

# Public attitudes towards sustainability in the UK

A YouGov Public showcase

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# Introduction

Since 2011, YouGov has been tracking public perceptions of the most important issues facing the country. Although the environment is felt to be highly important, it continually takes a backseat to other more immediate issues. But why is this?

To explore the **competing priorities** and nuances in public sentiment that exist across the UK, **YouGov Public** conducted a **mixed methods** study into public perceptions towards the **environment and sustainability**, revealing six attitudinal segments.

The study involved three stages, all conducted in the UK in 2022 using the YouGov panel.

1

A quantitative  
online survey of  
10,000 adults in  
the UK

2

Segmentation  
analysis

3



A one-week  
qualitative online  
community with  
60 participants

# State of the Nation

The **economy** and **health** are consistently perceived as top issues in the UK. As a result, the environment and sustainability are often **lost** amongst the more **tangible** and **immediate** issues that people are prioritising, such as the cost-of-living and Covid-19.

Among the public, there are varying levels of **responsibility** for sustainability placed on individuals versus large institutions. There are also important differences displayed in attitudes towards taking sustainable action to make an **impact**.

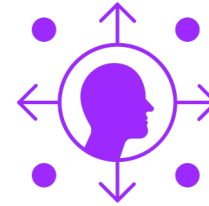
Our research has found that **competing priorities**, **perceptions of responsibility** and **sense of impact** are key themes that characterise six segments of the population and their attitudes towards sustainability.

[Discover living data](#)

## Introducing the six segments...



**The Hopeful Worriers**



**The Outside-Pointing Worriers**



**The Disempowered Environmentalists**



**The Accountable Optimists**



**The Externalising Passives**



**The Climate Change Agnostics**



# The Hopeful Worriers

*"In terms of the environment, I think that is everyone's responsibility. The government has a responsibility to force businesses to move towards more sustainable models, while businesses and individuals also have a responsibility to reduce their own environmental impact"*



### General perceptions

They believe it is **urgent** that we become more sustainable and are the most likely segment to suggest that climate change has had a significant **negative impact** on their community and the world



### Sense of impact

They believe that **small individual contributions** can have an impact on climate change



### Responsibility

They believe fundamentally in the importance and impact of **individual action**, while also putting emphasis on government and business-led solutions



### Behavioural changes

They are the segment most likely to have made **behavioural changes** to be more sustainable and feel family and friends are doing their part too



### Living sustainably

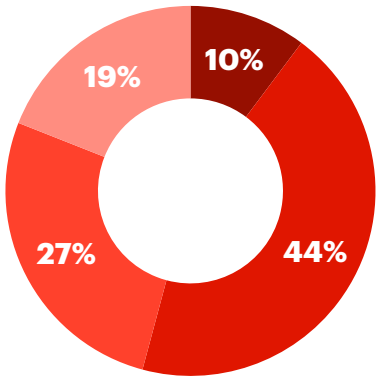
They are more likely than all other segments to believe it is **affordable, achievable** and **healthy**



58%  
Women

42%  
Men

AGE



● 18-24 ● 25-49 ● 50-64 ● 65+

## EDUCATION

High education levels\*

35%

28%

● Hopeful Worriers ● Overall

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Under £20k

17%

20%

£20 - £40k

26%

26%

£40k - £60k

16%

14%

£60k +

18%

15%

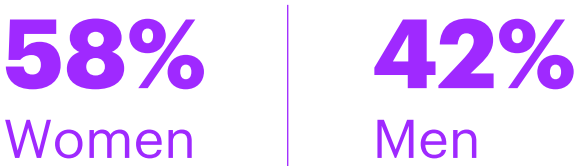
● Hopeful Worriers ● Overall

\*See definition in Method section

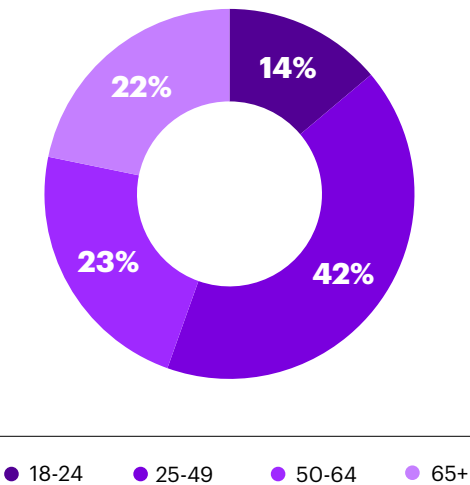
# The Outside-Pointing Worriers

"If we do makes changes then that's amazing and it will help, but it will be a drop in the ocean compared to what the corporations and governments could do."

-  **General perceptions**  
They are anxious about the impact of climate change and attribute the cause to **human activity**
-  **Sense of impact**  
They believe that even if only some make changes to their **lifestyle**, it can still have a positive impact on climate change
-  **Responsibility**  
They believe strongly that **government**, and particularly **corporations**, should be doing more to act on climate change and **enable** individuals to maintain a sustainable lifestyle
-  **Behavioural changes**  
They think they should still act and feel relatively positive about the **effort** they and their peers are already making
-  **Living sustainably**  
They believe it is generally **healthy** and **achievable**, but feel it is a common occurrence less often than some other segments

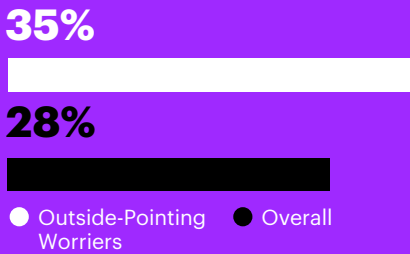


AGE



## EDUCATION

High education levels\*








## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

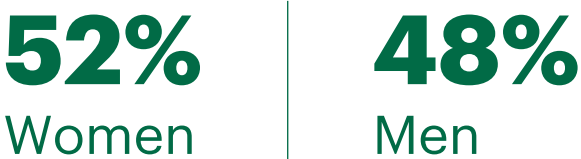


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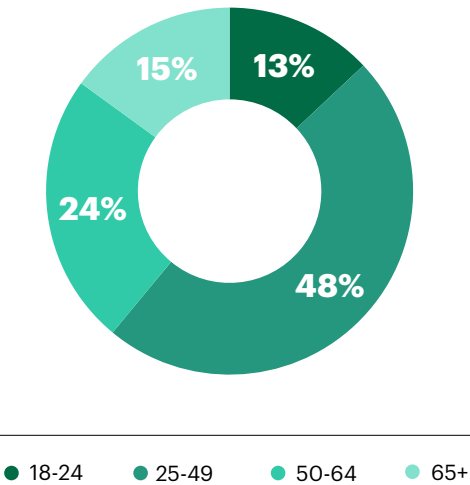
# The Disempowered Environmentalists

“Organisations engaged in directing human activity directly or indirectly have the most responsibility because any change they make will have immediate and widespread effects. Any changes individuals make will not be effective unless extremely well organised.”

