

CAST BRIEFING 48 - October 2026



How the People's Emergency Briefing turns environmental concern into civic action

Key messages:

- The *People's Emergency Briefing* offers a practical model for environmental communication and civic engagement, combining expert evidence, public voices and in-person community discussion.
- Attending the *People's Emergency Briefing* produced substantial shifts in environmental understanding and concern, even among highly worried audiences. Attending the People's Emergency Briefing left people feeling substantially better informed and more motivated to act, even among an audience already highly concerned about climate and nature. 89% of attendees felt more informed and 87% felt more motivated to act after the briefing. The proportion extremely worried about climate change rose from 68% to 83%, and for nature loss from 68% to 80%. Attendees also reported stronger understanding of how these crises affect aspects of everyday life, including food prices, health, energy bills, jobs, insurance, transport and national security.
- People who spent longer at *People's Emergency Briefing* events were more likely to leave intending to take civic and collective action. The proportion of attendees intending to contact a politician rose from 59% among those surveyed within 80 minutes of the event start time to 74% among those surveyed after more than two hours. Longer engagement was also linked to greater intentions to discuss climate and nature with others and get involved with local action.
- More constituency screenings were associated with stronger subsequent public and political engagement. Areas with more screenings saw higher public petition signature rates and greater likelihood of MPs signing the campaign's Parliamentary Call. Each additional prior screening was associated with a 17% increase in MPs' weekly signing odds, meaning that five screenings corresponded to roughly twice the odds.



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Background and context

This briefing is intended as a resource for environmental organisations, civil society organisations, community organisations, policymakers and anyone interested in how to engage the public with climate change and biodiversity loss.

In 2025, the grassroots National Emergency Briefing campaign was launched to brief the public on the climate and nature crisis and build support for a government-led televised briefing and wider emergency action. **The campaign comprises three parts:**

1. In November 2025, ten of the UK's leading experts briefed more than 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media in Westminster on the implications of climate and nature breakdown for health, food systems, national security and the economy.
2. Since spring 2026, community-organised screenings have been hosted across the UK. Attendees watch a 50-minute film, the *People's Emergency Briefing*, which features extracts from the Westminster briefing alongside reactions from members of the public and familiar public figures, with commentary from Chris Packham. Screenings typically include time after the film for attendees to discuss the evidence, reflect on what it means for their own communities and consider how to respond.
3. The campaign is calling on the Government to host a live televised emergency briefing by independent experts that everyone in the UK can watch. Its primary political route is the Parliamentary Call, which asks MPs to support such a briefing. Attendees at local screenings are encouraged to ask their MP to sign the Call, and to sign and share a supporting public petition with a similar aim.

CAST researchers worked with the campaign team to evaluate the impact of the local screening events. These provide an interesting research case study as their design aligns with much of the evidence on effective public engagement with climate change, including:

- Making climate change risks and solutions 'relatable' to everyday life and people
- Balancing urgency and hope to motivate action
- Using both expert and lay messengers
- Showing video material (rather than text) in person (rather than online) and within community or organisational settings (rather than asking viewers to watch alone)
- Providing time for group deliberation and debate

Recommendations

We recommend that campaigners, community leaders and policymakers use the *People's Emergency Briefing* as a practical model for turning climate and nature concern into local discussion and political action. For government and public bodies, it also offers lessons for designing public briefings that combine evidence with structured opportunities for discussion and follow-up action. In particular, we recommend including the following elements in climate change engagement events:

1) Host in-person events that bring people together, enabling them to actively engage with the content and each other

Include space for discussion, reflection and questions, so people can consider what the messages mean for their own community and decide what to do next. Our findings suggest that the facilitated, deliberative element of screenings may be particularly important for encouraging civic and political engagement, rather than individual lifestyle change alone.

2) Help audiences understand the immediate, concrete and personal relevance of climate and nature risks

Our findings show that attending the *People's Emergency Briefing* increased environmental concern among an already worried audience and helped viewers see how climate and nature loss could affect familiar parts of everyday life, including food prices, health, national security, energy bills, jobs, insurance and transport. Campaigners should connect large-scale risks to local examples, lived experience and trusted messengers, while offering practical next steps so urgency does not become overwhelming.

