

Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

SOCIAL MARKETING & CLIMATE CHANGE

TIPPING POINT **OR TURNING POINT?**

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OR TURNING POINT?
SOCIAL MARKETING & CLIMATE CHANGE

Phil Downing and Joe Ballantyne



Climate change is the greatest market failure the world has ever seen. Three elements of policy are required for an effective global response. The first is the pricing of carbon, implemented through tax, trading or regulation. The second is policy to support innovation and the deployment of low-carbon technologies. And the third is action to remove barriers to energy efficiency, and to inform, educate and persuade individuals about what they can do to respond to climate change.

[Nicholas Stern, The Economics of Climate Change](#)

People are confused about what they can do. It is individuals as well as Governments and corporations who can make a real difference. To make serious headway towards smarter lifestyles, we need to start with clear and consistent policy and messages, championed both by government and by those outside government.

[Tony Blair, September 2004](#)

Going green is not some fashionable, pain-free option. It will place a responsibility on business. It will place a responsibility on all of us. That is the point. Tackling climate change is our social responsibility - to the next generation.

[David Cameron, Conservative Party Leader, October 2006](#)

Humanity is incredibly innovative. We have the capacity to solve the problem of climate change; the only issue is whether we as individuals, governments and businesses have the courage to act together to do what needs to be done. The stakes could not be higher.

[James Murdoch, Chief Executive, BSkyB, September 2006](#)

Whatever happens over the next few years, our children and grandchildren are going to live in a world in which the climate is very different from the one we grew up with. The concern is that if we keep on increasing carbon emissions then climate change will become irreversible and the long-term consequences catastrophic.

[Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, in The Guardian, April 19, 2006](#)

I am a banker, not a scientist, but I believe that climate change may be the biggest environmental challenge this century. Climate change will affect all aspects of modern life, and only by working together - government, business, NGOs and individuals - will we be able to create a more sustainable world.

[Sir John Bond, Group Chairman, HSBC Holdings Plc, October 2005](#)

I say the debate is over. We know the science, we see the threat, and the time for action is now.

[Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California](#)

FOREWORD

If consumerism is a force for good, then there are few issues that test the truth of that more than the challenge of facing up to climate change.

It is true that there are many environmental challenges, from the change in habitats and ecosystems through to the loss of marine life and the extinction of species. But climate change stands out as an emergency because of its reach and the long time-lags involved.

Carbon emissions released today persist in the atmosphere over the longer term, as if we were walking with our shadow lengthening on the ground in front of us. Responding to this challenge means acting at every level, from the individual in their lives as consumers and as citizens to business and government at local, national and global levels.

This latest research by Ipsos MORI is key in helping all concerned to understand and unpick these choices. Where are we now? How did we get here? And what are the possible solutions?

The findings helpfully build on and update the work of Sustainable Consumption Roundtable in our 2006 Report, *I Will if You Will*.

Yes, as consumers we now have more sustainable choices available to us than ever, even if they remain outweighed by unsustainable ones. And there are an ever increasing number of 'ethical consumers' who use their purchasing choices to reflect their concerns, values and beliefs. But the truth is that the complexity of information required to make a judgement on product sustainability can leave even the most dedicated green consumer confused and disempowered.

So what is the way forward? As Ipsos MORI make clear, we have to create the conditions in which people can act together. This means finding the right level for change. Consumer choice, for example, is a characteristic of systems and not just of individual interactions. Choices like travel to work, for example, are wrapped up in habits and routines - and system change, like the congestion charge in London or cutting energy wasted in transmission, can help to reset us on a more sustainable path. The sustainable choice, in short, becomes the easier choice.

At an individual level, social marketing, which encompasses much more than simply communications and information, has a huge role to play here in understanding consumer behaviour and tapping into the motivations that can lead to a truly sustainable pattern of consumption. This is where a consumer focus can genuinely help. Social marketing is a disciplined but powerful toolkit that can help to harness public action on climate change.

Climate change cannot be addressed on the quiet. There is no substitute for public action and, although there is a long way to go, we have to start from where the public are.

Ed Mayo

Chief Executive of the National Consumer Council

His latest report on sustainable consumption is The Environmental Contract: how to harness public action on climate change, available on http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC166pb_environmental_contract.pdf
The report of the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, co-chaired by Ed with Alan Knight, is available on http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC125pd_i_will_if_you_will.pdf

SUMMARY

'Everest ice forest is melting' (Guardian, 30 May 2007); *'Extreme weather: forecasters warn of more to come'* (Independent, 01 July 2007); *'Climate change blamed for rise in asthma and hay fever'* (Times, 13 May 2007); *'The next few years are critical in the fight for the climate'* (Telegraph, 4 February 2007); *'Pay up...or the planet gets it'* (Sun, 30 October 2006); *'British armies must ready for global warming'* (Mirror, 25 June 2007).

On the subject of climate change the public find themselves in a different world to that of only a few years ago. Barely a day goes by without a media headline about the possible impacts. In the high street consumers are confronted with more and more sustainable choices – HSBC is suddenly a green Bank; Marks & Spencer has its Plan A; Ikea doesn't give free plastic bags. At the ballot box David Cameron wants the public to "Vote Blue: Go Green". Arnold Schwarzenegger has traded movie stardom with instigating the US's flagship low carbon policy, while Al Gore, when not directing Oscar-winning documentaries on climate change, is organising global rock concerts.

Maybe we've made it. Scientists are at a virtual consensus, NGOs convinced, politicians persuaded, and business on board. Surely then, the debate is over. In the face of a dangerous climatic tipping point, we stand on the verge of a behavioural turning point. Or do we?

This report focuses on the perspectives of the public – the way they think and behave in relation to climate change, as well as their values and aspirations. Have they fully bought into the concept of anthropogenic climate change? Are they willing to act? What signs are there already of a transition to low carbon lifestyles, and how far are they really willing to go? Drawing on recent Ipsos MORI research and that of others, we set out to establish the answers to these questions and the prospects for encouraging sustainable lifestyles - what role for behaviour change intervention and social marketing?

1. Attitudes to climate change

- There is widespread recognition that the climate, irrespective of the cause, is changing - 88% believe this to be true. Many say they have personally seen evidence of this.
- However, the public is out of step with the IPCC, with 41% believing that climate change is being caused by both human activity and natural processes. 46% believe human activity is the main cause.
- Only a small minority reject anthropogenic climate change, while almost half (44%) are very concerned. However, there remains a large proportion who are yet to be fully persuaded and hold doubts about the extent of the threat. The public do recognise the notion of environmental limits and acknowledge the need for action, but there is increasing optimism about our ability to address the problem and find solutions.

- There is still a strong appetite among the public for more information, and 63% say they need this to come to a firm view on the issue and what it means for them. While broad understanding of what climate change means is increasing – up now to 69% - David Miliband was right, in his final days at Defra, to note that the British public still have a “mixed and confused” idea of the risk posed to the UK. While the debate may be over for some, for others it certainly is not.
- The public continue to externalise climate change to other people, places and times. It is increasingly perceived as a major global issue with far-reaching consequences for future generations - 45% say it is the most serious threat facing the World today and 53% believe it will impact significantly on future generations. However, the issue features less prominently nationally and locally, indeed only 9% believe climate change will have a significant impact upon them personally.
- Messages questioning climate change and/or its anthropogenic causes – for example Channel 4's *Great Global Warming Swindle* and other voices in the media - are having an impact. Complexity in science and notions of probability do not translate easily to the public who, in the absence of definitive ‘proof’, search out signs of doubt. 40% question our ability to predict the climate system, while as many as 56% believe that the scientific jury is still out on the causes of climate change. Uncertainty in the science is matched by widespread confusion and doubts about what actions to take and which products to buy.
- As well as messages to educate and reinforce, the language deployed and the way the debate is framed are both very important. Support can shift considerably depending on the nature of the arguments and presentation of the information.

2. Attitudes to actors and agencies

- The public look to Government to orchestrate collective action and prefer decision making authority at the national level rather than through the EU or other supranational bodies. The public agree, in principle, that government has the mandate to lead, although their response to potential interventions is more complex. The nature of the intervention is key and certain measures – particularly fiscal – are contentious, whereas others (e.g. ‘editing out’ certain consumer choices, like incandescent light bulbs) are widely supported.
- Trust is a key factor impacting on the ability of government to make the case to its electorate about any particular policy measure, and eco-taxation, the Polluter Pays principle and hypothecation all suffer from the stigma of “stealth” taxation. The (successful) introduction of the policy itself can have one of the most marked impacts on public opinion - as in the case of the London Congestion Charge – which enjoyed a considerable surge in support following its introduction.
- Consumers are looking to business to take greater action on climate change, and expect greater competition in the next few years around this issue. They want easier choices and more help differentiating environmentally sound products from others. They are also cautious of commercial claims, and businesses face challenges convincing consumers that its efforts are beyond ‘spin’. Certain sectors, such as investment, transport and oil, face more scrutiny than others because environmental objectives are perceived to be fundamentally at odds with their *modus operandi*. However, the public have taken note of the efforts of companies over the past year.

- Local agents are perceived to have the least influence on climate change. Local authorities have traditionally focused on local environmental quality but are becoming more involved (e.g. through the planning system to encourage renewables, or the parking regime to target “gas guzzlers”). The public consider the local community and themselves as individuals to be minor actors - only 4% perceive they have a large influence to combat climate change, while 33% feel they have none. There is also a mismatch between the size of the problem relative to the actions the public are encouraged to take. Communications often play straight into this disconnect, focusing on the minutiae and steering away from the grand and heroic.
- A sense of collective action is fundamental, particularly in view of concerns over fairness and the potential for ‘free riders’ to take advantage of individual sacrifices. Indeed, 54% say that they would do more if others did as well.

3. Behaviour change and sustainable lifestyles

- Changing behaviour is complex, and environmental behaviours are very different from one another. There is a distinction to be made in terms of conscious behaviours (e.g. buying a car) and subconscious behaviours (e.g. driving a car); between small behaviours likely to change rapidly and those requiring longer time horizons; and between isolated behaviours and interconnected ‘sticky’ behaviours that catalyse others. And the heterogeneity of households and consumers means it is critical to target messages, products and services at particular audiences.
- Behaviours are already changing and there are some positive signals. The committed few are becoming larger in number and enough to support impressive, if still niche, progress. Recycling is the success story to date, with rapid shifts in parts of the country. However, many of the current trends remain in the wrong direction and some behaviour – such as driving and taking holidays abroad – appears sacrosanct.
- Many consumers still seek to make changes at the margins of their lifestyles and do not perceive a need for a fundamental shift in behaviour. Moreover, their actions do not appear consistent, well planned or systematic – when asked unprompted what they are doing to confront climate change, most cannot identify anything beyond recycling, begging the question whether this has become a token behaviour that discharges responsibility in other areas. The majority of consumers are not aware that some of their actions are associated with a large carbon footprint, e.g. high levels of meat consumption.
- At face value the public say they’re willing to do more and go further – 78% agree with this sentiment. However, opt outs and caveats play an important part in what they are willing to change and, as a result, actual behaviour lags behind intentions. Several behavioural levers are potentially important. For example, there are opportunities to tap into the underlying drivers of consumption, whether financial, emotional, social or psychological. There are also opportunities to draw on ‘descriptive norms’ (which teach us how most people around us behave) and ‘injunctive norms’ (which alert us to what is sanctioned or frowned upon) to modify what is considered desirable.

Final reflections

- The public are currently pulling in different directions. A large group – around 40% - have bought into anthropogenic climate change and are looking to act. A smaller minority – around 15% - reject anthropogenic climate change, while a much larger minority – also around 40% - are yet to be convinced. The latter group are arguably most interesting and important in the battle for hearts and mind because their views remain in flux and they want more information and discussion.
- Turning to behaviours, the public is torn between competing and conflicting mindsets. As citizens they want to avert climate change but, at the same time, as consumers they want to go on holiday, own a second home, a big car and the latest electronic goods. They acknowledge their collective responsibilities but guard jealously their personal rights and freedoms. The research community needs to find new ways of understanding these tensions, for example through semiotics.
- In terms of what the research says about the potential for social marketing, the evidence supports its role at the centre of the behaviour change agenda as well as demonstrating its versatility to help 'sell' policy ideas and measures along with products, services and lifestyles. However, it also shows that social marketing is most effective as part of a wider package of behavioural interventions and legislative shifts. A range of measures, simultaneously, on a number of fronts and allied with political leadership and vision, will be required to encourage, engage and enable the public to act.

STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

Attitudes to climate change

- 88% believe, irrespective of the cause, that the climate is changing.
- 68% believe they have personally seen evidence of climate change.
- 46% think climate change is mainly caused by humans; 9% think it is mainly caused by natural processes; 41% think it is a mixture of both.
- 44% are very concerned about climate change; 38% fairly concerned; and 15% unconcerned.
- 22% believe the issue has been exaggerated; 48% strongly disagree.
- 70% believe that if there is no change, the world will soon experience a major environmental crisis.
- 12% feel they know a great deal about climate change; 57% a fair amount.
- 63% want more information in order to form a clear opinion.
- 45% see climate change as the most serious threat to the future wellbeing of the world; but only 19% see it as the most important issue facing Britain.
- 9% believe climate change will have 'a great deal' of impact on them personally; 53% think it will have a great deal of impact on future generations.
- 58% cite 'a cleaner atmosphere' as the main personal benefit to them if climate change is averted; 31% cite stability for their children and 30% less severe weather.
- 40% believe that climate change is too complex and uncertain to make useful forecasts; 56% believe many leading experts still question if human activity is contributing to climate change.
- 46% think the world community will find a solution to the problems posed by climate change; 36% disagree and 22% don't know.
- 16% believe the Conservatives have the best policies on climate change; 14% think it is Labour and 14% the Liberal Democrats; 23% don't know.
- 26% trust David Cameron to be more effective in tackling climate change; 25% trust Gordon Brown. Over a third trust neither.

Attitudes to key actors and agencies

- 66% think the Government has a large influence on limiting climate change; 4% think the same of themselves as individuals.
- 66% think that the UK can make a real difference in stopping climate change and 70% agree the Government should take the lead, even if it means using the law to change people's behaviour.
- 59% support more spending on improving bus services; 78% enforcement of minimum energy standards for household appliances; 77% for banning incandescent light bulbs...
- ...but only 21% support increasing the costs of flying; and 14% increasing tax on petrol.
- 39% in London supported the Congestion Charge on its introduction; 58% did four months later.
- 38% think retailers are already making positive steps with more action needed; 41% think these steps are small and much more action is needed.
- 76% think it is difficult to know which products are really better for the environment; 78% want companies to make it easier for customers to buy low impact products.
- 28% strongly agree that more information on a company's social and environmental performance would influence their decisions about what and where they buy.
- 21% strongly agree they personally can help reduce climate change; 50% tend to agree and 15% disagree.
- 54% say they would do more if other people did as well.

Behaviour change and sustainable lifestyles

- The proportion in London Western Riverside who say they recycle 'everything that can be recycled' increased from 11% to 42% in four years.
- 84% say they have reused carrier bags in the past 12 months; 74% recycled; 58% bought free range eggs and 45% recycled or composted food waste...
- ...but only 11% say they have avoided buying products which have been grown out of season and 7% avoided products transported by air.
- When asked unprompted, 37% say they are not doing anything to reduce climate change; 22% don't know; 23% cite recycling; 13% using less electricity.
- 22% strongly agree they are prepared to change their behaviour; 56% tend to agree.
- 40% identify recycling as the action they believe would be most effective in reducing climate change; 34% say developing cleaner engines for cars; 11% flying on holiday less; 4% conserving water.
- 90% associate the word 'modern' with a sustainable home; 79% 'high tech'; 78% 'fashionable' and 72% 'attractive'.

INTRODUCTION

The past 12 months have seen climate change emerge centre stage - barely a day goes past without a headline about its possible impacts and implications. The rise of climate change up the agenda in the UK has been matched only by the political and commercial response: the main political parties are eager to demonstrate their green credentials, Marks & Spencer's 'Plan A' has set the bar for retailers, and HSBC has re-invented itself as a 'green bank'. Elsewhere in the World, Al Gore has walked off with an Oscar, while Arnold Schwarzenegger has spearheaded one of the most ambitious pieces of environmental legislation in California.

The response has been driven in no small part by the predictions and forecasts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has led to an apparent consensus on the issue: NGOs are convinced, politicians persuaded, business on board and the media is covering it all.

But what of the public? Beyond the corridors of Westminster and media offices of Canary Wharf, is this 'second coming' of the environmental issue reaching the critical mass required to bring about a behavioural and cultural turning point? Are the efforts of villages such as Ashton Hayes in Cheshire and Modbury in Devon to become carbon neutral and plastic bag-free, respectively, an opening salvo in the widespread shifts in behaviour to come? Or, just as in the late 1980s when global warming first entered into the spotlight, will it fade quietly back to the periphery? Will the public, as the *New Statesman* recently claimed¹, shun the issue and continue flying, driving and buying with unchecked enthusiasm, sending the climate towards a dangerous tipping point?

Past and recent trends certainly give little cause for comfort: annual carbon dioxide emissions are now only 5.3% lower than in 1990 and have actually increased by 2% since 1997; energy consumption in the household sector has risen by about 40%; distances travelled by private car increased by 17% between 1996 and 2004; and the number of passenger kilometres by plane rose from 125 billion to 260 billion worldwide between 1990 and 2000. According to WWF² we currently need three planet Earths to sustain our current lifestyles and service the ecological debt. The challenge to reduce the UK's carbon footprint is indeed formidable.

This report first focuses on public attitudes to both climate change (Section 1) and the key actors and agencies charged with addressing it (Section 2), and then considers existing behaviours and the prospects for low carbon lifestyles looking forward (Section 3). What are the public willing to change and what aren't they? Is it about what Blair refers to as "smarter lifestyles" and consuming *differently* or, as Jonathon Porritt argues, about addressing the "dark side" of consumerism and consuming *less*. And can behaviours be changed fast enough to take advantage of a rapidly closing climatic window of opportunity to ensure that climate change is constrained within 'safe limits' (i.e. a 2°C increase in average global temperature)?

In relation to these questions we draw on a range of quantitative survey data allied to deliberative research which is particularly effective at getting beneath 'top of mind' responses and unpicking complex, and often subconscious, behaviours.

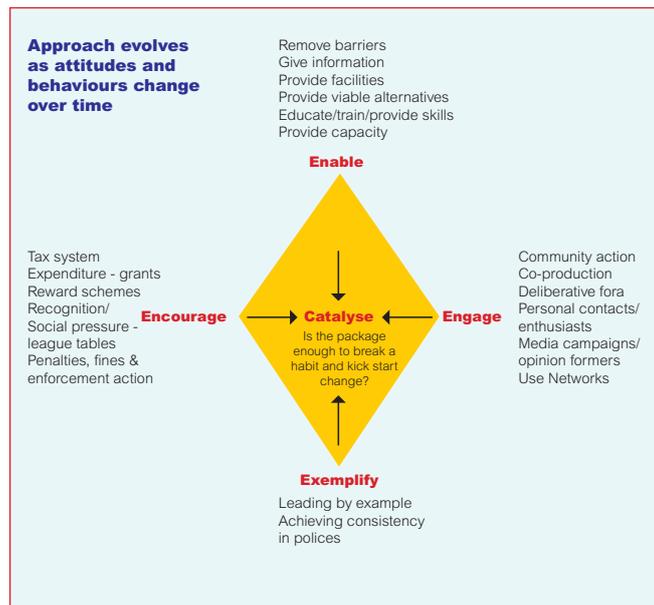
¹ *Climate Change: Why we don't believe it*, *New Statesman* 23 April 2007

² <http://www.wwf.org.uk/oneplanet/ophome.asp>

The policy backdrop: a new behaviour change toolbox

This report, and the data contained within it, provides a useful resource to feed into a wider policy focus on the behaviour change agenda. Here, the Government's "4 Es" framework sets out how Government intends to engage, encourage and enable the public to adopt sustainable behaviours, as well as exemplifying sustainability and leading by example.

The 4 Es Behaviour Change Framework, Securing the Future, UK Government



In particular, there is considerable interest in the potential for social marketing³ to play a key role alongside traditional fiscal and regulatory policy intervention. In many respects the social marketing approach has emerged as a response to the limitations of past "communications-only" campaigns, and to the inconsistencies and contradictions that are evident among the plethora of existing messages. More information on the principles and approach behind social marketing are outlined below:

What is social marketing? Taken from the National Social Marketing Foundation

Social marketing is defined as "the systematic application of marketing concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioural goals, to achieve a social or public good". It is based upon six principles which can be conceptualised in the triangle below.



³ <http://www.nsms.org.uk/public>

- **Customer or consumer orientation:** a strong 'customer' orientation with importance attached to understanding where the customer is starting from, their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, along with the social context in which they live and work.
- **Behaviour and behavioural goals:** clear focus on understanding existing behaviour and key influences on it, alongside developing clear behavioural goals, which can be divided into actionable and measurable steps or stages, phased over time.
- **'Intervention mix' and 'marketing mix':** using a range (or 'mix') of different interventions or methods to achieve a particular behavioural goal. When used at the strategic level this is commonly referred to as the 'intervention mix', and when used operationally it is described as the 'marketing mix' or 'social marketing mix'.
- **Audience segmentation:** clarity of audience focus using 'audience segmentation' to target effectively.
- **'Exchange' use and application of the 'exchange' concept:** understanding what is being expected of 'the customer', as well as the 'real cost' to them.
- **'Competition' use and application of the 'competition' concept:** understanding factors that impact on the customer and that compete for their attention and time.

Understanding perceptions and behaviour is key to social marketing and something we have a wealth of data on. The question of how to best lever public action and trigger behavioural change is a central question for social marketers. This report is not intended to provide the silver bullet, since none exists, nor does it seek to provide a 'how to' guide to social marketing. There has already been much work in this arena, by The Sustainable Consumption Roundtable⁴, Green Engage Communications⁵, Futerra⁶, Defra⁷ and others, and we draw upon this where relevant in the course of the analysis.

Rather, by drawing on our extensive data on attitudes, we aim to provide an important narrative on public attitudes to climate change and the implications that emerge for commercial and public sector organisations as they seek to shift, modify and edit consumption choices and lifestyle trends.

⁴ *I Will If You Will: Towards Sustainable Consumption*, Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, 2006

⁵ *Painting the Town Green: How to persuade people to be environmentally friendly*, Green Engage Communications, 2006

⁶ *New rules: new game: Communications tactics for climate change*, Futerra, 2006

⁷ Defra Behaviour Change Strategy, forthcoming 2007

SECTION 1: ATTITUDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

This first section of the report focuses on attitudes to climate change. Here, we assess the following key issues:

- Recognition of climate change, its causes and levels of public concern
- Public knowledge about climate change
- Perceptions of threat: internalisation or externalisation?
- Public reactions to uncertainty and complexity
- Framing the climate change debate
- Attitudes to political parties and leaders

i. Recognition of climate change, its causes and levels of public concern

Recognition of the issue provides the fundamental basis on which to build a case for action. The results here present a very mixed picture, with the public pulling in different directions.

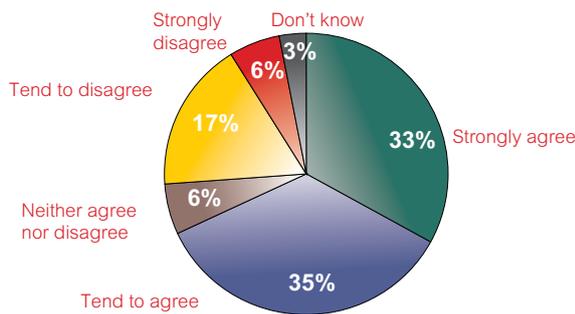
First, the vast majority – 88% - believe the climate, irrespective of the cause, is changing. 68% say they have *personally* seen evidence of this.