- **General perceptions**  
They believe in the benefits of living sustainably and that climate change has a **negative impact** on their surroundings, but feel **disempowered** to take more personal responsibility due to lack of progress observed
- **Sense of impact**  
They are **sceptical** of the capability and **effectiveness** of actions performed at the individual level without support from a large **collective** of individuals
- **Responsibility**  
They accept that **some responsibility** can and should rest at the personal level but argue that individuals alone do not have the same power that government, industry and brands have
- **Behavioural changes**  
They generally express their concern through incremental modest actions (like eating less meat) rather than major lifestyle changes (like avoiding animal products entirely)
- **Living sustainably**  
They struggle to see it as achievable and believe less often than other segments that it is a common occurrence



AGE



## EDUCATION

High education levels\*



● Disempowered Environmentalists ● Overall

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME




● Disempowered Environmentalists ● Overall

\*See definition in Method section

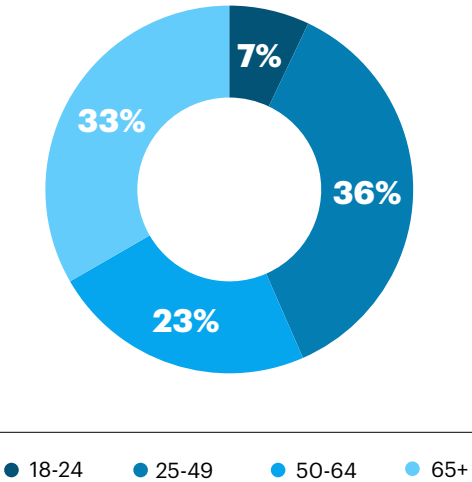
# The Accountable Optimists

*"I play my part with my family. We do a lot of recycling and try to get clothes reused and donated so we ensure items are being well used to its maximum use."*

-  **General perceptions**  
They express **concern** about climate change but feel more positive about the future than some other segments. They take responsibility for acting in an environmentally-friendly manner
-  **Sense of impact**  
They believe **personal action** can still make a difference, irrespective of what the others are doing
-  **Responsibility**  
They take a strong stance on the belief that responsibility for sustainability lies with **individuals** as well as **businesses** and **government**
-  **Behavioural changes**  
They make behavioural changes to be more sustainable, which tend to be **major lifestyle changes** rather than convenient adjustments
-  **Living sustainably**  
They believe it is very common, **affordable** and **achievable**

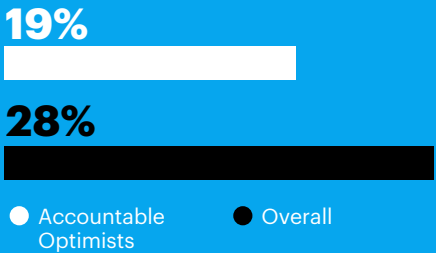


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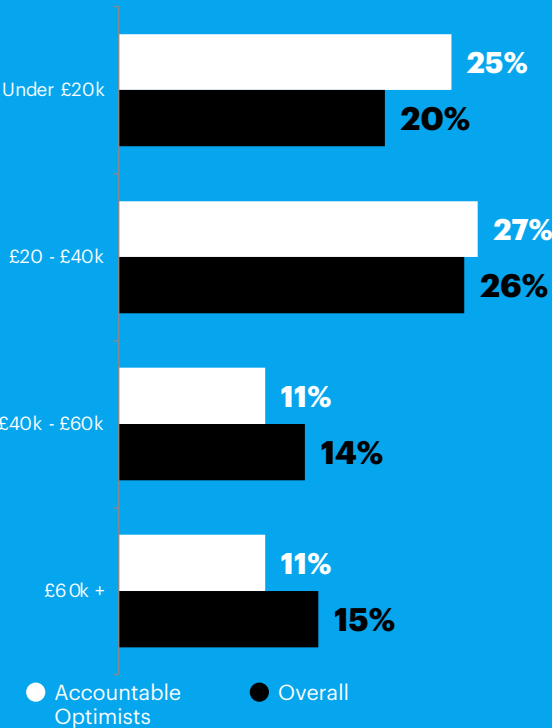


## EDUCATION

High education levels\*



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



\*See definition in Method section

# The Externalising Passives

"The current cost of living has made me be less picky on being sustainable. At the end of the day, I have to feed my family, I can't be picky and choose things [that] are more beneficial to the environment because they are expensive."



### General perceptions

They are **unconcerned** about climate change and take very little responsibility for acting and living sustainably. They feel **detached** from the subject and think attention should be focused on other social issues



### Sense of impact

They tend to feel that there is **little point** in taking individuals action to tackle climate change unless everyone changes their lifestyle



### Responsibility

They believe that the **government** in particular should be leading the charge on sustainability, as opposed to individuals



### Behavioural changes

They seem disinterested in implementing behaviours that might move them into a more sustainable lifestyle and concentrate on what they feel to be more **immediate social issues**



### Living sustainably

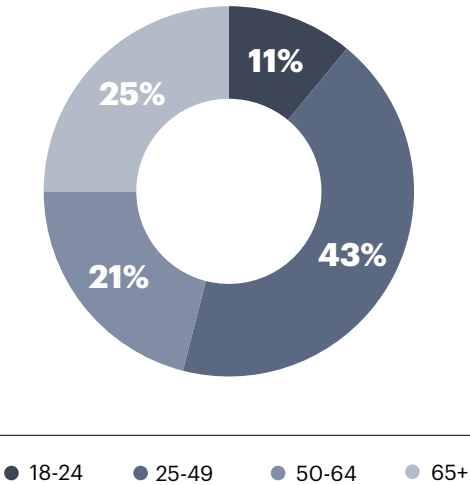
They are unlikely to believe it to be affordable, achievable or a good thing



50%  
Women

50%  
Men

AGE



## EDUCATION

High education levels\*



● Externalising Passives ● Overall

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



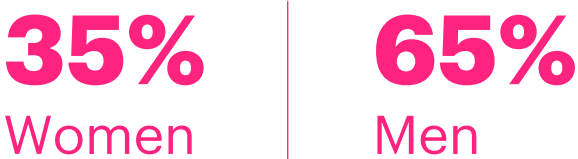
● Externalising Passives ● Overall

\*See definition in Method section

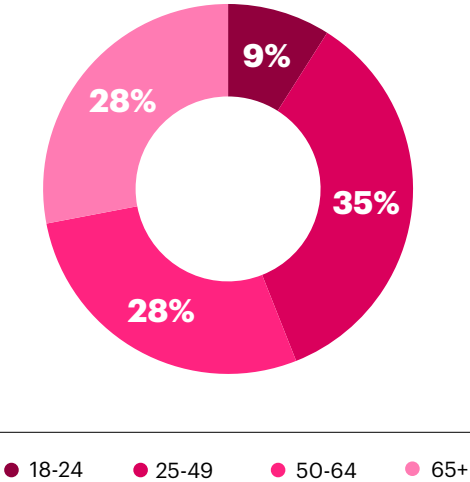
# The Climate Change Agnostics

*“Reducing meat is just not something I want to do - I enjoy meat!  
Changing investments for ‘ethical or sustainability related investments’ -  
I choose a financial investment based on its returns not because a  
company can tick some boxes and make them sound more ethical.”*

- **General perceptions**  
They are the segment **most detached** from the issue of sustainability and by far the most likely to suggest climate change is a **naturally occurring** phenomena or is ‘not real’
- **Sense of impact**  
They think **collective action** is more powerful than individual efforts when it comes to climate change, but are very unconcerned with acting sustainably
- **Responsibility**  
They place responsibility outside themselves and onto the ‘big players’, such as **businesses** and the **government**. However, they don’t believe the environment should be a priority for those in power
- **Behavioural changes**  
They are highly negative when it comes to most environmentally-friendly behaviours and are **disinterested** in taking action, unless there is a perceived benefit to themselves
- **Living sustainably**  
They believe it is **expensive** and **unachievable**

