

Article

Public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change, Great Britain: 2024

Insights on individuals' and businesses' attitudes towards climate change and the environment using data from our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

Contact:
Public Policy and Social Insights
team
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.
gov.uk
+44 3000 671543

Release date:
13 November 2024

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Climate change is an important issue for people and businesses](#)
3. [Effects of climate change on people and businesses](#)
4. [Actions taken to prevent or prepare for climate change](#)
5. [Data on public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change](#)
6. [Glossary](#)
7. [Data sources and quality](#)
8. [Related links](#)
9. [Cite this article](#)

1 . Main points

Using the latest data collected from adults in Great Britain in October 2024 using our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey:

- Around 6 in 10 (57%) adults reported climate change and the environment was an important issue, compared with a recent high of 69% in July to August 2023.
- The most common ways adults reported climate change had affected them in the last 12 months were strong winds (40%), floods (35%) and heatwaves (30%).
- The most commonly reported ways adults expected climate change would affect them in the next 10 years were increased temperatures (65%), increased flooding (60%), stronger winds (50%), rising sea levels or coastal erosion (44%) and water shortages (40%), with around 8 in 10 (83%) expecting to be affected in the next 10 years in at least one of the ways we asked about.

When considering public attitudes to climate change by different characteristics using data collected during August to October 2024:

- Groups of the population who appeared more likely to report climate change and the environment was an important issue included adults with a degree or equivalent (66%), working in professional occupations (67%), those living in the least deprived areas of England (61%), women (60%), those living in the South West (61%), those aged 16 to 29 years (59%) or aged 70 years and over (59%).
- Around three-quarters (76%) of adults reported having made changes (68% some, 9% a lot) to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change; groups who appeared more likely to report this included those working in professional occupations (85%), adults with a degree or equivalent (85%), Asian or Asian British adults or Mixed or multiple ethnic group adults (82%), women (81%), those living in London (81%), adults aged 30 to 49 years (80%) or 50 to 69 years (79%).
- Among the 24% of adults who had not made any lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change, the most commonly reported reasons were not feeling that their changes would have any effect on climate change (42%), thinking that large-scale polluters should change before individuals (37%), it being too expensive to make changes (24%) and not knowing how to make changes (19%).
- The majority of adults in Great Britain (74%) reported they would support (41% strongly, 33% somewhat) the creation of renewable energy projects in their local area; this proportion appeared higher among groups including those with a degree or equivalent (84%) or those in professional occupations (85%).

Using data collected during September 2024 from our UK Business Insights and Conditions Survey to examine business attitudes towards climate change:

- The proportion of businesses that expressed concern (very or somewhat concerned) about the impact of climate change on their business had fallen from around a third (34%) in June 2024 to less than 3 in 10 (28%) in late September 2024.
- Concern appeared more common among larger businesses with 250 employees or more (57%) and among certain industries surveyed including the accommodation industry (44%).
- When asked about which risks of climate change businesses had assessed, supply chain disruption (8%) was most common, but the majority of businesses (74%) had not assessed any risk that we asked about: supply chain disruption, coastal erosion, increased flooding, temperature increase or water scarcity.
- Among businesses that had assessed at least one climate change risk, relatively small proportions had taken action as a result, with the largest proportion having taken action against potential supply chain disruption (15%).

2 . Climate change is an important issue for people and businesses

A majority of people think climate change and the environment is an important issue

Our monthly Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) continues to ask adults in Great Britain about their opinions on climate change and the environment.

Around 6 in 10 (57%) adults reported climate change and the environment was an important issue in the latest data for October 2024 (Figure 1). This proportion has decreased compared with a recent high of 69% in July to August 2023.

Figure 1: Around 6 in 10 (57%) adults thought climate change and the environment was an important issue

Proportion of adults reporting each important issue, Great Britain, October 2022 to October 2024

Notes

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option.
4. The length of each data collection period presented in this time series may be different.

By pooling survey waves together, we have examined the characteristics of those who report climate change and the environment was an important issue in more detail. Groups of the population who appeared more likely to report this during the pooled period 7 August to 27 October 2024 included:

- adults with a degree or equivalent (66%) compared with adults with no qualifications (48%)
- adults working in professional occupations (67%) compared with adults working in skilled trades (39%)
- those living in the least deprived areas of England: 61% among those living in the least deprived fifth of areas, compared with 49% among those living in the most deprived fifth of areas, according to the [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)
- women (60%), compared with 52% of men
- those living in the South West (61%) compared with those living in other regions of England
- younger and older adults: 59% among those aged 16 to 29 years and 59% among those aged 70 years and over, compared with 54% among those aged 30 to 49 years and 55% among those aged 50 to 69 years (Figure 2)

These groups have been consistently more likely to report climate change and the environment as an important issue. For more information on how reporting of important issues has varied among different groups of the population see our [Public opinions and social trends: June 2024](#) bulletin.

