



ClientEarth's Climate Snapshot 2019

A survey of UK attitudes towards climate change and its impacts





Foreword

Looking back on the last 12 months, it's fair to say that 2019 has been dominated by ordinary people making their voice heard about the climate crisis. Across the world, we have witnessed the public take to the streets to demand more from their leaders. Most notably, the amazing students striking for their futures led by Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg.

Headlines in 2019 have also featured people taking part in dramatic protests and direct action to call for greater climate ambition.

Never before have government and businesses faced such scrutiny over their climate commitments. And never before has our collective future been so dependent on how far we can push both legislators and business to protect people and the planet.

In light of this, in 2019 we've repeated last year's polling of UK attitudes towards climate change, taking a deeper look at what the public wants from central and local government as well as the financial system.

The results are again powerful. The majority of people believe that the climate emergency demands more urgent action, with many saying it is now the biggest issue facing humankind. However, most believe that the UK Government has not done enough to prevent and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

This could have an impact at the ballot box, given many say climate change will influence the way they vote at the next general election.

Also quite striking is the public support for radical new policies. This includes support for bringing forward the 2050 deadline to make UK emissions net zero. The public also backs major investment, such as a Green New Deal or Green Industrial Revolution – plans which have garnered so much attention in the United States.

People want to see more action locally too. There is strong support for councils to take practical steps to transform their towns and make them more sustainable and liveable for the future.

The poll also reveals there is general support for radical action to ensure big business actively supports the Paris Agreement pledge. Importantly, the majority of the public think financial institutions and banks should no longer invest in fossil fuels and should be legally accountable if they do.

Looking to the future, people in the UK are also clearly concerned about pension funds' continued investment in fossil fuels. These insights into consumer preferences demand to be heeded by industry and policymakers.

Sadly, Britons are already seeing the impact of climate change all around them, whether that be from record-breaking heatwaves, unprecedented flooding or extreme weather conditions. Young people say they have already been personally affected by changing weather patterns and even the extinction of plant and animal species.

While it is important to recognise these awful effects and mark the grief people feel, we must use these events to spur us further into action.

The British public has spoken. They are in no doubt that greater ambition and more radical action is needed and that it is now more urgent than ever. We must now double down our collective efforts to ensure decision-makers are compelled to listen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Thornton'.

James Thornton,
ClientEarth CEO





Introduction

This is ClientEarth's second annual Climate Snapshot – a thorough investigation of UK attitudes towards the deeper issues of climate change.

We asked key questions around people's personal fears, what they want to see from central and local government, the role of the financial system and how we power the future.

This report presents the findings of a survey of 2,001 UK adults aged 18+, conducted between the 17th and 27th September 2019. The figures are weighted to be representative of all UK adults.

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The Climate Change
Collaboration

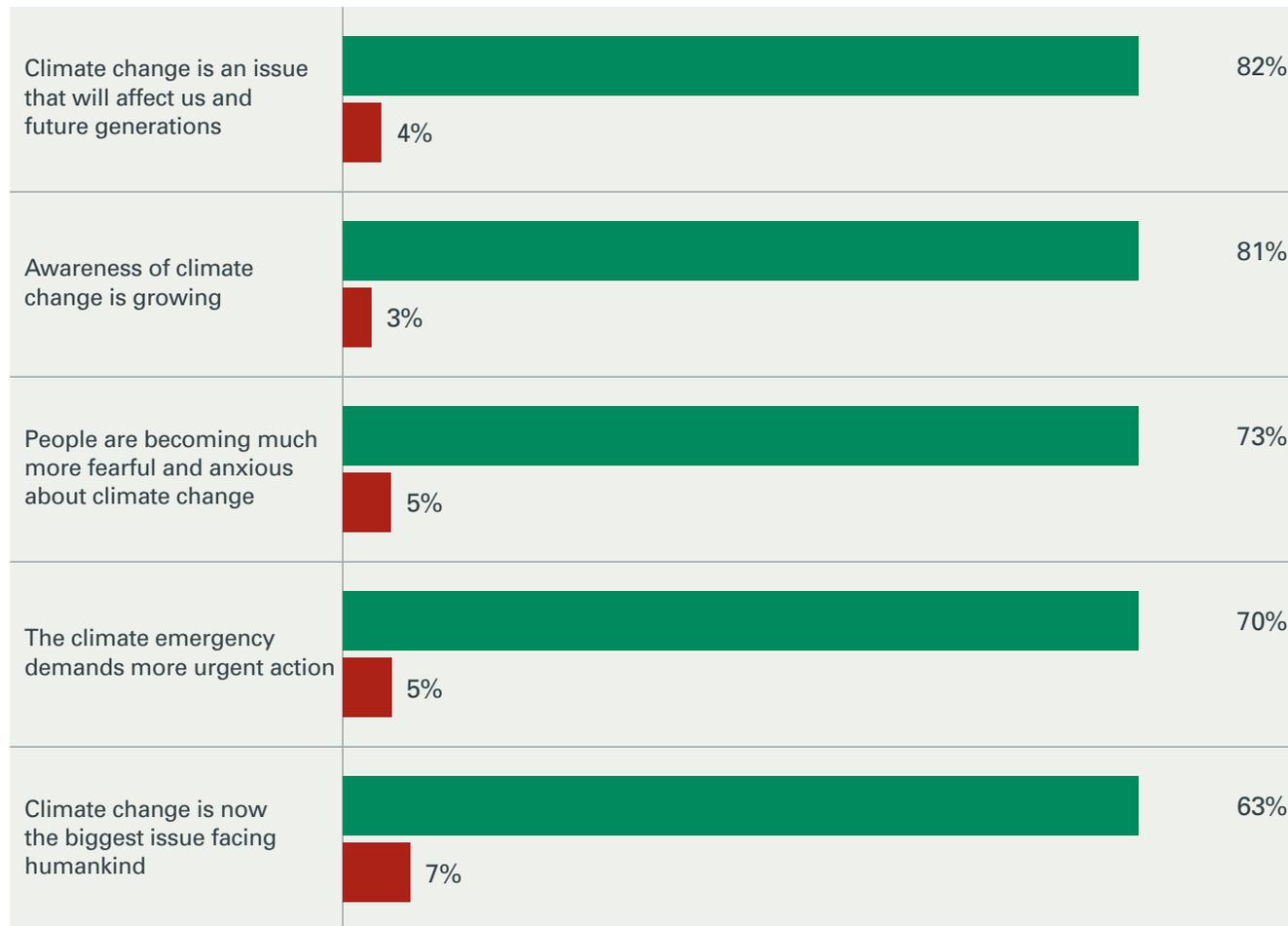
Research undertaken with assistance from

Views on climate change

1



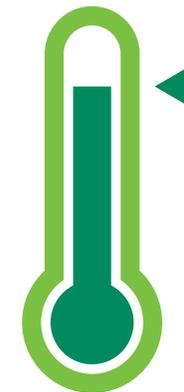
People in the UK are becoming more fearful about climate change



■ Net: Agree ■ Net: Disagree

82%

of people think climate change is an issue that will affect future generations.