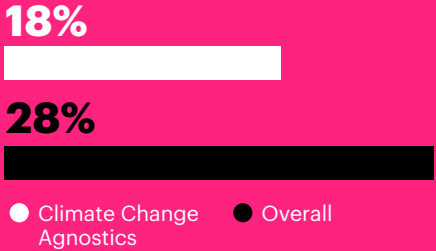


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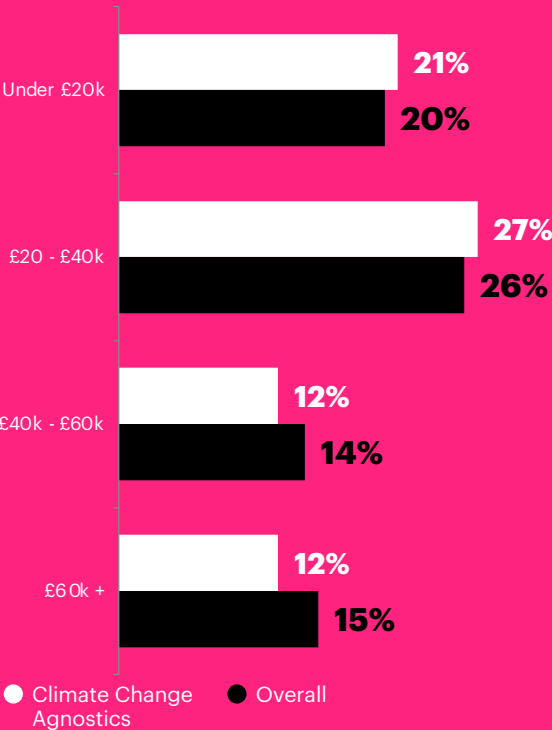


## EDUCATION

High education levels\*



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



\*See definition in Method section



# Prioritisation of sustainability





# Perceptions of the most important issues facing the UK

During recent years, the environment has typically come in third or fourth place in terms of the most important issues perceived to be facing the country

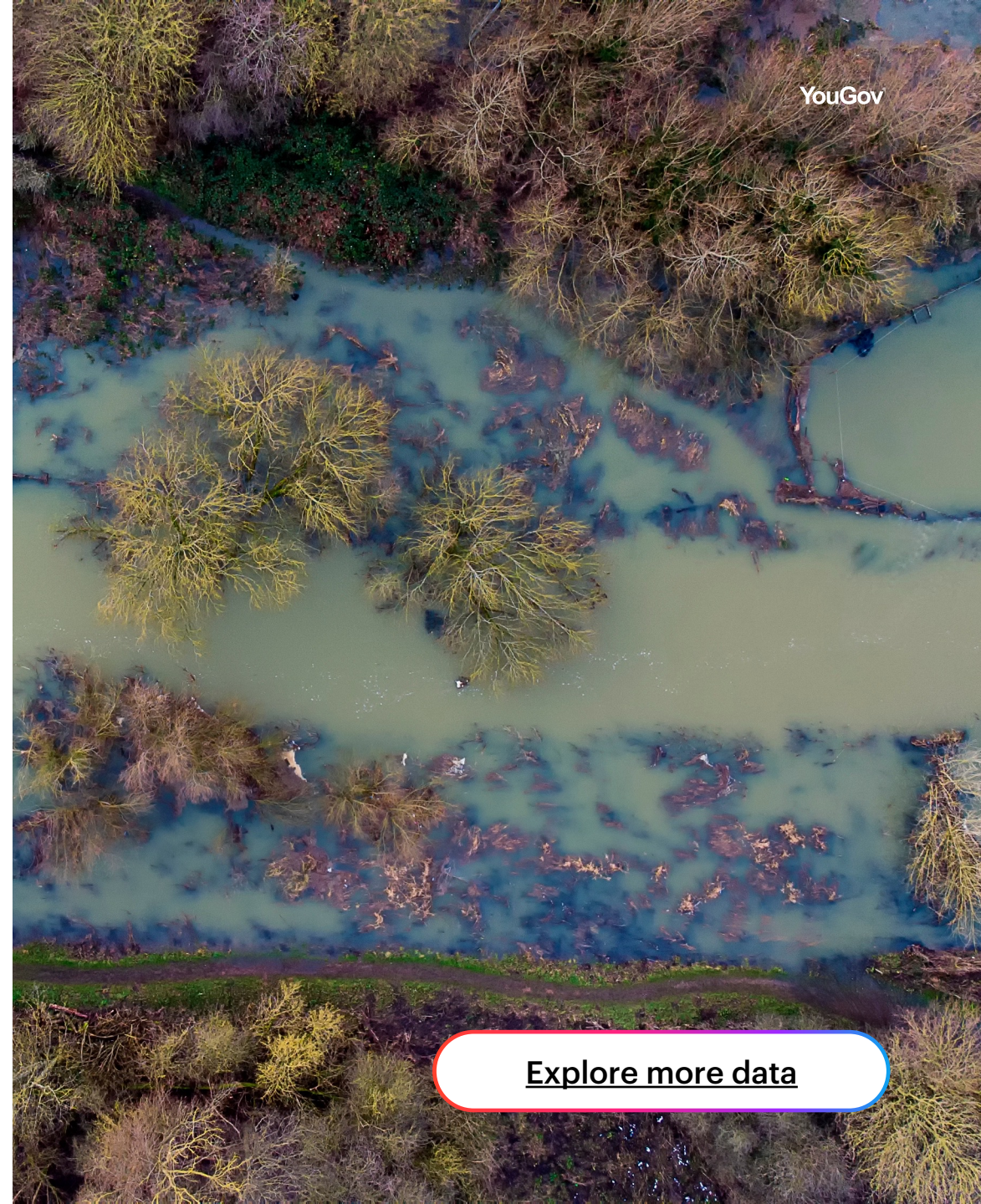
The environment tends to feature prominently when the UK public are thinking about the most important issues facing the country. Our research finds that it is often in third or fourth place, but never in the top two. As of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023, **23% of UK adults** view **the environment** as one of the top three most important issues currently facing the UK. It comes behind the economy (59%) and health (45%), which dominate by far as the most important issues, and also behind immigration and asylum (30%).

At YouGov, we have been tracking these perceptions since 2011. The proportion recognising the environment as an important issue has **steadily risen over the past**

**decade** from having hovered between 5%-9% until 2014 to **consistently** staying above 20% ten years on. Since 2019, seeing it place third or fourth has become a regular occurrence. Notably, the environment **peaked** as an important issue during recent times where it may have felt closest to home, such as the height of the UK **heatwave** in July 2022 (32%) and during **COP26** (34%), which was hosted in Glasgow in November 2021.

The environment has **never placed first or second**. This suggests that, although people do recognise that there is an issue to be addressed, **other immediate concerns are viewed as more prominent and urgent.**

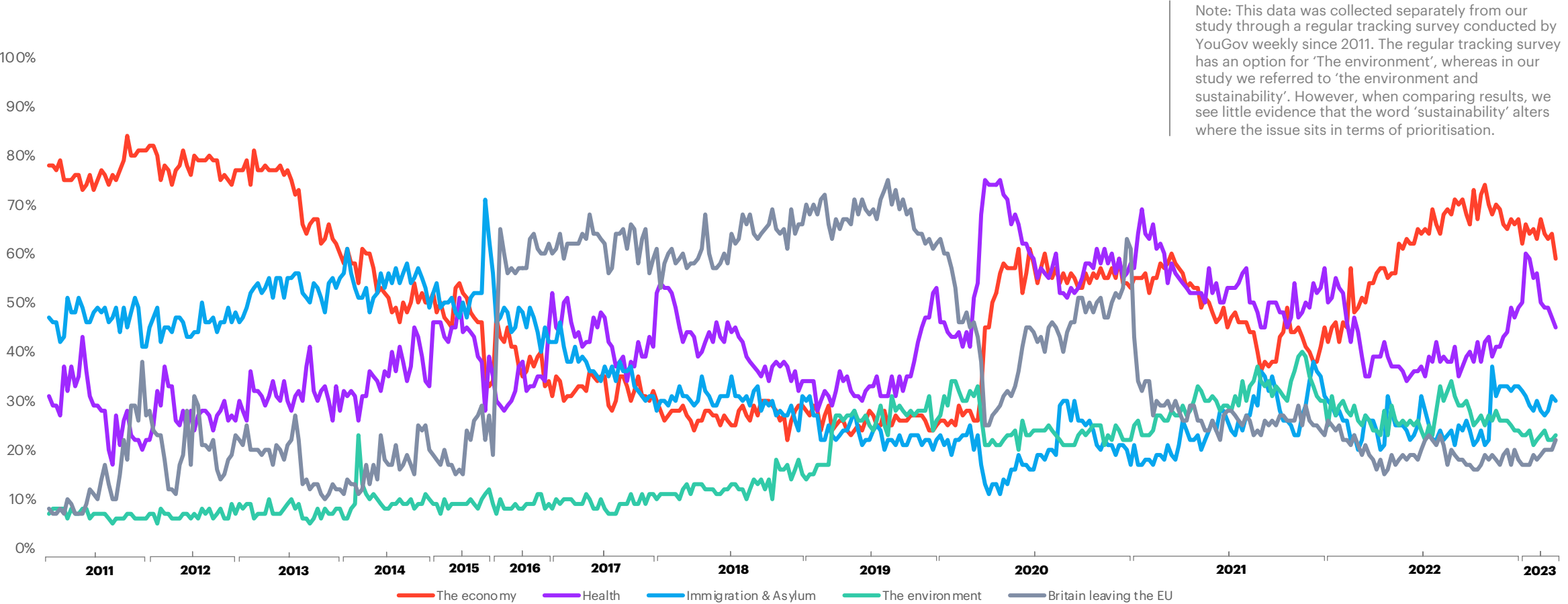
[Explore more data](#)