3) Clearly explain to attendees how they can take further climate action and support them in doing so

For example, provide contact details and a template e-mail to help people write to their local MP; let people know about other groups and events they can get involved with; give guidance to help people organise their own engagement events; organise and share a petition that people can sign. Our findings suggest that film screening events can strengthen intentions to take civic climate action, so organisers looking to leverage this intention should make the route to action as accessible as possible.

Methods

CAST researchers and the National Emergency Briefing team collected data directly from people who attended the film screening events. Information was gathered on attendees' thoughts, feelings and behaviours related to climate change and nature loss using two surveys – one administered before the film and the other afterwards.

Respondents were asked to create an ID code, which allowed us to match their pre-film and post-film responses. In total, we received 26,680 valid pre-film survey responses and 13,237 valid post-film survey responses, of which 8,689 could be matched across both surveys. Within the final sample used for analysis, women were over-represented, as were older adults aged 56-75 and white attendees, while younger adults were under-represented.

We also combined pre-existing data from several publicly available sources to understand more about the areas where screenings took place and whether the events were linked with wider political engagement. Sources included the list of Parliamentary Call signatories; UK Parliament petitions; the 2024 Yale/Ipsos Climate Change in the British Mind survey; MP and constituency information; and local demographic and geographic data on population density, age, education and economic activity.



Findings

Finding 1: Attending a local screening of the People's Emergency Briefing shifted people's climate change attitudes

Most people who attended a screening were already very worried about climate change and nature loss. Even so, after watching the film, viewers' levels of concern increased. The share of attendees who said they were extremely worried about climate change rose from 68% to 83%, and for nature loss the percentage grew from 68% to 80% (Figure 1).

