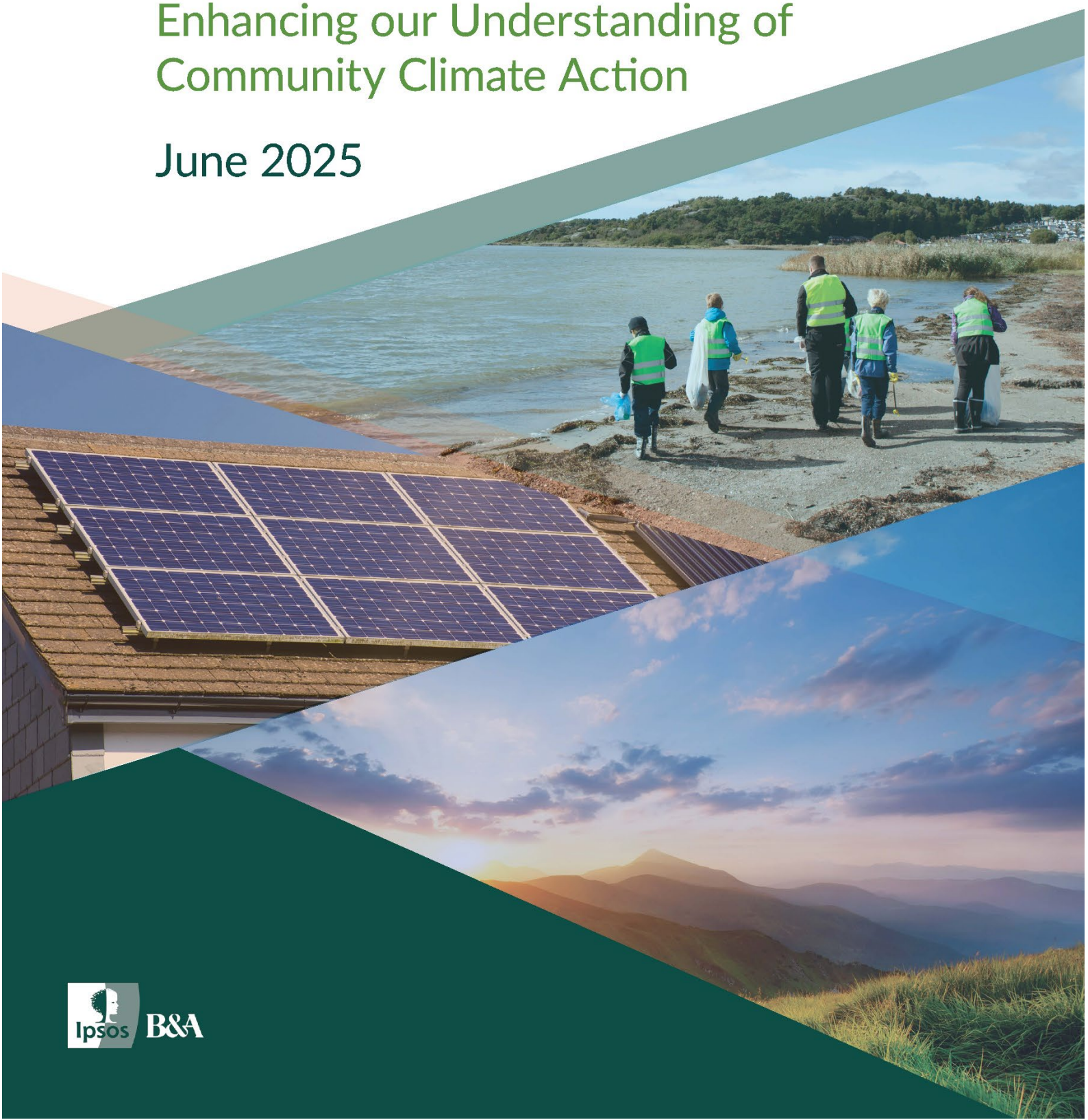
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Climate Conversations 2024 Report

Enhancing our Understanding of Community Climate Action

June 2025



Ipsos B&A

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1. Executive Summary

Between May 30th and September 23rd, 2024, the Climate Conversations 2024 online public consultation was available on the gov.ie website, with the aim of assessing public attitudes, understanding, and involvement in climate action within the Republic of Ireland. This initiative is part of the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA), a programme initiated by the Irish government and led by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) with support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Key sections of the public consultation focused on climate literacy and emotions, perceptions of responsibility and effectiveness, understanding about climate impact, as well as levels of community involvement. A total of 1,949 completed responses were collected.

The consultation was promoted through a mix of media channels to ensure broad awareness and participation, whilst demographic data - covering factors such as gender, age, work status, region, and housing - was collected and benchmarked against the 2023 Climate Conversations study.

Key Findings from this Report are:

- **Rising Climate Concerns and Emotional Frustration**

Respondents express even greater worry about climate change in 2024 than in 2023, with increasing concerns regarding perceived harm to other people and future generations. A new question introduced this year on feelings around climate change show these to be largely negative, with frustration being the main feeling reported by 67%. Reducing confusion about climate change could potentially reduce scepticism around the topic.

- **High Importance of Collaborative Climate Action in Ireland**

The Irish Government, the EU, and Business and Industry are similarly seen to play a highly important role when it comes to delivering climate actions. While the majority (68%) expresses dissatisfaction with the delivery of a plan to co-ordinate climate action between government, businesses and people, 76% of respondents feel they themselves could do more.

- **Various Sources used to Obtain Information on Climate Change**

Newspapers and online news are still the main source of information about climate change, with webinars/conferences and podcasts mentioned to a greater extent this year. Academics/ scientists and research institutes remain the most trusted sources regarding climate change information.

- **Misconceptions Surrounding Carbon Emissions Reduction**

Misconceptions about the impact of various actions on reducing carbon emissions persist. Notably there is an increased tendency to underestimate the benefits of electric vehicle adoption and to overestimate the effects of reducing food waste and recycling.

- **Potential to Enhance Community Engagement in Climate Action**

6 in 10 respondents report being involved in a community organisation in their local area across a variety of activities, with just over half of them (54%) saying this work involves climate action. Only a small minority (3%) express no interest in community engagement.

As part of the NDCA, the Climate Conversations programme is a cornerstone of Ireland's strategy to engage citizens in shaping the nation's climate policies. By participating, citizens contribute directly to the development of the Climate Action Plan, ensuring that policies reflect diverse viewpoints and address the concerns of all demographics. Citizens plays a vital role in helping Ireland transition to a climate-neutral and sustainable future. The findings outlined in this report aim to contribute to increased awareness and engagement on climate change, to motivate and enable effective climate action, and inform policy responses and behavioural research.

2. Responses to the Online Consultation

This section explores the topics covered by the initial stages of the online public consultation, including personal views and feelings towards climate change, levels of climate action and climate literacy. A number of the questions were repeats of those asked in the Climate Conversations online consultation in 2023, in order to monitor any changes in attitudes and behaviours.

A total of 1,949 responses were received in this latest 2024 consultation, compared with 4,061 in 2023. Relative to the previous year, the profile of participants saw an increased representation of males (up 6 points to 44%), urban-based and Dublin residents, those in full-time employment and those on higher income levels. It is important to bear in mind that the nature of a public consultation will tend to over/ underrepresent different cohorts within society, with participation typically skewed towards those who are more engaged in a topic. **Findings should not be considered as reflective of the wider general population.**

Key Points

- **Climate Anxiety**
  90% of respondents are worried about climate change (71% very and 19% somewhat worried), up a significant 3 points on the 2023 consultation's findings. Concern is particularly high among females (88%) and urban dwellers (86%), considering it an extremely/ very important personal issue.

- **Perceived Harm**
  The disparity between personal harm and harm to others/future generations has widened especially in relation to "a great deal of harm". More respondents identify with the potential impact to themselves as being moderate. Female respondents and the younger population aged up to 44 years express higher levels of concern.

- **Feelings Towards Climate Change**
  "Frustration" is the dominant emotion, identified with by 2 in 3 respondents. Over half also expressed a sense of "worry" and/or "powerlessness", followed by "sadness", "anger" and "anxiety". Demographically, in line with the above, females, those aged up to 44 years and urban dwellers were more likely to nominate a number of emotions.

