

Article

Worries about climate change, Great Britain: September to October 2022

An article covering people's worries about climate change, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey collected between 14 September and 9 October 2022 and based on adults in Great Britain aged 16 years and over.

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1 . Main points

- Around three in four adults (74%) reported feeling (very or somewhat) worried about climate change; the latest estimate is similar compared with the percentage who said they felt worried (75%) around a year ago.
- Around 1 in 10 people (9%) felt unworried (somewhat unworried or not at all worried) about climate change, higher than a year ago when it was 6%, and around one in five (17%) said they were neither worried nor unworried.
- Thinking there are more urgent priorities to be worried about was the most frequently reported reason among those who were unworried or neither worried nor unworried about climate change (55%, up from 34% around a year ago).
- When asked about a range of issues, climate change was the second biggest concern facing adults in Great Britain (74%), with the rising cost of living being the main concern (79%).
- Three in four adults (75%) said they made a lot or some lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change, lower than the percentage found a year ago (81%), and one in four adults (25%) said they had made no changes, up from 19% a year ago.
- Rising UK temperatures was the biggest impact of climate change that adults expected to experience by 2030 (75%), 13 percentage points higher than when this question was asked six months ago (62%), before the summer heatwave.
- Those most likely to report feeling worried about climate change included women (77%, compared with 71% of men) and those with a degree or equivalent qualification (83%, compared with those with an education below degree level (71%), and those with no qualifications (62%).

2 . Worries about climate change

This article looks at the worries adults have about climate change and the characteristics of those who feel worried, based on data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) collected between 14 September and 9 October 2022. We asked three comparable questions around the same time last year (6 to 17 October 2021), and where possible we describe differences between the two periods.

Around three in four adults said they felt worried about climate change

During the latest period, 74% of adults in Great Britain aged 16 years and over said they were (very or somewhat) worried about climate change. This latest estimate is similar compared with when the question was asked a year ago at 75% (6 to 17 October 2021). For more information, see our [Three-quarters of adults in Great Britain worry about climate change publication](#).

England (75%) and Scotland (72%) had similar levels of worry. However, the level of worry in Wales (63%) was lower than England.

By English region, while London had the highest proportion who felt worried (81%), this was not statistically significantly different compared with the region with the lowest proportion (North East; 67%), because of the smaller sample sizes.

The remainder of the article focuses on Great Britain overall because the smaller sample sizes for each country make robust comparisons difficult.

Figure 1: Around three in four adults reported feeling worried about climate change

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over, and level of worry about climate change, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022

Notes:

1. Question: "How worried or unworried are you about the impact of climate change?".
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Around one in five adults (17%) adults said they were neither worried nor unworried about climate change, similar to last year (19%). A further 9% said they were unworried (somewhat unworried or not at all worried), higher compared with a year ago when it was 6%.

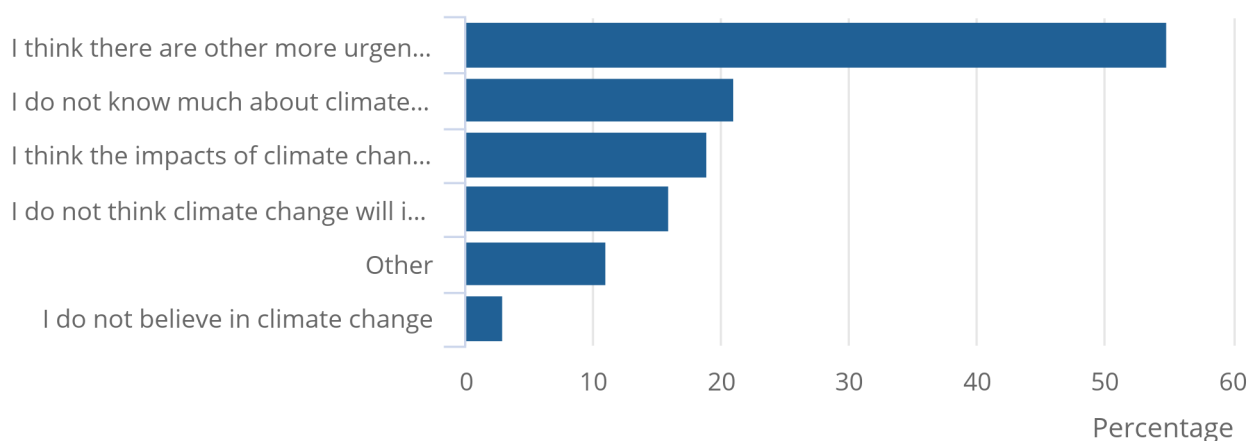
We asked these people why they felt this way, and more than half (55%) said they thought there were more urgent priorities to be worried about, up from 34% since when the question was first asked a year ago. Around one in five (21%) said that they did not know much about climate change, down from 35% since last year.

