

Thin Ice?

Understanding voters' support for net zero



ONWARD >

About Onward

Onward is an independent, not-for-profit thinktank, registered in England and Wales (Company Registration no. 11326052).

We believe in a mainstream conservatism – one that recognises the value of markets and supports the good that government can do, is unapologetic about standing up to vested interests, and assiduous in supporting the hardworking, aspirational and those left behind. Our goal is to address the needs of the whole country: young as well as old; urban as well as rural; and for all parts of the UK – particularly places that feel neglected or ignored in Westminster.

We do this by developing practical policies that work. Our team has worked both at a high level in government and for successful thinktanks. We know how to produce big ideas that resonate with policymakers, the media and the public. We work closely with policymakers of all parties to build coalitions of support. Most importantly, we engage ordinary people across the country and work with them to make our ideas a reality.

Thanks

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About Getting to Zero

Established a year before COP26, Onward's Getting to Zero programme is dedicated to developing practical and politically possible ways for the UK to meet its net zero ambitions and lead the world in decarbonisation.






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Summary of the argument





Climate change has gone from being a relatively niche concern a few decades ago to near ubiquity today. In the past decade, the proportion of voters who are “concerned” about climate change has risen sharply across every demographic and today around four-fifths of voters are concerned about climate change. During the pandemic, only health and the economy are considered of greater importance. This has been reflected in policy, through the amendment of the Climate Change Act in 2019, the steady drumbeat of policy commitments on decarbonisation and renewables, and the Government’s recent Net Zero Strategy.

But talk is cheap. How deep does this concern go - and how much does it translate into action? We know that most voters care about the environment and ostensibly support attempts to reduce emissions, but how many are willing to take the difficult personal decisions or bear the cost burden that action will necessarily involve? To what extent is the ultimately distant target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 an immediate concern for voters? And, to the extent that voters are actually willing to take action, where are they most supportive and most resistant?

As the Government starts to move from the principle of net zero to the practice of delivering it, these are questions that can no longer go unanswered. In this report, we attempt to go beyond previous surveys to understand voters’ revealed preferences about net zero when confronted with the likely cost, urgency and impact of different policies. In doing so we reveal that while policymakers will need to tread carefully as they take steps towards net zero, there is a corridor through which voters can be convinced of the value of the trade-offs.

- Overall, we find that a strong majority of voters believe that the Government is not being bold enough on climate change, and should be doing more to tackle it. Two thirds (67%) of voters think the Government is not being bold enough, compared to just a third (33%) who think it is being too bold. While variation does exist between parties - with Labour and Remain voters more likely to take this view than Conservative or Leave voters - every political parties’ voting coalitions exhibit net support for bolder action.
- This generalised support falls when the prospect of higher costs is added into the equation. Excluding ‘don’t knows’, half of people say they are willing to pay higher taxes, and 46% are willing to pay higher prices for fuel and household items, in order to deliver net zero. Low income voters, non-graduates, renters, and C1, C2 and DE voters are all net opposed to the idea of paying higher taxes or prices. 41% of Conservative voters say they would pay higher prices to reduce emissions, versus 54% of Labour voters and 66% of Lib Dems.

When voters are confronted by the costs and implications of specific policies, however, the situation becomes more complex. Working with J.L. Partners, we created a Net Zero Index to measure support for different policies once the likely cost, perceived impact and relative urgency of each policy had been taken into account. This reveals, most importantly, that support for tackling climate change is not just superficial. All nine policies that we tested enjoyed voters' net support using our Index. However, while there is broad support for each policy among the electorate, our index did reveal sharper dividing lines than seen previously. For example:

- Policies to decarbonise transport resonate most with the public. For example, installing electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station enjoys +37% net support, making it the most popular policy we tested.
- On the other hand, voters were split on the idea of policies requiring costly changes to people's homes. For example, making every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households, enjoyed net support of just +3%.
- Other policies were somewhere in between. A policy of changing taxes so that products and services that generate a lot of CO² in their production cost more than those that generate less CO² enjoys +18% net support. The idea of charging an extra tax for each additional international flight taken each year enjoys net support of +22%.

The Net Zero Index also reveals large differences between demographic groups. Younger voters tend to be in favour of each policy to a similar extent, while older age groups strongly support some policies, like transport or incentives changes, but oppose others, such as forcing changes to their home. There are differences between genders too, with men more supportive of every policy by between 2 and 10 percentage points. Degree-holders are more supportive of every policy tested, by an average of more than 20 points.

Notably, some of the largest differences are to do with geography, rather than population. Unsurprisingly, London is comfortably the most supportive region. Meanwhile, relative scepticism appears to be concentrated in the North East, as well as East Anglia, the Black Country and some rural parts of the South West. This means that there is a large divide at a constituency level, given the Conservatives' advance into the Red Wall and the Labour Party's retreat to metropolitan boroughs at the last election.


The most supportive constituencies are held by Labour, while the least supportive seats are predominantly held by the Conservatives. However the Conservatives are

still seen as having a clearer stance on the environment than Labour, and the Labour coalition is twice as geographically divided as Conservative voters on support for tangible policies, suggesting that the Conservatives have an electoral advantage from delivering on this agenda. And support for net zero appears to be strong, even when voters are told how much it will cost them.

The new consensus?

Public attitudes towards the principle of net zero





There is little doubt that climate change has become more salient in recent years. What was once a relatively fringe concern among members of the voting public has become one of the most important policy issues in UK politics. What is not clear is how soft, or hard, this concern is, and how it might translate into support for policies that will inevitably be costly and disruptive, even if they lead to benefits elsewhere.

As the Government embarks on an ambitious agenda to halve carbon emissions by 2030, and to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050, they are treading an incredibly narrow tightrope between going fast enough to deliver the change required on the one hand and maintaining public support and legitimacy on the other. To achieve a successful political balancing act, policymakers will need to understand:

- Which policies are deemed most legitimate, and where are voters most opposed?
- What behavioural and industrial changes are most and least popular?
- Where are voters most willing to personally contribute to climate change reduction?
- Which groups of voters are more or less willing to support specific policies?
- How does the potential cost, impact and urgency of policies impact on willingness to support?

To answer these questions, Onward partnered with J.L. Partners to convene a series of focus groups and to conduct a large sample (n = 8,478, 11 - 30 August 2021) poll to understand voter opinion towards net zero. This chapter sets out the context for that work, both in terms of the change in the last decade and the current state of public opinion today. The following chapter includes a more detailed analysis of a large range of climate change policies, taking into account the perceived urgency, potential cost and likely impact of each policy.

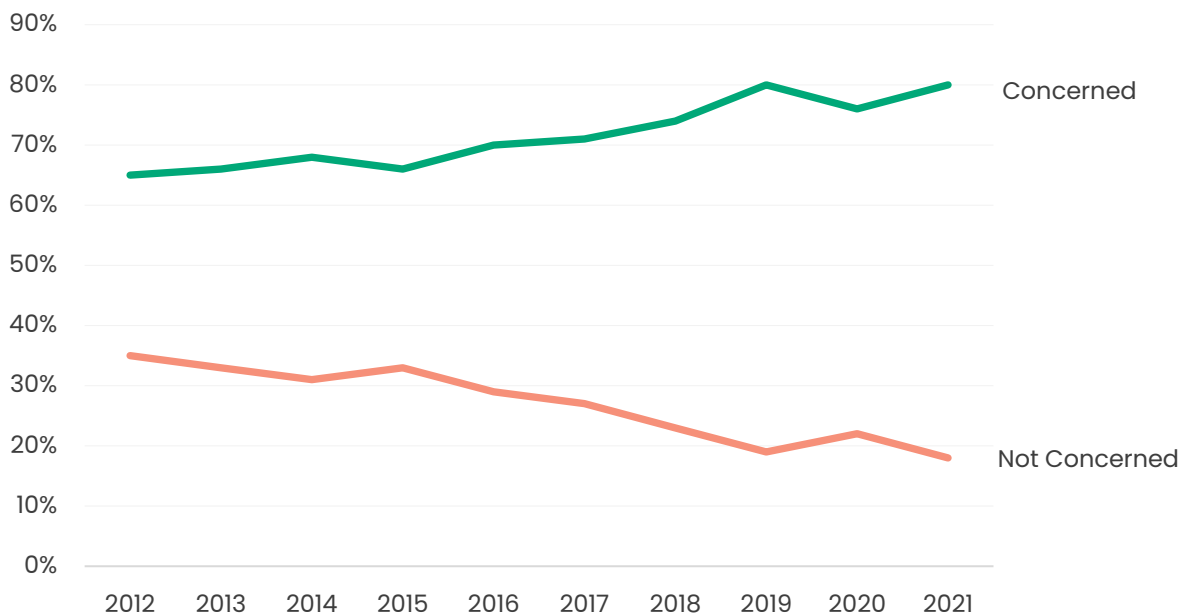
There has been a marked rise in the salience of, and concern for, climate change in the last decade

In little more than a decade, climate change has gone from a relatively fringe concern in British politics to a mainstream issue. In 2010, the environment ranked 10th out of 13 issues facing the country in YouGov's Political Issues Tracker, with just 6% of voters choosing it as one of the most important issues facing Britain.¹ Today the environment is 3rd out of 16 issues on the same tracker, behind only health and the economy. It is now chosen by five times as many people - 31% of voters - as one of the most important issues facing Britain.² According to polls, more than seven in ten people (72%) believe that "the world's climate is changing as a result of human activity", and a similar proportion (69%) do not agree that claims about climate change are exaggerated.³

This is reinforced by the Government’s own surveys. Data from the BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker shows that since 2012 the proportion of the population who consider themselves “concerned” about climate change has risen by 15 points, from 65% to 80%. While this dipped slightly during the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, levels of concern recovered to a record high earlier this year. The share who say they are not concerned about climate change now amounts to fewer than one in five people.

Figure 1: Proportion of the population who are concerned about climate change, over time

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker



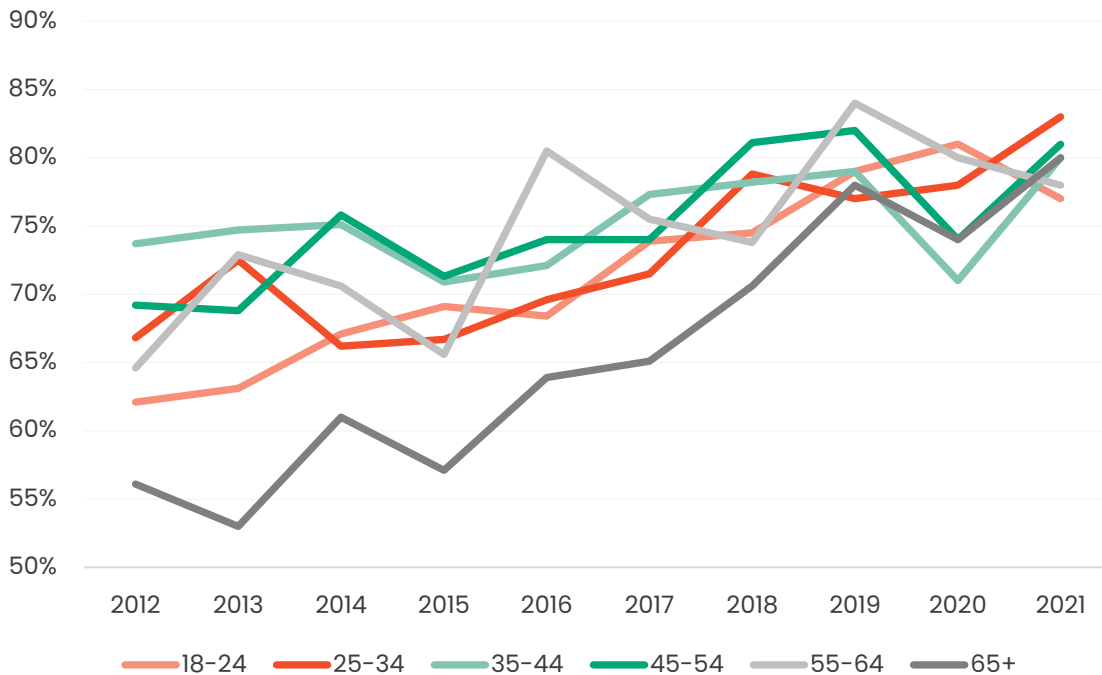
Nor is this concern being driven by certain segments of the country. Rising concern is reflected across all demographics: every age group, social class and income bracket surveyed by BEIS shows a strong net feeling of concern about climate change and virtually every demographic group has shown an increase in concern of at least 10 points since 2012. The two groups that have experienced slower rises - people aged 35-44 and people with a household income of more than £50,000 - started from the highest levels of concern originally. Meanwhile, rising concern about climate change has been strongest among those groups that historically were least concerned about climate change. In 2013, for example, just 53% of those aged 65 or older were concerned about climate change. Today, this number stands at 80%. This means that the 20 point gap that existed between over-65s and 35-44 year olds (the most concerned group) in 2012, has entirely closed, in less than a decade.

Climate change is therefore no longer (insofar as it was ever true) solely the concern of younger generations. When BEIS started measuring public attitudes in 2012, those least concerned about climate change were the very youngest (18-24 year olds) and

very oldest (over 65s) age groups, while middle aged groups were most concerned. As older and younger voters have become more concerned in the last decade, the spread between age groups has narrowed from 18 points in 2012 to just 6 points in 2021. The environment is therefore a policy issue which enjoys intergenerational virtual unanimity.

Figure 2: Levels of concern about climate change, by age bracket

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker



A similar but less pronounced pattern is visible across class and income. In 2012, around three fifths (60%) of DE voters were concerned about climate change, 11 points lower than AB voters (71%). Today, DE voters are still 8 points less concerned (75%) than AB voters (83%), but the gap has narrowed. Those earning less than £25,000 a year are generally least concerned about climate change, but the share saying they are concerned about climate change has risen by 16 points from 63% to 79% since 2012. This means that lower earners are nearly as concerned as higher earners (those earning more than £50,000).

Figure 3: Levels of concern about climate change, by occupational class

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker

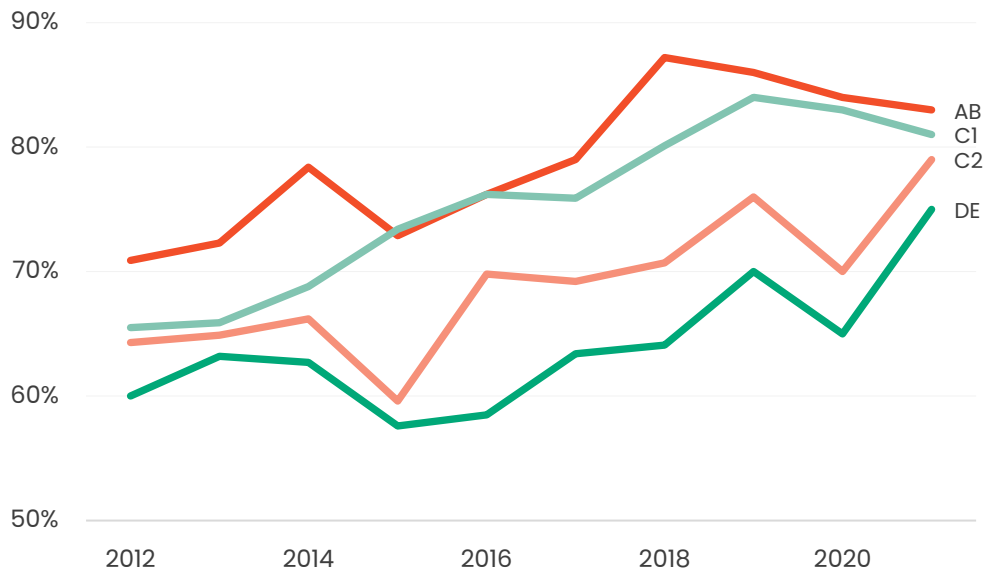
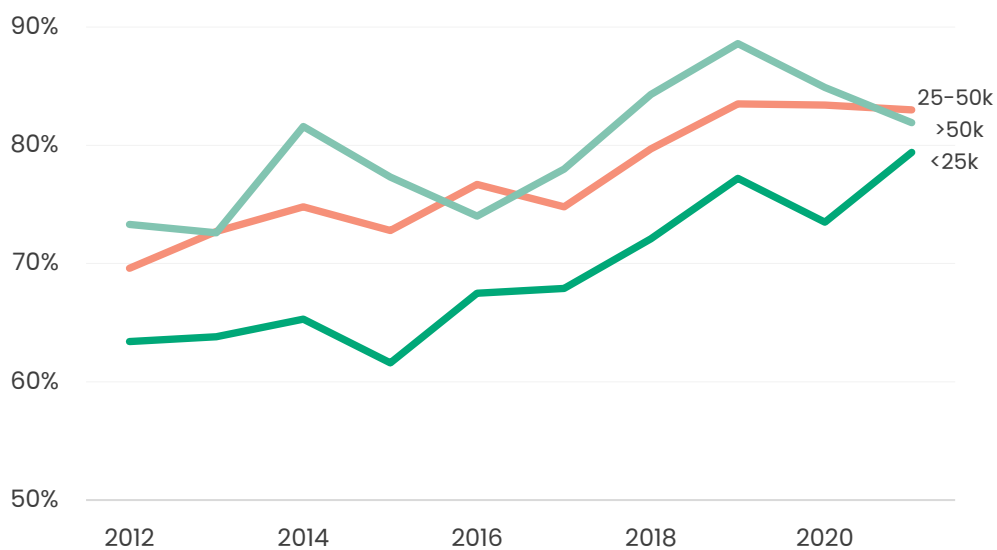


Figure 4: Levels of concern about climate change, by income bracket

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker



This concern was reflected in qualitative work undertaken by J.L. Partners for this paper. In focus groups in both the Red Wall seat of Redcar and in the Southern marginal of Southampton Itchen, there was near-unanimous agreement that climate change was something to worry about, even if people disagreed about how it should be tackled and who should pay.

Box 1: Excerpts from focus groups

How important is the environment? As a thing for you, for you personally?

“Well, personally, being a mother, I do fear what the world is coming to, what sort of future my children are going to have. And obviously the way things are going now it seems to be accelerating quite quickly... because it's hot. It's just too hot.” - Claire, health practitioner, Southampton Itchen

“Well, I think it's hugely important. If you asked me about what it's like, the ice caps are melting, I don't live in an icy country and so why does it matter? But as I've got older, I definitely think, yeah, more aware. Seems more important. And I'm more interested in what small changes each sort of individual family can make” - Holly, Child Services worker, Southampton Itchen

How much of a worry is climate change?

“Well I haven't got children so it's not a great worry for me personally, obviously I'm an older person and not going to be here forever, but there are the future generations, so I think we should be doing something for them. Think it is fairly serious.” - Sheila, pharmacist, Redcar

On face value, the electorate is more gung-ho than policymakers on the issue

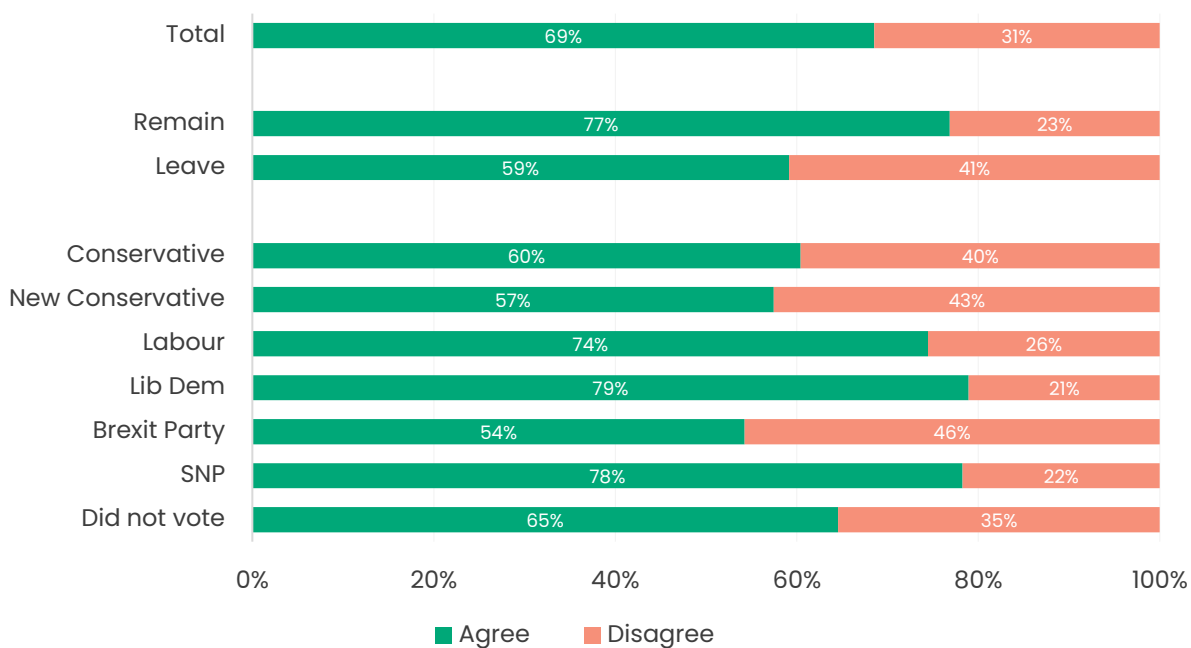
This rising level of support is reflected in attitudes towards climate change policy. In our large sample poll with J.L. Partners in late August, we asked a series of forced choice - or “wedge” - questions to determine voters' attitudes towards climate change. Excluding Don't Knows, we find that:

- Nearly seven in ten (69%) of all voters agree with the statement “Tackling climate change is one of the most important issues we face today” compared to less than one in three (31%) who believe “there are many more important priorities facing us today than tackling climate change”. There is very little variation between men and women, different age groups, social grade or between owners and renters. The only significant demographic difference is between degree holders (73%) and non-degree holders (64%), echoing the extent to which education is a broader dividing line within the electorate. In addition, around two thirds (63%) of people agree that climate change will seriously impact people in Britain in the next 5 years

- There is more variation among political groupings. Overall, 77% of Remain voters vs. 59% of Leave voters; 79% of 2019 Liberal Democrat voters, 78% of SNP voters and 74% of Labour voters vs. just 60% of Conservative voters, and only 57% of new Conservative voters in 2019. However, it is nonetheless true that every party's electoral coalition has a majority in favour of climate change being one of the most important issues we face today. This is particularly notable given the timing of the poll during the pandemic and associated downturn.

Figure 5: Agreement with the statement “Tackling climate change is one of the most important issues we face today”, by vote

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



- This follows through into climate radicalism. When asked whether the Government is being too bold or not bold enough on climate change, voters overwhelmingly support bolder action in principle. For example, 33% of voters (excluding Don't Knows) agree that “the Government is being too bold on its measures to tackle climate change” against just 67% who agree with the statement “the Government is not being bold enough on its measures to tackle climate change”. As shown in Figure 6 below, this is true among young and older voters, by tenure, social class and education level, although men are marginally more hesitant than women.
- Similarly, when asked explicitly whether “the Government should be doing more to tackle climate change, even if that is at the expense of other issues” or “the Government is focusing too much on tackling climate change at the expense of other issues”, we find that a similar share - 67% - want the

Government to do more, and only 33% want them to focus on other issues instead. In the same manner, there is no noticeable difference between different demographic groups on this question either.

- Again, we find more variation between different political groupings, with 77% of Remain voters and 76% of Labour voters wanting the Government to do more, compared to just 55% of Leave voters and 57% of Conservative voters, but there is nevertheless majority support across all political coalitions for greater action to tackle climate change. The only group of voters who believe the Government is “being too bold on its measures to tackle climate change” are Brexit Party voters, among whom 60% believe the Government is being too bold and 40% want bolder action.
- The implication of this is significant: in principle, climate change does not have the potential to become a significant dividing line in British politics, in the same way Brexit or immigration have done in the past. This would suggest that, on face value at least, the political value is from going further, not pulling back.

Box 2: Excerpts from focus groups

What do you think about that net zero aim target? Is that right? Is that the right target/wrong target?

“It is certainly the right target to have, but it’s whether it’s achievable or not, especially in that time frame.” - Darren, accountant, Southampton Itchen

“I think it's an optimistic time frame. Because I haven't yet lived for 30 years, I can't see huge changes being made. If I look at changes that have been made based around climate change, I don't think there have been many. I know technology is moving forward and things like that, but I can't imagine a huge, huge impact on the whole world.” - Chanel, Local Authority worker, Southampton Itchen

“Why the wait? Why is it taking so long? If it is so desperate, why are we waiting 30 years? What can we do quicker? It's kind of like an assignment, isn't it? If you get given a year to do an assignment, the majority of people are gonna say I'll do it the last week before I'm due back to school.” Tara, hairdresser, Redcar

“I think we need a global commitment. We need proof that everyone is involved and doing their bit, and not saying oh, we'll wait thirty years to do it, we'll just carry on for the next thirty years. We need a commitment from everyone at the same time, but they should start doing it now, instead of waiting.” John, electrician, Redcar

Figure 6: Support for the Government being too bold or not bold enough on climate change

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

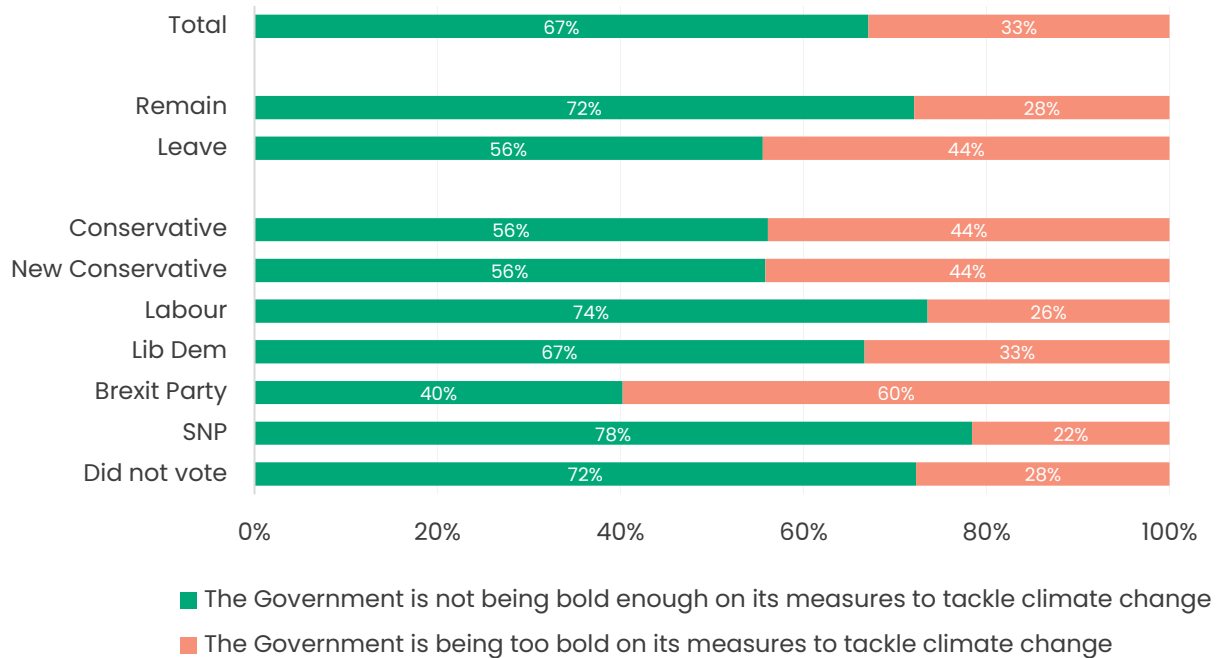
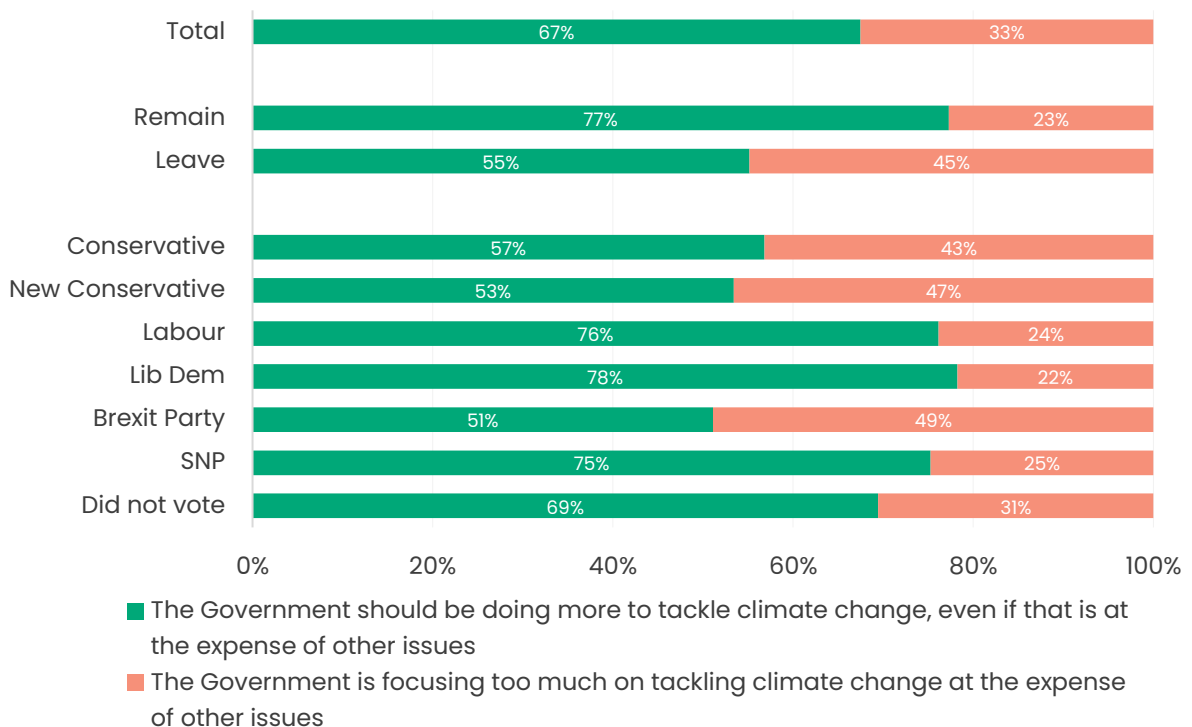


Figure 7: Support for whether the Government should be doing more to tackle climate change

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



But support begins to fall at the prospect of higher taxes and prices

One of the criticisms of much net zero polling is that it is largely abstract, conducted without reference to the prices and taxes that will be necessary to make meaningful change to emissions but which will undermine public support. So how soft or hard is public opinion, and how willing in principle are people to pay higher taxes or prices to deliver net zero?

When asked, we find that support drops markedly when people are asked whether they would personally be willing to pay higher taxes or prices for net zero. Excluding don't knows, we find that:

- Half (50%) of people say they would be “happy to pay more in taxes if it leads to less carbon being emitted into the atmosphere”. As you would expect, lower income groups such as renters (45%), C1C2s (46%), DE (45%) and non-degree holders (45%) - as well as low income voters generally (45%) - say they would not be willing to pay higher taxes to tackle climate change. The groups most willing to pay higher taxes include degree holders (56%) and high income voters (60%).
- People are less willing to pay higher prices for fuel and household items to support action on climate change than they are to pay taxes. 46% of voters overall, including 41% of non-degree holders and 38% of low income voters say they would be happy to pay higher prices for fuel and household items to reduce emissions. This compares to 53% for degree holders and 60% for high income voters respectively, reflecting the price sensitivity we would expect for high and low income groups.
- Politically, however, there is a sharp divide in willingness to pay higher taxes and prices to tackle climate change. Conservative voters, particularly those who voted for the party for the first time in 2019, are in general unwilling to pay more to reduce emissions: 44% of 2019 Conservatives would be willing to pay higher taxes and 41% would be willing to pay higher prices. This falls to 41% and 36% respectively among new Conservative voters. By comparison, 54% of 2019 Labour voters and 66% of Lib Dems would be happy to pay higher prices, rising to 58% and 68% respectively who would be willing to pay higher taxes.

