing quickly enough in alternative energy sources' (83%), the 'UK being too dependent on energy from other countries' (80%), and 'power cuts becoming more frequent' (81%). Slightly lower proportions were concerned about the 'UK not developing technology to maximise the use of its existing fossil fuel sources' (73%) and the 'UK's fossil fuel supplies being insufficient to meet demand' (69%).

Between Summer 2023 and Summer 2024, there have been small declines in the proportions concerned about the UK not investing quickly enough in alternative sources for energy (83%,

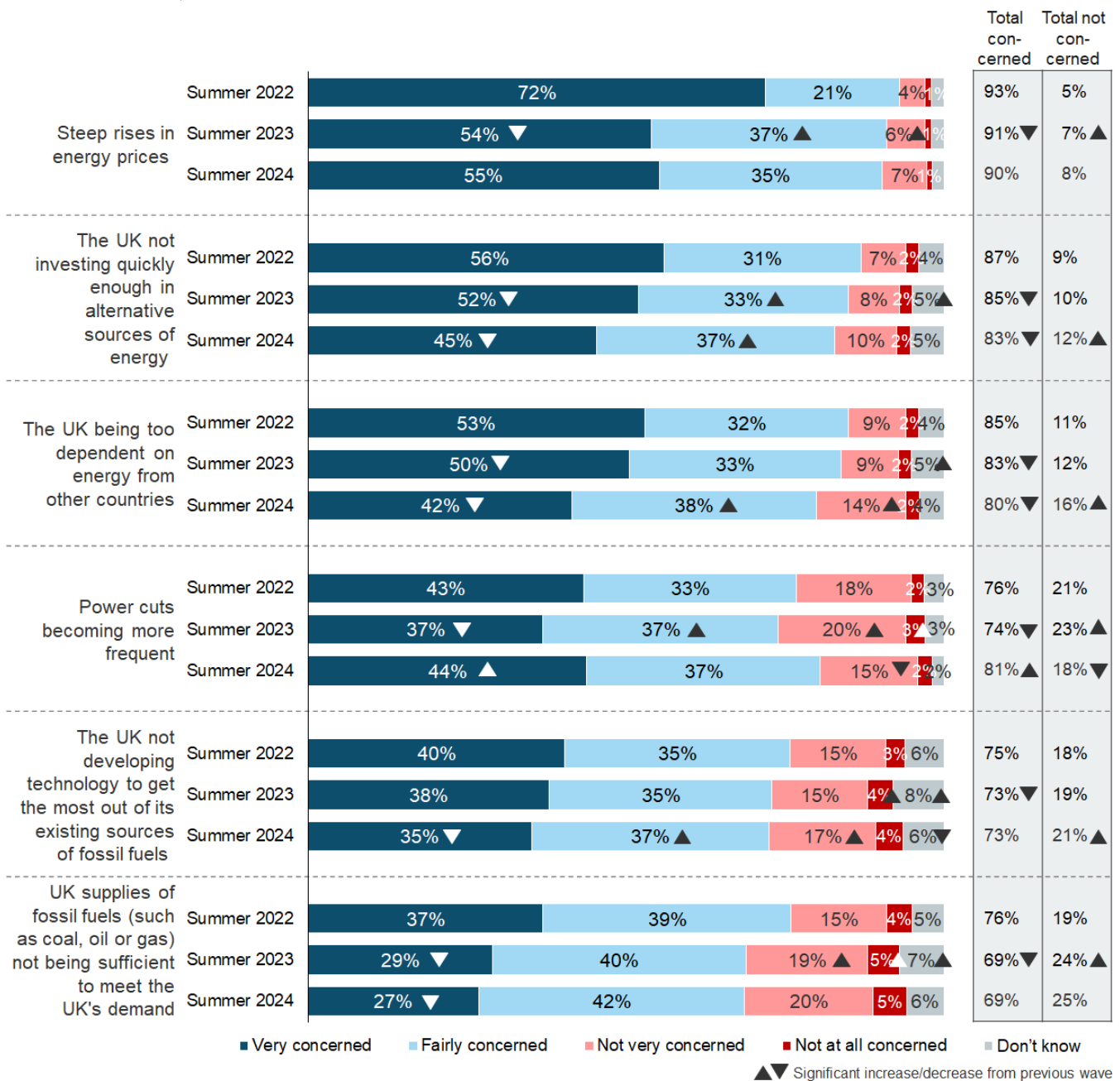
¹ INFRAWHYHAPP: You said you would be very or fairly happy for electricity network infrastructure to be built in your local area. Why is this?