People are already seeing the effects of climate change in the UK



Air pollution (increase in cases of asthma etc)	68%
Increased flooding	64%
Increased extreme weather (e.g. extreme storms)	61%
Species extinction	60%
Political instability in the UK	59%
Sea level rise and storm surges, causing coastal erosion	58%
Hotter and longer heatwaves	54%
Longer periods of less rainfall / drought	47%
Regional conflict and national security risks (including increased immigration)	46%
Increased risks to human health (including heat stress, communicable disease)	46%
Ocean acidification	43%
Food and water insecurity (e.g. shortages, price fluctuations, lack of access)	32%

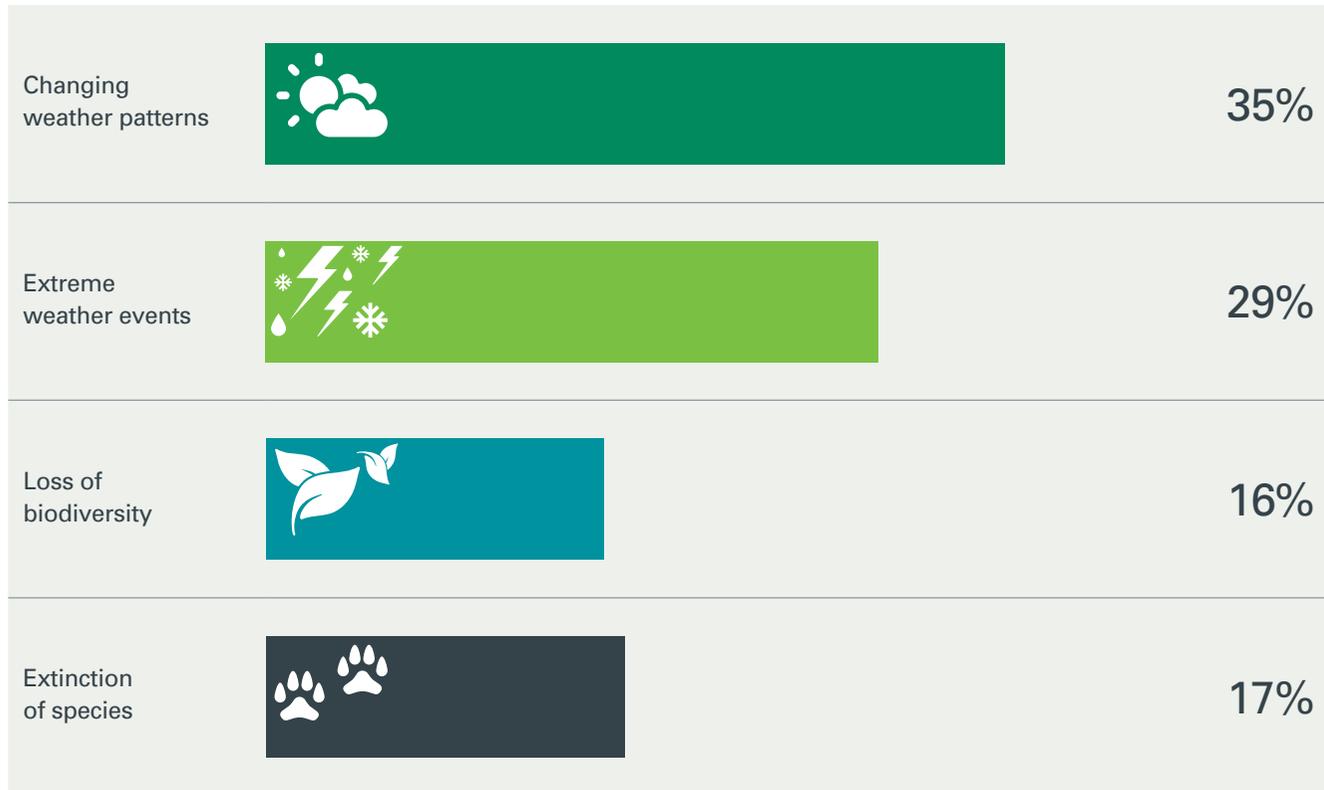
68%

of people say they are seeing the effects of air pollution in the UK.



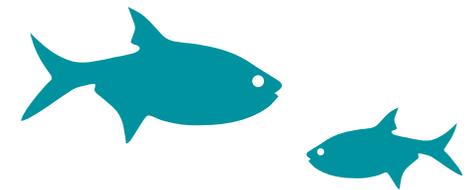
Q. Which, if any, of the following do you feel are affecting the UK now and will do in the future because of climate change?

Young people are already being personally affected by changes in the natural world



17%

of young people feel they are being affected by the extinction of species in the natural world.



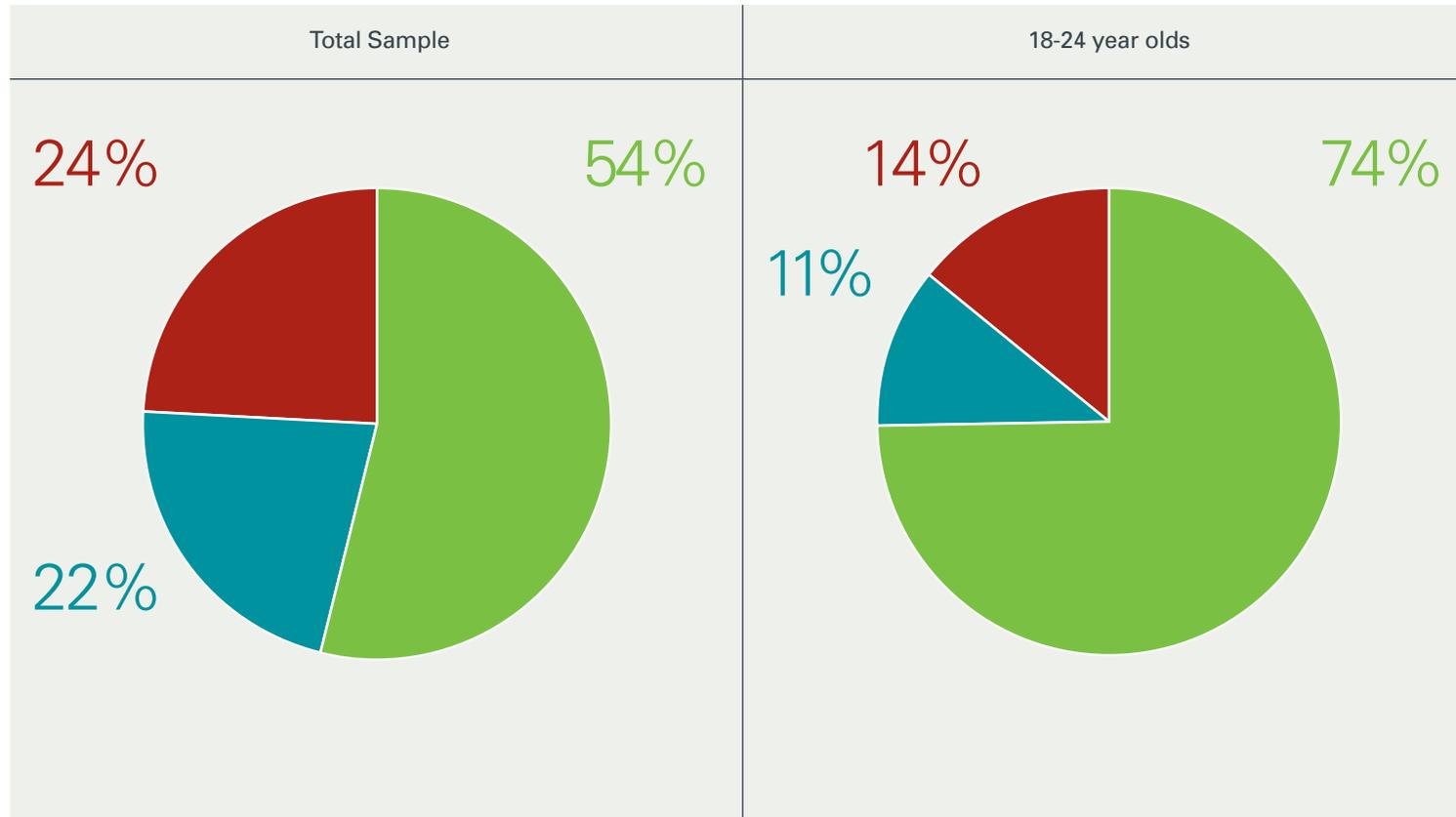
Q. Have you personally been affected by any of the following occurrences that relate to climate change?