**The environment consistently ranked third as most important issue facing the UK for the majority of 2021 and 2022 after surpassing Britain leaving the EU, but was overtaken in late 2022 by immigration & asylum**

**The top 4 issues over time, plus the environment**

Respondents can select up to three





The segments are divided on whether the environment and sustainability are priorities.

While the economy comes out top across the board, there are stark differences between the segments when it comes to the environment and sustainability. **Hopeful Worriers** put particular emphasis on the issue, placing it as second (54%), as do **Outside-Pointing Worriers** and **Disempowered Environmentalists** (49% and 44% respectively). Comparatively, the issue comes bottom (joint with transport) for **Climate Change Agnostics** (4%) and less than a fifth of **Externalising Passives** place it in their top three (17%).

Speak to sales

Segment (rank of E&S)	Top 3 issues	
 <b>The Hopeful Worriers</b> (Rank = 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	Economy	69%
	<b>Environment and sustainability</b>	<b>54%</b>
	Health	42%
 <b>The Outside-Pointing Worriers</b> (Rank = 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	Economy	69%
	<b>Environment and sustainability</b>	<b>49%</b>
	Health	41%
 <b>The Disempowered Environmentalists</b> (Rank = 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	Economy	65%
	Health	44%
	<b>Environment and sustainability</b>	<b>44%</b>
 <b>The Accountable Optimists</b> (Rank = 4 <sup>th</sup> )	Economy	64%
	Health	33%
	Immigration	32%
 <b>The Externalising Passives</b> (Rank = 5 <sup>th</sup> )	Economy	66%
	Health	37%
	Immigration	28%
 <b>The Climate Change Agnostics</b> (Rank = 13 <sup>th</sup> )	Economy	62%
	Immigration	49%
	Health	25%

# Economic stresses take priority in their lives

"I think both the economy and environmental issues need to be at the same time, as there needs to be a **balance** struck between maintaining economic growth whilst also making massive shifts towards a greener country."

Hopeful Worrier



"I think sustainability is important to the world but how much effort is given to achieving it **depends on the economy**"

Outside-Pointing Worrier



"The economy is affecting businesses and prices have increased, which affects everybody"

Disempowered Environmentalist



In the **qualitative community** this was further highlighted, with the majority commenting that their personal needs, including their finances and health were more of an 'immediate' and 'visible' issue than the environment and sustainability. Many also commented that the economy and sustainability are inextricably tied together and with more financial stability they could be more motivated to make sustainable choices.

"It is still important, but people are more likely to give priority, within reason, to measures that they can **afford** even if they are less sustainable. If money is tight, there is **less choice**."

Accountable Optimist



"**Cost of living** is more urgent, sustainability is more important in the long term."

Externalising Passive



"Sustainability doesn't **immediately impact** myself or the people around me to the extent energy prices"

Climate Change Agnostic



## So what?

In order for promoters of sustainability and climate action to effectively engage the public and affect significant behavioural change, they must acknowledge the prominence and urgency placed on other issues. Developing sustainable living options that speak to the significance of these 'more pressing' issues is essential and should:

- Demonstrate the personal impact the environment and sustainability have on their daily lives, with reference to other key issues;
- Make clear connections between the economy, health and environment, evidencing solutions which address both issues and benefits them personally.

# Responsibility for sustainability





# The public think themselves to be much less responsible for acting sustainably than the government and businesses

When the public are asked how much responsibility for sustainability they think various groups and institutions **should have**, the highest levels of expectation are placed on the **national government** and **large companies**. **Local government** is also high on the list of institutions to be held to account, while much less onus is placed on small companies in comparison with **large ones**.

Overall, people tend to place slightly more responsibility for sustainability on **themselves** than on their **family, friends or local community**, which indicates that people do not necessarily hold their peers to the same expectations as they hold **themselves**.

**Hopeful Worriers** are strongly defined by their conviction that each of these institutions and groups should be responsible for sustainability.

When it comes to expectations for large companies, **Outside-Pointing Worriers** and **Disempowered Environmentalists** align closely with **Hopeful Worriers** in their strong sense that these **institutions** should be **held to account**.

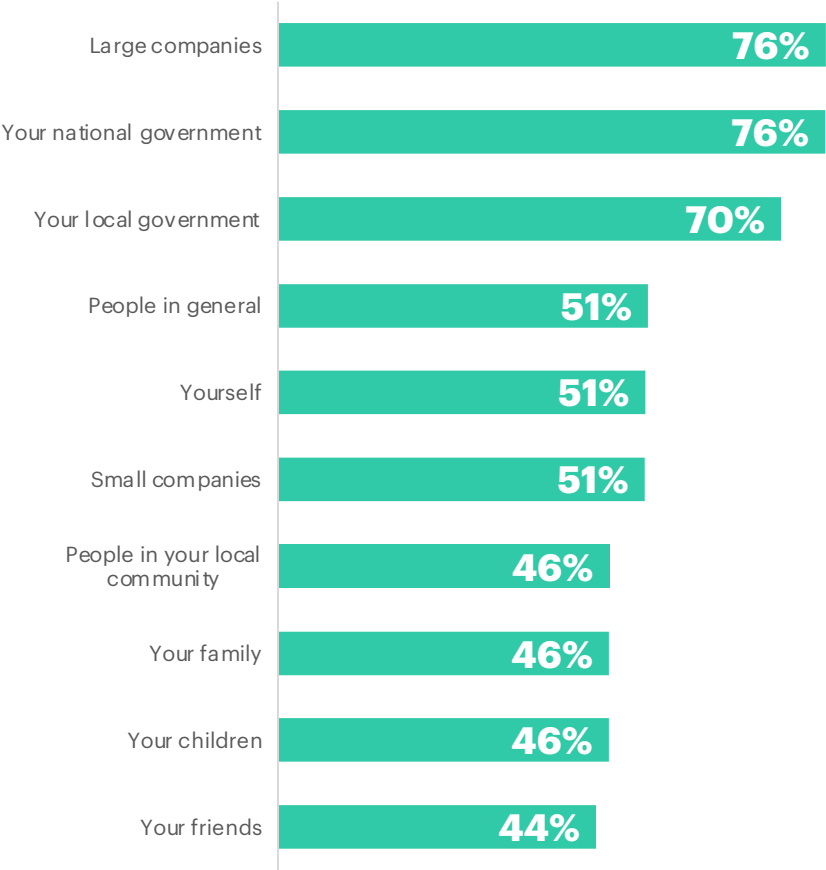
**Disempowered Environmentalists** also align closely with the views of **Hopeful Worriers** when it comes to a stance on the amount of responsibility that should be placed on the national government.