Figure 2: Over half of adults who were not worried about climate change think there are other more urgent priorities to be worried about

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over, and reasons for adults not being worried about climate change, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022

Figure 2: Over half of adults who were not worried about climate change think there are other more urgent priorities to be worried about

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over, and reasons for adults not being worried about climate change, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "For which of the following reasons, if any, are you not worried about the impact of climate change?" We asked this question if respondents said they were neither worried nor unworried about climate change or if they said they were unworried (somewhat unworried or not at all worried)."
2. Please note, respondents were able to choose more than one option.

Climate change was the second greatest concern facing adults, after rising costs of living

When asked about a range of specific issues, the rising costs of living (79%) was the most common concern closely followed by climate change (74%).

The level of worry about climate change was slightly higher than worries felt about the war in Ukraine (72%), and statistically significantly higher than the level of worry felt about "the environment" (61%), and the effect coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on people's lives right now (29%).

The proportion of adults feeling worried about climate change is largely unchanged since when the question was asked last year (6 to 17 October 2021) when it was 75%, suggesting that climate change has remained a top concern for adults in Great Britain.

Those who felt (very or somewhat) worried about climate change felt more worried about the entire range of issues when compared with those who were unworried (somewhat unworried or not at all worried) about climate change, this included:

- the rising costs of living (83% compared with 60%)
- the conflict in Ukraine (81% compared with 34%)
- the environment (78% compared with 6%)
- the effect the coronavirus pandemic is having on their life (33% compared with 14%)

While 75% said they had made changes to help tackle climate change, this was lower than a year ago (81%)

When respondents were asked about the changes they have made to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change, three in four (75%) said that they had made a lot or some changes, down from 81% since when the question was first asked a year ago. Furthermore, one in four (25%) said they had made no changes, up from 19% last year.

Cost is one of the largest barriers people face when making changes to help tackle climate change

Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) data, collected between 20 and 31 July 2022, shows that the most common reasons people reported for not making any changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change were:

- the belief that large polluters should make changes before individuals (34%)
- feeling that their changes will have no effect (32%)
- too expensive to make changes (30%)

For more information, see our [Climate change insights, families and households, UK: August 2022 article](#).

The top three reasons have remained the same since last year, however, there has been an increase (though not statistically significant) in the proportion of people thinking it is too expensive to make changes, from 21% to 30%.

Among owner-occupier households who had not yet installed specific types of insulation, cost was also reported to be one of the most common barriers people face when it comes to installing these. This was the case reported for 48% when considering double glazing, 29% for loft insulation, and 22% for both cavity or solid wall and underfloor insulation, according to the [Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\) Public Attitudes Tracker \(PDF 2.48 MB\)](#).

3 . Worries about the impact of climate change

We also asked people about a range of climate change impacts and whether people expected that these would directly affect them by the year 2030 (listed in Figure 3).

The percentage of adults who feel that rising temperatures will affect them has risen by 13 percentage points (from 62% to 75%) since earlier this year

Rising UK temperatures was the most frequently reported expected impact among three in four adults (75%), up from 62% since the question was first asked earlier this year (13 to 24 April), before the summer heatwave. Over 6 in 10 adults think they will be affected by water supply shortages (62%, up from 40%), and over half think they will have reduced access to safe and affordable food (53%, similar to the previous estimate of 54%). For more information, see [our Climate change insights. UK: May 2022 publication](#).

Around 1 in 10 adults (9%) thought none of the response options would directly affect them by 2030, down from 14% earlier this year.

