

Polling on voter attitudes towards environmental policies

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Climate change has consistently remained one of the public's top issues:

- The public has **consistently** ranked the environment as one of the top five issues facing the country since 2019 (YouGov, ongoing).
- The public sees climate change as **more important** than housing, defence, and education (Ipsos, August 2023).

The public accepts the science of manmade climate change and is concerned about its impacts:

- **80%** of the public is concerned about climate change (DESNZ, March 2024).
- **70%** of UK adults agree that climate change is mainly caused by human activities (YouGov, March 2024).

Conservative voters support net zero, although awareness of the term is low:

- Only **52%** of 2019 Conservative voters feel confident explaining what net zero means (CT Group, May 2024).
- A **majority** of 2019 Conservative voters support net zero by 2050. Nearly twice as many support it as oppose it (CT Group, May 2024).
- Support for net zero is consistent across the financially more well-off and less well-off among the 2019 Conservative coalition (**Public First**, August 2023).
- 2019 Conservative voters are more likely to support net zero than the general public: **71% compared to 69%** (Public First, October 2023).
- **Half** of 2019 Conservative voters would consider it embarrassing for the party to drop the net zero target (Public First, September 2023).
- **72%** of Blue Wall voters say that climate policies will influence how they vote (Survation, September 2023).
- **67%** of Red Wall voters support the net zero target and 54% think the government should do more to address climate change (Focaldata, May 2023).
- Over **two-thirds** of those who voted Conservative in 2019 and are now backing Labour (Con-Labour switchers) support net zero (CT Group, May 2024).
- Over **70%** of Con-Labour switchers said that net zero will be important to deciding their vote in the 2024 general election (CT Group, May 2024).

The public supports many clean technologies (renewables are the most popular energy sources) and environmental policies (e.g. grants for insulation):

- **59%** and **55%** of 2019 Conservative voters believe wind and solar energy should be the main focus of government investment to tackle climate change, the most popular options (CT Group, May 2024).

- When asked which sources will generate most of the UK's electricity by 2050, **61%** of voters said wind, **51%** solar, and **51%** nuclear (CT Group, May 2024).
- Voters see pro-renewable policies as **preferable, more achievable, and more deliverable** than any of the last Conservative Government's five pledges (i.e. stopping the boats, halving inflation, growing the economy, cutting waiting lists, and reducing the national debt) (Opinium, July 2023).
- Investment in renewable energy sources shifts how electable a policy platform is as strongly as building hospitals. Delaying net zero and continued oil and gas drilling in the North Sea makes a party **10%** less electable (**Public First**, October 2023).
- Most 2019 Conservative voters outside of London would have an unfavourable view of their MP if they were to campaign against a local solar farm, with an average favourability of **-16.6** (CT Group, May 2024).
- **61.5%** of those living near active solar farms are supportive of them (Copper Consultancy, August 2023).
- **49%** of those who said they were considering buying a new car were planning to buy an ultra-low emission vehicle (DfT, January 2024).
- **71%** of 2019 Conservative voters support the development of new electricity grid infrastructure to enable the UK economy's decarbonisation and improve Britain's energy security (Survation, August 2023).
- Those **who intended to vote Conservative** at the 2024 general election think that building more renewable energy sources in the UK would help to boost our energy security (**74%**) and make the cost of energy cheaper (**60%**) (**Public First**, April 2023).

The public believes climate action will be economically beneficial and believes fossil fuels rather than green policies are to blame for the energy crisis:

- Nearly **two-thirds** of voters believe green industries such as offshore wind and EV manufacturing will provide good jobs in 'left behind' parts of the UK (Opinium, July 2023).
- **Over half** of the British public prefer tax cuts to be focused on renewables, compared to only **15%** who would rather they are given to oil and gas companies (Opinium, June 2023).
- **Nearly half** of UK adults think that renewable energy and clean technology are the sectors most likely to create long-term growth for the UK economy, above manufacturing and financial services (Opinium, June 2023).
- **Nearly half** of UK adults think the government should support the UK's 'home grown' renewable energy industry to keep up with the US and China, compared to **19%** who thought it would not be a good use of public money (Opinium, June 2023).

- 55% of voters believe that investing in renewable energy sources help to make the UK's energy supply more secure (Public First, August 2023).
- 73% of voters in the North East believe that building more renewable sources of energy in the UK will bring new jobs to areas in the UK (Public First, April 2023).
- 58% of swing voters believe that growing the renewable energy sector will be more beneficial for the UK economy overall than any of the Chancellor's other 'key growth' sectors (Opinium, July 2023).
- 51% of 2019 Conservative voters who intended to vote Conservative again at the next election believe that the financial benefits outweigh or were worth the costs of creating an environmentally sustainable economy (Public First, August 2023).
- 83% of Con-Labour switchers said that a failure to secure investment in renewable energy and green industries would be a missed opportunity for the UK. 78% of Con-Labour switchers said they were less likely to vote Conservative in 2024 because Rishi Sunak was seen as less proactive in securing new green investments (Opinium, October 2023).
- More 2019 Conservative voters think that the UK should be one of the most ambitious countries in the world on climate change, rather than not taking steps until China and the US do the same (Public First, August 2023).

The Conservatives would lose more votes than they would gain from weakening environmental commitments:

- Net zero is not a top concern for Reform voters: 57.5% of Reform voters said that immigration was their primary concern compared to just 1.5% who said net zero and 65% of Con-Reform switchers have ruled out voting Conservative in any case (Opinium, April 2024).
- 89% of 2019 Conservative voters who hadn't ruled out voting for Labour and 62% of Reform voters want a cross-party consensus on tackling climate change (Opinium, April 2024).
- 2019 Conservative voters are more concerned about immigration and the state of the economy than net zero: 48% prioritised immigration and 41% the state of the economy (Public First, August 2023).
- 44% of people said they would be embarrassed to back a party which banned solar farms in fields (Opinium, July 2023).

Support for climate action falls when people have to bear direct costs, but this is true of other policy areas such as healthcare and policing:

- Two-thirds of 2019 Conservative voters support green policies that don't put the costs on ordinary people, while only 17% back them if they do result in costs (YouGov, July 2023).
- However, this is the same for most policy areas, save the NHS: only 10% of voters would be willing to accept large increases in the cost of living to pay for 'effective action' on education or crime (Focaldata, August 2023).
- Nearly two-thirds of voters support the government increasing investment in tackling climate change (CT Group, May 2024).
- 76% of those who intended to vote Conservative at the 2024 general election think that the UK should be building more renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar, even if it is costly to build them, compared to only 15% who oppose (Public First, April 2023).