Figure 2: Adults with a degree or equivalent were more likely to report climate change and the environment was an important issue

Proportion of adults reporting climate change and the environment is an important issue, by characteristic, Great Britain, August to October 2024

Notes

1. Question: "What do you think are important issues facing the UK today?".
2. Base: All adults, except for occupation for which the base is all adults in employment.
3. Estimates by quintile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are provided among adults in England only.

Estimates of those reporting climate change and the environment as an important issue among other groups of the population including by country, region, whether living in an urban or rural area, employment status, occupation type, parental status, household composition, tenure type, disability status and ethnicity are available in the [dataset](#) published alongside this article.

Businesses' concern about the impact of climate change

We also regularly ask businesses on our Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) whether they are concerned about the impact climate change may have on their business.

Not all industries are covered by the BICS survey sample. Industries excluded from the sample include those in agriculture, oil and gas extraction or energy generation and supply. This should be considered when interpreting the results in this section. See [Section 7: Data sources and quality for more information](#).

The proportion of businesses that are either very or somewhat concerned has fallen from around a third (34%) in June 2024 to less than 3 in 10 (28%) in late September 2024. The proportion had been as high as around 4 in 10 (41%) in early February 2023 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The proportion of businesses who are very or somewhat concerned about the impact climate change may have on their business has fallen since February 2023

Climate change concern, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, September 2022 to September 2024

Notes

1. Question: "Is your business concerned about the impact climate change may have on the business?".
2. Base: All businesses in the UK surveyed, who had not stopped trading.

Concern about the impact of climate change by business characteristics

Reporting some level of concern about the impact climate change might have on their business appeared to increase by size of business, with around 6 in 10 (57%) larger businesses (250 employees or more) reporting concern compared with around a quarter of smaller businesses (26% among businesses with 0 to 9 employees).

Considering this by industry type, businesses in the accommodation industry were among those most likely to report this (44%) whereas businesses in the information and communication industry were among those least likely to report this (19%).

Further details on environment-related questions asked to businesses, including all response options broken down by industry type and size band, can be found in the Wave 117 edition of this [dataset](#).

3 . Effects of climate change on people and businesses

Effects experienced by people in the last 12 months

For the first time in October 2024 (2 to 27 October 2024), we asked adults in Great Britain about the ways in which they felt climate change had affected them in the last 12 months. The most commonly reported ways were:

- strong winds (40%)
- floods (35%)
- heatwaves (30%)