However, and notably out of step with the findings of the IPCC, there is not yet a consensus among the British public about the cause of climate change. 46% believe that human activity is mainly responsible, in contrast to 9% who identify natural processes. In fact, many – 41% – think that climate change is the result of both natural *and* human processes acting in combination.

Furthermore, if there is little consensus on what is behind climate change, the same is true of levels of public concern. A significant proportion - 44% - are very concerned about it, compared to a relatively small minority of 15% who say they are not. A third group, representing 38%, say they are 'fairly' concerned but give a series of indications that they are yet to be fully persuaded of the extent of the threat.

Evidence of climate change

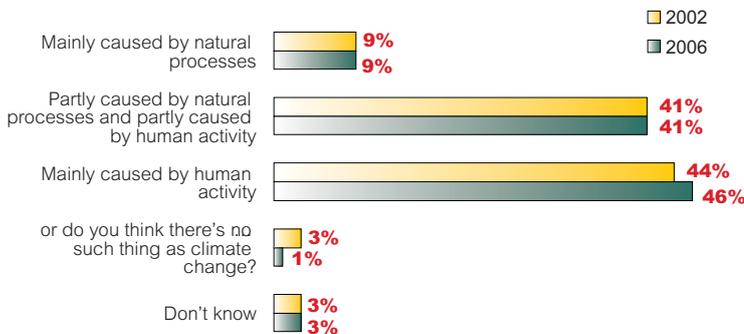
Q: And to what extent do you agree or disagree that you have personally seen evidence to climate change?



Base: 1,002 British adults, 25-27 August 2006

Causes of climate change

Q: Do you think that climate change is..



Base: 1,002 British adults 16+ interviewed by telephone, 25th-17th August 2006

Indeed, this soft underbelly to some of the concern is echoed in our recent deliberative research:

"This paranoia that we have at the moment about global warming and I'm not too sure about that at the moment."

Male, 55+, C1C2

"I don't disagree that the way humans behave is having an effect on the environment, but I'm not sure whether it's almost a scare tactic, sort of bigging up something that's not necessarily the huge issue that they say."

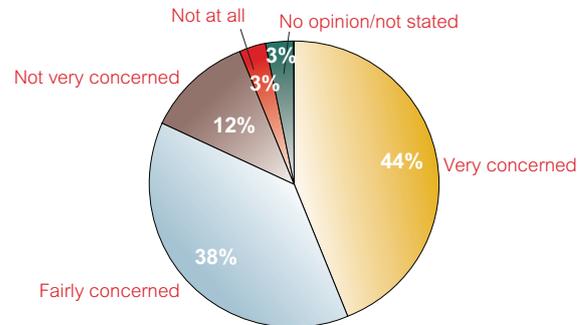
Male, 25-45, AB

These views are not filtering into mainstream rejection of climate change - only 22% believe, for example, that the threat of climate change has been exaggerated, compared to 48% who strongly disagree. Neither is the public rejecting the idea of environmental limits per se, and they indeed appear cognisant of the need for action. For example, 70% agree with the statement "if there is no change in the world, we will soon experience a major environmental crisis", and only 23% concur that "nature is strong enough to cope with the impact of modern industrial nations". At the same time, though, there is growing public confidence that solutions are available, and now 61% agree human ingenuity will ensure that we keep the earth liveable.

Divisions across the public have a socio-economic dimension. Almost 20 years after its introduction into the mainstream, concern about climate change is still concentrated among certain groups in the population – notably those with a higher income, in social class ABC1, and degree educated. There has been apparently only limited progress in widening the message and making the case to the public as a whole.

Concern about climate change

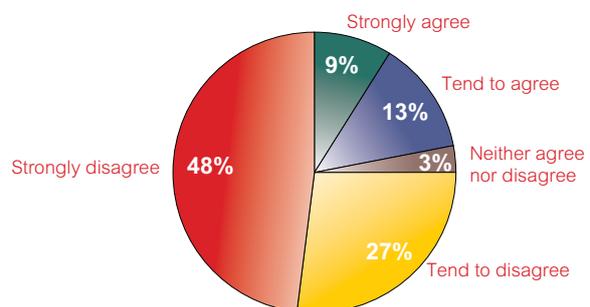
Q: How concerned, if at all, are you about climate change, sometimes referred to as global warming?



Base: 1,002 GB adults 16+ August 2006

Is climate change exaggerated?

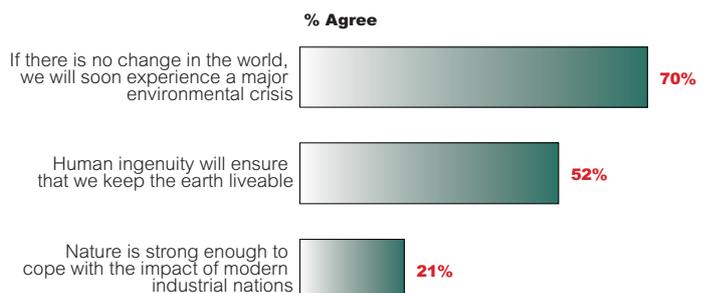
Q: And to what extent do you agree or disagree that too much fuss is made about climate change nowadays?



Base: 1,002 British adults, 25-27 August 2006

Perceptions of environmental limits

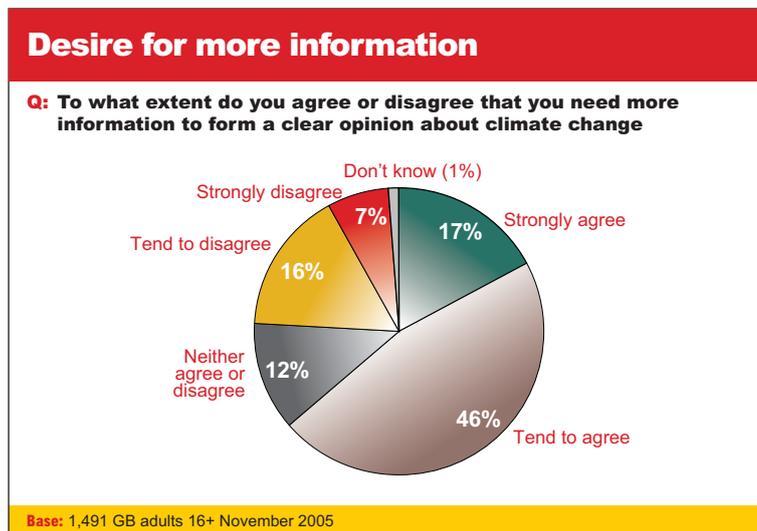
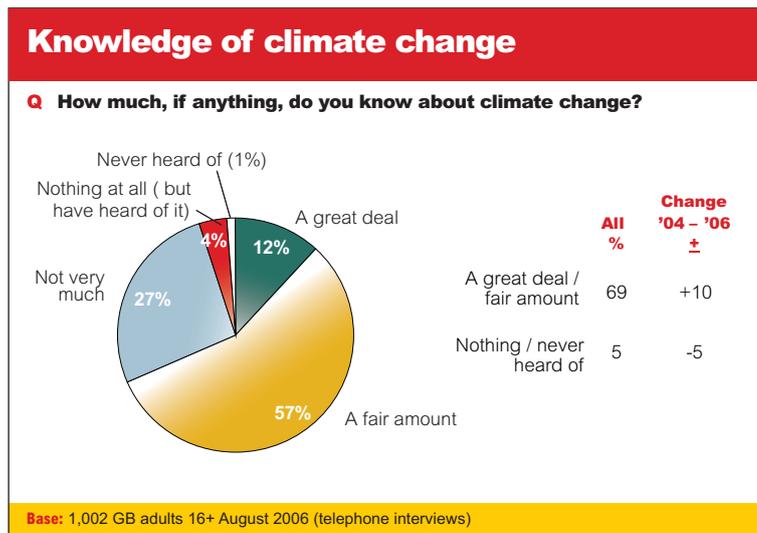
Q: Thinking now about environmental issues, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: 1,547 adults aged 16+, Aug 2002

ii. Knowledge about climate change

Claimed knowledge of climate change among the public is broadly increasing - 69% say they know at least 'a fair amount' about the subject, up from 59% in 2004. However, below this headline only 12% feel confident on the subject. In fact, there remains a strong appetite for more information, and 63% agree they need more information to form a clear opinion on the subject. Fears about saturation of coverage in the media, therefore, appear unfounded.



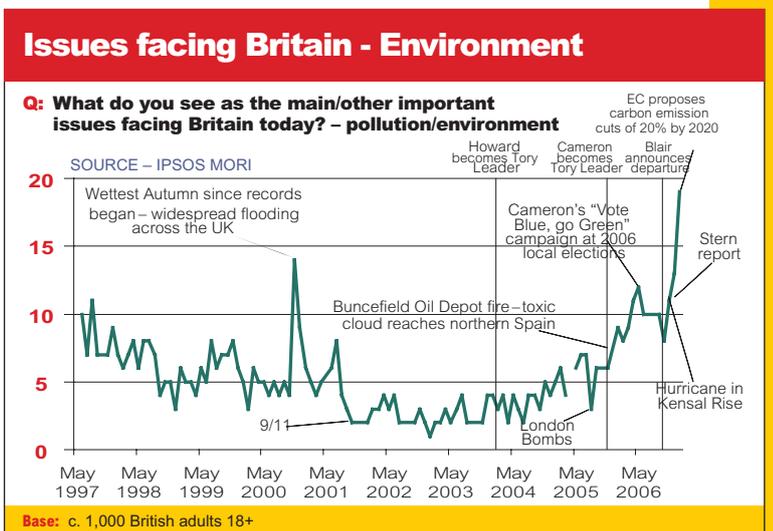
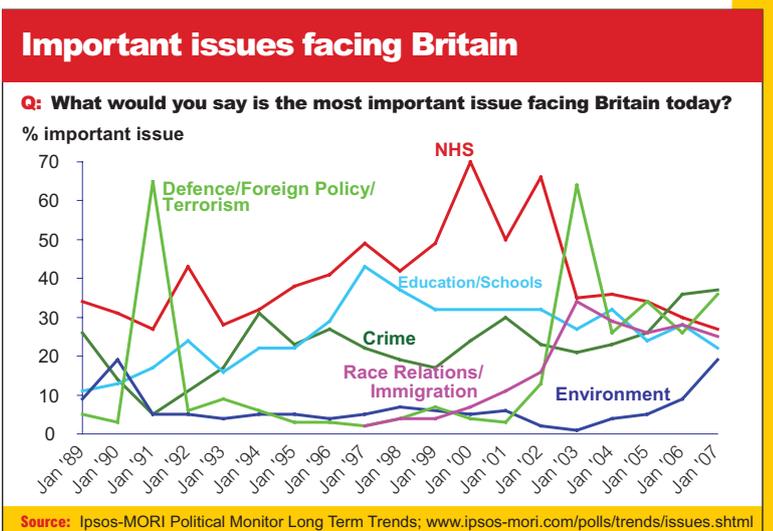
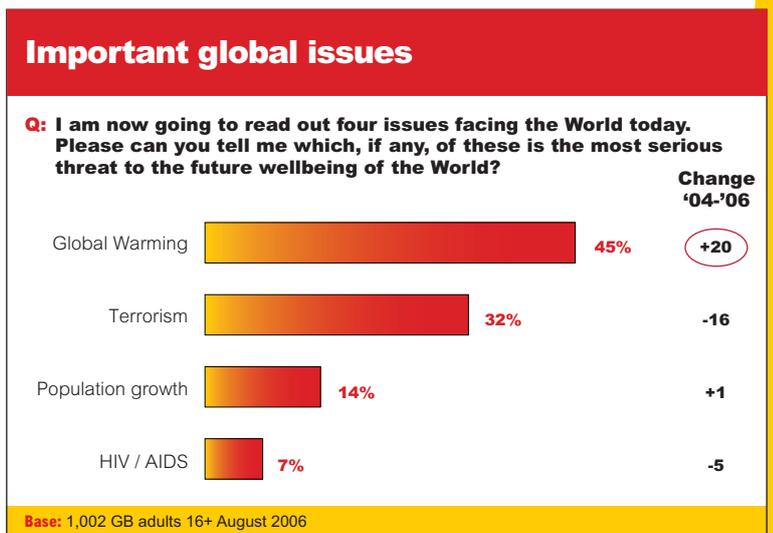
iii. Perceptions of threat: internalisation or externalisation?