- **Climate Literacy**
  The news (papers/online) and social media sources remain key sources of information on climate change, followed by books and literature/papers for consultation respondents. There were also greater mentions of webinars/talks/conferences and podcasts this year. Trust remains highest in academics/scientists (84%) and research institutes (70%), and lowest for friends/family (7%) and politicians (6%).

- **Climate Priorities**
  Respondents agree most strongly with statements about climate change leading to more extreme weather events in future, also that it will result in a global migration crisis due to a shortage of food and natural resources. Conversely, there is notable disagreement that the general public can do little to reduce climate change and that dietary choices have no real impact. It not being the right time to invest in climate change reducing measures also attracts low levels of agreement.

2.1 Current Views and Understanding

Overall, 9 in 10 consultation participants say they are worried about climate change and/or consider it important to themselves personally. There have been increases registered in both these measures vs. the previous year, as seen in Figure 1 below.

Climate becoming even more of a worry and a matter of personal concern for respondents

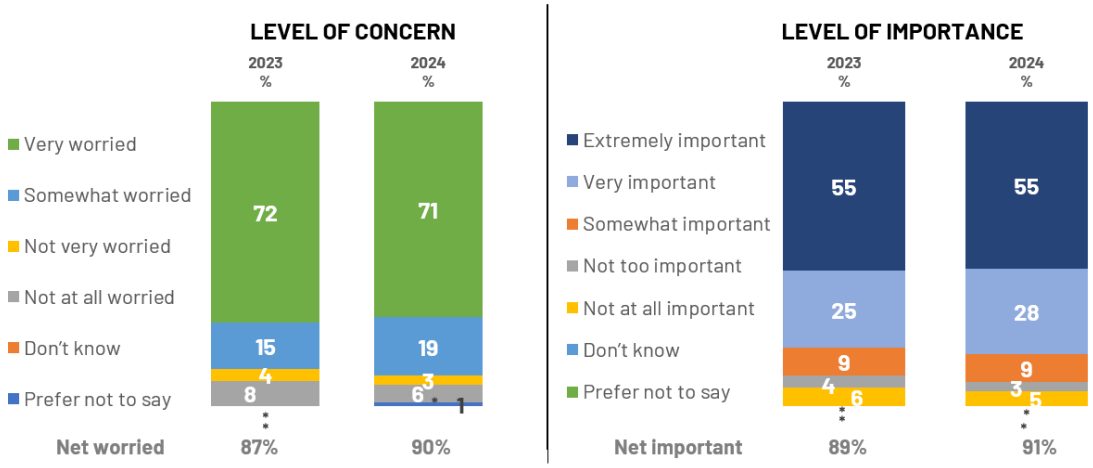

Figure 1 – Level of Personal Concern and Importance

2.1.1 Climate Anxiety

Similar demographic differences are seen again in this year's study, across both these metrics of personal concern and level of importance, with females and/or those living in more urban environments tending to express higher levels of anxiety overall. Linked to this, is a strong recognition of the importance of climate change, with up to 83% claiming it is an extremely/very important issue to them personally.

2.1.2 Perceived Harm

Research findings once again highlight the existance of an individual-collective gap in the level of harm climate change is perceived to cause, with 41% expecting it to cause a great deal of harm to them personally compared with 81% who consider it will strongly impact others and 86% future generations (shown in Figure 2).

Moreover, figures suggest the gap appears to be widening when considering this top box response i.e. the difference stands at 40 points (vs. 35 in 2023) between personal harm and harm to others and 45 points (vs. 41 in 2023) in relation to harm to future generations.

A higher proportion of respondents this year consider the level of potential harm to themselves to be moderate (so this is now more or less equal to the proportion identifying with a more extreme level of personal harm). Female respondents and those aged up to 44 years tend to be more wary individually and collectively in this regard.

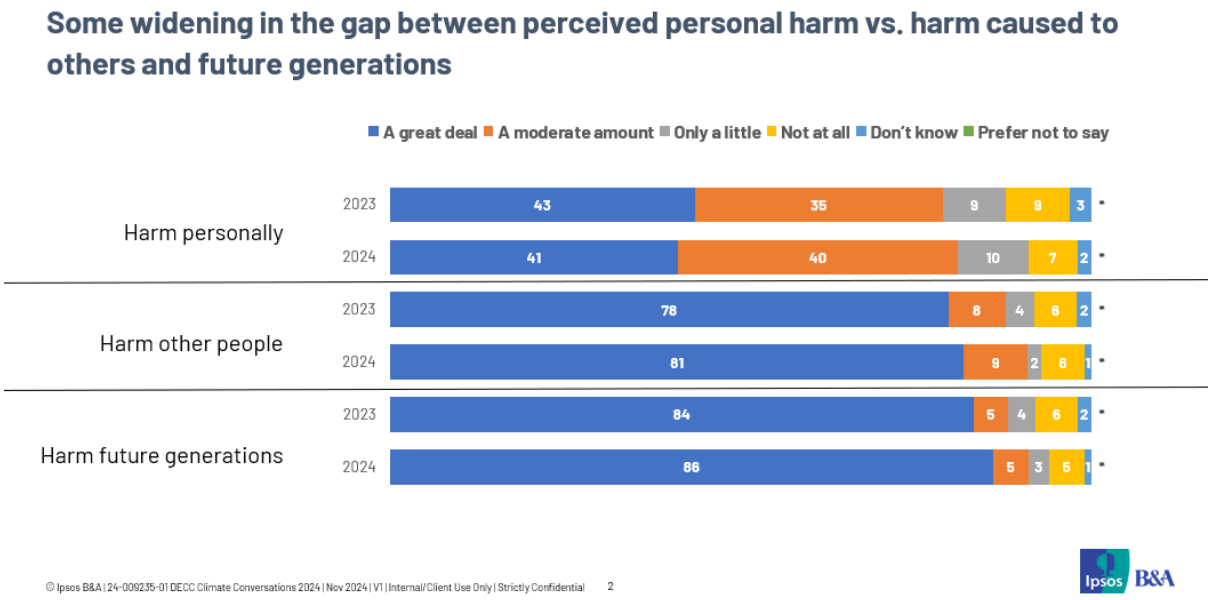

Figure 2 - Perceived Level of Harm caused by Climate Change

2.1.3 Feelings towards Climate Change

A new question was introduced in the 2024 online consultation to explore the range of differing emotions and mindsets that exist regarding climate change and also how the various types of feelings might be grouped together (respondents were asked to select from a prompted list). As evidenced in Figure 3 below, frustration is an emotion felt by up to two thirds of respondents, followed by worry and powerlessness.

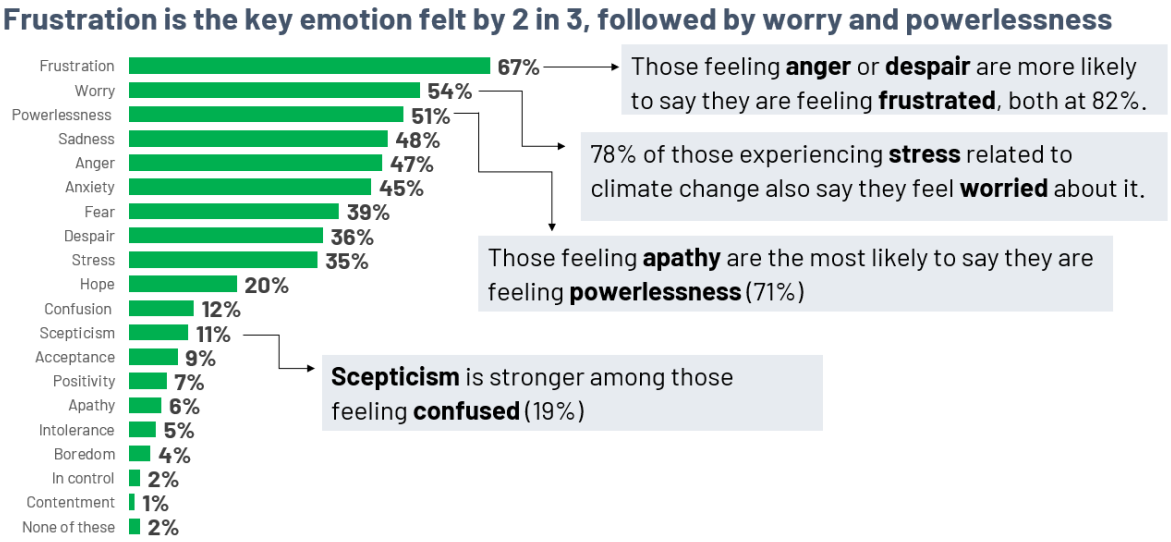

Figure 3 - Feelings towards Climate Change

Demographically, echoing the sentiment already discussed, females and/or those aged up to 44 years, as well as those living in urban areas, were more likely to nominate several emotions. The gender gap is widest when it comes to the expression of worry, powerlessness and fear, where females scored at least 10 points in excess of males. In turn, males were significantly more likely to nominate sentiment around scepticism, acceptance and boredom than females.