In the **qualitative community**, the vast majority **believed that integrating more sustainable practices into society is important and worthwhile**.

And while many were willing to do their part personally, albeit at varying levels, there was an overwhelming desire to see **more institutional-led action from the government and big businesses**

% who place a high degree of responsibility for sustainability on each group/institution (8-10 on a scale of 0 to 10)



# When faced with the choice, the public place more responsibility for sustainability on the government than on businesses

When choosing between the two, the public put significantly more responsibility for being sustainable on **businesses** (76%) than **individuals** (24%). Similarly, much more onus is placed on the **government** (75%) than **individuals** (25%).

Although this paints a very similar picture across the two institutions, when required to choose between businesses and the government, the weight shifts towards the **government** (57%) as opposed to businesses (43%).

[Speak to our qualitative team](#)

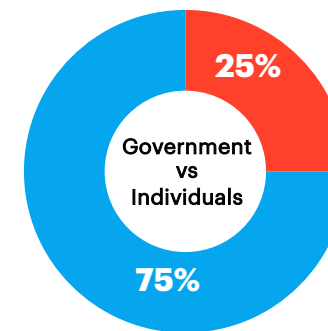
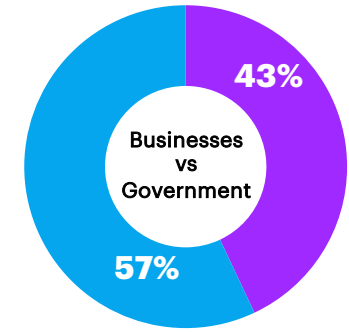
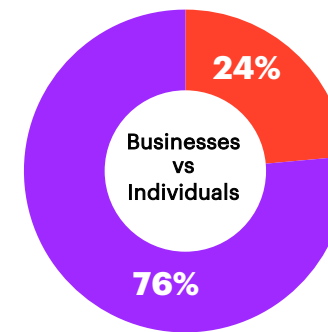


In the **qualitative community**, most felt that those who have the greatest impact are the government and large businesses, and therefore should be held **accountable** and **lead change**. Individuals should be **enabled** to take action and not be **detrimentally impacted** in their day-to-day lives in the pursuit of sustainability.

Although most individuals were open to making **incremental and visible changes**, the majority felt that **systemic** and **transformational** change is unlikely to be made by 'average' citizens.

**Hopeful Worriers** and **Outside-Pointing Worriers** believed that governments and businesses should create and enable a **framework** for individuals to follow.

## Who has more of a responsibility to be sustainable...



- Individuals
- Businesses
- The Government

# An important factor diversifying the segments is the degree to which they place responsibility on themselves versus other institutions

**Accountable Optimists**, who tend to believe that **personal action** can make a difference, are characterised as placing less responsibility on businesses and the government than the other segments. Instead, they take a stronger stance on the belief that responsibility also lies with individuals.

On the other end of the spectrum, **Outside-Pointing Worriers** stand out for placing the greatest responsibility on businesses in comparison with individuals. Similarly, **Externalising Passives** tend to place a high degree of responsibility on the government instead of individuals.

**Hopeful Worriers** do not overly stand out against the other segments when it comes to a stance on the responsibility of individuals versus other institutions. However, they are characterised by placing increased onus on the government in comparison with businesses. Meanwhile, the opposite is true of **Outside-Pointing Worriers**; they believe more responsibility for being sustainable lies with businesses than the government.

"Government can only provide the framework. It is for the rest of us as individuals to implement them."

**Accountable Optimist**



"Governments, brands, industries and businesses have the power to make changes at a very large scale, individuals have no power over anyone but themselves"

**Outside-Pointing Worrier**



"The government has a responsibility to force businesses to move towards more sustainable models, while businesses and individuals also have a responsibility to reduce their own environmental impact"

**Hopeful Worrier**





# Consumer action and impact









# The public are more likely to prioritise cost and quality over sustainability when making a purchase

Even the most sustainability-driven segment, **Hopeful Worriers**, view sustainability as far less of a priority than **cost and quality** when making a purchase, with 7% ranking it as the top factor in their decision.

Meanwhile **Climate Change Agnostics** are least likely to rank sustainability as number one (1%).

Overall, three of the six segments rank sustainability as their lowest priority when making a purchase.

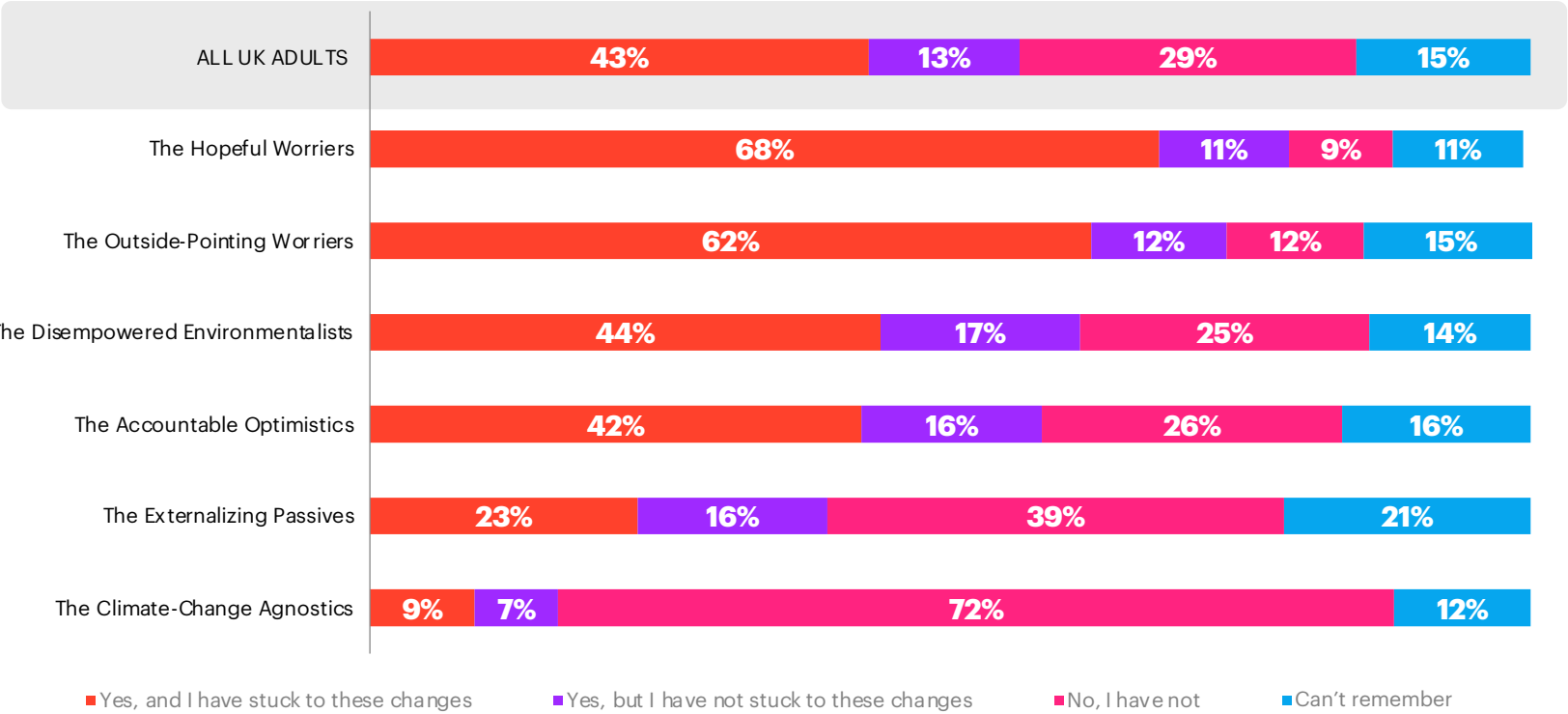
However, the story evolves when people are asked about the *importance* of different qualities in a product or service. A majority within five of the six segments think it is *important* that products and services are sustainable, while a much smaller proportion of **Climate Change Agnostics** (23%) hold this belief. This suggests that priorities when **purchasing** do not necessarily reflect a lack of perceived importance, but rather that **cost takes precedence**.