Recognition and concern establish the profile of climate change and ensure its place in the public consciousness. However, the extent to which this then translates into public action is governed, to an extent, by whether the issue is *internalised* and owned by the individual, or *externalised* and re-directed to other people, places and times. Our recent deliberative work demonstrates the latter in fact predominates, and this psychological resistance to the threats posed by climate change is driven by both perceptions of *scale* and *timing*.

Scale - local v global: The scale on which the public consider climate change is an important and complex dimension. On a global scale there is little doubt in the public's mind that climate change poses a serious threat - 45% now identify it as the most serious threat to the future wellbeing of the world – a view in line with the Government's chief scientist and a trend that has risen sharply in recent years, even since 2004.

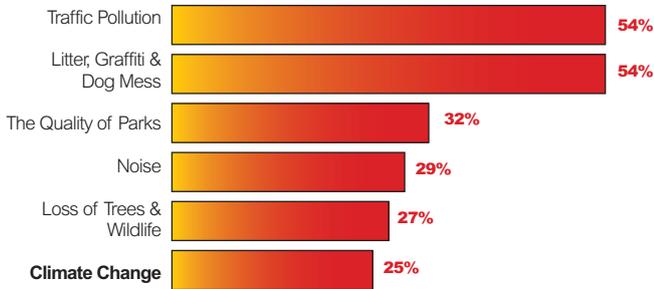
However, closer to home it fares less well when placed in the national context and it remains significantly behind issues such as crime, immigration and the NHS. While the past few years have seen a steady increase in recognition of the 'the environment/ pollution' as one of the most important issues facing Britain, reaching 19% by January 2007, it remains to be seen whether this second wave of concern can be sustained in a way that the first, back in the late 1980s when CFCs and global warming first entered the spotlight, could not. Indeed, following a peak in 1989, the issue receded to the margins.

We can see from the graph below, which represents the same pattern but with greater definition, that major policy or national events have a pronounced impact on public levels of concern. Notably, the autumn floods of 2000, David Cameron's "Vote Blue go Green" campaign in the 2006 local elections and, most recently, the Stern Report have all had a significant impact. Whether we see a spike in concern in July 2007 following the recent storms and flooding in the North of the country remains to be seen.



Local priorities

Q: Which two or three, if any, of these are you most concerned about in your local environment...?

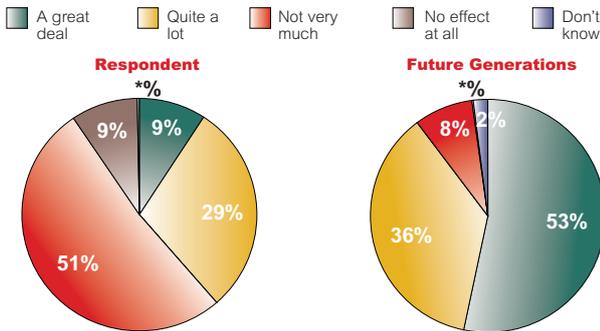


Base: Leicester residents, 2005

At a local level, climate change drops further down the list of priorities when set against day to day concerns – such as traffic, litter and noise – even when the public are specifically asked about their local environment. Whilst we would expect some spatial element to perceptions of climate change, the scale of the difference between global and local perceptions is consistently vast across our research. This gulf in perceptions is an overarching feature throughout the attitudinal data and clearly has a significant impact on subsequent messages for social marketing activity.

Perceptions of timing

Q: How much effect, if any, do you think climate change will have on you personally? And on future generations?



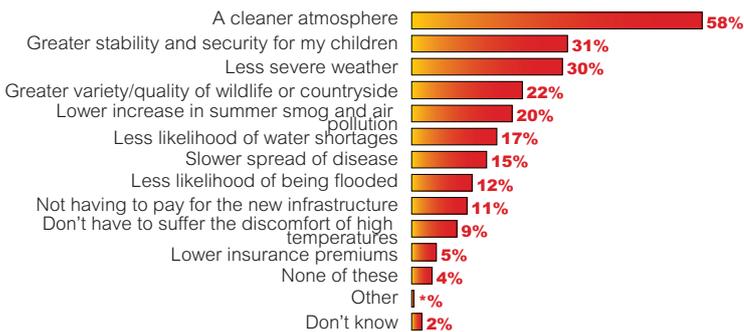
Source: DfT, August 2006 NS Omnibus. Base number = 1,218

Timing & Immediacy: The public largely consider climate change a problem for the future and believe that neither the threat of climate change nor the benefits from addressing it will impact on them personally. On the threats, while over two-thirds believe they can already see evidence of climate change, only 9% believe it will have a significant impact upon them. In contrast, opinions shift markedly when the public are asked to consider the impact on future generations – 53% then acknowledge there will be a significant impact.

The same is true of the benefits of averting climate change. While the public acknowledge this would be “a good thing”, they struggle to identify key personal benefits and perceive instead that they will accrue to other places, people and intangibles in the world. For example, ‘a cleaner atmosphere’ is cited most, by 58%. Recognition of benefits with more personal utility – including security for children, fewer water shortages and less likelihood of flooding – are evident but not dominant. There is also little recognition of the social implications of climate change, for example the prospect of mass migration which, given the current profile of this issue in the UK, may have some resonance.

Benefits of tackling climate change

Q: Which, if any, of the following do you think will have the most impact on you personally if climate change were successfully tackled . . . ?



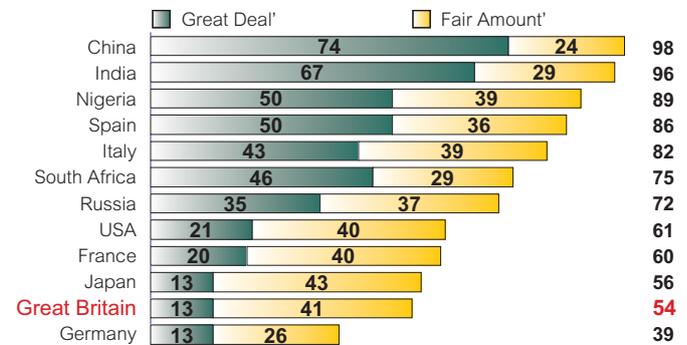
Source: 2,037 GB adults 16+ 14th – 20th June 2007

Extreme weather, on the other hand, does enjoy a higher profile, either in terms of major world events - such as Hurricane Katrina - or recent storms, tornados and flooding in the UK. As we have already seen, the public is sensitive to major UK-based or world climatic events.

There is in fact nothing new in the British public struggling to make the links between environmental threats and their personal situation. For example, they are far less likely than many of their international counterparts to identify a link between their health and environmental degradation.

Linking environment and health

Q: How much, if at all, do you believe environmental problems now affect your health?



Base: General Public

iv. Public reactions to uncertainty & complexity

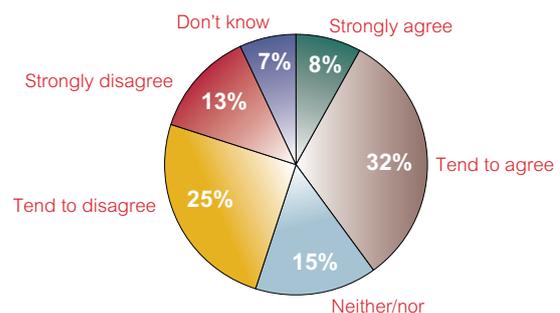
Complexity and uncertainty are familiar terms in the context of atmospheric science and efforts to model the climate system. Nonetheless, presentation of these concepts to a public looking for consensus and definitive 'proof' is difficult and liable to produce counter productive reactions. As Goldblatt comments⁸, while the public is concerned about the issue, their grasp of the science and the concepts of probability and predictability lags behind. Indeed, we find that the complexities of climate science lead 40% to conclude that the system cannot be modelled and predicted accurately.

While doubts remain there is, for some, an excuse for inaction. Indeed, as the Republican pollster Frank Luntz noted, *"Should the public believe that the issue is settled, their views on global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate"*.

One of the main sources of public confusion is the media coverage which has provided both a barrage of messages on climate change as well as conflicting and competing discourses. Even a cursory analysis of media coverage on the subject demonstrates the diversity of information. There are predictable differences between, say, The Guardian and Daily Telegraph (and among their readerships), as well as variations within the same publication and often on the same day. For example, a reader may be warned of the climate impact of aviation on one page before being lured by an advertisement for a 'no frills' airline on the next page or a luxury holiday in the travel section. Moreover, there are often inconsistencies and tensions within the same publication, for example between the news section and the commentary.

Public views of the complexity and uncertainty of climate change

Q: I would like you to tell me if you agree or disagree that . . . climate change is too complex and uncertain for scientists to make useful forecasts?



Base: 2,037 British adults, 14th – 20th June 2007

⁸ Goldblatt, D (2005) *Sustainable energy consumption and society: personal, technological or societal change?* Alliance for Global Sustainability Bookseries, Vol. 7

Climate change messages – media extracts***The next few years are critical in the fight for the climate*****By Paul Hardaker, Sunday Telegraph 04/02/2007**

The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was published on Friday is unequivocal in its conclusion that climate change is happening and that humans are contributing to the changes. The evidence of global warming from a number of different measurements is now much greater, and the tools we have to model climate change have more of our scientific knowledge within them. The world's best climate scientists are telling us it is time to do something about it.

Green tax won't help the planet or Tories**Leader comment, 11/03/2007**

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published last month, gave the impression that the debate about the reality of global warming and its man-made causes is over.

That impression is false, however, or at least misleading: there are still many uncertainties in climate science and prediction, and there are many reputable scientists who do not accept that the ever-increasing amounts of CO₂ human beings are pumping into the atmosphere are responsible for whatever changes in planetary temperature are happening.

Some of those dissenting voices were on display in *The Great Global Warming Swindle*, a powerful programme broadcast last week. Channel 4 is to be congratulated for not being intimidated or bullied out of transmitting the documentary.

At a glance: What the climate change report means for you**Daily Mail, 20 October 2006**

Ignoring climate change could lead to economic upheaval on the scale of the 1930s Depression, underlining the need for urgent action to combat global warming, a British report on the costs of climate change said.

Global Warming? What a load of poppycock!**Professor David Bellamy, Daily Mail, July 9, 2004**

Someone, somewhere - and there is every chance it will be a politician or an environmentalist - will blame the weather on global warming. But they will be 100 per cent wrong. Global warming - at least the modern nightmare version - is a myth. I am sure of it and so are a growing number of scientists. But what is really worrying is that the world's politicians and policy makers are not.

One particularly noteworthy and high profile alternative discourse was the recent Channel 4 programme *The Great Global Warming Swindle*⁹ which was in return widely rebutted by, among others, the Royal Society¹⁰ and the UK Met Office¹¹. The impact of specific media events such as this on public attitudes has not been fully assessed, although it is noteworthy that Channel 4 anecdotally reported that among the 700 comments it received following the programme, supporters outnumbered critics six to one.

We do not pass judgement here on the content of the programme itself, but we do note that, whether the public accept alternative discourses in their entirety or not, it appears they are influencing public attitudes. Recent research supports this view and finds at least some people unsure how to filter the information and arrive at a reasoned judgement. Two responses to confusion seem to predominate: either people choose to ignore the issue altogether or they try to adopt a "moderate" view somewhere in between two polar opposites (e.g. climate change is caused by both human activity *and* natural processes).

"You just don't know who to trust, it's like you've no idea what's actually going on. It's just sometimes all the different viewpoints coming out I just go 'I don't know' [...] so I'm just going to ignore the situation."