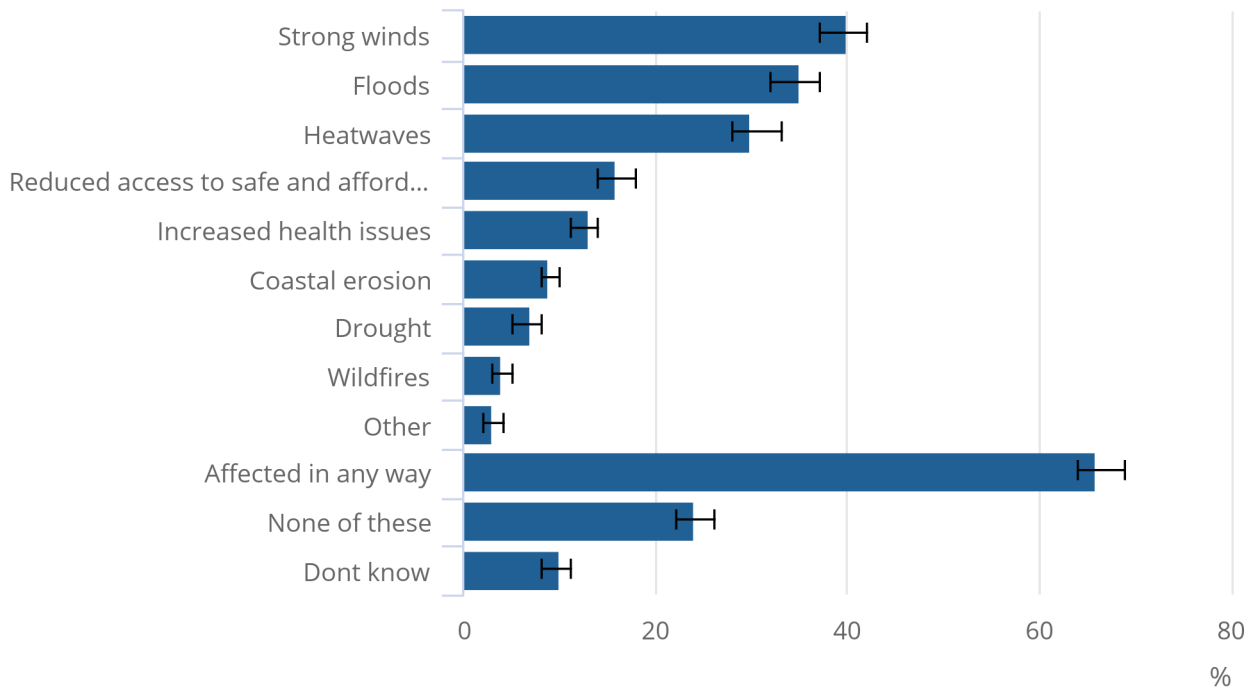
Two-thirds of adults (66%) reported they had been affected in at least one of the ways we asked about. Around a quarter (24%) reported they had not been affected in any of the ways asked about (Figure 4).

Figure 4: 4 in 10 (40%) adults felt climate change had affected them in the last 12 months through strong winds

Proportion of adults reporting ways in which climate change had affected them in the last 12 months, Great Britain, October 2024

Figure 4: 4 in 10 (40%) adults felt climate change had affected them in the last 12 months through strong winds

Proportion of adults reporting ways in which climate change had affected them in the last 12 months, Great Britain, October 2024



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "In the past 12 months, in which of the following ways, if any, do you think climate change has affected you?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option. The category "Affected in any way" represents the proportion of respondents who selected at least one option apart from "None of these" or "Don't know".

Expected effects on people in the next 10 years

We also asked about the ways in which they felt climate change would affect them in the next 10 years. The most commonly reported ways were:

- increased temperatures (65%)
- increased flooding (60%)
- stronger winds (50%)
- rising sea levels or coastal erosion (44%)
- water shortages (40%)

Around 8 in 10 (83%) expected to be affected in the next 10 years in at least one of the ways we asked about. Around 1 in 20 (6%) reported they did not expect to be affected in any of the ways asked about (Figure 5).

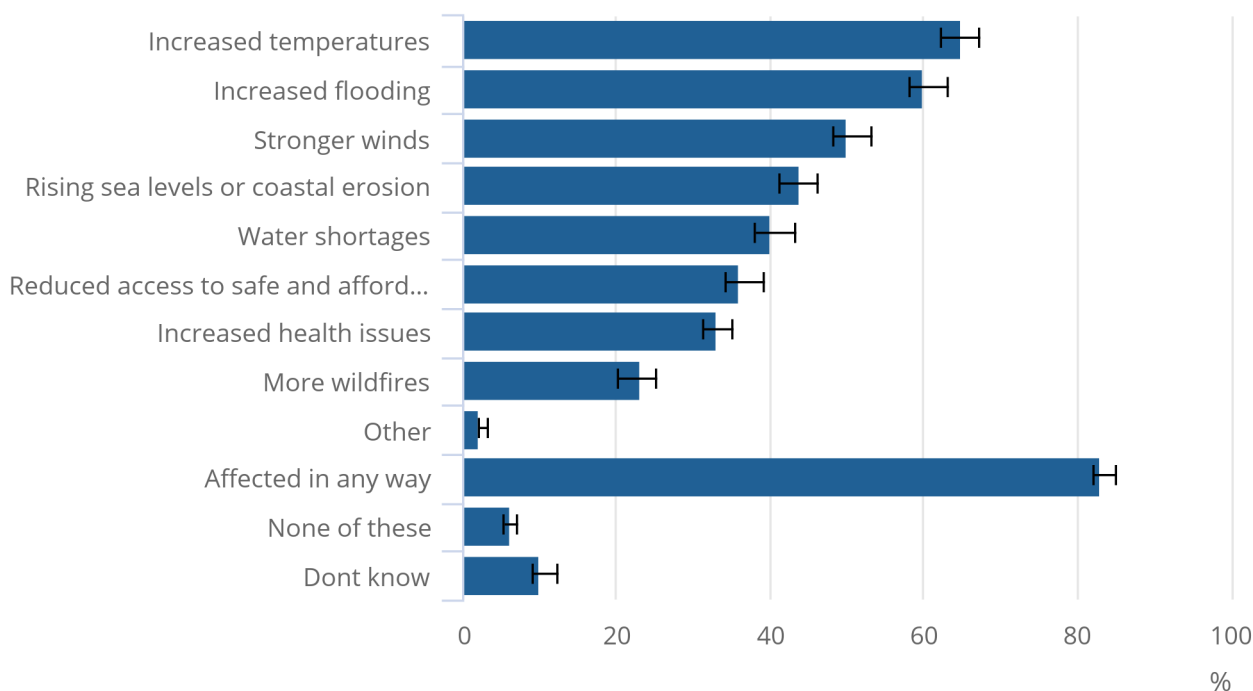
Estimates of climate change effects experienced in the past 12 months or expected in the next 10 years, by age group and sex, can be found in the [dataset](#) provided alongside this release.

