BBC SUSTAINABILITY TRACKER

November/ December 2024

BBC

Background

- BBC Audiences has commissioned regular polling of attitudes and knowledge around environmental topics, using nationally representative samples of UK adults. This latest wave of research was conducted across November and December 2024

- The data in this report was gathered for BBC Audiences by GfK. As such, it should be referred to as 'a survey by GfK, commissioned by BBC Audiences'.

- Its use is intended purely to inform content development, rather than inclusion of the findings in editorial.

- In the event of any reporting of the information it contains in BBC Content, this would be subject to the usual Editorial Guidelines around the reporting of polling by third parties.

- Results for the Sustainability tracker were gathered during w/c 11th November 2024 and w/c 16th December 2024. The total sample across the fieldwork was 1,008.

- To see the results from previous waves of the Sustainability tracker, please visit the BBC Commissioning site.

Key Insights

Audience attitudes to climate change

- Audiences do care about the environment, but they believe it is more important to them than it is to other people.

  – 56% of audiences claim the environment is of high importance to them personally, vs only 34% believing the environment is equally important to others.

- Most audiences believe there will be at least some negative consequences to climate change, but the majority still believe we can tackle it.

  – Three quarters of audiences believe that there will be at least some negative consequences to climate change (76%), with just under half (46%) believing the consequences will be mainly negative.

  – Despite this, 71% do believe we can tackle climate change in at least some way, but most believe we need to develop more solutions and act faster in order to do so.

Solutions and causes of climate change

- Audiences are most likely to rank deforestation/agriculture, pollution from transport and use of fossil fuels in industry and heat production as the top 3 contributors to climate change. This aligns with the latest science (see the Environmental Sustainability Topic Guide for further information).

- In terms of solutions to climate change, audiences are most likely to rank recycling, making their home more energy efficient and using green energy as the top 3 things they can do to reduce their carbon footprint. This doesn't align with the latest science (explained in the Topic Guide here).

- In line with their belief that they care about the environment more than others, audiences also think they are more likely to make changes to their behaviour than other people and institutions are, particularly global businesses and political leaders.

  – 76% of claim to be at least somewhat willing to change their behaviour for the climate, but only 31% of people believe global businesses are willing to change their behaviour.

B B C

Key Insights

Perceptions of nature

- Audiences are most likely to say that they believe nature is in decline across the UK and globally but a significant minority still think nature is healthy, stable or thriving.

  – 40% of audiences think UK nature is healthy, stable or thriving with the figure 36% for global nature. This doesn't align with the [latest science](#).

  – Audiences also believe that nature is under a greater threat globally than in the UK. 16% of audiences believe that nature globally is in steep decline vs 9% for UK nature.

Audience attitudes to climate change

1 in 5 adults rank the environment 10 out of 10 in terms of its importance to them personally

While the majority say the environment is of high importance to them personally, they do not believe this to be true for other people with only a third saying environmental issues are highly important to other people. This is stable vs the previous wave.

Q: How important would you say environmental issues are to you personally? Scale 1-10
Q: How important would you say environmental issues are to other people personally? Scale 1-10

