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

13 March 2025 **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 Winter 2024 wave of the Tracker, which ran from 7 November and 12 December 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 (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65 and over). In some cases, findings across age groups have been combined to describe a general trend, e.g. '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.

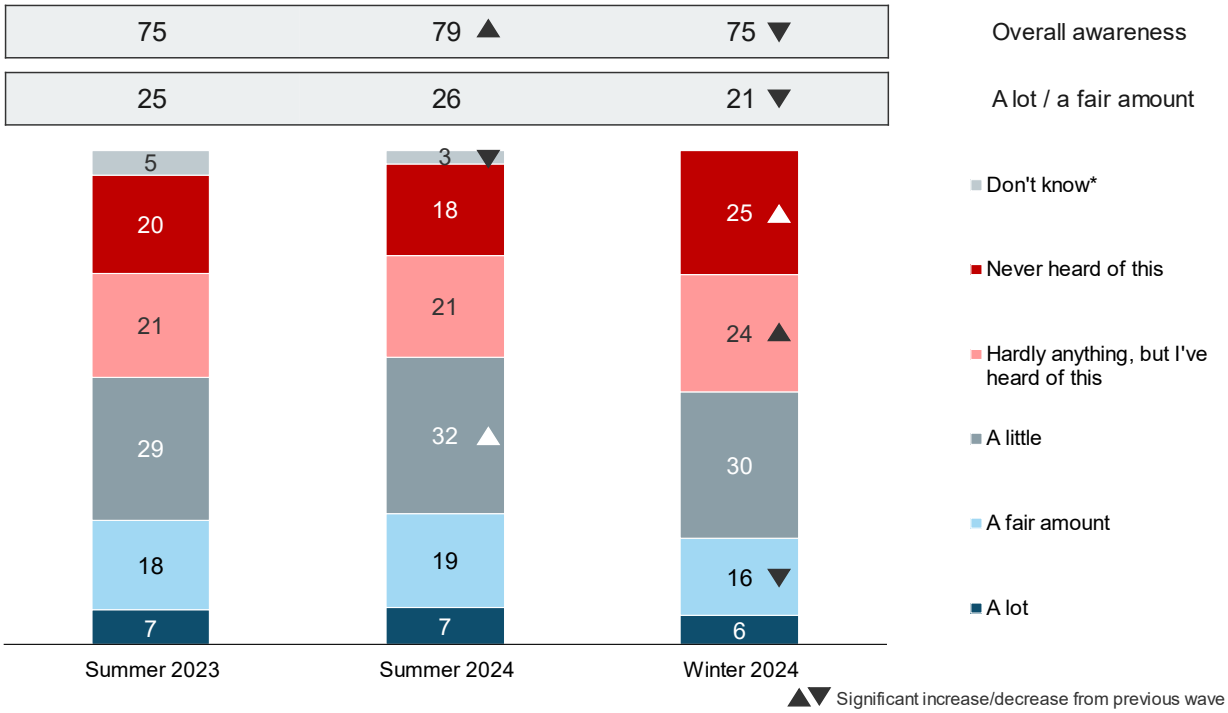
Awareness of new electricity network infrastructure

A question on awareness of the need for new electricity network infrastructure, previously asked in Summer waves, was also asked in Winter 2024.

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 Winter 2024[1], 75% of people said they were aware of the need to build more electricity network infrastructure, down from 79% in Summer 2024, but similar to Summer 2023 (75%) (Figure 3.1). Knowledge (knowing a lot or a fair amount) also declined between Summer 2024 and Winter 2024, from 26% to 21%.

Figure 3.1: Awareness of the need to build more electricity network infrastructure (% based on all people), Summer 2023, Summer 2024, Winter 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?
*'Don't know' option not included in answer list in Winter 2024
Base: All wave respondents – Summer 2023 (4,000), Summer 2024 (3,642), Winter 2024 (3,211)

Analysis by subgroups

Overall awareness of the need to build more energy infrastructure was higher among the following subgroups:

- People aged 65 and over: 81% compared to younger age groups between 16 and 34 (between 69% and 71%).
- People with a degree: 80% compared with 67% of those with no qualifications.
- People living in rural areas: 80% compared with 74% of those living in urban areas.
- People living in the East of England (82%) and Scotland (82%), compared with those in most other regions; in contrast the lowest levels of awareness were seen in Northern Ireland (68%) and the North East (67%).

Subgroup differences for knowledge (knowing a lot or a fair amount) about the need to build more energy infrastructure were similar, being higher among the following subgroups:

- People in age groups 65 and over: 27% compared with between 16% and 20% of those in age groups between 16 and 54.

