



**cavendish**  
advocacy

# Public and MP attitudes to net zero and climate change

Findings from polling by Yonder  
on behalf of Cavendish Advocacy

**Cavendish Advocacy, part of the BECG Group, has worked with Yonder to survey the public and MPs on attitudes to the climate crisis and awareness of government policy to combat climate change.**

**.YONDER**



# Key findings

## The public

There is significant positivity around the need to tackle climate change from the public.

### Lack of awareness

Despite **58%** of the public believing that the climate crisis should be the top issue on the Government's agenda (irrespective of the pandemic), **60%** of the public has never heard of the Government's flagship COP26 climate summit and a further **13%** have only heard the name. Awareness is higher amongst younger and more affluent people.

### Changing behaviours

The public has shown some willingness to adapt their lifestyles to combat climate change but generally only the easier and cheaper options. Switching to a renewable energy provider, installing better insulation and reducing air travel are the most popular options.

### But more expensive changes are less likely

Only **33%** would install solar panels on their home and **31%** would upgrade their heating system to a heat pump or hydrogen. Similarly, only **34%** would buy an electric vehicle.

### Public split on impact on finances

The public's perception of the impact of reducing climate emissions on finances is mixed, with **35%** expecting a positive impact, and **33%** expecting a negative impact. Once again, younger people and more affluent people are more positive about the impact on their household finances.

## MPs

The majority of MPs think tackling climate change should be the Government's top priority.

### Lack of consensus

Only **32%** of Conservative MPs think it should be the priority against **72%** of Labour MPs.

### Lack of awareness

Only **45%** of MPs think the Government is doing enough to engage the public on the importance of climate change. Alongside this, **88%** of MPs believe that their constituents are not very familiar with the Government's carbon reduction ten point plan.

### Challenges facing the ten point plan

MPs see decarbonising existing homes as the biggest challenge to achieving the Government's ten point plan. Decarbonising transport also scores highly.



You can download the full data set for this set of polling by contacting [greenecommunity@cavendishadvocacy.com](mailto:greenecommunity@cavendishadvocacy.com)

# Methodology

We commissioned Yonder to conduct two surveys on:

- Public awareness and engagement in the climate change agenda
- MPs' views of how the Government is engaging with the public on climate change

Our sample included:

**2,115**

members of the public, weighted to be nationally representative of the UK adult population.

**79**

MPs, weighted to be representative of the House of Commons.

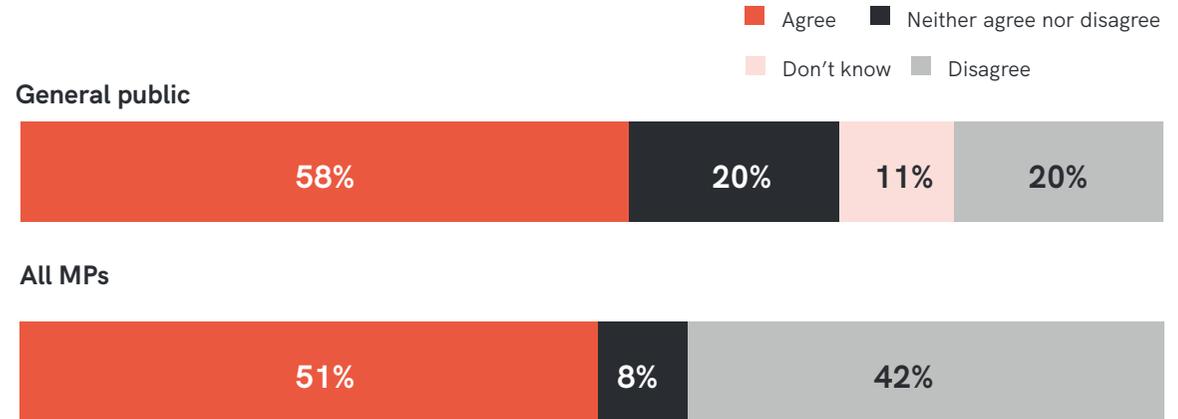
**.YONDER**

All polling was carried out in March-April 2021.