Male, Student

The exact impact of differential messaging has yet to be fully established, although one trend is worrying from the perspective of the prevailing political consensus – 56% believe that many leading experts still question if human activity is contributing to climate change, a view clearly at odds with the IPCC consensus.

In addition to uncertainty about the nature of climate change itself, the public then have to navigate uncertainties as consumers and households trying to effect change. Should they buy organic food that has been flown into the UK? Which option really is the most 'climate friendly'? How do the public know that what is claimed actually reflects reality?

⁹ Channel 4, Thursday 8 March 2007¹⁰ <http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/page.asp?id=6229>¹¹ <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/myths/index.html>

Drawing on work done around food labelling, the National Consumer Council (NCC) found¹² that logos on food labels are currently “more likely to confuse and mislead consumers than inform them”. A similar pattern is likely to apply to environmental and carbon claims, and the New York Times recently noted¹³ that “you almost have to be a scientist with a lab to decipher the dizzying array of claims on what makes a product green”. Even a cursory review of UK papers supports such an assertion. For example, how might consumers respond to The Observer’s following take on the subject of green travel¹⁴:

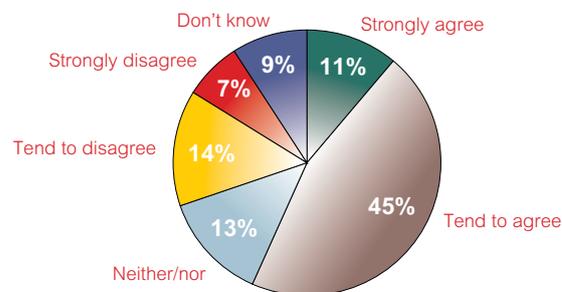
“The reality is that analysing how various modes of transport compare is fiendishly complex. Some trains are far worse than others (increasing the top speed of trains from 125mph to 220mph can consume four times as much energy, while diesels can emit twice the carbon dioxide of electric trains). Some high speed ferries, such as Stella Line’s HSS craft, use double the fuel of conventional ships, making them several times worse than modern planes for carbon emissions. Ultimately, experts admit that given the right circumstances, any method of transport can be made to come out on top”

Indeed, our research suggests that consumers are struggling to make purchasing decisions that reflect their intentions – 78% agree that it is difficult to know which products are better for society and the environment.

There is also a need to consider the impact of environmental ‘scandals’ which have and inevitably will occur. Recent examples include accusations that not all food marketed as organic really is organic, or the carbon offset market is plagued with carbon “cowboys” and “snake oil salesman”, or that planting trees in any other location than the tropics can result in a net negative impact on the climate. As the complexities of our actions to address climate change become more evident, how will the public react to accusations that their well intentioned behaviour has either been abused or ended up doing more harm than good? More research is needed in this area.

Public views of the scientific debate

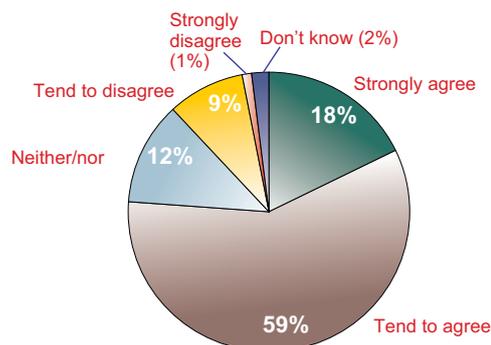
Q: I would like you to tell me if you agree or disagree that . . . many leading experts still question if human activity is contributing to climate change?



Base: 2,037 British adults, 14th – 20th June 2007

Uncertainty in taking action

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is difficult to know which products are better for society and the environment?



Base: 1,057 GB adults 16+, Aug-Sep 2006

¹² *Bamboozled, baffled and bombarded: consumer views on voluntary food labelling*, NCC 2003

¹³ *Eco-friendly shopping is hip, but is it helpful?* New York Times, Sunday July 8 2007

¹⁴ *The big green dilemma*, Escape in The Observer, 1 July 2007

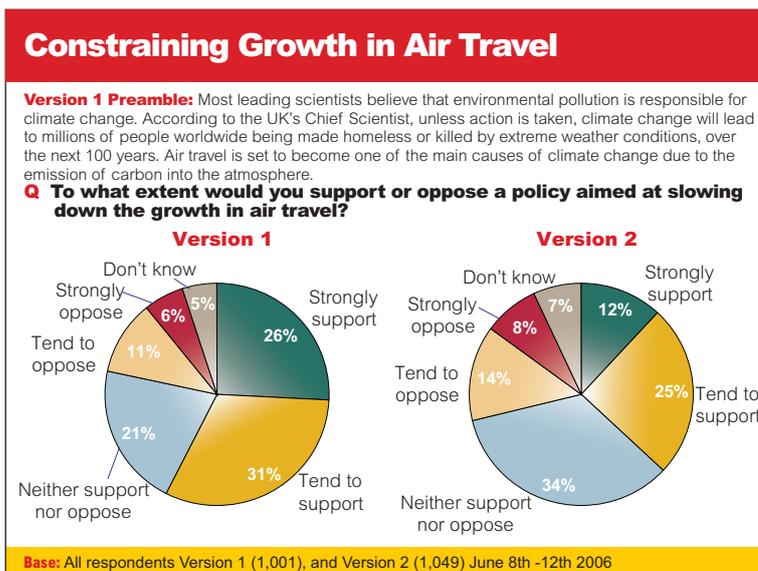
v. Framing the climate change debate

The communication of messages is a complex process, often requiring both broad recognition of the nature of the issue, as well as the delivery of specific arguments and precise information. Our data demonstrates that the latter elements – specificity and precision – are key elements in communicating pro-environmental messages and, in the case of emotive subjects such as aviation, important in guarding against negative counter argument and hostile reaction.

Indeed, the public’s response to a threat - or the actions or policies proposed to address it - vary significantly depending on the nature of the language used and the way in which the issue is framed. There are occasionally black and white responses where a perspective dominates and has become ‘hardwired’ in the public psyche (e.g. the lexicon of ‘stealth taxation’ and ‘postcode lotteries’), but there are often many shades of grey which provide opportunities to approach and tackle thorny issues from different angles.

Drawing on the example of tax evasion, our data shows that the British public are strongly opposed to benefit cheats – two thirds (67%) say it is never justifiable - but they appear less concerned about tax evasion (23% opposed) and, in particular, VAT evasion (12%). How might this work in the context of climate change? Is it possible to establish environmental norms – for example that it is not acceptable to get away without paying the environmental externality – in the same way?

While social researchers are in a somewhat unique position to control the flow of information to respondents in a way that is artificial, the process still demonstrates the extent to which opinions can, in theory, shift in response to the way in which the debate is framed. For example, in respect of aviation 37% support, *prima facie*, a policy aimed at slowing growth in aviation (including 12% who ‘strongly’ support it). However, with a preamble that focuses on some of the more severe and emotive potential impacts of climate change, the proportion supporting the policy increases to 57% (including 26% who strongly support it). Interestingly though, there is virtually no change in the proportion opposed, with or without the preamble.



The *tone* of the debate and the way arguments are couched also play an important part in communications. Should they be upbeat and focusing on the solutions, or reflective of the severity of the threat and the rapidly closing window of opportunity? In terms of where the British public are now, we have already noted the clear divide between those who are generally optimistic about averting dangerous climate change and those who are not, reinforcing the need for targeted and differentiated messages across the public.

The amount of coverage itself seems to play an important part here. Over the past five years the public have been relatively negative when asked if they think the quality of the environment is likely to get better or worse over the next few years – reaching 47% in September 2005. However, as the environment has moved up the political agenda over the past 18 months the proportion who thinks the quality of the environment will improve has actually increased.

On *language*, there is a notable mismatch between that used to describe the problem (e.g. apocalyptic, enormous, mass extinction) as opposed to the solutions (e.g. small actions matter, little things count). For some, the issue is perceived to be so significant, overwhelming and inevitable that that they respond with either denial or fatalism, and their perceived helplessness in the face of the threat provides them with both a license to ignore the issue and ‘opt out’ from taking action. In contrast, a focus on the minutiae and small actions that everyone can take – a common communications tactic to empower individuals – can in fact reinforce the perception that individual action is futile taken against the scale of the challenge. As IPPR¹⁵ note in their recent report:

“Both sets of communication strategies have their problems: the ‘small actions’ approach is likely to beg the question ‘how can this really make a difference?’, while the more people are bombarded with words or images of devastating, quasi-Biblical effects of global warming, the more likely they are to tune out and switch instead into “adaptationist” mode, focusing on protecting themselves and their families, such as by buying large vehicles to secure their safety. Indeed alarmism might even become secretly thrilling – effectively a form of ‘climate porn’, seen in almost every form of discussion on the issue”.

On a final note, climate change messages can also suffer from the communications equivalent of “friendly fire”, with confusion compounded by communications actually designed to educate the public. Terms like ‘carbon neutral’, or figures showing how many million tonnes of waste can be saved by slightly altering behaviour, can confuse as much as they can enlighten.



¹⁵ *Positive Energy: Harnessing people power to prevent climate change*, IPPR 2007

vi. Attitudes to political parties and leaders

Recent polling data on public attitudes towards the main political parties and their climate change policies shows that no one party has established it as “their own”, and nor has it yet been a key battleground on which a General Election is fought.

One thing is clear: the environment is one of the relatively few policy areas in which Labour has not been seen as strong by voters. In an ICM poll in March 2007 the Conservatives held a marginal advantage by 16% to 14% over both Labour and the Liberal Democrats on the subject of which party has the best policies for tackling climate change. A high proportion though - 23% - didn't know.

A similar pattern is evident in a stand off between the party leaders. Asked to reflect on whom they trust to be more effective in tackling climate change, the Conservative leader polled 26% and the Prime Minister 25%, with more than a third trusting neither. David Cameron does have a slight edge among younger people (33% to Gordon Brown's 26%).

The real losers, at least at the current time, are the Liberal Democrats who, for a large part of the 1990s, were consistently identified in our tracker poll as the party with the best environmental policies. They have been seemingly squeezed out of late by the focus on David Cameron and Gordon Brown. It is also evident that Liberal Democrat voters consistently register more concern about the environment than their Conservative and Labour counterparts.