Role of government

2



Climate change is influencing how people intend to vote



74%

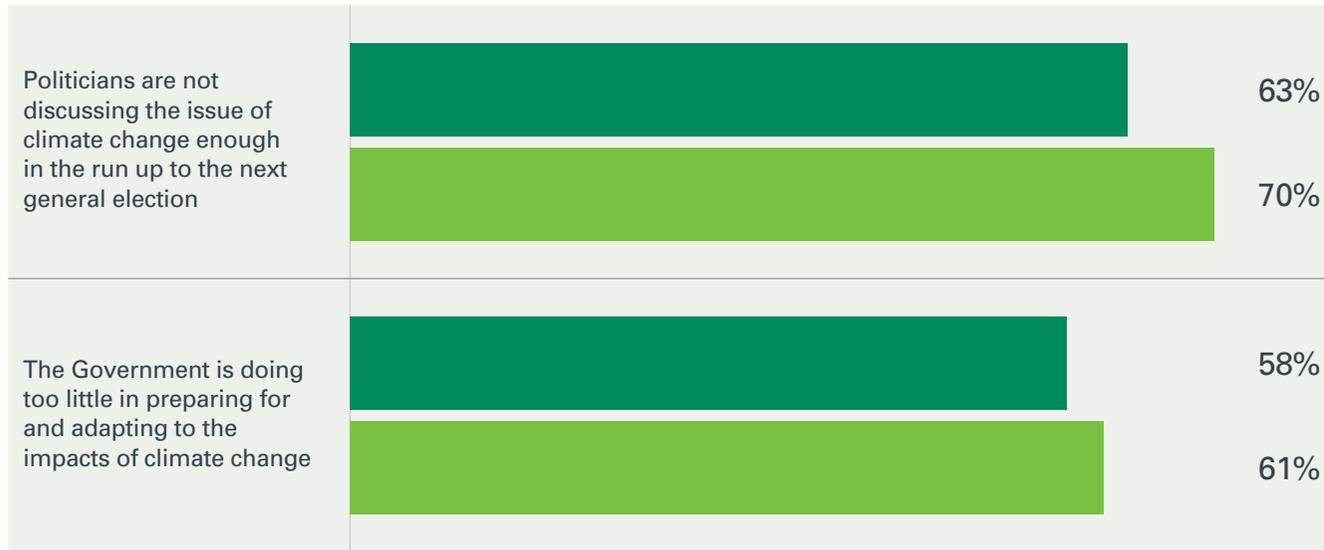
of 18-24 year olds said that climate change would greatly influence who they vote for.



■ Greatly/somewhat influences who I am likely to vote for
 ■ Has little effect on who I am likely to vote for
 ■ Has no effect on who I am likely to vote for

Q. To what extent does the issue of climate change influence who you are likely to vote for at the next general election?

Politicians are not talking about climate change enough



■ All adults ■ Under-25s

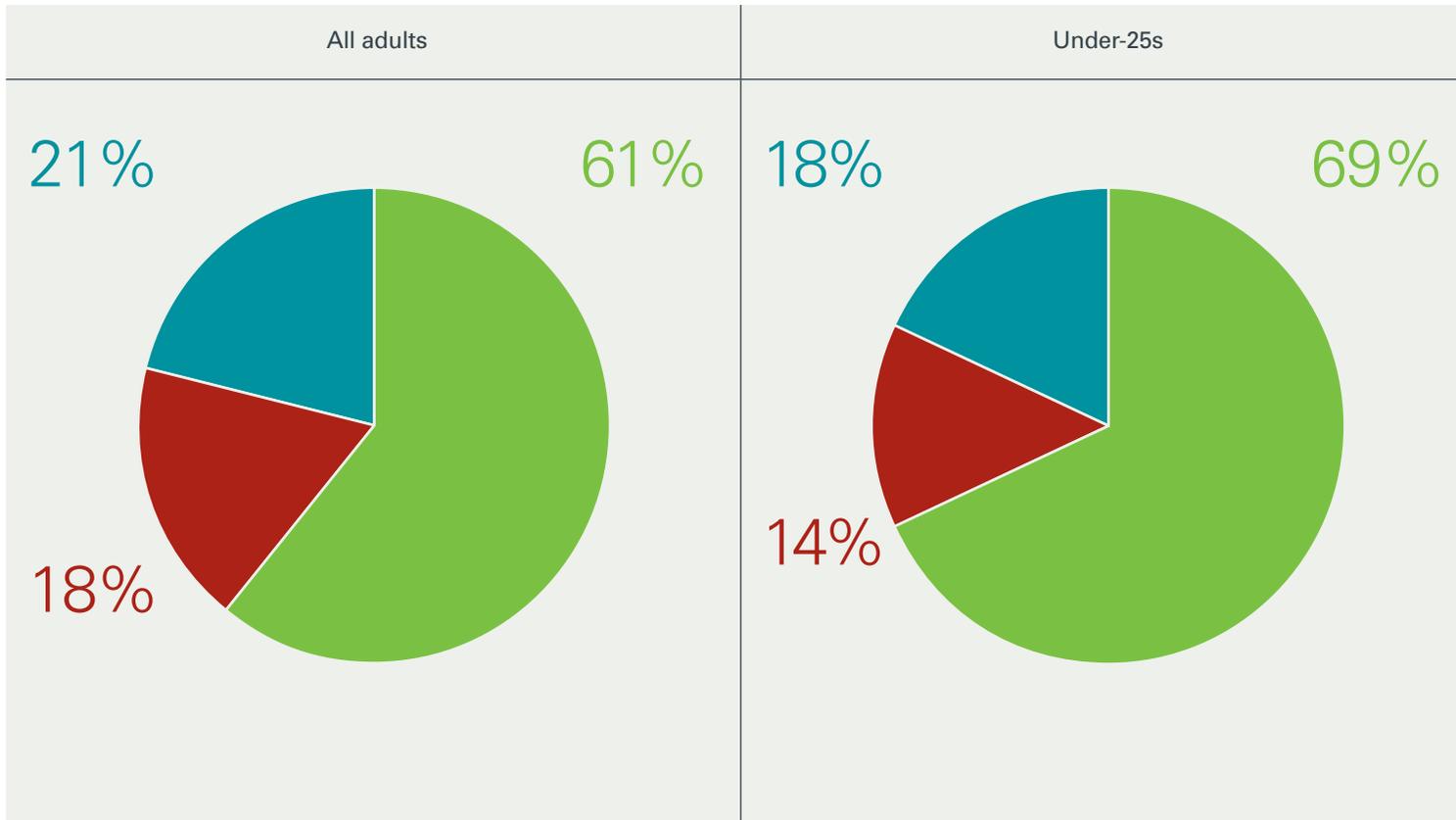
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

70%

of young people agree that politicians are not discussing the issue of climate change enough.



People want more urgency from government on climate



Support Against Unsure

This year the UK Government committed to reducing its total carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