Figure 8: Happiness to pay higher prices if it leads to lower emissions

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker

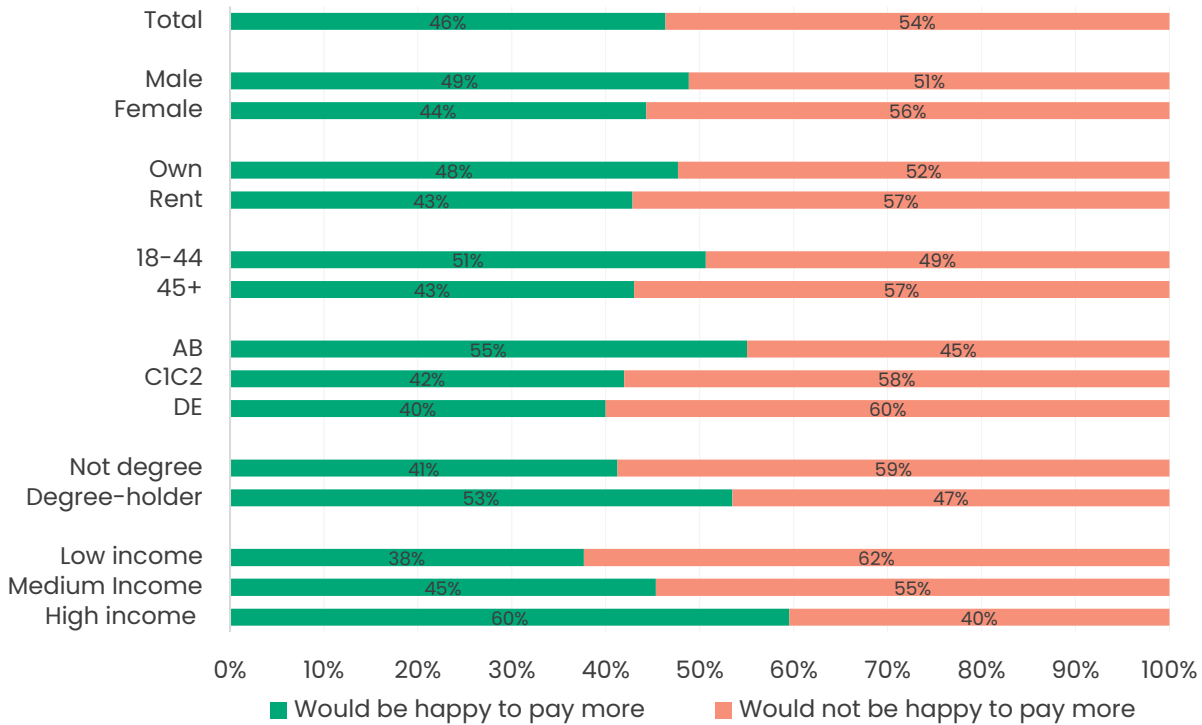
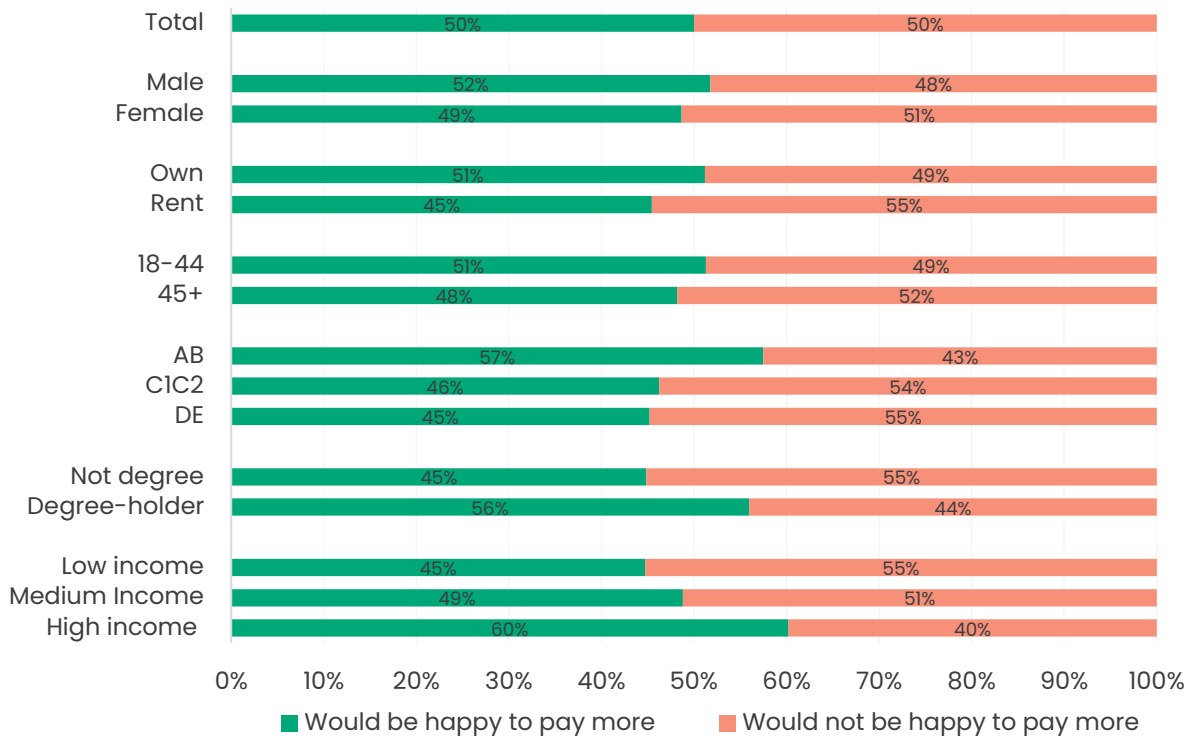


Figure 9: Happiness to pay higher taxes if it leads to lower emissions

Source: BEIS (2021), Public Attitudes Tracker



This was strongly reinforced by our focus groups. While people are supportive of net zero in principle, the practical reality of net zero makes them considerably more circumspect. We found, for example, that voters were resistant to being told to replace their boiler with a heat pump or buy an electric car because they felt they had been convinced by the Government to do the opposite in the past (in the case of combi-boilers and diesel cars). We heard that voters are nervous about the costs involved, which felt exorbitant and unrealistic. And we also heard that people were not yet confident in the products that they might need to switch to, fearing that EVs could not be charged easily and heat pumps offered less heating. This all suggests that net zero in practice may be much harder than in principle.

Box 3: Excerpts from focus groups

Okay, what about replacing your gas boiler with a hydrogen boiler or a heat pump?

“I just replaced the gas boiler, and its cost isn't it” Chanel, Local Authority worker, Southampton Itchen

“It'd be the cost issue for me” Darren, accountant, Southampton Itchen

How are we feeling about this net zero thing now?

“I'm willing to make changes, but I don't want to be forced to make certain changes. And I don't want to be impacted financially.” Claire, health practitioner, Southampton Itchen

How do you think it's going to affect you?

“We'll be taxed ridiculously. Personal tax, we're just going to be bled dry. We're being told to buy electric cars now, who can afford an electric car? I can't even envisage buying a new one. But if you bought one, you can guarantee ten, fifteen years down the line they'd be telling us “well, the electric cars now are worthless”. So you get sick of hearing “buy this car, buy that car”. I can't afford an electric car.” Mark, HGV driver, Redcar

In addition to cost, although 61% of voters agree that “setting international targets is a good way to tackle climate change”, people are quite sceptical of other countries' commitment to tackling the problem. A third of people (35%) agree with the statement “I trust other countries to do the right thing on climate change”, with China trusted by only 23% of voters and America only trusted by 27%. But around 69% of people agree that “if other countries do not sign up to reduce their CO² emissions the UK should take actions to reduce its emissions anyway”, suggesting that support for domestic climate action is not conditional on international agreement.

Indeed, of the 37% of people who do not trust other countries to do the right thing on climate change, 67% think that the UK should take action to reduce its CO² emissions anyway. Only 16% of this group think that the UK should not go ahead without commitments from other countries.

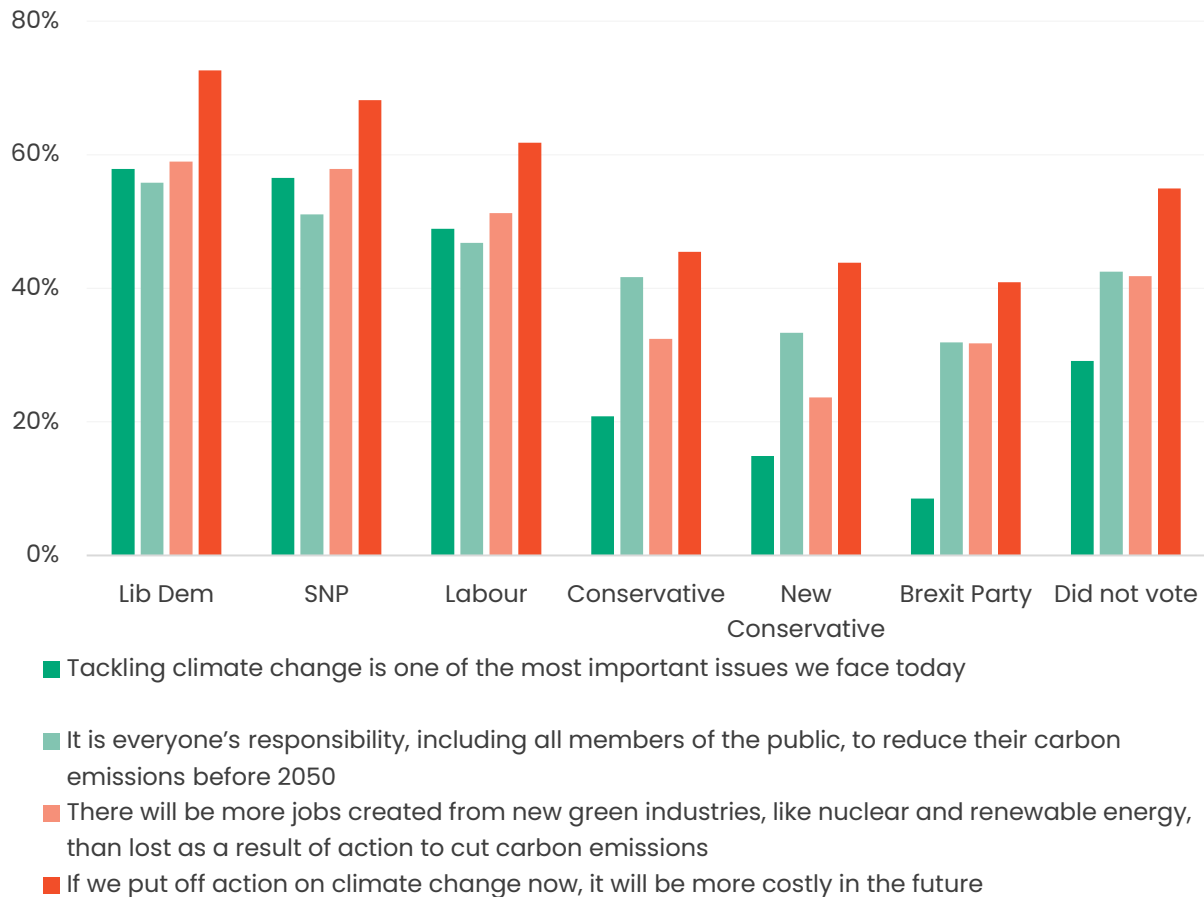
Despite this hesitation, people believe climate change is a burden that everyone must bear

While cost and tax implications impact upon support for climate action, people generally believe that tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility, and that doing so could yield considerable benefits, both in terms of short-term boosts to jobs and the long-term saving from acting early. Excluding Don't Knows, we find that:

- Well over two thirds of voters (73%), including 71% of Conservative voters and 67% of new Conservative voters in 2019 agree with the statement “It is everyone's responsibility, including all members of the public, to reduce their carbon emissions before 2050” versus just 27% who agree that “It is the responsibility of the biggest polluters, not all members of the public, to reduce carbon emissions before 2050”. Support for everyone taking responsibility rises among degree-holders and AB voters, and particularly among Remain voters and Liberal Democrat voters.
- Voters are optimistic about the potential upside benefits from net zero. There is also strong agreement with the idea that “there will be more jobs created from new green industries, like nuclear and renewable energy, than lost as a result of action to cut carbon emissions”, which is supported by 72% of all voters, compared to 28% who agree that “action to cut carbon emissions will result in more jobs lost than will be created in new green industries like nuclear and renewable energy”. While younger voters, graduates, AB voters and high income groups are most persuaded by the benefits of net zero jobs, 70% of non-degree holders, DE voters and low income voters agree that net zero will be jobs positive. Politically, Conservative voters are most pessimistic, with 66% agreeing, falling to 62% among new Conservative voters.
- An even higher share of voters believes that delay will lead to higher costs later down the road. 78% of all voters believe that “if we put off action on climate change now, it will be more costly in the future”, compared to just 22% who agree that “it will make no difference to future costs if we do not act on climate change now”. A fear of delay is shared by 73% of Conservative voters, including 72% of new Conservative voters. This is partly reflective of the Brexit divide, with Leave voters (71%) 13 points less likely than Remain voters (84%) to agree that delaying now will lead to higher costs later.

Figure 10: Net support for different wedge statements, by 2019 election vote

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Box 4: Excerpts from focus groups

If the average household might have to pay, let's say, you know, a few 100 pounds more in tax a year [to reach net zero] anyone here happy do that?

“If they give me a car, if they give me a boiler, I'd quite happily pay 300 pounds a year. But if I have to pay 300 pounds a year, and pay for a new car, and pay for a new boiler to meet those expectations, and I haven't got job security, then I can't afford to do that.” Claire, health practitioner, Southampton Itchen

“I think if there was a guarantee. So, if they said by 2050, we guarantee that this would be paid, we'd be at net zero. And we require you to do this, this and this. But there won't be a guarantee because the goalposts will move and I think people would be less willing to do anything more than like the little wins, I think, because people are doing those anyway. Do you know what I mean?” Chanel, Local Authority worker, Southampton Itchen.”

Where groups start to diverge over climate change principle

These wedge questions reveal a perhaps surprising truth: that climate change is not (or no longer) an issue that motivates some voters and not others. Voters of all ages, social backgrounds and political persuasions are broadly persuaded of the need to act, and the potential benefits from doing so.

This is a notable finding: while there are important differences between different voter groups, with lower income voters understandably more price sensitive and Conservative and Brexit-aligned voters more sceptical, there is clearly a broad coalition of voters willing to support action to tackle climate change. However while this may be true on the surface, there are important differences within these overarching coalitions. For example:

- While overall younger and older voters are broadly similar, there are important differences within different party coalitions. For example, younger Conservative voters are much more supportive of bolder action than older Conservative voters, with 18-24 year old Conservatives 16 points more likely to agree that the Government should be doing more than doing less (i.e. net support is +16%), compared to 4% net agreement among over 65s. This is inverted for Labour, where net support for more action to tackle climate change is 33% among 18-24 year old Labour voters, compared to 58% among over-65 year olds. The same pattern is visible on other questions.
- There is a noticeable gender gap in attitudes towards net zero. On the more generalised questions, women are consistently more likely to express no opinion. Excluding Don't Knows, women tend to be more concerned about the environment, more likely to say they have changed their behaviour to reduce their personal carbon emissions, and be much more critical of the Government's progress on tackling climate change. However, women are less willing than men to pay more in taxes and for fuel and household items even if it means lowering carbon emissions.
- London is the only region where people are more likely to say they would happily pay more for fuel and household items, reflecting the much lower levels of car ownership in the capital. However, people in Wales, Scotland and the West Midlands are more likely than those in the capital to say that tackling climate change is one of the most important issues we face today and to agree that if we put off action on climate change now it will be more costly in the future (perhaps reflecting exposure to the risks of climate change). The region least enthusiastic about net zero is the North East, although there is still strong agreement that tackling climate change is important, that taking action now is far less costly than doing nothing, and that more jobs will be created than lost in the economic transition.

Table 1: Net agreement with selected wedge statements, by region

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

	“Tackling climate change is one of the most important issues we face today”	“I would be happy to pay higher prices for fuel and household items if it leads to less carbon being emitted into the atmosphere”	“There will be more jobs created from new green industries, like nuclear and renewable energy, than lost as a result of action to cut carbon emissions”	“If we put off action on climate change now, it will be more costly in the future”
Wales	41.40%	-10.10%	34.90%	55.70%
Scotland	37.60%	-0.20%	31.30%	49.70%
West Midlands	34.40%	-1.10%	29.00%	49.40%
London	33.60%	2.90%	33.90%	41.10%
South East	31.60%	-3.90%	31.70%	48.70%
East	35.20%	-11.20%	28.80%	48.40%
South West	31.50%	-5.10%	29.80%	44.20%
North West	28.70%	-11.00%	31.60%	48.30%
East Midlands	27.40%	-3.20%	32.00%	40.70%
Yorkshire & Humber	29.40%	-12.70%	30.40%	42.50%
North East	22.20%	-14.40%	27.00%	39.10%

Figure 11: Criticism of the Government's record on tackling climate change, by age and 2019 vote

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

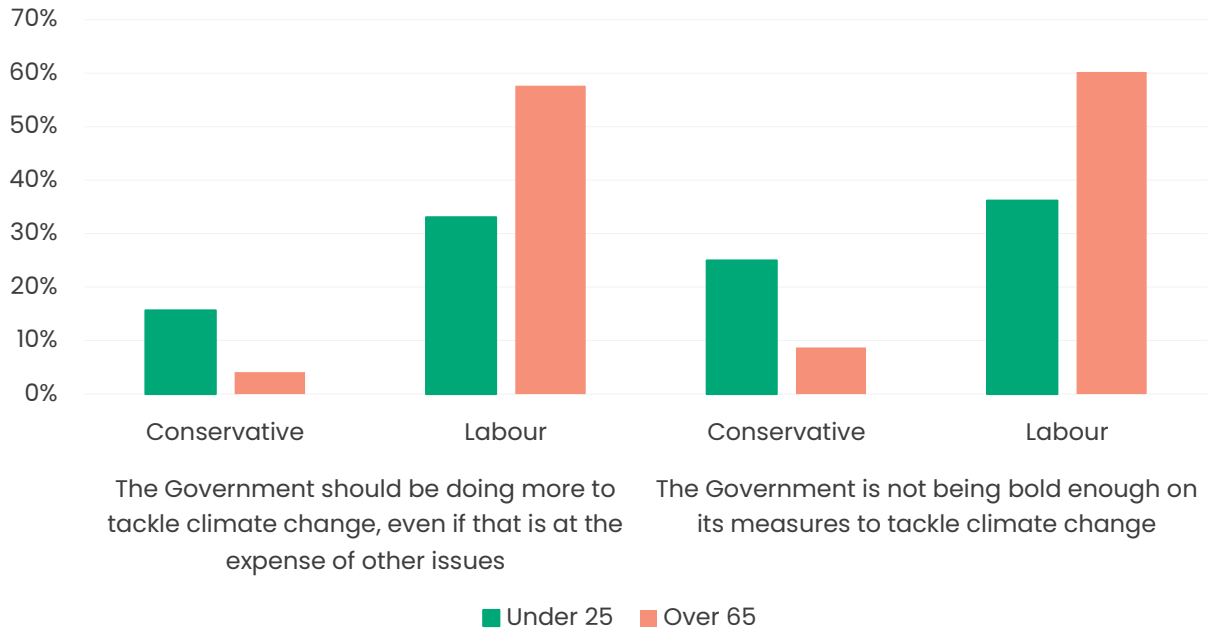
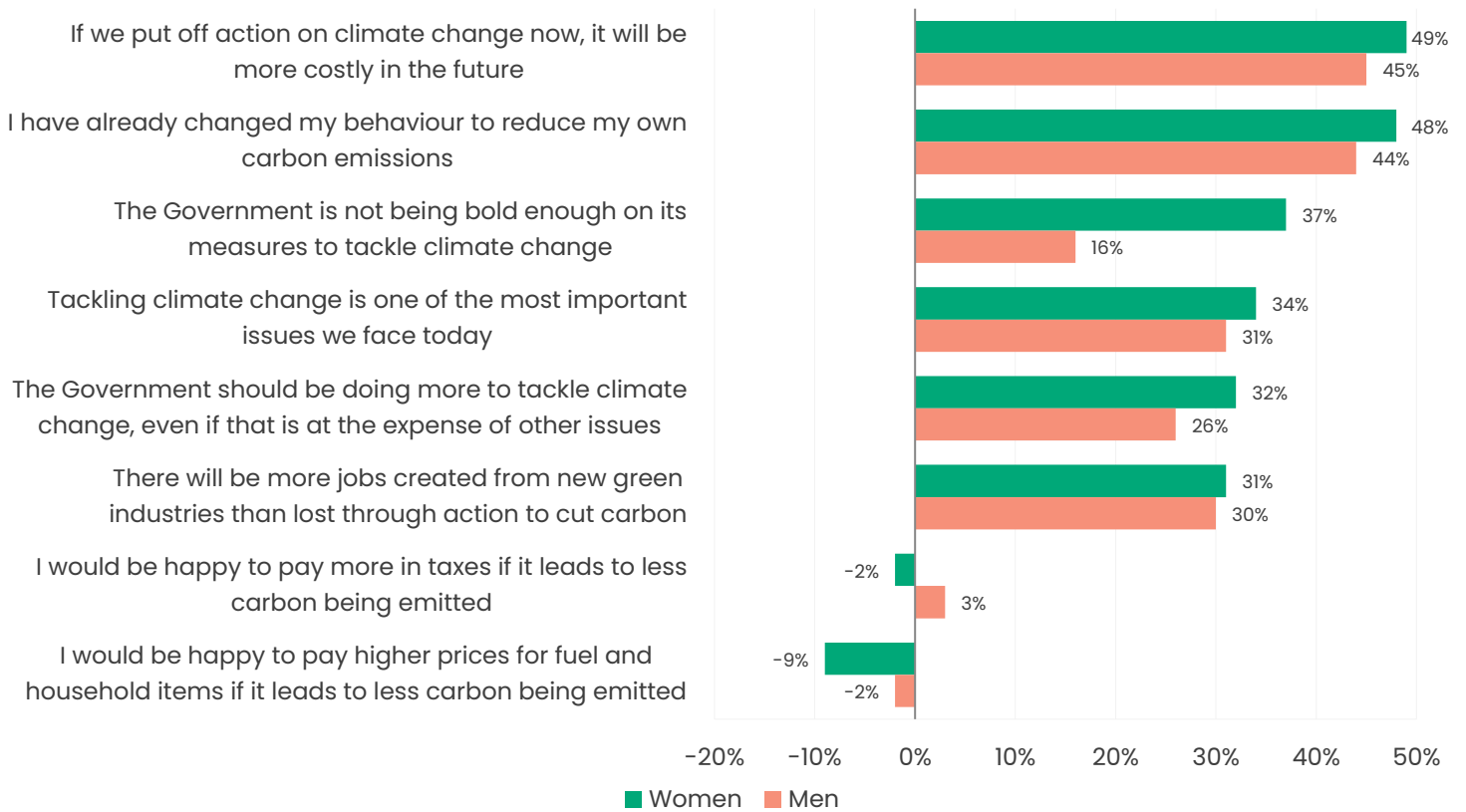


Figure 12: Attitudes towards net zero, by gender

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



On the ground

Qualitative insights from Redcar and Southampton Itchen





Alongside the polling for this report, we commissioned J.L. Partners to conduct two focus groups in Redcar and Southampton Itchen respectively to explore people's attitudes towards net zero.

These groups involved people aged 25-65 years old, who were in work, within C1C2D social grades. We targeted voters who had supported the Labour Party or Conservative Party in 2019 but were not undecided. They are summarised below.

People wanted to help on the environment – largely – but it was not something people think about every day

All but one respondent across the two groups thought the environment was in genuine trouble, and that we should work to improve it. Those who cared most tended to talk about it in generational terms – “as mothers” and as parents because of the world they would be passing onto their children. All apart from one in Redcar agreed it was a worthwhile aim, and all respondents did so in Southampton too.

But, despite people saying it “affects everything” and was very important on this superficial level, it was not something that people admitted to being in the front of their mind, or that they thought about daily. This lack of urgency underpinned people's later reluctance to make changes to their lives in both groups.

Claire, in Southampton Itchen, said: “I do fear what the world is coming to and what sort of future my children will have”, while Holly in the same group said: “I believe Climate change is happening, but just not convinced what the issues are causing it.” Meanwhile, in Redcar, Sheila said: “I haven't got children so it's not a worry for me” and Mark cast a more sceptical note: “It's going to cost billions and billions and billions of pounds which we haven't got. And there are other things which are more important to worry about.”

Of all the barriers discussed, cost was the major one and took enthusiasm away

Awareness of net zero itself and what it meant was mixed, but all understood that environmental measures were being discussed and were likely to come in. All expected to pay more in tax, and in higher prices, if net zero were to be achieved. People spontaneously mentioned electric cars and boiler replacements as some of the most likely places that changes would come – and for those that had not realised this, the negativity was compounded by not having thought about it before.

Most were resigned but frustrated at having to pay more tax, and spoke about how measures to reach Net Zero would hit the “people in the middle” like them, while the very richest and poorest had protection. In Redcar, affordability was a hard limit for

many, while people in Southampton tended to be more relaxed about their own ability to pay more, but expressed concern for those people who could not afford such a transition.

“They [taxes] will definitely go up, said Claire in Southampton Itchen, who also worried: “what are they going to do to support people to hit that target? I can’t afford an electric car right now”. In the same group, Holly said “I think the average person will be hit the hardest” and Chanelle said “I think there will be more unemployment [because of the Net Zero target]”.

In Redcar, cost was strongly linked to cost of living: “Some people are on the brink as it is and can’t even afford a bus”, said Tara, while Martin said: “You’re going to see it in your food bills, your fuel costs, your housing costs and your taxes”. There was also fear of tax rises: “We will be taxed ridiculously, personal tax- we will be bled dry”, said Mark. The gap between supporting net zero in principle and in practice was captured by Tara: “You can be happy enough to do it but can’t afford to go through with it”

A broadly abstract view of the consequences of climate change meant that people did not feel a pressing need to make changes to their own lives

Compared to the NHS or social care, where people talk enthusiastically about paying more if it is needed, the environment and climate did not feel tangible. In Redcar especially, people did not draw a line between climate change and recent events. This applied to the fires in Greece (which almost all had heard about) which people were more likely to put down to arson than a changing climate, as well as flooding local to the area over the winter (which was put down to poor building developments rather than a changing climate). In Southampton, the link was clearer, and people talked about everyday changes to the weather, swaying them to believing in climate change (especially around wetter summers – “there are no hosepipe bans anymore”).

But even here, it did not feel like a pressing threat to their everyday lives, and was often framed in terms of what could happen. Mixed in with distrust of a “lecturing” traditional media in both groups – which for one respondent in Redcar had pushed them to doubt the level of threat posed by climate change – and it was not a tangible or relatable concern for many people. This suggests that the consequences need to be more real and more relatable – international events are not going to cut it – for people to feel like they need to take action.

In Redcar, this mentality was partly driven by a feeling that net zero is being presented as a *fait accompli*. One participant, Mark, said: “Everything is dictated, there is nobody on the news in the opposition, it’s always negative news on the

environment. You can't just put propaganda and have no alternative opinion... Can anyone say they've heard someone talking in the opposite of the environment?... If you voice your opinion against them, you're patted down like a little man. When asked "Has the environment become a bigger thing in the last few years?", John replied: "That's all we've been told about on the news".

A feeling that other countries and organisations are not doing enough was also a major de-motivating factor

People instantly jumped to naming other countries – especially China and India – who were not doing their bit on carbon emissions, and this clouded the debate. There was very high awareness of the share of emissions that the UK is responsible for (with some even being able to give the figure of 1%) and a sense that China in particular emits much more. "China is worse than all Western countries put together", said John in Redcar, before claiming that "China are opening coal fired mines and don't care about the UK". In Southampton, Darren said, "No matter what we do as a country, there are other countries heavily polluting so does it matter what we do", while Holly said: "I'm more than happy to make my own changes, but there's a definitely bigger source to it [pollution]".

This was frustrating and demotivating for these respondents, especially in Redcar. The prospect of a genuine global agreement has the potential to deepen support for net zero, with this acting as a potential enabler many felt they needed to be convinced to take action themselves and to feel that their own actions would make a difference. "We can only do what we're asked in this country and hope everyone follows through", said Darren in Southampton Itchen.

On the more positive side, largely speaking it did not halt any superficial support to improve the environment, with most respondents agreeing that small action here in the UK was better than nothing. Few, however, thought the UK could credibly set an example for the rest of the world, as countries like China "did not care" about the "speck" that is the UK. Big business also had a role to play, with one subject consistently mentioned being packaging of supermarket goods, which feels like waste and bad for the environment, with companies not taking action to improve it. In the words of one respondent, "the polluters should be paying". There was little optimism about COP26, which was dismissed as an opportunity for politicians to "fly around" and "parade their wives and families on the beach". This suggests that, if COP26 is successful, it will be a golden opportunity to set a narrative of global agreement, leading to greater national and individual action."

People felt more and more like the government's tone was punitive, singling them out when others should also be paying

The policies tested, as well as the spectre of taxes and higher prices, made people feel like they were being singled out for blame. “We work hard for nice things”, said one respondent when confronted with the prospect of paying more for meat or cars. Even when people were willing to accept that the average person needed to play a part, they felt like this was foisting everything onto people who had worked hard and paid into the system when business, the biggest polluters, and the government themselves were not stepping up. It was not that people expected government and business to do all the work, but people did want a different tone from the government and an expectation for them to “meet us in the middle”. There was also concern about ulterior motive and suspicion too – e.g. the feeling that batteries for electric cars are being made in China, and are simply damaging the environment there instead. “Somebody’s going to profit from [achieving net zero]”, said Claire in Southampton Itchen.

As Martin in Redcar said, “People who are doing well will be fine, people who are doing comfortably will find it more difficult but people who are below what wages can afford, what will they do?”. Or as Chantelle put it in Southampton Itchen: “I think there are not many pleasures left in this life and eating steak is one of them, I will not be told I can’t do it”. Claire agreed: “I’m willing to make changes but I don’t want to be forced to make certain changes and be impacted financially... We don’t get to make choices but we have to pay for them”, adding: “I worked hard, I bought my house, I will run it the way I want”.

Experience of previous policies and government positions saps trust in measures to get to net zero

People regularly cited past examples of government pledges that were then reversed, and this again acted as a de-motivating factor in taking action: “how do we know that they won’t change position again?”. One example was the previous scrappage scheme for diesel cars. In Southampton, the example of cavity wall insulation was given, whereby someone had taken government funding for it, but it had to be reversed due to it causing major damp issues. Someone else cited the general theme of U-turns, referencing the pandemic. This suggests that relying on the government as the main channel of communication on net zero is not fruitful, and other voices do need to be used and harnessed to stress the importance of even the simplest measures.

“It’s drummed into us to buy electric cars, it’s not long since we were told to buy diesel cars”, said Jeannette, Redcar. Mark, in Redcar, echoed this: “if you bought one [electric car] you can guarantee someone will say 10, 15 years down the line then saying electric cars aren’t right”. Similar feelings were present in Southampton: “You

try to make a more sustainable way of heating your house, then you get told you're making it worse", said Claire.

