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CLEAN AIR FUND

Britons and clean air:

Making the intangible feel real

Key takeaways

Britons understand air pollution is bad, just not for them

There is widespread awareness that breathing polluted air harms health. Britons do not need convincing of this. However, most Britons don't think they are personally affected. Combined with air pollution's invisibility – this is driving down its prioritisation by the public.

There is latent support for policy interventions

Britons don't feel the government is doing enough to tackle air pollution and are broadly supportive, across party lines, of measures to bring down air pollution. However, Britons' low trust in government means they are sceptical about the effectiveness and motivations of government interventions.

This support is not unconditional

While there is underlying support for interventions to tackle air pollution, when examined in more detail this support can unravel for three key reasons:

1) Proportionality and fairness: Britons worry that interventions may achieve little benefit for a lot of disruption and that those who are more vulnerable are more impacted e.g. ULEZ.

2) Cost: Britons feel they can't bear additional costs right now.

3) Effectiveness: Clean air is difficult to perceive, therefore Britons aren't certain that interventions lead to improvements, especially at a personal level.

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The Seven Segments on air pollution

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How the Seven Segments see air pollution

 **Progressive Activists**	Convinced but cynical - the most concerned about air pollution and most supportive of increased action, yet a majority still distrustful of the government's motives.
 **Incrementalist Left**	Supportive and compassionate - strong backers of action, among the most concerned about the impact of air pollution on vulnerable groups and the most trusting of health charities.
 **Established Liberals**	Trusting but relaxed - the only segment to give the government the benefit of the doubt on their motives behind environmental policies, and among the most likely to rate their local air quality well.
 **Sceptical Scrollers**	Disengaged, not totally opposed - undecided on many measures and warier of experts, more likely than other segments to seek closer-to-home voices such as their family and local MP.
 **Rooted Patriots**	Carrots, not sticks - want the government to act and welcome incentives to help aid the transition to cleaner forms of energy, but sceptical of measures that put costs on households.
 **Traditional Conservatives**	Economy over air quality - the least concerned about air pollution and the most opposed to economic trade-offs, but trusting of scientists and care about congestion on their streets.
 **Dissenting Disruptors**	Suspicious of motives - see climate policy as a revenue-raising exercise and the most likely to trust no-one on air pollution, yet a majority still back tighter standards.

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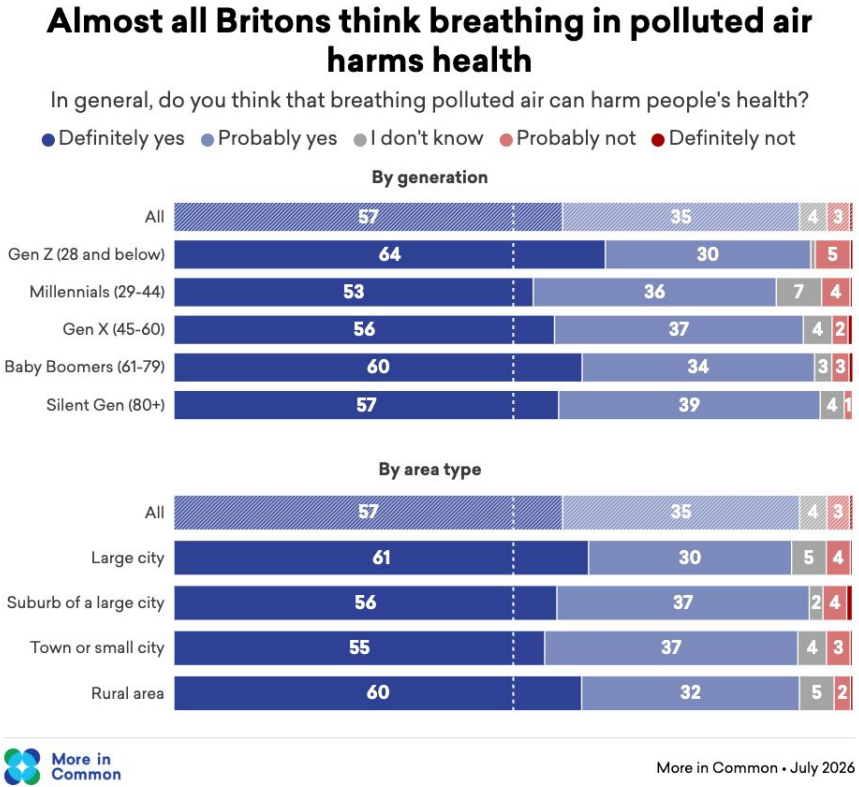
How Britons see air pollution

The health consequences from polluted air are widely acknowledged

Despite not ranking among their top concerns for their local area, Britons widely acknowledge that polluted air is harmful to health.

Less than 1 per cent of Britons say polluted air does “definitely not” harm people's health and just 3 per cent say it probably does not. In contrast over 9 in 10 say polluted air can cause harm to health, including 57 per cent who say this is definitely true.

This suggests there is not a need to convince people of the harmful impacts of polluted air as acknowledgement already spans across all age groups and regions of the country.

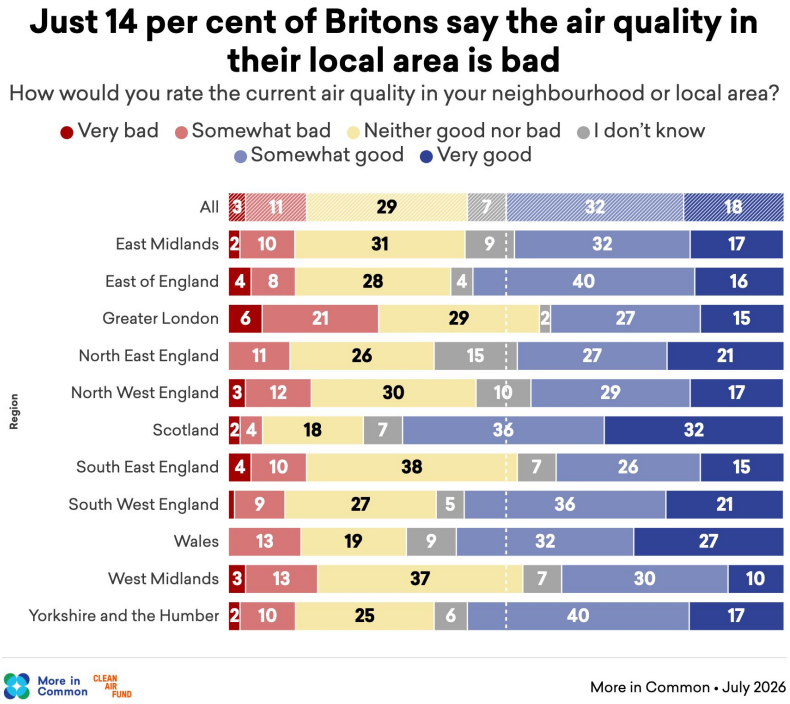


Britons acknowledge air pollution is bad for health, just not their own

While 92 per cent of Britons say that breathing in poor quality air is bad for your health, just 14 per cent think that their local air quality is poor.

A third of Britons (29 per cent) think their local air is neither good nor bad, and half say their local air quality is good or very good.

Britons living in rural areas are far less likely to rate their local air quality as bad - just 6 per cent, compared to 17 per cent of those in large cities or suburbs. London is the region where people are the most likely to say their local air quality is bad but, even there, only 27 per cent of Londoners say so.

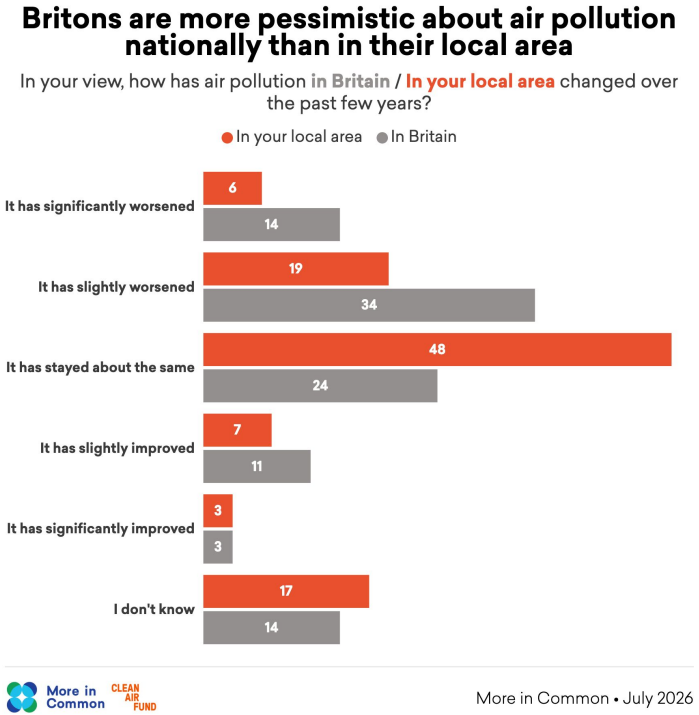


Britons also are much less pessimistic about the direction of change in their local area

Almost half of Britons (48 per cent) think air pollution has worsened nationally, compared with just 14 per cent who say it has improved in recent years.

At a local level, however, the most common view is that air pollution has stayed the same (48 per cent), with only a quarter saying it has worsened and 10 per cent saying it has improved. This fits the wider pattern of air pollution being seen more as a problem in the abstract, rather than one that affects people personally.

I was telling my children that when you used to come to London and you'd blow your nose, it'd be black because of the pollution. It used to be like that when I was younger, but it's not now. So I would assume that it is better due to hybrid and electric cars and the ULEZ.
Laura, Teacher, Croydon



Britons living in city centres are the most likely to say their air quality is getting better

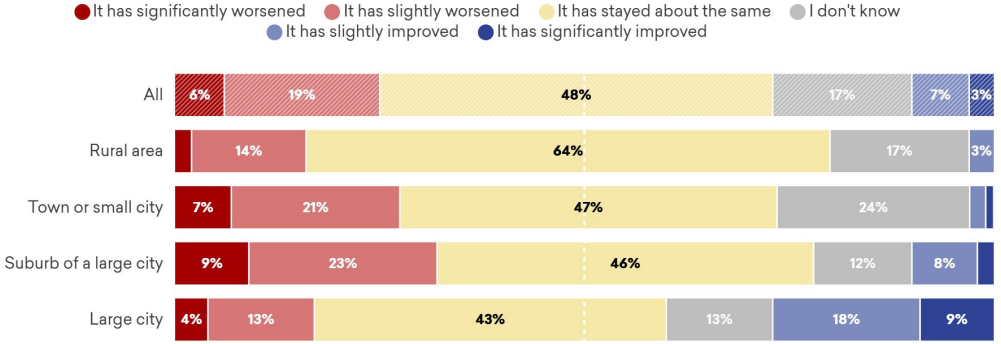
Britons living in large cities are among the least likely to say that local air pollution has worsened in recent years, with 27 per cent believing levels to have actually improved – by far the highest proportion of any area type.