2.1.4 Climate Literacy

This section examines respondents' understanding of climate change, their trusted sources of information and their views on climate priorities. As reported in 2023, social media and the internet play a key role in disseminating information, even in terms of finding out about the public consultation in the first place. Online forums were mentioned specifically to a greater extent this year, as were work colleagues and fellow workers involved in community/voluntary groups.

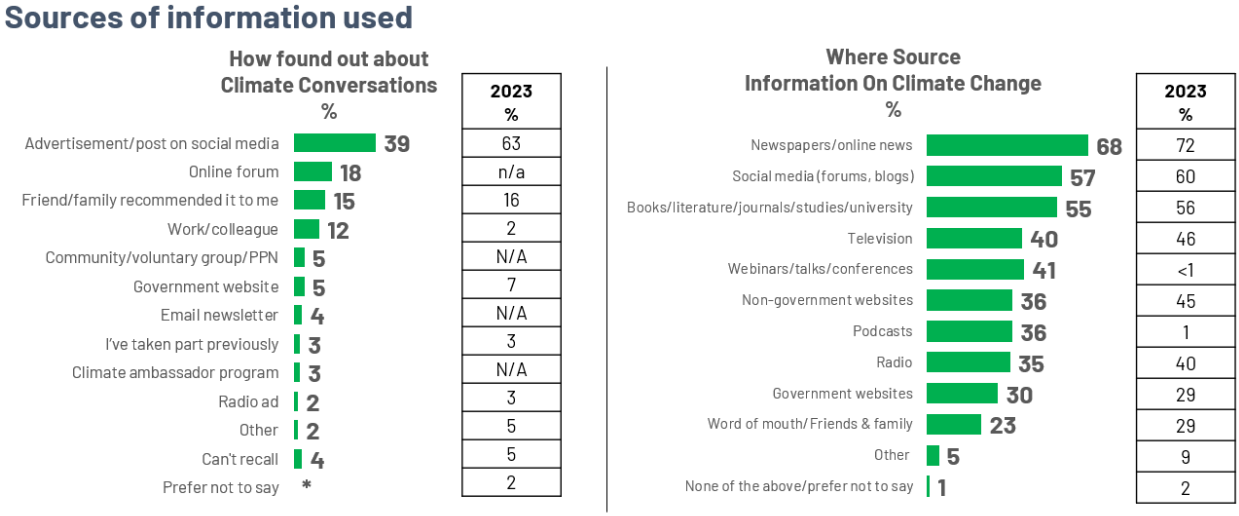

Figure 4 - Sources Used for Information on Climate Change

As highlighted in Figure 4, for information on climate change, the top three sources remain: the news (newspapers/online), followed by social media posts and books/literature/own studies. Mentions of webinars/talks/conferences and podcasts have increased significantly, a possible reflection of the higher proportion of full-time workers represented. Webinars/ talks/conferences were as likely to be mentioned as TV as a source of information in the latest dataset.

In terms of trusted sources of information, however, academics/scientists retain their top positioning, followed by research institutes, meteorologists and environment groups (see Figure 5). Respondents were prompted with a few additional sources this year, including community/local organisations, in which around 1 in 5 claim they trust, roughly the same proportion as do the Government (officials/departments).

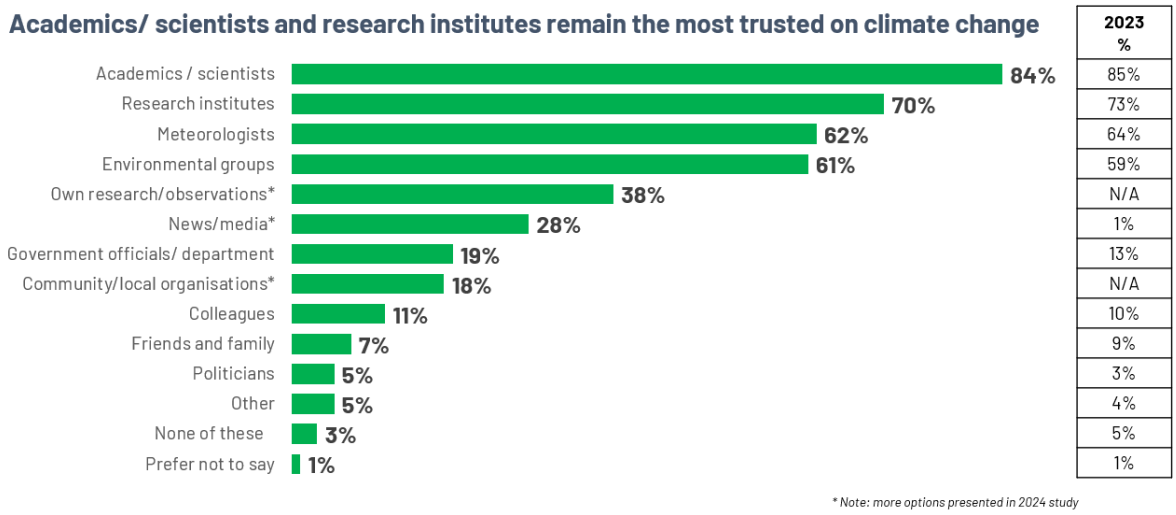

Figure 5 - Most Trusted Sources on Climate Change

Respondents were presented with largely the same battery of statements as in the 2023 consultation, to ascertain their level of climate literacy (Figure 6). Given this audience is both relatively highly educated and engaged in the topic of climate change, there are high levels of agreement with statements across the board, which have further increased in this latest survey, especially the associations of climate change with more extreme weather events in future, with a global migration crisis due to shortage of food and natural resources, along with climate change not being natural but caused by human activity.

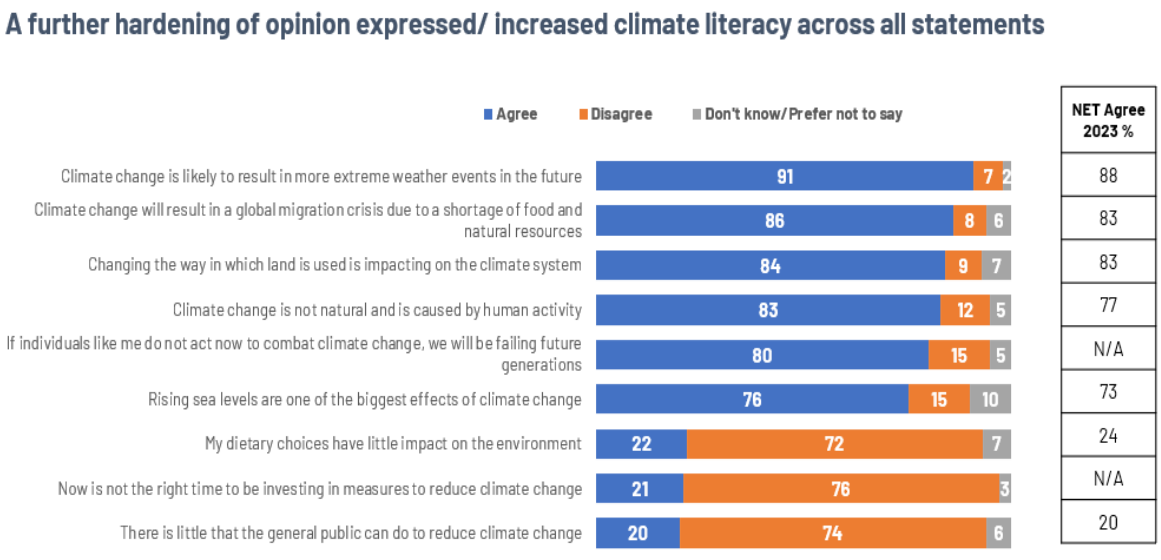

Figure 6 - Agreement with Statements on Climate Literacy

Conversely, levels of disagreement are high with “now is not the right time to be investing in measures to reduce climate change” and “there is little the general public can do to reduce climate change”.