This translated into scepticism about a number of policies. For example:

- Electric cars: people are not opposed to the idea of electric cars in principle, but for most the prospect seems impossible to fathom at this point of time. People cited a lack of charging points, possible congestion on the roads to queue for charging points, and above all the up-front cost of the car being very high. Even tax breaks for electric cars "felt too good to be true", with a general view that if everyone was using electric cars, the tax would probably go up rather than down.
- Boiler replacements: this was seen as an extremely high-cost measure that was out of reach for most for affordability reasons. There was also concern in Southampton about the changes to the home that would be required. There was some mention that hydrogen could be "flammable" or "dangerous". Even the idea of having this provided for by the government generated scepticism, with one lady talking about a cavity wall insulation grant she received but then backfired due to the levels of damp it produced.
- Getting public transport instead of driving: this was unrealistic for people, as it felt like bus routes and public transport availability had gotten worse in recent years rather than improved so it was not a viable option. Others were defensive of their right to drive a car for the convenience and even sense of ownership that they had after having earned to buy their own vehicle.
- VAT hike on some goods: This, again, fell into the realm of seeming like punishment. The goods described (meat and petrol) felt like essentials people needed every day rather than luxury items, so a tax like this would not deter them but just end up in them having to pay more. There was also residual negativity towards the idea of VAT itself being the thing to be raised, as it felt like a tax by stealth that could not be clearly seen or tracked by the public
- Landlords having to install insulation/boilers before selling: Though this did not necessarily personally grate with respondents, it was still received very negatively, with people saying it would simply stop people moving and would be "suicidal"

However, some policies were responded to positively:

- Flight taxes: though people did not want to see their own annual holiday hit, the idea of higher taxes on flights did not prompt anger and some said that it probably would be fair to tackle business travel on this basis. People also observed the pandemic had proven that high amounts of business foreign

travel was not necessary. “The pandemic has proven you don’t need to fly for business meetings”, said Sheila, Redcar.

- Scrappage scheme for petrol cars: this was seen as sensible and positive, though the up-front price of an electric car was still a problem for most.
- Import taxes: this was seen as fairer, and as something that would help to deal with larger polluters. If there were good British alternatives available, this also had a knock-on effect of people thinking it would be good for those British businesses and jobs. But people in Southampton warned that it could lead to higher prices.
- Lower VAT on more environmentally friendly products: asked in isolation, people were supportive of this, but enthusiasm fell away if in the context of a VAT rise on more polluting products (which, as above, were viewed as essentials). People in Southampton actually assumed the prices of environmentally-friendly goods would be more expensive, in the same way that organic products are due to their desirability.
- Not being able to buy plastic containers: people were keen to do this, as long as safe alternatives were available. “I would love to stop seeing plastic packaging”, said Holly, Southampton Itchen.

And most of all... jobs

This was a huge positive, especially in Redcar, with people tracing the move locally from steel to new industries, such as biofuel, carbon capture and a hydrogen plant. But often this had to be prompted, or arose as a broader discussion about the local area. People are not currently making the link between net zero and the benefits of local jobs. When it was linked to net zero by the moderator, even the most critical respondent in the Redcar group (who doubted the very concept of climate change) said this was a clear positive that had improved the area and the local economy - “it’s bringing jobs to the area to be fair”. The link also did not exist in Southampton, where people could not name any local ‘green jobs’ or industries.

This was clear from various statements in both groups. For example, Rich in Southampton said: “You’re going to lose certain jobs but balance it out with new jobs”. In Redcar, Martin said: “We are benefitting now economically with green energy as they are opening the biofuel plants” and Mark accepted that “it is bringing jobs by building a hydrogen plant by sucking the crap out of the air and putting it under the sea”. This was seen as the result of political leadership: “The local mayor has done a lot to bring jobs back here”, said Jeannette.

One way to enable more support for net zero was for voters to have a sense of a plan and a “roadmap”. People in Southampton said they did not feel engaged in the

process of getting to net zero, and wanted updates – even if these goals had fallen short, people felt they would be more willing to make sacrifices. One respondent talked about the need for a Covid-style “roadmap” to make it clearer what was needed and what they needed to do themselves. “Tell us how it’s going to be and what you expect us to do”, said Claire in Southampton Itchen. However, a note of caution is needed here: it may be that engagement levels in net zero are too low for there to be benefits to a ‘roadmap’, despite what people say about their preferences.

Differences between the two locations: affluence and NIMBYism

Affluence was more of an absolute limit on enthusiasm for net zero policies in Redcar – for many of these respondents, it felt like spending more for a new boiler, or needing to pay more in taxes, just wouldn’t be possible with their current incomes. In Southampton, though affordability remained a concern, this was less of an absolute limit and more of a frustration. In this group, hostility towards net zero tended to focus on the very act of being told to pay more (especially in the context of already having had the government dictate their lives during the pandemic) and a trace of NIMBYism. For example, people spoke about not wanting their house to be re-developed (“I like the way my house looks”), not wanting big changes to take place from heat pumps being installed, and not liking the “look” of electric cars. Even not rinsing plates (which most were fine with in Redcar) was met with a sniff and a shake of the head from a couple of Southampton residents.


Despite hostility to many of the policies, the overall reaction to the idea of them being implemented was one of weary resignation rather than strong protest – and there appears to be no real constituency for an anti-environment campaign or party. Asked how they would respond if these policies did come into practice, there was clear frustration (especially in the context of the government having already imposed on people during lockdowns) but ultimately a weary sense of resignation rather than fury. Respondents spoke about previous policies that they were concerned about but that had now become an accepted part of life (e.g. the plastic bags charge), suggesting a potential way through for some of the smaller measures.

There is no real space for an ‘anti-net zero’ political offering (especially in Southampton, the idea of a party not taking the climate seriously switched them off). If they managed to make clear they were not ‘anti-environment’ then a new party on the right could make hay of the issue in Redcar, and an opportunistic Labour and Lib Dem Party could clearly galvanise support against the Government’s approach. But overall, the social desirability effect of supporting the environment, and being seen to support the environment, was not only acting as a political buffer for the Conservatives but was also a driver of behavioural change itself. As Chantelle in Southampton said: “None of us can directly oppose so just get on with it”, although with the caveat: “You don’t mind paying slightly extra for small changes but not massive tax hikes”. In Redcar, Jeanette said: “It’s all about education... I was educated about it and now I’m happy to do it” [in regards to sorting the rubbish into recycling and gardening]”.

When the rubber hits the road

Putting net zero policies to the test





There is a big difference between being concerned about climate change and being willing to accept the policies necessary to achieve net zero, especially at a time when the cost of living is rising. The previous chapter demonstrated that while concern about climate change and support for bolder action from the government enjoys strong support from ~70% of voters, this falls to around 50% when people are confronted by the prospect of higher taxes or prices. This is a significant fall, but nevertheless a relatively high proportion to be supporting tax rises at all.

In this chapter, we go one step further and test a range of nine specific policies with our large sample of voters. In doing so, we not only tested headline levels of support, but we also tested support with the cost of the policy attached, as well as how effective respondents believed each policy to be in reducing emissions, and when such a policy should be introduced. The purpose was to generate a suite of responses that not only tested support in the abstract but also tested support *when costed*, the perceived *likely impact* and the *relative urgency* of each policy.

We combine these scores into a *Net Zero Index* which estimates the relative political saleability of each policy. This allows us to generate a much more rounded understanding of public support for different policies, and to explore which policies are most likely to alienate specific voter groups once implemented. The policies that we tested in this section of the survey were as follows. They were costed based on available information and Onward's own analysis of the likely tax burden or additional cost, with the cost explained in a way that was intended to be as meaningful to voters as possible (the basis for cost estimates is available at Annex A).

Table 2: Policies tested with their associated cost estimates*Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis*

Proposed Policy	Cost
Introduce a government scrappage scheme that gives people a payment for trading in their older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle.	£20.48 per taxpayer, per year
Use taxes to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station.	£1.94 per taxpayer, per year
Charge an extra tax for each additional international flight you take each year.	£44.26 per passenger, per flight
Change taxes so that products and services that generate a lot of CO ² in their production, like meat, plastics and petrol, cost more than those that generate less CO ² .	£6.37 per weekly household shop
Offer a government payment to every household who replaces their old boilers with a new green alternative, such as a heat pump or hydrogen boiler.	£50.07 per taxpayer, per year
Introduce a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating.	£27.85 per household, per year
Require landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house.	£16,700 per house sale
Make it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, like trains and buses, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles like petrol cars and airplanes.	£5 per household, per week
Make every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households.	£8,000 per household affected

The results should give policymakers confidence that the public are genuinely - and not just superficially - supportive of taking action to tackle climate change. However they also reveal a wide degree of variation in support for different policies, and much sharper dividing lines between groups than we have seen in the previous chapter.

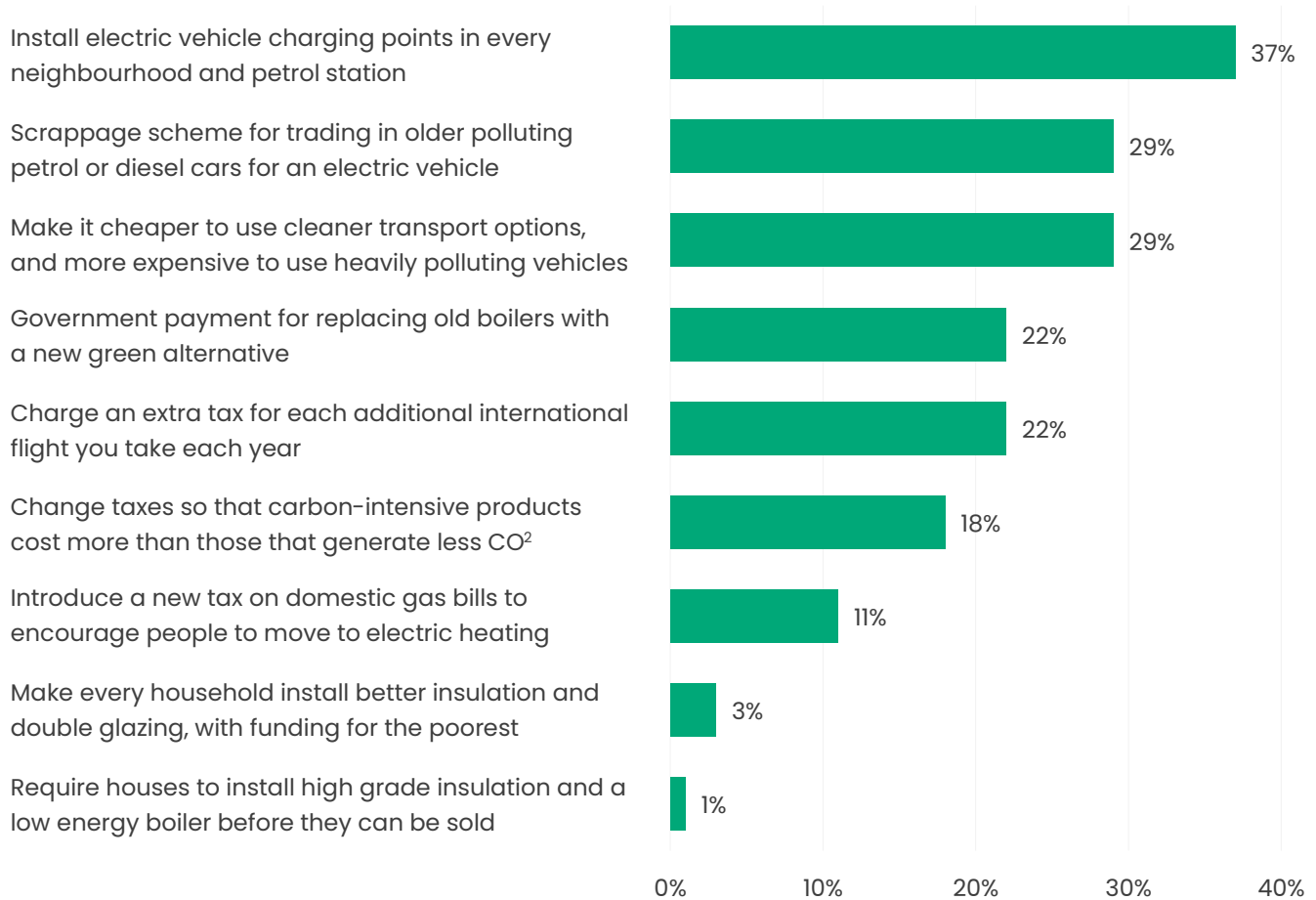
Net support for every policy is positive, although some are more evenly balanced

First, and most importantly, there is broad support for every policy we tested. Using our Net Zero Index, taking into account respondent's perceptions of impact, sense of urgency and the estimated cost, we find that every policy enjoys net positive support. However, we can quickly identify three categories of policy.

- It is clear that policies to decarbonise transport are the most popular category of policies. The top three policies using the Net Zero Index are all transport-related. Net support for using taxation to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station is +37%, while, in net terms, 29% of people support introducing a government scrappage scheme that gives people a payment for trading in their older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle, and the same share (29%) favour making it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, like trains and buses, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles like petrol cars and airplanes.
- People are less keen on the government policies that require changes to their homes. The two policies with the lowest overall support are, first, making every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households (net support of +3%) and requiring landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house (+1%). Both are within the margin of error. These were also easily the most expensive policies for households and individuals that we tested.
- In between these two poles are a series of incentives for behaviour change. These include introducing a new tax on gas bills to encourage more people to move to electric heating (+11%), subsidies for new heat pumps (+22%), additional taxes for frequent fliers (+22%), and taxes on meat, petrol and other carbon intensive products (+18%). All of these policies enjoy considerable net support. This suggests that Government subsidies and vouchers to change behaviour may be popular, even if they target activity with taxes and higher prices.

Figure 13: Net support for each policy on our Net Zero Index

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Note: Respondents were asked for a score ranging from 0 to 10. We classified support for a policy as a score greater than 6, and opposition as a score lower than 4. We then calculated net support by looking at the proportion of people who supported versus opposed each policy.

Demographic breakdown of net zero policies

As we revealed in Chapter 1, there is now very little to divide different age cohorts on climate policy, and within the two main parties older and younger voters respond very differently to questions about climate policy. This suggests that age is much less important than usually thought of within climate policy. When each of the specific policies listed above is tested by age, the picture becomes even more complicated still.

Age and gender

- The age profile of different policies follows a broadly similar pattern, in which voters aged 25-44 are the most supportive of each policy, with voters aged 24 or less tending to be less supportive and support plateauing after the age of 45 years old. On three policies relating to home ownership - adding a new tax to domestic gas bills, requiring landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler, and making every homeowner install insulation and double glazing, older generations are more likely to be opposed than supportive in net terms.
- In terms of rank order, the policy preferences of over-65s broadly match those of under-25s. Using taxes to fund the installation of more EV charging points in every neighbourhood is the most popular policy, and requiring landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house is the least popular policy option.
- However, as you can see from Figure 14 below, the range of views is much greater among older groups, starting at a low of -16% for the requirement to install insulation and new boilers, and rising to +38% for more EV charging points. Young people are strongly in favour of every policy, and to roughly the same extent. Among 18-24 year-olds, net support ranges from +12% to +32%. This means that older people are simultaneously more likely to be supportive of some policies (like the proliferation of electric vehicles) and more sceptical of other policies (mostly related to installing insulation and a new boiler).
- We also find that net favourability towards decarbonisation policies on our index is generally higher among men. This gap ranges from 2 percentage points for more funding for EV charging points through taxation to a 10-point gap for requiring homeowners to install better insulation and a low energy boiler before they can sell their house. It is on the two policies relating to renovating existing homes that female voters are most resistant, while men are supportive of every policy overall.

Figure 14: Net support for policies on Onward's Net Zero Index, by age

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

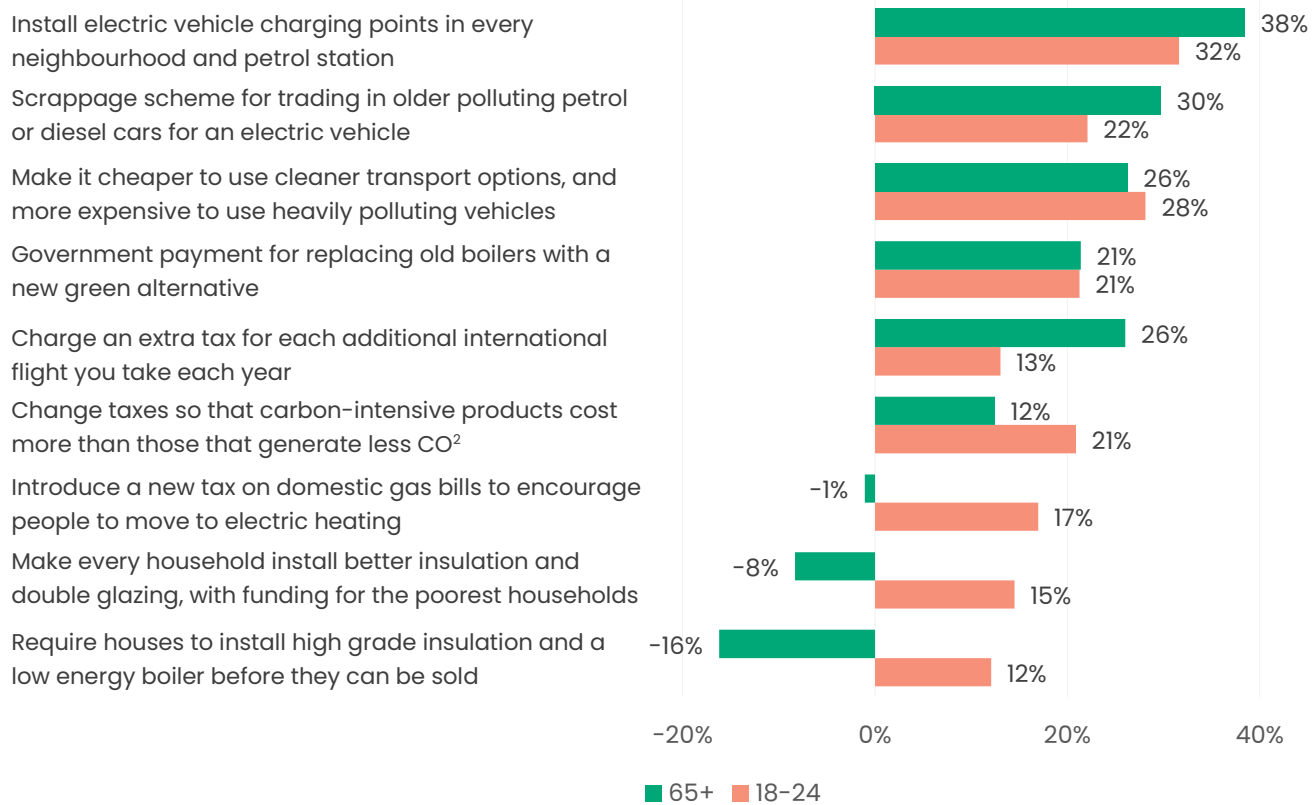
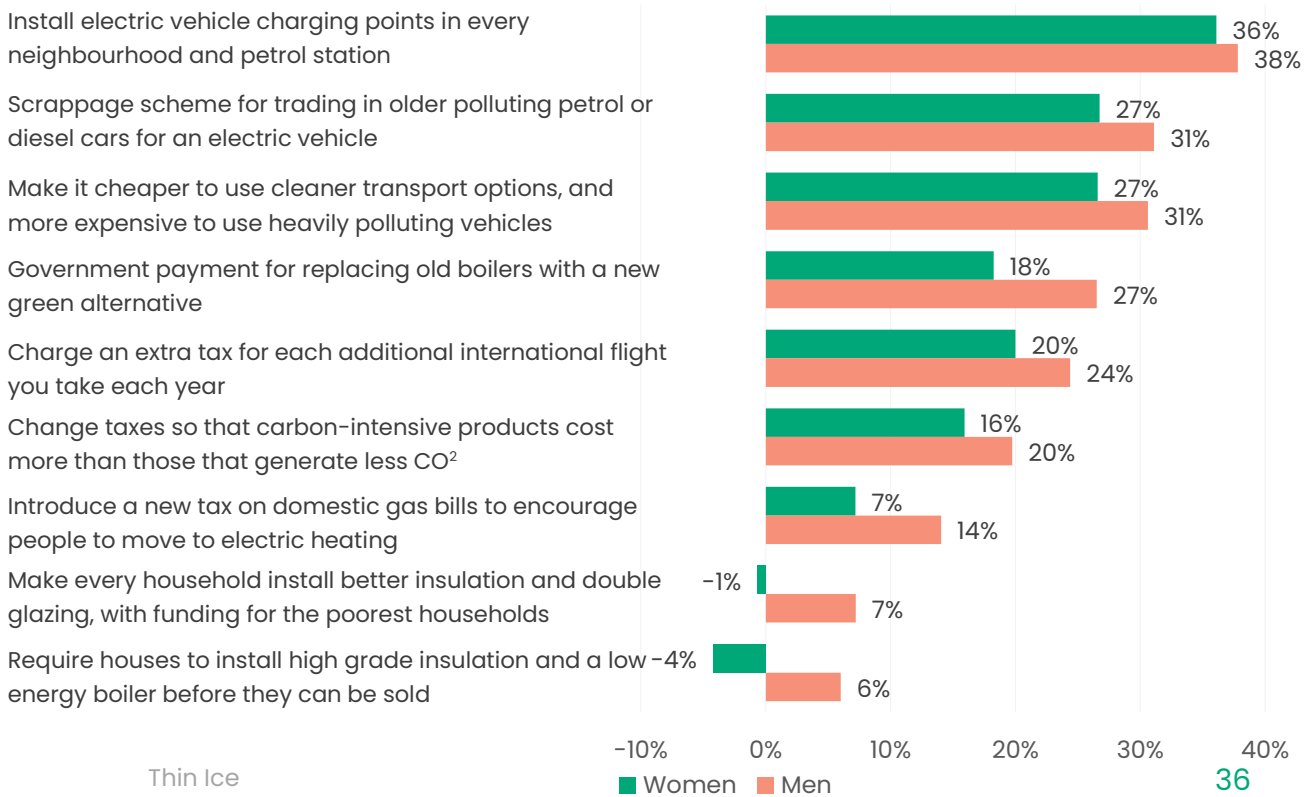


Figure 15: Net support for policies on Onward's Net Zero Index, by gender

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

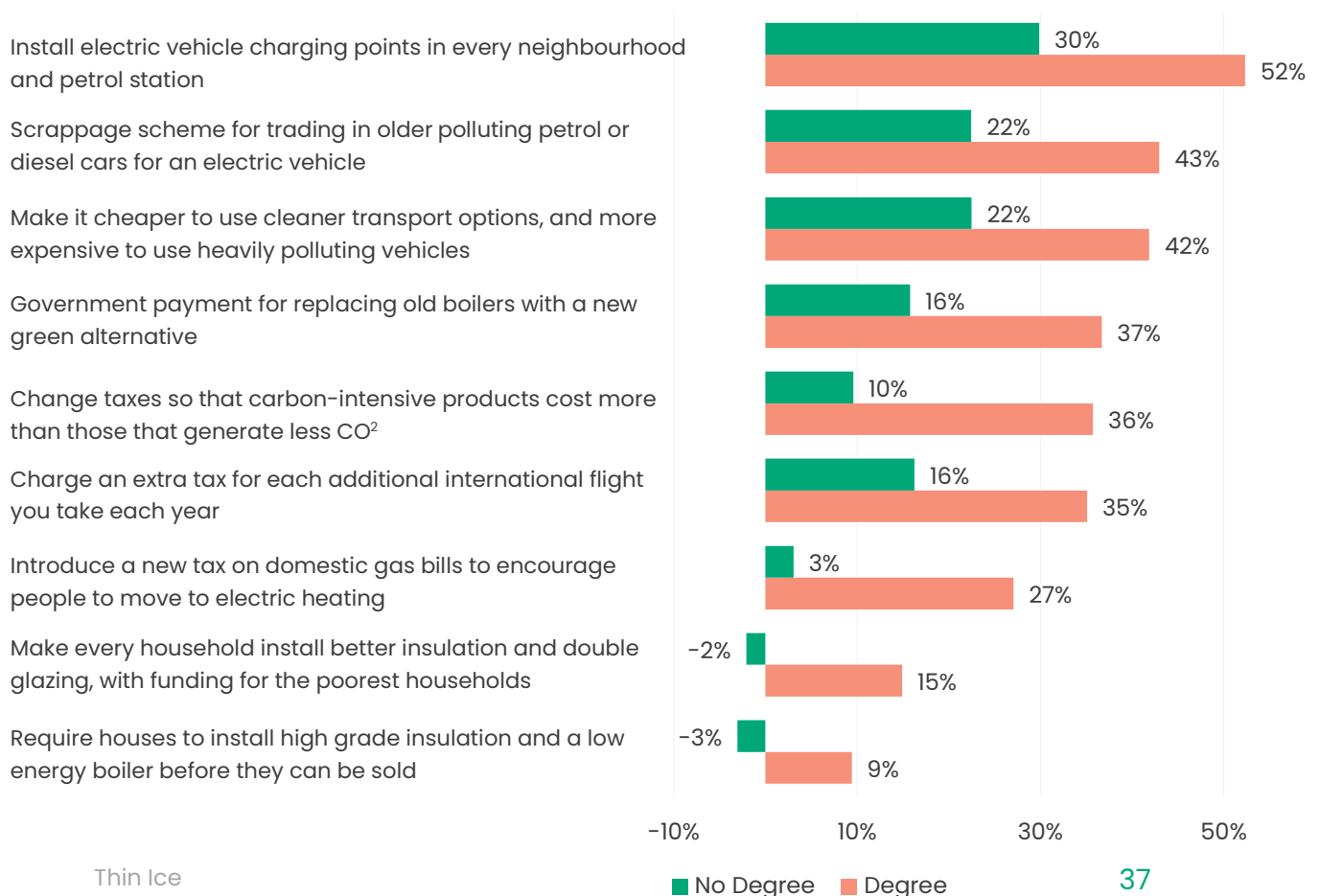


Occupation, income and education

- Those with degrees are generally far keener to take action to tackle climate change. Looking at the Index below, we can see that there is net support from those with degrees for every policy tested, and that they are also much more supportive than those without degrees. On average, net support among degree-holders is typically 20 points higher than those without degrees across each of the policies tested.
- However, there is considerable variation between different policies. For example, the difference in support between those with degrees and those without ranges from 12 points on the issue of requiring landlords to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house, to 26 points on the idea of a tax on carbon-intensive products. It is again on the two policies requiring households to invest in home insulation and low-carbon heating that there is a divide, with non-degree holders more likely to oppose this than support it.

Figure 16: Net support for net zero policies according to our index, for those with and without degrees

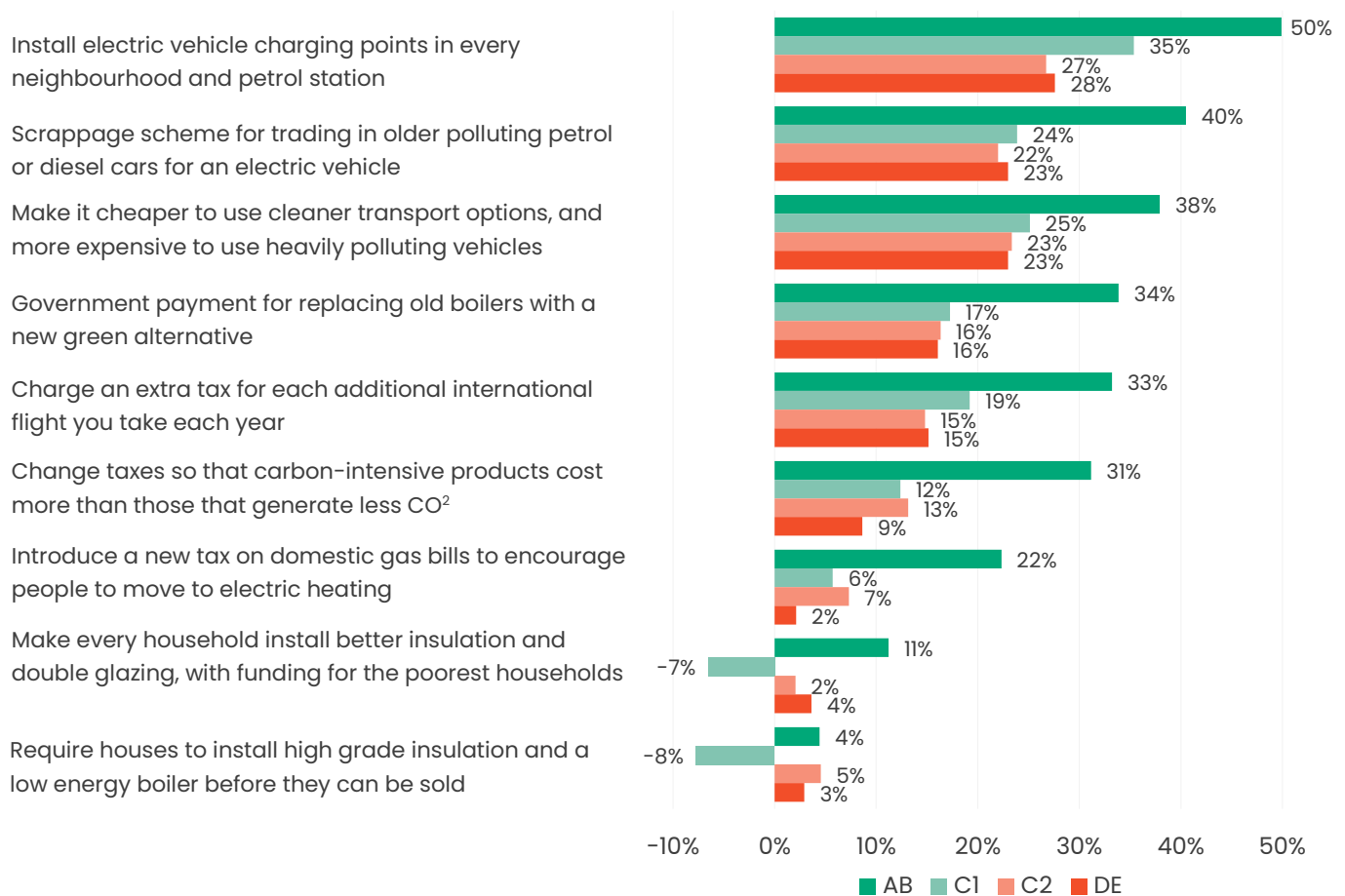
Source: J.L. Partners (11 – 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



- But there is no straightforward or linear class divide. The defining pattern by occupation is for AB voters to be overwhelmingly positive towards each policy idea and all other groups to be slightly more hesitant. The gap between AB and the rest of the country is largest for using taxes to fund more EV charging points and taxing products that generate a lot of CO² in their production, where net support is around 13 points higher than average for both. The only group who are net opposed to any policy is C1 voters in relation to retrofitting homes with better insulation and new boilers. Even among homeowners, AB workers are +4% net in favour, but every other group is net opposed: -14%, -1%, and -6% for C1, C2 and DE respectively.