This may partly reflect city residents seeing more visible action being taken on air pollution, such as clean air zones, which they are far more likely to live in or near to (62 per cent compared with 33 per cent nationally).

I think the air is cleaner than it's ever been really at the moment in city centre. Definitely 20 or 30 years ago whereabout I live, it was quite smoggy. And also we've got electric cars now... So I personally, I think it's better.
John, Manufacturer, Birmingham

Britons living in large cities are by far the most likely to report a recent increase in local air quality

In your opinion, how have levels of air pollution in your local area changed over the past few years?



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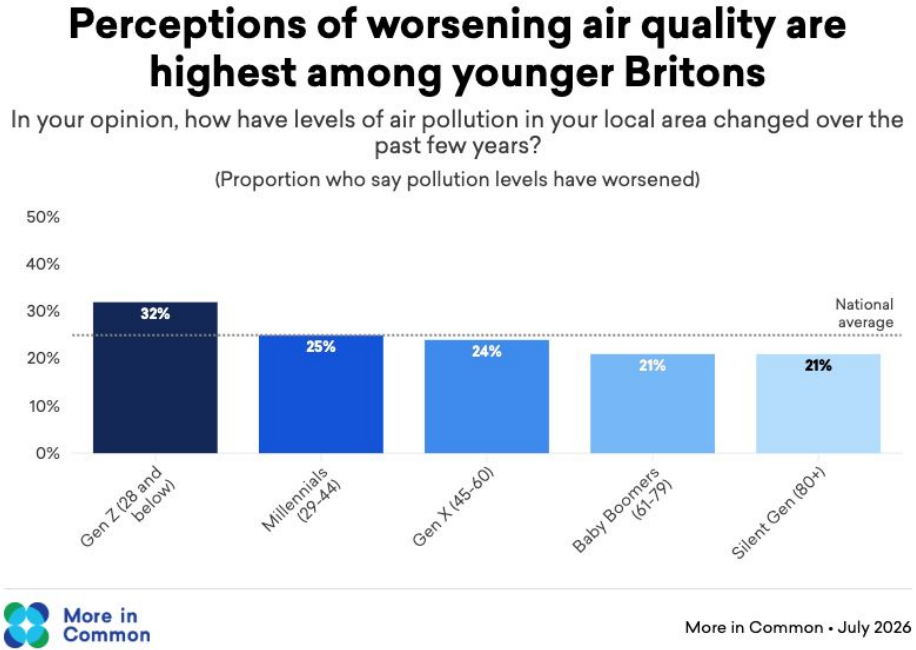
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Older Britons are more likely to say their air quality is getting better

Those who think air pollution has gotten worse skew younger, falling steadily from 1 in 3 of Gen Z to 1 in 5 of Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. This is especially notable given Gen Z are the most likely to live in large cities, where views on pollution trends are typically more positive, suggesting age cuts against the usual geographic pattern. In focus group conversations, it's clear the main reference point for older generations when thinking about what air pollution used to be like are the decades of persistent smog.

If we go back to the '50s when I was a child... We used to have in Birmingham terrible smog, terrible fog. You couldn't see. I remember being sent home from school and having to walk three miles because you couldn't see anything. And yet they did actually stop that... we don't have smogs and fogs now.

John, Manufacturer, Birmingham



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Concern and awareness

Acceptance, worry, indifference: how Britons feel about their local air quality

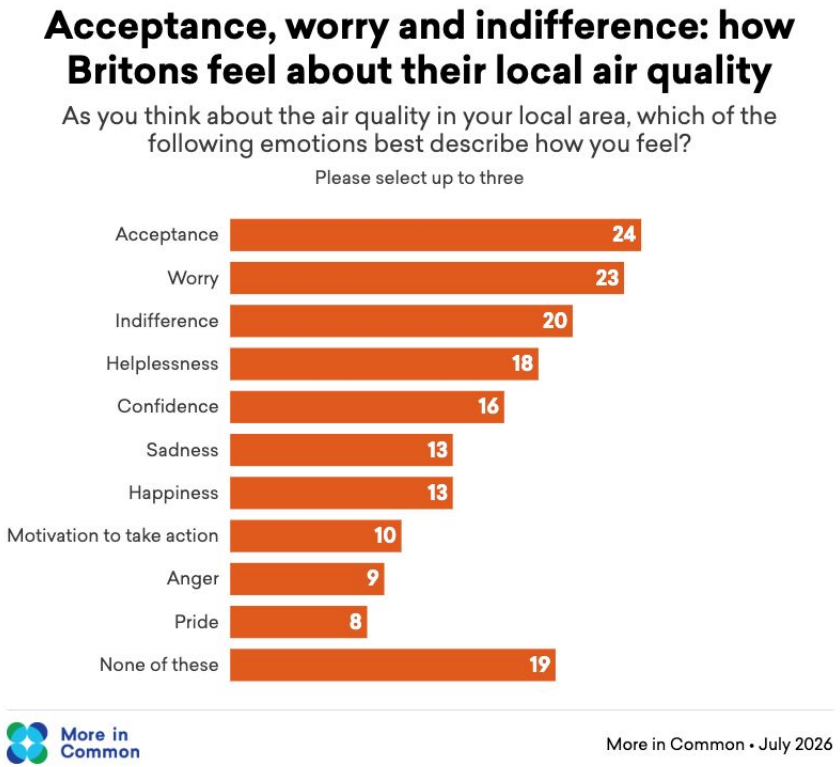
When asked to describe how they feel about their local air quality, **acceptance** was the most commonly selected word, chosen by one quarter (24 per cent) of Britons.

However this is very closely followed by **worry**, selected by 23 per cent of respondents. A further 20 per cent say they feel **indifferent** toward the quality of air in their local area**.**

Motivation to take action was notably higher among younger Britons, at 15 per cent of under-45s compared to just 5 per cent of those 45 and over as well as the Incrementalist Left.

Progressive Activists were most likely to select helplessness (25 per cent) and Established Liberals were most likely to select confidence (28 per cent)

You'll never get away from pollution now. It is what it is and you've got to learn to live with it or try and be as clean as you can.
Jamie, Electrician, Solihull



Air pollution is viewed as one of many, and not a top concern

Air pollution is not a top local concern for most Britons, who are more likely to be unconcerned (44 per cent) than concerned (35 per cent). Littering, crime, traffic and extreme weather all rank notably higher.

This holds across all area types and all but the youngest generation - Gen Z, as the exception, rank air pollution as their second biggest local worry, after neighbourhood crime levels.

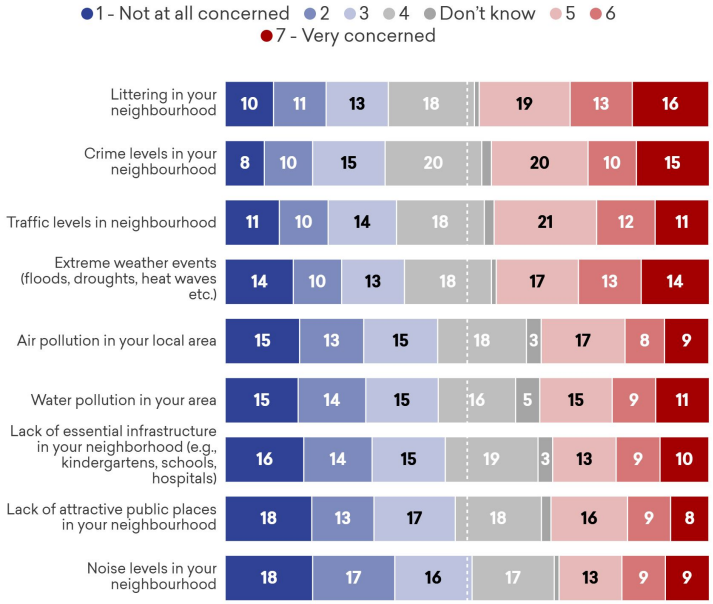
The intangibility of air pollution is a likely factor here, feeding again into the reassurance among Britons that although poor air quality is an issue, it isn't one that affects them or their local area.

It's tough because air pollution is not something that you can see. So naturally, I don't think that it's something that concerns people.

Tayo, Retail, Croydon

Littering, crime and traffic are Britons top concerns for their local area

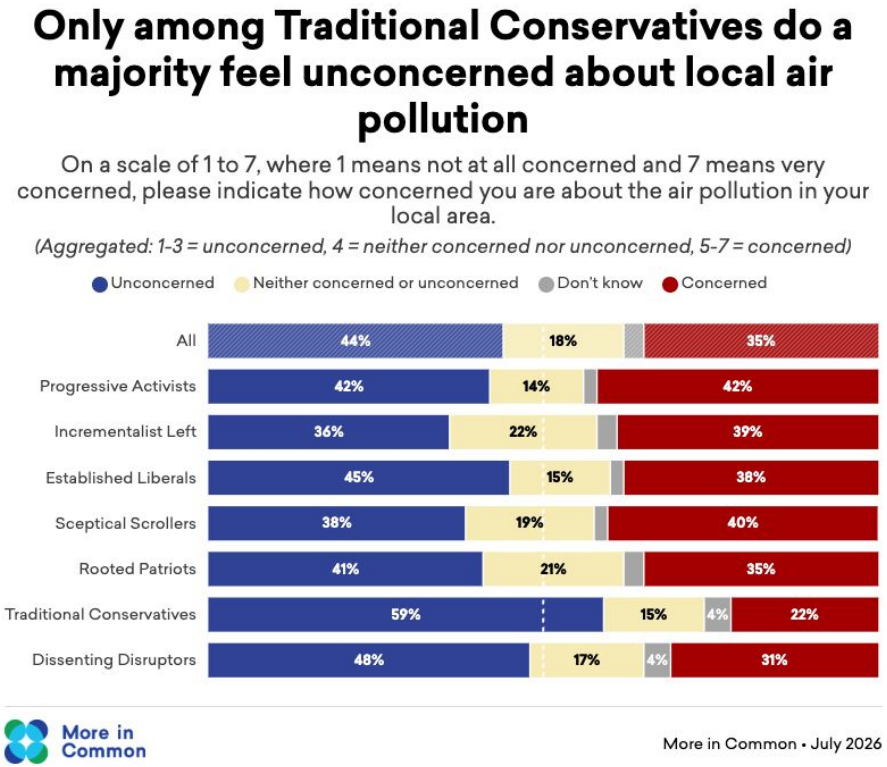
On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means not at all concerned and 7 means very concerned, please indicate how concerned you are about the following issues in your neighbourhood.