SUMMARY

The analysis finds the following to be true of public attitudes to climate change:

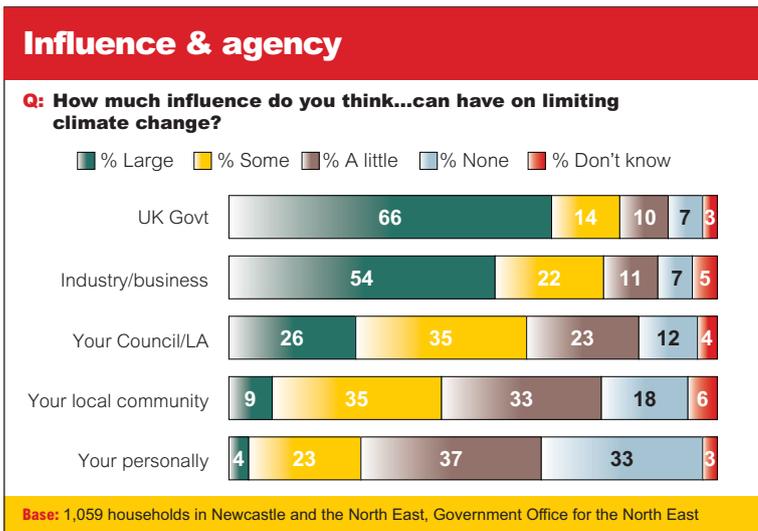
1. Recognition of climate change per se is very high, with near universal agreement that the climate is changing. Many say they have personally seen evidence of this.
2. However, the public is out of step with the IPCC with 41% believing climate change is caused by both human activity and natural processes acting in combination.
3. Furthermore, while levels of concern are relatively high there are dissenting voices and moreover a soft underbelly to some of the concern. This intimates that, for a significant number, attitudes are in flux and this group remain to be persuaded about the scale and nature of the threat posed by climate change.
4. There is recognition of environmental limits and the majority acknowledge the need for action; but the public is more optimistic than in previous years about our ability to address the problem and mitigate environmental threats.
5. The public continue to externalise the threat of climate change to other people, places and times, because they don't perceive it to be an immediate, or local, problem. For example, despite its presence globally climate change continues to have significantly less resonance when set in the context of national issues and local, day-to-day concerns. As Jonathon Porritt notes, *"the internalisation of consciousness about climate change must go hand in hand with the internalisation of costs"*. How can climate change be brought into the sphere of the individual?
6. Public knowledge of the issue is increasing but only a minority feel very well informed. While the debate for some may be over, this is far from true for others and there remains a strong demand for more information.
7. Complexity in the science and notions of probability do not translate naturally to the public who are looking for definitive 'proof' and this – allied with competing and conflicting media coverage – fuels uncertainty. A significant number believe the climate system is too complex to model, while over half believe leading scientists are still questioning whether human activity is contributing to climate change.
8. In addition to uncertainty about the science, there is widespread uncertainty about what actions to take and which products to buy.
9. The way in which the debate is framed is highly significant and can lead to different reactions to a particular issue. Such nuances in reactions point to important implications for the language deployed, and the need to couch arguments in terms the public are receptive to, at the same time as avoiding language that triggers 'mental shortcuts' to inherently negative responses (e.g. 'tax', 'restrictions', etc) .
10. The battle among the political parties on climate change has yet to be resolved. The Liberal Democrats, long thought of as the party with the best policies on the environment, are being squeezed by the focus on Gordon Brown and David Cameron. Will the environment, for the first time, be a key election issue?

SECTION 2: ATTITUDES TO KEY ACTORS AND AGENCIES

This section of the report focuses on public attitudes to the key actors and agents behind climate change actions, covering the varying roles of government, business and local agencies in engaging the public.

Drawing on a survey in Newcastle and the North East, there are wide variations in the perceived influence of different agents. Whereas Government and business are considered to wield a large influence, local communities and individuals are perceived to have little, if any. This is consistent with the analysis from Section 1 concerning the public’s tendency to externalise the problem – and the responsibility - to others.

The remainder of this section now looks at each of the agents in turn, before considering public trust as an overarching issue.



i. Government

In addition to being seen to have the most influence on limiting climate change, the Government are considered by the public best placed to take responsibility. There are several reasons behind this. First, one of the clear advantages of Government-orchestrated action is a perception among the public that, at this level, collective action can make a significant difference – 66% agree that Britain can make a real difference in stopping climate change. Hence it is the level at which they generally feel comfortable in ceasing to externalise the threat.

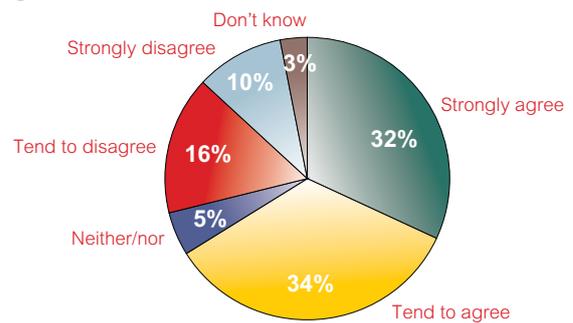
Second, while the public recognise the need for collective action on an international scale – noting the role of the US, EU and China as they key players - this does not extend to ceding decision making authority to supranational institutions. For example, when questioned about future energy challenges, the British public is, in comparison with their European counterparts, *most likely* to identify national government as the best placed to respond and *least likely* to identify the EU.

In principle then, the Government has a mandate to initiate change and lead the climate change agenda. Moreover, this mandate appears to extend to the use of the law to change behaviour – as many as 70% agree with this proposition.

However, there are clear tensions in attitudes towards intervention. On the one hand the public bemoan the “nanny state” but on the other they look to Government to intervene. For example, drawing on our work in other areas, a majority agree both that *“the Government does not trust ordinary people to make their own decisions about dangerous activities”* **and** that *“the Government should do more to protect people by passing laws than ban dangerous activities”*.

UK has a role in global solution

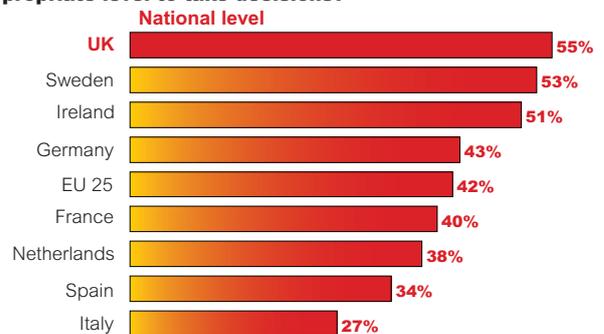
Q: And to what extent do you agree or disagree that . . . Britain can make a real difference in stopping global climate change?



Base: 1,002 British adults, 25-27 August 2006

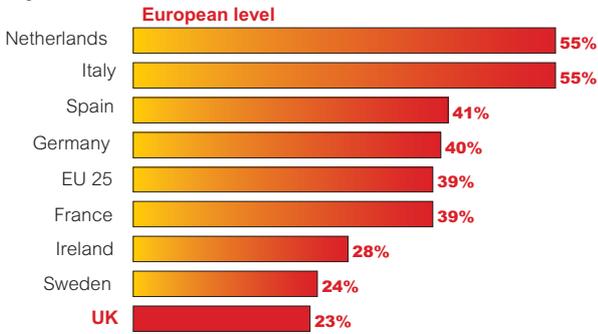
Decision-making – EU, national or local level?

Q: In order to respond to the new energy challenges that we have to face for the years to come, what is, according to you, the most appropriate level to take decisions?



Decision-making – EU, national or local level?

Q: In order to respond to the new energy challenges that we have to face for the years to come, what is, according to you, the most appropriate level to take decisions?

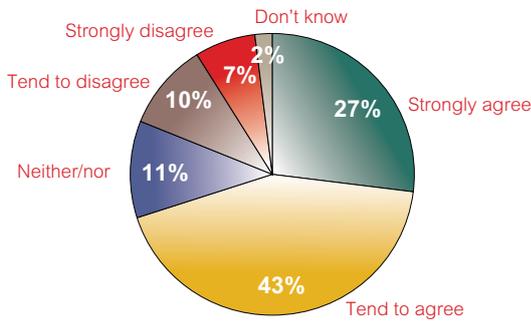


The issue of government intervention to achieve carbon reductions is clearly a difficult one. The research suggests that three factors have a bearing on public reactions:

- Attitudes vary according to the *target issue of the intervention* - for example, studies find support for action to promote sustainable energy and food - even if it raised prices as a result - but hostility to interventions surrounding sustainable transport and, in particular, the car.
- Our deliberative work on waste policy shows that the *nature of engagement* with the public in the decision making process can yield some beneficial results. During a one day deliberative event for Suffolk County Council, for example, involving a site visit to a waste plant and testimonies from expert witnesses, the public's focus shifted from a short to long term perspective and in favour of some waste processing technologies at the expense of others.
- Finally, the *type of intervention* tool is significant. The public prefer, not surprisingly, carrots rather than sticks, and incentives where something is *gained* rather than disincentives where something is lost. For example, a recent DfT survey on climate change¹⁶ found strong support for spending more on bus and rail services and safe routes to school. In contrast, other policy measures, such as a tax on petrol, congestion charging and increasing the cost of flying, attracted far less support. Interestingly, the one exception in relation to the car is a differentiated tax on environmentally unfriendly vehicles, a measure that has stronger backing and is of course already in place via the road tax system and is planned to form part of the London Congestion Charge.

Support for government intervention to change behaviour

**Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree that . . . ?
The government should take the lead in combating climate change, even if it means using the law to change people's behaviour**



Base: 2,037 British adults, 14th – 20th June 2007

Government intervention: competing views

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree that...

■ % Strongly disagree
 ■ % Tend to disagree
 ■ % Tend to agree
 ■ % Strongly agree



Base: 1,015 adults Jan 1999

¹⁶ A review of public attitudes to climate change and transport behaviour, DfT, 2006

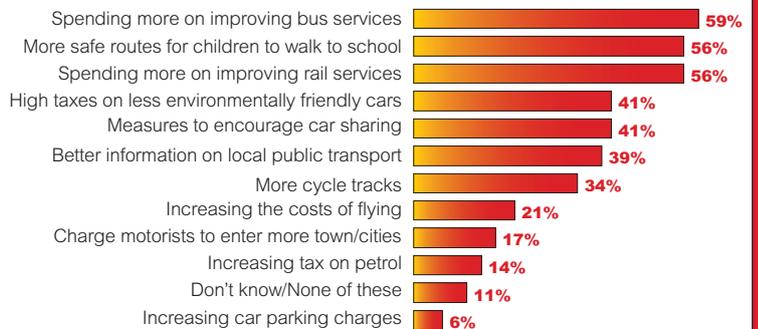
The public are also, broadly speaking, more in favour of simply editing out unsustainable choices, i.e. removing them from sale, than the use of fiscal measures to encourage positive consumer choices. So, for example, in the World Environment Review¹⁷, a survey of UK consumers found high levels of support for enforcing minimum energy standards for household appliances (78%), banning incandescent light bulbs (77%) and only allowing water efficient showerheads to be sold in retail outlets (65%).

Indeed, the potential for “choice editing” is borne out by the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable’s work. In a review of the development of 19 ‘successful’ eco products, the analysis established that it was the combination of product policy measures, choice editing, product marketing and consumer pressure that explained mainstream take up. The report concluded that consumer pressure *alone* rarely accounts for shifts in take up, demonstrating the importance of accompanying changes in the supply chain, such as editing out unsustainable options and ensuring sustainable alternatives perform up to the expectation of the relevant market.

As a final remark, though using taxation to reduce consumption is, at face value, the least popular option, it is important to recognise that public views can and do change. This can either be in response to effective and sustained information/argument, or the actual introduction of the measure itself. The Irish smoking ban provides one example of this, with support for the policy doubling following its introduction. In the UK, one of the best examples is the London Congestion Charge. Following the launch of the scheme, public opinion, which had previously been split, shifted substantially in favour of the charge. A similar trend happened in response to the plans for the western extension and, following the consultation period where opinion on the scheme had narrowed, public support once again increased.

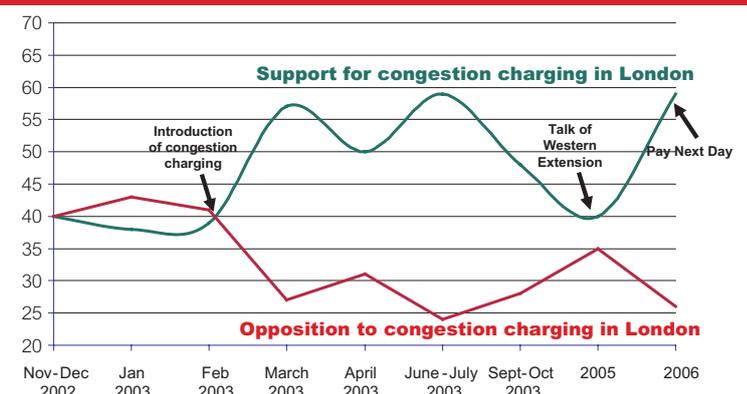
Support for transport policies

Q: Which, if any, of the following would you support?