Whilst agreement with the statement, “My dietary choices have little impact on the environment” has slightly reduced, there is still a relatively high proportion (29% including don’t know) who do not agree with this sentiment. There may be a number of reasons for holding this view, with these individuals perhaps unclear, or even sceptical, of a direct impact of dietary choices on the environment.

There is a high sense, however, of personal responsibility with 4 in 5 agreeing with “If individuals like me do not act now to combat climate change, we will be failing future generations”.

3. Addressing Climate Change

This chapter looks at the section within the online consultation that explores respondent's attitudes towards perceived responsibility for climate action, how Government is considered to be performing on a range of aspects related to promoting the required changes, and also how respondents assess their own behaviour relative to others on the level of climate-friendly actions being taken.

Key Points

- **Accountability for Climate Action**
  As in the last consultation, larger entities, namely the Irish Government, the EU, Business and Industry, are seen to be highly responsible for delivering climate action, significantly ahead of society and individuals. Furthermore, there was a reduced proportion of respondents who considered the general public and individuals as having an extremely important role to play in delivering climate action.
- **Government Performance on Climate Issues**
  The Government's approach to climate change remains negatively perceived, particularly in the same three areas: collaboration plans, prioritisation of climate change alongside other issues, and the effectiveness of its communication.
- **Perceptions of Own Climate Action**
  A majority of respondents (61%) consider themselves to be doing more than others when it comes to climate change (up 9 points vs. 2023). And yet over 3 in 4 (76%) say they could do more, also higher than previous, no doubt a reflection of those participating in the consultation who are more engaged on the topic, who are relatively more urban-based, well-educated and affluent.

3.1 Accountability

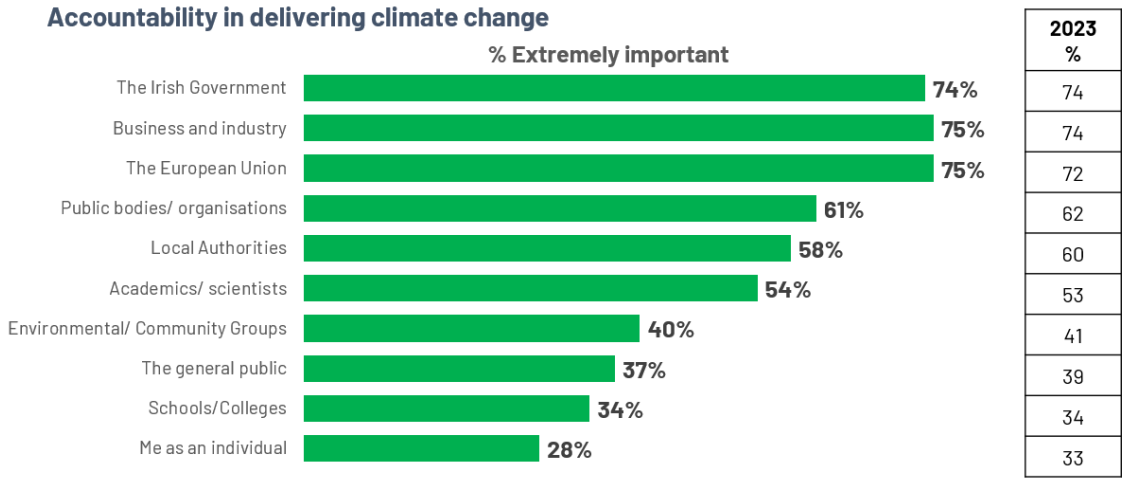

Figure 7 - Role in Delivering on Climate Action

As Figure 7 above shows, there has been little change in the top three players considered to have the most responsibility for delivering on climate action, i.e. the Irish Government,

Business and Industry and the EU. Responses continue to reflect an expectation for both public and private sectors to play an extremely important role.

The greater focus, however, on larger systems over personal action (taken by either the general public or by the individual), remains true, and there is some concern that the gap has even widened a bit further in the latest data.

The European Union, along with Business and Industry and the Irish Government, are viewed as the primary drivers of climate action.

Public Bodies/Organisations and Local Authorities continue to be ranked mid-table, along with Academic/scientists. Similarly, there is no year-on-year shift in the responsibility identified at a more local/community level, which was identified in Climate Conversations 2023, as a key driver to getting people and society in general to become more involved and likely to take on climate-friendly behaviours. This suggests that more work is needed to convince people that bottom-up change is possible and effective.

3.1.1 Perceptions of the Government's Performance

Respondents were presented with a list of ways in which the Government could be seen to address climate change and asked to rate their performance on each (Figure 8).

Their performance was generally negatively perceived across all areas, especially in terms of "having a clear plan in place for getting Government, businesses and people to work together", and in "Giving citizens a say in climate policy". "Supporting individuals and communities to take climate action" was also one of the more poorly rated areas.

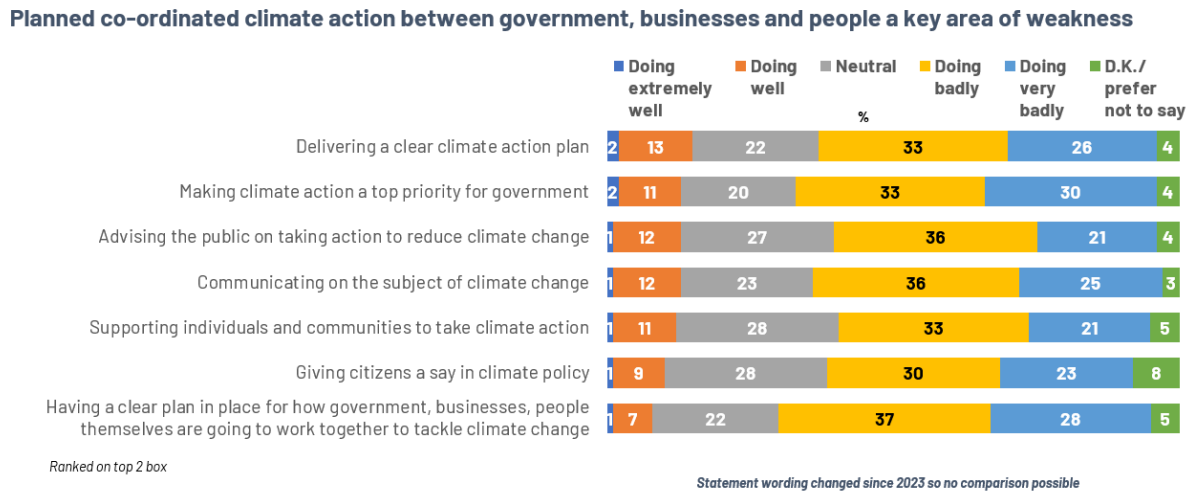

Figure 8 - Rating of Different Aspects of Government's Performance on Climate Change Delivery

However, only a small minority, just over 1 in 7, believe the Government is delivering a clear climate action plan, although opinions were split over whether the Government is making climate action a top priority and on how it is communicating around the topic.

3.1.2 Perceptions of Own Performance

As already noted in this report, respondents to the online consultation are generally more engaged with the topic of climate change than the general public. This is worth remembering considering the responses to these questions highlighted in this chapter. Indeed, an even greater proportion in this year's study feel they are doing more than other people to reduce their climate impact (61% vs 52% in 2023), with 28% citing they do about the same as others (Figure 9).