Progressive Activists are the most concerned about local air pollution

Progressive Activists are the most concerned about local air quality (42 per cent) and are the most likely to say they have experienced discomfort from air pollution in the last year (30 per cent). This may reflect both a greater salience of environmental issues and a higher level of potential exposure, as a group that skews younger and more metropolitan.

By contrast, just 22 per cent of Traditional Conservatives say they are concerned about air pollution in their local area. This segment is far more likely to be concerned about neighbourhood traffic levels (41 per cent), which may offer a more effective avenue to engage them on clean air measures.



Britons are more than twice as likely to feel uninformed than informed about the level of air pollution in their area

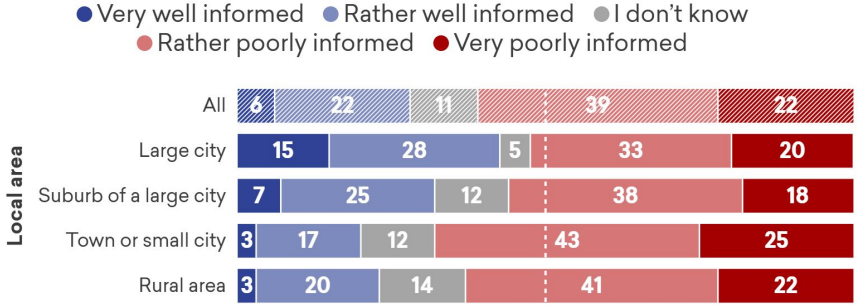
Britons are more than twice as likely to feel poorly informed about the levels of air pollution in their local area (61 per cent) as to feel well informed (28 per cent).

Those who do feel well informed are more likely to be younger, degree-educated and living in urban areas. They have higher concern about local air quality (45 per cent compared with 33 per cent of those who feel poorly informed), but are also over six times more likely to think levels have improved in recent years (25 per cent compared with 4 per cent).

I've not heard anything about air pollution. I know the causes of it, but I've not heard anything. I don't know what the council has done for the past couple of years to try to reduce this as well.
Christelle, Fundraising Manager, Croydon

Six in ten Britons feel poorly informed about air pollution levels

How well informed do you feel about levels of air pollution in your area?



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Impacts of air pollution

Many urban Britons are already having to adapt their daily lives to air pollution

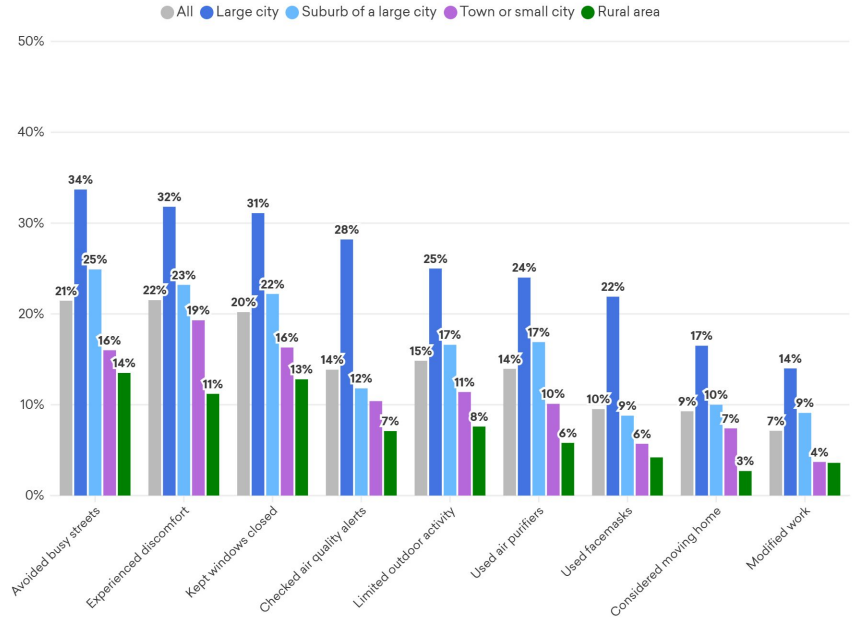
Britons living in cities are far more likely to report either experiencing the side effects of air pollution or having engaged in behaviours to avoid air pollution.

In large cities, as many as one third of residents say they have avoided busy streets (34 per cent) or have kept their windows closed (31 per cent) to reduce their exposure to air pollution - more than double the share of rural residents saying the same thing.

When my children were young, I used to avoid walking down lots of busy streets...I felt like they were just breathing everything in.
Laura, Teacher, Croydon

Air pollution disproportionately affects the lives of Britons in large cities and suburbs

In the past 12 months, have you experienced or done any of the following?



Britons believe air pollution disproportionately impacts the vulnerable

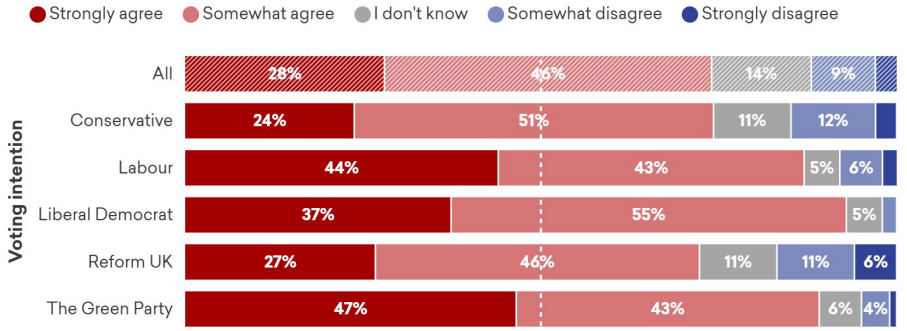
There is consensus across supporters of all major political parties that the consequences of air pollution disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society, such as those on low incomes, people with existing health conditions, children and the elderly.

While clear majorities of these groups themselves agree, they are less likely to do so than their less vulnerable counterparts. 68 per cent of those struggling financially agree, compared with 81 per cent of those who are very comfortable, and 67 per cent of those who describe their health as bad, compared with 77 per cent of those who say it is good. This again feeds into the pattern of air pollution being seen more as a problem for others than for oneself.

Every party's voters agree that vulnerable populations are particularly at risk from air pollution

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Air pollution disproportionately affects vulnerable groups such as low-income communities, children, older people, and those with existing health conditions.



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The role of government

Britons want national government to take responsibility

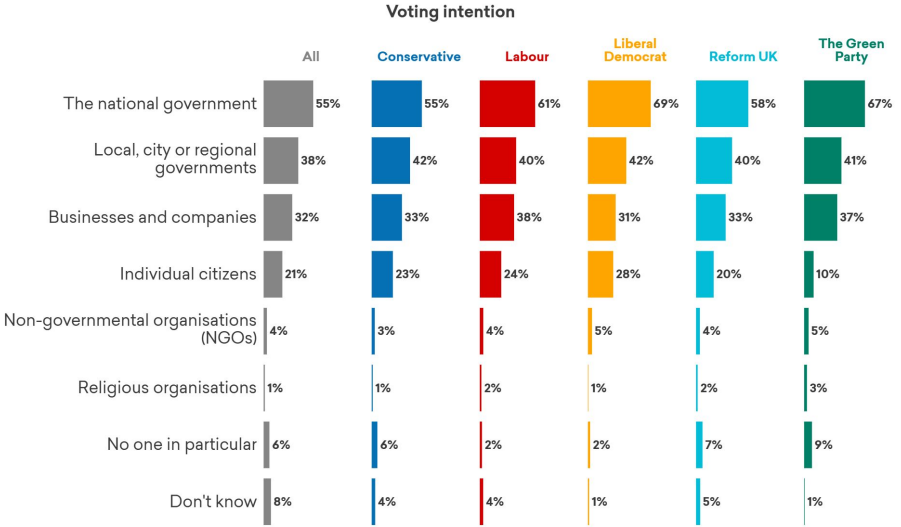
Over half of Britons say they want the UK government to take responsibility for tackling air pollution (55 per cent). This holds for supporters of all major political parties.

Two in five (38 per cent) want to see local government take responsibility, but only 19 per cent of Britons choose it without also choosing national government. This suggests that while there is a role for local government to play, it is not seen as an alternative to national action.

Far fewer see air pollution in Great Britain as a responsibility for individual citizens (21 per cent) or NGOs (4 per cent).

Britons want national government to take responsibility for air pollution

In your opinion, who should take the most responsibility for preventing or reducing air pollution in Great Britain? Please select up to two options.