%

- Important to you personally
- Important to other people
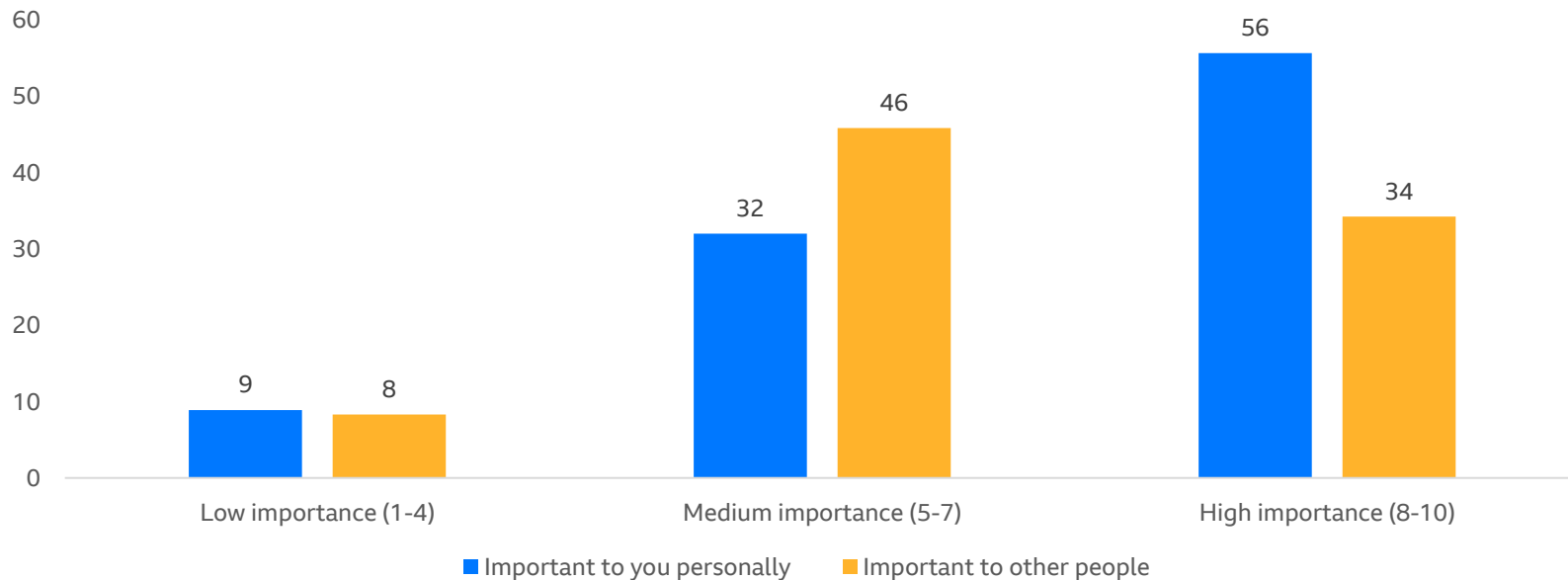
Almost half of audiences think the consequences of climate change will be mainly negative

76% of audiences believe there will be at least some negative consequences to climate change

In your opinion, what consequences will climate change have where you live? %

- Mainly negative consequences
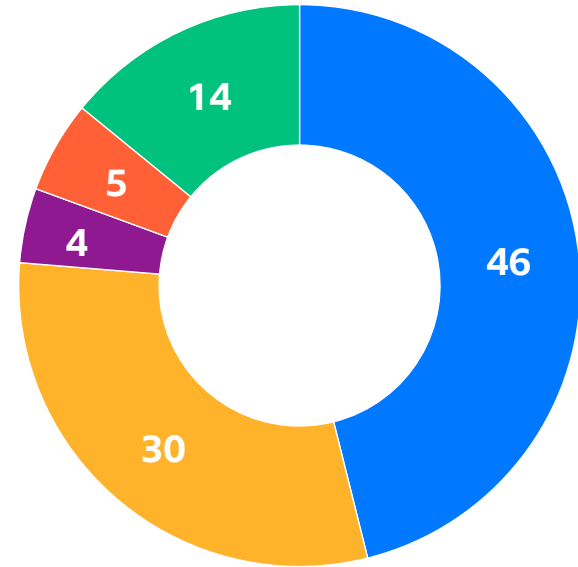- Mainly positive consequences
- I don't know
- Both negative and positive consequences
- I don't believe the climate is changing

8

Overall 71% of audiences think it is possible in some way to tackle climate change, but most think we need to develop more solutions and act faster.

There is little difference by audience map segments, at least two thirds of all audiences think we can tackle climate change in some way. Only 2% think we don't need to tackle the issues.

Do you think it is possible to tackle climate change and nature loss? %

Yes, we have the solutions and are actioning them	6
Yes, we have the solutions but need to put them into practice faster	26
Yes, but we need to develop more solutions	39
No, it is too late to do anything about climate change and nature loss	7
No, it's too difficult and/or too expensive to do anything about climate change and nature loss	4
I don't believe we need to tackle climate change and nature loss	2
I don't believe climate change or nature loss are caused by human actions	4
I don't know	12

UK broadcasters remain the prime source of information from the media on environmental issues. 45% of audiences claim to have seen environmental content from a UK broadcaster.

Have you seen, heard or read anything about environmental topics or issues from any of the following in the past few months? %