Figure 17: Net support for net zero policies according to our index, by occupational class

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



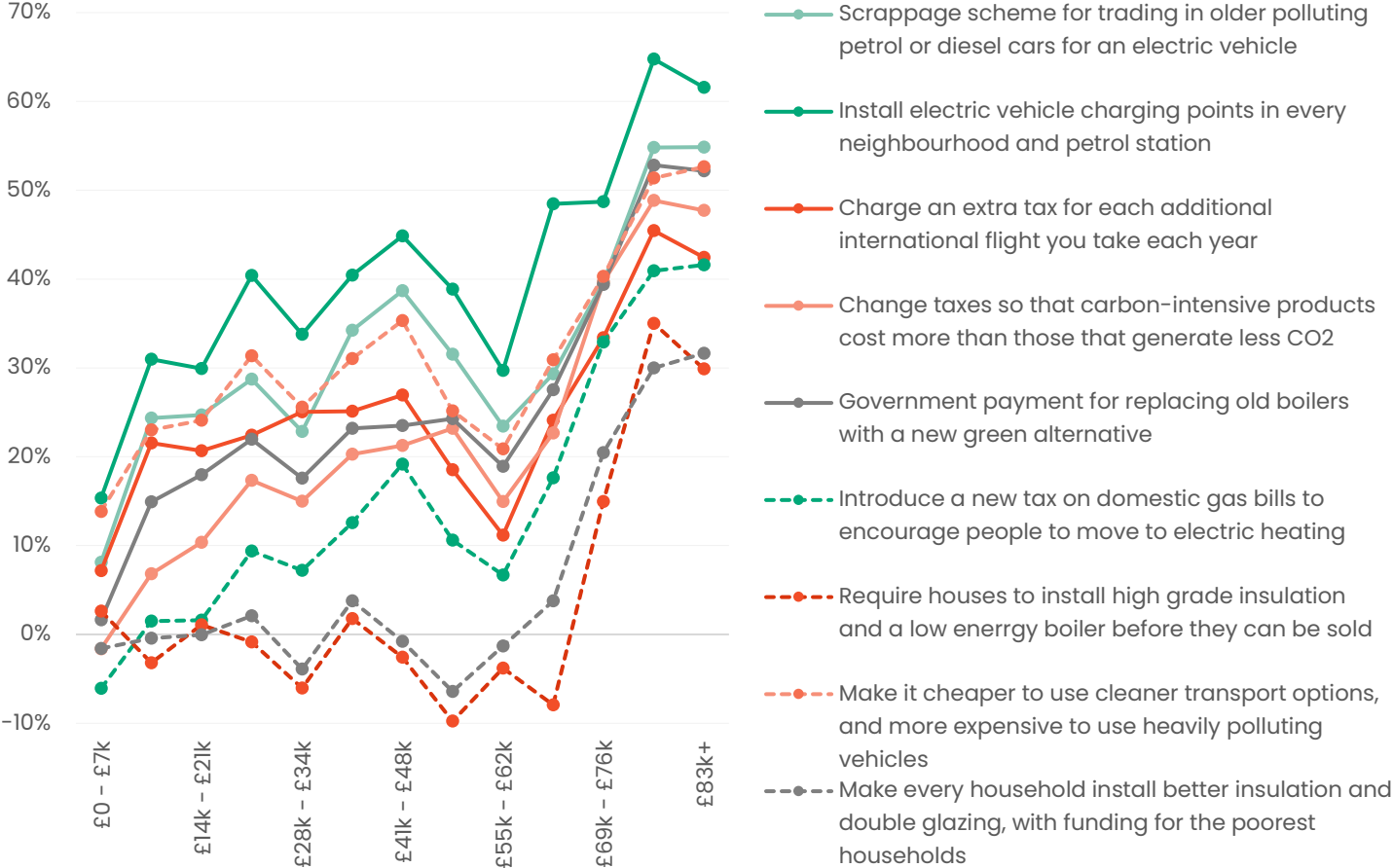
- The defining pattern with regard to income is for the highest earners to be positive and everyone else more hesitant. However this is complicated by the fact that support drops among those earning between £48,000 and £62,000 per year. As shown below, support for most climate policies rises with income, but every policy we tested then experiences a drop in support, before tending to recover slightly among people earning £62,000 and above.

Excluding the very lowest earners all but three policies have their lowest support within the upper-middle income brackets spanning £48,000 to £69,000 per year. This reflects the net opposition of C1 voters to the idea of retrofitting homes with insulation and new boilers.

- Those on middle incomes also tend to have the most diverse views between each policy, whereas those on the lowest or highest incomes are more consistent. For example, support by policy differs by 56.4 points for those in the £62,000-£69,000 bracket, whereas it differs by just 21.4 points for those in the lowest income bracket, between £0 and £7,000. Those earning up to £7,000 look less favourably on tax changes, including a new tax on domestic gas bills, or changing taxes to make products and services which generate a lot of CO² in their production more expensive. The use of taxes to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station is consistently the most popular policy, across every income bracket.

Figure 18: Net support for net zero policies according to our index, by income bracket

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



The impact of cost on support for different policies

As discussed earlier, other research has shown that the public is broadly supportive of net zero policies, but that support tends to decline significantly once the financial implications of each policy are discussed. However, estimates of cost are typically not provided, and the anticipated cost of each policy will differ between respondents.

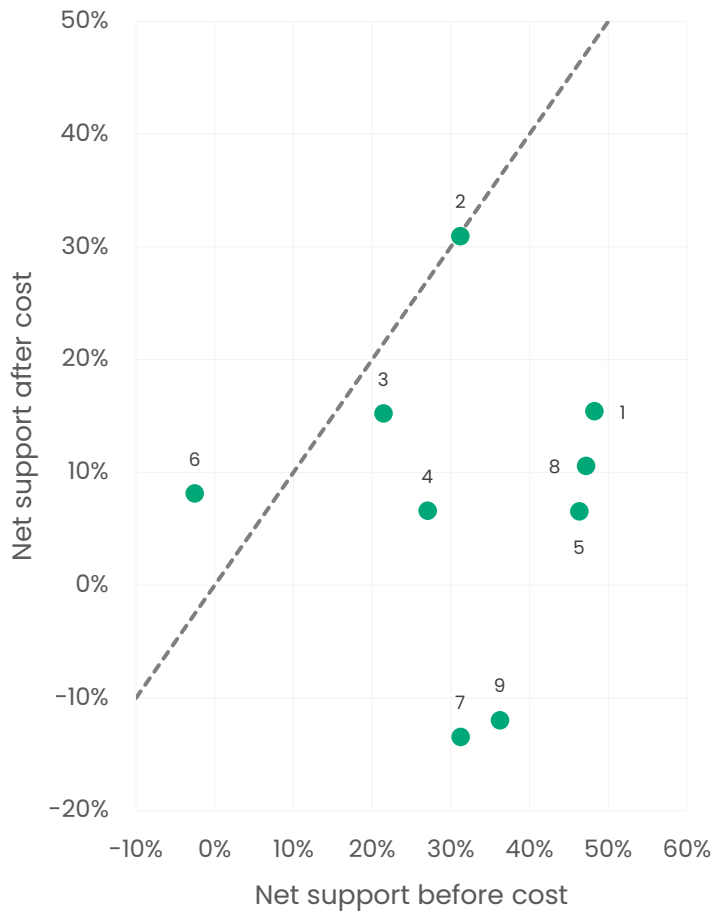
As part of our poll, we tested support for each policy before and after people were shown an estimated cost. This cost to the consumer of each policy was based on Onward's calculations, which are detailed in the annex. Overall, we confirm what has been suspected from other qualitative and quantitative research: that support for net zero policies is relatively shallow and falls when accompanied by potential costs.

We find that when “blind” support for a policy is re-tested against “costed” support for a policy, almost every policy becomes less popular. In Figure 19 below, those policies below the diagonal line lose support when costed, while those above the line gain support.

- The decrease is largest for policies with the largest costs, such as making every household install better insulation and double glazing, a capital-intensive change which we costed at £8,000 per household. For this policy, net support falls from +36 points to -12 points when the cost is revealed. Similarly, requiring landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house, which we said could cost up to £16,700 per home, saw support fall from +31 points to -13 points.
- This decline in support was also visible with changes that cost far less. For example, the policy of offering a government payment to every household who replaces their old boilers with a new green alternative, such as a heat pump or hydrogen boiler (which the Government has since supported) was supported by a net 46% of people blind but just 7% with the cost revealed, which we estimated as funded by taxes rising by £50 per taxpayer a year.
- Falling net support for each policy reflects not only people switching from net support to net scepticism. It also reflects a number of voters going from being undecided to having a firm opinion. For example, support for introducing a government scrappage scheme that gives people a payment for trading in their older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle falls significantly when people find out that it would come with an estimated cost of £20 per taxpayer per year, driven in large part by undecided voters taking a side. When the cost is revealed, net support falls from +48% down to +15%. This is partly because 27% of those first in favour become undecided.

Figure 19: Costed support against uncostered support for each policy

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward



1. Scrappage scheme for trading in older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle
2. Install electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station
3. Charge an extra tax for each additional international flight you take each year
4. Change taxes so that carbon-intensive products cost more than those that generate less CO²
5. Government payment for replacing old boilers with a new green alternative
6. Introduce a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating
7. Require houses to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler before they can be sold
8. Make it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles
9. Make every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households

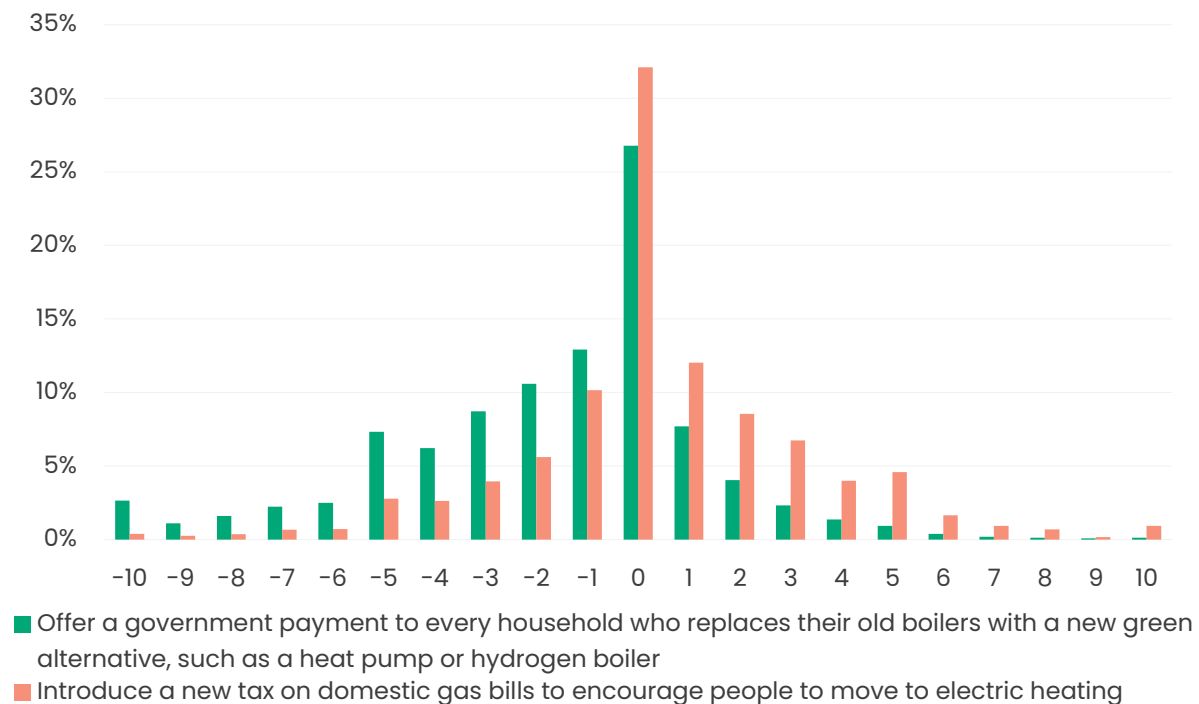
While the majority of policies become less popular once the cost is revealed, there is one exception.

- The introduction of a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating was listed against an estimated cost of a £28 rise in gas bills, per household, per year - with electricity bills remaining the same. Net support for this policy rises from -2.6% when blind to the cost, to +8.2% once the cost is revealed, a shift largely driven by older people and homeowners. Net favourability among over-55s rises by 28 percentage points.

- This tells us that the idea of a rise in energy bills really puts people off, but when framed as a £28 a year increase only on gas, people are more accepting. We can show this with Figure 20 below, which shows respondents' scores before the cost was revealed minus their score after the cost is revealed. For context, we also compare this to a similar policy of a government incentive to switch from a boiler to a heat pump. You can see from the way respondents stack up on the positive side of the graph on the gas tax, whereas the heat pump scores stack up on the negative side, that revealing the cost of the gas tax policy actually eroded some of the initial opposition.

Figure 20: Change in support after learning the cost

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Box 5: Excerpts from focus groups

Would any of you be willing to do that if it meant getting to net zero?

“I couldn’t afford to pay more, I already pay enough.” Jeanette, care assistant, Redcar

“I would like to think I could make a change but realistically, you’re living with what you’ve got. We’re all wanting to do better, but can’t pay that extra cash. I think people are struggling enough as it is. I can’t see how it would work.” Tara, hairdresser, Redcar

“The government should give us some money, it should be the other way round.” John, electrician, Redcar

Climate constituencies

The political geography of net zero opinion



There has been relatively little research into how climate opinion varies between different places. This chapter explores the political geography of net zero opinion, and how people feel about the main parties' handling of the issue.

The electoral geography of net zero

The large sample of our poll with J.L. Partners allows us to estimate the extent to which people support or oppose different policies in different parts of the UK, at both a regional and constituency level. This allows us to interrogate in which constituencies net zero policies are likely to play well, and where people may be relatively more sceptical.

We use the demographic profile of a constituency to estimate the likely attitudes towards decarbonisation using our index, in a similar way to the method known as multi-level regression and post-stratification (MRP) that is increasingly used in election modelling. Using this technique, and as you can see from the map below, we find that:

- Net zero opinion varies sharply between different parts of the UK, with London and its environs most supportive, and parts of the North East of England in particular least supportive. Of the thirty most supportive constituencies, twenty five (83%) are located within London and 50% of London's constituencies feature in the top decile of constituencies when ranked by net zero support. Just six of London's constituencies (8%) rank in the bottom half of our rankings for net zero support. We can also see that Scotland is generally favourable to net zero with most of Central Scotland strongly in favour.
- The UK's major city regions also exhibit strong support for net zero policies, but with sharp divisions between different places. In Manchester, for example, the city centre and south eastern constituencies such as Altrincham and Cheadle are more in favour (ranked 3rd and 107th respectively, but support is much lower in places like Leigh, Bolton South and Wigan (ranked 503rd, 477th, and 499th respectively). A similar divide is visible in Tyne and Wear, where constituencies covering Newcastle city are strongly in favour, but places further out like Wansbeck and Blyth Valley are more sceptical.
- The East Coast of England, from the Isle of Sheppey in Kent to Berwick-upon-Tweed in Northumberland, is an almost unbroken line of constituencies where support for net zero policies is generally lower than average. This mirrors wider socio-economic characteristics, such as Onward's social fabric index, which reveals particularly fraying social fabric along the East coast. In particular, parts of the Red Wall in South West Yorkshire and the North East coastline stand out as more sceptical than most

other places - despite some of them, such as Tees Valley and the Humber, increasingly being hubs for net zero industry. Relative scepticism is also concentrated in areas like Lincolnshire, East Anglia, the Black Country and some rural parts of the South West.

Overall, this map appears to correlate with the new electoral geography of the United Kingdom, where metropolitan areas are more progressive in their values and more likely to vote for the Labour Party, while more peripheral and industrial areas are more conservative in their values and more likely to vote for the Conservative Party. This gap is not large enough to constitute a major dividing line between the major parties, but it does speak to the wider bifurcation of British politics, as Table 3 outlining the top and bottom 30 constituencies for net zero support demonstrates below. Almost all of the most pro-net zero constituencies are held by Labour, whereas almost all the seats least favourable to net zero are Conservative held.

Figure 21: Estimated overall support for net zero by constituency, based on index scores (10 = completely support, 0 = completely against)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

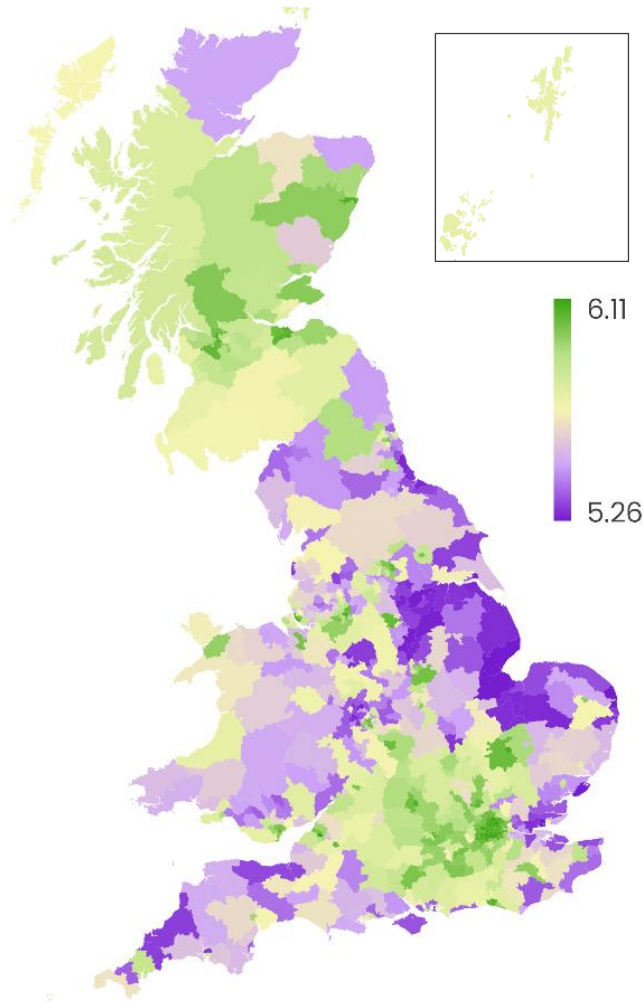


Table 3: Top and bottom 30 constituencies for net zero support

Most supportive		Least supportive	
Name	Index	Name	Index
1 Battersea	6.11	650 Boston and Skegness	5.26
2 Tooting	6.08	649 Great Yarmouth	5.27
3 Hackney North and Stoke	6.04	648 Clacton	5.29
4 Vauxhall	6.04	647 South Holland and The Deepings	5.29
5 Bristol West	6.04	646 Castle Point	5.3
6 Streatham	6.04	645 Doncaster North	5.3
7 Hornsey and Wood Green	6.03	644 Walsall North	5.31
8 Dulwich and West Norwood	6.03	643 Bolsover	5.32
9 Hampstead and Kilburn	6.03	642 Bassetlaw	5.32
10 Islington North	6.03	641 Kingston upon Hull East	5.33
11 Putney	6.02	640 Dudley North	5.33
12 Hackney South and Shoreditch	6.01	639 Barnsley East	5.33
13 Chelsea and Fulham	6.01	638 Ashfield	5.33
14 Bermondsey and Old Southwark	6.01	637 Great Grimsby	5.33
15 Ealing Central and Acton	6.00	636 Easington	5.34
16 Lewisham, Deptford	6.00	635 Redcar	5.34
17 Manchester, Withington	5.99	634 Stoke-on-Trent South	5.34
18 Poplar and Limehouse	5.99	633 South West Norfolk	5.35
19 Islington South and Finsbury	5.99	632 Don Valley	5.35
20 Cities of London and Westminster	5.98	631 Mansfield	5.35
21 Hammersmith	5.98	630 Cleethorpes	5.35
22 Cambridge	5.97	629 Louth and Horncastle	5.35
23 Bethnal Green and Bow	5.97	628 North East Cambridgeshire	5.35
24 Edinburgh North and Leith	5.97	627 Normanton, Pontefract and	5.35
25 Holborn and St Pancras	5.96	626 Stoke-on-Trent North	5.36
26 Westminster North	5.96	625 South Basildon and East Thurrock	5.36
27 Wimbledon	5.95	624 Hartlepool	5.36
28 Glasgow North	5.94	623 Dudley South	5.36
29 Kensington	5.94	622 Brigg and Goole	5.37
30 Richmond Park	5.92	621 Scunthorpe	5.37

Figure 22: Estimated support by constituency for a scrappage scheme for trading in older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

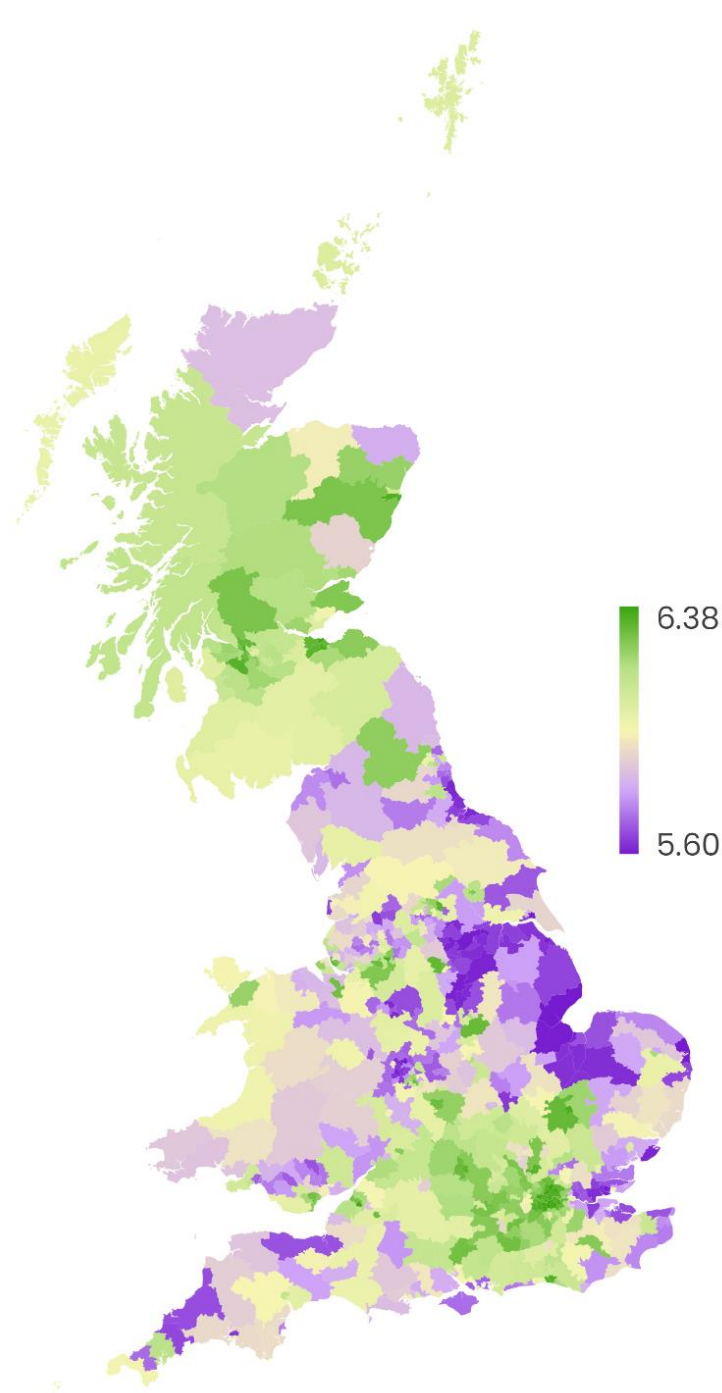


Figure 23: Estimated support by constituency for installing electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

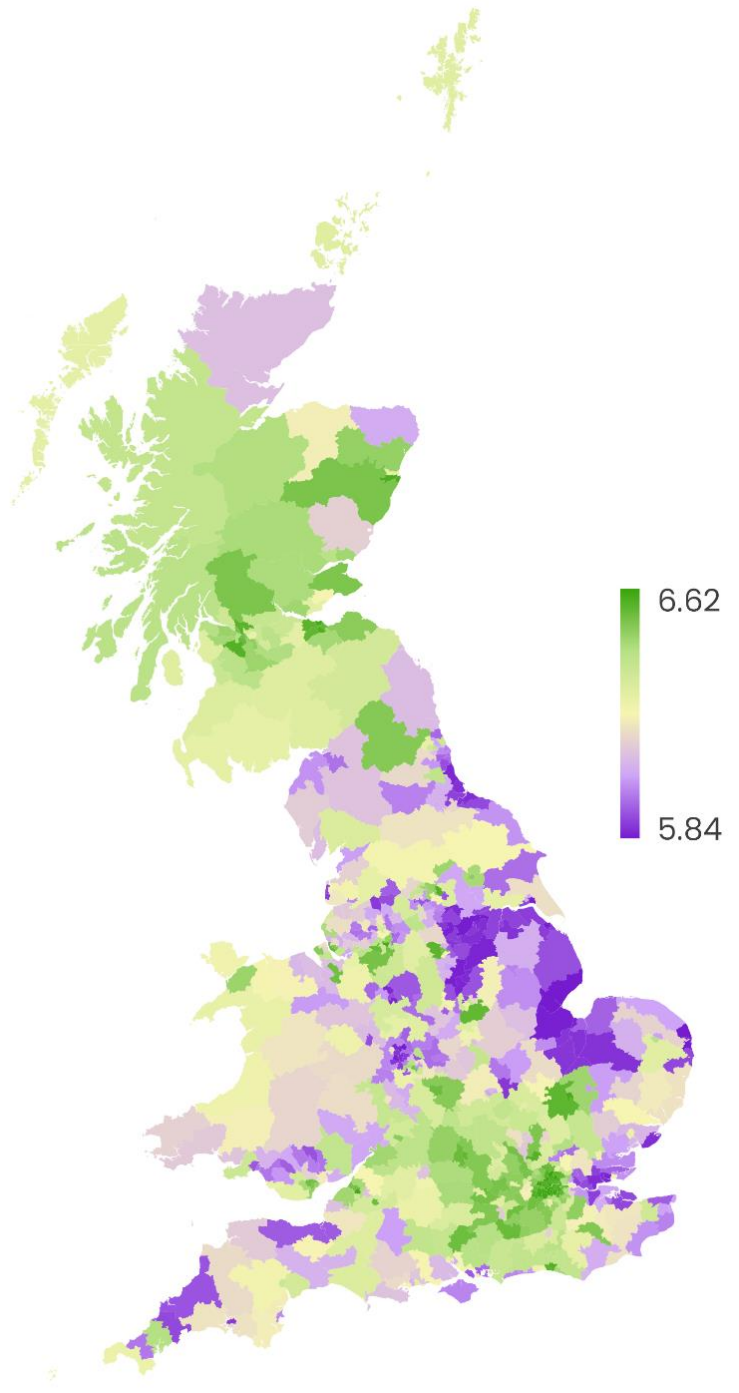


Figure 24: Estimated support by constituency for a scrappage scheme for charging an extra tax for each additional international flight taken each year (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

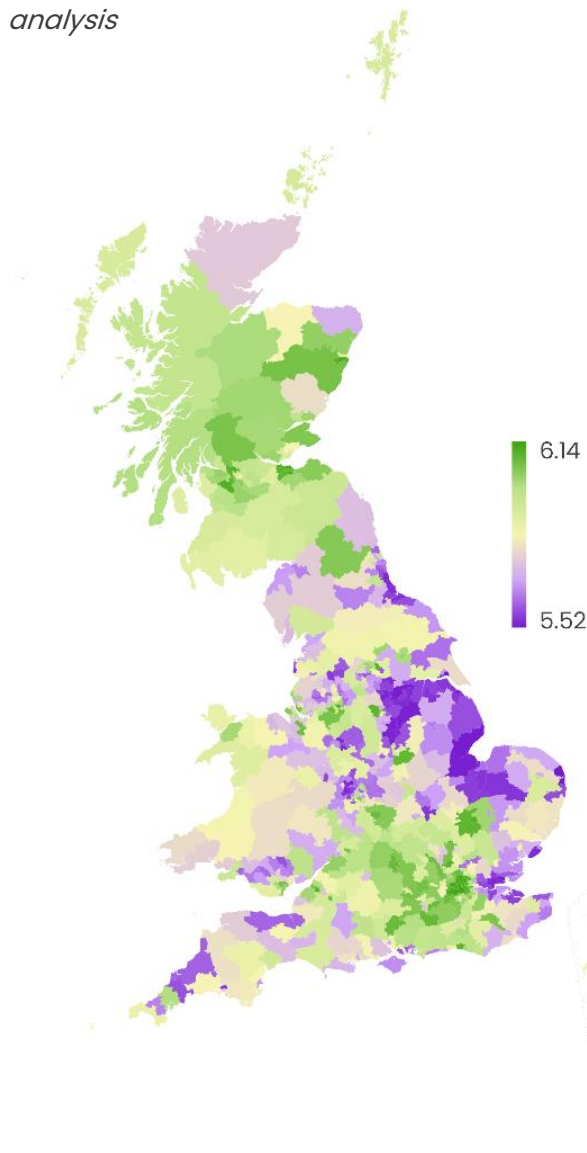


Figure 25: Estimated support by constituency for changing taxes so that carbon-intensive products cost more than those that generate less CO² (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

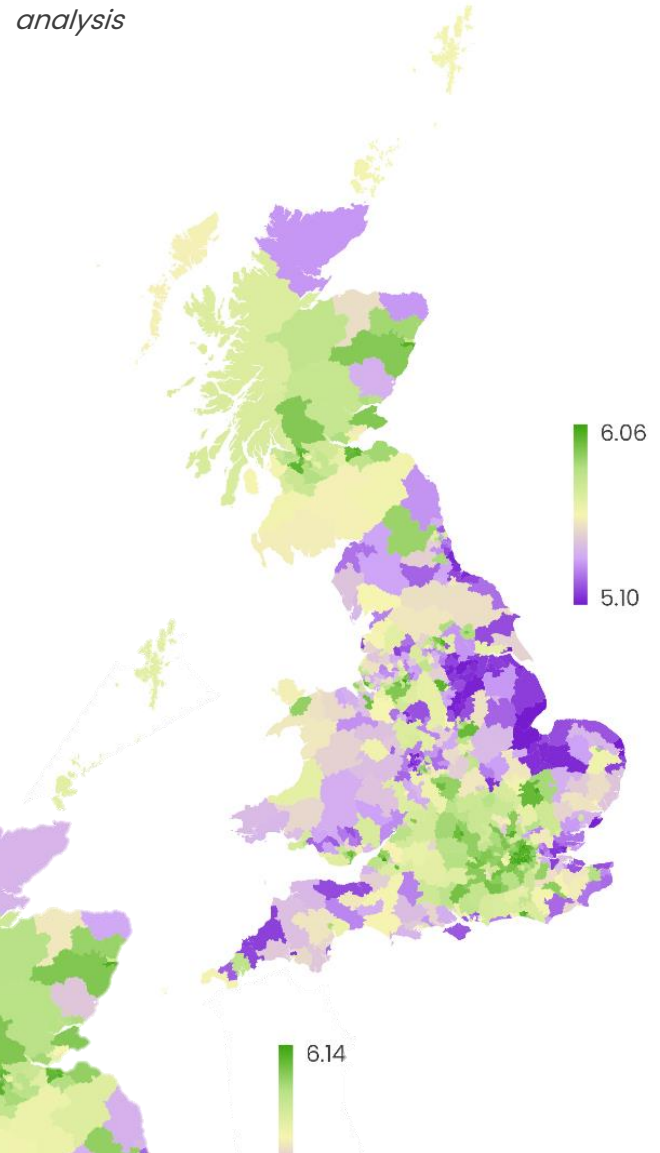


Figure 26: Estimated support by constituency for a government payment for replacing old boilers with a new green alternative (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Figure 27: Estimated support by constituency for introducing a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

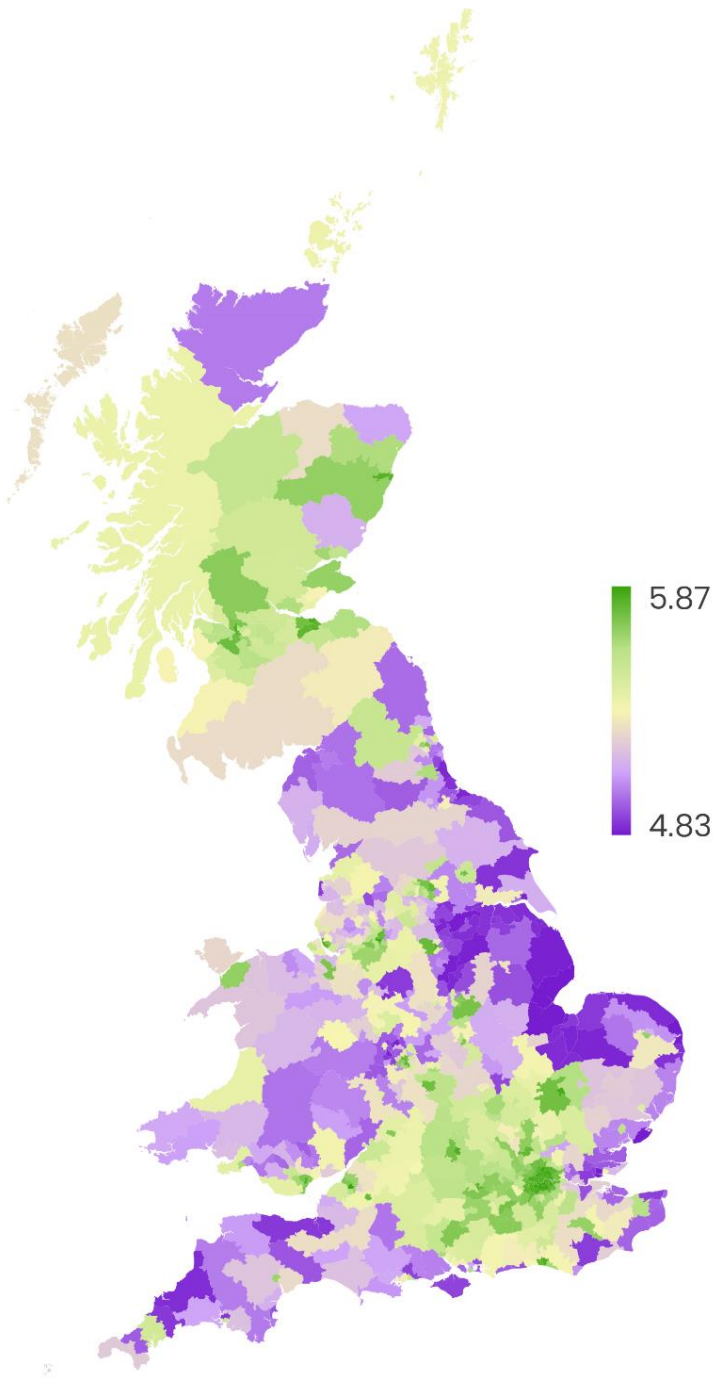


Figure 28: Estimated support by constituency for requiring houses to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler before they can be sold (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