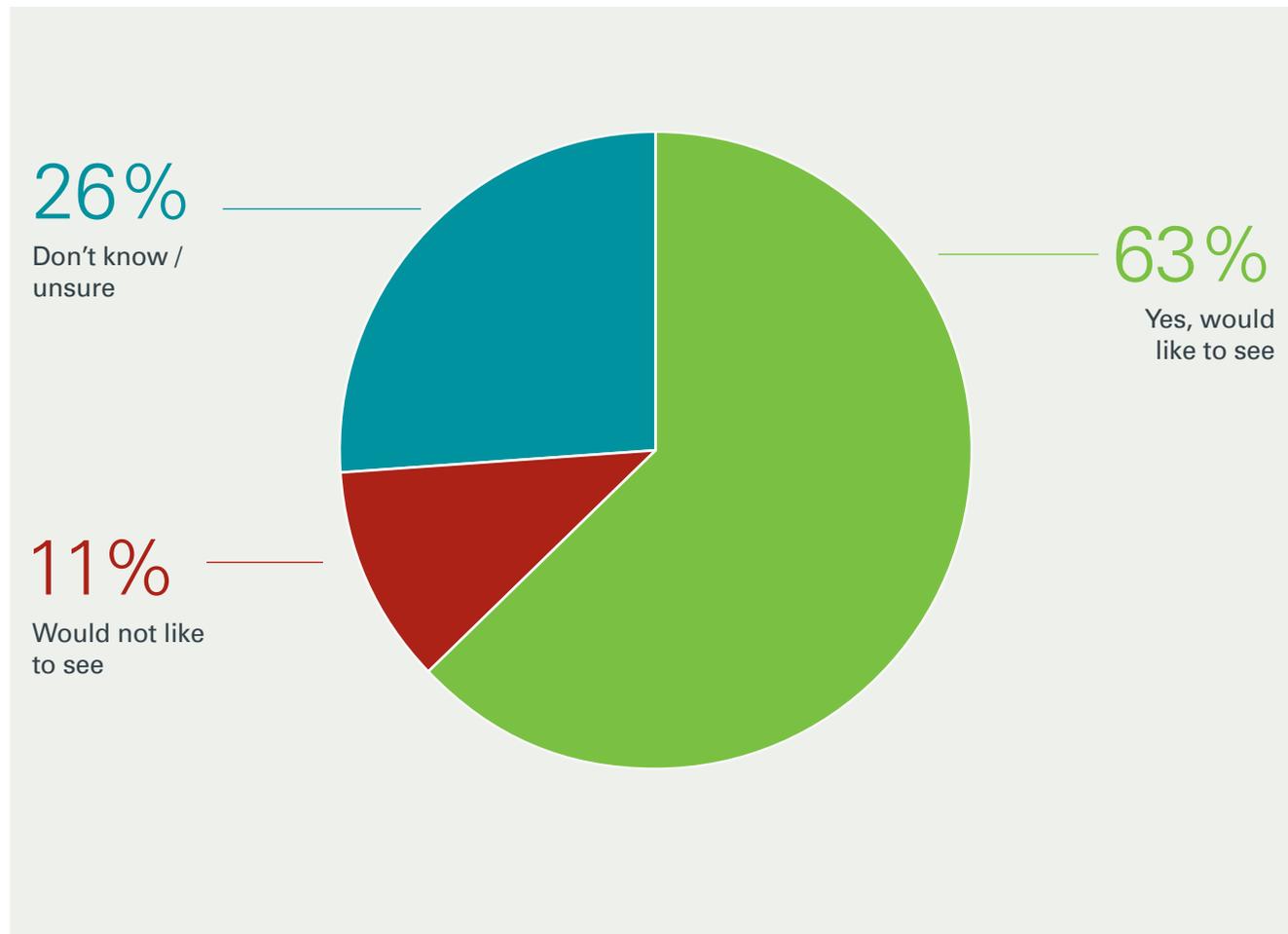
69%

of young people want to bring forward this deadline.



Q. This year the UK Government committed to reducing the country's total carbon emissions to be net zero by the year 2050. There is scientific consensus that more rapid action on climate is needed. Bringing forward this deadline will have both positive and negative impacts. For example, less investment in fossil fuels and their industries but more in clean energy and green jobs. Less private vehicle use, cleaner air in towns and cities. Do you think the UK Government should bring forward the 2050 deadline?

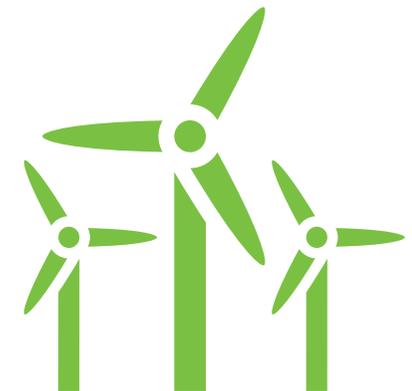
People support greater investment in a green economy



Almost two-thirds

63%

support a 'Green New Deal' or 'Green Industrial Revolution' to boost jobs and infrastructure, echoing campaigns from climate groups and trade unions. A motion supporting such a plan was also passed at the recent Labour party conference.

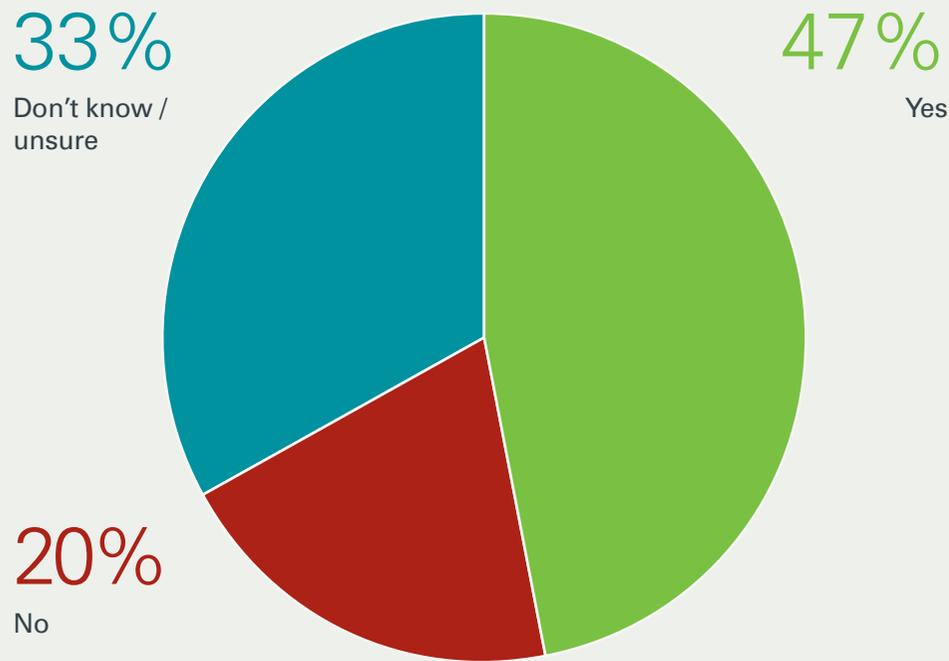


Q. Earlier this year, a bill was proposed in parliament that called for a Green New Deal for the UK, which would create green jobs and tackle inequality as a response to climate change. Do you think the government should introduce a Green New Deal or 'Green Industrial Revolution' that includes large scale, long-term investment in green jobs and infrastructure?

What people want from the UK Government



Delisting carbon-heavy companies



Q. Almost every country has committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming. However very few major companies or major corporations have business plans that are compatible with the targets set by the Paris Agreement. Would you support plans to remove (delist) companies listed on the London Stock Exchange that do not have business plans that are compatible with the Paris Agreement?

Planting trees

64% of people want to see the government plant more trees or reforest land.



Q. What actions, if any, should the UK Government be taking to limit further climate change?

People want action from their local government too



Local authorities have a legal obligation to ensure climate change is central to their local plans. Councils can do many things to green their communities.

69%

want local councils to invest in active travel.