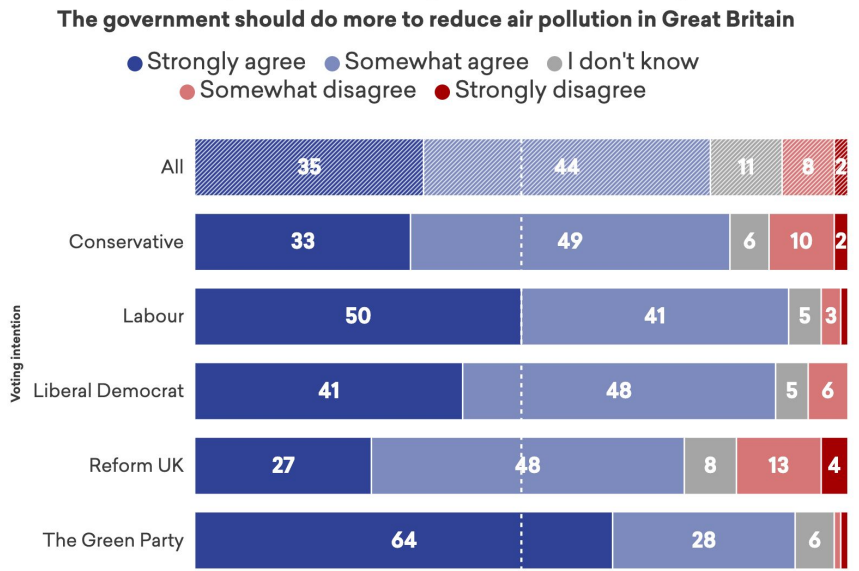
Many want to see the government do more to tackle air pollution

There is also consensus across parties that the government should be doing more in this area. Support is particularly strong among Labour and Green Party supporters, reaching just over 9 in 10 for both (91 per cent), but even among Reform UK supporters, three quarters (75 per cent) would like to see the government go further.

This translates into clear support for tougher regulation in general – a majority of every voting group, generation and segment back tightening air quality standards, with just 6 per cent of Britons opposed.

Supporters from all parties say the government should do more to reduce air pollution in Great Britain

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...



Less than one fifth of Britons are aware of the UK's weaker regulations

Less than one fifth of the public (19 per cent) correctly identified that the UK government has looser regulation on air pollution than the EU. Instead, the most common belief is that the two are similar (26 per cent).

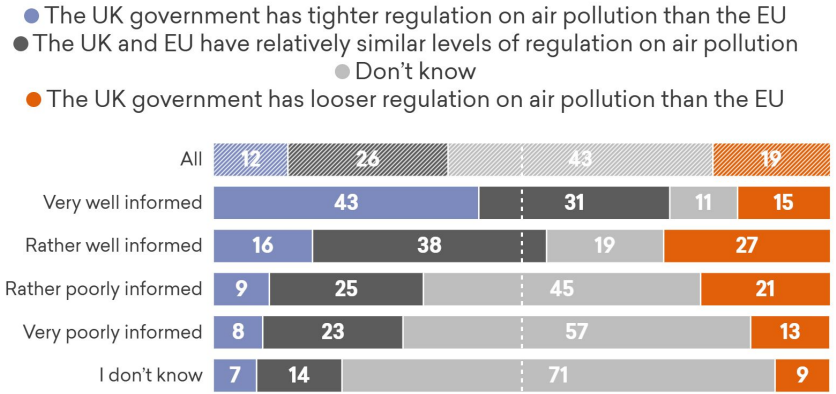
Those who consider themselves very well informed about air pollution in their area are the most likely to wrongly assert there is tighter regulation in the UK (43 per cent).

In focus groups, participants were often shocked and disappointed to learn that UK regulation falls behind our European neighbours who they saw as a useful benchmark for Britain's standards.

I would agree. It's very disappointing to know that we're not keeping up with other European countries. We're interconnected in so many other ways. We should be at least trying to keep the same standards.
Tanya, Teacher, Esher and Walton

Among those who feel 'very well informed' about the levels of air pollution in their area, just 15 per cent identify the UK's looser regulations

Which of the following comes closer to your view?



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But Britons are concerned that policy changes will hurt people like them

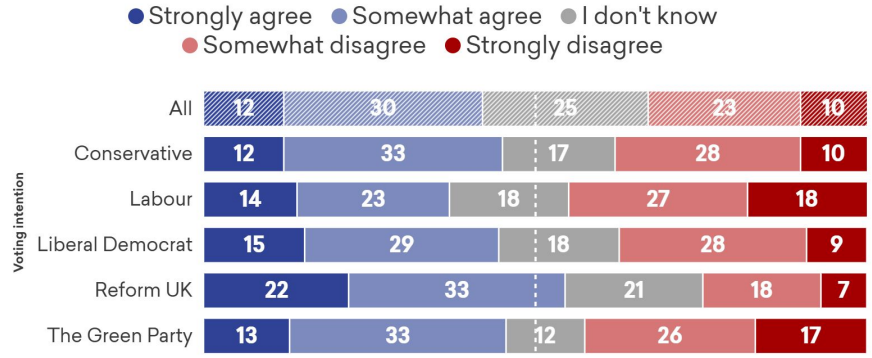
In spite of strong, widespread acknowledgement that air pollution harms health (92 per cent), alongside an appetite for tighter regulations and increased government action, many Britons worry that policy change in this area will hit people like them the hardest.

More than two in five (42 per cent) are concerned that most policies designed to tackle air pollution will negatively affect people like themselves, compared with a third (33 per cent) who are not. Those concerned are less likely to support the tightening of UK air quality standards (67 per cent vs 76 per cent of the public as a whole), but a clear majority are still in support.

One third of Britons are concerned policy change to tackle air pollution will negatively affect people like them

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

I am concerned that most policies designed to tackle air pollution will negatively affect people like me in Great Britain



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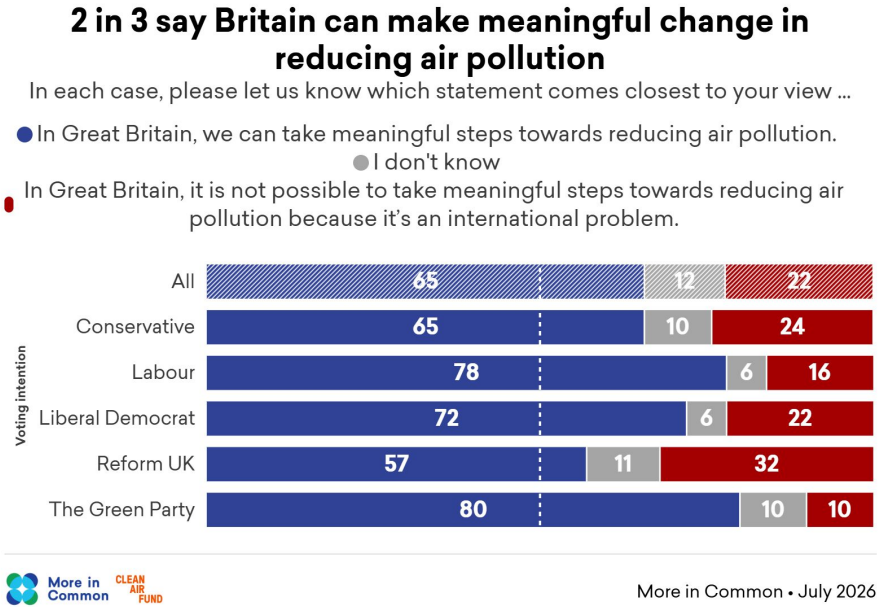
Trust and motives

The public have faith that Britain can make positive change in reducing air pollution

Britons are three times as likely to say the UK can make meaningful progress on air pollution (65 per cent) as to say the problem is too international (22 per cent).

A majority of supporters across all political parties hold this view, but Reform UK supporters are more sceptical than most, with around a third (32 per cent) believing Britain lacks the means to make a real difference.

This sense of agency matters when it comes to support for action on air pollution – those who think the UK is able to make a difference are far more likely to back tighter air quality standards (78 per cent compared with 51 per cent), and are more supportive of every council and government policy measure tested.



Britons think the government is introducing environmental policies to raise revenue – not to make things better

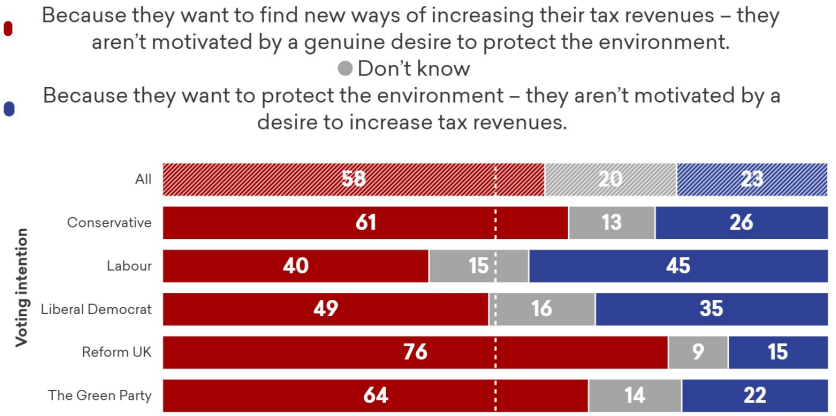
Many Britons are sceptical of the government's motives when it comes to environmental policies, with a majority (58 per cent) believing raising tax revenue to be a bigger motivator than protecting the environment (23 per cent). When asked in focus groups about clean air policies specifically, participants expressed similar suspicion.

Reform UK's supporters feel this most strongly (76 per cent), while Labour's voter base are pretty evenly split - 45 per cent identify environmental protection as the main motivation over 40 per cent for tax revenue.

I think it's purely money driven, all of it. I really don't think they care.
John, Manufacturer, Birmingham

The majority of Britons are sceptical about the government's intentions behind climate change and environment policy

Which of the following comes closest to your view about the government's motivations when it introduces policies related to climate change and the environment?



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Only Established Liberals give the government the benefit of the doubt

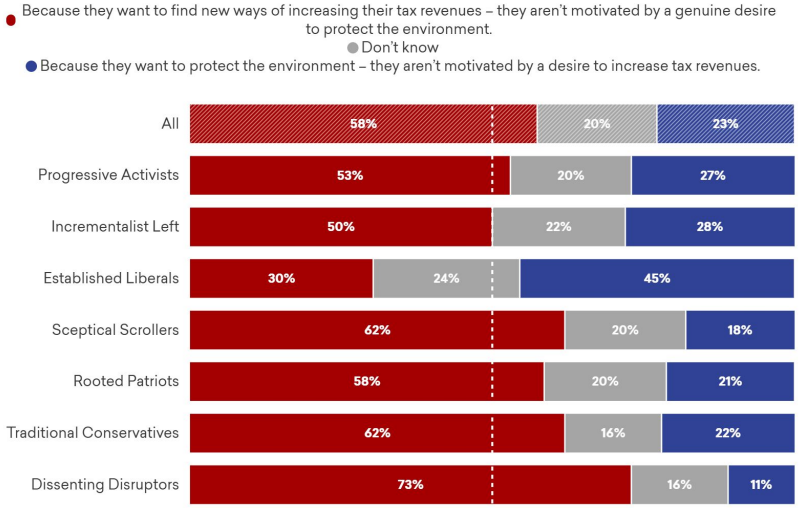
Scepticism about the government's motivations cuts across almost every segment. It is starkest among Dissenting Disruptors (73 per cent), who tend to be deeply distrustful of the political establishment and already feel working people are overtaxed.