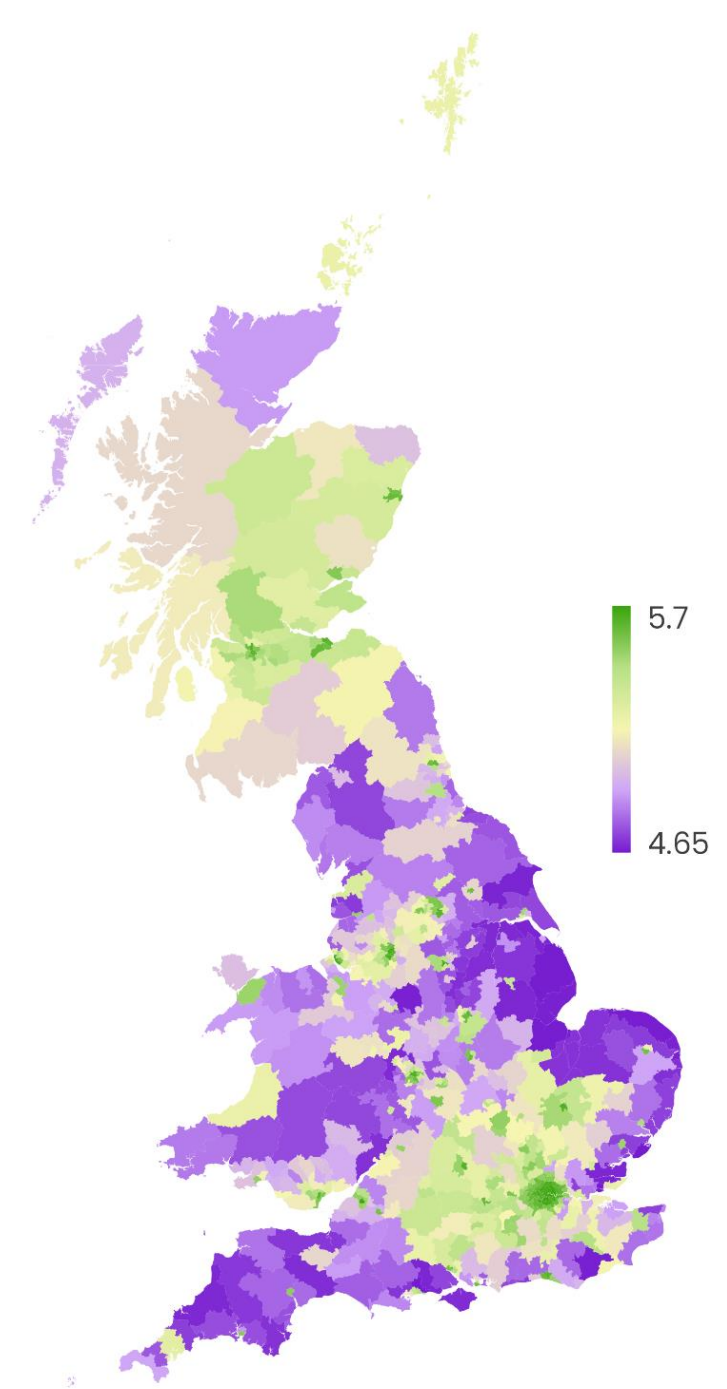


Figure 29: Estimated support by constituency for making it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

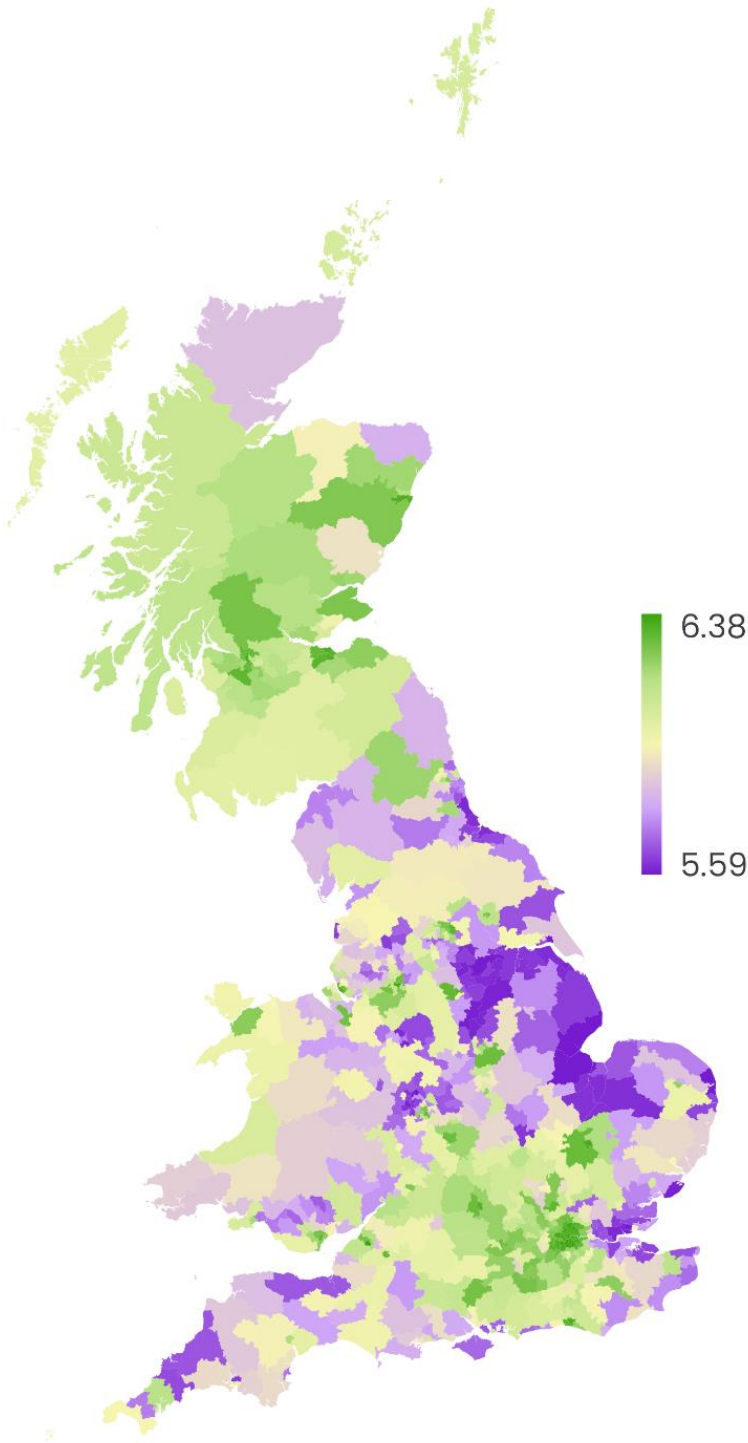
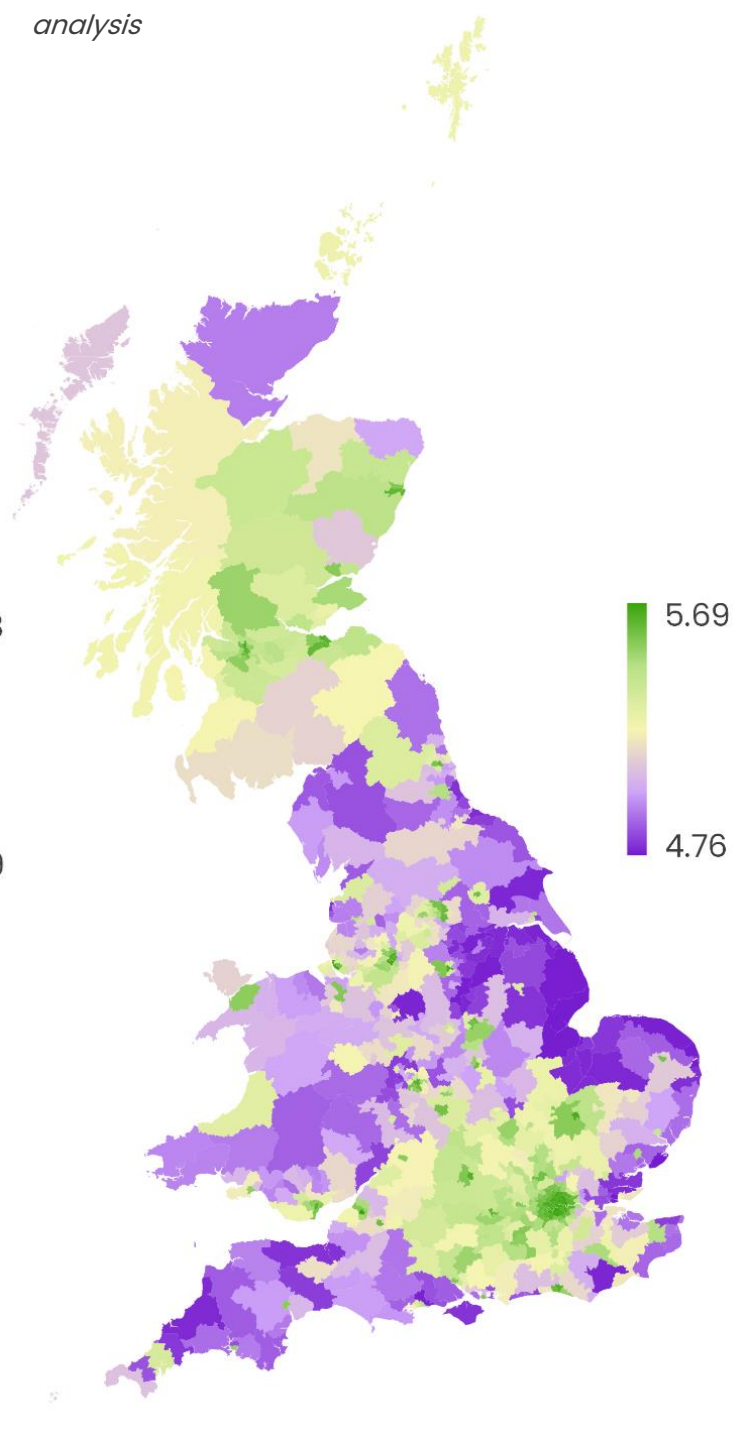


Figure 30: Estimated support by constituency for making every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households (10 = completely support, 0 = no support)

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



This distribution does not change considerably for each of the different policies as the maps in Figures 22-30 show. As with the overall picture, support is consistently stronger in London, the Home Counties, and Central Scotland, along with other city centres. Support is consistently weaker along the East Coast, in the South West, the Midlands, and Wales.

There are two noticeable exceptions to the general trend. These are the two policies which relate to the installation of insulation - requiring landlords to install high grade insulation prior to selling their homes, and making every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households. Support for these policies remains concentrated in London, central Scotland and some city centres. Meanwhile scepticism is more prevalent outside of these areas, with a greater contrast between the supportive regions and those which are more sceptical. This effect is particularly seen in North and West Wales, Yorkshire and Lancashire. These regions are relatively undecided in their support for other policies, on average falling somewhere in the middle of more supportive or sceptical constituencies. However, for the two insulation policies, these parts of the country become much more sceptical.

These effects are demonstrated by looking at where each constituency ranks in terms of support, on an individual policy basis, from the most supportive constituency to the least. Streatham, for example, ranges from the 5th most supportive to the 11th most supportive constituency, depending on the policy tested. Streatham's 'ranking spread' - the number of places between the constituency's highest and lowest rank - is therefore just six places. The average ranking spread across all constituencies is 123 places. This indicates that constituencies typically have consistent attitudes across each policy, and that support generally rises or falls uniformly across the country when different policies are tested. Excluding the two insulation policies, the average ranking spread is just 60 places. This demonstrates that the two insulation policies impose the biggest variation in attitudes across constituencies.

Voters want greater ambition from both parties, but back the Conservatives over Labour

The maps above suggest that, while most people are generally supportive of taking action on net zero, the Conservative Party may find itself less able to carry radical reform among constituencies in the East of England and North East, where it now has a considerable foothold.

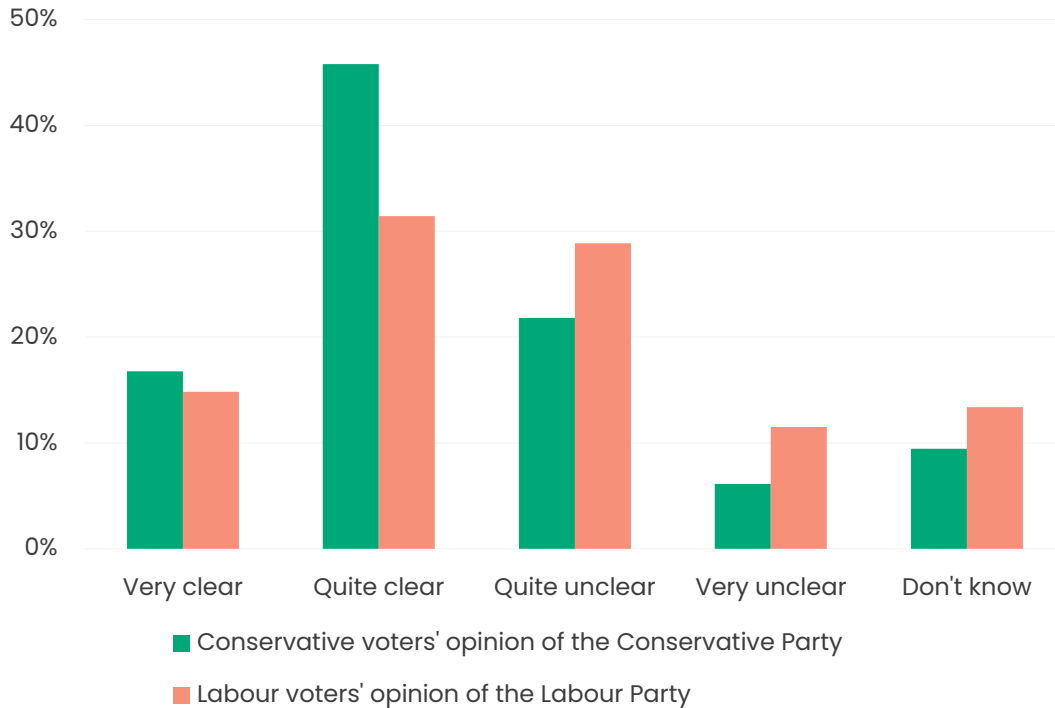
However in other ways, the Conservative Party holds the advantage over the Labour Party. This is because people are more likely to think the Conservatives' stance on the environment is clear compared to the Labour Party's, and they are also more

likely to think that the Conservatives are going at the right pace in tackling climate change. For example, we find that:

- 38% of people think the Conservative Party's stance on the environment is clear or very clear. This compares to only 28% who say the same of Labour. This may be partly explained by partisanship - voters tend to think more highly of their own party. But, even controlling for this, Labour voters seem less clear about where their party stands on environment policy: 46% of Labour voters think that Labour has a clear position on the environment compared to 63% of Conservative voters who believe the same of the Tories.
- We also asked respondents if Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party are going too fast, too slowly or just about the right pace in taking steps to tackle climate change. And we asked the same of Keir Starmer and the Labour Party. We find that people are nearly three times more likely to think that the Conservatives are going too slowly than too quickly (40% compared to 13%), but this rises to a factor of 4 for the Labour Party, where 35% said "too slow" and 9% said "too fast". This suggests that voters want both parties to increase the pace of reform, and currently believe the Conservatives are being more ambitious (in contrast to Labour's own rhetoric).
- This is compounded by the fact that the Labour Party, and its leader Keir Starmer, simply struggle to provoke strong opinions at all. Around a third of respondents - 32% - said that they "don't know" if the party is going too fast, too slow, or at the right pace on tackling climate change. Even among Labour voters at the last election, a fifth (21%) don't know if the party is going too fast or too slow in addressing climate change. Excluding Don't Knows, 45% think the party is going too slowly and 44% think the pace is about right.
- This contrasts strongly with Conservative Party voters. Almost half (49%) of their 2019 voters think the pacing is about right, and just 8% said they don't know. Whereas Labour voters are much more likely to think their party is going too slow, the balance among Conservative voters is more even. 18% think the party is going too fast in tackling climate change, compared to 25% who think the opposite.

Figure 31: Perceived clarity of each party's position on the environment, by 2019 vote recall

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Box 6: Excerpts from focus groups

What political parties, between Conservatives and Labour, are better at these environmental issues?

“I wouldn’t be able to tell you anything about the Labour Party on environmental issues but we know about the Tories. I think Boris Johnson is doing quite well.”
Mark, HGV driver, Redcar

If we look just at the Conservatives and Labour for a second. Who's better at handling the environment?

“I suppose considering that it's been highlighted for the last 10 years, it's hard to judge, isn't it? Because the Tories have been in from like 2008 or 2010, wasn't it? So it's hard to judge other parties on that, because they've been the only ones who have actually been in power.” Darren, accountant, Southampton Itchen

The Conservative coalition is more united on climate than Labour's

As Onward's previous research has shown, the Conservative coalition assembled in 2019 is noticeably more homogeneous in terms of its values and policy priorities than that of the Labour Party. In *No Turning Back*, we showed that Conservative voters across the country are closely aligned on issues like immigration and taxes, with the views of Tory voters in the newly-won Red Wall seats broadly similar to long-time Tory voters in the Home Counties. But to what extent is this true of net zero, an issue many fear could become a key dividing line? Our poll suggests that net zero is unlikely to split the Conservative coalition. We find that:

- Conservative voters in the North and the South of England agree that climate change is one of the most important issues facing the country, have similarly optimistic views on whether more jobs will be created from new green industries than lost, and both groups are more likely to think the government is not being bold enough than too bold in its environment policy.
- When it comes to policy, 2019 Conservative voters in the North of England are also aligned with their Southern counterparts. Both are strongly in favour of more EV charging points and a scrappage scheme for electric vehicles. They are both marginally opposed to coercive retrofitting of homes. The only significant gap is southern voters being 4-points more supportive of a tax on domestic gas bills. Across every policy except the scrappage scheme and EV charging points, the north-south divide is greater among Labour voters than Conservative voters.
- We can see this clearly using a composite metric, calculated by summing the absolute percentage point differences between northern and southern voters for each party. As Table 4 below shows, Labour's 2019 coalition is twice as geographically divided as the Conservatives' across the range of net zero policy questions. The total variation between Labour's northern and southern voters is 33 percentage points, but just 15 points among Conservative voters.

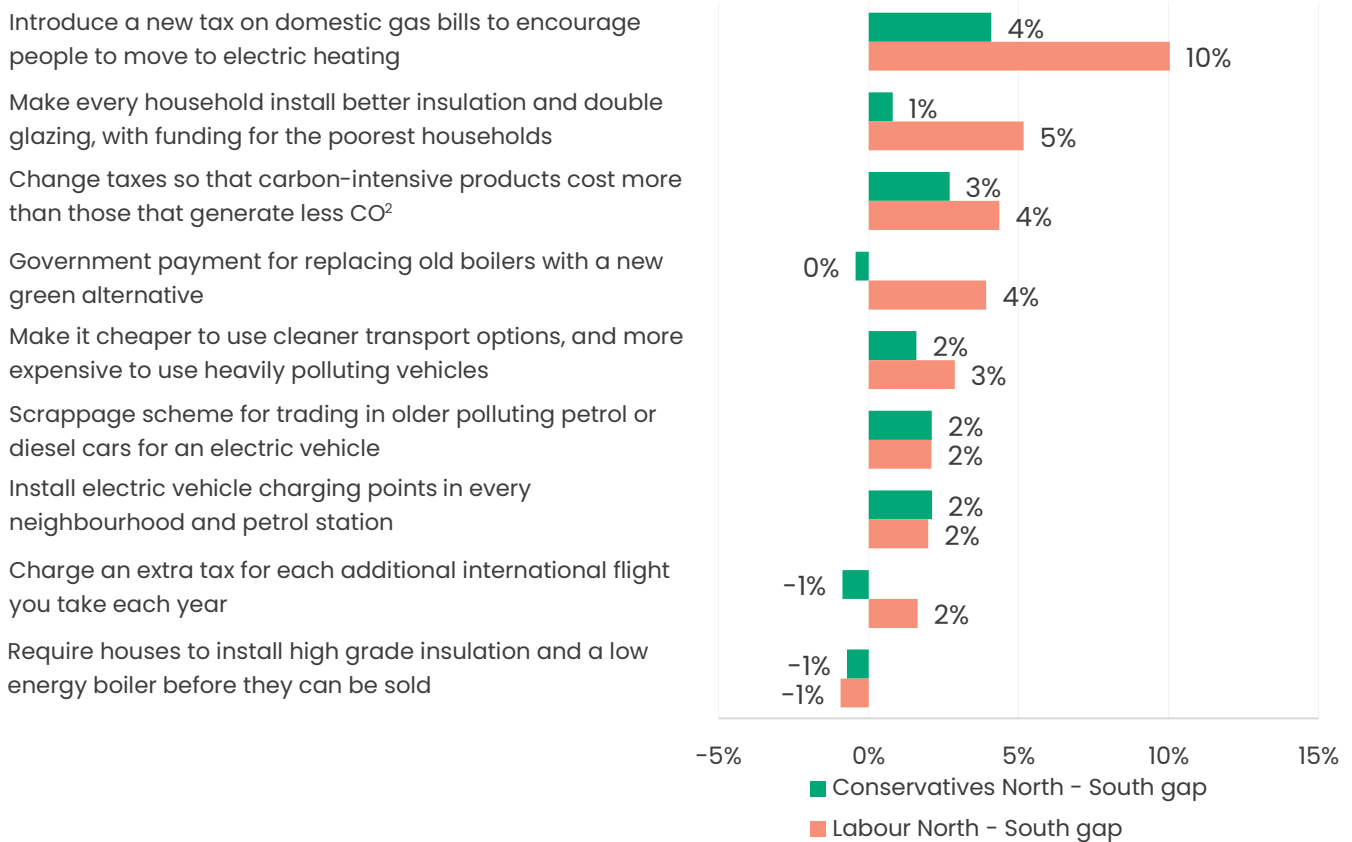
Table 4: Absolute percentage point difference between voters in the North and South of England, by party

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

	Conservative	Labour
Sum of total variation	15.4%	33.0%
Change taxes so that products and services that generate a lot of CO ² in their production, like meat, plastics and petrol, cost more than those that generate less CO ²	2.7%	4.4%
Charge an extra tax for each additional international flight you take each year	0.9%	1.6%
Introduce a government scrappage scheme that gives people a payment for trading in their older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle	2.1%	2.1%
Introduce a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating	4.1%	10.0%
Make every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households	0.8%	5.2%
Make it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, like trains and buses, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles like petrol cars and airplanes	1.6%	2.9%
Offer a government payment to every household who replaces their old boilers with a new green alternative, such as a heat pump or hydrogen boiler	0.4%	3.9%
Require landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house	0.7%	0.9%
Use taxes to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station	2.1%	2.0%

Figure 32: Percentage point difference in net support between voters in the South of England and voters in the North and Midlands, by 2019 vote

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis. Note: Positive values mean that southern voters are more in favour, according to our Net Zero Index



Voters in the Red Wall are not opposed to net zero policy and want the Government to be bolder

We can also test the support for net zero principles and policies in the so-called Red Wall, the group of seats where the Conservative Party underperformed relative to demographic expectations prior to the last election, around half of which fell to the Conservatives after decades of Labour dominance.

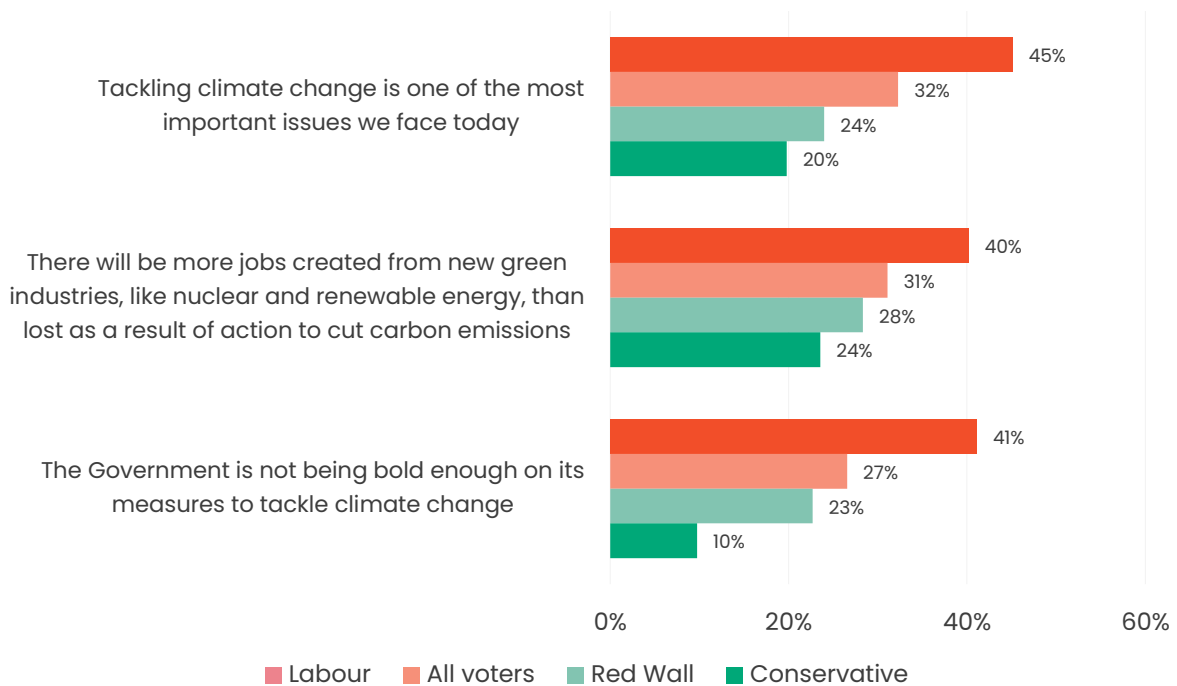
To achieve this, we use the original definition of the Red Wall, based on the analysis of the pollster James Kanagasooriam, who sits on Onward’s Advisory Board. While the results suggest Conservatives in the Red Wall tend to be less supportive of net zero than both the UK as a whole and other Conservative voters, they nonetheless undermine the narrative that net zero will necessarily alienate the support of voters in the Red Wall. In fact they strongly support greater action and are more likely to

want the Government to be bolder on net zero than to scale back their ambitions than other Conservative voters:

- Overall, voters in Red Wall constituencies are marginally less positive about the benefits of decarbonisation than the average person. But they are by no means negative: 48% of Red Wall voters think that there will be more jobs created from new green industries, like nuclear and renewable energy, than are lost as a result of action to cut carbon emissions - broadly in line with the UK average of 50% and the Conservative average of 49%. Net support in the Red Wall is +28% compared to the UK average of +31% and a Conservative average of +24%.
- Similarly, Red Wall voters are slightly more apathetic towards tackling climate change in general, but still view it as an important issue which requires more from the government. 55% of Red Wall voters believe climate change is one of the most important issues we face today, compared to 31% who believe that “There are many more important priorities facing us today than tackling climate change”, giving a net score of 24%. This is 8 points lower than the UK average, of whom a net 32% believe climate change is one of the most important threats we face, but 4 points higher than all Conservative voters (+20%).

Figure 33: Net support for different net zero statements, by 2019 vote and Red Wall

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



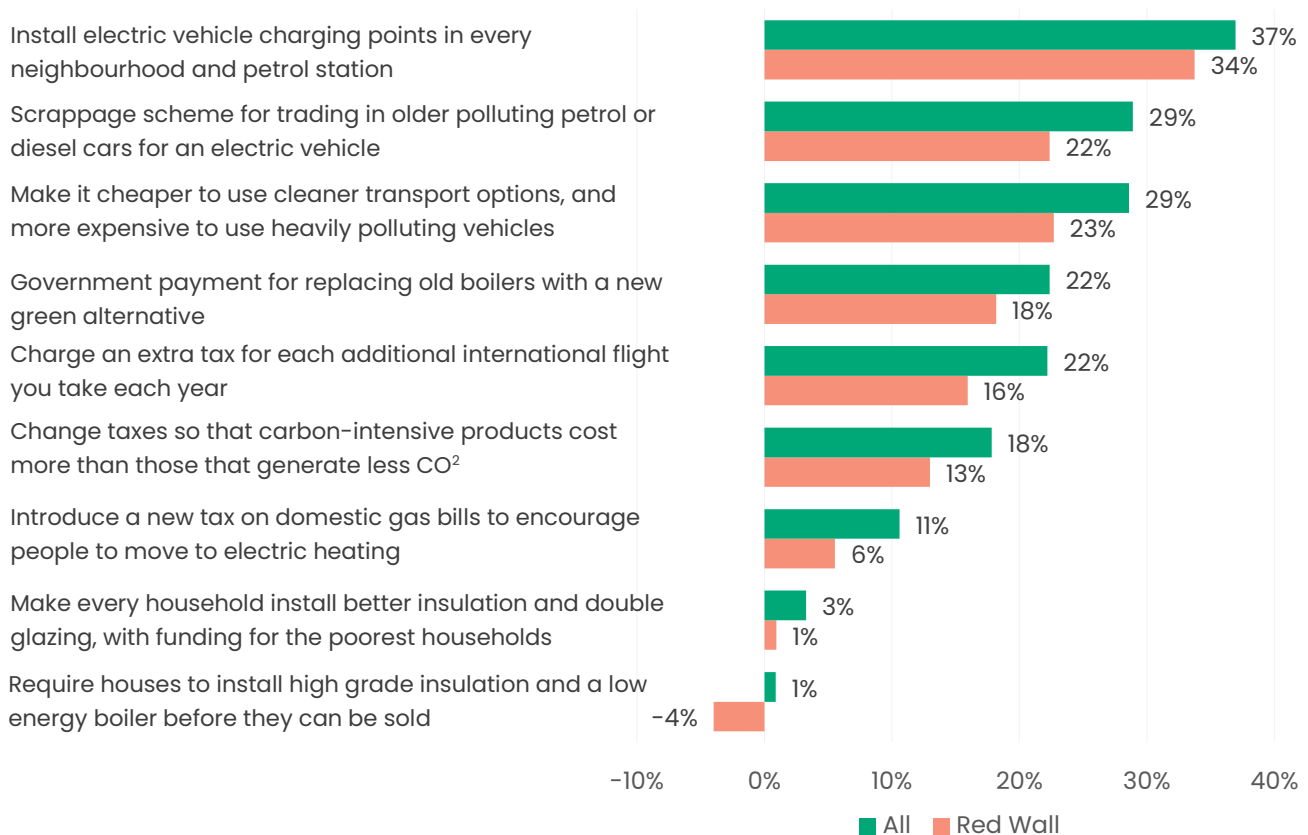
- When asked whether the Government is being too bold or not on tackling

climate change, we find that just 27% of Red Wall voters believe the Government is being too bold, compared to 36% of Conservative voters, against 50% who want the Government to be bolder (vs. 46% for Conservatives). While net support for bolder action is lower than the UK average, it is nevertheless higher than the wider Conservative coalition. In net terms, only +10% of Conservative voters think the Government is not being bold enough, around a quarter of the level among Labour voters (+41%).