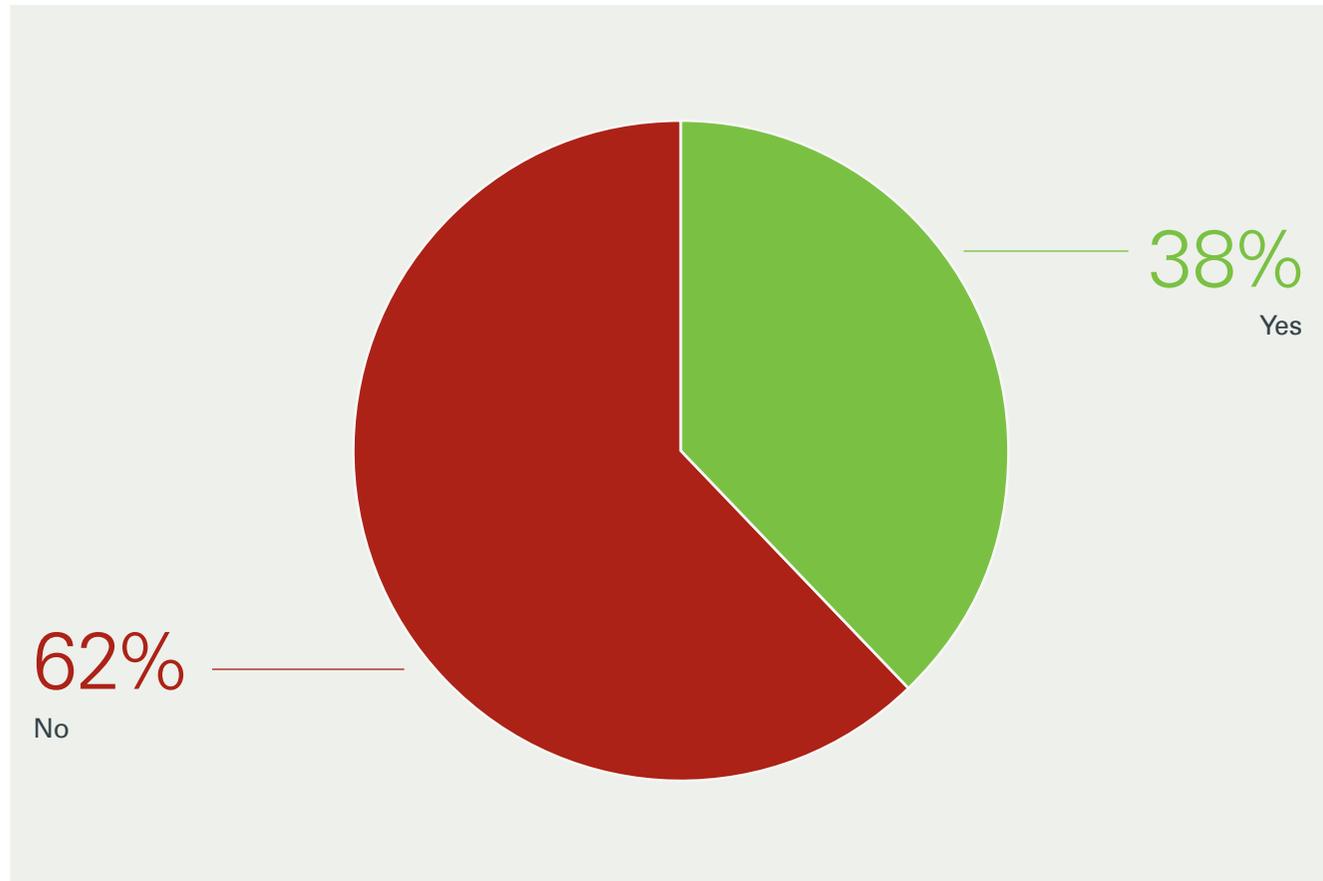
Q. Thinking now about the important role that local government can play in tackling climate change, how important is it for your local council to do the following

Finance and investment

3



People are unsure what their money funds



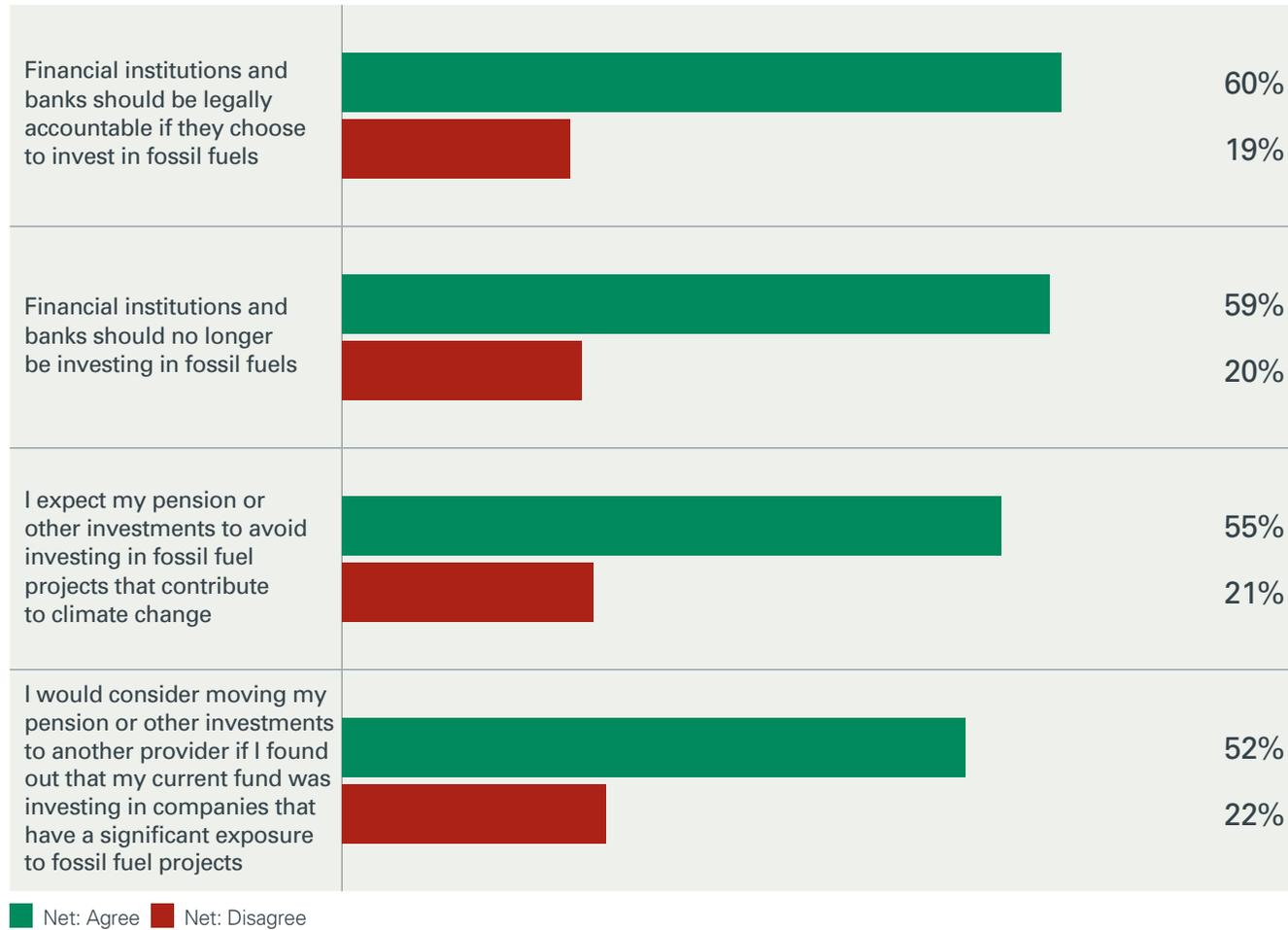
Q. Did you know that UK financial institutions like banks and pension funds use ordinary customers' investments to help pay for fossil fuel projects – like coal mines, oil wells and gas fields – to be built and operated?

62%

of people do not know that UK financial institutions like banks and pension funds use ordinary customers' investments to help pay for fossil fuel projects.



People want to move their money away from fossil fuels and make financial institutions accountable