Figure 5: Around two-thirds (65%) of adults felt climate change would affect them in the next 10 years through increased temperatures

Proportion of adults reporting ways in which they think climate change will affect them in the next 10 years, Great Britain, October 2024

Figure 5: Around two-thirds (65%) of adults felt climate change would affect them in the next 10 years through increased temperatures

Proportion of adults reporting ways in which they think climate change will affect them in the next 10 years, Great Britain, October 2024



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Question: "In which of the following ways, if any, do you think climate change will affect you in the next 10 years?".
2. Base: All adults.
3. Respondents could select more than one option. The category "Affected in any way" represents the proportion of respondents who selected at least one option apart from "None of these" or "Don't know".

Impact on businesses of severe weather events in the last 12 months

The majority of businesses (79%) reported on our BICS survey in September 2024 that they had not been affected by severe weather events in the last 12 months. Small proportions reported they had been affected by:

- storms (7%)
- flood (5%)
- increased temperature or heat (4%)

Among those businesses who had been affected by severe weather events, the most commonly reported forms of impact were:

- weather-related damage to physical infrastructure (20%)
- employee absence (13%)
- disruption to local supply chains (9%)
- disruption to global supply chains (5%)

Around half (50%) of businesses were not sure how they had been affected and 13% selected "other" reasons.

4 . Actions taken to prevent or prepare for climate change

Extent of actions people are taking to help tackle climate change

Around three-quarters (76%) of adults in Great Britain reported having made changes (68% some, 9% a lot) to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change during the period 7 August to 27 October 2024.

Groups of the population who appeared more likely to report making changes included:

- adults working in professional occupations (85%) compared with adults working as process, plant or machine operatives (65%)
- adults with a degree or equivalent (85%) compared with adults with no qualifications (65%)
- Asian or Asian British adults (82%) or Mixed or multiple ethnic group adults (82%) compared with White adults (76%)
- women (81%), compared with men (72%)
- those living in London (81%) compared with some other regions of England
- adults aged 30 to 49 years or 50 to 69 years: 80% among those aged 30 to 49 years and 79% among those aged 50 to 69 years, compared with 69% among those aged 16 to 29 years and 72% among those aged 70 years and over (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Around 8 in 10 (82%) Asian or Asian British and Mixed or multiple ethnic group adults reported they had made changes to help tackle climate change

Proportion of adults reporting they had some or a lot of changes to help the environment, by characteristic, Great Britain, August to October 2024

Notes

1. Question: "To what extent have you made changes, if any, to your lifestyle to help tackle climate change?"
2. Base: All adults.

Barriers to people taking action to tackle climate change

Among the 24% of adults who had not made any lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change, we asked about the reasons for this. The most commonly reported reasons were:

- not feeling that changes made would have any effect on climate change (42%)
- thinking that large-scale polluters should change before individuals (37%)
- it being too expensive to make changes (24%)
- not knowing how to make changes (19%)

Around 1 in 10 of those adults who had not made changes felt they did not need to make changes because the effects of climate change were exaggerated (13%) or because they did not believe in climate change (8%).

