Survey infographics: UK perceptions of climate change & lifestyle changes

The following infographics show results from a survey conducted between 29th September – 26th October 2020 with 982 respondents across the UK*. Quotas were set for gender, age, region, and socioeconomic status to ensure that the sample is representative of the British public. An associated briefing can be found here or email info@cast.ac.uk for more details on the survey.

* Comparative data was collected in China, Brazil, & Sweden.

**UK Public perceptions of climate change & lifestyle changes...**

People are worried about climate change


Climate change is seen as either a very serious or extremely serious threat to each of the following...

- You & your family: 26% (2020)
- The UK as a whole: 43% (2016)
- People in less developed countries: 59% (2016)

How positive or negative the effects of climate change will be to the UK...

- Entirely negative: 68% (2020), 57% (2016)
- Neither positive nor negative: 19% (2020), 26% (2016)
- Entirely positive: 6% (2020), 12% (2016)
If everybody in the UK did the following, which would have the biggest impact on tackling climate change*

*Picked up to three.

Low carbon (car free) travel options, reduction of home energy use and minimising of air travel are seen by most people as the most impactful climate mitigation strategies.

Reduction of meat consumption and changes to consumption patterns were picked by fewer than a quarter of respondents.

Measures perceived to be most effective to reduce emissions...

- Walk, cycle or use public transport: 47%
- Reduce energy use at home: 42%
- Minimise air travel: 42%
- Use low-carbon heating at home: 29%
- Minimise food waste: 26%
- Drive an electric car: 25%
- Reduce new purchases: 23%
- Eat less red meat: 18%
- None of these: 7%
- Don't know: 4%

Urgency

Despite levels of worry about climate change remaining/staying high, perceived urgency to address climate change has gone down compared to 2019.

The level of urgency with which climate change needs to be addressed...

- Little or no & low level of urgency: 14% (2020), 9% (2019)
- A moderate level of urgency: 30% (2020), 19% (2019)
- A high level & an extremely high level of urgency: 52% (2020), 63% (2019)
Belief that these societal changes should definitely be implemented...

People who are more worried about Covid-19 express higher urgency to address climate change, compared to people who are less worried about climate change.

| High climate change urgency | Low worry about Covid-19 | 26% |
| High climate change urgency | High worry about Covid-19 | 56% |
| Low climate change urgency  | Low worry about Covid-19  | 35% |
| Low climate change urgency  | High worry about Covid-19  | 10% |

The notion the Covid-19 pandemic undermines the feeling of urgency to address climate change is not supported by the current data, as those most worried about Covid-19 express it needs to be addressed with high urgency.

Necessity of drastic lifestyle changes...

Belief that these societal changes should definitely be implemented...

- Reduce meat consumption: 2020 - 24%, 2019 - 21%
- Limit air travel: 2020 - 43%, 2019 - 28%

Citizen Assembly

Almost half of respondents were supportive of political decision processes similar to a Citizen Assembly to help shape policies on climate change.

Support for politicians allowing citizens’ opinions about climate change to directly feed into policy making...
A third of people are unwilling to consider a reduction of their meat consumption.

Gender breakdown of willingness to reduce meat consumption:
- Male
  - Unwilling: 44%
  - Willing: 34%
- Female
  - Unwilling: 24%
  - Willing: 44%

Diet related beliefs associated with meat consumption:
- “I am not the type of person to become vegetarian”
  - Agree: 52%
- “Eating meat is an important part of who I am”
  - Agree: 46%
- “Eating meat is an important part of my culture”
  - Agree: 37%
- “Most of my friends follow a vegetarian (meat free) diet”
  - Agree: 10%

Diet related policies:
- Vegetarian & vegan options mandatory in restaurants
  - Support: 42%
  - Oppose: 26%
- Research on alternative meat sources
  - Support: 34%
  - Oppose: 30%
- Food labelling systems to show carbon emissions
  - Support: 55%
  - Oppose: 9%
- Increasing the price of meat products
  - Support: 22%
  - Oppose: 52%

Few report to be completely vegetarian or vegan (6%) but 20% say they never eat red meat. Most eat white meat at least twice a week (72%) with a small majority (57%) consuming dairy products every day.
Travel: car use & air travel

For people who are willing to reduce their car journeys, walking is the most popular alternative, followed by public transport and cycling only as the third most likely option.

Transport related beliefs

Most people don’t perceive car ownership or traveling far and often as an essential part of their identity.

- “My car defines who I am”
  - 16% Agree
  - 62% Disagree

- “Travelling far & often is an important part of my life”
  - 21% Agree
  - 53% Disagree

- “I aspire to fly on holiday at least once a year”
  - 31% Agree
  - 42% Disagree

Transport related policies

Phasing out the sale of petrol & diesel cars for electric

- 46% Support
- 22% Oppose

Stopping airport expansions

- 45% Support
- 17% Oppose

Higher road charges to improve public transport

- 33% Support
- 36% Oppose
Willingness to change to a low carbon heating or cooling system

- Unwilling 15%
- Willing 44%

Willingness to reduce how much you heat and/or cool your home

- Unwilling 20%
- Willing 50%

Heating related beliefs

- “I don’t know much about low-carbon systems”
  - 71% Agree
  - 9% Disagree

- “Changing the system in my home would be a hassle”
  - 70% Agree
  - 9% Disagree

- “The use of a system is restricted by how much it costs”
  - 51% Agree
  - 21% Disagree

Heating related policies

- Building regulations to force developers to install low carbon heating & cooling systems in new homes...
  - 6% Oppose
  - 67% Support

- Subsidies to help people insulate their homes
  - 5% Oppose
  - 77% Support
Consumption

People are very willing to embrace the idea of buying less things overall (70%) but very few people are willing to rent things rather than buy them (13%).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Willing</th>
<th>Unwilling</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Buy fewer things overall”</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buy more products second hand”</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Rent items, clothes or tools instead of owning them”</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>69%</td>
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Consumption related beliefs

For most people, buying and owning new things is associated with enjoyment (47%) and for some, with an expectation of happiness (33%).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoy buying &amp; owning new things”</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more”</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Buying second hand, others might view you negatively”</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Support for changing product pricing to reflect how environmentally friendly products are (e.g. lower prices for low carbon products)

- 55% 
- 13%

Support for regulations to require products to be more reusable, repairable & recyclable

- 75% 
- 5%

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Research conducted and infographic designed by DJS Research.