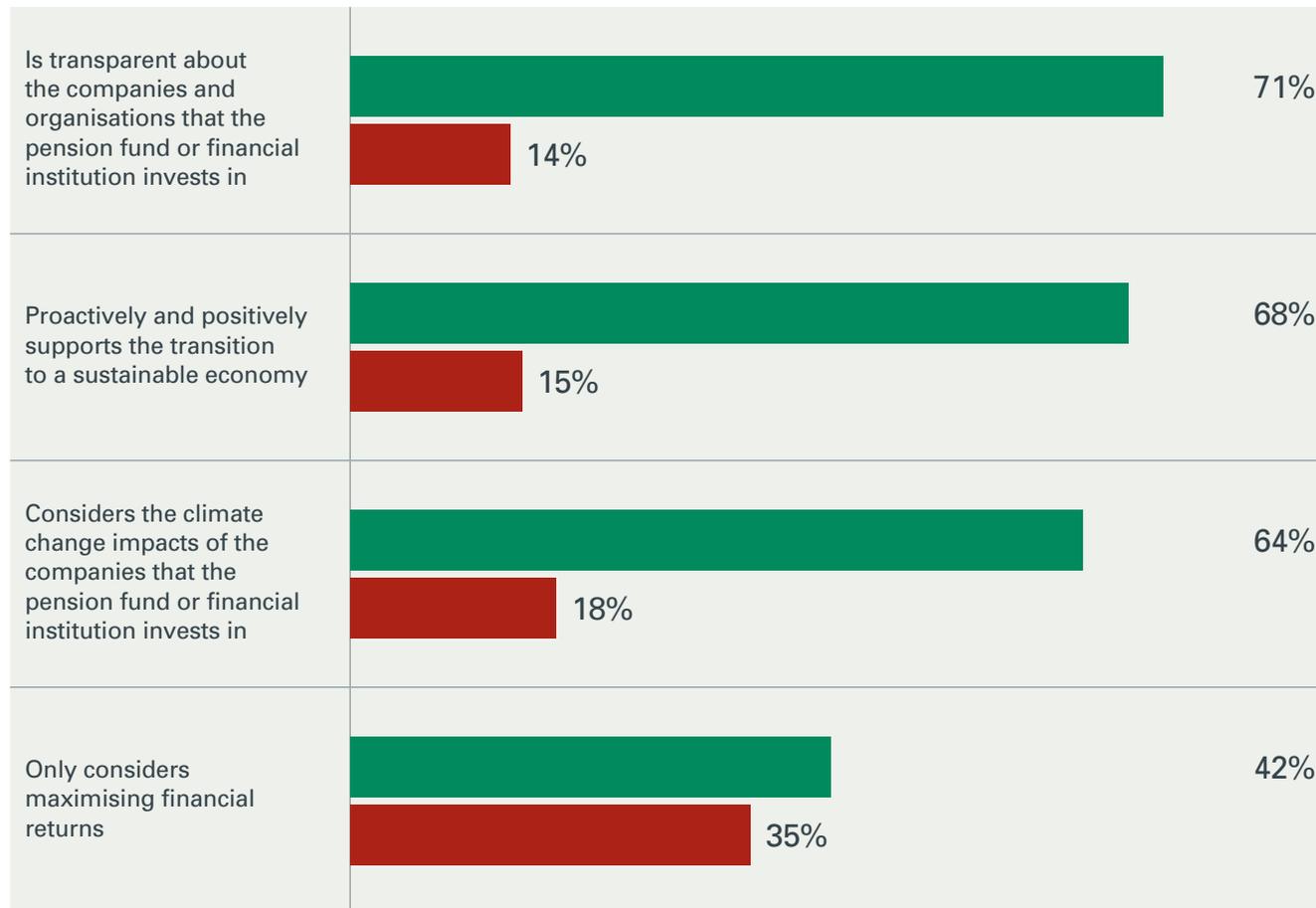
60%

of people agree that financial institutions and banks should be legally accountable if they choose to invest in fossil fuels.



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Note: if you don't currently have a pension or other investments, please answer based on what you might do in the future.

People want climate transparency in their pension fund



■ Net: Interested ■ Net: Uninterested

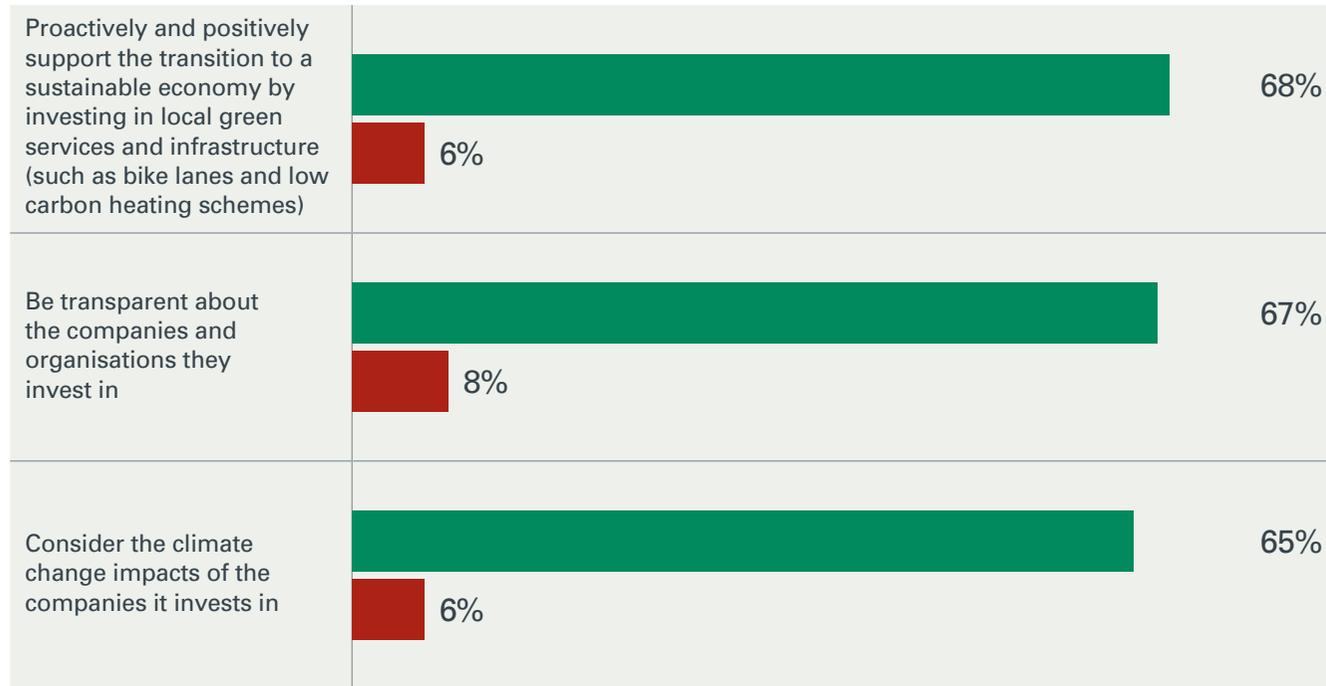
Q. How interested would you be in a pension fund or other financial institution that..?

71%

of people want transparency about the companies and organisations that their pension fund or financial institution invests in.



Investment funds of major institutions and council pension funds must play a role



■ Net: Agree ■ Net: Disagree

Q. Do you think investment funds of major institutions and local authority pension funds should:

68%

of people think major institutions' investment funds and council pension funds should help support the climate transition.