But this is not confined to the right. Around half of Progressive Activists (53 per cent) and the Incrementalist Left (50 per cent) say the same: two of the most climate-engaged segments, and among the most concerned about air pollution in their local area.

Established Liberals are the only exception. Typically the most trusting of institutions, they are the only segment more likely to cite the environment (46 per cent) over revenue (30 per cent) as the primary motivator for the government.

Most segments see tax revenue, not the environment, as the driving force behind climate policy

Which of the following comes closest to your view about the government's motivations when it introduces policies related to climate change and the environment?



Many view existing policies as “money-making schemes”

Scepticism was shared in focus groups around the government's true intentions when implementing environmental policy. Many doubt clean air policies are motivated by genuine environmental concern, and instead view them as ‘money-making schemes’ targeting the public. There was also a shared belief that policies such as these don't meaningfully change behaviour or reduce emissions and instead just add costs without addressing the underlying problem.

My reaction [to the clean air zone] was that it’s just another thing to pay money. They just wanted money again. I didn’t feel that they were doing it for the right reasons, it was just another tax to charge people.
Kelly, Accounts, Birmingham

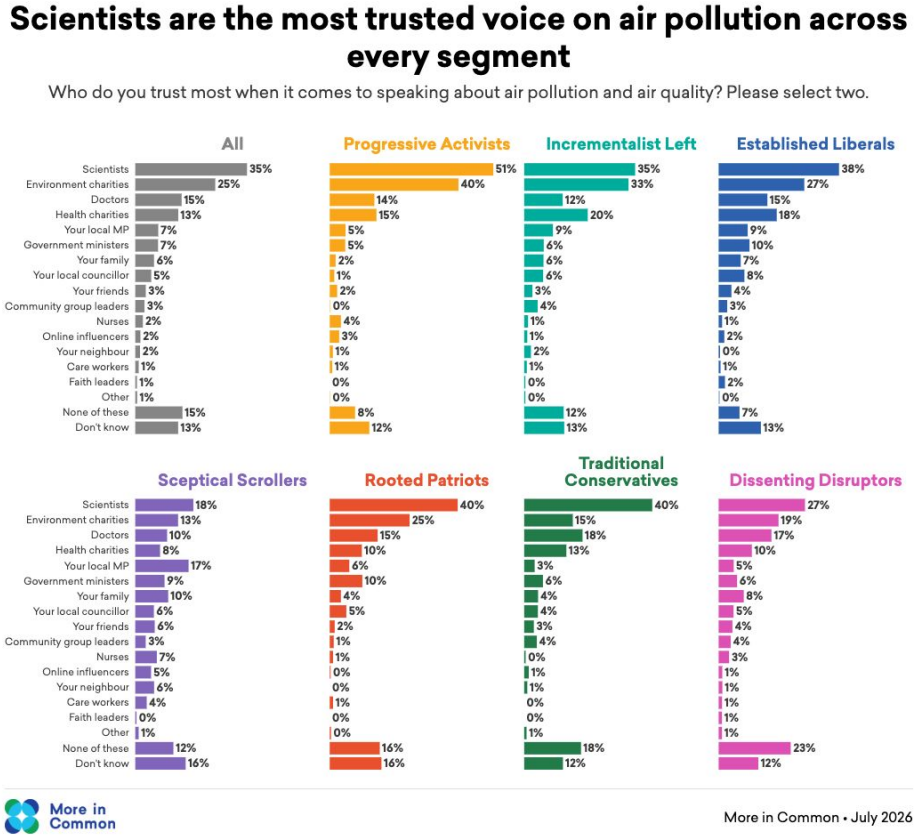
Is [the clean air zone] a money-making thing? Yes. Is there a secondary health benefit? Probably, but it’s very, very small and it’s very hard to quantify. The primary thing is financial.
Ally, GP, Solihull

The pedestrianised areas have probably reduced emissions, but all the clean air zone has done is charge everyone for driving in and around the city centre - it doesn’t mean that people are doing it any less. It’s just a bit of a money-making scheme, really.
Matt, Jewellery Maker, Birmingham

Experts lead when it comes to trust on air pollution

Scientists are the most trusted voice on air pollution, chosen by over a third of Britons (35 per cent) and topping the list in every segment. Environment charities come second overall (25 per cent), but receive considerably less buy-in outside the more progressive segments. Trust in them falls from 40 per cent of Progressive Activists to less than half of that among Sceptical Scrollers (13 per cent), Traditional Conservatives (15 per cent) and Dissenting Disruptors (19 per cent).

Trust in doctors is more modest, but very consistent, chosen by between 10 and 18 per cent in every segment. Given that health is Britons' primary concern when it comes to air pollution, doctors may be well placed to carry the message to audiences that campaigners struggle to reach.



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The cost question

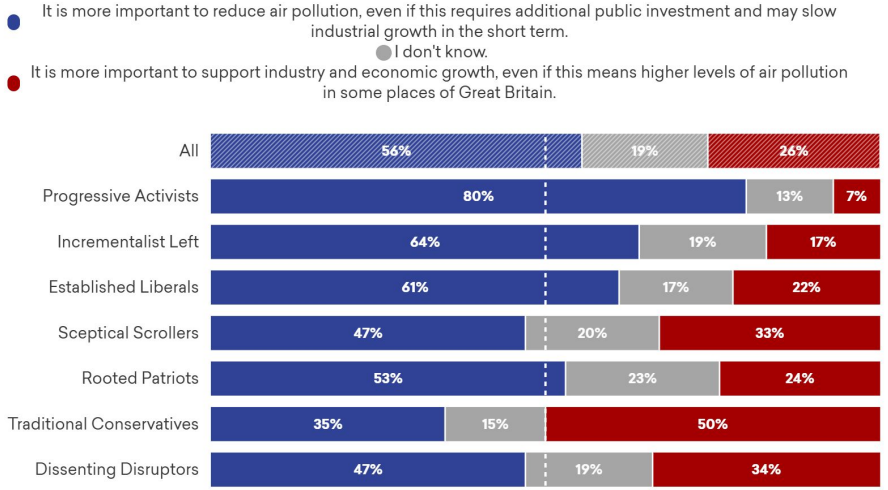
Most Britons are willing to accept the economic trade-offs involved in reducing air pollution

A majority (56 per cent) say slower industrial growth and additional public spending are worthwhile costs to reduce air pollution in the UK, while just 26 per cent say growth and industry should be prioritised. Local concern makes a clear difference: 70 per cent of those worried about air pollution in their area accept this trade-off, compared with 45 per cent of those who are unconcerned.

1 in 2 Traditional Conservatives would prioritise industry and economic growth, more so than any other segment. As the segment least concerned about local air pollution (22 per cent), they may see little reason to accept economic costs for a problem they do not see as pressing.

Most Britons prioritise reducing air pollution over industrial growth

Which statement comes closer to your view?



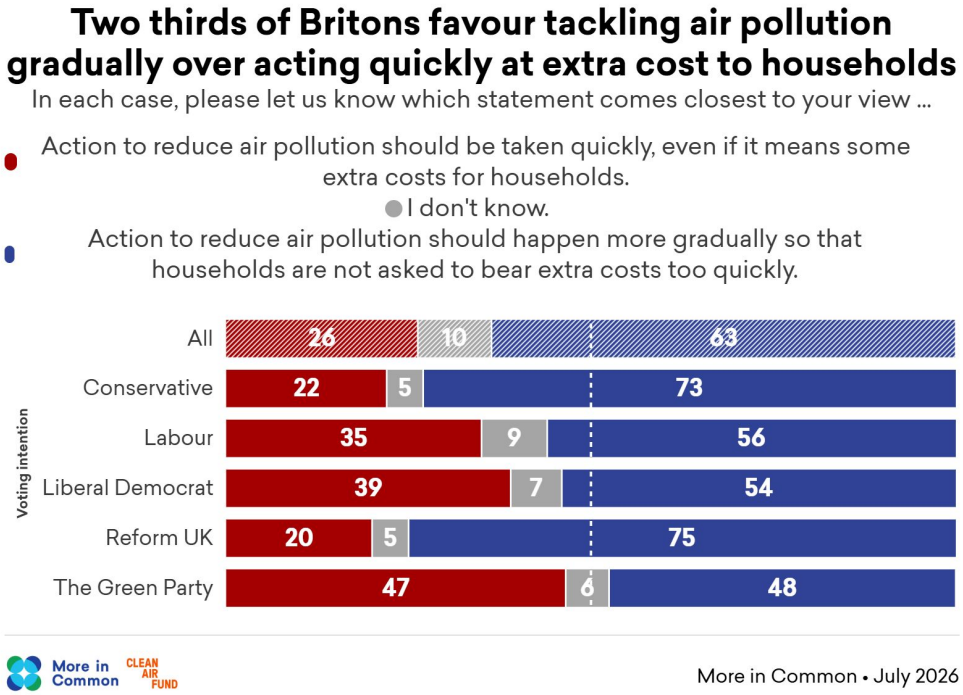
But they draw the line at costs for themselves

While the public are broadly willing to accept slower growth to reduce air pollution, they draw the line at additional costs to themselves. When given the trade-off between speed of action and extra costs, 63 per cent would prefer a slower rate of change to allow households to adjust - whereas a quarter (26 per cent) say action should be taken quickly, even if this means higher costs.

Even among those who say the current air quality in their area is bad, 61 per cent would choose gradual change over extra household costs.

If push comes to shove and somebody says to me, "You've got to pay another five pounds to drive into the city centre", I'd be more worried about the cost than the quality of the air.