■ Jan-24   ■ Nov-24

Solutions and causes of climate change

BBC
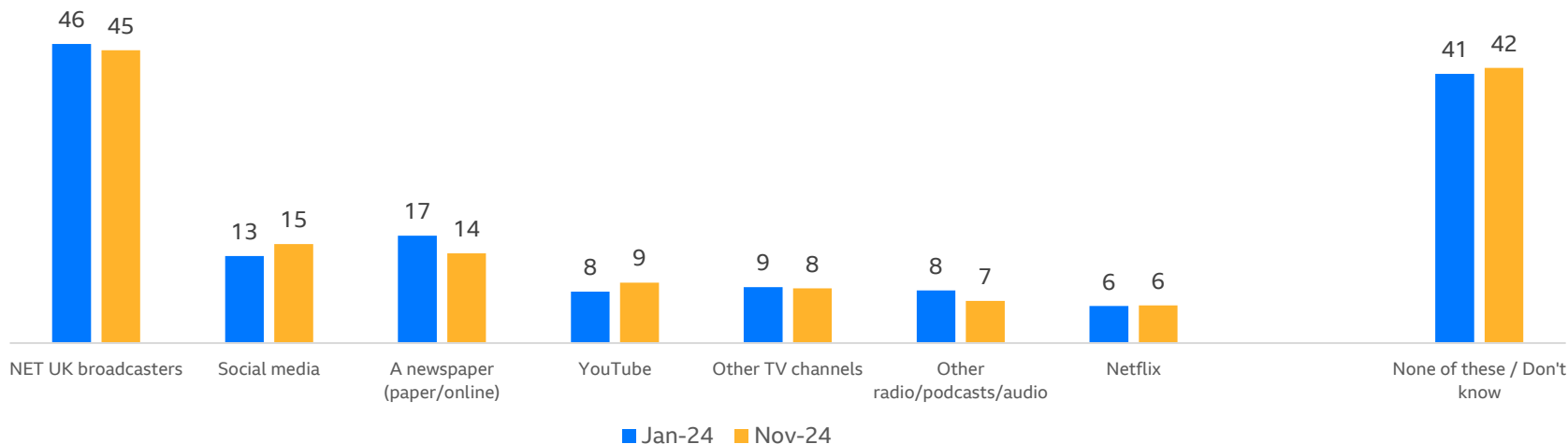
When asked to rank the biggest contributors to climate change, audiences are most likely to put deforestation, transport and use of fossil fuels for energy as no.1
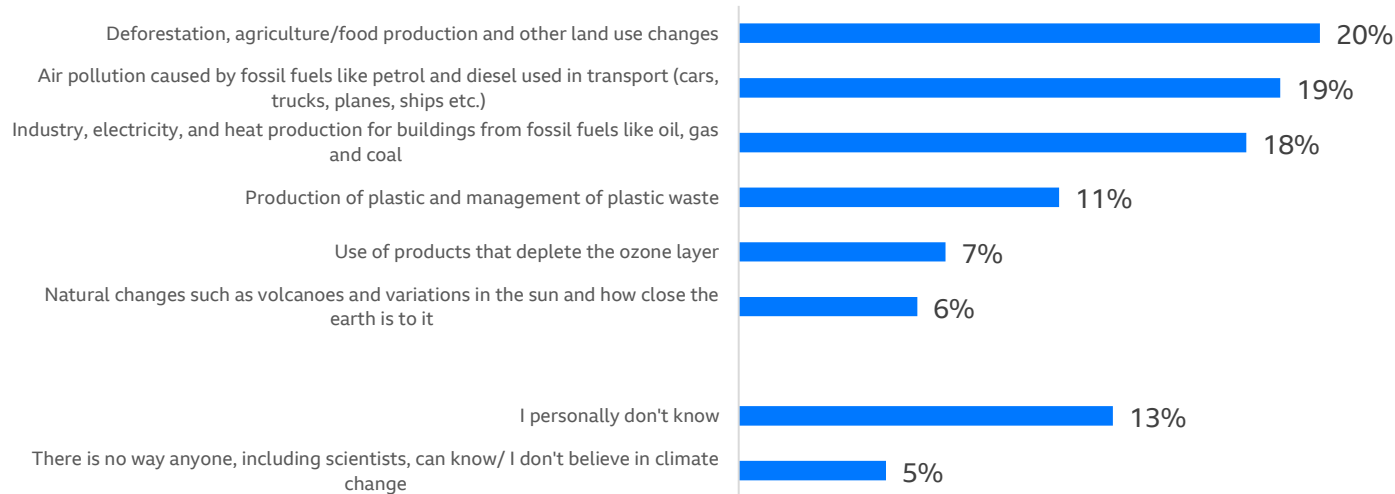
There is little difference by segment but Metropolitan Professionals/ Starting Out are the segments more likely than others to rank plastic production as the no. 1 cause, with 17% doing so behind deforestation (32%) and air pollution (24%).

