

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: attitudes to climate change and environmental issues, September 2026

Insights on public attitudes to climate change and the environment, including experiences of water use restrictions, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

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1 . Main points

Ahead of the United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Conference (COP17) in October and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in November 2026, we have considered attitudes towards biodiversity, climate change and environmental issues among different groups of the population.

The following information is from data collected from 1 July to 27 September 2026, based on adults in Great Britain.

- Around 3 in 5 adults (60%) reported climate change and the environment as an important issue facing the UK; this was more commonly reported among adults with a degree or equivalent qualification (69%), and adults living in London (67%).
- When asked how they had been affected by climate change in the past 12 months, adults most commonly cited heatwaves (78%), drought (40%), and wildfires (26%).
- More than 4 in 5 adults (85%) reported that they had been affected in at least one way by climate change in the past 12 months; this was an increase from 74% when we last asked this question between 3 September and 26 October 2025, and up from 66% in October 2024.
- Over three-quarters of adults (77%) said that they had made changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues; this was higher among adults with a degree or equivalent qualification (85%), and women (82%).
- Among the 23% of adults who said they had not made any changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, the most commonly reported reasons for this were thinking that large polluters should change before individuals (31%), not thinking that their changes will have any effect on environmental issues (26%), and it being too expensive (21%).
- Over 4 in 5 adults (86%) reported taking at least one action to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month; this was more common among women (91%) and adults aged 70 years and over (91%).

Our latest data collection period (1 July to 27 September 2026) coincided with heatwaves in Great Britain. The Met Office [provisionally declared summer 2026 the hottest on record for the UK](#). Responses collected during this period may reflect the impact of these weather conditions on people's perceptions and experiences of climate change and environmental issues.

2 . Climate change and the environment as an important issue

In the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, 3 in 5 adults (60%) reported climate change and the environment as an important issue facing the UK today.

Climate change and the environment was more commonly reported as an important issue by:

- those with a degree or equivalent qualification (69%), compared with those with a below-degree-level qualification (58%), other qualification (57%) or no qualifications (49%)
- those living in London (67%), compared with those living in Yorkshire and The Humber (56%) or the North East of England (51%)
- adults aged 16 to 29 years (66%), compared with those aged 30 to 49 years (59%) or 50 to 69 years (57%)
- women (65%), compared with men (55%)
- those living in the least deprived fifth of areas in England (64%), compared with those living in the most deprived fifth of areas (51%)

Breakdowns by additional characteristics and for all the other important issues facing the UK we asked about are available in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness by personal characteristics dataset](#).

Monthly estimates for the same measures for the period 2 to 27 September 2026 are also available in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness dataset](#).

Figure 1: Adults with a degree or equivalent qualification and those living in London were among the groups most likely to report climate change and the environment as an important issue

Proportion of adults reporting climate change and the environment as an important issue, by characteristics, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

Notes:

1. See our [accompanying dataset](#) for confidence intervals, additional response options and related footnotes.

Download

Concern about loss of biodiversity

In the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, almost 4 in 5 adults (78%) reported being very or fairly concerned about the loss of biodiversity in the UK, while 15% reported being not very or not at all concerned, and 7% said they did not know.

Groups that were more likely to report being very or fairly concerned about the loss of biodiversity in the UK included:

- adults with a degree or equivalent qualification (83%), compared with those with a below-degree-level qualification (77%), other qualification (75%) or no qualifications (68%)
- women (81%), compared with men (74%)
- those living in the least deprived fifth of areas in England (80%), compared with those living in the most deprived fifth of areas (71%)

Business concern over climate change

We also regularly ask UK businesses whether they are concerned about climate change and environmental issues through our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\)](#). The latest insights on business attitudes towards climate change and the environment are available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK economy datasets](#).

In the period 21 September to 4 October 2026, around 2 in 5 (41%) businesses reported being concerned about the impact climate change may have on their business (9% very concerned; 32% somewhat concerned). This is an increase from 25% in the period 15 to 28 September 2025 (5% very concerned; 20% somewhat concerned) and is the highest recorded proportion since February 2023.