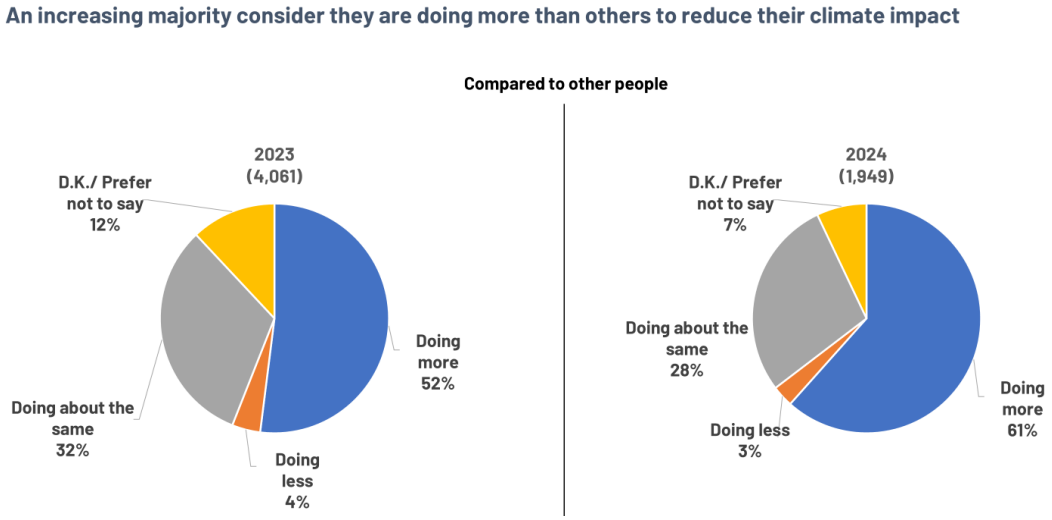

Figure 9 - Rating of Own Performance versus Others

At the same time, as shown in Figure 10 below, there was a higher proportion (over 3 in 4) respondents in this year's consultation who said they could do more to further reduce their climate impact.

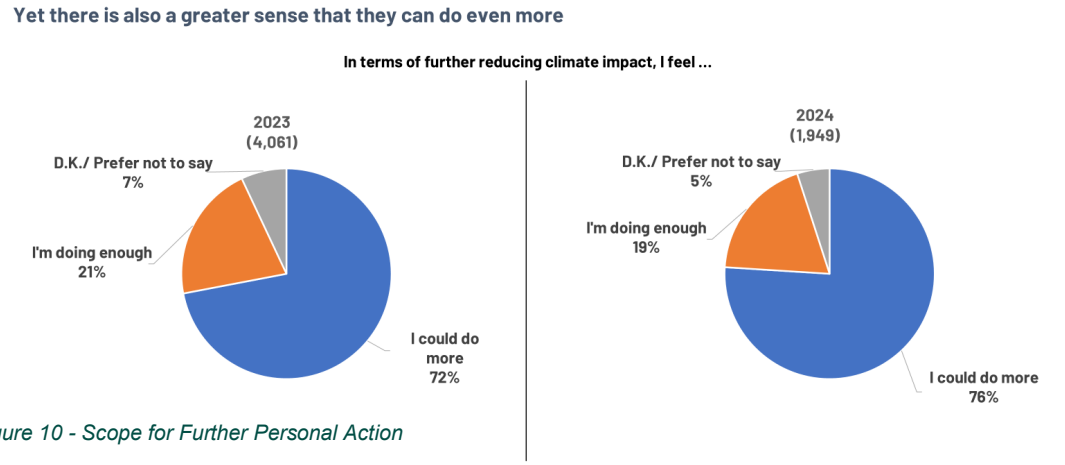

Figure 10 - Scope for Further Personal Action

4. Misperceptions about Climate Impact

Climate Conversations seeks to build layers of understanding about the complex world of climate related behaviour change. Not all climate actions are equal in terms of their impact on our emissions. Different behaviours have a greater or lesser impact on an individual's carbon footprint. Ideally, citizens would have an accurate understanding of the relationship between their behaviours and their impact on the environment.

Key Points

- **Perceived Impact of Action**
  As in 2023, the three top contributors to a reduction in carbon emissions are seen to be: reducing flights, retrofitting and installing solar panels or wind turbines. More frequent use of public transport (instead of a car) follows closely and has seen a notable increase in nominations, followed by living car free and reducing food waste.

- **Reality Gap in Impact Perception**
  Actual impact analysis reveals the misconceptions/ differences between perceptions and reality in terms of actual savings on emissions. As previously identified, switching to Electric Vehicles (EV) remains the most undervalued action, with the use of heat pumps another outlier, possibly reflecting concerns over their own use of energy to operate/charge and the disposal of car batteries, amongst others.

The 2023 study first tested perceptions around which actions have the greatest impact on reducing carbon emissions and compared them to reality. This is beneficial for three key reasons:

- We can identify actions that people overestimate in terms of their benefit to the environment – these can potentially be deprioritised.
- We can identify actions that people underestimate their benefit to the environment – these can be promoted.
- If citizens know where they can make the most impact, they can tailor their actions accordingly.

The same question was repeated in the 2024 consultation to ascertain whether understanding has shifted and whether the gap between perceptions and reality has narrowed or not.

4.1 Perceived Greatest Impact – Flights, Solar & Retrofitting

In line with last year, respondents were presented with a range of carbon emission-reducing actions. They focused on four key areas: Transport, the Home, Food and Other Day-to-Day Activities. Respondents were asked to select up to three top actions from each area, followed by the next step which was to rank all the selected actions in order of their greatest perceived impact.

This ranking exercise revealed the same three most widely nominated actions across all areas that would have the greatest perceived impact on climate emissions, as identified in 2023 (see Figure 11 below):

- Reducing the number of flights taken
- The installation of solar panels and/or wind turbines
- Retrofitting

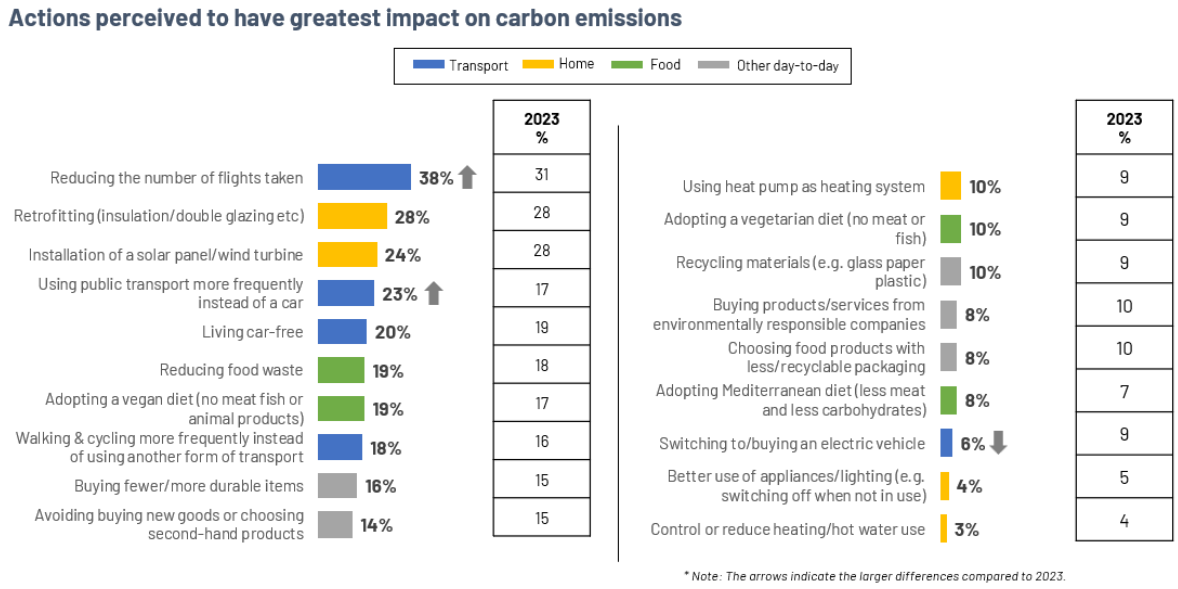

Figure 11 - Actions Ranked on Perceived Impact on Carbon Emissions

Overall, transport-related activities received more nominations this year, with reducing flights and using public transport increasing significantly. However, switching to/buying an EV decreased significantly, possibly a reflection of mixed messaging received from the media. The remaining activities with the greatest perceived impact were a mix of food-related behaviours (reducing food waste, adopting a vegan diet) and other activities (buying more durable items and second hand).

4.2 Actual Greatest Impact

By re-ranking these actions in order, according to their associated level of carbon emission, we can understand anomalies in the gap between perception and reality. Whilst in 2023, none to the top 3 perceived actions matched reality, the increased recognition around using public transport more frequently (instead of a car), has made this action more aligned.

The action with the most significant perception reality gap remains the switching to/purchasing of an Electric Vehicle (EV), as identified in 2023.

Usage of heat pumps is also misaligned with reality, and similarly to EV usage, this possibly reflects different types of communication surrounding their pros and cons.