- This feeds through into Red Wall voters' attitudes towards different policies, where they tend to be more favourable than Conservatives but less favourable than the UK average despite overall showing support for almost every policy we tested. We find that Red Wall voters are most strongly supportive of installing more electric vehicle charging points in neighbourhoods and petrol stations, introducing a scrappage scheme for older vehicles and investing in cheaper public transport. The only policy they are net opposed to is requiring homeowners to install better insulation and a new boiler before they can sell their home.

Figure 34: Net support for different policies using our Net Zero Index among Red Wall voters

Source: J.L. Partners (11 – 30 August 2021), Onward analysis.



- In the same vein, we find that Labour voters in 2017 who switched to the

Conservatives in 2019 are more persuaded of the importance of climate change than the average Conservative voter. They are more strongly pro-environmental on every wedge question, and more likely than other Tory voters to think the party's stance on the environment is very clear (22% vs 17%). Moreover, a majority (57%) think the Labour Party's stance on the environment is unclear or simply don't know what the party's position is. They are also far more supportive of every policy, by between 15 and 35 percentage points. Despite not agreeing with the idea of paying higher prices or taxes to reduce emissions, former Labour switchers were supportive of policy ideas involving higher taxes when we tested them through our index.

Figure 35: Net support for different net zero statements, Conservative voters and former Labour switchers

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis

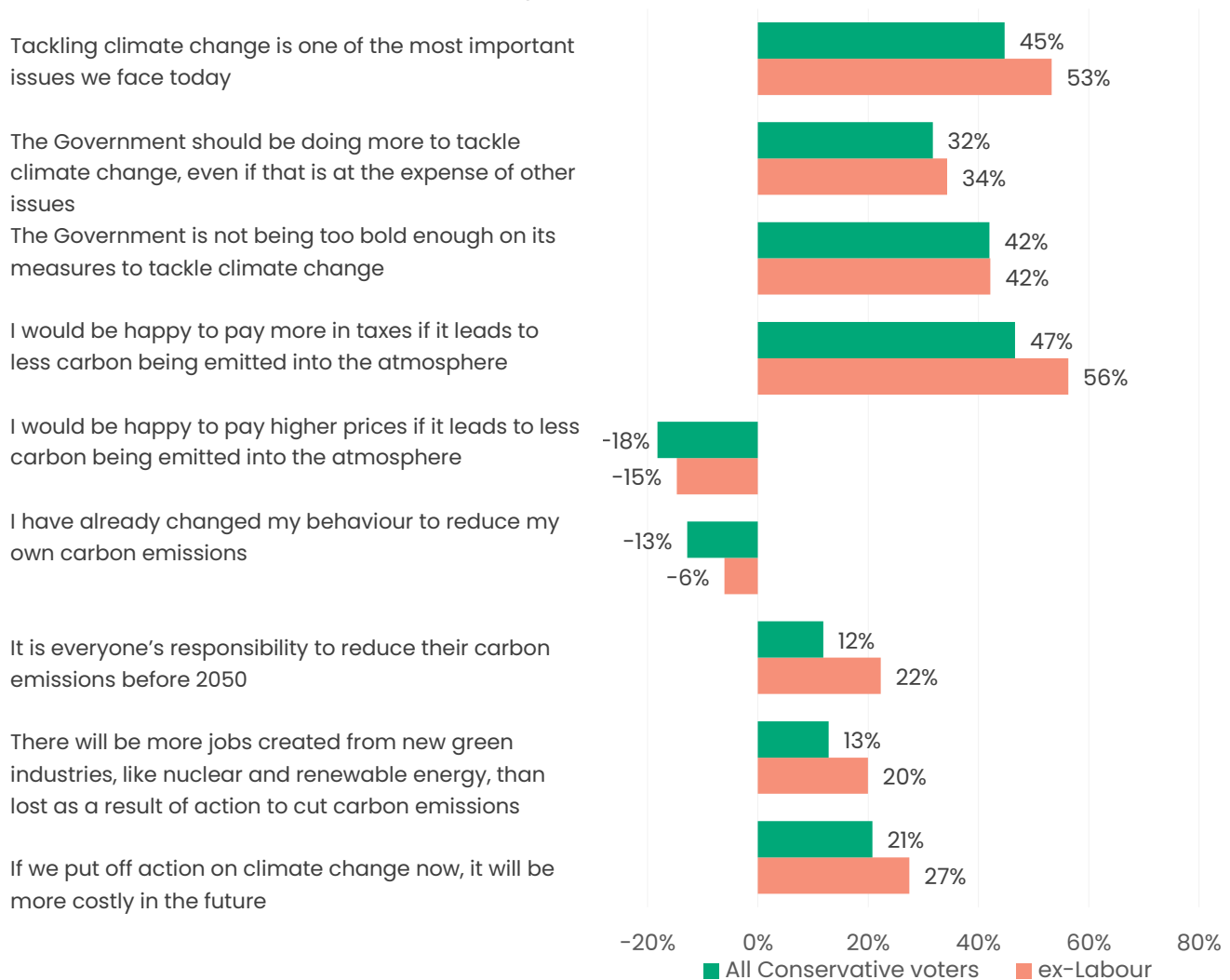
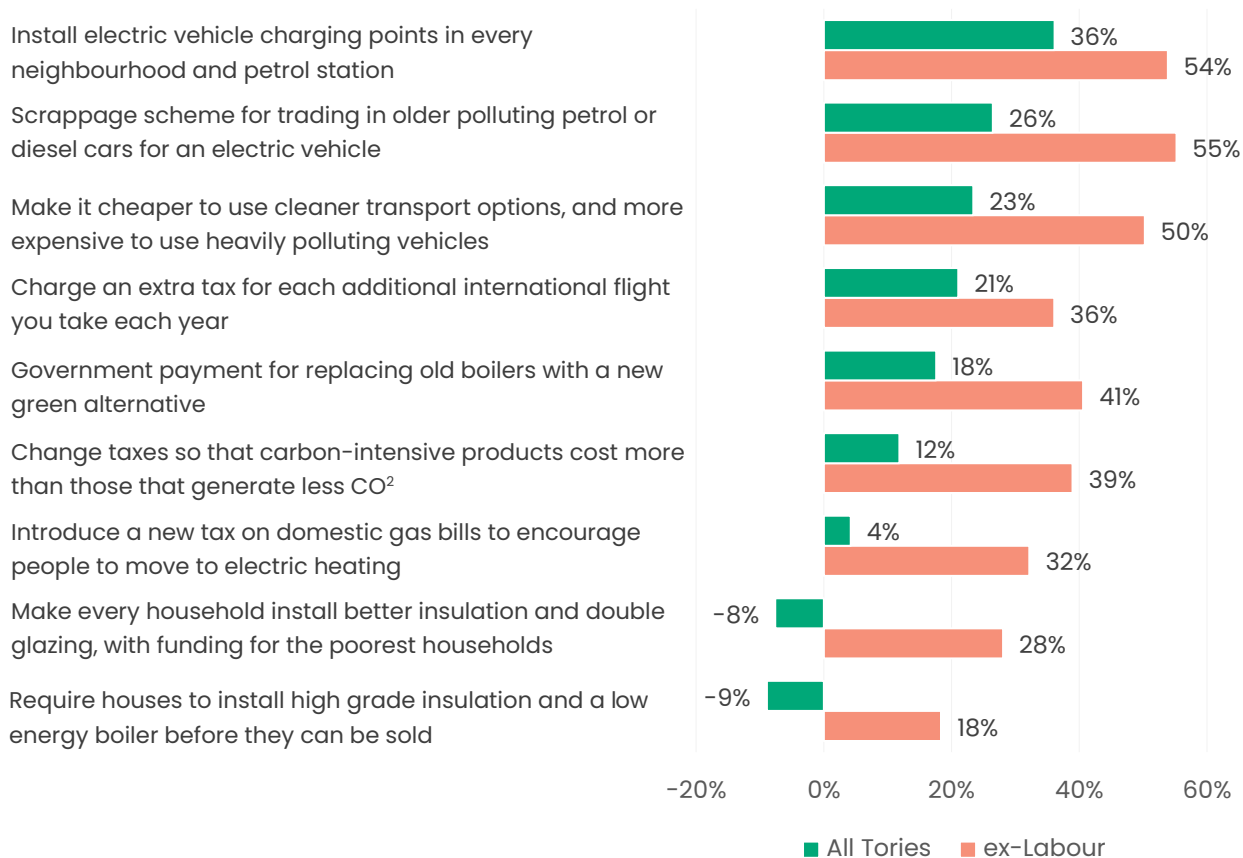


Figure 36: Net support for different policies using our index for all Conservative 2019 voters, and Conservative 2019 voters who voted for Labour in 2017.

Source: J.L. Partners (11 - 30 August 2021), Onward analysis



Box 7: Excerpts from focus groups

Are there any benefits that might come from net zero? Particularly thinking about Redcar and the local area? Any plus sides?


“A cleaner environment. There was outrage when British steel shut down. But at the same time, there was days when you went outside and your windowsills were black. Yes, lots of men came out of work and it was a shame. But now, when you look outside, it’s cleaner round here.” Jeanette, care assistant, Redcar

“We’re all benefiting from it more now, and I don’t mean in terms of our climate, but in terms of economically we have greener energy - they’re opening a biofuels plant.” Martin, teacher, Redcar

“There’s a carbon capture plant getting built on the old Teesside. And there’s a hydrogen plant getting built, which is very expensive to make but it’s obviously more beneficial to the environment. It’s bringing jobs, to be fair, even though I’m not in favour of it all” Mark, HGV driver, Redcar

Conclusion





Climate change may have once been a fringe concern in British politics but that is no longer the case. Voters from every background, of every political persuasion, and from every part of the country are concerned about climate change and in general want greater action to be taken to tackle it.

There is also broad public support for net zero policies. Some are more politically saleable than others. The low hanging fruit for this Government lies in policies which aim to decarbonise transportation. These policies, such as using taxes to fund cheaper public transport and more electric vehicle charging points, are inherently popular across all groups of voters. Similarly, policies which aim to incentivise behavioural change also enjoy broad support. The most politically-difficult policies will be those which require people to make changes to their homes. Lower-income voters are concerned about the cost of specific measures, while among middle class voters hostility stems from NIMBYism or a belief that if an Englishman's home is his castle and his gas boiler is his own concern.

The Government can take confidence from the fact that, while Conservative-held areas tend to be more sceptical of net zero policies than those held by Labour, the difference is slight and support remains strong. If anything, this is indicative of an opportunity for the Conservative party to make further gains into Labour heartlands, especially given voters' perceptions that the Labour party's stance on climate change is muddled, and not urgent enough. This suggests that, for the Conservatives, net zero is unlikely to risk their core support, and further action may strengthen their majority.

Annex A

Methodology



Methodology

The nine policies we put to the test were as follows, with details of the calculations used to produce estimations of the cost of each:

1. Introduce a government scrappage scheme that gives people a payment for trading in their older polluting petrol or diesel cars for an electric vehicle.

In 2019, there were more than 6.1 million cars on the road in the UK which were more than 13 years old and were manufactured in 2006 or earlier. This is equivalent to around 19% of the UK's car stock - up from 6.3% in 1994.⁴ A scrappage scheme would target these older vehicles, manufactured 15 or more years ago, which are nearing the end of their lifespans.

The scrappage scheme we tested would offer a £6,000 subsidy on the cost of a new electric vehicle when trading in one of the 6 million or so petrol or diesel cars manufactured in 2006 or earlier which are still on the road. If 50% of consumers owning an eligible vehicle made use of this scheme, the total cost would therefore be approximately £18 billion. Split evenly across all taxpayers over the next 29 years, this would cost each taxpayer an additional £20.48 per year.

2. Use taxes to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points in every neighbourhood and petrol station.

According to the Climate Change Committee, approximately 27,000 electric vehicle chargers will be required across the UK in public spaces by 2030. These chargers should be situated near local facilities such as shopping centres, parks, and libraries, enabling consumers to charge their vehicles while going about their daily business. As of 2018, the CCC estimated that just 2,700 of these chargers have been installed, and so a further 24,300 are needed to support the rollout of electric vehicles.⁵

The CCC estimates that an additional £530 million of investment is required to fund the remaining local area chargers required, equivalent to £58.9 million per year over the next nine years. This would therefore cost each taxpayer an additional £1.94 per year over this period, on average.

3. Charge an extra tax for each additional international flight you take each year.

Flying is the most carbon-intensive form of transport available. However, emissions from aviation are not equally distributed across the population. In 2018, just 1% of the UK's population took a fifth of international flights, while nearly half (48%) of people did not take a flight at all. A policy which imposes an extra tax for each additional international flight taken each year would therefore be more progressive than most, targeting those who fly the most frequently and therefore have the highest emissions footprints. This tax would be proportionate to the emissions associated with a flight, and so long-haul flights would incur a higher tax.

In the UK, aviation kerosene is exempt from tax, which effectively subsidises it to the tune of £9.1 billion per year, or an average of £4,028 per flight.⁶ There are an average of 91 passengers per flight in the UK, and so this tax exemption is equivalent to £44.26 per passenger per flight, on average. To test support for a tax on frequent fliers, we used this figure as an estimation of the average extra tax paid by a passenger for each additional international flight taken each year.

4. Change VAT so that products and services that generate a lot of CO² in their production, like meat, plastics and petrol, cost more than those that generate less CO².

Some products and services are much more carbon intensive to produce than others. For example, producing one kilogram of beef generates an average of 60 kilograms of CO², whereas producing one kilogram of apples generates an average of just 0.4 kilograms of CO². This policy would raise VAT on the most carbon-intensive products and lower VAT on products which have a low carbon-intensity.

Depending on the scale of the VAT adjustments, this would add approximately 10% to a regular food shop. According to the ONS, the average family food shop each week totals £63.70, and therefore this policy would cost the average household an additional £6.37 per week.

5. Offer a government payment to every household who replaces their old boilers with a new green alternative, such as a heat pump or hydrogen boiler.

Gas boilers are by far the most popular method of heating homes in the UK, relied on by approximately 22 million homes. The heating of buildings accounts for approximately 17% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, and so

in order to reach net zero the UK's gas boiler stock will need to be replaced with low-carbon alternatives. This policy would support this transition by offering a £4,000 payment to households making the switch, in order to subsidise the cost of a new low-carbon heating system.

A £4,000 subsidy was used to test support for this policy based upon the proposed Clean Heat Grant, which was undergoing consultation at the time fieldwork was carried out and proposed a £4,000 grant towards the cost of installing a heat pump. Assuming a 50% take-up rate to 2050 among those households which currently use a gas boiler, this would cost approximately £44 billion. This would be equivalent to an additional £50.07 per taxpayer per year, on average.

6. Introduce a new tax on domestic gas bills to encourage people to move to electric heating.

At present, both gas and electricity for domestic use are charged at a rate of 5%. However, gas is increasingly more carbon-intensive than electricity, due to the increasing proportion of electricity generated through renewable or low-carbon sources. Therefore, this policy would propose introducing a new tax on gas bills or increasing the VAT on gas, in order to incentivise consumers to switch to electric heating to save money.

The average gas bill in 2020 was equal to £557 per household. Therefore, if the VAT on domestic gas was increased by a further 5%, the average gas bill would increase by £27.85 per household per year.

7. Require landlords and homeowners to install high grade insulation and a low energy boiler if they want to sell their house.

This policy would aim to address emissions from the heating of buildings by both quickening the phaseout of fossil fuel heating systems, such as gas and oil boilers, and improving the energy efficiency of homes. Prior to the pandemic, there were 836,762 house sales across England and Wales in 2019.⁷ This policy would require the owners of each of these homes to install a low carbon heating system and high-grade insulation prior to selling them.

The CCC estimates that retrofitting an existing property in order to install a low-carbon heating system and high-grade insulation to achieve a high standard of energy efficiency would cost a minimum of £16,700.⁸ For the purpose of this poll, we tested support for this policy using the figure of

£16,700 as an estimate of the average cost each landlord or homeowner would need to pay prior to selling their property.

As a caveat, it should be noted that the cost for new or recently-built homes would be much lower, as these are commonly built to much higher standards of energy efficiency. For example, 75% of new build properties receive an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of A or B, compared to just 12% of existing homes.⁹

8. Make it cheaper to use cleaner transport options, like trains and buses, and more expensive to use heavily polluting vehicles like petrol cars and airplanes.

According to the ONS, the average household spends £34.10 on fuel, flights and public transport each week. When broken down further, this spending averages £22.90 per week on motor fuels (including petrol and diesel), £6.10 per week on flights, £3.60 per week on rail fares and £1.50 per week on buses.

In order to cost this policy suggestion, we assumed a 20% average increase in the cost of fuel and flights, and a 20% decrease in the cost of taking public transport. The net effect of this would be an increase in household spending of £4.78 per week, on average. We rounded this to £5 per household per week for simplicity.

9. Make every household install better insulation and double glazing, with funding for the poorest households.

There are approximately 19 million homes in the UK with an EPC rating of D or below, which represents approximately 70% of the UK's housing stock. The Government's Clean Growth Strategy targets an EPC rating of C or above for all fuel poor households by 2035, and as many houses as possible "where practical, cost-effective and affordable".^{10 11} The installation of various forms of insulation is crucial to improving the energy efficiency of homes, while replacing single-pane windows with single or double glazing is also an effective measure.

According to the CCC, the average cost of retrofitting a property with high-grade insulation and double glazing is around £8,000. Therefore, this was the figure used to test support for a policy which requires households to install such products in order to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Index methodology

The index was calculated as a weighted average of each of the four component questions:

- Blind support: Do you support or oppose the following policies designed to reduce carbon emissions? (Weighting = 0.5)
- Costed support: We are now going to tell you how much each of the following policies would cost the government and the taxpayer. How much, if at all, are you willing to pay this amount? (Weighting = 4)
- Impact on CO²: How much do you think the following policies would reduce CO² emissions? (Weighting = 2)
- Timing: For each of the following, if they were to happen, when do you think they should be introduced? (Weighting = 1)

Annex B

Focus group transcripts



Southampton Focus Group

Well, let's start with introductions. So if you give your first name, what you do for a living, and something you've seen on the news, in the last few days, that stuck out to you on the news.

I'm Holly, I work for Children's Services. I've seen on the news fires in Turkey.

Hello, my name is Chanel, I work for the local authority. And I was gonna say fires as well. But I think the thing that stood out to me is the climate change headlines saying that we need to get a move on and start the thing.

Hi, I'm Zoey. I work for the NHS. And I was gonna say about the climate change, yeah, that's really stuck out.

Thanks. I'm Rich, I work for Hampton fire rescue. Also I'd say the last two things, and I'd probably say the Olympics as well. I've been, it's been stuck out in the last couple of days.

Darren, I work for a local accountancy company. And yeah, I suppose apart from the fact that I've been keeping an eye out for when all these countries are going into the green list, the Olympics has been sort of the main thing.

I'm Claire, I'm a foot health practitioner - self employed. And basically, I think it's all been covered by fires in Greece and Turkey and the climate change and everything.

So first of all, some really basic questions. Just right back to sort of first principles, really, how important is the environment? As a thing for you, for you personally? How important is it to you?

Well, personally, being a mother, I do fear what the world is coming to, what sort of future my children are going to have. And obviously the way things are going now it seems to be accelerating quite quickly. Obviously when I was younger, there was, you know, a clear summer, a clear winter, from what I can remember and now it just seems to be blurred with the flooding, not just in this country. I know we've suffered before with the rivers bursting and things but there's other countries over the last 12 months that have had severe flooding in Europe, when they don't usually have it and all these fires starting up in Australia last year. Obviously the temperature's going up when those fires are starting. Because it's too hot. It's just too hot.

It's obviously very important, like you just said it's long term, you could almost be excused for sort of not doing anything, but it's obviously very much, you know, stuff

you do now will sort of echo and yeah, obviously it's important for the next generation.

Yeah, I think it's very important. I think the clear divide in seasons, when I was younger, that was the same for me. I don't have children or anything like that so it's a selfish point of view of things I think for me, but I like to know I can sunbathe. But yeah, for the future, I think the children and what to expect for them.

Well, I think it's hugely important. But I have to be honest, for me, I would say it's only been about the last 10 years. And I do have children, and I didn't really contemplate it a lot prior to that. I think I'm influenced by certain things. We've heard about climate change for a long time, but it depends what I'm shown and what changes I can be encouraged to make. For instance, we get milk delivered by milk men, it cost me a hell of a lot more. But for me, it was a really small change as a family we could make. So for me, I'd say there has only been in the last 10 years. Yeah, I'd probably say that. If you asked me about what it's like, the ice caps are melting, I don't live in an icy country and so why does it matter. But as I've got older, I definitely think I'm more aware, it seems more important, and I'm more interested in what small changes each sort of individual family can make.

Okay. What do other people have to say? It's something you think about day to day?

Honestly probably not. But it's almost a subconscious thing, I suppose, isn't it. But yeah, I'm probably guilty of not thinking about it every day, but certainly in the news it always highlights stuff and then you sort of think a bit more about it for a while, but I suppose it's about having that longevity and putting things in place.

You know, you're going to see a lot of social media, like on your Facebook, Instagram, their newsfeed, but you don't really tend to think about that. First you want to go on your phone and have a little look, that's because you tend to be like this is happening.

Okay. So Holly touched on there about the last 10 years? Is it becoming more or less important?

Becoming more important, I think it's accelerating a lot faster than anybody expected it to be. I mean, I didn't know when I was younger. I heard things flying around about the hole in the ozone. And then about 10 years later, I heard that it was closing itself up again. I was like, well, that's good news. I didn't understand back then, I knew there was gases up in the air. And you know, they were worried about the world cooling, because all the heat was escaping, I think. That was a long time ago. But now, it feels like the earth is obviously warming up too much and has a knock on effect on everything.

In terms of importance, probably no change. But the younger generation seems to be obviously more proactive about it.

They are more aware now. More schools talk about it as well.

I think I'd say it has always been the same. I think the same people are banging on about it and telling us and I just think the way we communicate is different. So I think what you say about the young people is right, because of social media, it's more in your face. For me, I am probably picking up more information for things on social media, if a trusted friend is sharing something, I am more likely to read it, potentially believe it, whereas actually the media is being slanted constantly, aren't they for, you know, what their views and opinions are. So you're a little bit less likely, I think, to believe what, say, one news reel is telling you whereas when your friend shares it, I know they're an intelligent person or you know, I know they're into that kind of thing. So I think it's always been there. I think they've been telling us the same story from day one, just how we hear it.

Who are these people banging on about as you said, well, who are these who does bang on about that?

Oh, for me, it's always been David Attenborough. That's the only person I can think of, that for me, has always been like spearheading that kind of thing.

In recent years, Greta Thunberg.

What about climate change? Is that sort of part and parcel of the environment, or is that something a bit different? I mean, how important is that?

I think we're probably on the same wavelength, overall it's going to have a massive impact on the next generation. So I think wherever it's climate change or the environment, you've got to look at it in the same way, you've got to look at ways to resolve or make small changes.

Yeah, I think they go hand in hand, don't they.

I think everyone is trying to make changes. I'm quite a big Daily Mail fan. But then, again, sometimes they're not always correct in what they're putting in.

What is climate change?

In my mind, it's like maybe the weather we have now in October is completely different than what it was 10 years ago. So it kind of effects that isn't it

It affects farming, agriculture, and things like that. If you come from like a UK point of view, if you think about the rainforest and things like that, the animals, the insects, its the biodiversity isn't it? It's that butterfly effect which has a knock on - if that Caterpillar doesn't come out of its shell at a certain time.

And it's not just about our food, its the food we grow to feed the animals that we eat, as well. So you know, the bees are finding it harder and harder to survive in the current climate. So that's just one example of how you know all the pesticides that we use are killing off the insects. And it's okay trying to make organic but you've got one farmer who's spraying his crops, you get a bee on that crop, and then he flies on to an organic crop. So it's all affected, it's all got a knock on effect. And it starts with the smaller bits that you don't see on a daily basis. It's not just how much you drive your car, or what type of car you drive, it's what you're eating and what you're using.

So does anybody doubt the importance of climate change? Anybody?

Yes. I never genuinely believed in it. And I think that's why, I probably didn't start, until about 10 years ago, taking any notice. I thought it was a lie to be honest

And then what changed?

The weather - it is genuinely the weather. They talked about the ice caps melting and things like that but we didn't see anything. And even like the freak, flooded like tsunamis and things like that. They said it was climate change and records show that that does happen occasionally. As devastating as it is. But as I'm getting older, yeah, the fact that, you know, August is wet. Never ever had that.

When I was younger, August was always the hottest month.

It's been wet. But we haven't even heard about hosepipe ban, whereas I remember that being such a big thing when I was younger. Not had one of them in a long time.

Does anyone here tonight, have any doubts in their mind about climate change? You all sound relatively convinced.

No doubts in terms of what we're trying to do to stop it or slow it down effectively. But I think for me, the only thing that I do find annoying and frustrating is that it seems to be no matter what we do as a country you sort of think of other countries that are sort of really heavily polluting. And will it actually make that much of a dent from what we're doing? That's my concern.

I agree with that. Because obviously, we will make small changes, we recycle as much as we can. But my thing is, we wouldn't have to recycle as much if the supermarkets

were taking more responsibility for what they package and how they transport. We wouldn't have to make so many changes. I think the blame is being pushed on to the consumers more than the people that are producing these products and items and will be quite happy to get a bargain from poundland. But that just means that more things have been shipped over from China and the impact of those things been sourced and made cheaply and shipped over and more and more people want them because they are cheaper. So that has a bigger effect as well

It's not that I don't want things to be affordable. When people look at things like they're more disposable, like your clothes. Yeah, I'm guilty of it. I'll go to Primark, I'll buy my children's clothes because they're cheap and they grow out of them quickly. But you've got to think back to where those materials are sourced and how they're sourced and I've seen documentaries of water being polluted. There's a whole ocean, that is an inland ocean, that's been dried up because they diverted it to grow cotton to provide for these mass production companies. And so these companies, although they say they try and source organically, which they are trying to do with recycled plastics turning them into materials it's not going fast enough.

Yeah, I think we can all do our small bits. We can probably afford to make those small changes. I can afford to change my milk from carton to glass bottle. But actually, we don't represent the whole population do we? How many people can afford to purchase their children's clothes, when they grow out of them every three months so you can't afford to buy clothes that are sustainably sourced and things like that - it's not it's not doable. And also I'm more than happy to make my own changes, the small changes, but I definitely think there's a bigger source that should be dealing with it. We're talking about the petrol changing so there's going to be all of these cars that are not going to work. I understand that is better for the environment but is it genuinely better for the environment because what's gonna happen with all those vehicles?

Okay, let's go over that stuff in a minute. Have you experienced anything lately that's worried you about the environment? What are the things have you learned or perhaps thought or are worrying about?

There's been a lot more sort of forest fires in specific areas like South Africa and the Americas and parts of America. And obviously that's quite worrying because a lot of wildlife has suffered from that. That seems to be increasing, whether it's more that the reporting has increased. I find with social media that's kind of increased the platform that people have got so you sort of hear more about it don't you? So that's one thing

The fires were the one thing that you kind of look at the news. And here's the one thing that's worrying - not five minutes down the road you've got the new forest and

they've got got obviously of resources that if there's a wildfire, to help them out, but it's not to say that it couldn't have happened anywhere

Okay, so it feels like some people sort of saying yeah, these things are bad but they're quite far away. Does it feel like a threat to you personally?

No. Directly no.

But I suppose the longer it goes on it will be

Yeah like it's getting a little bit closer but I don't know. In the UK with things it always feels like that we're just a little bit further away.

Okay. And these things, are they definitely because of climate change or not?

We're told so by the media, the news, you watch the news, you read up on your phone, social media

I'm not a scientist and I'm not a news reporter. So I just have to go what the professionals what I would class as a professional has relayed on to be put out to us

If suddenly people have got a platform to put a video online, you know, people then take that and share it. It's not necessarily a professional view is it, someone's had the easy platform to share it. Some of the conspiracy theories. I think people find it hard to trust those sources.

I think more people believe what they see on social media that is then shared by other people. They're only given a one-sided opinion. But then again, you could say the news, the BBC, or the ITV only give you their opinion.

So is that sort of particularly relevant to the environment debate? Is there a side of the environment debate you trust a bit less?

In terms of the reporting? Yeah, I suppose if you don't trust the source, and you're not going to sort of pay much attention to that story

It depends on what the current theme is, doesn't it? And what is the theme at the moment, everyone will have assumed there is a political agenda, to whatever the current thing we're talking about, whether it's climate change, or the Olympics. I think we, as a nation are becoming a little bit wiser to it. We've always told the truth.

So what does that mean for your views on climate change? Does that mean, there's a bit of doubt in your mind or not really?

No, because I think I can see it for myself. I do think I can see it for myself

I remember seeing something about a guy in California, like a multi-millionaire, who had bought I think hotels on the edge of a cliff or something. And he was saying that there was no insurance policy that mentioned anything to do with climate change, and that none of it is true, basically, because there's nothing that they're trying to insure against. Whereas if they've spoken about it for so long, and that is definitely happening, there would be clauses in because basically these billionaires are putting the money into certain things. And they wouldn't be stupid enough to do it basically if there was enough information to say that it was happening. So I think there is like a flip side of like research and stuff. So you see something like that and you think, oh.

I believe climate change is happening. Just not necessarily convinced why or what the issues are causing it. Because I think if you're going back to each root thing, there probably is someone that financially benefits from us believing that that's the problem.

This brings us to another question. Net Zero. Anyone heard that phrase? Put your hand up?

I've definitely heard it. I have heard net zero being thrown around. But I wouldn't be able to say what it is.

So this is a target that the government has to reduce carbon emissions to the point that we as a country are taking the same amount of carbon out of the atmosphere as we're emitting as a country. So it means that it becomes net zero. And the government's target is to do that by 2050. So tell us about what we've heard about that.

It is purely the date that popped up in the news, either last night or this morning, that we want to be carbon neutral by 2050. That's the bit stuck in the mind, the 2050.

What have other people heard?

We were talking about that a while ago, but I don't feel like I've heard as much about that recently.

I think they moved the goalposts. I think the goalposts move forward or backwards. I can't remember what it was supposed to be originally but I think they've moved the goalposts.

What do you think about that net zero aim target? Is that the right target/wrong target?

Certainly the right target to have, but whether it's achievable or not, especially in that time frame.

And what are they going to do to support people to hit that target because I don't know about anybody else but I can't afford to buy an electric car right now. Or have the electric installed in my home to charge that car so that I can then go out to work, or charge the car whilst I'm on the road for work?

Yeah, okay. All right, what do other people think?

We both paid for the electric because it's going to be more than the petrol you put in your car and it's going to be more probably to have it serviced and have it MOT'd because the more electricity is or the more computers you put into a product, the less likely you're going to be able to get Bob around the corner to come and fix it.

On the target before we go into details then. So what you want to see perhaps?

Tell us how it's going to be done and tell us what you expect us to achieve by 2050.

Darren, you mentioned, you said, you're optimistic in that timeframe. Does that mean you think that's quite soon or not?

I think the targets for the targets they've set, I think is too soon. It depends what happens in the next year. Take all these electric cars, you don't know there might be a bit of resistance. I mean, have they stopped making them petrol cars now? No it was diesel. But honestly, it's gonna be that lag there as well with people that want to keep a petrol car. And they'll keep it, if they look after it, for 10 to 15 years, or even longer if it's a new car at that point. Yeah, I don't know, I think it's gonna take a lot longer than that, really.

I think it's an optimistic time frame. Because I haven't yet lived 30 years, I can't see huge changes being made. If I look at changes that have been made based around climate change, I don't think there have been many. So I can't imagine, I know technology is moving forward and things like that, but I can't imagine a huge, huge impact on the whole world.

We've talked about some of the negatives that we'll touch on, and we'll come back to those. But just before we do any benefits to this net zero plan? There's

obviously the obvious thing about the climate that we've talked about, but are there any other benefits so you can have changes in attitude?