² 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?

³ An overview of domestic energy price changes can be found here:
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9491/>

down from 85%), and the UK's dependence on foreign energy supplies (80%, down from 83%). However, concern about power cuts has increased over this period (81%, up from 74%).

Figure 3.3: Concern about energy security in future (based on all people), Summer 2022, Summer 2023, Summer 2024



ENSECCONCERN1-6. Now some questions about how concerned you are about various things happening in the future. By 'the future' we mean the next 10-20 years. So, how concerned, if at all, are you about...
 Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2022/Summer 2023/Summer 2024: Steep rises (4,487/3,997/3,642), Power cuts (4,462/3,983/3,637), Not investing (4,472/3,988/3,639), Too dependent (4,479/3,992/3,630), Not developing technology (4,463/3,983/3,637), Supplies not being sufficient (4,469/3,986/3,640)

With the exception of concerns about steep rises in energy prices, older people aged 65 and over were more concerned about all other issues compared to those under 25. For example, those aged 65 and over were more likely to be very concerned about dependence on energy from other countries compared to those aged under 25 (58% vs 26%) and were also more concerned about power cuts (56% vs 35%).

By education, people without qualifications were more likely than those with a degree to be very concerned about steep rises in energy prices (57% compared with 48%) and more frequent power cuts (51% compared with 39%). In contrast, people with a degree were more likely than those with no qualifications to be very concerned that the UK is not investing quickly enough in alternative energy sources (51% compared with 40%).

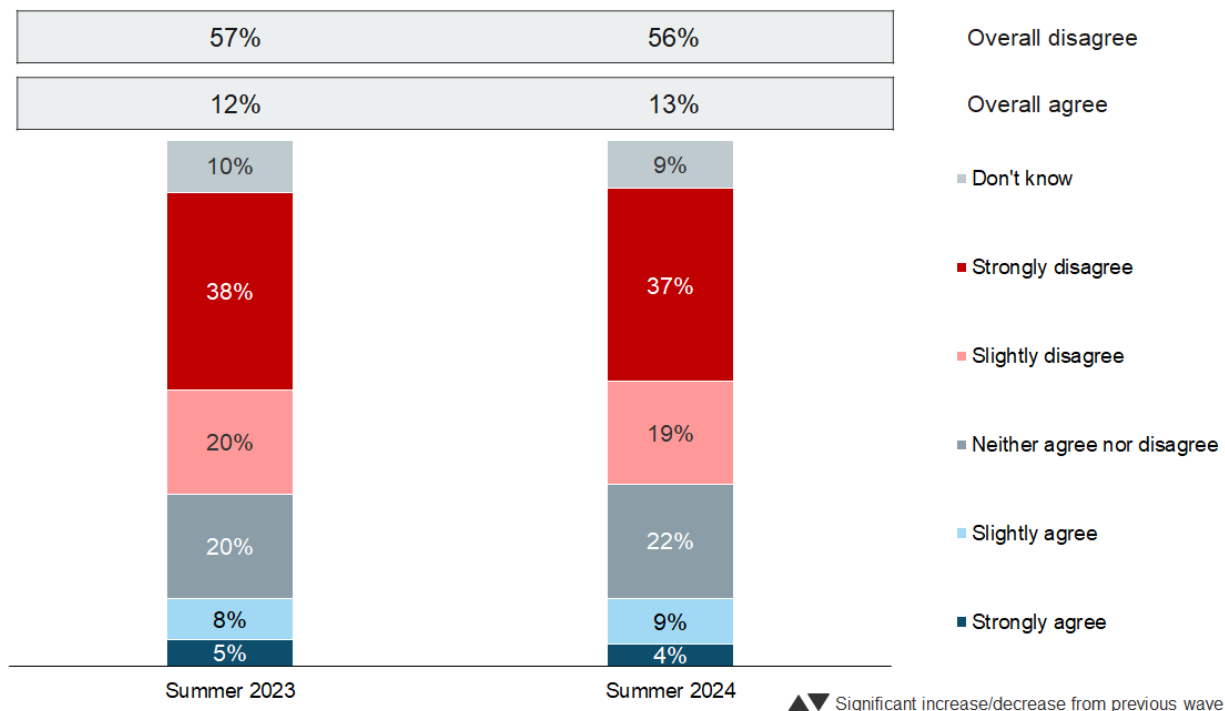
People who were very or fairly concerned about the UK becoming too dependent on energy from other countries (80% overall) were asked to identify the specific energy sources they had in mind⁴. In Summer 2024, a larger proportion of these individuals indicated they were not thinking of any particular sources (16%), compared to the previous two summers (9%). Where sources were mentioned, people were most likely to mention gas (68%, down from 78% in Summer 2023) followed by oil (56%, down from 64%) and electricity (48%, down slightly from 51%).