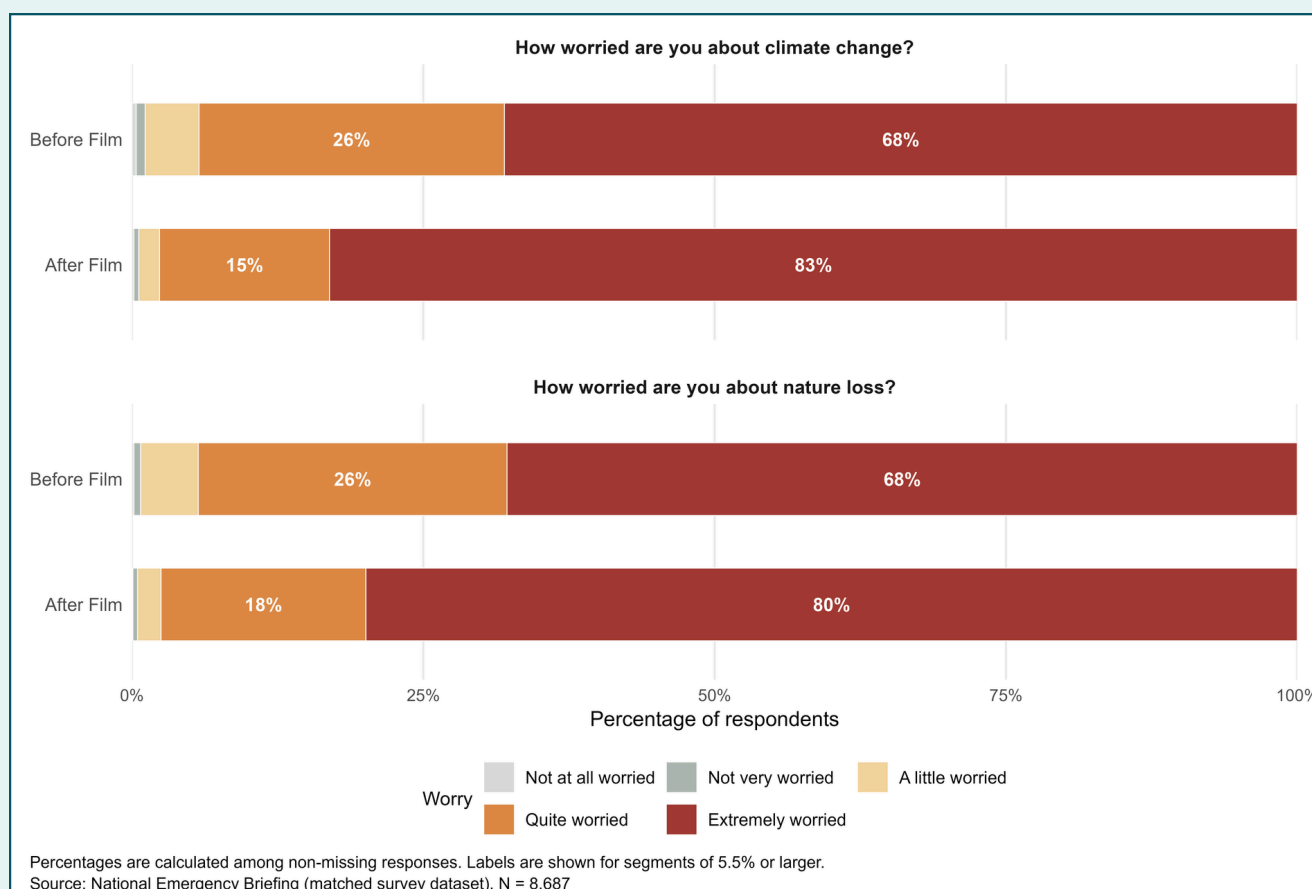


Figure 1: Pre- and post-film levels of worry about climate change and nature loss.

After the film, the extent to which survey respondents expected climate change and nature loss to affect everyday life over the next decade also increased (Figure 2). This was true across all seven areas measured, including food prices, health, national security, energy bills, jobs and the economy, house insurance, and transport infrastructure. The largest increase was for national security, one of the lower-rated concerns before the film. This suggests that the film may have helped broaden people's understanding of the societal consequences of climate and nature breakdown. Respondents also saw disruption as more immediate: the share saying climate change and nature loss are already causing major disruption, or will do so within the next 10 years, rose from 75% before the film to 89% after it.