In the period 21 September to 4 October 2026, almost 3 in 10 (27%) businesses reported that they were concerned about the impact that nature or biodiversity risks may have on their business, while 57% were not concerned and 16% were not sure. The proportion of businesses reporting they were concerned (27%) has increased from 17% in late September 2025.

3 . Impacts of climate change

In the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, we asked adults in Great Britain about the ways in which they had been affected by climate change in the past 12 months. The most commonly reported ways were:

- heatwaves (78%)
- drought (40%)
- wildfires (26%)

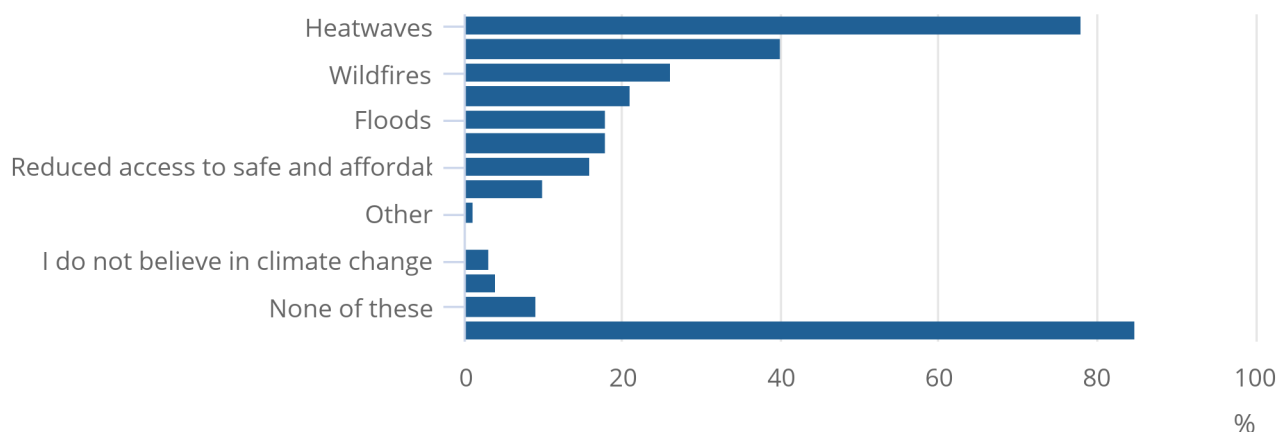
More than 4 in 5 adults (85%) reported they had been affected by climate change in at least one of the ways we asked about in the past 12 months. This is an increase from 74% when we last asked this question between 3 September and 26 October 2025, and up from 66% in October 2024.

Figure 2: Heatwaves, drought and wildfires were the most commonly reported ways adults said that they had been affected by climate change in the past 12 months

Proportion of adults reporting ways climate change had affected them in the past 12 months, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

Figure 2: Heatwaves, drought and wildfires were the most commonly reported ways adults said that they had been affected by climate change in the past 12 months

Proportion of adults reporting ways climate change had affected them in the past 12 months, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. The category "Affected in at least one way" represents the proportion of respondents who selected at least one option apart from "I do not believe in climate change", "None of these" or "Don't know".

Younger adults (age groups under 50 years) were more likely to report having been affected by climate change in at least one way in the past 12 months, compared with older adults. This is broken down as:

- 90% of those aged 16 to 29 years
- 88% of those aged 30 to 49 years
- 81% of those aged 50 to 69 years
- 80% of those aged 70 years and over

Women were also more likely to report having been affected in at least one way (87%), compared with men (83%).

Breakdowns by additional characteristics and for all the types of impacts we asked about are available in our [Public attitudes towards the environment and climate change, by personal characteristics, Great Britain dataset](#).

Expected effects of climate change in the next 10 years

In the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, we asked adults about the ways in which, if any, they think climate change will affect them in the next 10 years. The most commonly reported ways were:

- increased temperatures (83%)
- water shortages (69%)
- more wildfires (58%)
- increased flooding (50%)

Almost 9 in 10 adults (89%) reported that they expect to be affected by climate change in at least one of the ways we asked about in the next 10 years. This is an increase from 84% when we last asked this question in the period from 3 September to 26 October 2025, and up from 83% in October 2024.