Adults who had not made changes because they felt they would not have any effect on climate change were more likely to be among groups including those aged 70 years and over (55% compared with 37% of those aged 16 to 29 years and 35% of those aged 30 to 49 years), those in the South West of England (54% compared with 30% of those in Scotland), and men (45% compared with 37% of women).

Adults who had not made changes because they did not know how to make changes were more likely to be among groups including those in sales and customer service occupations (34% compared with 7% of those who were managers, directors or senior officials), social renters (29% compared with 13% of those who owned their home outright) and those living in London (26% compared with 14% of those living in the South East).

Types of changes people are making

Among the 76% of adults in Great Britain who reported they had made changes to their lifestyle to help tackle climate change, the most commonly reported changes they had made in the last 12 months were to their:

- shopping habits (66%)
- travel (50%)
- diet (43%)
- garden (38%)

Likelihood of reporting making different types of changes appeared to vary by personal characteristics. For example:

- parents (77%), those with a degree or equivalent (75%) and those aged 30 to 49 years (75%) appeared more likely to report making changes to their shopping habits (Figure 7)
- adults aged 70 years and over (53%), living in rural areas of Great Britain (49%) and who owned their own homes (46%) appeared more likely to report making changes to their garden

Figure 7: Parents (77%) were more likely than non-parents (64%) to report making changes to their shopping habits to help tackle climate change

Proportion of adults who had made changes to help tackle climate change who reported these were to their shopping habits, by characteristic, Great Britain, August to October 2024

Notes

1. Question: "What actions, if any, have you taken in the last 12 months to help tackle climate change?"
2. Base: Adults who had made a lot of or some changes to help tackle climate change.

The majority of adults in Great Britain (74%) reported they would support (41% strongly, 33% somewhat) the creation of renewable energy projects in their local area.

This proportion was highest among groups including those with a degree or equivalent (84% compared with 59% among those with no qualifications) or those in professional occupations (85% compared with 66% among process, plant or machine operatives).

More information on public attitudes in the UK towards specific types of renewable energy such as wind, solar or tidal power are available with the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Public Attitudes Tracker](#).

Businesses assessing the risks of climate change

In September 2024, around three-quarters (74%) of businesses had not assessed any from a list of climate change risks to their business, including coastal erosion, increased flooding, supply chain disruption, temperature increases or water scarcity.

The most commonly assessed climate change risks among businesses were to supply chain disruption (8%), temperature increases (4%) and increased flooding (4%).

Not all industries are covered by the BICS survey sample. Industries excluded from the sample include those in agriculture, oil and gas extraction or energy generation and supply. This should be considered when interpreting these results. See [Section 7: Data sources and quality](#).

Businesses' actions to adapt to the risks of climate change

We asked businesses who had assessed at least one climate change risk, which, if any, they had then taken action to adapt to.

Approximately 1 in 6 (15%) of these businesses reported they had taken action to adapt to supply chain disruption and distribution issues, 9% had adapted to temperature increases and 6% to increased flooding.

Around a quarter (26%) of businesses who had assessed at least one climate change risk reported that they had not taken any actions to adapt to any of them. Around 1 in 6 (17%) businesses who had assessed at least one climate change risk indicated this was because they did not expect to be affected by them.

Businesses' actions to protect the environment

When asked about what actions, if any, their business had taken to protect the environment, around two-thirds (67%) of businesses reported they had taken none of the actions listed, with around 1 in 5 (19%) indicating that they were not sure. The most commonly reported actions taken were:

- monitored climate change risks (5%)
- a climate change strategy (3%)
- a net zero or greenhouse gas emissions target (3%)

These proportions were higher when considering larger businesses. Among businesses with 250 or more employees, 31% had a climate change strategy, 26% a net zero or greenhouse gas emissions target and 16% monitored climate change risks.

5 . Data on public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change

[Public attitudes towards the environment and climate change, by characteristics, Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 13 November 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of people in Great Britain's attitudes towards the environment and climate change. Uses longer data collection periods to allow estimates by various personal characteristics.

[Public attitudes towards the effects of climate change, Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 13 November 2024

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of how people in Great Britain report climate change has affected them in the past 12 months and how they expect it to affect them in the next 10 years.

[Business insights and impacts on the UK economy](#)

Dataset | Released 7 November 2024

Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience. These are official statistics in development.

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy confidence intervals](#)

Dataset | Released 7 November 2024

Confidence intervals for weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience. These are official statistics in development.

6 . Glossary

Climate change

Climate change is not specifically defined for respondents on either the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) or the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS). More information on climate change is available from the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Climate change explained](#).