Support for domestic production of oil and gas

A further question was added in Summer 2023 to assess support for reducing domestic production of oil and gas (Figure 3.4). Similar to Summer 2023, in Summer 2024 over half of people (56%) disagreed overall (37% strongly, 19% slightly) that the UK should produce less of its own oil and gas even if that means buying more fuel from other countries. Just 13% agreed overall (strongly or slightly).

⁴ ENSECOURCE: You said that you are very or fairly concerned about the UK being too dependent on energy from other countries. When you gave this answer, were you thinking about specific energy types?

Figure 3.4: Extent to which agree that the UK should produce less of its own oil and gas even if that means buying more fuel from other countries (based on all people), Summer 2023, Summer 2024



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.

Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2023 (3,986), Summer 2024 (3,634)

People in age groups 55 and over were more likely to strongly disagree (52% to 53%), compared with those aged 16-24 (17%). People with a non-degree qualification were more likely to strongly disagree (41%) compared with people with a degree (32%).

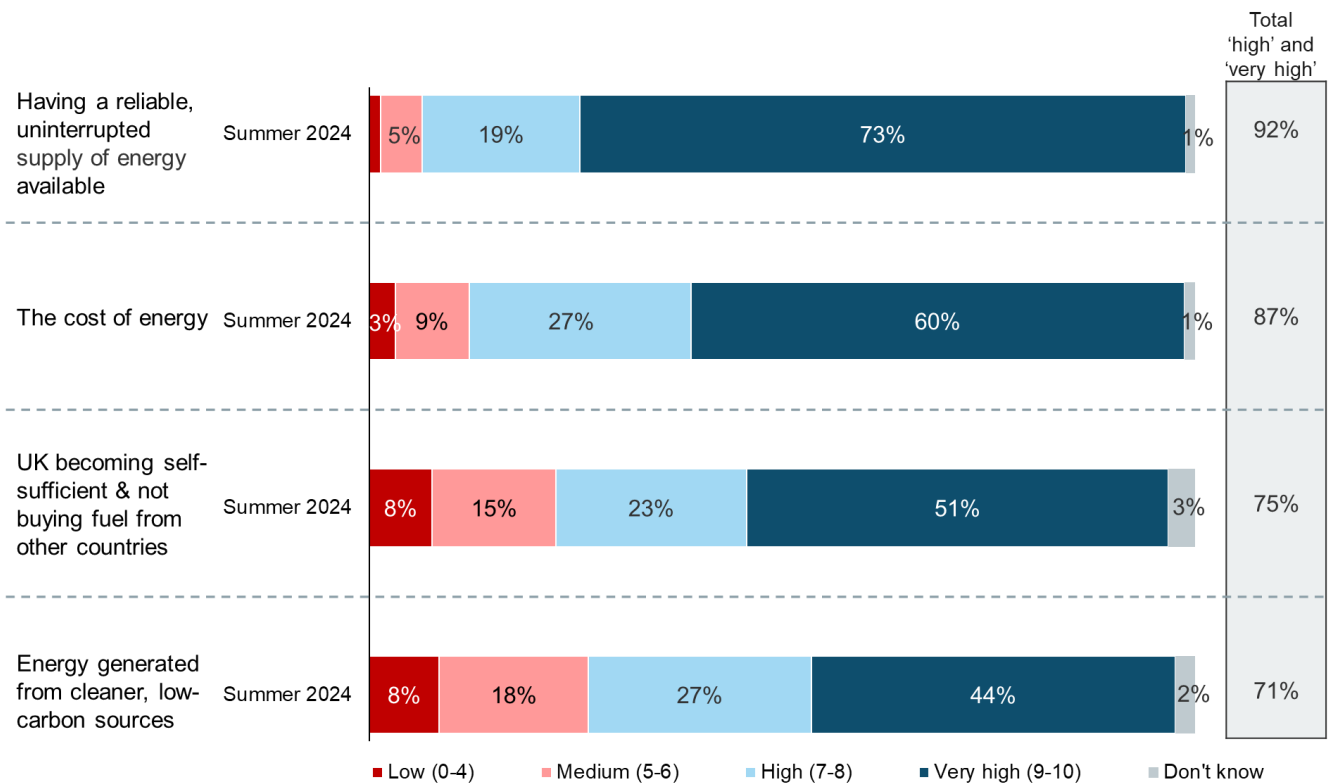
Perceived importance of different aspects of energy policy