Groups that were more likely to report expecting to be affected by climate change in at least one way in the next 10 years included:

- those with a degree or equivalent qualification (95%), compared with those with a below-degree-level qualification (87%) or no qualifications (80%)
- adults living in London (93%), the South East (91%), East of England (90%) and the South West (89%), compared with those living in the North East (79%)
- younger adults aged 16 to 29 years (91%) and 30 to 49 years (90%), compared with those aged 50 to 69 years (87%) or 70 years and over (86%)
- women (91%), compared with men (87%)
- those living in the least deprived fifth of areas in England (91%), compared with those living in the most deprived fifth of areas (85%)

Figure 3: Adults with a degree or equivalent qualification and those living in London were among the groups most likely to report that they expect to be affected by climate change in the next 10 years

Proportion of adults reporting they expect to be affected by climate change in at least one way in the next 10 years, by characteristics, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

Notes:

1. The category "Expects to be affected by climate change in at least one way" represents the proportion of respondents who selected at least one option apart from "I do not believe in climate change", "None of these" or "Don't know".

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Breakdowns by additional characteristics and for all the types of impacts we asked about are available in our [Public attitudes towards the environment and climate change, by personal characteristics, Great Britain dataset](#).

Impact of severe weather events on businesses

Our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\)](#) asks businesses about ways they have been impacted by severe weather events in the last 12 months.

Between 21 September and 4 October 2026, over 3 in 5 (62%) businesses said they had not been impacted by severe weather events in the last 12 months. The most commonly reported severe weather events that businesses said they had been impacted by were increased temperatures or heat (23%) and storms (6%).

4 . Actions taken to tackle environmental issues

In the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, when asked to what extent adults in Great Britain had made changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues:

- 77% said they had made some or a lot of changes (consisting of 68% who said they had made some changes and 10% who said they had made a lot of changes)
- 23% said they had made no changes

Groups that were more likely to report making some or a lot of changes included:

- adults with a degree or equivalent qualification (85%), compared with those with a below-degree-level qualification (76%), other qualifications (76%) or no qualifications (64%)
- women (82%), compared with men (72%)
- adults living in the South East of England (81%), London (80%), and the North West (79%), compared with those living in the North East (67%)
- those living in the least deprived fifth of areas in England (80%), compared with those living in the most deprived fifth of areas (70%)
- adults aged 30 to 49 years (79%) and 50 to 69 years (78%), compared with those aged 70 years and over (72%)

Figure 4: Adults with a degree or equivalent qualification and women were among the groups most likely to report making changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues

Proportion of adults reporting they had made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, by characteristics, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

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Types of actions taken in the past 12 months

Among the 77% of adults who reported that they had made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, the most commonly reported actions taken in the past 12 months were:

- waste reduction (80%)
- shopping habits (48%)
- their diet (42%)
- their travel (41%)

Breakdowns by personal characteristics for all reported actions we asked about are available in our [Public attitudes towards the environment and climate change, by personal characteristics, Great Britain dataset](#).

Reasons for not making any lifestyle changes to tackle environmental issues

Nearly 1 in 4 adults (23%) said they had not made any changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues. Among these adults, the most commonly reported reasons for not making any changes were:

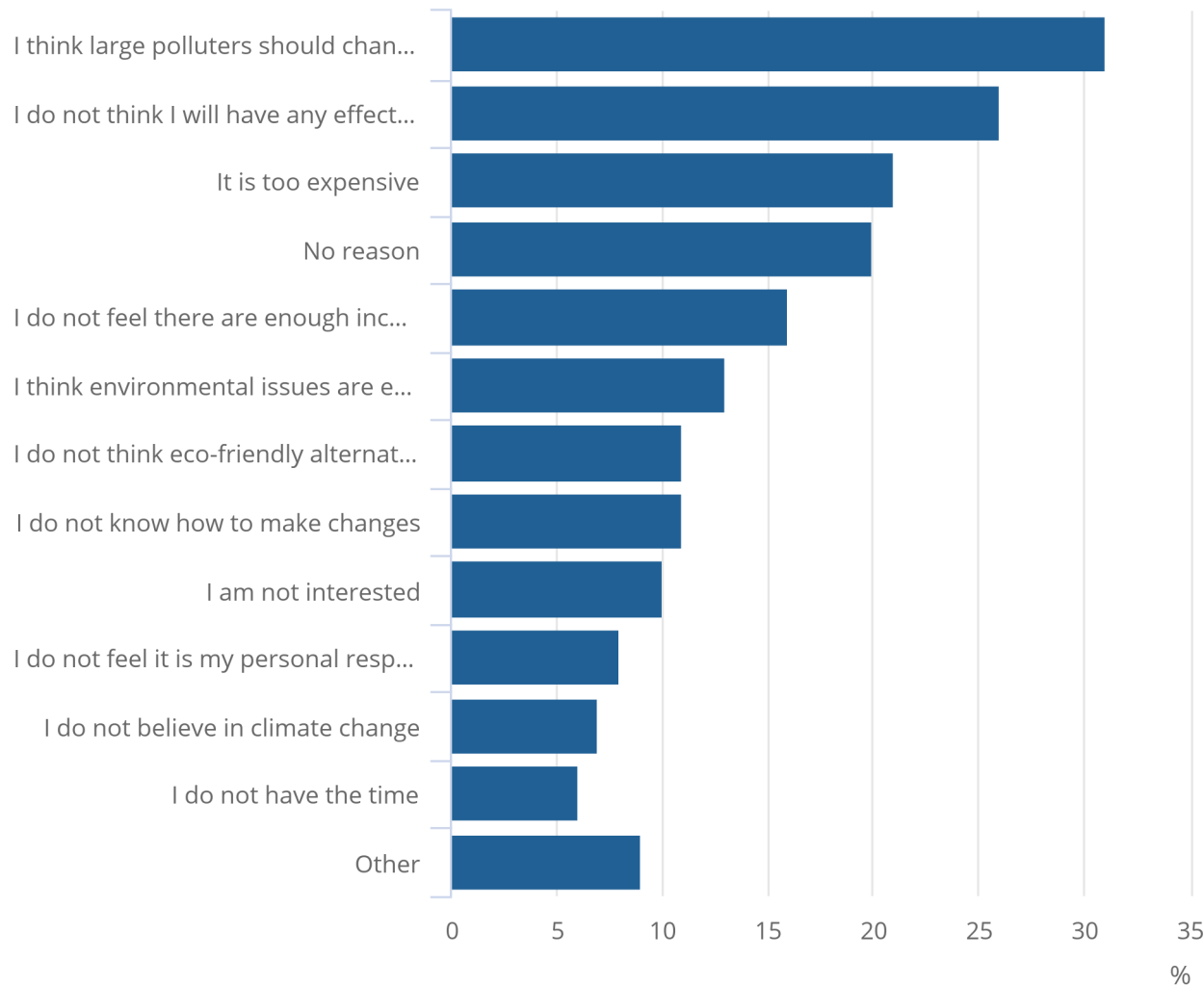
- I think large polluters should change before individuals (31%)
- I do not think I will have any effect on environmental issues (26%)
- it is too expensive (21%)
- no reason (20%)

Figure 5: “I think large polluters should change before individuals” was the most commonly reported reason for not making lifestyle changes to help tackle environmental issues

Proportion of adults who said they had not made any changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues reporting the reasons for this, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

Figure 5: “I think large polluters should change before individuals” was the most commonly reported reason for not making lifestyle changes to help tackle environmental issues

Proportion of adults who said they had not made any changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues reporting the reasons for this, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026



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

Notes:

- 1. Respondents could select more than one option.
- 2. See our [accompanying dataset](#) for confidence intervals and related footnotes.