Deprivation

Deprivation is represented by the [Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (IMD) and is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The IMD ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

Deciles are calculated by ranking the 32,844 small areas in England from most deprived to least deprived, and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10% of small areas nationally to the least deprived 10% of small areas nationally. To ensure robust sample sizes, we have further grouped deciles into quintiles.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity disaggregation used has been chosen to provide the most granular breakdown possible while producing robust estimates based on sample sizes, in line with Government Statistical Service (GSS) harmonised standards for ethnicity data. The five-category ethnicity breakdown includes:

- Asian or Asian British: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British: African, Caribbean or Any other Black, African or Caribbean background
- Mixed and Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian or Any other Mixed and Multiple ethnic background
- Other ethnic background group: Arab or Any other ethnic group
- White: White British, White Irish, Other White

Occupation

Occupation is self-reported on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and therefore should be treated with caution. The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is used, this a common classification of occupational information for the UK, in which jobs are classified by their skill level and content into the following nine major groups:

- managers, directors and senior officials
- professional occupations
- associate professional occupations
- administrative and secretarial occupations
- skilled trades occupations
- caring, leisure and other service occupations
- sales and customer service occupations
- process, plant and machine operatives
- elementary occupations

Parental status

In the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), an adult is defined as a parent if they are the parent of a dependent child living in the household. In this case, dependent children include children and stepchildren.

A dependent child is someone aged under 16 years, or someone who is aged 16 to 18 years, has never been married, and is in full-time education.

Other definitions

Definitions of all breakdowns of estimates used in this article are available in more detail in the Notes tab of our accompanying [datasets](#).

Statistical significance

This article presents the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) data as a summary of results. Further data, including confidence intervals for the estimates shown in the charts presented, are contained in our associated [datasets](#). Where comparisons between groups are presented, 95% confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the change. For more information on these terms, see our [Uncertainty and how we measure it for our surveys methodology](#).

7 . Data sources and quality

Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)

The analysis in this article is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain.

Data for the period 7 August to 27 October 2024 are based on 10,054 voluntarily responding adults. This comprises responses collected during six waves of data collection for the following periods:

- 7 to 18 August 2024
- 21 August to 1 September 2024
- 4 to 15 September 2024
- 18 to 29 September 2024
- 2 to 13 October 2024
- 16 to 27 October 2024

Pooling six waves of data together increases sample sizes and allows us to provide estimates among different groups of the population.

Data for the period 2 to 27 October 2024 are based on 3,960 responding adults.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population, based on our population estimates. Estimates for some groups of the population may be subject to greater uncertainty because of smaller sample sizes for these groups (for example, younger adults).

For all estimates in the datasets, [confidence intervals](#) are provided. Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this article, or comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences.

Further information on the survey design and quality can be found in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)

Information on the strengths, limitations, appropriate uses and how data are created from BICS is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#), which was last updated on 10 October 2024.

For the Wave 117 survey reference period, 16 to 29 September 2024, estimates in this article are based on, 38,942 businesses were sampled, with 10,444 (27%) responding.

The BICS is voluntary, and the results are official statistics in development. More information is available in our [Guide to official statistics in development](#).

For full details of the survey questions used, see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 16 September to 29 September 2024 article](#).

The BICS sampling frame is based on the same industries as our Monthly Business Survey (MBS). The MBS covers the UK for production industries only, and also construction, retail and services industries for Great Britain. The MBS is an important input to the output measure of gross domestic product (GDP), which includes monthly GDP.

For detailed information on the industries covered by the MBS and BICS, see our [GDP\(o\) data sources catalogue](#). The following are some industries that are excluded from MBS and BICS:

- agriculture
- oil and gas extraction
- energy generation and supply
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance.

8 . Related links

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: September 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 October 2024

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

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 7 November 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 November 2024

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade and business resilience.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 7 November 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 November 2024

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These real-time indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

[Climate change insights, families and households, UK: August 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 August 2023

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

[Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Article | Released 17 October 2024

Summary of the three measures of UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: territorial, residence and footprint.

[Public Attitudes Tracker: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#)

Triannual survey collecting data on public awareness, behaviours and attitudes relating to the department's policy areas.

[Climate change explained: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#)

Guidance on climate change from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

9 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 13 November 2024, ONS website, article, [Public and business attitudes to the environment and climate change, Great Britain: 2024](#)