From the list below, please rank the top 3 from most to least in terms of how much you believe they contribute, if at all, to climate change.
% of people ranking response no.1

Response	%
Deforestation, agriculture/food production and other land use changes	20%
Air pollution caused by fossil fuels like petrol and diesel used in transport (cars, trucks, planes, ships etc.)	19%
Industry, electricity, and heat production for buildings from fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal	18%
Production of plastic and management of plastic waste	11%
Use of products that deplete the ozone layer	7%
Natural changes such as volcanoes and variations in the sun and how close the earth is to it	6%
I personally don't know	13%
There is no way anyone, including scientists, can know/ I don't believe in climate change	5%

Top 3 causes of climate change according to current science:
1. Industry, electricity and heat production for buildings from fossil fuels
2. Deforestation, agriculture/food production and other land use change
3. Fossil fuel use in transport.

See the Environmental Sustainability Topic Guide for further information.

Deforestation and the use of fossil fuels for transport and energy are also the 3 factors audiences are most likely to rank anywhere in the top 3 causes of climate change

The latest science says deforestation, along with fossil fuel use in transport and energy production for industry and buildings (electricity and heat) are the 3 biggest contributors to climate change – 46% of audiences put all 3 of these factors in their top 3.

From the list below, please rank the top 3 from most to least in terms of how much you believe they contribute, if at all, to climate change.
% of people ranking response anywhere in the top 3

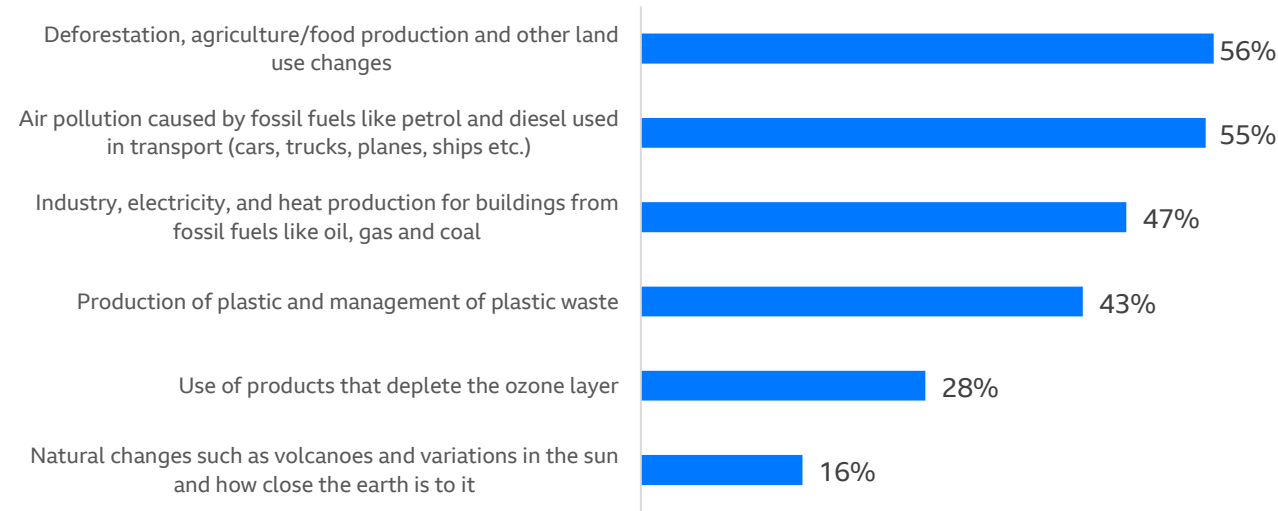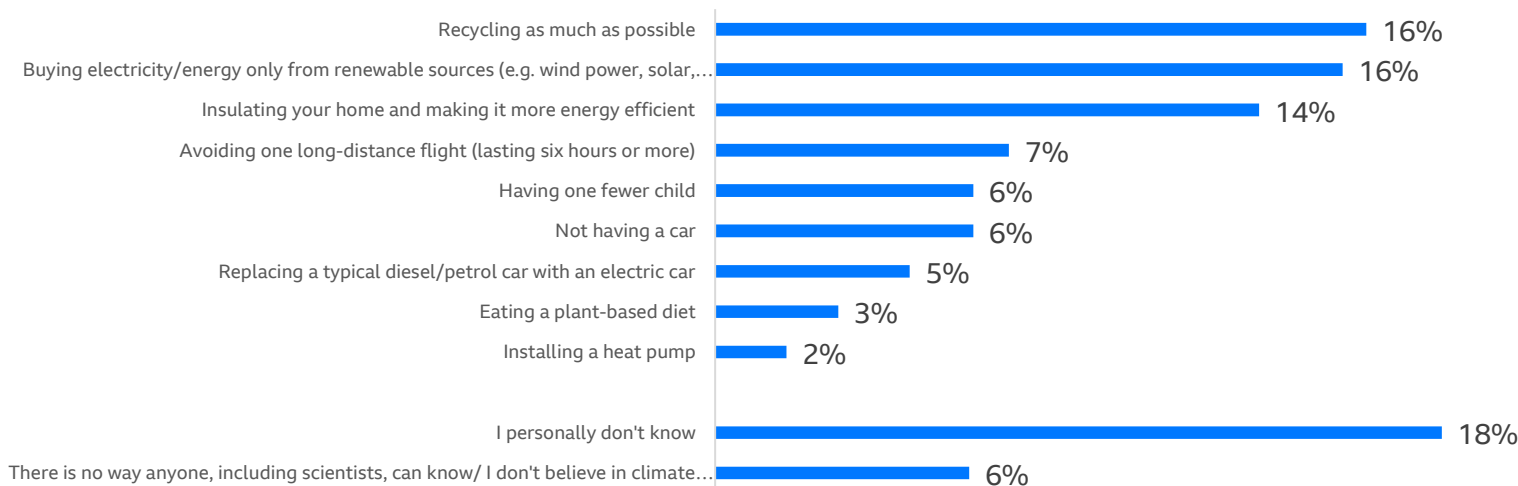|	
Deforestation, agriculture/food production and other land use changes	56%
Air pollution caused by fossil fuels like petrol and diesel used in transport (cars, trucks, planes, ships etc.)	55%
Industry, electricity, and heat production for buildings from fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal	47%
Production of plastic and management of plastic waste	43%
Use of products that deplete the ozone layer	28%
Natural changes such as volcanoes and variations in the sun and how close the earth is to it	16%