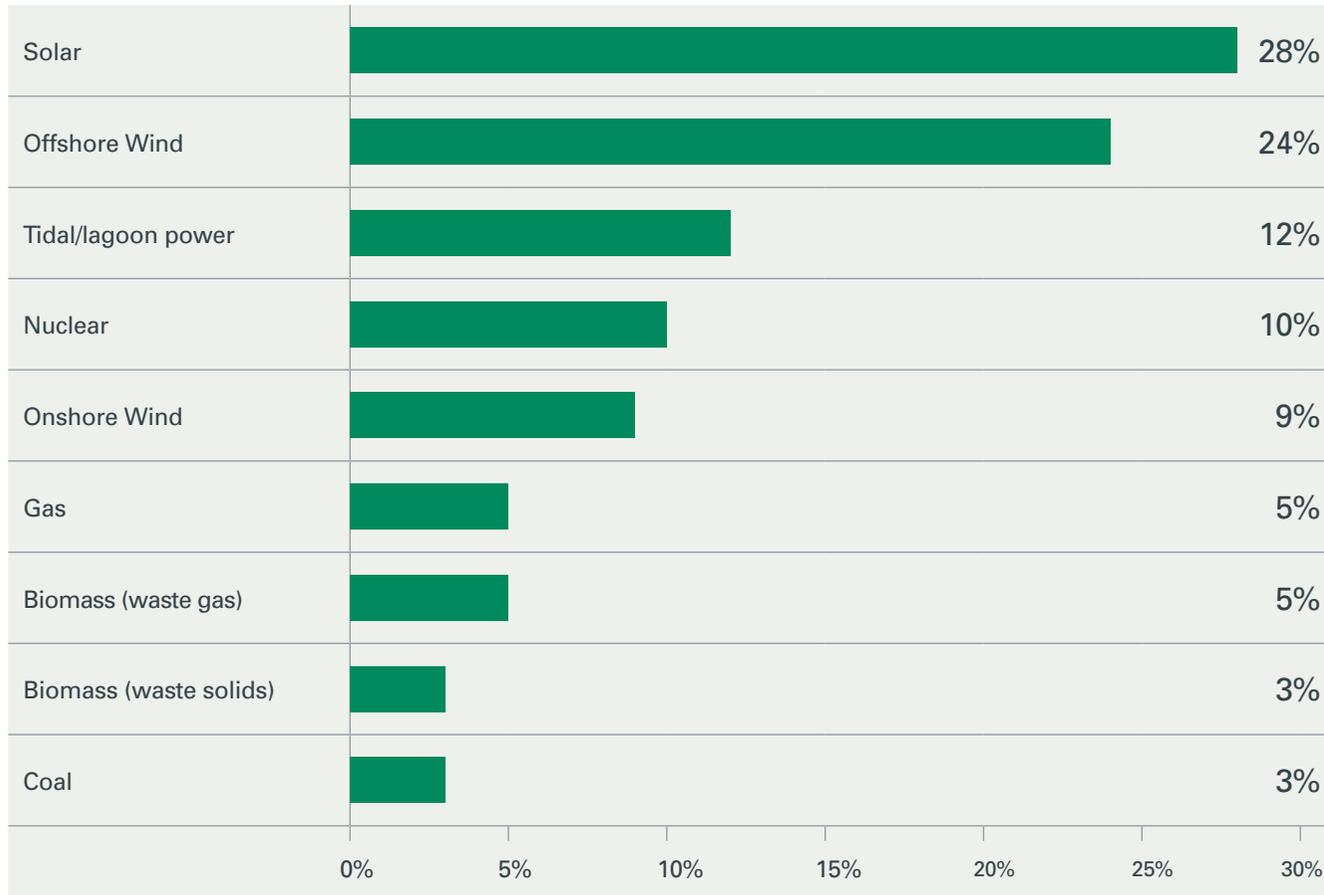


Energy and transport

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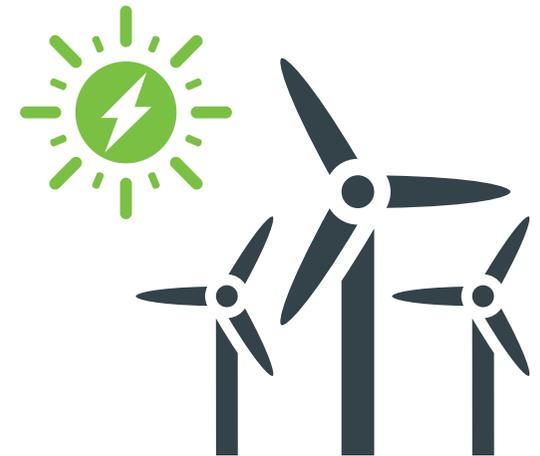
What are the preferred sources of energy for the UK?



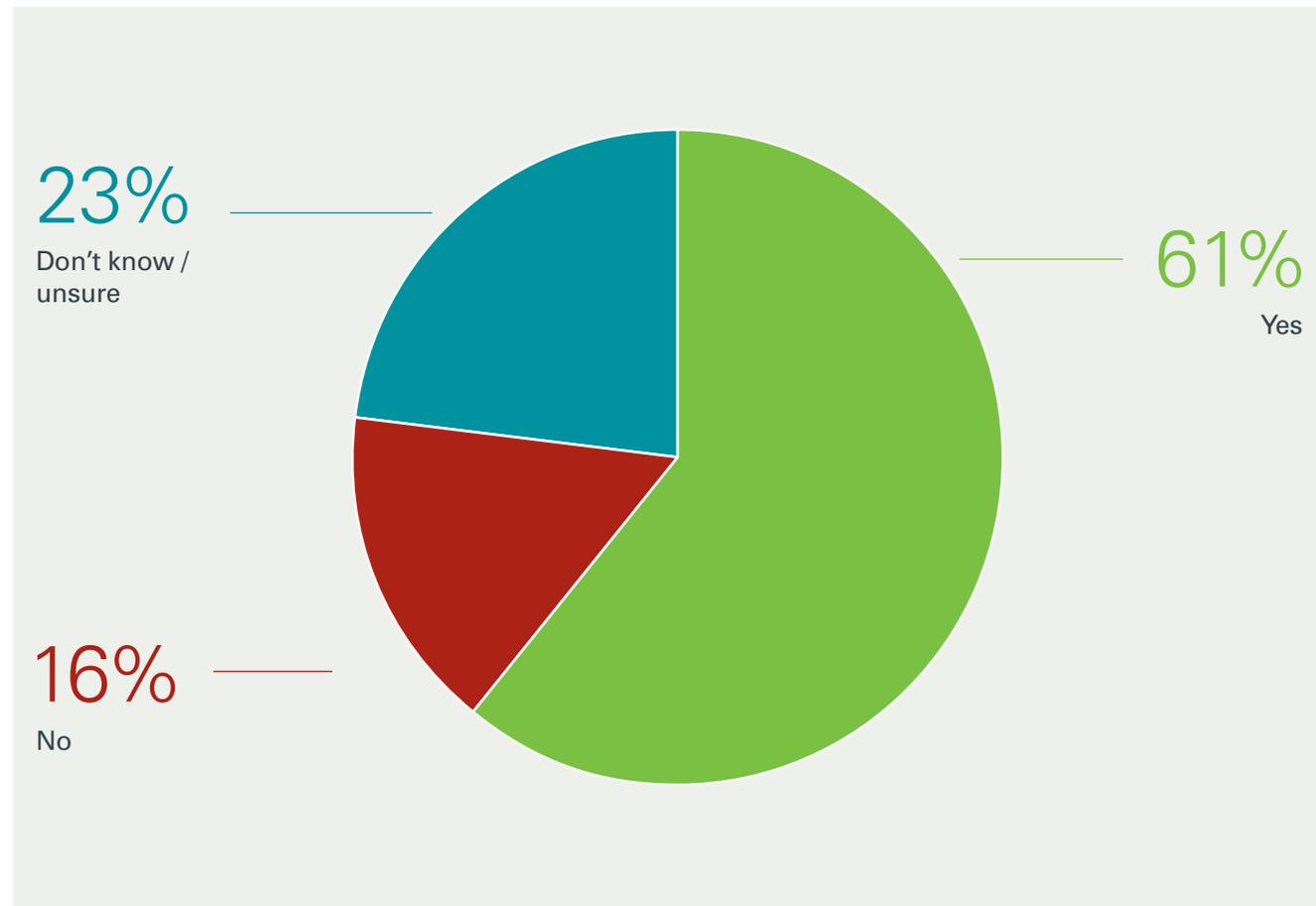
Note: this is the % of people putting each of the sources of energy as their first choice

Q. What energy sources should the UK Government be favouring in its energy mix? Please place them in rank order from 1 being most favourable to 9 least favourable.

28%
of people say solar, and
24%
say offshore wind, are
the energy sources the
government should favour.



People want to speed up the transition to low-emission vehicles

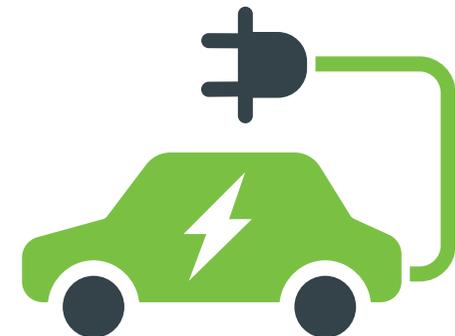


Q. The UK Government has decided to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040. However, the government's own Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has recommended a 2032 deadline at the latest. Should the government do more to shift road vehicles from combustion energy to low emission vehicles – like electric vehicles?