Barriers to people making more changes

Among the 77% of adults who said they had made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, the most commonly reported barriers to making more changes were:

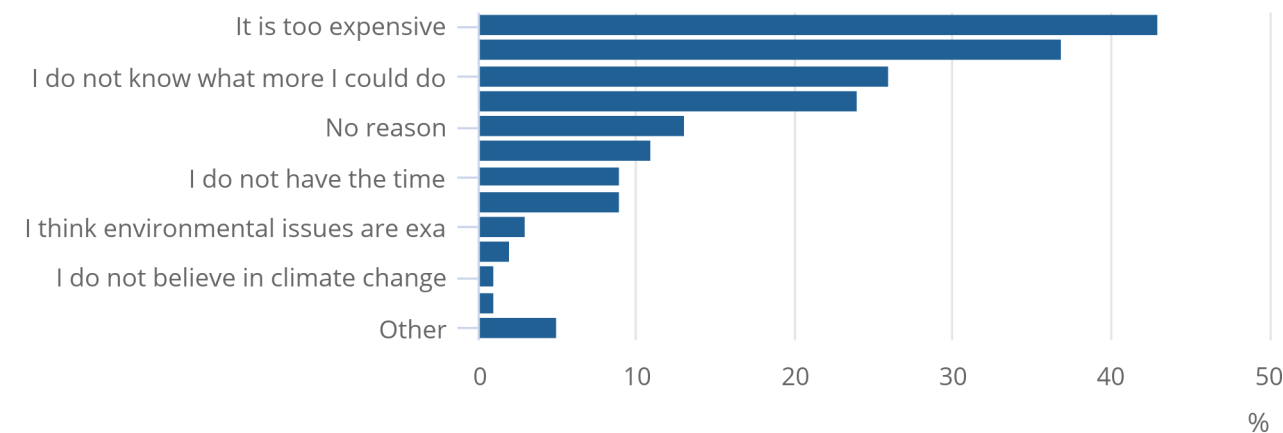
- it is too expensive (43%)
- I think large polluters should change before individuals (37%)
- I do not know what more I could do (26%)
- I do not feel there are enough incentives to enable change (24%)

Figure 6: “It is too expensive” was the most commonly reported barrier to making more lifestyle changes to help tackle environmental issues

Proportion of adults reporting they had made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, reporting the barriers to making more changes, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026

Figure 6: “It is too expensive” was the most commonly reported barrier to making more lifestyle changes to help tackle environmental issues

Proportion of adults reporting they had made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues, reporting the barriers to making more changes, Great Britain, 1 July to 27 September 2026



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

Notes:

1. Respondents could select more than one option.
2. See our [accompanying dataset](#) for confidence intervals and related footnotes.

Businesses' actions to protect the environment

Between 21 September and 4 October 2026, when asked what actions, if any, their business had taken to protect the environment, around 3 in 5 (61%) businesses reported they had taken none of the actions listed.

Some businesses reported that they monitor climate-related risks (7%), monitor nature or biodiversity-related risks (4%), have a climate change strategy (3%), or take other actions (4%).

Further information on businesses' environmental actions, including the full range of response options and latest estimates, is available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK economy datasets](#).

5 . Water use and restrictions

Throughout the period 1 July to 27 September 2026, we asked adults in Great Britain about their experiences of water use and water use restrictions in their local area. During our data collection period, some water companies introduced restrictions, or Temporary Use Bans (TUBs), to households in England and Wales.

The most commonly reported actions adults said they had taken to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month were:

- not leaving the tap running (65%)
- waiting until the washing machine or dishwasher is full before putting on (55%)
- using less tap water, including hosepipes, in the garden (44%)
- taking shorter showers (41%)

Over 4 in 5 adults (86%) reported taking at least one action to cut back on the amount of water they use in the past month. Groups that were more likely to report taking at least one action included:

- adults aged 70 years and over (91%), compared with those aged 16 to 29 years (84%), aged 30 to 49 years (84%), or aged 50 to 69 years (87%)
- women (91%), compared with men (80%)
- adults who reported water restrictions in their local area (91%), compared with those who did not report water restrictions (84%) or who did not know if there were water restrictions in their local area (81%)

Adults who reported water-use restrictions in their local area were also more likely to say they used less tap water, including hosepipes, in their garden (63%) than those who reported no restrictions (38%) or did not know if restrictions were in place (35%).