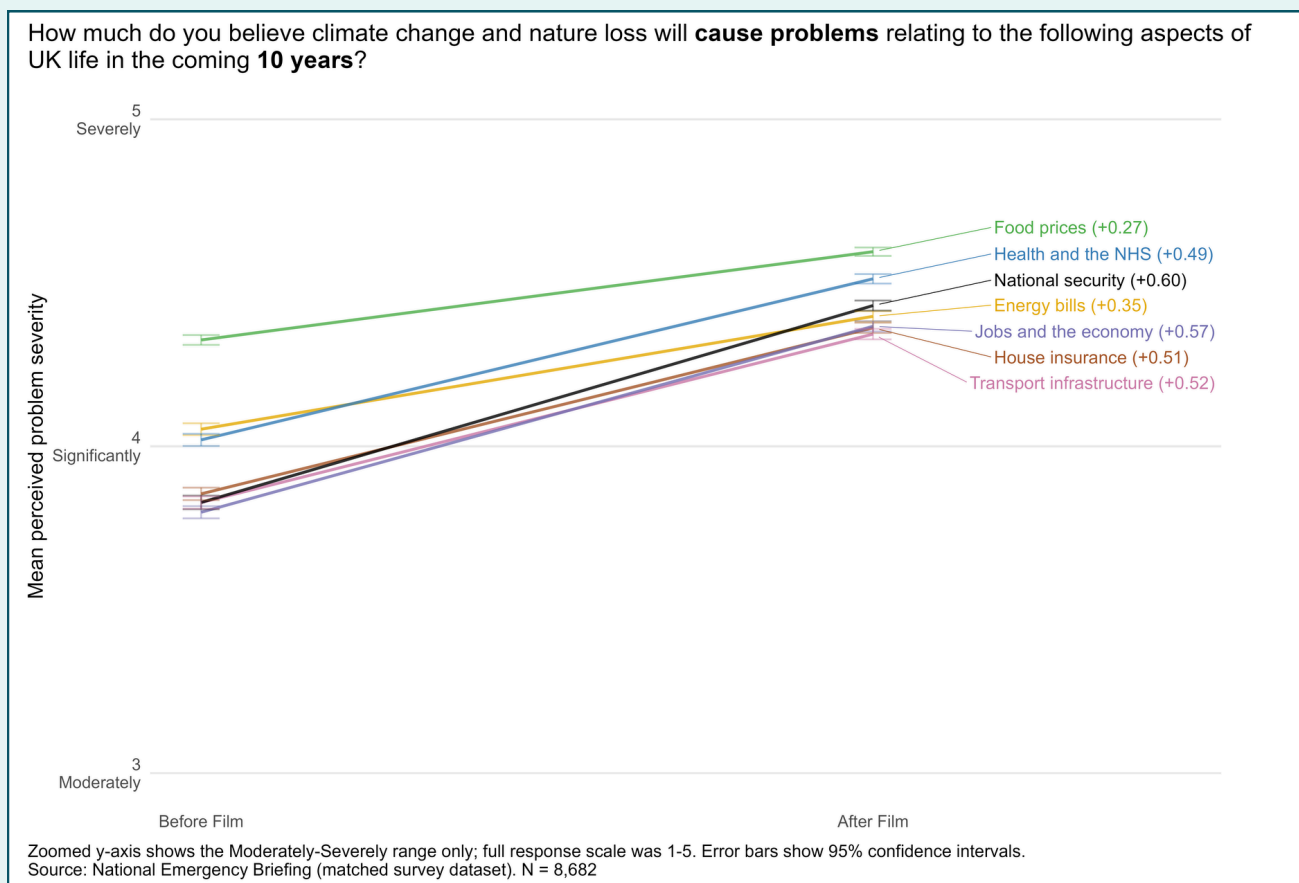


Figure 2: Average pre- and post-film ratings of the extent to which climate change and nature loss will affect specific aspects of life in the UK.

The findings on hope are notable given the seriousness of the material. Overall, 57% of respondents said they felt more hopeful after the film, while 16% felt less hopeful and 27% reported no change. Across all respondents, 89% felt more informed and 87% felt more motivated to act. Increased motivation did not appear to depend on increased hope: among those who felt less hopeful, 86% said they felt more informed, 86% felt more concerned, and 80% felt more motivated to act (Figure 3). For