Top 3 causes of climate change according to current science:
1. Industry, electricity and heat production for buildings from fossil fuels
2. Deforestation, agriculture/food production and other land use change
3. Fossil fuel use in transport.

See the Environmental Sustainability Topic Guide for further information.

Audiences are most likely to say recycling and using green energy are the no.1 ways to reduce carbon footprint, despite current science suggesting recycling has minimal impact.

Almost 1 in 5 say 'I personally don't know' how to reduce their carbon footprint highlighting the need for clear and simple information

From the list below, please rank the top 3 from most to least in terms of how much they reduce the carbon footprint, if at all, of someone living in the UK or one of the worlds richer countries.
% of people ranking response no.1

Category	%
Recycling as much as possible	16%
Buying electricity/energy only from renewable sources (e.g. wind power, solar,…	16%
Insulating your home and making it more energy efficient	14%
Avoiding one long-distance flight (lasting six hours or more)	7%
Having one fewer child	6%
Not having a car	6%
Replacing a typical diesel/petrol car with an electric car	5%
Eating a plant-based diet	3%
Installing a heat pump	2%
I personally don't know	18%
There is no way anyone, including scientists, can know/ I don't believe in climate…	6%

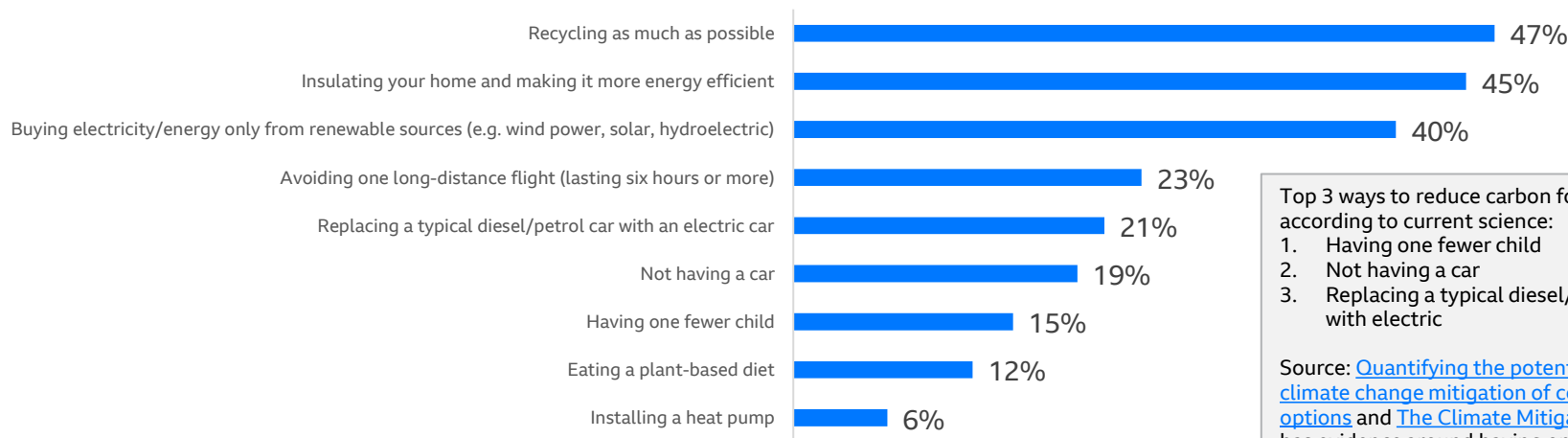Top 3 ways to reduce carbon footprint according to current science:
1. Having one fewer child
2. Not having a car
3. Replacing a typical diesel/ petrol car with electric