A new question was introduced in Summer 2024 asking respondents how important various aspects of energy policy were to them personally (Figure 3.5). People were asked to rate four items on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 was most important. Two items (cost of energy and uninterrupted supply of energy) relate to factors which affect people on a day-to-day basis, while the other two items (UK energy supply self-sufficiency and low-carbon generated energy) relate to broader issues. Importance rating scores were banded into low (0-4), medium (5-6), high (7-8) and very high (9-10).

In Summer 2023, all the different aspects of energy policy were regarded as important with at least 71% giving a high or very high importance score of 7 or more to each. Aspects affecting day-to-day life were regarded as the most important, with 92% giving a high or very high (7-10) rating for 'having a reliable uninterrupted supply of energy available' and 87% giving this rating for 'the cost of energy'.

For the aspects that relate to broader issues, 75% gave at least a high or very high rating for the 'UK becoming self-sufficient and not buying fuel from other countries', and 71% gave a high or very high rating to 'energy generated from cleaner, low-carbon sources'.

Figure 3.5: Importance of different aspects of energy policy (based on all people), Summer 2024



ENERG3. Now thinking about energy. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the least important and 10 being the most important, please indicate how important each of these is to you personally:
 Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2024: reliable energy supply (3,639), cost of energy (3,640), UK becoming self-sufficient (3,639), cleaner energy sources (3,638)

All four items were more likely to be rated as important by people aged 65 and over, compared with those in younger age groups. For example, 85% of those aged over 65 gave a very high (9-10) rating to ‘having a reliable uninterrupted supply of energy’ compared to 51% of those aged 16-24. For ‘energy generated from cleaner, low-carbon sources’ the equivalent comparison was 70% and 31%, respectively.

People who were finding it difficult to manage financially (72%) or just about getting by (also 72%) were more likely to give a very high (9-10) importance rating to the cost of energy compared to those who regarded themselves as living comfortably or doing alright (50%).

By geography, the regional pattern of importance ratings varied across the different aspects of energy policy, although people in the East of England consistently gave lower importance ratings for three of the four items:

- ‘Cost of energy’ was most likely to be given a very high (9-10) importance rating in Wales (68%), West Midlands (68%) and Northern Ireland (67%), and least likely to be given this importance rating in the South East (49%) and the East of England (54%).
- ‘Having a reliable, uninterrupted supply of energy available’ was most likely to be given a very high (9-10) importance rating in Northern Ireland (83%), Scotland (79%) and the South West (78%), while the South East (68%) and North East (68%) were least likely to rate this as of very high importance.
- The ‘UK becoming self-sufficient and not buying fuel from other countries’ was most likely to be given a very high (9-10) importance rating in the North East (59%) and Wales (58%), and least likely to be given this rating in the East of England (44%) and London (46%).

- 'Energy generated from cleaner, low-carbon sources' was most likely to be given a very high (9-10) importance rating in the South West (50%) and London (49%), and least likely to be given this level of rating in the East of England (39%) and Northern Ireland (41%).

Except for 'cost of energy', people who said they knew a fair amount or a lot about Net Zero were more likely than those who were unaware of Net Zero, to give a very high (9-10) importance rating to the following three aspects of energy policy:

- 'Having a reliable uninterrupted supply of energy available' (78% compared with 59%).
- 'Energy generated from cleaner, low-carbon sources' (50% compared with 36%).
- 'The UK becoming self-sufficient and not buying fuel from other countries' (56% compared with 36%).