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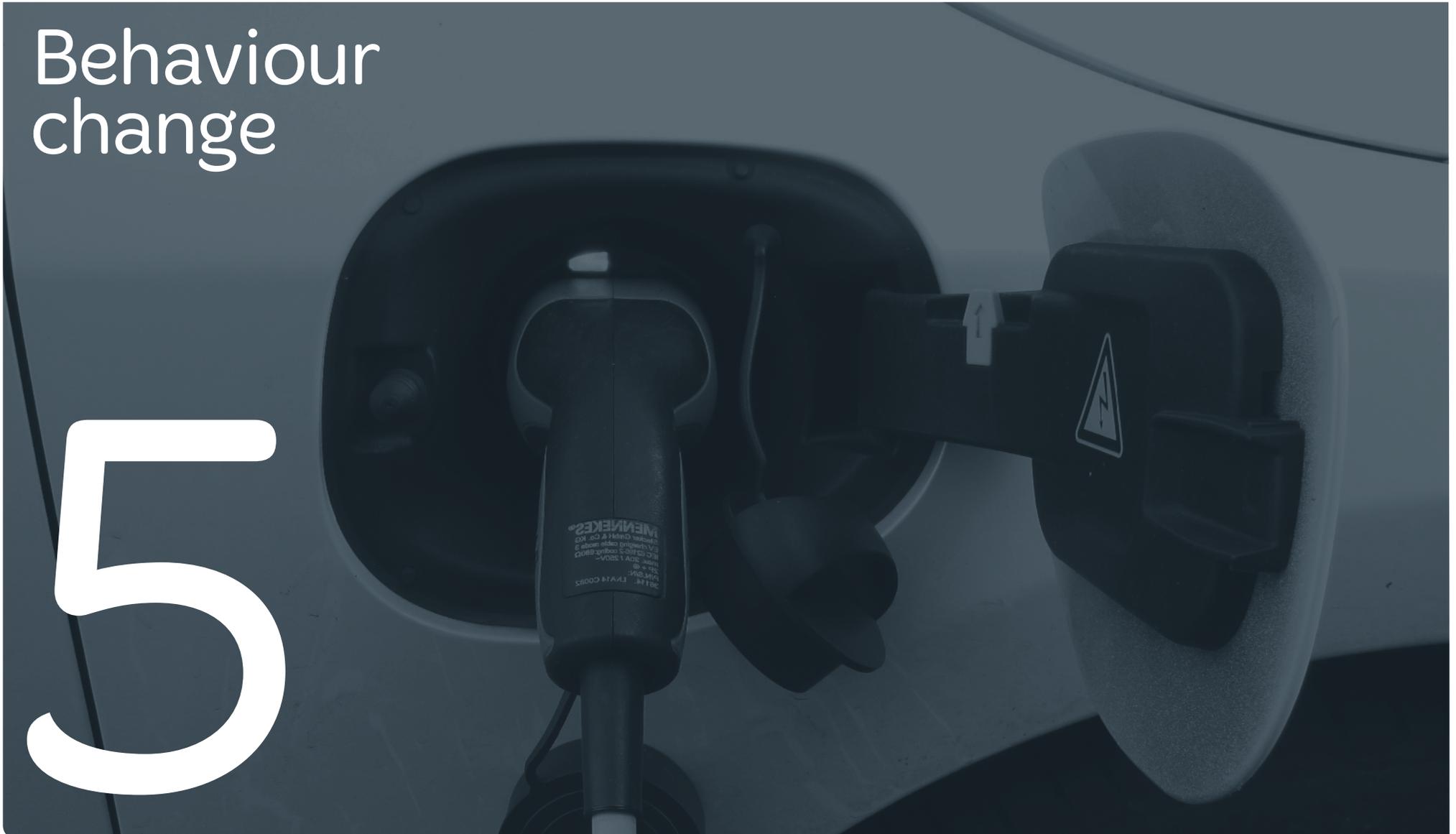
61%

of people think the government should do more to shift road vehicles from combustion engines to low emission vehicles – like electric vehicles.

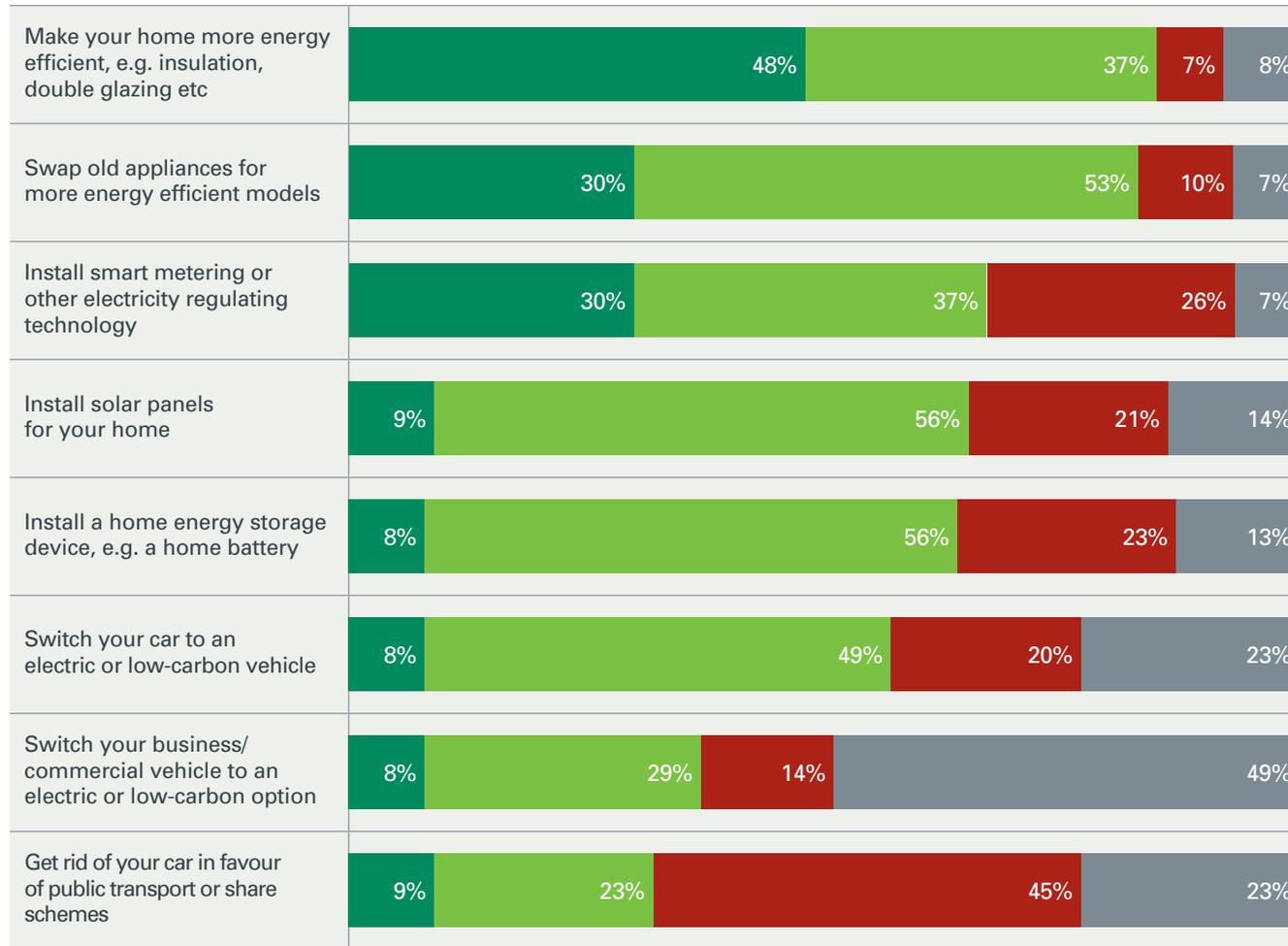


Behaviour change

5



People are already taking action, and would take more, with greater government incentives



■ Already do/have done
 ■ Would like to do
 ■ No interest in doing
 ■ Not applicable

Q. Are there any actions you would like to take personally or as a household, in response to climate change concerns, if there was greater assistance from the UK Government or through community or commercial schemes?

65%

either have or would like to install solar panels at home.



ClientEarth is a charity that uses the power of the law to protect people and the planet.

We are international lawyers, scientists and policy experts, finding practical solutions for the world's biggest environmental challenges.

We are fighting climate change, protecting oceans and wildlife, supporting sustainable forestry, greening energy, making business more responsible and pushing for government transparency.

We believe the law is a tool for positive change.

From our offices in London, Brussels, Warsaw, Beijing and Madrid, we work on laws throughout their lifetime, from the earliest stages to implementation.

And when those laws are broken, we go to court to enforce them.

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