Chris, Retired, Solihull



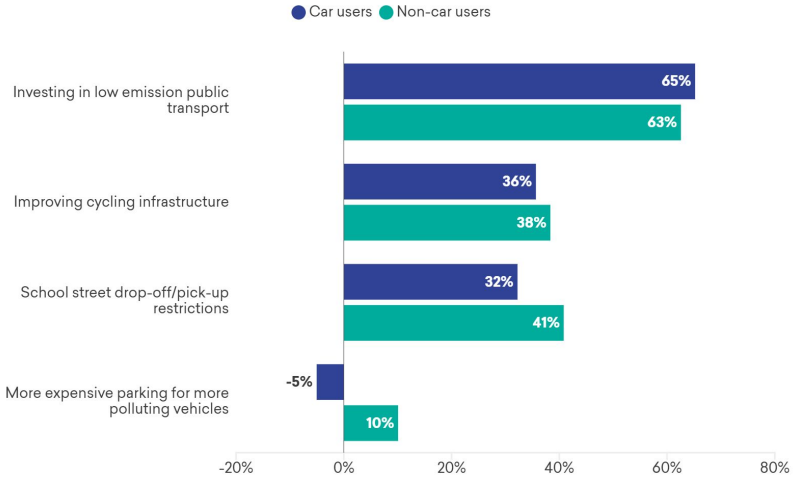
Drivers are just as concerned about air pollution, but are more resistant to policies that will cost them directly

While equally concerned about air pollution in their local area, drivers are much more likely than those who don't drive to worry that policies designed to tackle air pollution will negatively affect their lives (43 per cent vs 33 per cent).

Net approval for clean-air initiatives is very similar between the two groups, until they affect driving practices directly. Drivers show lower net support for policies that restrict or add cost to driving - new clean air zones, higher parking fees for polluting vehicles, school-street restrictions - and instead favour policies that help them upgrade, like EV VAT reductions and van scrappage schemes, their two best-supported policies.

Policies restricting driving reveal the widest gap between drivers and non-drivers

To what extent do you support or oppose your local council doing the following?
(Net support)



Britons feel that clean air charges unfairly affect those on lower incomes

A major recurring theme was that government action relies too heavily on negative reinforcement - such as ULEZ, congestion charges, and idling fines - which are seen to disproportionately hit lower-income working-class people who cannot afford to buy newer, compliant cars.

It always seems to hit those at the lowest socioeconomic status first... and it makes the gap between the haves and the have-nots even worse. Those that need to change their car that can't afford to, they now can't visit people. It affects communities, it affects livelihoods.
Laura, Primary School Teacher, Croydon

I think it depends as well. I mean it's what people can afford to pay. Sometimes people just use their car for work and they're being hit by these fines. So how can people earn a living? They might not be able to afford a newer car and then they're being struck by the fines. So it's a bit of a catch-22. I think it should be all dependent on whether you're working or whether you just go in and around the city centre for casual shopping. I think sometimes you have to make those choices.
Kelly, Accounts, Birmingham

I think it's affected people on lower income because let's be honest, if you're on the higher income, you can afford a new car. Your old car was probably compliant in the first place. It's probably the people without money, if they've going to have to have changed something or forked out money for something else, it's going to be those that probably can't afford to.
Daisy, Property Management, Croydon

The general working person can't afford an electric car. So again, those workers that need to get into town to work or whatever, they're the ones that are going to be hit. And I think that'd be really unfair.
Carly, SEN Teacher, Solihull

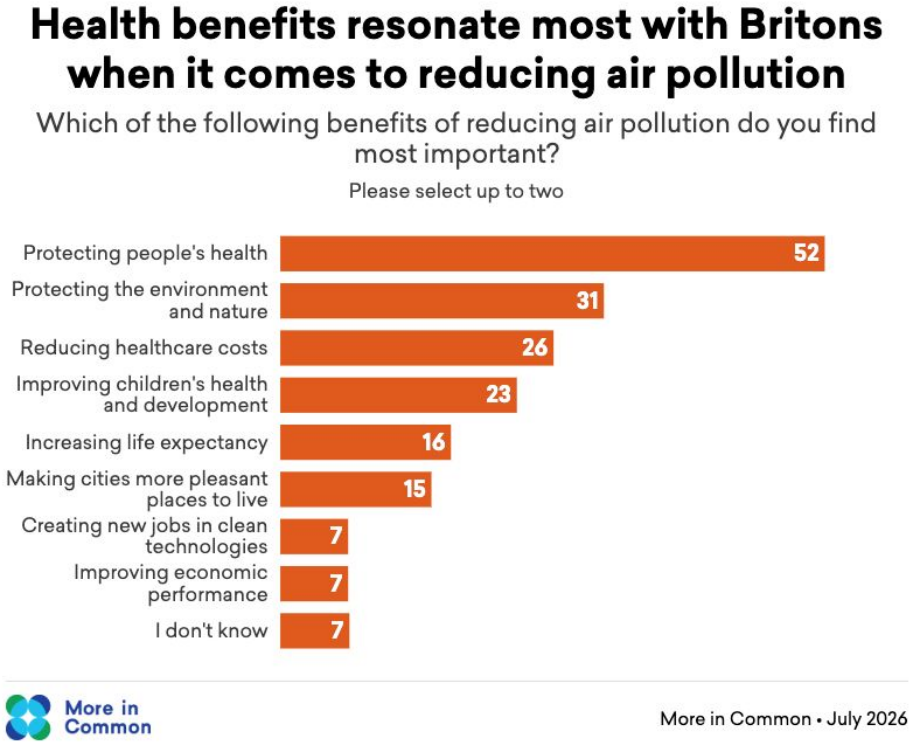
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Health resonates

Protecting the health of Britons resonates as one of the most important benefits of reducing air pollution

Protecting health stands out as the most important benefit of reducing air pollution by a clear margin, chosen by over half of Britons (52 per cent) and consistently prioritised across all age and voting groups.

Beyond health, the public are far more motivated by the benefits to the environment than to the economy. Protecting the environment and nature is ranked second in importance (31 per cent), while economic benefits such as creating clean tech jobs or improving economic performance rank lowest across every population segment, party and generation.

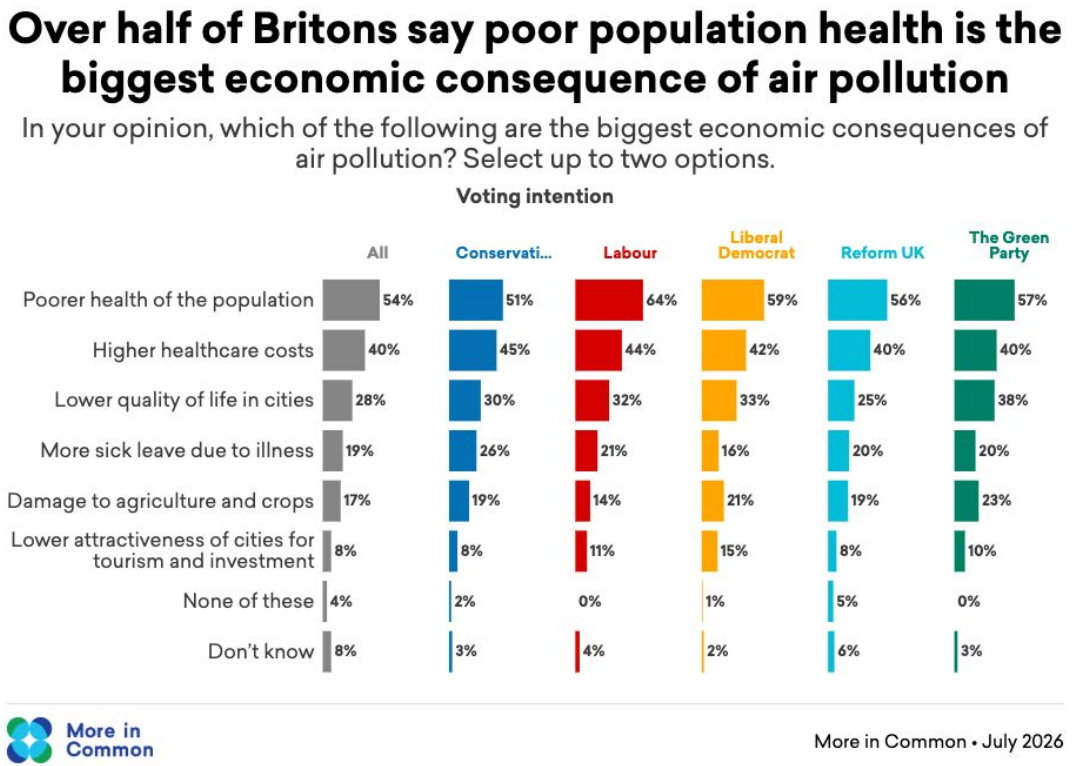


Poor health is seen as the biggest economic consequence of air pollution

Britons overwhelmingly see air pollution as a health issue first and foremost.

Poorer population health and higher healthcare costs are consistently identified as the two greatest economic consequences of air pollution across all segments and voter groups.

The same can be said for most area types, though city residents narrowly place lower quality of life in cities (34 per cent) ahead of higher healthcare costs (31 per cent). Even so, the health of the population remains their biggest economic concern (49 per cent).