Conversely, some climate actions appear to be overestimated, notably reducing the number of flights and reducing food waste. This is not to say that changing behaviour in these areas is not important, but it could potentially mean other “less obvious” but relatively impactful actions are overlooked. As an area, Diet, particularly adopting a vegan or a vegetarian diet, has seen some marginal upward year-on-year movement. But the perceived contribution of these areas is still out of kilter with the actual impact on reducing emissions. The diverse responses to the attitudinal statements regarding the impact of one’s dietary choices on climate change highlights the mixed views on this matter.

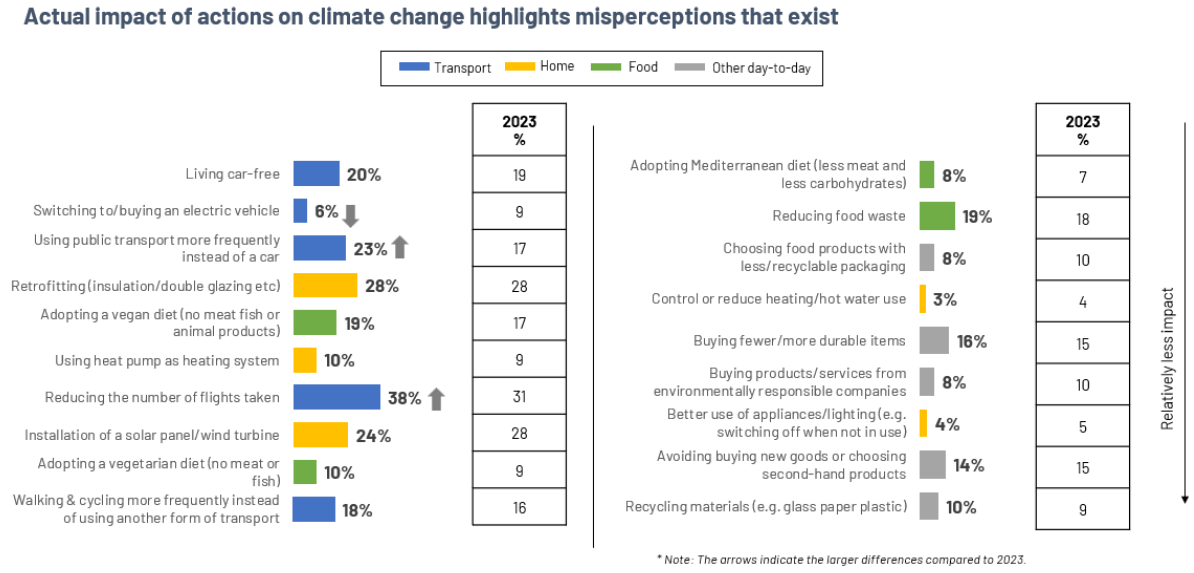

Figure 12 - Actions ranked on Actual Impact on Carbon Emissions

5. Community Involvement

In the 2024 online consultation, Ipsos B&A and DECC introduced a set of questions to better understand community involvement in tackling climate change in Ireland. The DECC understand that the involvement of population at their local level is crucial to not only generate change and reduce the belief-action gap, but to create a broad range of other benefits at a community level.

Key Points

- **Climate Action Prevalence**
  Over half (54%) of engaged activities involve climate action components. The penetration of climate initiatives into existing community frameworks is notable.
- **Prevailing Initiatives**
  High participation is seen in refuse/reuse/recycle efforts and active or public transport initiatives, signalling prevalent community-led efforts in these areas.
- **Interest Among the Uninvolved**
  For those not currently involved, significant interest lies in 'grow your own' food initiatives and enhanced public transport, particularly amongst rural (69% interest in growing food) and urban (63% interest in walking/cycling/using public transport).
- **Resistance to Involvement**
  A small minority (3%) dismiss climate action as unnecessary, attributing it to natural cycles of climate change, demonstrating ideological barriers.
- **Potential for Growth**
  The community's interest signifies untapped potential for deeper climate engagement. The results indicate a readiness to get involved with climate action at a community level, albeit with some educational outreach required. With 60% community organisation involvement overall, the integration and expansion of climate action roles could hold promise for further growth.

Communities possess invaluable local knowledge about the specific climate challenges they face and can contribute to the development of more effective and context-specific policies. Their insights can help tailor solutions to local needs and ensure successful implementation and enhance policy effectiveness.

A great example of climate action at the community level in Ireland is the Dingle Peninsula 2030 project. By focusing on community-driven solutions, Dingle Peninsula 2030 successfully fostered long-term behavioural change, built a strong sense of collective responsibility, and maximised the use of local expertise and resources. This type of initiative builds trust in the proposed actions and increases the likelihood of public support for climate initiatives.

Bringing together this local knowledge and local support, help to identify and implement innovative solutions tailored to their unique circumstances. By empowering community to take the lead, it is possible to tap into a wealth of creativity and resourcefulness. This has the potential to promote development in specific locations and benefits beyond generating sustainable actions.

Vulnerable communities are particularly at risk, as climate change disproportionately affects them. Actively involving these communities in planning and response efforts strengthens their resilience and promotes a fairer, more equitable transition.

In addition to the reasons above, community involvement is essential for:

- Promoting Behavioural Change: Engaging individuals at the community level is crucial for raising awareness about climate change and promoting sustainable behaviours. Community-based initiatives can effectively disseminate information, share best practices, and encourage collective action.
- Leveraging Local Resources and Expertise: Communities possess a wealth of resources, skills, and knowledge that can be mobilized to address climate change. By engaging local businesses, organisations, and residents, we can optimise the use of existing assets and expertise.
- Creating a Sense of Shared Responsibility: Addressing climate change requires a collective effort. Community involvement helps foster a sense of shared responsibility and encourages individuals to take ownership of the issue.
- Building Momentum for Broader Action: Successful community-led initiatives can inspire action at larger scales. By demonstrating the tangible benefits of climate action at the local level, communities can influence policy changes and inspire others to follow suit.

The Community Involvement section of Climate Conversations 2024 focused on assessing the level of community engagement in Ireland, the types of initiatives people participate in, and whether these efforts are climate-related. It also explored the interests and barriers for those not yet involved in climate-focused community work.

5.1 Community Involvement and Types of Organisations

Respondents to the online consultation were asked about their involvement in organisations in their local area to which 61% of individuals responded that they engage in at least one local organisation. Among these, almost a third (30%) reported being involved in a community organisation, 24% engaged with social/charitable organisations, and 22% with sport organisations. A higher proportion of females and those aged over 55 were more likely to be engaged with a community organisation or with social/charitable organisations, while males and those aged between 45 and 54 years were more likely to get involved with sport organisations.

61% of respondents are involved in at least one organisation

As Figure 13 shows, 12% report being involved with business networks. This type of engagement is more likely among males (15%) and in rural areas (16%).

Other organisations with notable levels of involvement include religious or church groups (8%), Public Participation Networks (8%), climate environmental groups (2%), educational groups (1%) and other varied groups (1%).

Overall, engagement with their community is more common in rural than urban areas and among older people, with some differences seen between males and females. In addition to sports organisations and business networks, men show higher engagement with political groups (12% of men versus 6% of women).

When looking at those who say they are not actively involved with any organisation in their local area, those aged 25-34 and 35-44 were more likely to report this, at 46% and 44% respectively. Additionally, 40% of those living in urban areas were not actively involved in community work versus 32% of those living in rural areas.