[1] The 'don't know' answer code was removed in Winter 2024 to be more consistent with other questions of this style. Before Winter 2024, it is likely that 'don't know' responses would have been captured under 'Never heard of this'.

- People with a degree: 30% compared with 19% of those with another kind of qualification and 11% of those with no qualifications.
- People living in rural areas: 28% compared with 20% of those living in urban areas.
- People living in Scotland (30%), the East of England (30%) and Wales (28%); in contrast the lowest levels were reported in the North West (16%), West Midlands (15%) and Northern Ireland (13%).

Information priorities for planned new electricity infrastructure in local area

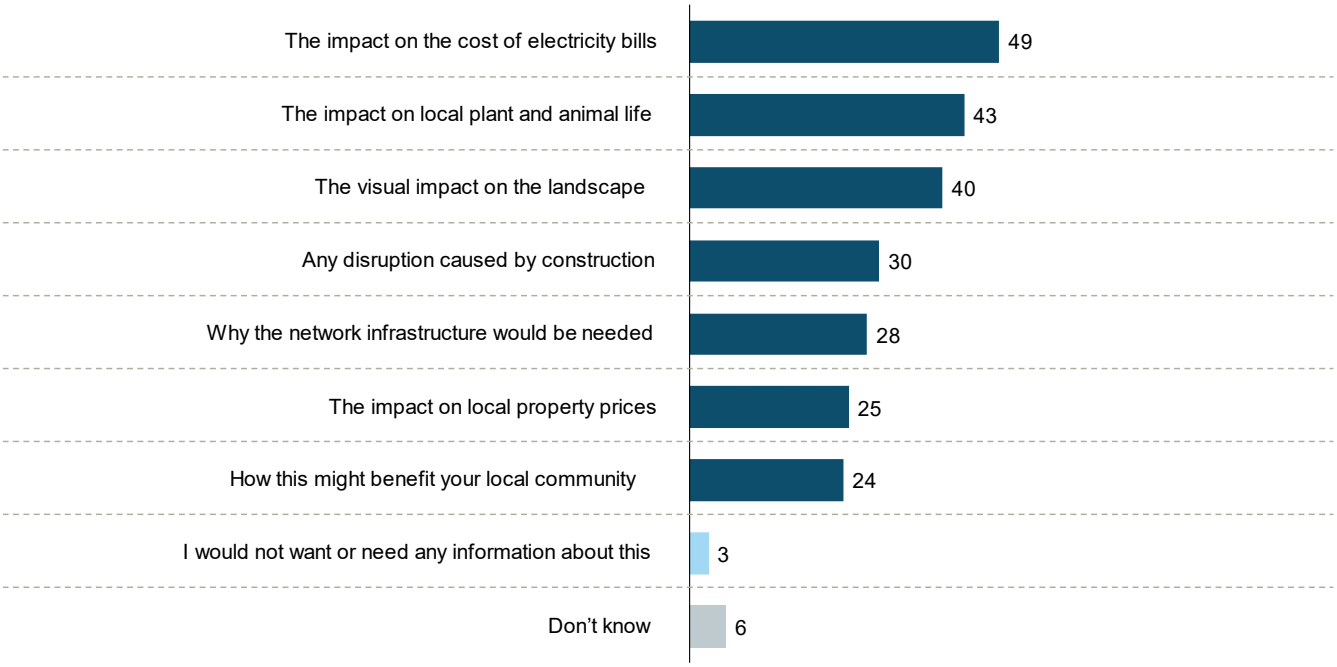
In Winter 2024, a new question was added to measure what information people would find most useful to know about during the planning stage of new electricity network infrastructure.

Respondents were asked to imagine that new electricity network infrastructure such as pylons, overhead power lines, and substations was planned for their local area. People were then asked to choose three types of information from a list that they thought would be the most important to know about during the planning stage.

The most important items of information were the impact on the cost of electricity bills (49%), impact on local plant and animal life (43%) and the visual impact on the landscape (40%) (Figure 3.2).

At least one in four people selected the other items including disruption caused by construction (30%), the purpose of the infrastructure (28%) and impact on property prices (25%).

