

The British Academy Sustainable Futures 2025



Key findings

25 April 2025



Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	UK27764
PROJECT NAME	Sustainable Futures 2025
CLIENT COMPANY NAME	The British Academy
PROJECT MANAGER NAME	Emily Arnold
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SAMPLE	2,050 UK Adults. Weighted to be nationally and politically representative
FIELDWORK DATES	23rd - 25th April 2025

Net Zero

Most do not understand the actions of the UK Government's to achieve the net zero objective

Only one in six (15%) are confident they understand the action the UK Government are looking to take to achieve their net zero objective, whilst over half (51%) are not very or not at all confident and 20% are somewhat confident. Those who voted Labour in 2024 have the highest perceived confidence (25%), whilst voters of the other political parties lag behind.

Alongside this lack of understanding, more UK adults (41%) are likely to say the UK government is doing a bad job at considering their needs when creating/implementing net zero policies, than doing a good job (12%). Only 3% believe the UK government is doing a very good job, with 22% believing they are doing a very bad job at the same time – growing to 46% of Reform voters.

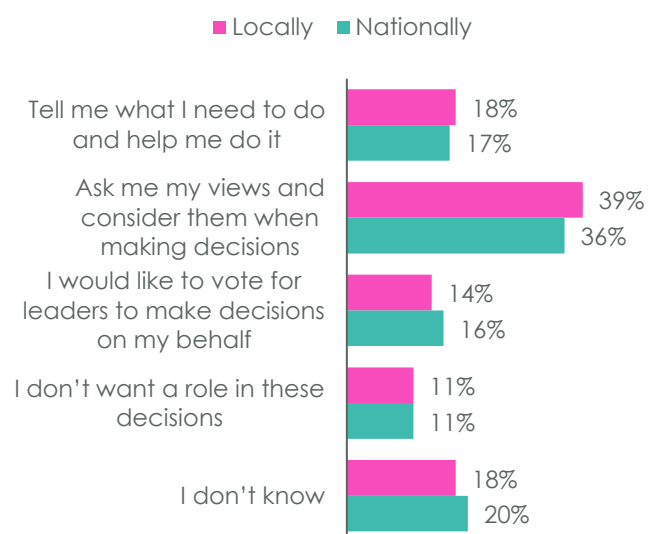
Similarly, the majority of UK adults feel the most vulnerable in society will be worse off as a result of the shift to net zero, with 43% stating they will feel worse off and 15% better off. 2024 Labour & Green voters are most likely to feel the most vulnerable in society will be better off (24% and 25% respectively), whilst Conservative and Reform voters feel they will be worse off (53% and 63% respectively).

Central Government not believed to collaborate well with local leaders on Net Zero

Only one in five (20%) of UK adults believe the central government collaborates well with local leaders and authorities on Net Zero initiatives. This belief is felt strongest amongst the youngest adults in society (41% of 18-34-year-olds agreeing) than older groups (only 7% of those aged 65 and over agreeing). In line with the previous results, voters in the 2024 General Election of the Lib Dems (11%), Reform (12%) and Conservative party (18%) believe the Central Government is communicating effectively with local leaders/authorities.

Despite the belief the Central Government does not collaborate well with local leaders on Net Zero, we see limited differences in terms of how people want to be engaged by both sets of leaders - both locally and nationally. The most popular way to be engaged by both leaders is for their views to be heard and considered when making decisions (39% locally and 36% nationally).

How leaders engage with me on Net Zero decisions



nationally). Only one in nine (11%) want no role in Net Zero decisions both locally and nationally, with the second highest option being don't know (18% and 20% respectively).

When asked what the best way would be to address environmental issues in the local community, the most popular way was for the national government to support my local council to resolve the issues (30%), followed by local communities and businesses resolving the issues with support from local and national government (29%). Very few (8%) believe the national Government should resolve the issues on its own.

To resolve environmental issues in the community, the most useful way considered by UK adults is for more partnerships between different groups, including national and local government as well as business and community organisations (31%). This is considered the most useful way amongst voters of all political parties – bar Reform voters who are slightly more likely to believe 'local government leaders understanding how the issue affects me and my community' is most useful (29% vs 26%). One in four (25%) do not know the most useful way to resolve environmental issues in the community – consistent across all age groups.

When thinking about resolving environmental issues important to UK adults, it is more likely that UK adults think global or country level organisations (both 17%) should take the lead in resolving that issue than smaller groups, such as individual households or neighbourhoods (both 4%). Despite being smaller, one in six (15%) adults believe each city or town should take the lead in resolving the environmental issue, just 2%pts. behind country and global organisations. Those aged 18-34 are most likely to believe global organisations should take the lead in resolving issues (21%), compared to only 13% of those aged 65 and older.

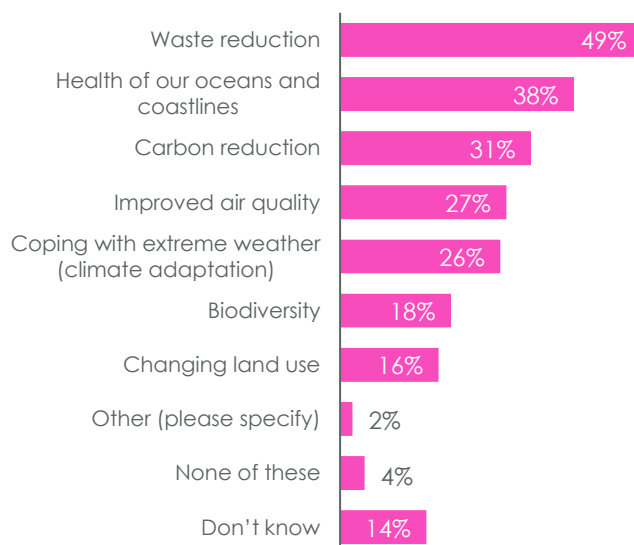
Waste reduction considered the most important sustainability issue for the UK

When asked the most important sustainability issue for the UK as a whole, nearly half (49%) of UK adults believe waste reduction to be top, followed by health of our oceans and coastlines (38%).

Across voters of all political groups, waste reduction is considered the most important sustainability issue. This grows in importance for those aged 50-64 and 65+, with more than half (54%) stating this to be the most important issue.

When asked the biggest barrier for resolving each issue, across all the top barrier was lack of political willingness from those within government. More than one in three (38%) who believe the health of our oceans and coastline was an important sustainability

Most Important Sustainability Issue for UK





issue for the UK believe there is a lack of willingness to resolve it from Government, with a similar number (33%) for biodiversity.