Breakdowns by additional characteristics and for all the other experiences of water use and water restrictions data are available in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: water restrictions and use by personal characteristics dataset](#).

Monthly estimates for the same measures for the period 2 to 27 September 2026 are also available in our [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: water restrictions and use dataset](#).

6 . Data on public opinions and social trends

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

Dataset | Released 16 October 2026

People in Great Britain's attitudes towards the environment and climate change, by personal characteristics; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: water restrictions and use, by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 16 October 2026

Experiences of water use and restrictions for people in Great Britain, by personal characteristics, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness by personal characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 16 October 2026

Personal well-being, loneliness and what people in Great Britain felt were important issues by personal characteristics; indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#)

Dataset | Released 16 October 2026

Survey information including sample sizes, response rates and user requested data for the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

All data used in this statistical bulletin are available on our [Related data page](#).

7 . 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 in the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Climate change explained guidance](#).

Biodiversity

The following definition of biodiversity was presented to survey respondents (once) before answering the survey question "How concerned, if at all, are you about the loss of biodiversity in the UK?":

"Biodiversity means the variety of plants, animals, and habitats".

Highest qualification

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
- Ordinary National Certificate or National Level Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)
- O Level or General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) equivalent (Grade A to C) or Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) equivalent
- GCSE (Grade D to G) or CSE (Grade 2 to 5) or Standard Grade (level 4 to 6)

"Other qualifications" represent all other qualifications not listed, excluding degree level and equivalent.

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 33,755 (least deprived area).

Deciles are calculated by ranking the small areas from most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. To ensure reliable sample sizes, we have further grouped deciles into quintiles.

8 . Data sources and quality

Sample

The analysis in this bulletin is based on adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain. In the latest period, 2 to 27 September 2026, we sampled 8,730 households. This sample was randomly selected from people who had previously completed the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) or Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

There were 3,640 individuals in the responding sample for the latest period, representing a 42% response rate.

The latest pooled period (1 July to 27 September 2026) combined three waves of data collection, covering the following periods:

- 1 to 26 July 2026
- 5 to 30 August 2026
- 2 to 27 September 2026

The responding sample for the pooled period contained 10,680 individuals.

Data quality

We applied survey weights 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).

From the 1 to 26 April 2026 data collection period onwards, the population totals used in weighting OPN estimates are based on 2024 mid-year estimates using updated population projections. They are initially projected forward using scaling factors derived from 2022-based subnational population projections by local authority, age and sex, and subsequently constrained to 2022-based national population projection totals. Further, these estimates are adjusted to cover only the population living in households and student halls of residence.

Our associated datasets include breakdowns across a range of personal characteristics, of which a selection is presented in this statistical bulletin. The inclusion of characteristics in the bulletin was based on the [statistical significance](#) of differences between groups, sample sizes, and limited capacity to cover all characteristics in the bulletin.

We provide [confidence intervals](#) for all estimates in the datasets. Where comparisons between estimates are made, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the differences. All estimates are individually rounded to whole numbers. Estimates may not sum due to rounding. In some cases, due to rounding, an estimate and its confidence intervals may appear to be the same.

Further information on the survey design and quality is available in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

9 . Related links

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: October 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 14 November 2025

Social insights on daily life and events, including insights on public and business attitudes towards environmental issues, using data from our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) and Business and Conditions Survey (BICS) in this edition.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: August 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 September 2026

Social insights on important issues facing the UK, water use and restrictions, and the cost of living, from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 8 October 2026](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 October 2026

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

[COP31 Türkiye Antalya 2026 UN Climate Change Conference](#)

External webpage

Official website for the COP31 Türkiye Antalya 2026 UN Climate Change Conference.

[Coordinated drought response intensifies amid extreme weather](#)

Press release | Published 20 August 2026

UK Government press release discussing drought conditions and water scarcity across parts of England.

[DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Spring 2026](#)

Dataset | Released 2 July 2026

Triannual survey from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero that collects data on public awareness, behaviours and attitudes relating to the department's policy areas.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 16 October 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: attitudes to climate change and environmental issues, September 2026](#)