Figure 3.2: Most important information needs at planning stage of new electricity network infrastructure (% based on all people), Winter 2024



INFRA2IMP. Please now imagine that new electricity network infrastructure such as pylons, overhead power lines, and substations is planned for your local area. What would be the most important information that you would like to know about during the planning stage? Please select up to three responses
Base: All wave respondents – Winter 2024 (3,187)

Analysis by subgroups

By age:

- People aged 65 and over were more likely to prioritise wanting information about the visual impact on the landscape (54% compared with 22% of those aged 16 to 24) and the rationale for the infrastructure (37% compared with between 22% and 29% of those in age groups from 16 to 64).
- In contrast, people aged 65 and over were less likely to prioritise information on disruption caused (20%) compared with those in age groups from 16 to 44 (between 34% and 38%).
- People aged 16 to 24 were less likely to prioritise information on the impact on property prices (16%) compared with those in age groups 25 and over (between 24% and 30%).

By education:

- Those with a degree were more likely than those with no qualifications to prioritise information on the impact on local plant and animal life (46% compared with 38%), impact on property prices (28% compared with 20%), and benefits to the local community (29% compared with 19%).

By geography:

- Information on the impact on cost of bills was more important for people in urban areas (51%) than those in rural areas (41%). In contrast, the visual impact on the landscape was more important for people in rural areas (52%) than in urban areas (37%).

- Respondents in the South West were most keen to know about impact on local plant and animal life (50% vs 43% overall), and the visual impact on the landscape (50% vs 40% overall).
- Residents in the East Midlands were most focussed on property prices (40% vs 25% overall) while respondents in Yorkshire and the Humber were most focussed on the cost of electricity bills (60% vs 49% overall), and those in London were more focussed than average on benefits to the local community (30% vs 24% overall).

Nuclear energy

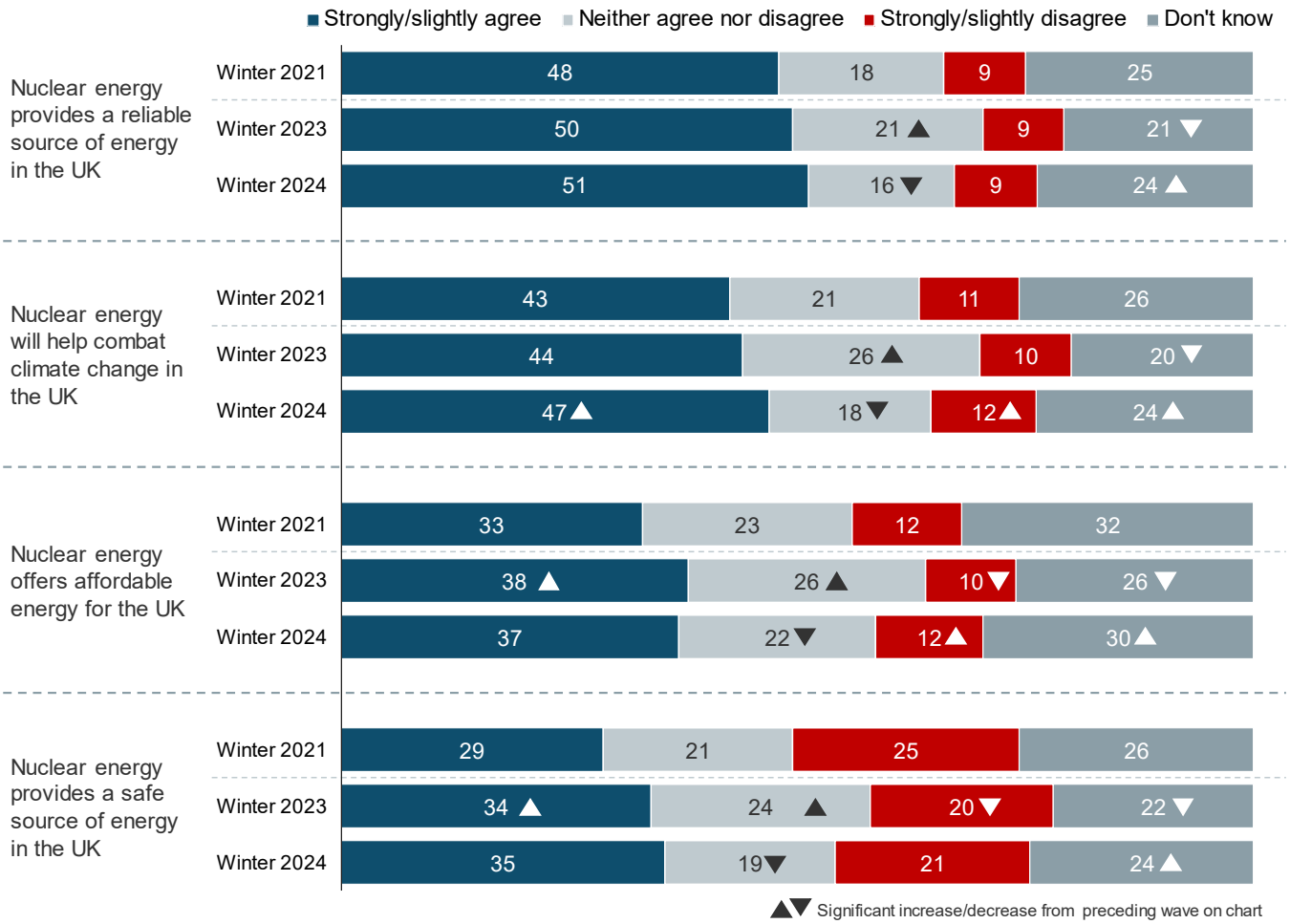
Questions on attitudes towards nuclear energy have been asked annually in Winter waves. People were first asked whether they agreed or disagreed with four statements in relation to nuclear energy. Data is shown in Figure 3.3 for the baseline Winter 2021 wave, and for the most recent two waves only.