# The public and MPs see climate change as the top priority

Almost three fifths (58%) of the public and half (51%) of MPs agree that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change should be at the top of the Government's agenda.



**32%**

of Conservative MPs think it should be the top priority – showing a disconnect with the Government's push on climate change over the last six months.

**"Irrespective of Covid-19, the climate crisis should be the top issue on the Government's agenda"**

% of Conservative MPs who agree

**31%**

% of Labour MPs who agree

**76%**

**66%**

of Conservative MPs also believe that the Government is doing enough to engage with the public on tackling climate change, **despite more than 50% of them also thinking their constituents are not familiar with the flagship ten point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.**

**"The Government is doing enough to engage the public on the importance of tackling climate change"**

% of Conservative MPs who agree

**66%**

% of Labour MPs who agree

**14%**

# Public awareness of COP26

The COP26 climate change summit in November is the Government's flagship event this year – they've created a Cabinet-level post to manage it and are putting significant resources and weight behind it.

However, our polling shows that 60% of the public say they haven't heard of COP26, and just over a quarter have an understanding of it. However, awareness is higher amongst younger, more affluent members of the public – so clearly more needs to be done to raise awareness.

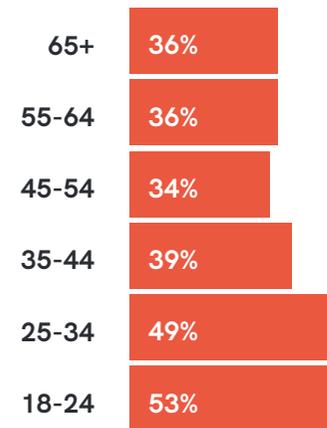
Have you heard of COP26, and if you have, how well do you feel you understand what it is?



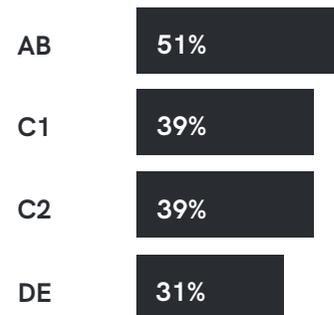
- Never heard of it
- Know the name only
- Know it, but understand very little
- Know it, and understand a fair amount
- Know it, and understand it very well

Have heard of COP26.

Age group



Socio-economic group



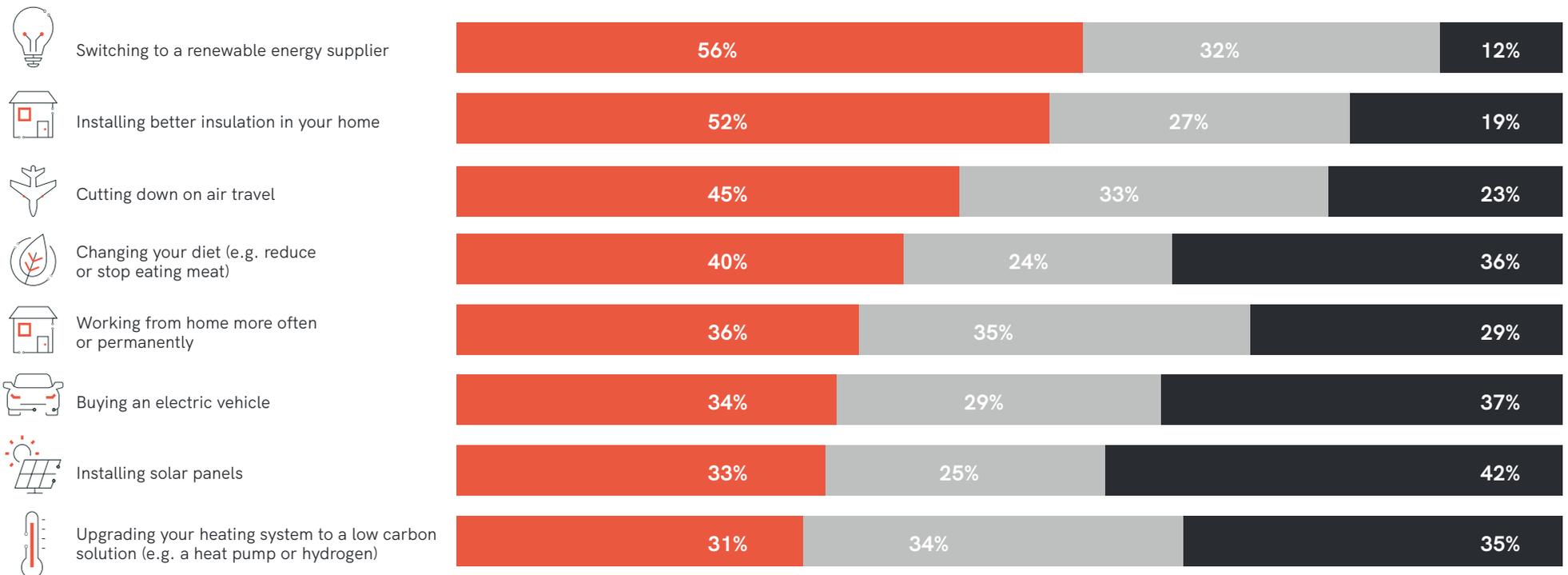
# Adapting behaviours to combat climate change