Source: DfT, August 2006 NS Omnibus. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Base number: 1,234

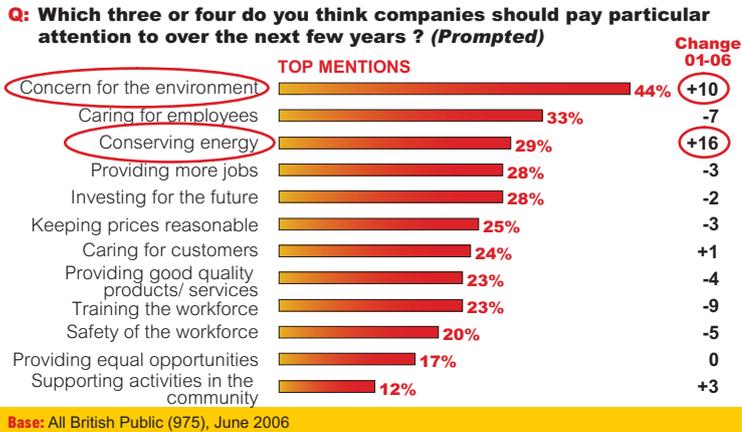
Attitudes towards the Congestion Charge



Base: Telephone tracking surveys 2002-2006, c. 1,000 Londoners per wave

¹⁷ www.gmi-mr.com

'Concern for the environment' should be a priority

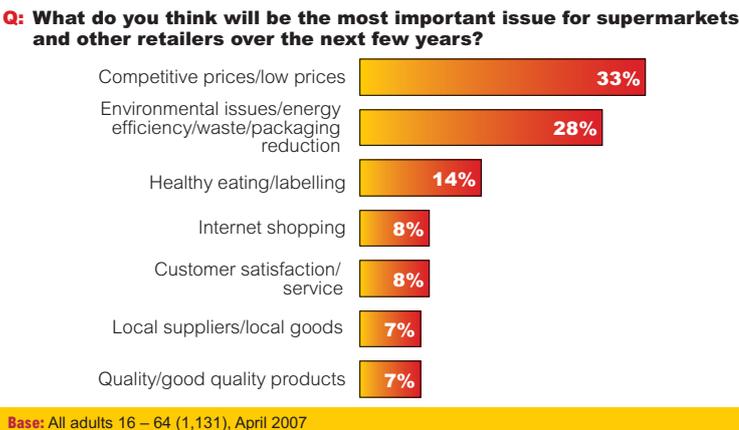


ii. Business

Alongside government, commercial organisations are considered by the public to have the requisite influence to limit climate change. The past few years have seen environmental concerns rise up the list of issues that consumers feel businesses need to address, and consumers have already picked up on the fact that retailers are competing on environmental performance and healthy products, as well as price.

The public are cautious but receptive to retailers' claims about their environmental and social performance. Two perspectives predominate – the first that retailers are making some positive steps but still have some way to go, and the second that retailers are only making slight changes and have much further to go. Views at the extremes - i.e. retailers are doing as much/little as they can – account for smaller minorities.

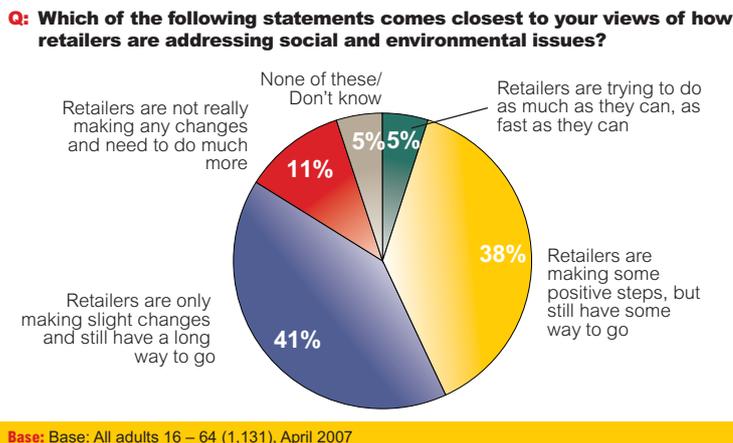
Consumers are very aware retailers are competing on price



Trust is an important issue. Recent deliberative work on sustainable finance confirms that companies face scrutiny on the issue, particularly where the environmental claim appears to be at odds with the company's *modus operandi*. This is true of several sectors, for example – but not limited to – banking, transport and oil, and these sectors may face some additional hurdles in this respect.

"If RBS or Citibank start saying, oh we're just going to go in the organic, ethical [fields], I just won't believe them because they simply can't be ethical."
Male, 25-35, AB, Surrey

Consumers acknowledge retailers still have a lot of work to do



"To make huge amounts of profit margins, ethics have got to be pushed to one side to an extent, it's just as simple as that."
Male, 25-35, AB

The research finds that consumers are still very much wedded to the belief that financial and environmental/ethical objectives are diametrically opposed. Financial objectives are couched in rational, pragmatic, individualistic and capitalistic terms, whereas green behaviour still tends to be seen as idealistic, collectivist and involving self-sacrifice. There is a default assumption, for example, that environmentally-friendly products are more expensive. Consumers also simply want more help in making sustainable choices, with a large majority saying that it is both difficult to differentiate products that are better for the environment, and that companies need to make ethical/sustainable choices easy.

Nonetheless, in the current climate of environmental concern there are clear commercial benefits for companies to enhance their green credentials, whether in terms of brand reputation, risk management or marketing a specific product or service. While only a relative minority are particularly tuned into the issue – and the likely primary audience – the minority is growing. Furthermore, there is a substantial secondary group of consumers who are passively receptive and acknowledge they benefit from the “feel good” factor if their retailer or bank is taking action.

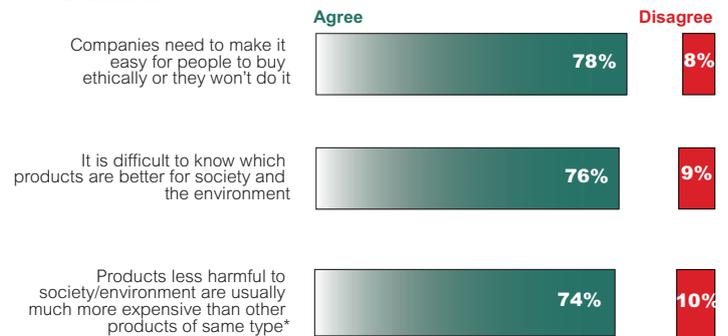
iii. Local authorities

Public attitudes to local authority intervention on climate change have not been fully assessed, although councils are generally not perceived to have a high degree of influence. The transboundary nature of the problem has played an understandable part in this, as has the fact that local authorities do not have the full range of fiscal or regulatory tools at their disposal to influence key carbon sources. Therefore, local authorities have, traditionally, been more concerned with local environmental quality issues, such as street cleaning and graffiti, as part of the ‘liveability’ agenda.

Nonetheless, there are signs that this may be beginning to change. For example, whereas climate change has not been an issue that local authorities are assessed on under Comprehensive Performance Assessments, there may be more scope to consider the issue, as a long term strategic risk, under the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessments. Furthermore, several councils have recently taken pro active measures to reduce carbon emissions using those powers they do have. For example, via the planning system we have seen the emergence of mandatory minimum targets for embedded renewable technologies for large new developments (the “Merton Rule”), as well as local road pricing pilots and action against polluting vehicles through the parking regime - as in Richmond and, following the recent local referendum, Islington.

Consumers want more help on ethical purchasing

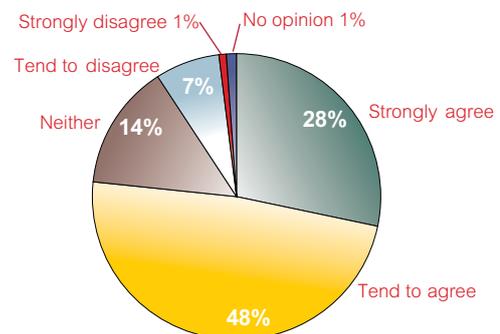
Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: 1,057 GB adults 16+, Aug – Sep 2006 * 969 GB adults 16+ Aug – Sep 2004

More information on responsibility could impact purchase

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? If I had more information about companies' social, environmental and ethical behaviour this would influence my decisions about what I buy

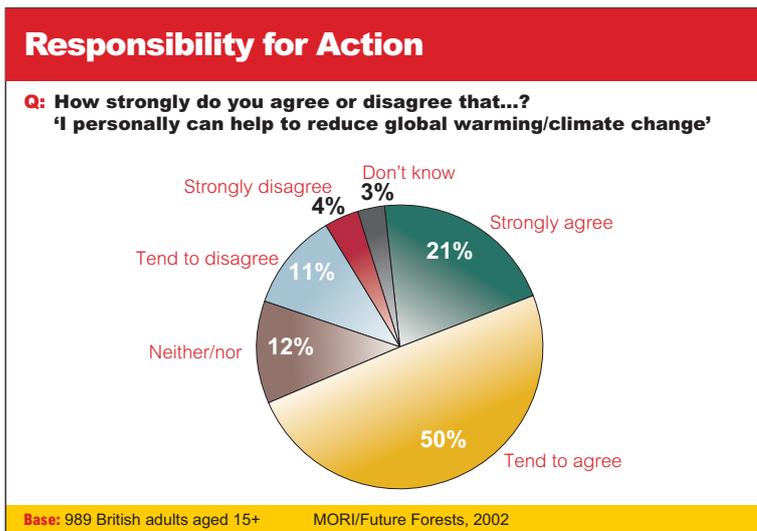


Base: 1,002 GB adults 16+ August 2006 (telephone interviews)

iv. Community action

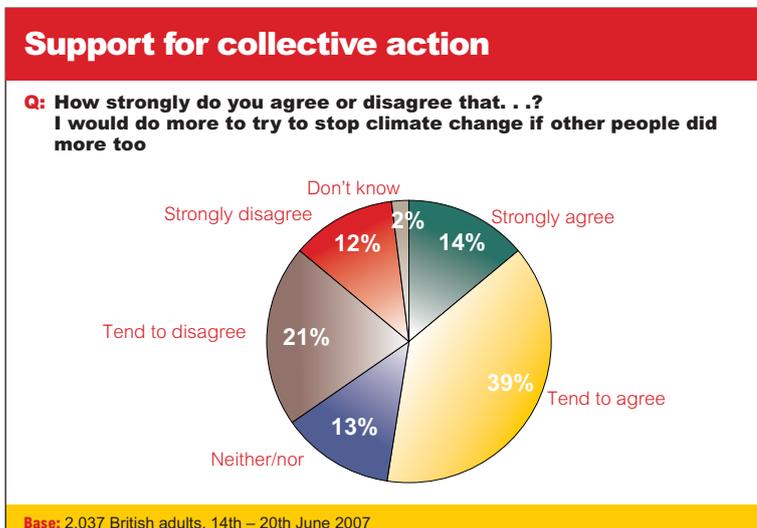
Although local communities and community groups are also not considered by the public to have much influence over climate change, there have been some interesting developments of late that are worth exploring further, as well as various Government initiatives to seed fund and then evaluate the potential impact of voluntary and community organisations, as well as social enterprises.

For example, there has been an apparent surge in the number of local communities taking action, such as Ashfield and Modbury. Action in these areas seems to have appeared relatively spontaneously on the back of local, bottom up community action, rather than top down intervention from the local authority. While these examples have yet to be fully examined to assess what has caused local attitudes and/or behaviours to change so rapidly, what potential is there for replicating these examples of collective action? Are they simply endemic to specific locations and specific individuals willing to galvanise the community, or capable of catching on and spreading to other places? These are questions currently being explored by a number of Government-funded programmes, most notable the Environmental Action Fund¹⁸ - a Defra funded scheme exploring, in the 2005-8 Round, sustainable consumption and production.



v. The Public: Households & Consumers

The public, as this report has already noted, tend not to identify themselves as having much influence or responsibility. Nonetheless, they acknowledge to varying degrees that they also have a role to play, even if there are questions about exactly what this is and how far they are willing to go (questions we address in Section 3). In terms of perceived influence, around one in five (21%) strongly believe they can influence climate change, while most (50%) adopt a more non committal line and 15% disagree.