Segment (rank of sustainability)		% ranked as top factor when making a purchasing decision	
 The Hopeful Worriers (Rank = 3 <sup>rd</sup> )		Cost	51%
		Quality	31%
		Sustainability	7%
 The Outside-Pointing Worriers (Rank = 4 <sup>th</sup> )		Cost	54%
		Quality	32%
		Reviews	6%
 The Disempowered Environmentalists (Rank = 6 <sup>th</sup> )		Cost	59%
		Quality	27%
		Reviews	4%
 The Accountable Optimists (Rank = 4 <sup>th</sup> )		Cost	50%
		Quality	30%
		Reviews	6%
 The Externalising Passives (Rank = 6 <sup>th</sup> )		Cost	58%
		Quality	26%
		Reviews	4%
 The Climate Change Agnostics (Rank = 6 <sup>th</sup> )		Cost	56%
		Quality	30%
		Reviews	4%

# Once people have made a sustainable change, they are more likely to stick with it than not

Overall, more of the public stick to their sustainable behaviours (43%) than not (13%) in response to information they have been exposed to.

% who have ever changed behaviour to be more sustainable in response to seeing or hearing information on being sustainable



Within the qualitative community, individuals considered time, personal effort/sacrifice and cost when deciding what level of sustainable lifestyle to lead.

Considerations are also taken around how much of a perceived impact their actions can make in a wider sense, **particularly when compared with actions/non-actions being taken by institutions/countries felt to pose more of a risk.**

For some, willingness to adapt and stick to behaviours was strongly linked to how much of a **direct benefit** would be felt by them personally e.g. around their health or finances.

[Learn more about our data](#)



## Among the least sustainability-driven segment, **Climate Change Agnostics**, just one in six have changed their behaviour to be more sustainable after hearing something about it – and almost half of that group did not stick to the change

**Hopeful Worriers** are the most likely segment to have made changes, with seven in ten (68%) having made **lifestyle modifications** and stuck to them after seeing or hearing information on being sustainable.

"The small changes aren't difficult, but some can be time consuming and require a different mindset or forward planning which can be difficult in a busy life."

"I don't think it's difficult if one makes the changes gradually"

**Hopeful Worrier**



**Disempowered Environmentalists** and **Accountable Optimists** show very similar behaviour patterns, despite the difference in urgency they feel towards climate change, with just over four in ten (44% and 42% respectively) making behaviour changes to make their life more sustainable. This could be linked to **Accountable Optimists** switching to **more cost-effective lifestyle choices**, rather than doing it for the serious concern of the environment.

"These campaigns have forced me to think about my health, the environment and my pocket."

**Accountable Optimist**



**Externalising Passives** and **Climate Change Agnostics** are less likely to have made any changes in response to information on sustainability, especially the latter, where seven in ten (72%) have not changed their behaviour at all. However, this may come as no surprise as a quarter (24%) of the same group say they have not seen or heard any information on sustainability.

"I think being sustainable is expensive. I cannot afford solar panels or an electric car."

**Climate Change Agnostic**



## A majority of the public would be willing to only eat food produced in the UK in order to be more sustainable

Amongst a range of sustainable actions, the public are most willing to only **eat food that has been produced in the UK** (56%) and switch to **energy providers** that only use renewable energy (51%). The most sustainability-involved segments share this sentiment; around two-thirds of **Hopeful Worriers** and **Outside-Pointing Worriers** would be willing to only eat food produced in the UK to lead a more sustainable life (67% and 66% respectively). Again this indicates the importance of connecting sustainability to other parts of society. **By encouraging eating UK-produced food, as a result jobs, the economy and the environment could all benefit.**

On the other end of the spectrum, the least informed and most disengaged segments show a lack of willingness to take any sort of sustainable action. Amongst **Climate Change Agnostics**, less than a quarter (23%)

would switch to a sustainable energy provider, and only 15% would cover the cost to make their home more energy-efficient. This is likely coming from their perception that climate change is not the fault of human activity, therefore there is no need to take action.

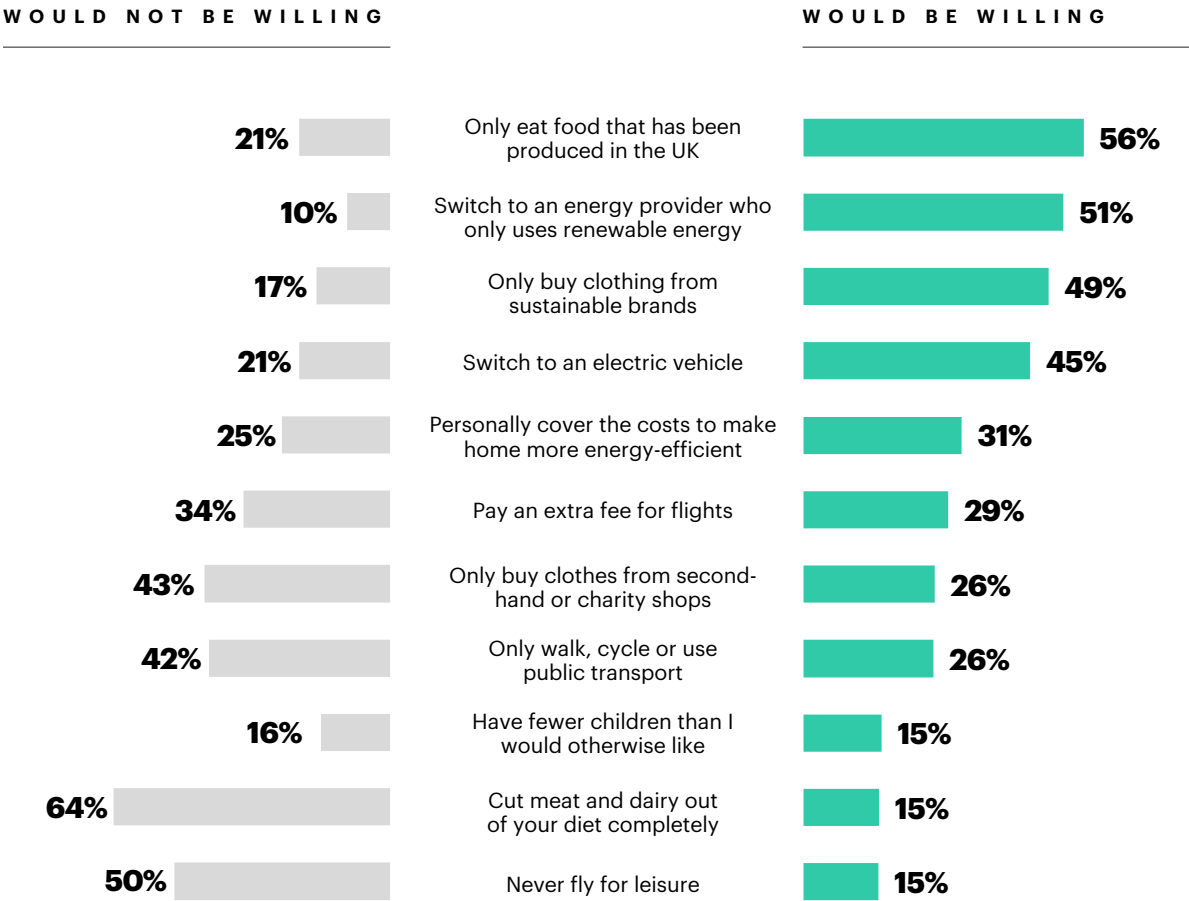


In the qualitative community, repairing existing items and shopping **second hand** were both considered to be appealing sustainable practices, owing to the **direct personal benefits**, such as money saving, in addition to environmental ones.