More in Common

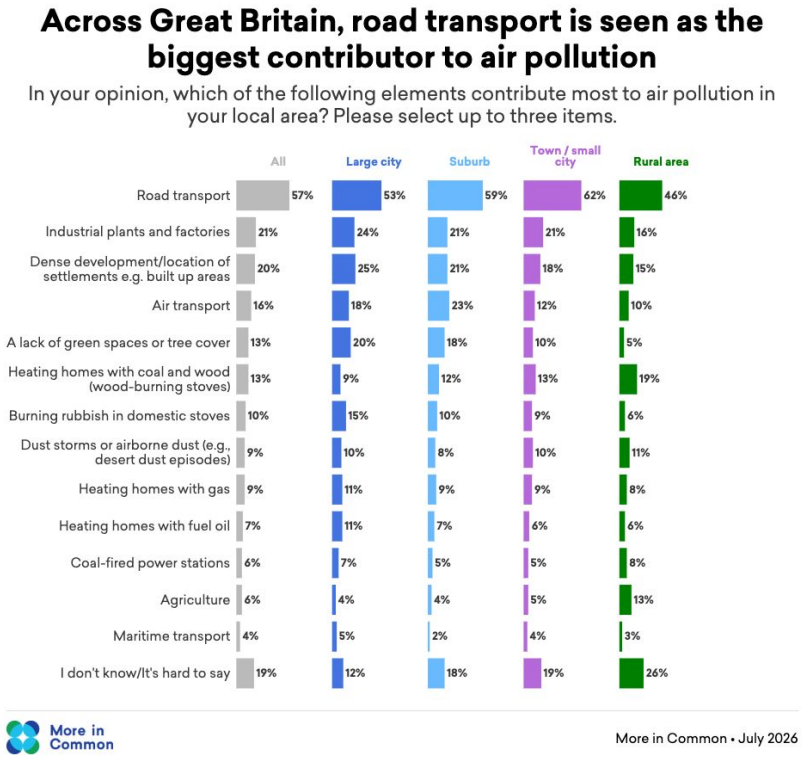
Transport

Road transport is widely seen as the biggest contributor to air pollution

Most Britons (57 per cent) identify road transport as a main cause of air pollution in their local area, far ahead of other forms of transport such as air (16 per cent) and maritime (4 per cent). This view is consistent across party lines, held by at least 55 per cent of each major party's voter base.

Rural Britons are the only group where fewer than half say this (46 per cent), but road transport is still their most commonly cited cause by a clear margin. They are the most likely of any area type to identify wood burning stoves as a main contributor, their second most common answer at 19 per cent.

A sizeable minority of Britons remain unsure about what drives air pollution where they live, with 19 per cent unable to name a main cause. Across focus group conversations, participants primarily saw air pollution as an issue of vehicle exhausts and emissions.



Traffic is what comes to mind when Britons consider air pollution

If you live quite close to the city centre, there's a lot of pollution by traffic and it reduces the oxygen and the clean air that you breathe in.
Sarah, Recruitment, Birmingham

The amount of traffic that we have near our house, I think that's what I would automatically go to, like diesel cars and the lack of electric cars
Carly, SEN Teacher, Solihull

I live in a suburban area and you think it's pretty good, but actually I live quite close to the motorway as well. You go to other places on holiday in the UK - I take the dog to Cornwall and Devon - and it does feel like a different air quality to what you're probably used to in a more built up area.
Ally, GP, Solihull

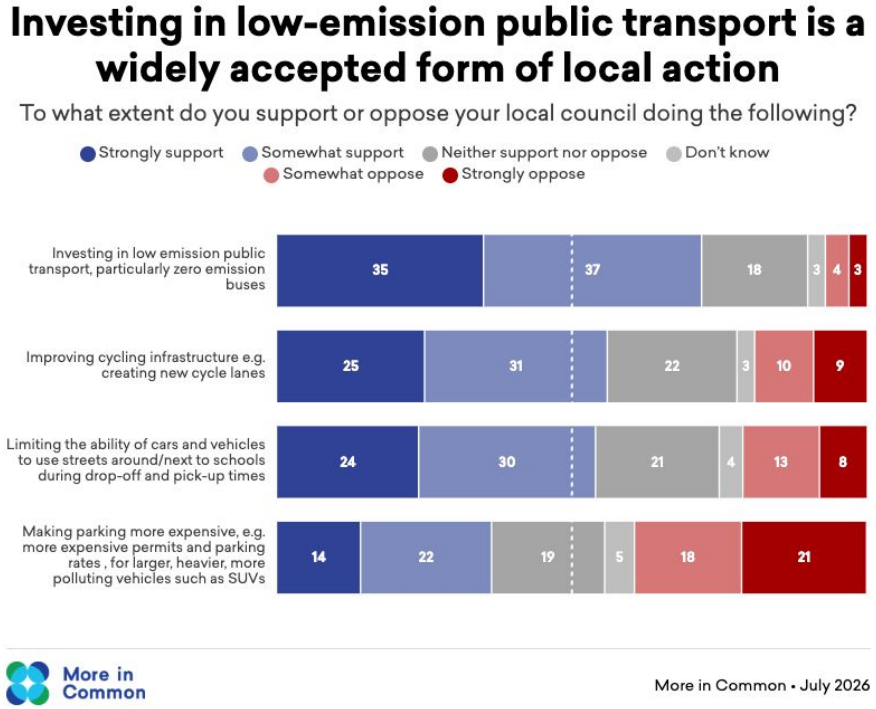
Yeah. I live in Birmingham, and then travelling out to the Netherlands where there's a lot more cycling out here, so the air pollution is a lot better. It's really noticeable.
Liam, Manufacturing, Birmingham

If you live in a city where there's no trees and there's a high dense population of people that are moving around with vehicles, you're going to have poor air quality. If you live out in the country, you're not.
Doug, Retired, Esher and Walton

Britons would be supportive of their councils investing in cleaner forms of transport

Britons are supportive of their councils taking action on road transport to improve local air quality. Investing in low-emission public transport is by far the most popular option, supported by 72 per cent of Britons, while improved cycling infrastructure and school street restrictions are also met with majority support.

Again, levels of support are consistent between drivers and non-drivers until policies restrict or charge driving directly. Drivers are twice as likely as non-drivers to oppose school street restrictions (22 per cent vs 11 per cent). More expensive parking widens the gap even further - it is the only measure drivers oppose on balance (net -5 vs +10 among non-drivers), and as they make up a large proportion of the public, this is enough to tip overall opinion against it (net -3).



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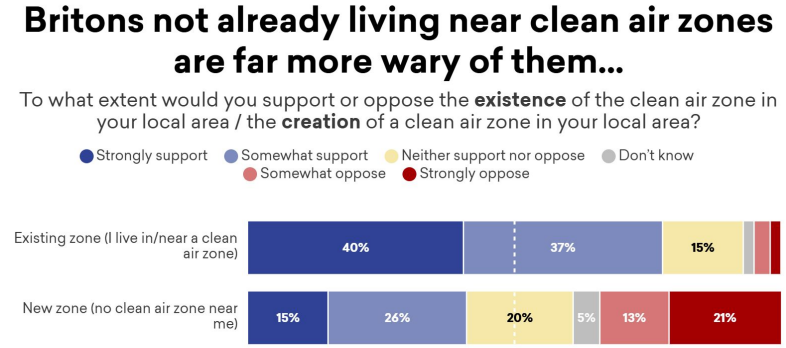
Attitudes toward clean air zones

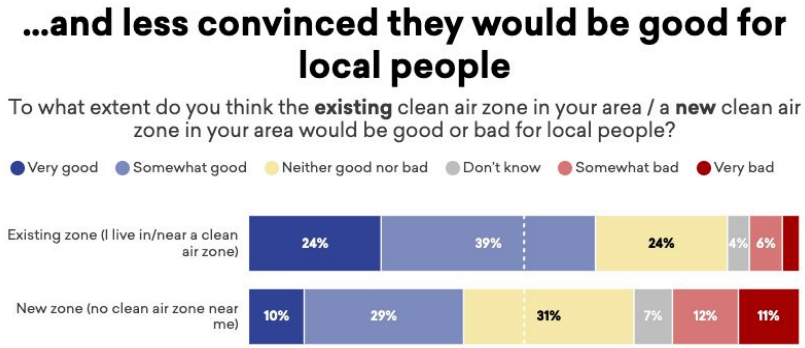
Britons are wary of new clean air zones coming to their area

Among those not already living in or near a clean air zone, support for the creation of one in their area only just outweighs opposition (41 per cent compared with 34 per cent), and they are around seven times as likely to oppose a clean air zone as those already living with one (5 per cent).

Opposition is strongest where the need feels least pressing. Those who rate their local air quality as good are narrowly opposed (net -3), while those who rate it as bad are strongly in favour (+41). Support also falls away outside urban areas, from net +32 in large cities to -11 in rural areas, where alternatives to driving are also more limited.

Notably, this wariness does not appear to be driven by doubt over whether clean air zones would work. Those without one expect similar levels of improvement to air quality and health as residents report, suggesting concern centres more on their cost.





But those living in clean air zones are firmly in favour

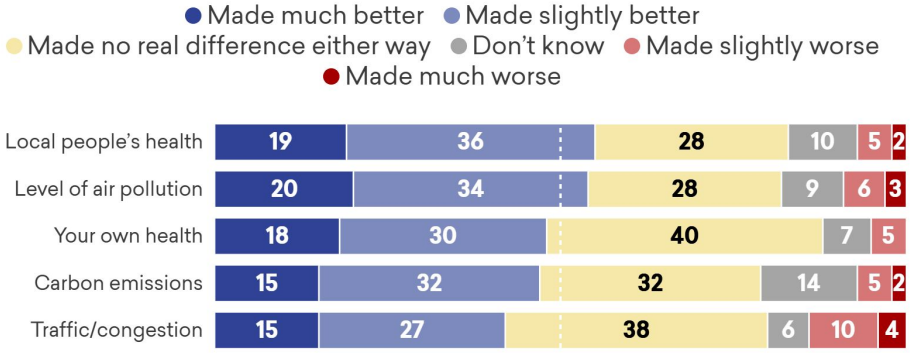
Those living in clean air zones strongly back them, with around three quarters (78 per cent) in support of the one in their area. Many have noticed direct improvements on air quality, with more than half reporting reductions in the levels of air pollution (54 per cent) and carbon emissions (47 per cent) as a result.

Around half say it has led to improvements in locals' health (48 per cent). When it comes to their own health, however, people are more likely to say it has made no difference, reflecting the now-familiar gap between how Britons see air pollution in the more abstract sense and how they experience it personally.

Crucially, first-hand experience seems to win people round. Residents of clean air zones are less than half as likely as non-residents to think they are bad for locals (5 vs 23 per cent), and far more likely to see them as a force for good (66 vs 39 per cent).

Those living within them say clean air zones have had a more positive than negative impact on every measure tested

What effect do you think the creation of a clean air zone has had on the following in your area?



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However, residents still want to see clearer evidence that clean air zones are making a difference

In focus groups, people living in or near clean air zones were more critical than the survey suggests - many could point to the costs in their daily lives, but struggled to identify any personal benefit. Several felt they would be more receptive if there was clearer communication about the difference the zones were making, and if they had been given more warning before they were introduced.