Source: Quantifying the potential for climate change mitigation of consumption options and The Climate Mitigation Gap has evidence around having one fewer child for those that can choose this. For more on the impact of individual behaviour change see the Environmental Sustainability Topic Guide.

B B C

Sample: All Respondents 1,008
Having one fewer child is a response option that will be removed for future waves

Audiences are most likely to rank recycling, insulating their home and using green energy anywhere in the top 3 things they can do to reduce their carbon footprint

From the list below, please rank the top 3 from most to least in terms of how much they reduce the carbon footprint, if at all, of someone living in the UK or one of the worlds richer countries.
% of people ranking response in top 3

Response	%
Recycling as much as possible	47%
Insulating your home and making it more energy efficient	45%
Buying electricity/energy only from renewable sources (e.g. wind power, solar, hydroelectric)	40%
Avoiding one long-distance flight (lasting six hours or more)	23%
Replacing a typical diesel/petrol car with an electric car	21%
Not having a car	19%
Having one fewer child	15%
Eating a plant-based diet	12%
Installing a heat pump	6%

Top 3 ways to reduce carbon footprint according to current science:
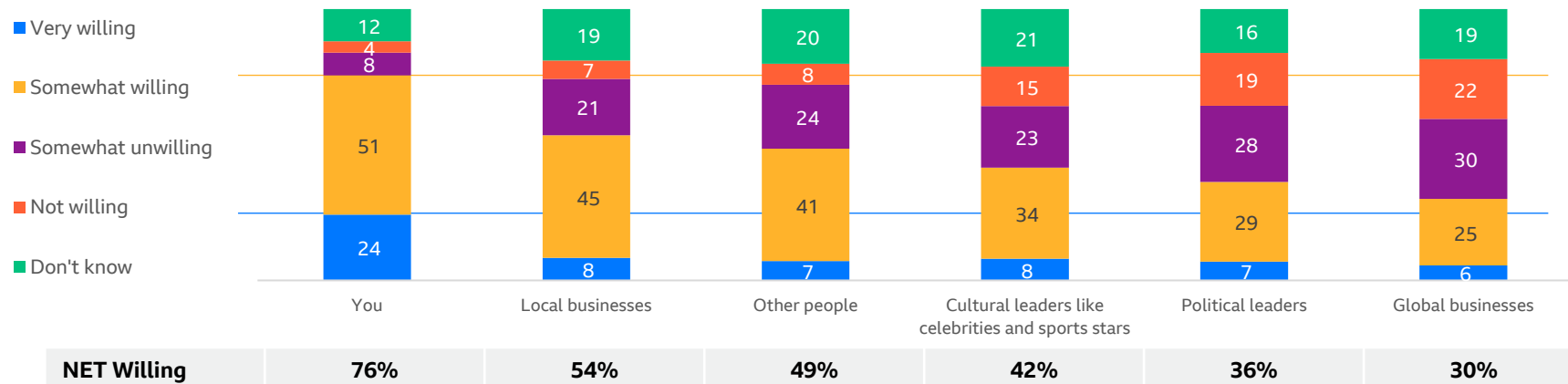1. Having one fewer child
2. Not having a car
3. Replacing a typical diesel/ petrol car with electric

Source: Quantifying the potential for climate change mitigation of consumption options and The Climate Mitigation Gap has evidence around having one fewer child for those that can choose this. For more on the impact of individual behaviour change see the Environmental Sustainability Topic Guide.

Sample: All Respondents 1,008
Having one fewer child is a response option that will be removed for future waves

When it comes to making behaviour change, audiences consistently believe they are more willing to change their behaviour to aid climate change ahead of others.