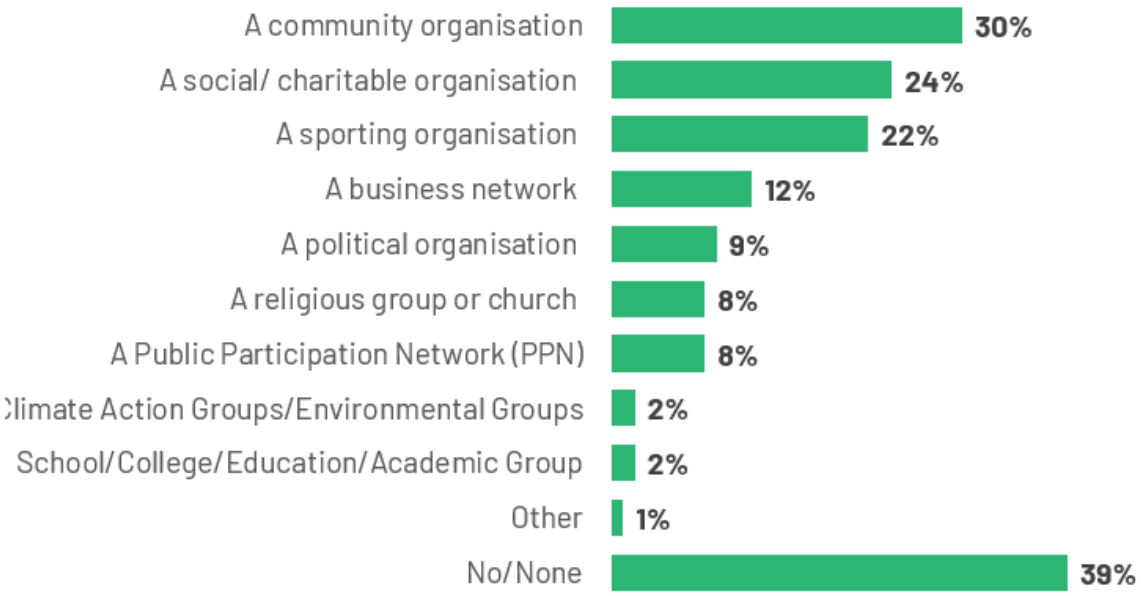

Figure 13 - Type of Organisations Actively Involved In

5.2 Personal Involvement

Respondents were asked to identify the organisations they are actively involved in and each respondent was asked to name up to three organisations. At the analysis stage, the responses were coded into 24 categories and cover a broad spectrum of societal needs, underpinning a diverse ecosystem of community involvement.

While 28% did not specify the local organisation they collaborate with, 17% identified their involvement with local community groups/programmes, which ranks as the top type of organisation individuals report being involved in. Mentions include neighbourhood community groups (general), gardening and landscape committees, Women's Shed, local development associations, among others. Females were more likely to be engaged with these organisations, as well as older individuals.

Additionally, 16% report being involved with environmental, conservation or sustainability groups, with mentions referring to groups related to wildlife protection & conservation, sustainability initiatives, biodiversity improvements, renewable energy, pollution and waste management, environmental education and advocacy, animal rights and welfare.

The GAA was mentioned by 10% of those involved within their community and was particularly popular among those living in rural areas (16%), male (14%), and those aged between 45 and 54 years (19%).

A further 10% report being involved with charities/nonprofit organisations, which encompasses a diverse range of social and environmental areas, such as mental health and support services, animal welfare, environmental and sustainability, social services and housing, education and cultural support, emergency and rescue services, overall community services and support. In terms of profile, individuals involved in charity/nonprofit work at their community were more likely to be female and older. There was no difference between rural and urban areas in this respect.

Just under 1 in 10 (7%) reported participating in religious groups/the Church. Though, participation was higher among those aged over 65 (18%). Only 7% had some involvement with professional/work groups and 7% mentioned involvement with specific political parties.

5% reported involvement with a PPN/County council, similar to the proportion involved in their Tidy Towns group. Involvement with both groups was lower in Dublin (2%) than in other regions of the country.

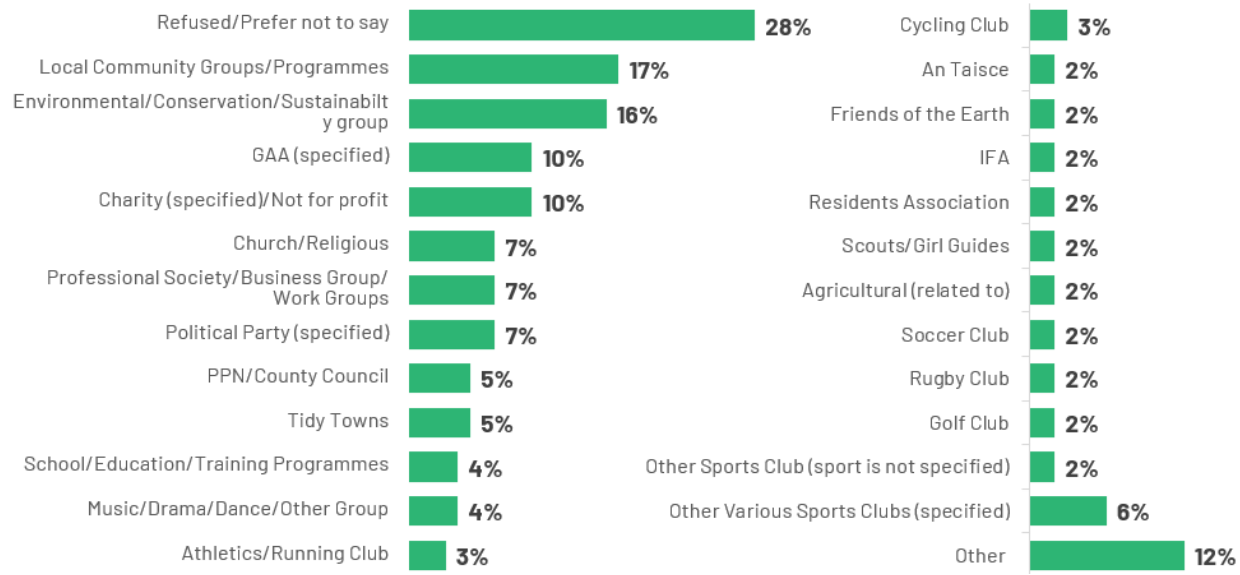

Figure 14 – Current Involvement with Community Organisations

The remaining categories were each mentioned by less of 5% of respondents and relate to a broad range of activities such as Education programmes (4%), Music/Dance/Drama (4%),

Running/Athletics (3%), Cycling (3%), An Taisce (2%), Friends of the Earth (2%), IFA (2%), Residents Association (2%), Scouts/Girl Guides (2%), Agricultural-related (2%), Soccer club (2%), Golf club (2%), Other sports – not specified (2%),Other Various Sports – specified (6%), Other various groups (12%).

5.3 Climate Action Involvement

A question was posed to assess whether participants' community work is connected to climate action. Of those engaged in community activities, 46% confirmed that some of their efforts are related to climate action, while 41% stated that their work does not involve climate action. When analysing responses based on the number of initiatives people participate in, more than half (54%) of the activities they are involved in include a climate action component, while 41% of initiatives are not directly linked to climate action. Initiatives less likely to directly address climate action tend to be those related to sports, such as soccer, rugby, and athletics.

As noted in other sections of the online consultation, males are more likely to report no involvement in climate action. Additionally, a small minority (6%) expressed uncertainty about whether the initiatives they participate in are related to climate action.

Figure 15 - Proportion of Activities Involving Climate Action

Respondents involved with climate action were then presented with a question about which areas their climate-related work involves. Results show that activities involving climate action in Ireland are more commonly related to litter and waste (31%), with 36% of those aged 55 to 64 engaged in this climate area.

29% of the climate-related initiatives at community level involved works towards active mobility such as walking, cycling, and using public transport. Initiatives touching on this area of climate action is significantly higher in urban areas and among males, both at 33%.

Land Use, Land Use Change & Forestry appears as the climate action area for 26% of the initiatives involving climate and the community. Involvement with land use is particularly present in rural areas (36%), among females (30%) and those aged between 35 and 44 years (36%).

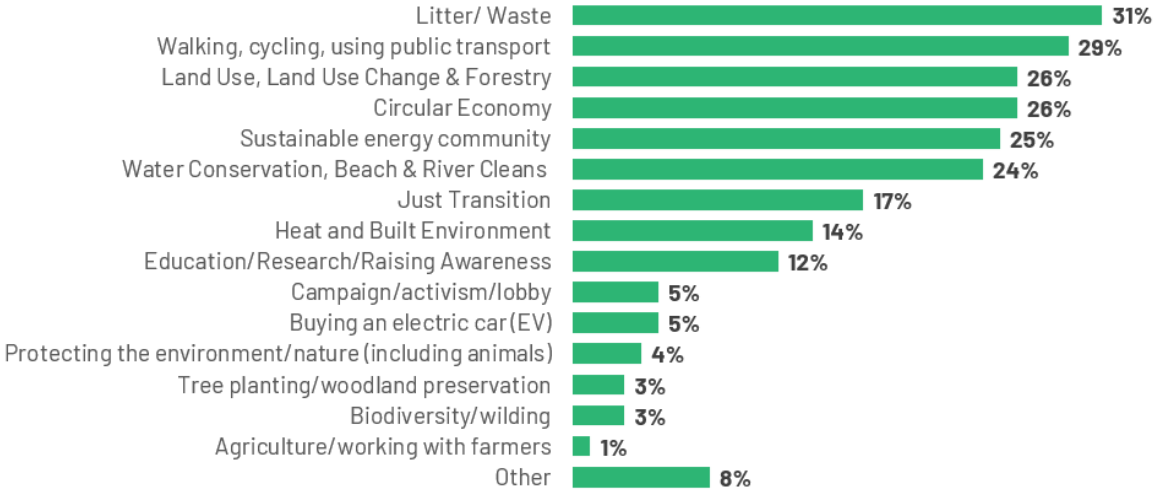

Figure 16 - Areas of Climate Action Involved In

Another 26% of all initiatives involved Circular Economy activities, with works related to Repair, Upcycling, Reuse, and Repurpose things. 29% of females were involved in circular economy initiatives versus 22% of males.