Although the public are quite open to modifying their diet to only eat food produced in the UK , they are strongly resistant to cutting out meat and dairy



“Reducing meat is just not something I want to do - I enjoy meat!”

Climate Change Agnostic



“I play my part with my family. We do a lot of recycling and try to get clothes reused and donated so we ensure items are being well used to its maximum use.”

Accountable Optimist



“I try to reduce the wastage in anything I consume and use. I tend to not buy cheap clothes so that quality one last more. I also have inclination about growing some veg of my own.”

Hopeful Worrier



So what?

- Generally, people are willing to cut back, not cut out. It’s crucial to highlight the positive impact that small changes have, rather than focusing on overwhelming lifestyle changes
- Although some audiences are less willing to act sustainably because of their environmental beliefs, it’s just as important to understand their levels of information and who they think should take responsibility

## No matter the stance on sustainability, 'greenwashing' and 'fast fashion' are perceived negatively

Three-quarters (74%) of the public believe 'greenwashing' is a form of marketing, and a similar proportion (72%) would feel negatively towards a company that was found to be 'greenwashing'. **Hopeful Worriers** (51%), **Outside-Pointing Worriers** (51%), and **Disempowered Environmentalists** (49%) are the most likely segments to be familiar with the term 'greenwashing'.

When considering 'fast fashion', generally people have heard of it more than they have of 'greenwashing', and nine in ten (89%) can name the correct definition when prompted. When breaking the findings down by segment, the least sustainability-concerned segments know the least about the practice; 50% of **Climate Change Agnostics** and 48% of **Externalising Passives** say they have never heard of it, and they are also the segments most likely to claim that their impression of a company would not change if they produced 'fast fashion' (50% and 43% respectively).



In the qualitative community, many strongly believed in **utilising the power of the consumer** as a key technique to instigate sustainable changes at large companies. Many believed that **applying pressure through persistent demand** would lead to an increase in the volume of sustainable alternatives on the market and result in positive, corporate-level changes thereby creating more accessible, sustainable lifestyle options.

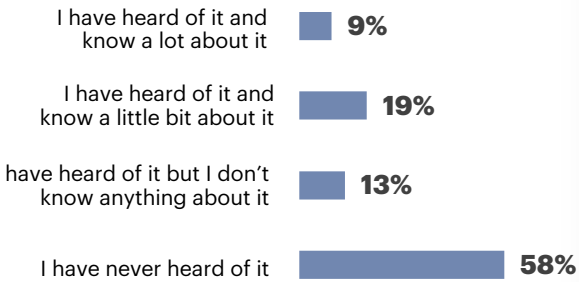
[Run a survey](#)




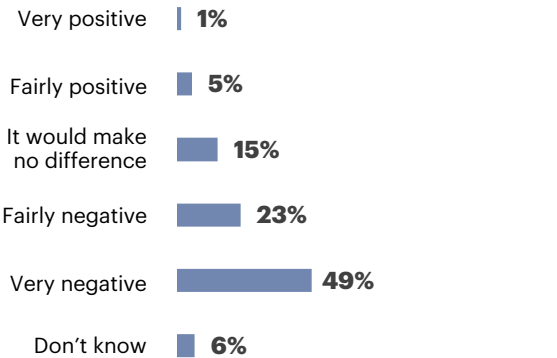


# The public’s depth of understanding of ‘greenwashing’ and ‘fast fashion’ and their impact on sustainability is varied

## Awareness of the term ‘greenwashing’



## Impression of a company found to be ‘greenwashing’



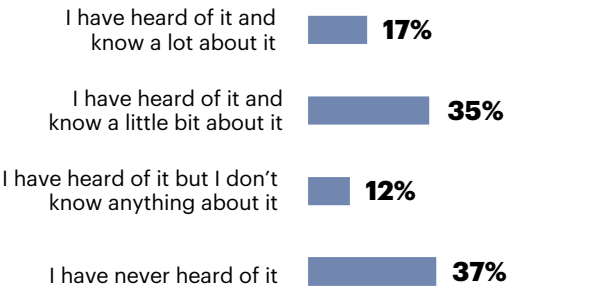
**74%**  
Correctly identify a definition of ‘greenwashing’

“This will ruin the reputation of the environmental company. It will reduce the public's passion for sustainability and trust in environmental companies”

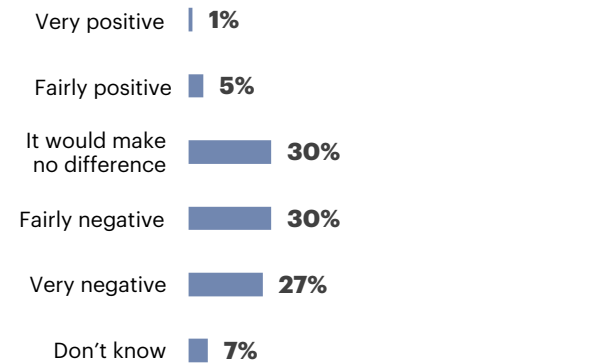
Hopeful Worrier



## Awareness of the term ‘fast fashion’



## Impression of a company that produces ‘fast fashion’



**89%**  
Correctly identify a definition of ‘fast fashion’

“H&M has a 'conscious' range of clothing that's supposed to be eco friendly and sustainable, but they don't pay their workers fair wages and they still use awful fabrics in all their 'eco' clothing with terrible quality so it's not going to last more than a season.”

Outside-Pointing Worrier



# Information and education





## Mainstream media dominates as the source providing the public with information on sustainability

The general public are most likely to get information about sustainability from **mainstream media or news** (43%) and this remains true across all segments.

Unsurprisingly, where efforts are required to obtain information on sustainability, the most engaged segments distinguish themselves. **Hopeful Worriers** (24%), **Outside-Pointing Worriers** (21%) and **Disempowered Environmentalists** (20%) are the most likely segments to **use online searches** for specific websites to access information on the topic.

One in ten members of the public (11%) say they have not been exposed to any information on sustainability, with this increasing to a quarter (24%) of **Climate Change Agnostics** and 15% of **Externalising Passives**. It is difficult to pin whether these groups have actively chosen not to engage with this information, but either way, there is a clear pattern where a **lack of information means less importance placed on the topic**.

"I only trust independent news as they allow neutral sources to voice their opinion. Politicians are corrupt and completely not trustworthy..."

**Disempowered Environmentalist**



"I would have to say I trust mainstream media to report news in an honest, timely manner, to the best of their ability. They have the facilities to provide accurate information e.g. fast coverage on current events."

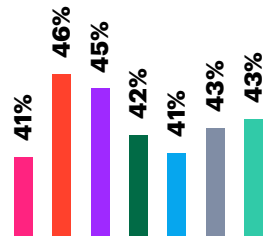
**Outside-Pointing Worrier**



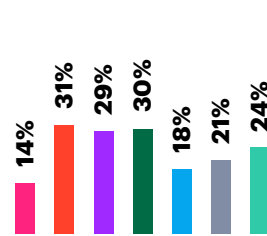
### So what?