some viewers, feeling less hopeful may reflect a clearer recognition of the seriousness of climate change and nature loss, rather than withdrawal from the issue.

After this event, to what extent do you feel the following about climate change and nature loss (compared to before the event)?

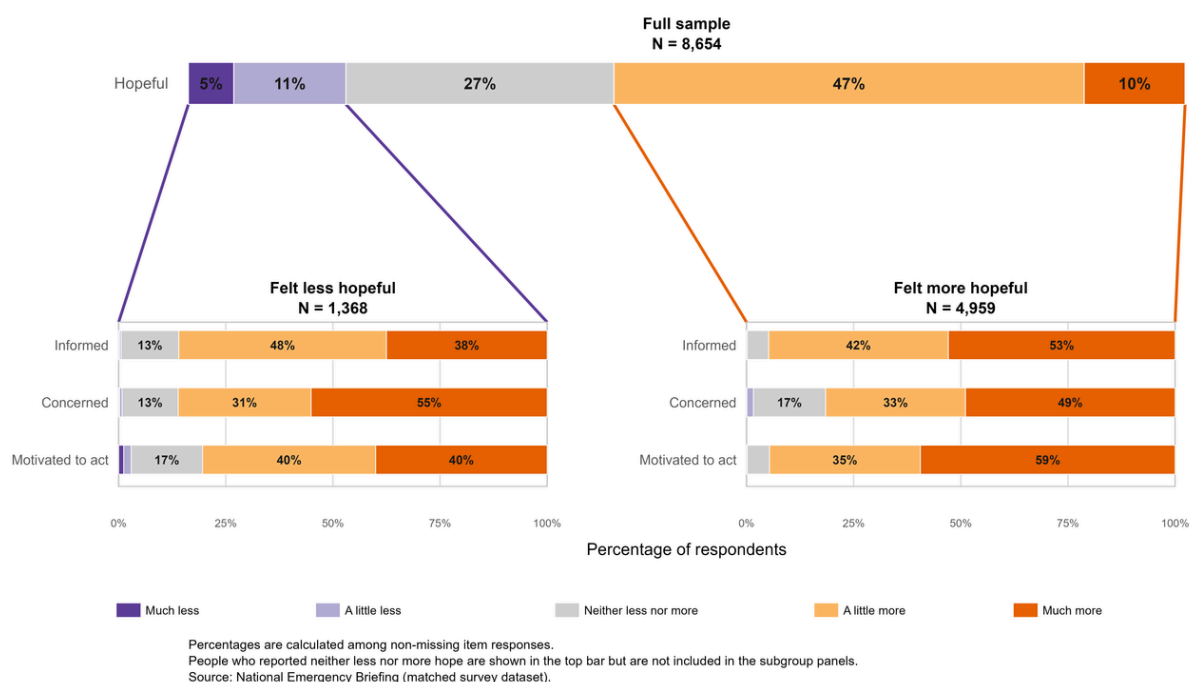


Figure 3: Hopefulness after the *People's Emergency Briefing* and related changes in feeling informed, concerned and motivated

Finally, the survey also points to the wider rationale for a national briefing: after the film, 93% of respondents said they did not think the UK public is being fully informed about climate change and nature loss.