Audiences have least confidence that global businesses and political leaders are willing to make significant changes to reduce the impact of climate change

*How willing, if at all, are **you** to significantly change your behaviour to help reduce the impacts of climate change? And how willing do you think **others** are?*

Legend:
- Very willing (blue)
- Somewhat willing (orange/yellow)
- Somewhat unwilling (purple)
- Not willing (red/orange)
- Don't know (green)

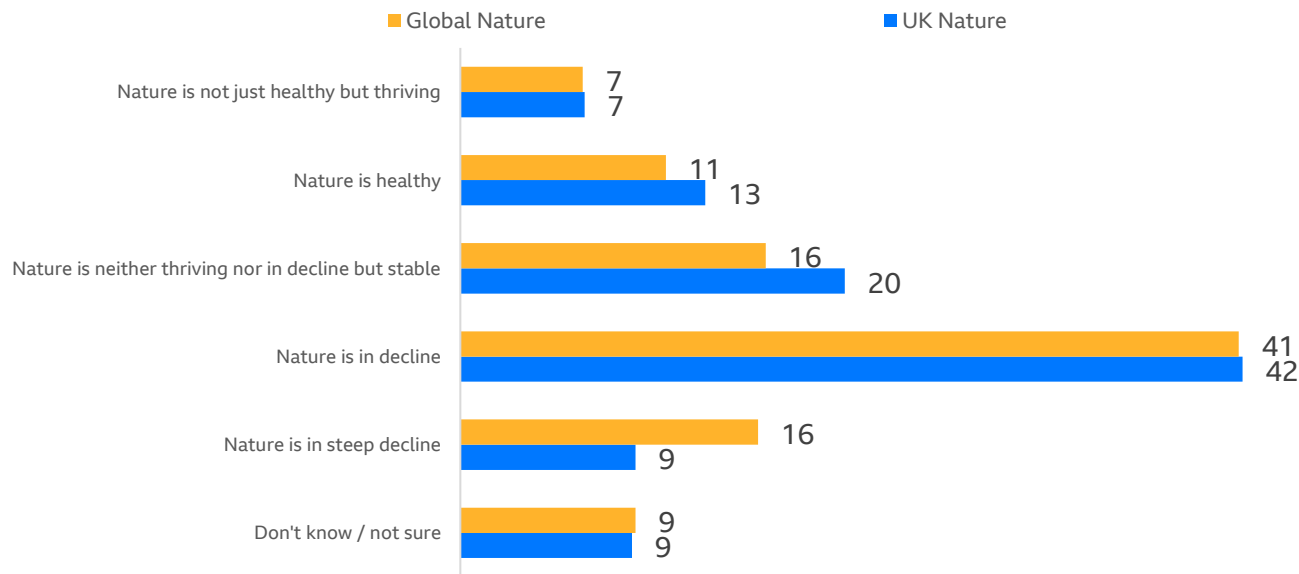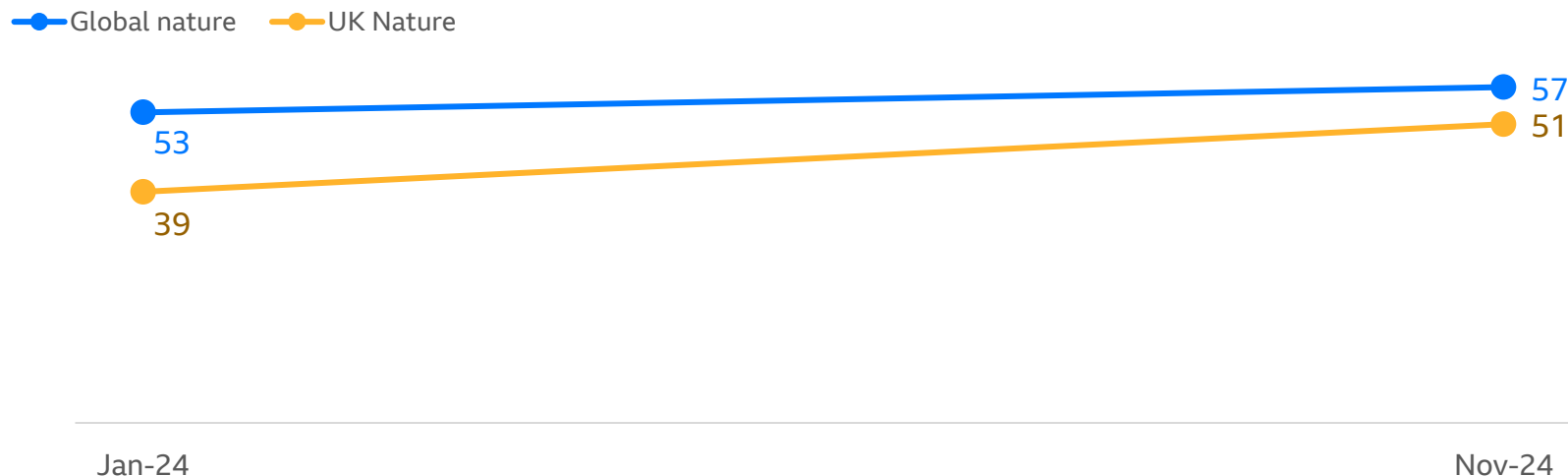|	You	Local businesses	Other people	Cultural leaders like celebrities and sports stars	Political leaders	Global businesses
Don't know	12	19	20	21	16	19
Not willing	4	7	8	15	19	22
Somewhat unwilling	8	21	24	23	28	30
Somewhat willing	51	45	41	34	29	25
Very willing	24	8	7	8	7	6
NET Willing	**76%**	**54%**	**49%**	**42%**	**36%**	**30%**