As shown in Figure 16, 25% of community-led climate action initiatives focus on sustainable energy solutions, and involvement in these initiatives was more common among those aged 45-54 (28%). The 24% of initiatives involving Marine Environment activities were more popular in rural areas (28%) than in urban areas (23%).

The consultation findings also show that 17% of community-led initiatives involving climate action focus on a Just Transition, with those aged between 19 and 34 more likely to be involved in these initiatives (24%).

Initiatives focused on heat and the built environment account for 14% of climate action efforts reported in the online consultation, emphasising energy efficiency and the transition to renewable energy in buildings. Males (18%) and those aged 55-64 (17%) were more likely to report involvement with this climate area.

Community work involving education and research regarding climate change was lower at just 12% of initiatives. Involvement in these was higher among those aged over 65 (17%). Other reported climate action initiatives at community level involved doing

campaigns/activism towards climate and sustainability (5%), adopting the use of electric vehicles (5%), actively protecting the environment and animals (4%), taking action regarding tree planting and woodland preservation (3%), efforts to mitigate biodiversity loss (3%), and agriculture/farming work (1%).

Results show that although there is a wide spread of climate actions happening around Ireland at the community level, the initiatives around refuse/ reuse/ recycle are the most widespread, followed by active or public transport. While litter/waste management helps to decrease carbon emissions, its impact is much lower than other areas. This highlights the need for more community-driven initiatives in Ireland that deliver greater climate benefits.

5.4 Interests and Barriers to Becoming Involved in Climate Action Initiatives

With a focus on the respondents not currently involved in their community, a question was asked about which area of climate action they would be interested in becoming involved within their local community. 92% said they would be interested in becoming involved in one or more areas of climate action, with a majority of 60% saying they would be interested in growing their own food at home or in community gardens supporting biodiversity. This area of interest is significantly higher among those aged 25-34 (72%), female respondents (67%) and those living in rural areas (69%).

Growing own food is more likely to be of interest of those living in rural areas (69%) while public transport initiatives are more likely to have greater interest in urban areas (63%).

Mobility is also an area that ranks as one of the top areas of interest for those not yet involved in community-led climate actions. Activities like walking, cycling, using public transport are of interest to 58% (63% in urban areas), while 52% show interest in getting involved with circular economy initiatives, such as repair, upcycling, reuse, and repurpose practices (60% among females).

Almost half (44%) expressed a keen interest in the adoption of modern energy solutions. This group was particularly drawn to retrofitting, heat pump systems, as well as solar and wind alternatives, and more strongly amongst individuals aged between 25 and 34 (56%). Additionally, 40% of people not actively engaged in community climate initiatives, showed interest in the work of sustainable energy communities, with the 25-34 group again expressing a stronger desire to contribute (55%) to collective efforts in reducing the carbon footprint through community-based energy models.

Furthermore, water conservation initiatives captivated the interest of 37% of everyone not actively involved in their community, sparkling interest especially among females (42%), individuals residing in urban areas (39%) and those aged between 25 and 34 years.

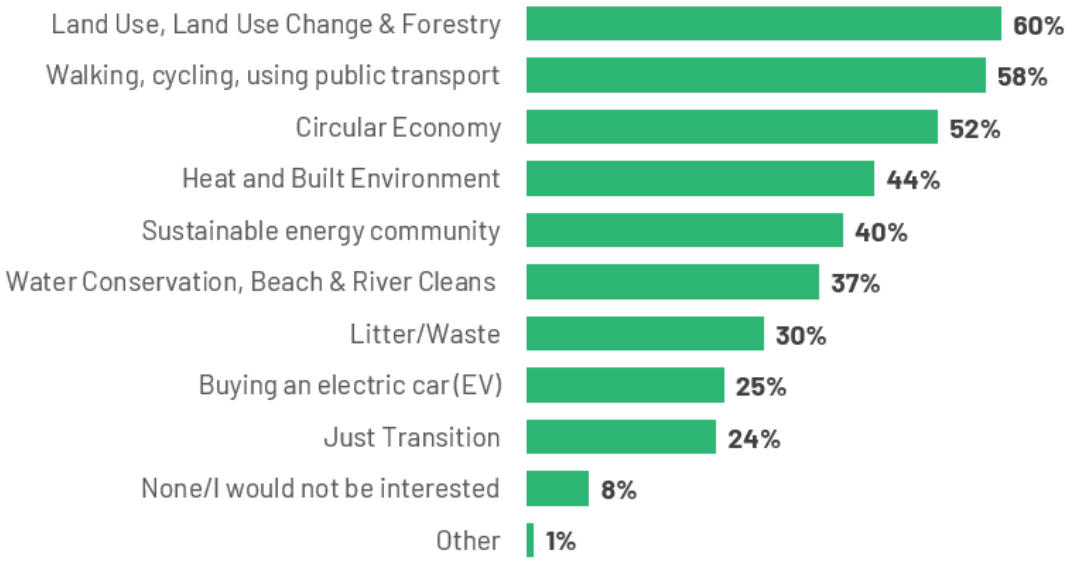

Figure 17 - Proportion Interested in Becoming Involved with Each Climate Action

Waste management initiatives, like Tidy Towns and the Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle frameworks, hold the attention of 30%. The interest extends to sustainable transport solutions with 25% considering the purchase of an electric vehicle (EV), with 31% of men interested in doing this versus 21% of women. Lastly, 24% express a desire to assist those specifically impacted by climate change, highlighting an underlying sense of social responsibility even among those not currently engaged in direct action. Once again, the interest is higher among adults aged 25 to 34 (37%) and among women (29%).

The small proportion of respondents saying they do not want to get involved in climate action work within their community, represents 3% of all those who have taken part in the online consultation. They show scepticism towards climate change or believe climate change is natural and not manageable. Some expressed that industry should deal with it and not individuals, along with the belief that larger countries should take more responsibility for this matter. Others said they have no interest in climate action or have no time to dedicate to it.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for Engagement in 2025

This report, combined with other work within the National Dialogue on Climate Action in 2024, advances our understanding of change public perceptions of climate change, along with an insight into the types of community action that is taking place at a local level.

Based on this work, recommendations for further engagement can be summarised as follows:

- The Climate Actions Work programme, commissioned by the Department alongside this online consultation, highlighted the benefits and challenges of building capacity for climate action at a community level. Harnessing the power of existing communities of place and interest in tandem with one another represents an efficient means to accelerate action across communities. Working alongside local authorities, the provision of funding for local community hubs (modelled on the Dingle Hub and similar structures adopted in Scotland) is recommended.
- The further decline in perceptions of the benefit of Electric Vehicles on emissions highlights one of the more significant perception-reality gaps amongst this population. Despite evidence to the contrary, the population vastly underestimate the benefits of Electric Vehicles. This work is needed in conjunction with the ongoing work relating to the adoption of public transport and active travel.
- The insights from this study, combined with other Nationally Representative samples of the Irish population, highlight how different audiences view the climate crisis from different perspectives. Harnessing the combined power of these studies is essential to adapting messaging andeliminating barriers to climate action.
- This study adds to the broad compendium of attitudinal and behavioural insight that is available for use with the Department. To enhance the benefits of this work, the continuing engagement with policymakers across the Government is recommended. This process of collaboration enhances the impact of a ‘whole of government’ approach to the tackling of the climate crisis.