- The inescapability of mainstream media coverage is clear to see. This is the platform that should be used to **promote sustainability more widely**, with **trusted actors** being the forefront of information
- If trying to reach specific audiences, it's important to **understand their perceptions of sustainability** and the efforts they will go to find and engage with this information

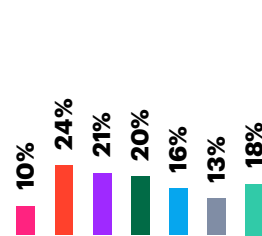
MAINSTREAM MEDIA OR NEWS



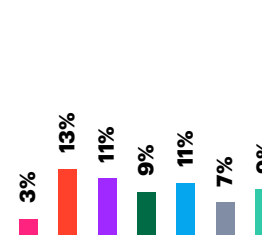
SOCIAL MEDIA



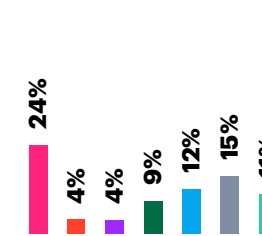
INTERNET SEARCHES



FRIENDS AND FAMILY



I HAVE NOT HEARD OR SEEN ANY INFORMATION



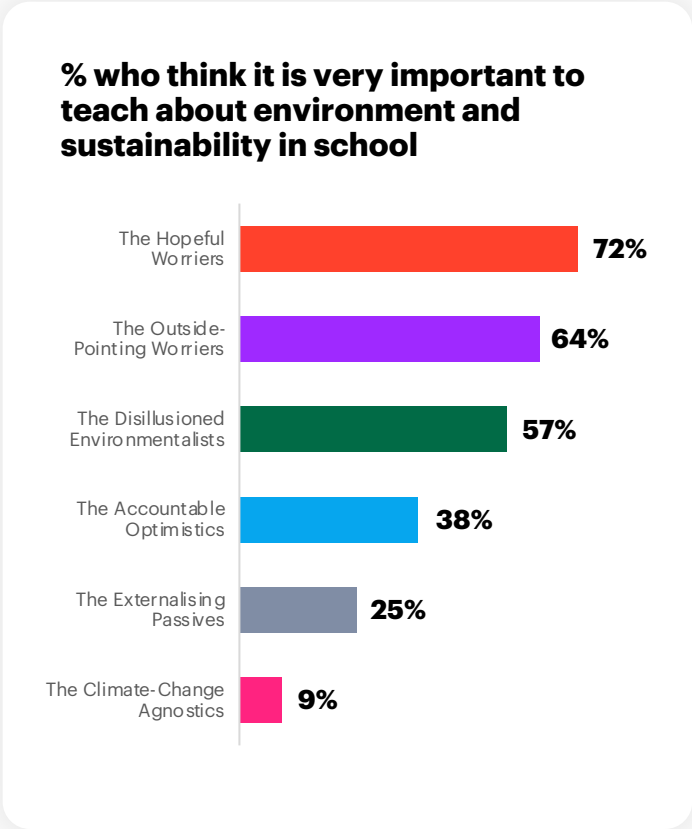
- The Hopeful Worriers
- The Outside-Pointing Worriers
- The Disempowered Environmentalists
- The Accountable Optimists
- The Externalizing Passives
- The Climate Change Agnostics
- General public

# Teaching about sustainability in schools is seen to be just as important as PE and History

The vast majority of the general public (85%) think that teaching about the environment and sustainability at secondary school is fairly or very important. In fact, the public see it being just as important as PE (84%), history (85%) and sex and relationship education (85%).

This trend continues among the segments. Almost all **Hopeful Worriers** and **Outside-Pointing Worriers** think the environment and sustainability is an important subject to teach in school (98% and 97% respectively) while only 44% of **Climate Change Agnostics** say the same. This may come as no surprise due to the varying levels of engagement and knowledge these groups have on the issue.

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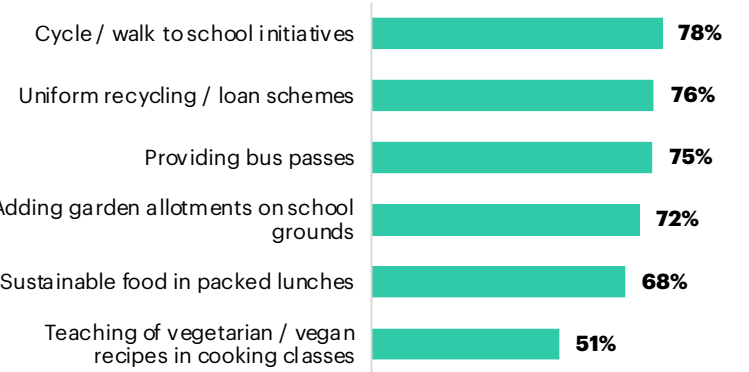
[Explore your audience](#)



# The idea of embedding sustainability into schools is popular

When considering different developments to implement in schools to encourage sustainability, introducing cycle / walk to school schemes is thought to be something that would have a positive impact (78%). A similar proportion feel that uniform recycling schemes (76%) and providing bus passes to students (75%) would drive sustainability in schools.

## % who think the following would have a positive impact on encouraging sustainability in schools



### So what?

- There is an appetite to **encourage** more sustainable actions in schools. Sustainability can be **entwined** with other important **social issues** for instance helping families economically by providing **cycle to school schemes** and **recycling uniforms**
- Core subject like English, Science and Maths are likely to remain top of teaching agendas, however sustainability can be **'sprinkled' in to the curriculum**. E.g. reading environmental poems or learning about the environmental impact and science behind of different sources of energy



# Pathway to change

05



# Pathway to change

## Communicate the relationship between sustainability and top issues

Currently, sustainability as an issue on its own can fall short on its relevance. Often compared to other more pressing issues, such as the economy and health, it can easily be pushed down the order of importance and fail to be granted the same sense of priority.

Sustainability should be reframed in public communications as something that is intrinsically linked with the economy and health, instead of a standalone issue.

## Enable sustainable choices

Placing responsibility on the individual can be polarising – government and large business actions are felt to have a greater impact than individuals.

Currently, it can feel simpler to steer clear of personal responsibility; many question why they should engage with sustainability if large institutions are not changing their ways or developing practical solutions for them. Therefore, institutions should do more to demonstrate that they are taking impactful sustainable actions.

## Focus on smaller, accessible actions

Cost is a major barrier that allows many to easily rationalise inaction. Smaller, incremental and affordable solutions that do not drastically hinder lifestyle need to be developed.

A stronger focus should be placed on the power of smaller everyday actions. This should be led by trusted actors across the private and public sectors.

## Educate through example

Creating a society where children are brought up with sustainability practices as part of their education from an early age is felt to be key to driving awareness and action.

However, the approach taken should attempt to move away from isolated teaching of sustainability to the incorporation of sustainability with a range of core subjects.



# Methodology



# Methodology

## Quantitative

YouGov conducted an online survey with **10,104 UK adults** from the 19<sup>th</sup> of July to the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2022.

The sample was structured and weighted to be representative of the population by age, gender, region, social grade, education, past vote (2019 General Election vote and 2016 EU referendum) and political attention.

The survey covered a range of topics, including:

- Perceptions of the most important issues facing the UK
- Where responsibility for sustainability lies
- Whether people have, or would, take sustainable actions
- The future and the role of education

Following the survey, YouGov ran statistical segmentation analysis, revealing six segments in the population.

## Qualitative

YouGov ran a **60-person online community** over one week, from 3<sup>rd</sup> of October to 9<sup>th</sup> October.

10 participants from each of the segments identified were included

The online community covered various topics including

- The shape of their lives
- Trusted advisors
- Changing behaviour
- Attitudes towards sustainability and the future of sustainability

\*High education levels are defined as: University or CNA first degree; University or CNA higher degree (e.g. M.Sc, Ph.D)

\*\*Statistical segmentation analysis analysed a data set of over 10,000 individuals with complete responses to all segmentation survey items. The underlying factor variables were computed using polychoric and continuous correlations, oblimin rotations, the minimum residual estimation, and the ten Berge method for generating scores. The clustering procedure used the k-means algorithm and Euclidean distances, paired with the k-means++ initialisation algorithm. The selection of the solution rested on a variety of compactness measures, such as silhouette width and within-cluster variance, alongside subjective appraisals in terms of interpretability and strategic usefulness - all results have been weighted.



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**Get in touch**





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# Thank you

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