Finding 2: Amount of time attendees spent at a screening event was associated with stronger political and community action intentions afterwards

Using the amount of time between attendees' pre-film and post-film survey responses as a rough indicator of how long they engaged with the event, we analysed the link between event engagement and intention to take part in subsequent climate and nature action. There was a clear link with political and community-facing actions (Figure 4). Respondents who spent more time at a screening event were more likely to say they intended to discuss climate and nature with others, contact a political representative, or get involved with local activities. For example, intention to contact a representative rose from 59% among those who completed the survey soon after watching the film to 74% among those who completed it two to four hours afterwards. Intention to get involved with local activities increased from 54% to 65%. By contrast, event engagement was not linked with intention to make personal lifestyle changes, suggesting that the added value of the facilitated event may lie less in encouraging greener consumer behaviour than in turning people towards collective, civic and political action.

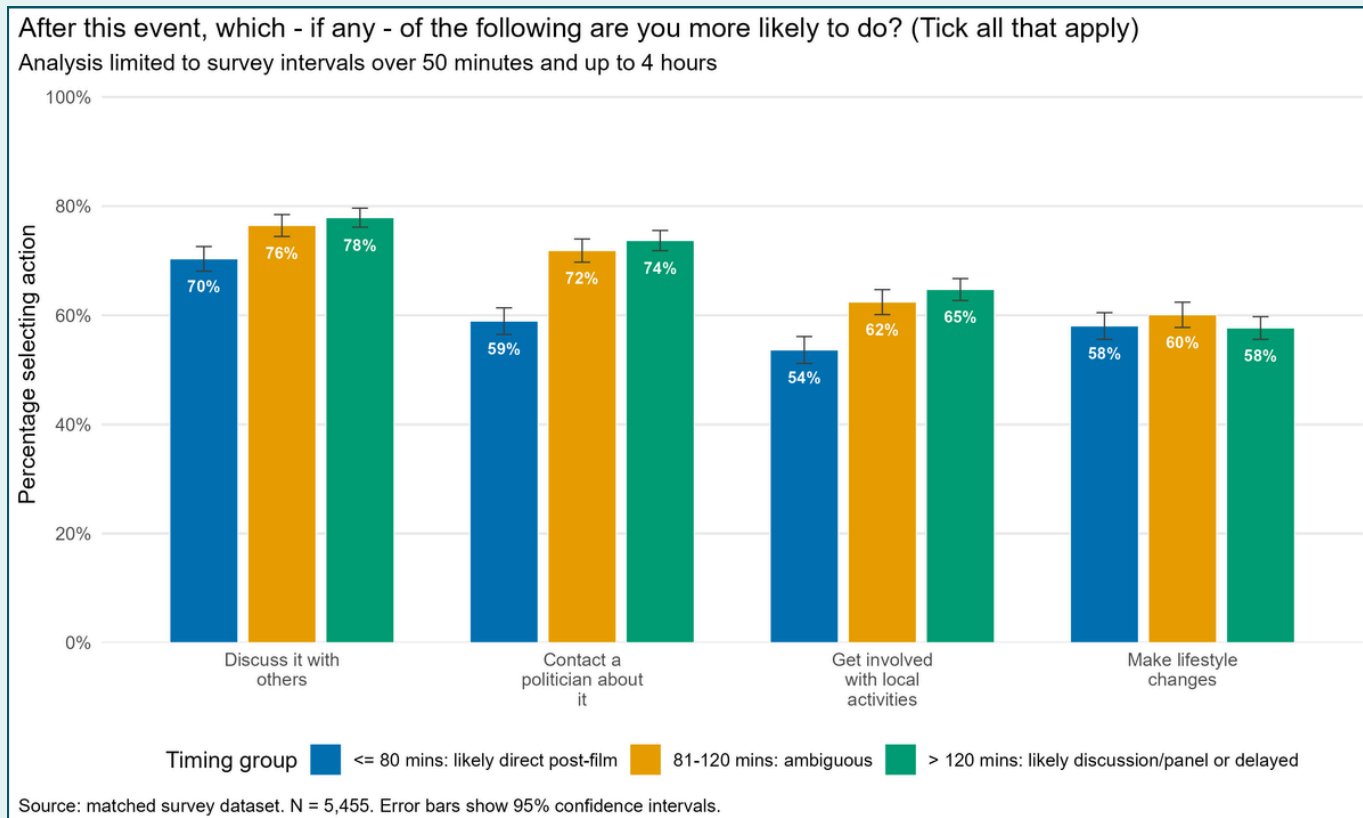


Figure 4: Post-film behaviour intentions, segmented according to the time between individuals' pre- and post-film survey responses

Finding 3: Screenings were associated with political action by MPs and residents

MPs were more likely to sign the Parliamentary Call in constituencies where more screenings had already taken place. To test this, we followed MPs who had not already signed before public screenings began and tracked whether they signed week by week during the campaign period. Importantly, the analysis examined whether screenings preceded MPs signing, rather than simply comparing constituencies where both had occurred. Although signing was rare in any given week, with fewer than 1% of MPs in the analysis signing in an average campaign week, each additional prior screening in a constituency was associated with 17% higher weekly odds of signing, even after accounting for party affiliation. Since the effect compounds across screenings, a constituency with five prior screenings had just over twice the odds of an MP signing in a given week compared with a similar constituency with no prior screenings.

A separate analysis looked at signatures on the campaign-related public petition. Constituencies with more screenings tended to have higher petition signature rates: each additional screening was associated with a 14% higher signature rate, equivalent to roughly seven or eight extra signatures per 100,000 residents.

Neither analysis proves that screenings directly caused MPs or residents to act, but together they suggest that screenings formed part of a wider pattern of local mobilisation linking public concern, visible community activity and political engagement.

Finding 4: Historic patterns of climate and nature concern were associated with a greater number of screenings being organised

Screening rates were higher in places where more residents had said they were worried about climate change in the [2024 Yale/Ipsos Climate Change in the British Mind survey](#) (Figure 5). This relationship remained even after accounting for differences such as region, population density, age, education and economic activity. A 5 percentage-point higher level of local climate worry was associated with screening rates around 2.8 times higher.