In Winter 2024, as in previous years, for each of the four statements the proportion of respondents who gave a non-opinion response (that is ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or ‘don’t know’) was high, ranging between 40% and 51%.

Among those who gave an opinion for each statement, people were on balance more positive than negative about nuclear energy. Overall, in Winter 2024:

- 51% agreed that ‘nuclear energy provides a reliable source of energy in the UK’, up from 48% in Winter 2021 (9% disagreed).
- 47% agreed that ‘nuclear energy will help combat climate change in the UK’ up from 43% in Winter 2021 and also up from 44% in Winter 2023 (12% disagreed).
- 37% agreed that ‘nuclear energy offers affordable energy for the UK’, up from 33% in Winter 2021 (12% disagreed).
- 35% agreed that ‘nuclear energy provides a safe source of energy in the UK’, up from 29% in Winter 2021 (21% disagreed).

Figure 3.3: Attitudes towards nuclear energy (% based on all people), baseline wave (Winter 2021) and two most recent waves (Winter 2023 & Winter 2024)



NUCATTA-NUCATTD. The next questions are about nuclear energy. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All wave respondents – Winter 2021 / Winter 2023 / Winter 20204: Nuclear energy provides a reliable source of energy in the UK (3,669/3,706/3,204), Nuclear energy will help combat climate change in the UK (3,683/3,713/3,209), Nuclear energy offers affordable energy for the UK (3,668/3,708/3,207), Nuclear energy provides a safe source of energy in the UK (3,670/3,704/3,207).

Analysis by subgroups

By education:

- Across all four statements, people educated to degree level were more likely than those with other or no qualifications to agree with each of these statements. For example, 60% of those with a degree agreed that nuclear energy provides a reliable source of energy compared with 41% of those with no qualifications.

By geography:

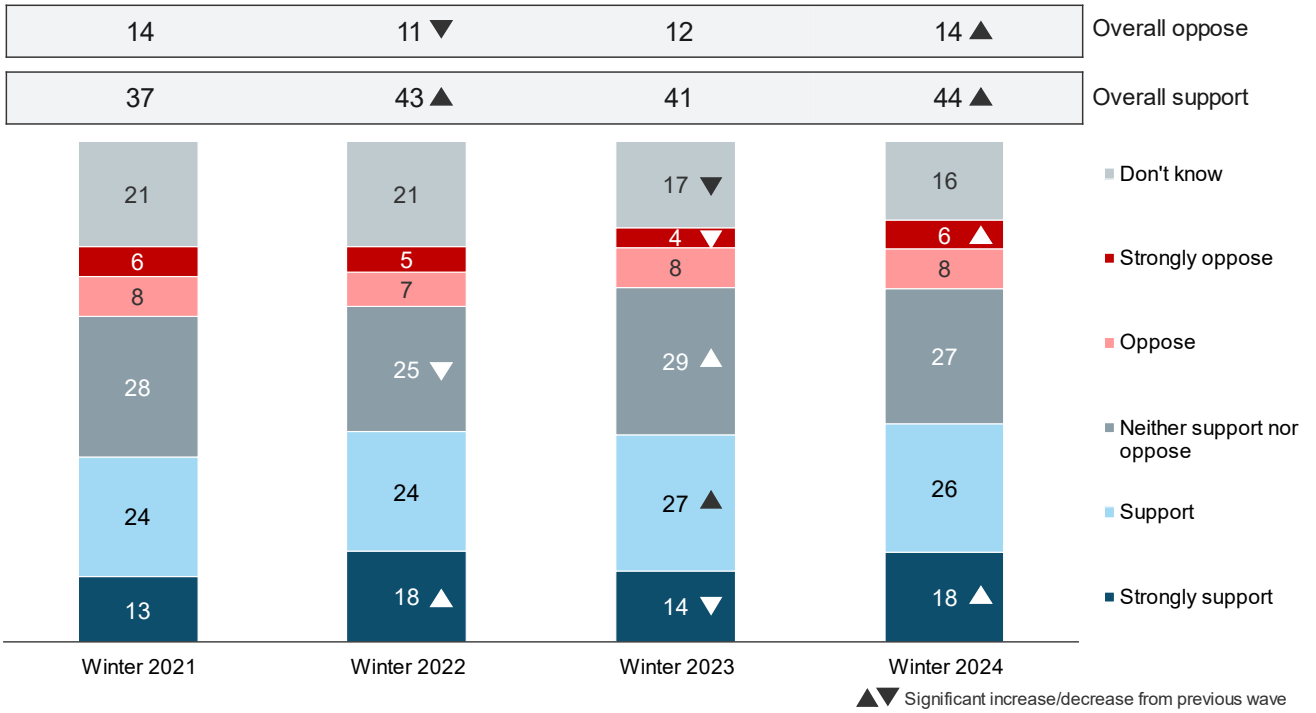
- Those living in coastal areas[2] were more likely to agree that nuclear energy is both reliable (54% compared with 46% of those in coastal adjacent areas) and safe (39% compared with 31%).
- People in the North West and London were most likely to feel that nuclear energy is affordable (43% and 42% respectively, vs 37% overall) and safe (40% for both regions vs 35% overall).
- Agreement that nuclear energy is a reliable source was most reported in the East of England (58% vs 51% overall), while agreement that nuclear energy will help combat climate change was most reported in the North East (55% vs 47% overall).
- People in Scotland were most likely to disagree that nuclear energy will combat climate change (16% vs 12% overall) and to disagree that it will be affordable (18% vs 12% overall). Disagreement that nuclear energy will be safe was most reported in the South West (30% vs 21% overall).

People were also asked about their level of support for nuclear energy. In Winter 2024, people were more likely to support (44%) than oppose (14%) using nuclear energy to generate electricity in the UK (support up from 41% in Winter 2023); 43% did not give an opinion either way highlighting a high level of uncertainty on this topic (Figure 3.4). Over the same period, there was also an increase in strong support (from 14% to 18%) but also opposition (from 12% to 14%).

Overall support for nuclear energy has increased over the longer term from 37% in Winter 2021 to 44% in Winter 2024.

[2] Coastal classification is reported for this question due to the need for nuclear sites to be located close to a reliable source of cooling water. The classification of areas as coastal, coastal adjacent, or inland was determined by the distance from the centre point of each postcode to the nearest coastline. Coastal areas are defined as being less than 5 km from the coast, coastal adjacent areas are between 5 km and 25 km from the coast, and inland areas are more than 25 km from the coast. More robust methods for coastal classifications are currently under development to enhance the accuracy of this approach.

Figure 3.4: Whether support nuclear energy (% based on all people), Winter 2021 to 2024



NUCSUPPORT. From what you know, or have heard about using nuclear energy for generating electricity in the UK, do you support or oppose its use?
Base: All wave respondents – Winter 2021 (3,703), Winter 2022 (3,570), Winter 2023 (3,731), Winter 2024 (3,211)

Analysis by subgroups

Overall support for nuclear energy in the UK was highest for:

- People with a degree: 51% compared with 33% of those with no qualifications.
- People living in the East of England (52%) and the North West (51%); in contrast the lowest levels were reported in Northern Ireland (37%) and Scotland (34%).
- People who were not concerned about climate change (51%) compared with 43% who were very concerned and 41% who were fairly concerned.

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'.
- 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'.
- 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'.
- Support for local construction of new electricity network infrastructure, See Summer 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on 'Awareness and support for new electricity network infrastructure'.
- Attitudes towards energy security and domestic production of oil and gas, see Summer 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on 'Concerns about energy security'.
- Perceived importance of cost and supply aspects of energy policy, see Summer 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on 'Perceived importance of different aspects of energy policy'.
- Awareness of greenhouse gas removals, see Summer 2024 report on energy infrastructure and energy sources – section on 'Awareness of greenhouse gas removals'.

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

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