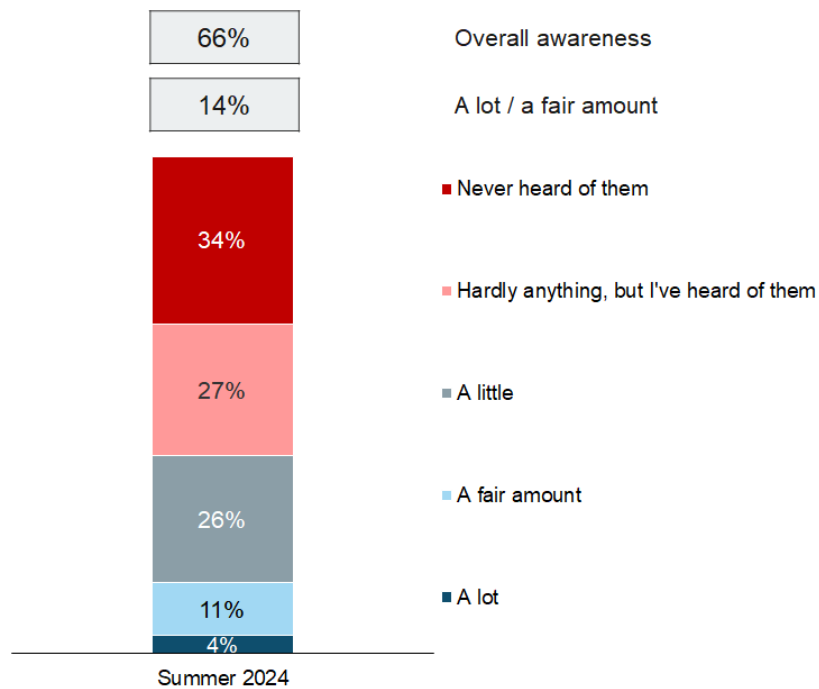
Awareness of greenhouse gas removals

A new question was introduced in Summer 2024 to assess awareness of greenhouse gas removals (GGRs). Before being asked about level of awareness, respondents were provided with a brief description of GGRs as follows:

'Now some questions about greenhouse gas removals (GGRs). These are methods that remove greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to help tackle climate change. The purpose of GGRs is to help achieve Net Zero in the UK by 2050, balancing out emissions from industries such as air travel and farming, where eliminating greenhouse gas emissions will be more challenging. Greenhouse Gas Removals (GGRs) can be based on natural approaches. However, they can also be based on engineered approaches. Engineered approaches use technology to remove greenhouse gases from the environment and store them permanently, for example offshore in underground storage sites.'

In Summer 2024, 66% of people said they were aware of GGRs, but the level of self-reported knowledge was low with just 15% saying they knew a lot (4%) or a fair amount (11%).

Figure 3.6: Awareness of greenhouse gas removals (based on all people), Summer 2024



GGRKNOW. Before today, how much, if anything, did you know about engineered greenhouse gas removals (GGRs)?

Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2024 (3,642)

Awareness of GGRs was lower among people aged 25 to 44 (59% to 60% across age groups) compared with those aged under 25 (68%) and 45 and over (67% to 71%). Self-reported knowledge (a lot or a fair amount) was higher for those aged 65 and over (18%) compared with those in all age groups 25 to 64 (11% to 13%).

Awareness was also higher for those with a degree (71%) compared with those with other qualifications (66%) and those with no qualifications (63%), with a similar difference for self-reported knowledge of GGRs (20% compared with 12% and 9%, respectively).

By geography, awareness of GGRs was highest in Scotland and the South East (both 71%), the West Midlands (70%), and London (67%) and lowest in Northern Ireland (58%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (56%). Self-reported knowledge was lower in Northern Ireland (6%) compared with England (14%), Scotland (15%) and Wales (17%).

Further findings on energy infrastructure and energy security

In previous waves, questions were included on other topics relating to energy infrastructure and energy security. The latest findings relating to these topics can be found as follows:

- Awareness and support for fusion energy, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Awareness and support for fusion energy](#)'
- Attitudes towards fusion energy, see [Summer 2023 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources](#) - section on 'Attitudes towards fusion energy'
- Awareness and support for fracking, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Awareness and support for shale gas](#)'
- Reasons for either supporting or opposing fracking, see [Autumn 2022 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources](#) - section on 'Awareness and support for shale gas'
- Awareness of small modular reactors, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Awareness of small modular reactors](#)'
- Attitudes towards local nuclear power stations, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Attitudes towards local nuclear power stations](#)'
- Attitudes towards nuclear energy, see [Winter 2023 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources](#) - section on 'Nuclear energy'
- Awareness of hydrogen as a fuel, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Awareness of hydrogen as fuel](#)'
- Awareness and support for carbon capture and storage, and reasons for support or lack of support, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Awareness and support for carbon capture and storage](#)'
- Trust in a range of information sources to provide accurate information about new and emerging energy sources, see Spring 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on '[Trust in information about new energy sources](#)'



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