Its awareness, isn't it as well, and hopefully people will start to listen if there's a target to be achieved, and people know where they're going with it, then they might get on board. But as I say, I think going back to the car thing, I think there's gonna be a resistance from certain people that aren't really sure at all.

Okay, we'll come on to that. Any other benefits of this net zero agenda you can think of?

How many are gonna profit from it? Tesla? Elon Musk? Anyone that's already got that money. They can invest in all these new technologies that are going to roll out to replace old products and services.

If these people are going to benefit, do you think people like you will benefit?

I've got money to invest in their companies. And if I've got a stockbroker, who tells me which it would be the best to invest in.

I don't think any of us are probably going to financially benefit. It's highly unlikely that there's not going to be grants. It's not going to be like COVID is it? You're not going to get a grant to be helped out to buy an electric car. That's not going to be available. So I don't think we will financially benefit. But I'd like to think future generations are going to benefit.

What about jobs and stuff about jobs, are there any benefits there?

It will create, but I've heard a story saying that a lot of these that do get created, they're not sustainable. So the project ends, it is short term. It will create jobs, but I think there's a bit of a downside to it.

It's gonna take jobs away. My cousin he's a gas engineer. And they're planning to not have any gas boilers installed, or any gas to put in new houses. So eventually, the people that do that job, won't have that job. So then they're going to have to support themselves to retrain. Or are the government going to support them to retrain to be able to continue? Because he's going to have to then learn to install electrics as well as maintain the old gas. So people like who will lose their jobs, what will their jobs be replaced with? Will there be support for them?

What about in your local area? Will it create new jobs or not? Can you think of any examples of sort of greener jobs or industries?

I think it will take jobs away.

I think there will be quite a lot around the marine industry? I think that's becoming more green locally. I know a lot of their [university] courses are more around sort of the marine industry being greener.

There's not a sort of sense in you guys that there's a biofuel or carbon capture industry or anything like that you can see. What about the government? Lets talk a bit more about this net zero thing. Obviously there's just 30 years to deliver, this target. Are the government doing enough at the moment?

We don't really know about this. They've mentioned, you know, the target. But there's not really any update.

Like the COVID. We don't know what the plan is? We need to know what each step of the way is, and what they expect us to do.

With COVID, its just made the government that little bit more accountable by each day. What was it, all 50 year olds or over 50s to be vaccinated? Then we had a clear roadmap.

Yeah. It's like accountability, that.

Okay. What kind of thing could they be doing more of that?

They should be telling us what they plan, what they're aiming and what they want us to do

Can anyone name anything they are doing?

Well they're sort of putting a plan in place for that, aren't they? But to me, that seems to be one of the only things that sort of been focused on, I think, so more of that's needed.

Yeah, there's a lot of discussion around the diesel, the petrol, the electric cars. But we don't hear about how does that impact industry? We're talking about buying things from China and things like that. But I've not personally heard anything about what the government are going to do in terms of industry because [China] have got to be a bigger polluter than what everyone sat in this room is.

I know there's certain grants available for home improvements, as in solar power or updating your boilers. I know there was one recently during the COVID, a grant that you could have your front doors and windows upgraded, you could apply for a

certain percentage for that. I did look into it and even though my windows are leaking, like I don't qualify, because I you know, there are certain rules within it. It was mainly wooden frame, single pane windows, but they didn't tell you that they just said oh, yeah, you get new windows and doors, and it's like, oh, no, I can't actually because you know, they've been replaced within 25 years. So there is help out there and people think that they can get help, but when you actually read the small print...

What do you think is needed to get to that carbon neutral UK? How do we think that's going to affect the UK, what needs to happen and what is the impact it's going to have?

There needs to be a bit more of a sort of meet in the middle, it's alright to say that we need to buy more locally sourced stuff and all that but really, everyone here is going to go for the sort of cheaper option in most cases, because you can't actually afford to do everything correctly. And there's no meeting in the middle, the price goes so much higher for stuff that is local. If they lowered the price to be you'd be more inclined to actually get you to go for it.

What are the impacts? What do you think is going to help the UK in the next 30 years? Is it going to mean changing jobs? Is it going to mean more debt? Is it going to mean higher prices?

We need the government. That's why we need them to communicate with us and tell us what we're aiming for. Because if we don't know what we are personally aiming for, how do we know what to expect? And then is it going to cause a rift, between the rich and poor? The rich get richer and the poor are going to get poorer, because the poor can't afford to pay. So what is it that they're aiming for?

It's got the impact for unemployment hasn't it. So you say that would include getting rid of diesel. So that person has to get rid of their diesel vehicle or however they do it they make the tax so high that you can't afford to tax it, that person potentially loses their job. Yeah, suppose unemployment would be the highest thing I can think of.

So you think the number of jobs will go up or go down?

I think it will even off because the jobs are going to be lost, but also you're going to gain from these new projects and so I think it'll be interesting to see how that actually sort of balances out. But I think it will be quite even too

Yeah, I'd probably say the same. We're gonna lose certain kind of businesses and mostly certain job opportunities, but it's only going to balance out with new jobs

coming through the pipeline as well. So I agree it would probably would even itself out.

What about levels of sort of government government debt. Will that go up or go down?

Yeah, I think probably go up because it always does.

Yeah, it will go up. It always goes up.

And it'll probably go up. Because let's be fair, the UK are going to donate to other countries to help them achieve the same thing.

Okay, is that the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do?

We're talking head or heart. Heart says yeah, that's absolutely the right thing to do. It's one world isn't it and the UK can't impact climate change solely, but with high levels of unemployment, for what they are, I think we do need to maybe keep a little bit more money here.

So how worried are you about this net zero target in terms of how it might impact yourselves? Are you not worried at all, a bit worried, very worried?

Honestly, at the moment, I would say not worried. But then again, it's not impacting us at the moment. In the back of my mind, there's a bit of doubt with everything. So I think slight worry, for sort of the next 10-15 years.

Right now, probably not very worried, because I don't think it would change my job, or anything like that. It wouldn't impact me directly. But I think wider, it will have quite a big impact on the job thing. I think there'll be more unemployment. So you think that that generation who are trained in something specific would lose their job, I don't know if they would then retrain into something else or have to start from scratch or whether it would just be a case of I can't do that. So I think unemployment would grow based on that. And I think there would be more of a class divide based on that.

Yeah, again, I'd say at the moment probably not as worried as it should be. But again, it's an age thing.

And what do you expect for you personally? What would you expect the impact to be?

I to have to make changes to my house, because there will be a time where I won't be able to replace my gas boiler with another gas boiler. So then I would probably have to have my whole house rewired to support electrical heating. And my car - I won't be able to continue to drive the car that I'm used to, and as I said, charge my car. Hopefully by the time I have to get an electric car, it will be able to recharge itself. So yeah as a homeowner I have to think about what changes would have to be made to my house, and obviously as a person who uses a vehicle to get to her job I'd have to think about the impact of that on my work.

Yeah, I don't think it is going to change my daily normal life because I don't really do much that would affect my daily life apart from living in my house and driving my car.

The next big thing is the cars to be fair. You can't go on using the cars you're using now in 6-7 years, you'll have to replace it at some point in the future. The next big thing will be electric cars and its the price of that and the price of installing that and that will lead to electric charges and everything.

Is that why they've got the scooters about now to stop or encourage people not to drive?

Yeah hopefully things like when I go to buy a lettuce its hopefully not going to be wrapped in plastic. Its got its own protective film, I'm just going to take off the top leaves. I'd love for there to be changes like that in the supermarket. I would love to sort of see our food not being wrapped, I'd like to see them just stop providing bags.

What about taxes? You expect those to change or not?

Yeah, they'll go up, they go up every year.

Especially if the debt is going up, taxes are gonna rise.

And is that because of net zero?

Not specifically, it happens, it just happens

I think it just happens and I don't think the government is always careful with the money that they charge us to live in this country

But it'll go on our surroundings won't it. You can't stop someone driving a diesel vehicle but you can make it financially impossible so the taxes go up to purchase the diesel and in the next phase no one is gonna buy it, and its going to trundle on like that.

Okay, but what your income tax is going up to pay for net zero, do you see that happening or not?

It goes up all the time anyway, its gone up hugely anyway hasn't it

Companies will be impacted won't they? I think corporation tax will take a hit, because they will be expected to implement stuff I'd imagine.

I disagree, I don't think they're gonna be the people hit. My genuine belief is that most people in the central government probably have some financial interest in bigger corporations and industry, and I don't think the increase is gonna be hit the hardest there. I think it's going to be the average person. Because we've been told it was the straws before, we're told it's the straws, the plastics, the carrier bags, not all the stuff that the industries are pumping into the oceans.

What about prices you pay in shops, do you expect that to change?

I don't know if anyone else has noticed but my food shop has gone up. Since a year and a half ago, I've been spending 30-40 pounds per week more and I'm not buying any more. It has gone up already. It creeps up a little bit and they try not to let you notice but it's all going up.

I think it's the same as with the organic stuff now. There's a surcharge effectively isn't there? And it would just be the same across the board with most prices I'd imagine. If I bought an organic product or something that is environmentally friendly, if they advertise it as if it's helping the environment then there will be an increased price to it.

If its a carbon neutral product its been zoomed down by electric cars down the road it will be three times more expensive than if shipped down from Spain.

Being environmentally friendly is starting to get more expensive, why is that?

Because they like people to buy into it, they want people to think they're doing the right thing. By doing your bit to protect the environment - if you buy your lettuce without the plastic on it at twice the price because you're helping the environment. And it makes you as a consumer feel better about yourself when really all they needed to do was not put the plastic on the lettuces and then they would equal.

Sounds like there is a lot of suspicion from you guys on companies and the pricing of packaging. Is that fair?

I think they need to take more responsibility. They tell us we need to recycle, and yet we're going to wrap your food in all this plastic and all of this stuff, material that can't be recycled

It would just be so easy for them not to do that. Just gives somebody else a job, doesn't it, to wrap up like cucumber.

See I don't blame the TESCOs for that, I blame the government. I think that gets passed on by EU laws that certain things have to have that, to be packaged, you know what I mean? To get to you, to get to the consumer.

I don't think it's the government. Well maybe, but I know that TESCO can't sell a potato if it's too big or if it's too small. They can't sell you a wonky cucumber or carrot, without telling you its wonky.

Why is that?

Because of standards.

That's the EU laws isn't it? They can sell you a wonky carrot but you're more likely to buy a straight carrot because you've been programmed to buy a straight carrot. If you grew your own wonky carrot you'd eat your own wonky carrot.

Quote of the evening. What about heating costs, do we expect that to change?

My bill is absolutely ridiculous. I'm forever phoning EDF to ask if I've got some sort of neighbours tapping in. We have gas and electricity in our house, so I think if it was all electricity, it would be double or more than that. For my bill I think electricity is 60-65%.

Oh yes, my electricity bill was horrendous. When you think about what you're getting paid, that's a big chunk out of your wages.

I suppose the only good thing is you get a lot more competition, there are a lot more providers but they all slip into those prices.

So will you have to change the way you heat your home or not?

Well no, because some people have log burners installed to take down their heating bills, and then they were told their log burners are doing more damage to the environment than the electricity or gas they were buying in the first place. So you can't win either way. You try and make it what you would think is a more sustainable way of heating a big room in your house by turning off the radiator, or just using one room with your log burner, but then you're told you're polluting the air even more.

I'm just finding this really funny, we're all talking about electric, and I get that because that's what they're pushing it towards especially with the vehicles and all like that, but a lot of what I've seen or read, only because I drive an electric car and I'm quite interested in it (and I've done that for environment reasons, I genuinely thought I was doing good for the environment), is that to make the batteries and components for my car - the cost to the environment from all that is probably going to be more than a petrol vehicle. So yeah in the long-term I'm doing better, but what damage did I do, in terms of manufacturing, when I purchased the car?

Okay. Let's zoom out for a second. We've spoken about government, what about people in general? Are they doing enough for the environment?

Probably not in the majority. How can you monitor that day to day? You could recycle once a week but are you recycling properly? They've said a lot of the damage comes from that actually. Maybe it's made of tin and it's chucked in the recycling and that's actually done more damage than if you put that in the normal rubbish.

Do you think people will do these things?

The people that are doing it now will continue to.

Some people can't, can they?

Some people I think just don't care do they? And they don't care to check. Obviously they put their newspapers and their cardboards in the recycling bin but you've got to look at the label. But also, I don't think the signs are big enough. You have to look for it to know whether or not it's recyclable and they can send you leaflets in the post from the council to tell you what you can and can't recycle, but not everything is on that list.

Okay. For those of you who said some won't do it, why would that be, why would they not do it?

It could be because of time, if you're in a rush in the morning and you're chatting to someone, you're not going to go 'oh that can be recycled and that can't be.' There's so many factors to it.

And umm children.

It's also about what is available. Within a block of flats there's one recycling bin for say 10 flats, and 2 or 3 normal bins, if the recycling bin is full and the normal bins are empty, then someone is going to throw their recycling in the normal bin. You're not

going to take it back upstairs are you, or save it for next week, in the hope there should be some space.

But it's not just recycling. It's packaging stuff, it's the car stuff, it's everything isn't it?

What holds you back from doing more?

Convenience, a pretty life, money.

I think we as a family are quite environmentally conscious. I know for example my husband likes to buy clothes from certain brands who donate money to climate change and things like that, sort of sustainably resourced. To be honest I don't want to pay that price myself, and I think it will always come down, for me, to money.

What about this idea that a few of you have touched on, about other countries? About other countries doing stuff. Does that come to your mind?

I think it's more for me when you hear that we're not doing enough. And then if you are making an effort to buy the right things, then you sort of think 'then why am I doing this?'

What would you do there?

Well you know, I suppose I would sit down with the government to have a link between them all to try and improve their end, but that's absolutely, that's beyond us isn't it. We can only do what we're asked to in this country and hope that others follow us.

But that exists already doesn't it, with the summits and things like that, it's just who is paying the most attention. I know personally when I'm trying to think of how to be more environmentally conscious, I try not to think about other countries not doing their part. I think change starts with us doesn't it.

I don't consider what other people are doing really, I don't really at all. That would not impact my decision on whether to do it.

Who do you trust most then as a voice on these environmental issues?

David Attenborough!

I don't really trust anyone.

Scientists.

But the scientists don't really talk to us do they? And that's the problem - it's then relayed to us through somebody else, like the government and the media. If the scientists phoned me up and said you know 'come on you need to do this,' I'd be like 'Yeah okay I will.'

I'd want to know who is paying the bills cause they're not all independent are they?

Well they're paid by whoever - the big corporations, the government.

Chanel, you said you don't really trust the BBC? What made you say that?

I don't, no, but that's not really a conversation for today. Just stuff that's happened. Yeah, I don't trust them.

What about these summits? Holly mentioned that they sort of get together and say things, is that trustworthy or not trustworthy?

Again I'm sure someone is financially benefiting from it, and when they take a jet to get there I think you could have done it on zoom like the rest of us had to do for the last year and a half. You could have done it on zoom but no, you have to parade your wives and families on the beach while you're all in there making the next decisions for the rest of the world.

So let's talk about some of these things that people actually want us to be able to do on net zero. Tell me what you're doing or not, put your hand up if you'd do it tomorrow. So getting an electric car instead of a petrol or diesel car. Can you see yourself doing that anytime soon? Someone here already has, if not, why not?

No, they're very expensive aren't they? I suppose you could get a lease.

I like the look of certain cars and I don't like them. I think electric cars all look like spaceships, and if I didn't have to buy one I wouldn't. So no, I wouldn't do it tomorrow no, I'd be one of those waiting around a bit longer than others

I'm the same. If my car broke down, say, tomorrow, I know I could afford to get a decent petrol car. Whether I could get a decent electric car with the same kind of spec, you're not going to get one.

What about charging points and things I think you mentioned earlier, is that a worry or not so much?

I mean, there's plenty of them around at the moment, but as more and more people get electric cars then there's going to be less and less points available. So are they going to install them at the same rate that they're selling them to people. Or are you going to turn up I mean, you've already got to wait you know, half an hour for example to get back home from Tesco, but then you've got to wait half an hour to use the charging point because somebody else is already doing their monthly shop and you got to wait for him to finish.

I'm thinking about it though, and I might be completely off the ball with this, but that along most of our roads it would be self-charging anyway. It might have just been motorways, I'd heard. So in the road they have a wireless charging thing so as we are driving, you will be able to go further for longer. And there is a big government initiative in here, that you will only be so many miles away from a charging point.

What about residential streets, are they gonna do those? Cause then we'd have to pay to have these installed.

I don't know, just that you will only be a certain amount of miles away from a charging point.

What about another one – not rinsing your plates every time you put the dishwasher on? Who'd do that, put your hand up. I think the idea is you use less water.

It's not a bin, is it, a dishwasher? Then you'd be buying a new dishwasher because it would get clogged up. So I wouldn't do that tomorrow, no.

What about replacing your gas boiler with a hydrogen boiler or a heat pump?

I just replaced the gas boiler, and its cost isn't it.

Yeah, and if I didn't have to do it tomorrow, if there wasn't someone banging on my door saying we've shut off your gas you can't heat your house, I wouldn't do it tomorrow because my boiler is fine, its just been replaced.

Yeah, same, it's been about a year and a half and it'd be the cost issue for me.

And the aesthetics. I know what that's gonna look like, what we're gonna stick on the side of a house or something. Not interested. Plus I don't know much about hydrogen other than that it sounds a little bit flammable. I trust gas, it smells.

So anybody else picked up on that, on what Holly said about it being dangerous or not?

I don't know

We don't know anyone who has got a hydrogen boiler

So how much do you think those will cost?

I got no idea, but you said if it was a pound, then I would do it. Or maybe a tenner.

So if they said you know the government is aiding you we'll pay for it would you do it?

No, because it's not free from the government, is it?

What about the rest of the house? Are you gonna pay to rip out all the pipe work and the damage? Because I like the way my house looks I don't want it all torn out.

I don't trust those government initiatives around your home that come in or are environmentally friendly. I had the cavity wall insulation installed for free, which was probably a couple of grand, but then had to pay myself to have it removed because it made the home damp. So for me I do not trust that.

Okay, interesting. You're sort of saying 'don't touch my house'

Well yeah. I work hard, and I've bought my house and I want to run it the way I want to. I spent a lot of money on my house. They're already telling me what I can do in public, don't tell me what I can do in my personal home.

What about no longer buying plastic bottles of shower gel or water?

I've started

I just buy shower gel and I recycle it when I finish.

I've already started using shampoo bars instead of bottles of shampoo and I use soap instead of shower gel anyway because I just prefer the smell of it.

What about eating less meat? Who would do that? This is to try and get this net zero target. What makes you hesitate?

I enjoy my meat. You got to go to a bar and they have burgers and hotdogs and you'd rather that than just some fake meat to be honest.

I think there are not many pleasures left in this life and eating a bit of steak is one of them. And I don't like to be told I can't do it. And I like when I'm driving past fields of cows you know what I mean? It's not something I would do tomorrow. Obviously if the world is going to end, I would.

So we've talked about an impact on prices, we've talked about an impact on taxes. We've talked about some of the things there that people are suggesting that you guys should do. How are we feeling about this net zero thing now? More positive or more negative?

I suppose part of the half of the questions you've asked, we've obviously been not very willing, I suppose. We're a bit more negative towards it!

I'm willing to make changes, but I don't want to be forced to make certain changes. And I don't want to be impacted financially.

It has to be feasible. You say about the changes with the boiler - it's got to be doable for everybody.

I mean, if this has this impact, where, you know, the average household might have to pay, let's say, you know, a few 100 pounds more in tax a year. If that's to help get to this target, anyone here happy do that?

If they give me a car, if they give me a boiler, I'd quite happily pay 300 pounds a year. But if I have to pay 300 pounds a year, and pay for an income and pay for a new boiler to meet those expectations, and I haven't got job security, then I can't afford to do that.

Yeah, I would say the same at the moment, if I'm bringing X amount and I've been asked to put in a new boiler and buy a new car. But at the moment I've got a decent boiler with a decent car. Why would you? Why would you want to?

At the moment, I'm gonna say working for the public sector - absolutely not, you're not going to get another 300 quid out of me willingly. Because you can't put my wages up, I'm on a pay freeze. You're not, you're not going to get extra money out of me. Cut your expenses back and pay for it that way.

Yeah, same as that given I am also working in the public sector. I think a couple of 100 pounds doesn't sound like a lot per year per household. But if those other things aren't added in for free, and those costs are coming to everybody else as well, then yeah, we'll be willing to.

Yeah, I would probably go with these guys. You know, if you save and had to pay, say 300 pounds, but then you were then given it back in some way, in that respect I think that would be okay, but at a push. At a push. Because you know, our wages are tight and they're never going up.

Sounds like you're leaning more No than Yes. Is that fair?

I think if there was a guarantee. So if they said by 2050, we guarantee that this would be paid, we'd be at net zero. And we require you to do this, this and this. But there won't be a guarantee because the goalposts will move and I think people would be less willing to do anything more than like the little wins, I think, because people are doing those anyway.

It would be incremental targets. So instead of this 2050, almost like what we're aiming to get here by 2020. Yeah. And then show us the results. And then the next one's 30.

Yeah, that's that roadmap thing again. By 2030 we will have done so and so, this is the support we'll put in place to ensure that happens.

And then yeah, they can show the results, you'd probably be more willing to say actually, that they've made these changes in five years.

Let's say that tax rises, price rises. Some of the things we've talked about - the gas boiler and some things. How would you feel if these actually did happen? That it was announced, you know, over the next couple of weeks or over the next 10 years, you were going to have to pay out for these changes. You were going to have to pay for more tax, stuff in the shops were going to cost more. How do you feel?

There'll be a lot more people protesting in London about the control. I mean, with the whole lockdown and COVID situation there's been protests about people being controlled and not wanting to wear the mask. And I think more people would start standing up and saying no. Unless you support us in this, we can't live and achieve your targets without your support.

I'm not gonna panic, for one reason, I think is probably working for the local authority. All we do is have change of structure and leadership. And 2050 is a long way off. Is it going to be the same government? Is that going to be their agenda? You've only ever got to plan for about four years before something's going to change.

And the same conversation with another group last night, and they were a bit more anti than you actually. But when I asked, you know, how would you feel if that happened, everybody looked kind of shocked?

That's what I'm saying, you don't really have much of a choice do you? It's tax, you have to pay it.

It's kind of taken out your hands.

Yeah. So I'd be furious, I'd be slagging off the government and I already do that.

So I think that I think directly, none of us would be able to do anything, none of us can directly oppose a company. So you just get on with that.

But it depends on you, and how much of an impact it would have.

What about voting for someone else?

It's the same as with this COVID situation isn't it? Whoever is in, it's difficult, they seem to change like the wind. Whatever one party is doing, they seem to just argue that point and then do very similar. And it's a closed shop.

So what I'm gonna do is I'm going to show you some headlines, and I want you to just imagine that's a real thing that's been announced. Just think of your reactions. Positive, negative? So "motorists hit with a new tax for using petrol cars. But going electric means less tax than before." How do you feel about that?

I could see that happening, because it's kind of happening already with certain emissions as you pay more tax. So I suppose that's one that you probably just have to pay isn't it.

That is nearly what is happening. One type of petrol is being phased out. The next one is already electric, and it isn't being taxed so heavily.

So how do you feel emotionally seeing that?

There's no right or wrong answer. But not like, not very emotive I would say.

I just think, oh my god, here we go, I'm out of pocket.

You're almost being forced into it.

So the off putting thing about it is just the price label of an electric car?

Yeah, pretty much, I'd say so. It's just nowhere near the price of a petrol car. There seems to be quite a gulf isn't there between that and a normal car.

Another one - "lower VAT on less polluting products, like electricity, or meat-free products"

Well, I think in a way, they kind of already do that with the sugar tax. So people will still buy full fat drinks because they like full fat drinks. So lowering the VAT is not going to stop me from eating a real burger.

That one feels positive? Yeah, when you read that I thought oh yeah, that's good.

You look at it and you think oh, it's a great idea. But again, it's the same kind with things I like - meat.

It's a lifestyle choice isn't it - I don't want to eat meat and I drive an electric car, lovely, I'm gonna pay less money.

Generally at the moment aren't meat free products more expensive?

Yeah, that would be weird because you can't mass produce that as much as you can.

Okay, so another one about "a VAT hike on polluting products, including meat, plastics and petrol"

That's the negative version

How do we how we react to that if that was a thing tomorrow?

Buy more meat!

Again, it's like with the sugar tax, people are still buying full fat drinks because that's what they want.

It would change my opinion on the government again, because despite the fact that I don't want to eat meat and drive an electric car that feels like the average man is being attacked again.

You keep coming back to this tone - attacked, singled out - do a lot of the things I've spoken about feel like that?

I think it's probably after this year and a half isn't it? Everybody has had enough

We don't get to make choices but we have to pay for them. People who have become a lot more sceptical.

So another one - "extra tax announced on international flights"

I suppose personally it wouldn't affect me too much because I go on a holiday abroad once a year maybe some people go twice.

I don't check the tax on the cost of the flight, do you?

Yeah you know you just look at the final product at the final price.

Yeah you'd factor it in as a part of your holiday - I can't afford to go there now, I'll go somewhere a little bit cheaper

You don't really factor in the tax, you look at the overall price and then that's it.

Does that mean it's a good thing or a bad thing?

Well it's a bad thing, because it is going to push up the price of your holiday, but you don't actually know that's where the money is going. We don't look at where the tax, we look at the overall price - so much per person, okay well I'm taking my family away - that's the cost of that holiday.

Yeah and you're actually trying to get away from all of that.

Another one - "new tax on households who do not heat their homes with electric, and a reduction in the cost for those who do use electric". What would you think if you saw that?

I'd have to take the hit because I can't afford to pay all the money right now to replace it, to be cheaper over a certain period of time. So I just have to take the hike over that period of time.

That would be my reaction. It just feels like we are being forced, there's nothing I can do about it. All I can do is roll my eyes because I'll have to pay tax.

I'd feel alright to be fair, my heating is already electric and so yeah I'd be alright with that.

But I'd feel bad for my parents and stuff who've got gas heat and stuff like that.

Yeah similar really. Reading that, it's a good idea, but in practice, it's worrying because you'd have to make a lot of changes wouldn't you.

I'm not saying you'd go out straight away and buy an electric heater, but if you had to have one you'd do it. You'd want to know more about it.

Another - "scrappage scheme introduced with payments for people who go electric with their cars"

That's good isn't it

Lots of cheap cars.

Yeah, it would depend on how much you're going to give me to change my car.

I personally had an experience where before we had the scrappage scheme, I couldn't afford a new car but because I've had that car for over 10 years, you were able to get on it, and it helped a lot. So if it was a similar scheme, then yeah, that's quite promising and that would probably push me to get an electric car, and it is quite a sizable deposit off.

It wouldn't force me to rush out and do it though. But I would definitely consider it if I needed a new car, but it wouldn't have forced me into doing it.

Where's the money going to come from?

Our pockets anyway!

Here's another one. "Landlords and homeowners are forced to install high grade insulation and low energy boilers before they are allowed to sell their homes"

The problem with that is that it would be incorporated into the selling price, wouldn't it. Because you'd sell higher, so you'd have to spend more when you're buying.

Yeah there's something similar already isn't there that on new houses anyway, on a new build, the government is just gonna sell it to you for a higher price if it's a new build.

It's not gonna affect me right now, I'm not bothered by it.

It would it be something to consider if I was going to be moving house.

I think it is unfair

I don't I don't think it's unfair because I think it is creating a standard.

It depends on the circumstances of you having to sell your house. If you're having to sell your house to pay for your care in a care home because the government won't support you because you are a homeowner so they won't give you any money to help you, and you then have to sell your home to pay for that care, you're then losing a lot of money because you're not allowed to sell your house until you've paid for that to be done. So you're losing out on your care and your future.

I agree with that

Final one - "a new import tax on products from polluting countries which have low environmental standards than the UK"

Again I'd roll my eyes, and the prices will go up in Primark - but they're still cheaper than the other shops.

For me that one is a positive - then we can essentially bring things back to the UK, more industry within the UK.

This would create more jobs as well.

Or if it just means that those companies have to then become less polluting, then I'm gonna feel less guilty.

Well why aren't the companies who are bringing in the polluted items not paying for that?

Yeah, but it would be passed on to us. Just because we're not necessarily paying the tax, we're going to be paying more for products because they want to still make their profit

Yeah I'd probably say the same. It really all depends where the money comes from. That's the problem.

Yeah, in principle it's great because it means that the other countries that are you know, bringing these products in, are going to have to think more about their processes. But obviously again it depends on the impact is on us.

A couple of final questions - so the UK makes up 1% of the world's emissions, China was 30%. Some say China they're not doing enough, so there's no point not doing anything until they do say. Others say actually, every little bit makes a difference, the UK should do their bit and try and set an example for others. Where do you think you are or are not?

There's no harm in practicing it yourself even if that is a huge, shocking stat. Yeah, I wouldn't change me recycling and you should still do your bit but that is quite disheartening knowing that it's probably 1% compared to China's 30%.

Yeah, but why is that, why are they 30%? Because they provide to the rest of the world and we don't produce what they produce. So the reason is because they're producing for us. We're bringing it over here. So we're not running the factories, making those products, so we're obviously bringing it in from somewhere. So it's still all worldwide.

Well, what do others think about those two different modes of thinking?

Yeah, I think we should maybe set an example. I think you've got to start somewhere.

So it sounds like you're saying, the China thing, big companies thing - it's annoying, it's frustrating, and it's disheartening. But it doesn't erode the weight of the thing?

We should still definitely try and make a difference. I think we are making a difference.

The 1% is probably going to make the 30% go up, because the battery of my electric car is definitely made in China.

Okay, final couple questions. Is there any political party, if we look just at the Conservatives and Labour for a second. Who's better at handling the environment? Green issues? Are those two?

I suppose considering that it's been highlighted for the last 10 years, it's hard to judge, isn't it? Because the Tories have been in from like 2008 or 2010, wasn't it? So it's hard to judge other parties on that, because they've been the only ones who have actually been in power.

I mean Boris Johnson does go to Scotland for his holiday!

They're doing just as much as anyone else, they're listening and putting processes in place, but again, it's it I think, whoever was in power, I just believe that we need more clarity. It's definitely hard to compare I'd say.

Okay, what about the Lib Dems? Any sense of their position on the environment?

No, not really.

They're not shouting, I don't think any of them are shouting loud enough

They're not standing out. The last vote was getting Brexit done. So it was based on who wanted to leave, who wanted to stay. That was the general consensus for the last vote. Nobody was saying, oh, I'm going to get Brexit done and I'm going to save the environment. It was mainly, you know, drumming it into you that it was just about Brexit. But this was obviously before anything else happened. So people that wanted to get it done, voted that way. And so I think people vote on their beliefs, and whoever shouts about them loud enough.

Have any of you changed your mind - based on the environment - in terms of how you voted?

Now, yes, but only because of what's been happening over the last few years. And if somebody was shouting out enough, then I would say, okay, you get my vote.

Based on the environment, probably not. The last year and a half means it's almost a poisoned chalice and it's sort of hard to sort of judge the Tories on the last year and a half. I mean, a lot of people will. But yeah, environmentally, I don't think it's been at the forefront of their sort of policies, because they've been dealing with Brexit and dealing with COVID.

And what about the Greens? Are you tempted by the Greens?

No, they're not big enough. It feels like a wasted vote.

Going back to the question of trust. I think you mentioned you've mentioned on David Attenborough, I think somebody else mentioned Greta Thunberg. And then obviously we've discussed scientists. Nobody mentioned any of the charities or any campaigners. How do you feel about them?

I don't trust them. I don't trust the labels on our food and things like that, that are all backed by charities and things like that. Like dolphin-friendly tuna, it's not dolphin friendly. You can just buy that logo. And for years I bought dolphin-friendly tuna

thinking I was doing something good until I realised that they could just buy that logo, charities and things like that.

But do you look into all of those charities like the fair trade, the co-op, the fair-trade thing with their products and things? Do you believe in those sorts of charities?