The public is open to the idea of adapting behaviours to combat climate change – but generally only the easier and cheaper options.

The public are more likely to do the majority of the measures we asked about than not. However, only two measures had a majority of the public saying they would do them: switching to a renewable energy provider (56% likely) or installing better insulation at home (53%). The public are most unlikely to want to install solar panels (42% unlikely).

How likely or unlikely would you be to do each of the following measures in order to reduce your personal impact on climate change?

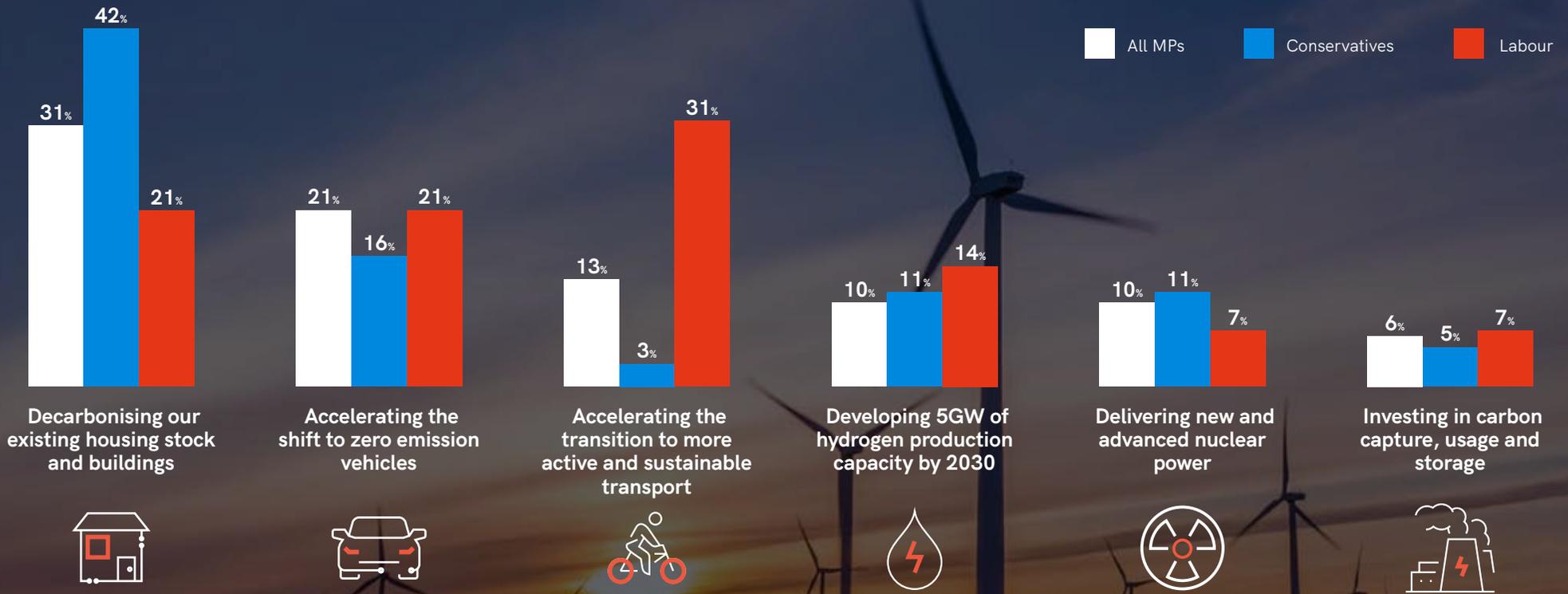
 Likely  Neither likely nor unlikely  Unlikely