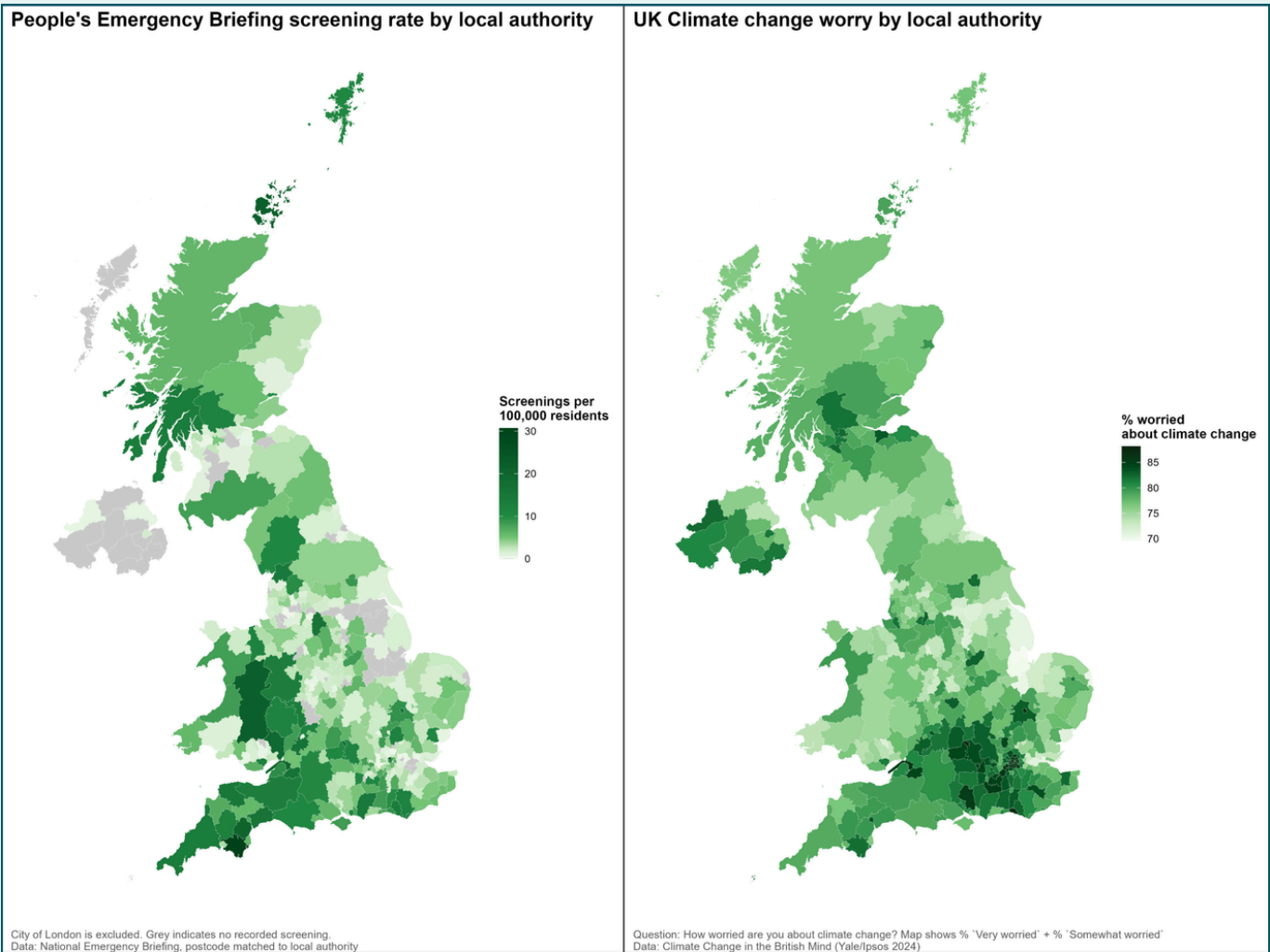


Figure 5: Maps of the UK indicating (Left) screening rate for the *People's Emergency Briefing* per 100,000 of the population and (Right) climate change worry data from Yale/Ipsos 2024 Climate Change in the British Mind survey

Further reading

- Leiserowitz, A., Carman, J., Goddard, E., Verner, M., Rosenthal, S. and Marlon, J. (2025) "Climate Change in the British Mind": Available at: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-british-mind/>
- Lorenzoni, I., Jordan, A., Sullivan-Thomsett, C. and Geese, L. (2025) "Using citizens' assemblies to shape climate policy: a summary of current thinking for policymakers and practitioners". CAST Briefing 43. Available at: <https://cast.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/the-centre-for-climate-change-and-social-transformations-cast-briefing-43-using-citizens-assemblies-to-shape-climate-policy.pdf>
- Millar, C., Mulholland, C., Zanin, B., Whitmarsh, L., Gibson, R., Meyer, J., & Demski, C. (2025). [A review of effective public engagement on climate and implications for Scotland.](#)
- National Emergency Briefing: <https://www.nebriefing.org/>
- UK Petition: Hold a UK-wide briefing on climate and nature risks: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/767687>
- Verfuerth, C., Demski, C., Capstick, S., Whitmarsh, L., & Poortinga, W. (2023). A people-centred approach is needed to meet net zero goals. *Journal of the British Academy*, 11(S4), 97-124.

Suggested citation:

Clarke, R, M., Wilson, M., Kotecha, M., & Whitmarsh, L. (2026). How the *People's Emergency Briefing* turns environmental concern into civic action. CAST Briefing 48. Available at: <https://cast.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/the-centre-for-climate-change-and-social-transformations-cast-briefing-48-how-the-peoples-emergency-briefing-turns-environmental-concern-into-civic-action.pdf>

Supplemental materials: A full breakdown of the survey findings can be found on our OSF page: <https://osf.io/gzu7y/overview>

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We are a cross-institutional research centre with world-leading expertise in environmental psychology, behaviour change, public engagement, policy, governance, education, communications and more.

Underpinning CAST's research is a question of immense significance: how can we transform society in order to live better and address climate change?



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CAST is funded by the
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