I don't believe in any of it, to be honest, I think someone's financially benefiting. I think if you look at their owners and things like that CEOs.

What do other people think about charities and agents?

I'd rather give to smaller local charities than larger charities.

We talked about the cost of tackling climate change throughout. I'm interested to know who thinks it should mostly be the government paying or should we be paying with our taxes?

It really sounds a bit wishy washy, but a bit of both? Obviously, we have to change our sort of lifestyle in certain aspects, but at the same time, it's meet in the middle, you need to see that you're not being charged for something. There's a lot of people in our generation, with this target set at 2050, who can be excused for saying I'm paying extra for something that I'm not going to benefit from. Certain people will feel like that yeah.

I think if you start bigger, it will be like a funnel. So if you start with the bigger companies, and then by the time it filters down to us, there's not going to be so much to contribute.

I think it should be between the government and the big businesses. And the small changes we make, you don't mind paying the extra for those things. But I don't think we should be taxed heavily or have to make these big changes within our homes that we've got to pay for, like if we've got to go out and buy electric cars. I think there should be some incentive from the world leaders.

Yeah, I think the same thing.

Say that the Labour and Conservatives, for instance, were saying that we will have to spend a lot of money doing these things. And they were saying there's lots of stringent rules saying that require you spend a lot of money on taxes. And if there was another party that came up out of nowhere and said, screw this, we're not doing a target we can't live with these costs, would that potentially be attractive?

It depends. If say the Conservatives and Labour are saying that that needs to be done to save the environment, then someone else has come along and said “don't worry about all that.” You almost wonder why, that's not the right sort of mindset.

I do think the world needs to be saved. And I do think we can have an impact on it eventually. But it's just what's the cost?

I do think that would be attractive to a lot of people though. And there'll be people who aren't thinking about anything else, and they told them you won't have to pay any taxes, don't worry about any of that, they'd go “wahey, that's jolly with me, get down the pub”. So it would not change my mind, but I think some people will be attracted by that.

Redcar Focus Group

Name, introductions, and something you've noticed in the news recently?

Sheila - pharmacist - in the morning I heard about Prince Andrew being taken to court

John - insurance loss assessor - climate change is in the news a lot, particularly the fires in Greece

John - electrician - fires in Greece

Mark - HGV driver - fires in Greece

Martin - works in primary school - Olympics

Tara - hairdresser - Olympics and Prince Andrew

Jeanette - care assistant in a nursing home - same as above, but the Afghan withdrawal too.

How important is the environment to you? Not at all? A bit?

A lot

I don't give a damn

It has become more important hasn't it, seen all the climate changes having big effects around the world... hot weather as well

On one hand I'm for it and on one hand I'm against it... I read somewhere that the British carbon footprint is less than 1%, and China's is all of the Western world put together, and nothing is said about them. We convince each other that 'we should be doing this' and 'we should be doing that' but it's the likes of China and India and Russia and America.... Even America doesn't compare to what China and India are putting out

China's easy to knock though, from that point of view, because they've got 5 billion people.... Compared to the Western world, you add up the Western world and you'd struggle to get near 5 billion people, and yet whole cities in China, I was watching the news about six months ago, and one city's got the whole of their bus fleet is electric. from doing that, and yet, we all hear the negative things about the world, they've got a whole city that's turning to electric buses. Why haven't we got that?

Human beings will always do what human beings are doing. They say that the environment is caused through human beings. What are we going to do about it? Yes, we've got to live, we've got to survive. And the earth is going to die. So as far as I'm concerned, we need to progress in life... It's costing billions and billions and billions of pounds of which we haven't got. There are other things, there are other more important to worry about. And I know people will say 'Oh, he's one of those Luddites' but we have to be human beings, what are we going to do to change things, we are all going to die, eventually the earth is going to die. I'm a great believer in Mother Nature, will do what it needs to do to survive. That means wiping the human race out, that's how it's going to be. So I'm a great believer in Mother Nature, and the way that the world is developing, it will do what it needs to do.

Ummm. I sway either way... it's not something I know a great deal. It's more, if I knew a lot more about it I'd have a strong opinion to sway either way, but I don't feel like we're educated enough to know 100% what to do to make them big changes. I don't think there's enough information

Well I think it is important. I also agree with him that the world will do its own thing that you know, but, if we can help? I don't know. Sometimes we have to... It's drummed into us to buy electric cars. It's not long ago that we were told to buy diesel cars. I just don't know. I think it is important.

How much in your daily lives do you think about it?

I don't (majority)

You hear about animals and things going extinct and things like that, and if we can help things along that way, you know, that's ok. But on a daily basis, no I don't.

Can anyone think of any examples where they have thought about it on a daily basis?

Martin (primary school): I think about it every day or every other day. Because if I don't watch the news, I sit on my phone at night and read it. Every day, I would say that a liberal read that will be linked to climate change, and to what's happening around the world. And we were born and went like - packaging, like why does it have to be this kind of packaging because we use it. And then we set up the debates about whether other arguments go back to something that you touched on there - 'are inventions a good thing?' I remember when the plastic ICI and polymers were coming out and it was the best thing since sliced bread, and doing all this because we've moved forward. So sometimes, humans are desperate to do things faster and better. It's going to get back to them exhausted faster and faster, and that is not always a good thing.

I think that's where I've noticed it - you're unpacking your shopping. Obviously if you've got big family, I do actually every single time I do me shopping I have compartments in the fridge that I put them in now I'm gonna have all this packaging and it fills the top of the counter and I'm just like, that is absolute joke. And I mean, like I say I can sway the way and I'm not like Mother Nature Earth type girl but I have noticed that it's just stupid. It's just doesn't make sense. And it's just going straight in the bin. So I've made a conscious effort to save containers, my fruit for instance, I've got a container in the fridge which separates fruit, strawberries, and blueberries, raspberries for the kids and stuff... easier to get out. And the amount of packaging instead of just having the box of grapes etc.

Where's all this packing come from? Who's responsible for that?

Supermarkets

I don't think you can blame supermarkets, you can't blame supermarkets. They only buy the stuff that comes in from China or bloody Devon or Cornwall

I think the majority of people, if there was, going back to your brown paper bag or bringing reusable packaging, I think a lot of people would do it.

I don't know, I disagree, because Morrisons started doing their recycling brown paper bags, and as soon as you put your potatoes in the bag splits, so you're all over, and you go back to your normal sack of potatoes in your polythene bag.

When we had those bags originally though it wasn't such a problem though when they were doing that - they survived didn't they... people managed. Nowadays people just want things easier

So more broadly, has the environment become more or less of a risk over the last year?

We're told that on the news, that's all we're told, everything that happens is linked to bloody climate change. We've got to go and buy electric cars, it's going to cost a fortune, we've got to do this. When you look into it, a bit like plastic bags, it's not really gonna work. I mean, look at the batteries, you know, for electric cars, a huge thing when they need to be recycled. But we'll leave it for now.

And where do we get the lithium from? Isn't it somewhere in Russia? I don't know what the conditions that they get it from are absolutely horrendous. It's disgusting. And we use another method when it comes in our country where the poverty stricken. So you know, all these people use batteries, battery powered vehicles, or is it lithium they use... something like that.

Let's take one step backwards - what is climate change? Really simply question

Heating of the earth

We don't have the seasons like we used to have because it's getting hotter

Pollution

Factors that change our weather conditions

The Earth is doing what the Earth does - it's just natural evolution

How much of a worry is this?

Well I haven't got children so it's not a great worry for me personally, obviously I'm an older person and not going to be here forever, but there is the future generations, so I think we should be doing something for them. Think it is fairly serious.

Well I'm told it's serious, I can only hear what's being spouted down the news channels. All to do with raising the temperature of the earth because of the carbons we're emitting...

And how serious do you think it is?

I can remember back when I was younger, we had massive summer of water shortages. We had winters. I remember the snuggling up, you know. I'm told that you just sit there and go on and then and then it's, there's always a caveat at the end. So we need to, you know, UK needs to do this and that and whatever. What you said there are other countries around the world, that hoofing all these carbons out and we, as a country, produce 1% of the carbon footprint. However, we're going to get hammered with the tax today's green taxes. Okay. I'm not saying we shouldn't take part, I think we should, but...

John: exactly the same as the man before me

Humans are going to be here for thousands of years yet, but my kids will develop technology to deal with their generation when it's needed. And their grandkids will do the same. We live in an environment where we are creating technology to deal with what we do in our lifetime. The grandkids are going to do the same, the great grandkids are going to do the same. Human beings are gonna die out 1000s and 1000s of years earlier than what we're planning to do.

If we weren't watching the news, and we were just looking at where we live and wandering around in our daily lives, I would say it's not serious at all because we're very fortunate with where we live. Because when we see the news about flooding and other terrible weather, earthquakes, we get none of that. Even when it's terrible rain. The sun has been nice, I like the snow, I like the different seasons. But when you see what's happened in different places, with the landslides in Germany, you think that's terrible. So you've got to see that there is some serious things. Something you touched on there that always makes me think about these things is that the people who do sci fi films always have fantastic insight into the future... what you're describing is that when the earth is really hot, we will have things that are looking after the sky and the air and pollution but at the same time when you watch those sorts of those people who've got more money are okay, but the ones who haven't and it's always so climate change for me it's going to affect the poor people the most and that's what we see in poorer areas in the world where they're greatly affected and that's where I think that's where it gets the support and that's why it serious.

I can only mimic what this guy said. It's not something I've seen in our area, it's something you kind of see on the news and you turned a blind eye because you just think that's not affecting my life. But yeah, if we were told right this is what we have to do, the same as with the pandemic you have to do this you have to do that then yes, we'd all happily make change because we *have to do it*. But you kind of see on the news and you just think back to being a child and think that's not going to affect me.

I'm affected when I see it on the news. When things are implemented for us - blue bins for plastics, green bins for garden rubbish - I'm not happy because I paid council tax and I expected them to do it. But I've been educated I'm quite happy to do it. And so again, it's all about education. This area was built on pollution wasn't it, Steel Works, all the works, plumbed, plummeted all this steam and smoke and hazardous things out. And I think we've been educated over the years to make it more safer and great and if there's an alternative to all the rubbish being spilled out.

When stuff like that happens does that worry you about the environment? Not much connection? Or, a sign that things are getting worse?

Put it down to building/green spaces/water not being absorbed by trees

Councils not doing anything about the drains

Issues with building contracts/newly built houses

Few of you mentioned the Greek fires - is that a climate change thing or not affected?

We don't know how it started.

Probably something like California fires - people see one fire and think it's like other fires

Greece was the perfect storm - the atmosphere, no wind, whipped up fire storms.

What about the flooding in Germany and the landslides - climate change issue or not affected?

We don't know - there's no proof either way.

But we can't blame someone for starting the flooding in Germany - the concern is why has it happened. I was more concerned about that being linked to climate change.

Nobody on the news... Everything is dictated, dictated, dictated. There's nobody on the news with an opposition. Anything about the opposition is always negative news from the environment. There's no, there are people out there that should not feel alone. We can't just keep putting out propaganda. There is never an alternative opinion. It is only from the people who have an agenda. The problem of the BBC is the worst. There is no opposition saying that 'this isn't because of this, this isn't because of that, it's because of this'. BBC is the worst. They're the worst now - BBC Radio four throughout the day, the entire day, 12 13 14 hours a day. And even the BBC and ITV they're just as bad. But for the news that you listen to when you listen to when you listen So have you ever had anybody come along and say I need to do the first thing is that they're pushed down. Your opinion is not valuable. You're made out to look like an idiot. Does anyone talk about the opposite of the environment? No.

Net zero - has anyone heard of that?

Heard of it but don't know what it is.

Put your hands up if you have heard of the term net zero

All but one raise their hands.

Put your hand up if you know for sure what it means

3 hesitantly raise their hands.

A commitment to be carbon neutral by... can't remember what date. They're trying to implement different schemes to do that. Electrification...

That does ring a bell, I've heard that by 2030 or something we have to be carbon free and different things.

What does carbon free mean then?

Well it doesn't does it... we're trying to offset our carbon footprint but we're still flying etc.

I was led to believe that it's where things are getting stored in the ground and out at sea - don't know whether it's the same thing.

Cars have to be electric - something to do with that.

I don't know what net-zero is.

So this is a target that the government has to reduce carbon emissions to the point that we as a country are taking the same amount of carbon out of the atmosphere as we're emitting as a country. So it means that it becomes net zero. And the government's target is to do that by 2050. So tell us about what we've heard about that. Is that the right thing to do/wrong thing to do?

Right - it's only going to work though if everyone else does it.

Why the wait? Why is it taking so long? Sense that it's taking a long time. If it is so desperate, why are we waiting 30 years? What can we do quicker?
There isn't a global commitment... COP26 is an important moment to discuss it. India aren't playing their part and we are paying the price...

Would it make you feel better if everyone globally agreed?

I think we need a global commitment. We need proof that everyone is involved and doing their bit, and not saying oh, we'll wait thirty years to do it, we'll just carry on for the next thirty years. We need a commitment from everyone at the same time, but they should start doing it now, instead of waiting.

Kind of like an assignment, isn't it? If you get given a year to do an assignment, the majority of people are gonna say I'll do it the last week before I'm due back to school (one of my friend's is a teacher who has got lots to do, but takes 6 weeks off and does it the week before) - that can be a lot of people's view on that - if we do a little bit, now...

What you're saying about assignments though, that's where it's not a level playing field, is it. So if you thought of all those pupils as countries, they've all been given the same target to achieve that same day, some of those countries over better position to be able to get that Grade A standard, whereas other countries are going to need support of the other people who actually get the great need to actually get up to there. All because they're starting off from a much poorer level. Especially when we're looking at these third world countries, they are starting off well below that. And I would say we can't wait until the other countries around the world say, well, we're going to do it. But you need to do it if you think it's right. And you want to do it as a country, that's you should do that no matter what the countries are saying and as an excuse and say, well, they're not doing it, they're still talking about this. You can't do anything about that except show them a model that works - this is what we've achieved, this is how we've done it. Trying to keep his glass half full. Find something that works, and show them *how* it works.

Anyone else any thoughts on what Martin is saying, that you don't have to wait?

I agree.

I don't agree - the sentiment is great. China are opening coal fired power stations once a month and are mining in a massive way. They are not interested in the UK. We have no influence on these major, massive countries. Countries like China are killing the world still, and we need a global agreement. No-one will look at the UK and want an agreement.

Will we get an agreement by doing nothing?

I don't think we'd get an agreement anyway. Look at China, Russia, India, USA that spin the majority of carbons into the world. I don't think they have the will to do the right thing. At the end of the day, we are just going to carry on.

I do think that each country needs to play a part in it altogether. Why should we try our very best when other countries are just brushing it under the carpet.

Are there any benefits that might come from net zero? Particularly thinking about Redcar and the local area? Any plus sides?

A cleaner environment. There was outrage when British steel shut down. But at the same time, there was days when you went outside and your windowsills were black. Yes, lots of men came out of work and it was a shame. But now, when you look outside, it's cleaner round here.

We're all benefiting from it more now, and I don't mean in terms of our climate, but in terms of economically we have greener energy - they're opening a biofuels plant.

They're supposed to be Waste/recycling an issue, not being done.

There's a carbon capture plant getting built on the old Teesside. For me, that's a benefit. It's a bit of a contradiction in terms, I suppose. I'm not in favour of it, but it is bringing jobs. And there's a hydrogen plant getting built, which is very expensive to make but it's obviously more beneficial to the environment. It's bringing jobs, to be fair, even though I'm not in favour of it all.

Are they jobs that people have the skills to do/want?

Yes, it's going to be skills-based jobs I'd imagine.

Net-zero target in 2050 - right sort of time frame?

Seems like a long way off - not sure what's taking that time? We're uneducated about it.

It's the amount of money that needs to be spent that is taking time.

This target is in the law. How do you think that will affect the UK, getting to that target, in the next 30 years?

We'll probably get into more debt.

Congestion on the roads, problems with the motorways, changes to transport, having to have the charging points in different places, routes will therefore change as the technology isn't there at the moment to make the full journey on purely electric. Building the infrastructure is going to take time.

Length of journey time with electric cars (points not working etc.) - cost him more money.

Infrastructure isn't there.

People can't afford them. Some people are on the brink as it is, and can't even afford a bus. It's all right saying get on your bike, but sometimes getting a bike to work isn't realistic.

People from London have every kind of transport that they want - here, you're lucky to get a bus at the right time, and it won't take you to the place that you want to go.

You have to walk another 2 or 3 miles to get to where you want to go. No buses, trains.

It's going to change our eating habits too - cattle have a massive impact. Seen people wanting to become vegetarian and vegan lifestyles, but the cattle problem isn't going to go away. Will it affect our diet?

Everything seems to be narrowing - can't do this, can't do that etc.

What kind of impact do you think getting to this target will have on you personally?

Put your hand up if you think it will have a big impact?

4 people put their hands up. When asked if this impact will be positive or negative, everyone put their thumbs in the middle (i.e. - not sure if the impact will be positive or negative).

How do you think it's going to affect you?

I think it's going to cost individuals more. Like we said about the cars costing more, and you said about the batteries not lasting. They need to make the cars last longer or that will just cause more of a problem with the environment.

Food prices will increase.

We'll be taxed ridiculously. Personal tax, we're just going to be bled dry.

Thought that some people will turn a blind eye and carry on in their ways.

Gas boilers, heat pumps (excess of £10,000).

Electric cars are incredibly expensive, and can't guarantee that 10 years down the line they will be ok.

Technology for HGV vehicles?

The Government are only going by what they are advised at the time, they change their minds about things. What they're putting out there is current advice, not future.

What about things that you might have to do to help the environment yourselves?

I am personally doing a lot with recycling and things.

If I could get a bus to work, and I didn't have to have two cars in my family, I would! They don't run at the end of my shifts either.

On cost, would any of you be willing to do that if it meant getting to net zero? A lot of you have mentioned, obviously there, increasing costs, right? Would any of you be willing to do that if it meant getting carbon emissions down and getting to net zero?

If it came down to a cost to me, I don't think I could afford to. To take any more hits with council taxes, and your taxes, and with your work. So personally, I just think, paying enough.

I would like to think I could make a change but realistically, you're living for you've got. Any spare money that you do have, you wouldn't like to think you're gonna be paying something out to put towards something, but then we've got to look at the bigger picture. We're all wanting to do better, but yet we're not willing to spend... To pay that extra bit of tax to go towards things like that, and then that's when you get people who go 'absolutely not' and just fall back into bad habits again. I think people are struggling enough as it is and then... I just don't see how it's... i just can't see the end or how we're gonna get there.

It's mixed isn't it. Because there's, what you're saying is about the poverty divide and the pay divide, and the people who are very wealthy, it's not going to make too much difference to, but people who are doing comfortably are going to find it more difficult, but people who are below the wages able to cope with that, who's going to then pay for them to be able to do that? And support them? They're not going to be able to make the changes, so then that's where you were saying about it comes back to taxes. So some people are going to be paying two fold for those increases, so, I think cost and it keeps coming back to cost because people are finding it more difficult, and it's not gonna be a difference in cost of one item, and say, tell you what, if you all pay an extra twenty quid, let's say a week, you know, an extra twenty quid a week, our climate change, our net zero will be sorted. It's not, you're gonna see it in your food, you're gonna see it in your wages... in your fuel bills, you're gonna see it in your housing costs, you're going to see it in your tax costs, local tax costs.

Would you be willing to pay more for that cost if it meant impacting the environment or not?

Yes... to a certain degree. If it was, if I felt it was fair and balanced and everyone was taking their fair share of it, yes, but if they're saying well because you do... she's got a good job and she works very hard at that, well then if we kept thinking well actually,

she's only paying more and more and more and more, and we're doing all of that, and doing the extra and being willing to do all of these things, then that's where it starts to come and think well 'hang on, we're willing to do our bit for everybody else', but, now you're taking the mick.

Well, we all pay an extra tariff on our gas, we all pay an extra tariff on our electricity, we all pay on the water... in our water bills, gas bills, electricity bills, there is tariff in there above and beyond. So that was supposed to be our contribution towards, to add to better technology, greener fuels, so what you're saying is you're prepared to pay more money when you're already paying more, cause you were conned into it many years ago... I'm not prepared to pay another penny more because I have no choice, I don't want to pay that tariff on gas and electricity, I don't want to contribute more money, of my money, towards things that I was promised, that were on my gas and electricity and water bill, and now they're asking for more money, and I'm not prepared to do that.

I think the opposite way, I think they should be getting it and sending it to us - give us some money towards getting better. More scrappage deals for your cars - that's all gone to pot now I think - you used to get £2500 to change your car. I think they've stopped that, I think they say ah you wouldn't... buy this, we'll give you so much off, so much towards a new boiler or whatever. I probably would, I think they should be more incentives to us to do it.

Paid more for what? What, you know, what, when you say 'are you willing to pay more?' for what's gonna happen? How much? I mean it's a very hard question to answer, you know, it's like, I actually chuckled when you said that the government, you know, 2050 carbon neutral, and baked in law, that's all gonna happen. How many U-turns? How many things have gone to wraps. At the end of the day, at the moment, I honestly think technology is not there. Electric cars, to a degree great, but they're too expensive as everybody said. If you go to a petrol station you get one electric point, they're dotted all over the place. Until you get to the point where technology can pull up, plug it in, zoop it's done and away you go, it ain't gonna work [...inaudible...] it's all 'poof' for me.

I think it's always the middle income earners that end up bearing the brunt of it. Um, people are on the dole, or on low income, they get help with a lot of things we don't, so I think it will be us that lose out most...

Talking about ideas in practice - what should people be doing? Electric cars? Would you do it? What would stop you from doing it?

All: cost.

The technology is not there.

What about the people who drive a car that's just getting by? To be able to go to work six days a week, to provide for their family? They'd struggle to pay the MOT on it but it gets them to work, they get to work, they go and do what they need to do for their family or even for themselves, and what are they gonna do?

In ten years time, technology will be there... but it's just not here today.

Would anybody consider getting an electric car now?

If I was quite well-off, then yes. If I was out looking for another car, and I'd, I mean really well off, because I have seen them, they have passed me by, and I've thought 'oh my god' the noise that's not coming from them and stuff like that.

How much are they?

I think the cheapest one is around 25... I think 25, 27 grand, that's just the basic one.

They go to about 80 thousand pounds for Tesla.

But if for the price of that, you were getting something that you could say is better than what you've got now, and helps your life better than it is now, you would be saying yeah that's the cost worth, but because the infrastructure's not there, and you're saying well actually, I can only go this distance, so it's actually gonna be more. The moment you have a purely electric car, that people are out and about in the car all the time, it's more hassle than it's worth. I do think that, when you said about the incentives, before it comes to 2030, you will find, there will be incentives for swapping your car over, and they will be saying 'you'll get this x amount off' if you change your car over now.

Like you say, if you're just using it to and from work... travel 6 mile to work and back, and going into town to do your shopping, it would be brilliant for that. But when you pay 30,000 pound to do that?

But if you were going an hour... because a lot of people in our area travel either north or south for a bit of work, so if you were travelling/commuting half an hour to an hour all of the time, you then start to see my distance...

Not rinsing plates?

Yes, they don't rinse plates anyway!

No longer buying plastic bottles of shower gel/water?

Wouldn't bother me at all.

Refill stores are more expensive - if the cost was the same people would. If money was no option, then sure. Environmentally friendly way should not be more expensive.

Gas boiler/hydrogen boiler?

Never heard of them.

If they are going to change them free of charge, then yes.

Concerns about hydrogen being flammable?

Dependent on cost again - how the Government get you to change your behaviour. For example, charging 5p for a plastic bag isn't stopping this focus group from buying plastic bags.

Taking fewer international flights per year

No - feel as though it doesn't relate to them, just to frequent flyers.

Want flights as cheaply as possible for holidays, and they only go a few times.

Pandemic has shown that business flights don't really need to happen.

Feel that public transport has got worse in their area - one girl remembers that buses used to be everywhere. And now they don't turn up or don't take you where you need to be.

Experience of children having to get 2 buses to school, and parents having to go and collect them when buses don't turn up.

Clear frustration that the systems aren't there.

If these buses were there, would you use them instead of a car?

No - don't want germs.

We work hard for nice things - like getting in my car, which is a luxury, and get there instantly. Comes down to different situations.

Eating less meat?

1 person would, all the rest of them would not be willing to eat less meat.

How would we feel if this stuff/these changes did happen for the wider purpose?

Would feel dictated to, as if we would have to do it.

Wouldn't be happy.

Slowly but surely think it is going to happen anyway.

Can be happy enough to do it but don't have the cost or resources to do it. Therefore not happy.

Reluctantly accepting. Too many 'ifs' to see how passionately people are going to go up against it and protest it. Mention of the coal tax, when it came into effect, that's when people really protested. At the moment, we're in a situation of too many what ifs, and so there's nothing concrete to fight against.

More people will go into poverty. You can only push people so far, and wonder where that snapping point will come in society.

I'm not sensing furious anger...

It depends on what level we are getting taxed at, how much money we are going to get screwed out of.

I'm the only angry one here about being told what to do. I shouldn't be forced to eat less meat, but if I voice my opinion against all these people telling me to eat less meat, I'm patted down like a silly little man, and that's what angers me.

What kind of things do you think you'd need to see to justify paying more? Knowing where the money was going? Knowing other countries were doing similar things?

Want to see it working. We'd want proof. 100% proof that we're all doing our bit and it's working.

Quality of life improves - but hard to quantify. Whole of society is improving.

Should the cost come from individuals? Government? Businesses? Other countries?

The Government only get money from the people that work for it.

Personal taxes vs. business taxes?

Polluters should be paying! The ones who are spewing out stuff should be paying, not the people who are going about their daily lives and trying to make 2 ends meet.

If big businesses pay then we end up paying more anyway because they put their prices up. Facebook, Google, cryptocurrency - don't even know what it does - a joke - they should be paying.

Businesses should be changing the way that they practice - need to be giving things back, and businesses need to demand things from their providers (thinking of a supermarket).

Coming back to individuals, should richer people, poorer people pay? Should it be the same for everyone?

Same for everyone.

Looking at specific ideas now relating to net-zero target. Holding up headlines and first reaction:

'VAT hike of polluting products, including meat, plastics and petrol'

Got no choice, tough luck, got to pay.

They know that people are still going to buy these things, but they're hiking the prices anyway. Sugar tax - people are going to buy sugar anyway.

Stealth tax - more money I have to pay.

Depressing - meat and petrol are not luxuries. So why tax it? Other things could be taxed.

Very frustrated - not solving the problem. Making the items more expensive for consumers, not stopping the businesses from sorting their problems. Not giving a cheaper alternative.

Comparison to smoking - pictures have had an effect, prices have gone up, and now there is an alternative with e-cigarettes.

'Lower VAT on less polluting products, like electricity, or meat free products'

If they really are a direct comparison, you have to have a legitimate choice - happy.

Used to pay 17% VAT, and now we pay 20%, so are they going to reduce it down to 17%? That we already paid? Not good enough for me.

'Landlords and homeowners forced to install high-grade insulation and low-energy boilers before they are allowed to sell their house'

Firm no. Suicidal. Wouldn't be happy - didn't know how expensive it was.

Will just stop people moving.

'New import tax from products from polluting countries with lower environmental standards than the UK'

If there was a British alternative, then yes. That's what people are finding frustrating - still finding out about products that we can't get in the UK, and we need to be more self-sufficient. So if there is an alternative, yes, tax the one from other countries.

Overall yes.

'Motorists to be hit with new tax for using petrol cars but going electric means less tax than before'

To me that's a no brainer, if you were in charge of doing that you would definitely do that.

We all know around here that if everybody got an electric car, you will be taxed eventually. There will be a road tax, it's a con.

Look at the state of roads now.

Hybrid cars - you spend more than I do on my diesel. So where's the incentive?

'Rubbish' - you're trying to tax now to bring in the new technology that is not operating yet. Haven't fully thought out how we are going to recycle everything. Easy thing to get money in.

If you're going to have an electric car, you need an electric car charging point at home.

Overall, if these things were to happen, how would we feel?

Well it's like if you want an electric car, you're gonna have to have an electric point at home, cause realistically, you're gonna get the kids, say if your car needs charging, you're not gonna leave it at the petrol station overnight to charge, to then walk home with your family, to then...

So thinking away from the specifics, how would we feel if these things were to happen, broadly speaking?

If they happen, and there's a fair alternative, and I see it as being fair and balanced, then I'd be happy. But if I see that it was one idea unopposed, that just comes across as penalising everybody, without the choice of something else, a fair alternative, then that's when I'd be frustrated.

What political parties between Conservatives and Labour are better at these environmental issues?

I wouldn't be able to tell you anything about the Labour party on environmental issues but we know about the Tories... They're out meeting at the minute, I think Boris Johnson is doing quite well.

I don't think either of them have a proper plan of how to do this.

I've just got no faith in both parties, to be fair.

Quickly then on Boris Johnson, he has talked about 'levelling up' - any of you heard that phrase?

4 people raise their hands.

What do you understand it to be?

From the South to the North levelling it up, is that what you're on about it? Yeah I know a little bit about it then.

Good thing/bad thing?

I think they're actually... it's about time they are doing it.

More opportunities, more jobs, more money towards like the poorer areas. It's not just the North it's the poor areas in the South too.

We're seeing it.

Well I think we are seeing it, but very little. You know, nothing to what's going on down South and, with HS2 and everything, I mean that's not a level up, why do we want spend all that money on a stupid train.

What improvements have you seen with levelling up?

We are slowly getting more jobs, more opportunities.

In our region, it's the re-opening of the international airport, it's the work that's going on at the ports, and the work on the industrial sites to attract new businesses. Movement of the Treasury up to this area to do that, and I think there have been a couple of other technology businesses that - Ben Houchen - has tried to introduce them. I would put a lot more down to him being able to work hard, he has managed to get more than we've had in the last few years than we've had in a long time. But it's got to be a long process, got to be until 2050, continuous.

John: I agree with him. There comes a time when the North and all the money invested up here, but then other places that seem well off say 'well we're not getting investment here', and it moves investment and other people get sick. Other people get peeved off when other places get more money.

As more and more people, especially during covid, have come up this way and have seen different parts of our area, more and more people will want to come and live here and work here as well. Because there's that image on the telly of the North being terrible industrial area, yet we've got beautiful places around us and people come in and think oh it isn't a bad place.

Local MP here? He/she? Anyone know who they are?

Don't know who the MP is - 'I think we're more interested in the Tees Valley mayor'.

If Ben Houchen said that net-zero would be good for Redcar, how does that make you feel about net zero or green issues. Do you trust him? Compared to others?

Depends what he was going to do to help. If he was just towing the party line. From what he's produced he has a lot of kudos here.

He is passionate about this area.

I think the thing that stands him in good stead is he said a couple of things, like politicians have done, but he's actually backed them up with evidence. Like the Tees Valley airport and the Free port.

He showed that. You have I'm going to do net zero but this is what we're going to do and this is how it will benefit you then I would say yes.

What do you think of the offshore wind turbines just off the coast from Redcar?

I personally was a bit shocked and thought it was a blot, but you know, just got used to them.

I think they're brilliant. It works and it's green.

Endnotes



¹ YouGov Trackers, Archives:

[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/vemrod4xuq/YG-Archives-Pol-Trackers-Issues\(2\)-Most-important-issues-140415.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/vemrod4xuq/YG-Archives-Pol-Trackers-Issues(2)-Most-important-issues-140415.pdf)

² YouGov Trackers. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-country>

³ YouGov Trackers. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/are-concerns-around-climate-change-exaggerated>; <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/belief-in-climate-change>

⁴ <https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/cars/article-8739771/Britons-keeping-cars-longer-says-new-report.html>

⁵ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2018/01/19/plugging-gap-next-britains-ev-public-charging-network/>

⁶ Onward, 2021, 'Greening the Giants'

⁷

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housepricestatisticsformallareas/yearendingdecember2020>

⁸ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-costs-and-benefits-of-tighter-standards-for-new-buildings-Currie-Brown-and-AECOM.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.elmhurstenergy.co.uk/new-homes-are-the-most-energy-efficient-but-could-they-be-better>

¹⁰ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmbeis/1730/173005.htm>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

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