# MPs see decarbonising housing and transport as the biggest challenges

Conservative MPs are most likely to say that the biggest challenge to achieving the 10-point plan is decarbonising our existing housing stock and buildings, while Labour MPs are most likely to say it is accelerating the transition to more active and sustainable transport.

This is set against our findings on the measures the public are likely to do to combat climate change, where only a third of people want to shift to an electric vehicle, and even less are considering changing their home's heating system.



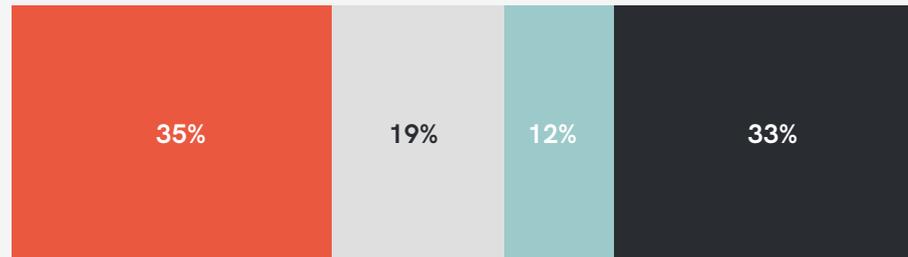
# Impact on household finances

The public are split over whether measures to combat climate change will have a positive or negative impact on their household finances.

Just over a third (35%) think it will have a positive impact and a similar proportion (33%) think it will have a negative impact. Younger and more affluent members of the public are more likely than the wider public to think that the measures will have a positive impact.

To what extent do you think the efforts to reduce carbon emissions would have a positive or negative impact on your overall household finances?

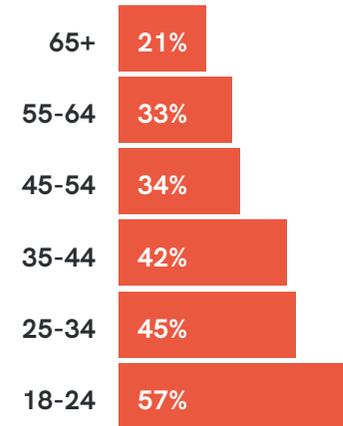
## General public



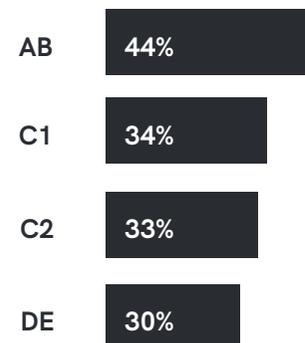
- Positive impact
- No overall impact
- Don't know
- Negative impact

## SUM Positive impact by...

### Age group



### Socio-economic group





## Get in touch

If you want to talk more about how to position yourself within the green economy and climate change agenda, please contact:

[greenecology@cavendishadvocacy.com](mailto:greenecology@cavendishadvocacy.com)