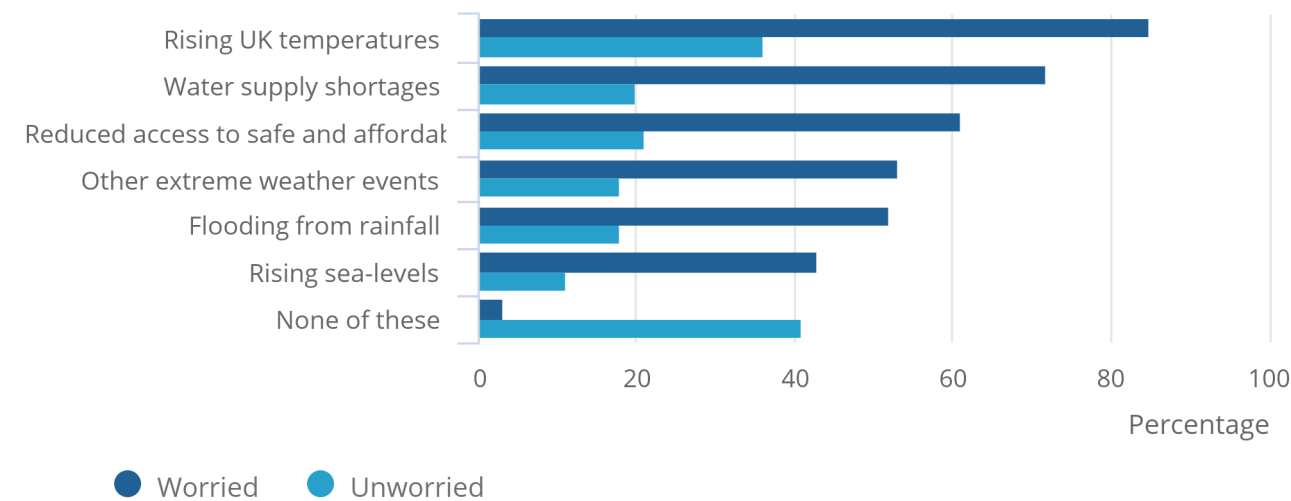
Adults who reported feeling worried (very or somewhat worried) about climate change were more likely to expect that they would be directly affected by all the response options related to climate change impacts, than those who reported feeling unworried (somewhat unworried or not at all worried; Figure 3).

Figure 3: 85% of worried adults expect rising UK temperatures will directly affect them by 2030 compared with 36% of unworried adults

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over selecting from a list of options that would directly affect them by 2030, by level of worry about climate change, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022

Figure 3: 85% of worried adults expect rising UK temperatures will directly affect them by 2030 compared with 36% of unworried adults

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over selecting from a list of options that would directly affect them by 2030, by level of worry about climate change, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "Thinking about climate change, which of these, if any, do you think will directly affect you by 2030?".
2. Please note, respondents were able to choose more than one option.
3. Percentage group of worried about climate change includes those who were very worried or somewhat worried.
4. Percentage of group not worried about climate change includes those who were not at all worried or somewhat unworried.

4 . Characteristics of adults feeling worried about climate change

Women were more likely than men to feel worried about and report making changes to help tackle climate change

Women (77%) felt more worried about climate change than men (71%), similar to what we found last year in our [Three-quarters of adults in Great Britain worry about climate change](#) publication. Women were also more likely to say they have made changes to help tackle climate change (79%, down from 85% since last year) than men (70%, down from 77%).

Similar results were also found from the [Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\) Public Attitudes Tracker \(PDF 1.101 KB\)](#) that indicated that overall concern (very or fairly concerned) about climate change was higher for women (87%, compared with 80% of men; data for the UK collected between 9 June and 7 July 2022).

Younger adults had the highest proportion who felt “very worried” about climate change

By age, the overall proportion who felt (very or somewhat) worried was highest among older adults aged 70 years and over (77%), and lowest among adults aged 16 to 29 years (67%).

When looking at the individual response options, a more complex pattern emerges (Figure 4). Particularly, adults aged 16 to 29 years had more mixed views, with this group having the highest proportion who felt very worried (33%), and the highest proportions who felt neither worried nor unworried (22%) and not at all worried (10%). With these mixed views, far fewer people of this age said they were somewhat worried (34%), explaining why this group had the lowest overall proportion feeling (very or somewhat) worried.

Figure 4: Adults aged 16 to 29 years had the highest proportion who felt very worried and not at all worried

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over, and level of worry about climate change by age group, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022

Notes:

1. Question: “How worried or unworried are you about the impact of climate change?”.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Adults aged 30 to 49 years (79%) and 50 to 69 years (78%) were more likely to report they have made changes to help tackle climate change, whereas those aged 16 to 29 years (68%) and 70 years and over (67%) were least likely to say they have made changes.

Adults with a degree were more worried than adults with no qualifications

The level of worry was higher among those with a degree or equivalent (83%) when compared with those with an education below degree level (71%), and those with no qualifications (62%).