16

Perceptions of nature

While audiences are most likely to say nature is in decline to some extent, 40% of audiences think UK nature is healthy, stable or thriving, vs 34% for global nature - contrary to [scientific reports](#).

Audiences are almost twice as likely to consider global nature to be in steep decline vs UK nature.


■ Global Nature   ■ UK Nature

	Global Nature	UK Nature
Nature is not just healthy but thriving	7	7
Nature is healthy	11	13
Nature is neither thriving nor in decline but stable	16	20
Nature is in decline	41	42
Nature is in steep decline	16	9
Don't know / not sure	9	9

Overall, the proportion of audiences that believe nature is in decline to some extent has increased since January, both globally and for the UK

People have different views on the state of the natural world (wildlife and plants) in the UK and across the world. Which of the following is closest to your view?
A: NET Nature is in decline/steep decline

— ● — Global nature   — ● — UK Nature

Global nature: 53 (Jan-24) → 57 (Nov-24)
UK Nature: 39 (Jan-24) → 51 (Nov-24)

Jan-24   Nov-24

Feeling connected to nature is a key driver of adopting sustainable behaviour and most people claim to feel somewhat connected to nature

Q: Which of the images below best describes your relationship with nature?

Option	Value
A	5
B	8
C	14
D	29
E	18
F	12
G	14
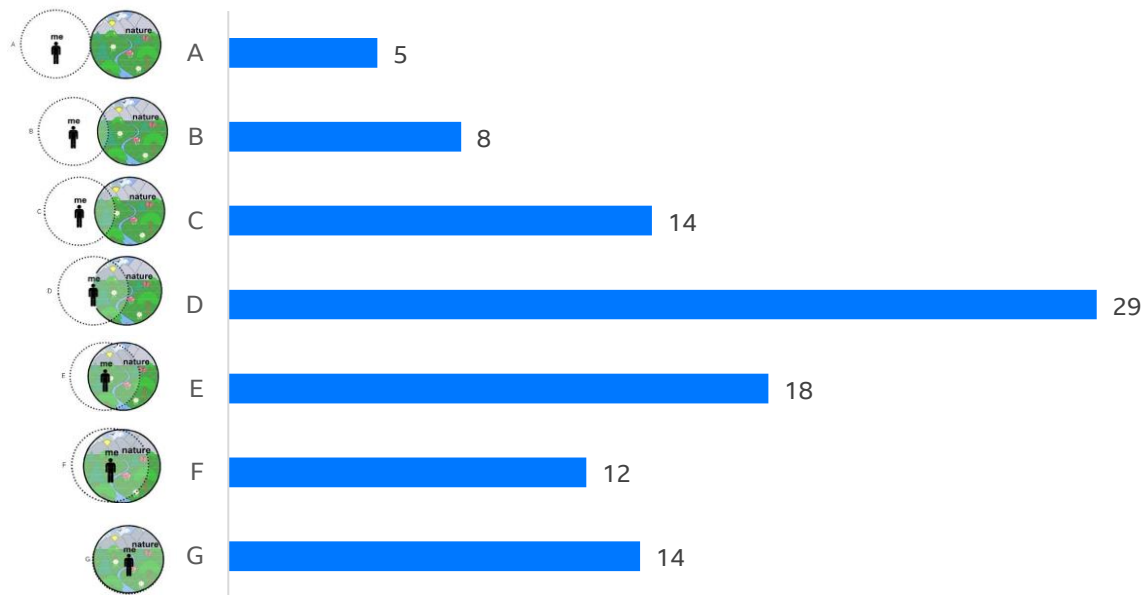
NATURE CONNECTEDNESS SCORE 4.5

We will create a 'nature connectedness score' from the question that we can track over time by applying a weighted average to the responses.

The maximum score is 7 and a score of 7 would be achieved if all participants selected option 'G'.

This wave the nature connectedness score was **4.5**.

THANK YOU

BBC