They haven't even come out and said, "ULEZ was introduced in 2024 and by doing that we brought pollution down". We haven't heard anything as to why they did it, we're all just left with a negative feeling towards it.
Siobhan, Dental Practice Manager, Croydon

It just came on all of a sudden. I think just a bit more information, maybe a longer campaign to say, "In five, six years we are going to do this, and in the meantime these are the things you can do", [would have been useful]. Not everyone has the means to just switch it up.
Nika, Pharmacist, Croydon

I wouldn't have thought that [the clean air zone] has had a demonstrable impact. I think this [scientific information] is the kind of information that we need more of to be able to convince everyone who says ULEZ hasn't achieved anything.
Anna, Business Analyst, Esher and Walton

They need to be publishing data of what the emissions tests were showing back then, and what they're showing now. Then it's measurable...I think they should be more transparent about what they're doing.
Lora, Auctioneer, Birmingham

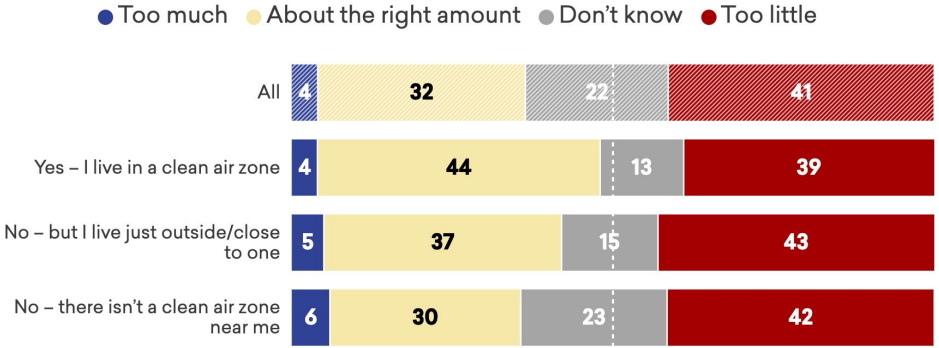
Clean air zones are seen as a starting point but not the finished product

Those living in a clean air zone are 12 points more likely than average to say that the government is doing the right amount to reduce air pollution in the UK (44 to 32 per cent), suggesting that action taken locally gives people more confidence that the issue is being addressed.

However there remains a significant appetite for more to be done. Among those living in a clean air zone, 4 in 10 (39 per cent) still say the government is doing too little to reduce air pollution - an indication that, although current efforts have been well received, for many they are just a first step.

Those living within clean air zones are most likely to say the government are doing the right amount to tackle air pollution, but there remains appetite for further action

Do you think the government is doing too little, too much, or about the right amount to reduce air pollution in the UK?



I agree [it's got better], but I still don't think it's good enough. Just because it's the best it's ever been, it doesn't mean it's as good as it probably should be.

Sarah, Recruitment, Birmingham

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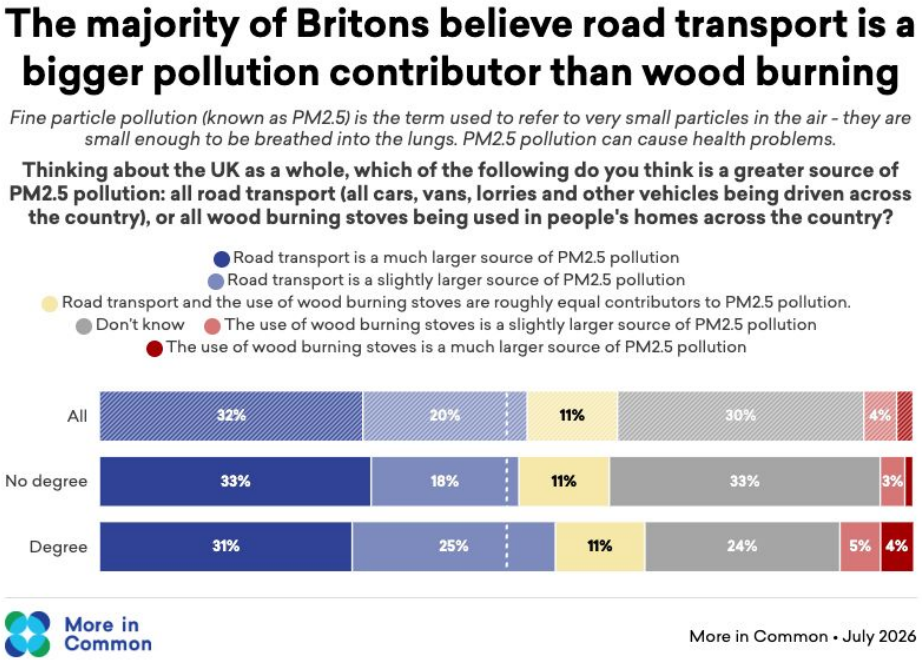
Heating homes

Unprompted, Britons overwhelmingly say road transport is a bigger contributor of PM2.5

Just 11 per cent of the public correctly identified that road transport and wood burning stoves are roughly equal contributors of PM2.5.

Neither education level nor confidence in their knowledge of local air pollution makes Britons much more likely to answer correctly. The same proportion of graduates as non-graduates identified the correct response, and excluding those who said they didn't know, there was just a 2 point gap in accuracy between those who feel well informed (18 per cent) and those who feel poorly informed (16 per cent).

In focus groups, participants voiced genuine shock at this statistic, questioning why they were not previously aware of the levels of pollution emitted from wood burning.

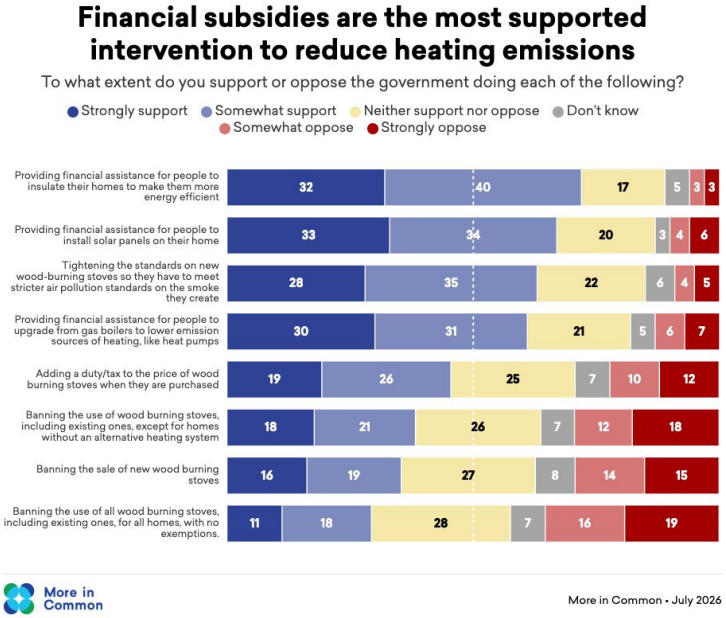


Support for action on wood burners stops short of an outright ban – even without knowledge of the scale of pollution they cause

Subsidising home improvements is the most popular way of reducing heating emissions among the public, with 72 per cent and 67 per cent of Britons in favour of financial support for home insulation and solar panel installation respectively.

Britons also back tougher regulation on wood burners. Tightening pollution standards on new wood burning stoves is the third most popular measure tested, supported by 63 per cent, just ahead of financial assistance for heat pumps at 61 per cent.

Support decreases as measures on wood burners become stricter, but holds up further than might be expected. A tax on new stoves is backed by twice as many people as oppose it (45 per cent vs 22 per cent), and partial bans still receive narrow net support - only an outright ban on the use of all stoves, with no exemptions, is opposed on balance (-5 net).



There was appetite in focus groups to impose restrictions on wood burners…

After being presented with the information that wood burners are responsible for the same amount of PM2.5 pollution as road transport, support for restrictions increased dramatically:

I would probably support a ban, if I'm honest, because I just think we harm so much already… Not the old ones, because I think it's lovely to have a history and they're already here. But no, if it's that damaging, I'm sorry, for the sake of a stove, no.

Tanya, Administration, Solihull

I mean, I certainly would be in favour of banning them in inner city areas. I think that makes complete sense… We are sentimentally attached to the idea of a chimney in a house, people would rather have a house with a chimney even though it's not used, but I think it's a good idea to ban them.

Richard, Training Manager, Esher and Walton

I think in this instance, a tax like this isn't going to be the same as the ULEZ that hits normal working class people. These appliances, in my experience, are in the nice houses where these landlords or owners can afford to switch them out. So I don't think it should be a tax because I think they'll be able to afford the tax. I think it should be that they're not allowed. You got until this date to get rid and we will incentivize you by saying if you have this make and this model, you get this much money back or something like that.

Daisy, Property Management, Croydon

I think if most of those people are quite wealthy, then there's no point putting a tax on it because they'd be able to pay the tax anyway. It'd make more sense for this to be banned and we need to be able to see a campaign on this from the government.

Christelle, Fundraising Manager, Croydon

… but concern remained among some about the effect these might have on the finances of households dependent on them

It's just making money again. Why don't they reduce your gas bill? Reduce your gas bill and then people wouldn't revert to log burners. Common sense to me… They just want to get more money out of people, it's not actually trying to help the environment.

Kelly, Accounts, Birmingham

In Northern Ireland where I'm from, it's oil heating in most of the areas. They don't run gas into Northern Ireland for heating. So a lot of homes, a lot of my friends, my family, they have coal fires or wood burning fires in the front rooms, and they use them in the winter because the oil is so expensive to run…You can heat your water through the fire rather than use the electricity. So the whole system over there is not geared for getting rid of any kind of wood burning or coal-burning fires.

Tanya, Teacher, Esher and Walton

You can't go from no education on how these affect things to then straight away taxing somebody. If somebody has known for 10 years that it has this effect and has still chosen to do that then it's different, but you've not educated anybody that this does it and then you're just going to go straight in with a tax.

Amanda, Sales Admin, Birmingham

I think our energy is already super expensive, I think if people want to burn logs to try and save money, I think they should be free to do that, to be honest.

Sam, IT, Birmingham