Similar results were also found from the BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker that indicated that, between 9 June and 7 July 2022, overall concern about climate change was higher for people educated to degree level (89%, compared with 82% of those with other qualifications and 76% of people with no qualifications).

Figure 5: Adults with a degree were more worried than adults with an education below degree level

Proportion of adults, aged 16 and over, and level of worry about climate change by highest qualification, Great Britain, 14 September to 9 October 2022

Notes:

1. Question: "How worried or unworried are you about the impact of climate change?".
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Adults with a degree or equivalent (81%) were more likely to say they have made lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change, compared with those with an education below degree level (73%), and those with no qualifications (66%).

Other characteristics of adults who are worried about climate change

The [accompanying reference tables](#) include a wider range of data on the characteristics of adults who report being worried about climate change. Some of the main findings include:

- ability to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850: adults who were able to afford this expense were more likely to feel worried about climate change compared with those unable to afford this expense (79% compared with 70%)
- employment status: worries about climate change were higher in those who were retired (78%) and employed or self-employed (75%) than those who were economically inactive (other, 62%), the estimate for unemployed (79%) was not statistically significantly different to the other groups because of the lower sample size
- household size: higher levels of worry were seen in households with two people (78%) when compared with household sizes of four or more people (66%)

The [reference tables](#) include findings by a range of demographics including disability status, ethnic group, parental status, and housing tenure. However, we did not find statistically significant differences when looking at these.

5 . Other sources of data for understanding climate change and its impacts

A range of data, statistics and analysis has been published from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other government sources, providing insights into the climate change and its impacts. This includes our [Climate change insights, families and households, UK article](#), a quarterly publication bringing together the latest climate change-related statistics from a range of official sources, most recently focusing on families and households, and on 11 November on natural and rural environments. This is also include [the UK Climate change statistics portal](#), a cross-government resource of climate change-related data, statistics and insights.

6 . Worries about climate change, Great Britain data

[Worries about climate change, Great Britain: September to October 2022](#)

Dataset | Released 28 October 2022

People's worries about climate change, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey collected between 14 September and 9 October 2022 and based on adults in Great Britain aged 16 years and over.

7 . Glossary

Worried or unworried about climate change

Worried survey respondents are those who said they were very worried or somewhat worried when responding to the question: "How worried or unworried are you about the impact of climate change?" Unworried survey respondents are those who said they were somewhat unworried or not at all worried in response to the same question.

Highest education level

Highest education level is derived based on the highest qualification reported by the respondent. "Below degree level" includes higher educational qualifications below degree level, A-Levels or Highers, ONC or National Level BTEC, O-Level or GCSE equivalent (Grade A to C), CSE equivalent, GCSE (Grade D to G) or CSE (Grade 2 to 5) or Standard Grade (Level 4 to 6).

"Other qualifications" represents all other qualifications not listed, excluding degree level and equivalent. "No qualifications" refers to adults who have no formal qualifications.

8 . Data sources and quality

This article contains data and indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact and the worries climate change is having on British society.

It is important to note that the findings in this release do not provide evidence on causality, that characteristics have caused certain groups of people to feel worried about climate change. Peoples' evaluations of their worries will be complex and multi-faceted. The analysis should be interpreted bearing these caveats in mind.

Breakdowns by age, sex, region, and country, including confidence intervals for the estimates, are contained in the [accompanying dataset](#).

Sampling and weighting

Unless otherwise specified, the analysis throughout this article is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain. The latest analysis in this report is based on a sample of around 4,254 adults from a pooled dataset comprising two waves of data collection, covering the following periods: 14 September to 25 September 2022 and 28 September to 9 October 2022. Pooling two waves of data together increases sample sizes, allowing us to carry out detailed analysis for different groups of the population.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on June 2021 population estimates).

More quality and methodology information on the OPN and its strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#).

Statistical significance

This report presents a summary of results, with further data including confidence intervals for the estimates contained in the associated datasets. Where comparisons between groups are presented, 95% confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the change.

9 . Related links

[Public attitudes to the environment and the impact of climate change, Great Britain: November 2021](#)

Article | Released 5 November 2021

Analysis of people's attitudes to the environment and the impact of climate change.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 12 October to 23 October 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 October 2022

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, working arrangements and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Climate change insights, families and households, UK: August 2022](#)

Article | Released 12 August 2022

Quarterly publication bringing together the latest climate change-related statistics and analysis from a range of sources.

10 . Cite this article

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