The role of collective action cannot be overstated - over half (54%) agree they would try to do more if others did more as well. The sense of collective action is particularly important because climate change suffers from the "bystander effect", i.e. everyone looking on without anyone stepping in to act. There are also significant public concerns about fairness – and in particular the potential for "free riders" who will simply step in to benefit from others' individual sacrifices (documented best in Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*¹⁹ and the 'prisoner's dilemma' literature). Indeed, Mark Lynas, author of the book *Six Degrees: Life in a Hotter Climate*, argues simply that "it doesn't make sense for people to make individual sacrifices while the world goes on around them".

¹⁸ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/eaff/index.htm>

¹⁹ Hardin, G. (1968) *The Tragedy of the Commons*, Science 162, 1243-1248

There are several parallels here with recycling policy, which has used visible collective action – i.e. recycling bins out on the street prior to collection – to establish new behavioural norms. The results from London Western Riverside²⁰ and Waste Watch's campaign in the area appear very effective, with a strong shift in the proportion perceiving others to be taking action.

Recent efforts to transfer this to climate change have included, most recently, the *Lights Out London* event²¹, which saw The Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and Piccadilly Circus plunged into darkness for an hour to raise awareness of climate change.

vi. The importance of trust

The analysis has already touched upon public trust as a key factor, whether in terms of government successfully 'making the case' for a particular measure or business convincing its existing customer base (and potential customers) that its efforts are genuine, beneficial and surpass that of its competitors.

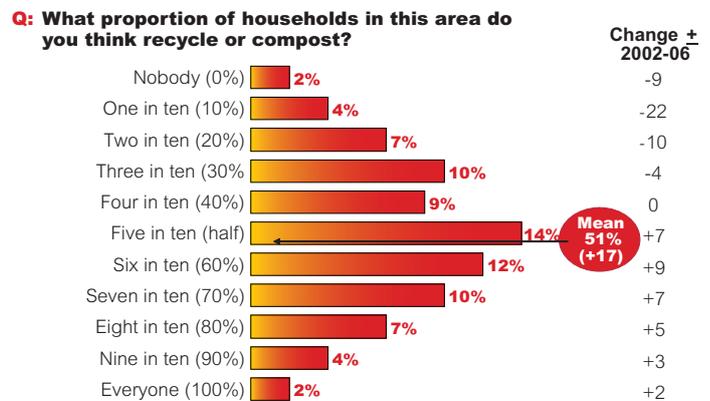
Trust in modern society is a challenge for all parties. For government, the proportion of people who say they can be trusted to put the interests of the country before the interests of the party has halved since 1986, and six in ten do not feel that government uses official figures honestly and without political interference²². Moreover, journalists and government ministers are among the professions least trusted by the general public to tell the truth, raising questions about the best strategies for getting the climate change message across. Even within categories there are some important nuances, for example marked variations in trust for scientists, depending on their background and funding sources. It is clear that not all messengers are equal.

Trust is also important in the context of individuals feeling assured that their pro-environmental efforts are 'for something'. For example, we repeatedly find in qualitative research that some individuals question whether their recycling leads to any good, or whether it is simply landfilled or sent around the world:

"To be honest, I think that most of the recycling is just shipped off to China at the end of the day, and we're not much better off."

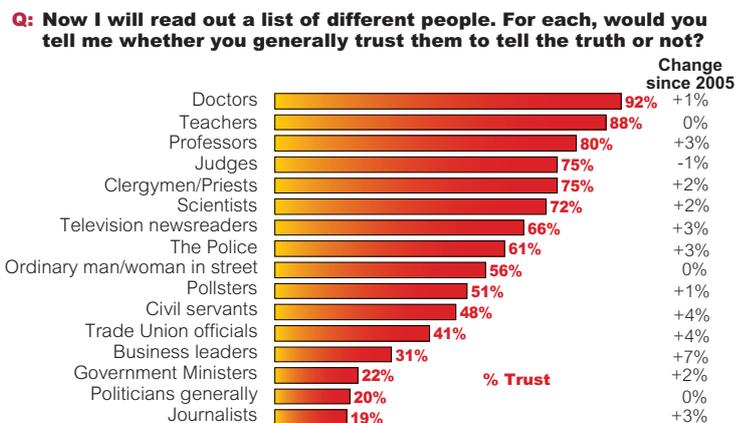
Female, 18-35

Everybody's doing it...?



Base: 2,074 British adults aged 15+ Oct 2006

Trust in professions



Base: 2,074 British adults aged 15+ Oct 2006

²⁰ The London Boroughs of Lambeth, Richmond, Kensington & Chelsea and Wandsworth

²¹ <http://www.lightsoutlondon.co.uk/home.asp>

²² Ipsos MORI 'Who do you Trust?'

One very important implication of a lack of trust in government is a decline in support for the 'Polluter Pays Principle', which has suffered at the hands of the public's hostility to taxation. As Peter Ainsworth, the shadow environment secretary, notes *"a lot of the middle classes support the Daily Mail view that this is just another means of imposing stealth taxes"*. Indeed, the public appear far from convinced that measures announced under the banner of climate change are actually intended to benefit the environment or simply to raise revenue. The notion of hypothecation is appealing to the public but it is unclear how they can be convinced that eco-taxes are being re-invested in environmental improvements.

"If we've got to pay a bit more than I would, I just don't want to be lining their [the Government's] pockets, which is what I feel the governments all over the world are doing, they are not really committed to the real issue."

Female, 35-54, AB

"In the Budget yesterday he [Gordon Brown] mentioned environmental this, that and the other several times. Is it a way of raising taxes? Probably. Is it going to be ploughed back into the environment? Unlikely"

Male, 35-54, C1C2

Some of our deliberative work has also identified equity as a strong challenge to environmental taxation amid concerns they will be regressive and penalise the poor (or, in the case of 'pay as you throw' waste disposal, large families). In fact, our citizens' event at 10 Downing Street, as part of the Public Services Policy Review, showed how high initial levels of support for incentives and disincentives actually decreased following deliberation because of the potential impact on vulnerable groups.

SUMMARY

The analysis establishes the following:

1. The public perceive a strong gradient of declining influence from the national to the local, and see themselves as having little power to effect change. As Tim Jackson notes *"I think we are at a turning point in the relationship between mankind and the environment, but people so far still don't see the responsibility as theirs. They think it is the job of government and big business."*
2. National government is considered best placed to lead on the climate change agenda, both because it exists at a sufficiently broad level to effect change, and also because the public prefer decision-making at the national level over EU and/or International directives.
3. The public agree, in principle, that government has the mandate to lead. However, the issue of intervention – particularly fiscal – is clearly contentious and more research is needed to better understand public reactions to policy propositions. Initial findings suggest there are marked variations in acceptability across different issues and intervention tools. The (successful) introduction of the policy itself can have one of the most marked impacts on public opinion - as in the case of the London Congestion Charge.
4. Consumers are looking to business to take greater action on climate change, and expect greater competition in the next few years around this issue. They are cautious of commercial claims but similarly are aware of the efforts of certain companies over the past year or so, even if they believe they still have more work to do. Certain sectors – for example finance, transport and oil - face more scrutiny because the public believe that the rationale for their work is in conflict with the environment. Consumers want easier choices and more help differentiating environmentally sound products from others. In return is the promise of brand enhancement, management of reputational risk and/or opportunities to access new markets.
5. There are several contradictions in the public's view of their role in efforts to limit climate change. On the one hand they believe they have far less influence than other agents, but still acknowledge they can act. The question of exactly what they are willing and unwilling to do is key. A sense of collective action is fundamental, particularly in view of concerns over fairness and the potential for 'free riders' to take advantage of their own individual sacrifice and others to be left behind.
6. Trust is an underlying and key theme. The ability of government to make the case to its electorate about a particular policy measure, or a retailer's chances of capitalising on its green policies and products, is predicated on trust. For Government, in particular, environmental taxation is viewed with suspicion and the shadow cast over the debate by claims of "stealth taxation" remains in place.

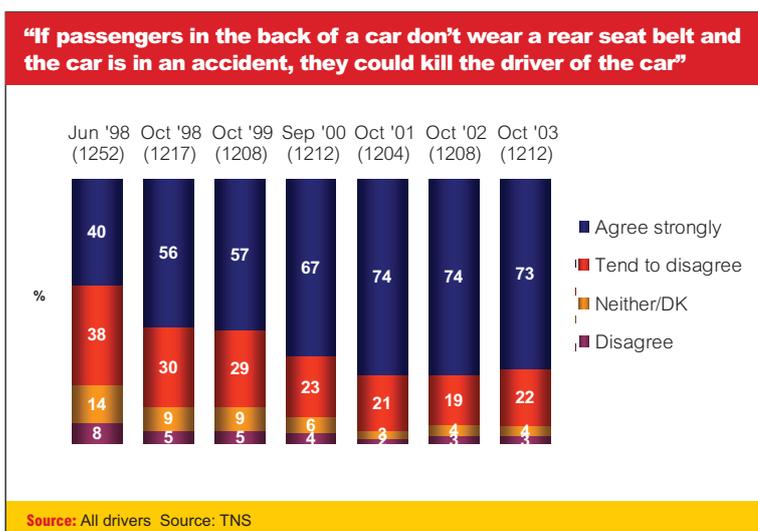
SECTION 3: BEHAVIOUR CHANGE & SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES

This final section of the report moves beyond public *perceptions* of climate change to focus instead on the public's *behaviour* and willingness to adopt low carbon lifestyles. Is public recognition and concern about the problem translating into personal action? Is uncertainty or a lack of knowledge fuelling inaction as the public 'wait and see'? Or are they cognisant of the challenge but simply unable or unwilling to change? The section considers five key issues:

- Understanding environmental behaviours
- What are the public already doing?
- What more are the public willing to do?
- What underpins the public's willingness (and resistance) to change?
- Understanding the policy implications for behaviour change and social marketing

i. Understanding environmental behaviours

Environmental behaviour change is a complex social science and our behaviours, and the factors that underpin them, are different. Rather than a simple continuum of behaviours that lead neatly into one another – with simple, habitual actions at one end of the spectrum through to large and fundamental lifestyle shifts at the other – each have their own motivations, sacrifices and rewards. Adopting recycling is not the same as forgoing flights abroad, neither is opting for a climate change financial product the same as buying organic food. Sometimes we do something out of habit, others on the basis of deliberation. Sometimes we buy things for our health, at others to save money, or perhaps to parade our eco credentials in front of friends. Sometimes we make sacrifices as moral agents, at others we're looking for novelty, quality and the niche.



There are several fundamental distinctions to draw. The first is between conscious and subconscious behaviour. While rational choice models assume that behaviour is based upon cognitive deliberation, much environmental behaviour is driven by habit more than active choices. Futerra²³ succinctly make the point:

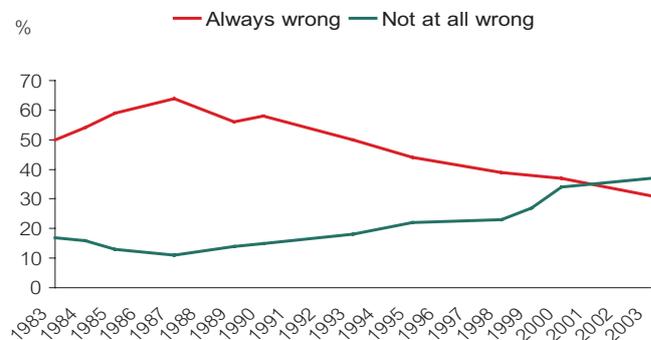
"Conscious and unconscious behaviours are different; active and passive, choice and habit behaviours. The difference is between the behaviour of buying a car (conscious, choice, active) and that of driving a car (unconscious, habit, passive). When people are on automatic pilot – which most of us are, most of the time – 'conscious, choice, active' messages won't reach them"

The second relates to the timing and speed of behaviour change. While some behaviour is stable, most is fluid and open to change. For example, we have tracked a marked shift in the social norms governing rear seat belts and, given that the legislation itself was introduced in 1991 and behaviours only began

²³ *New rules: new game: Communications tactics for climate change*, Futerra, 2006

Marked increase in acceptance of same sex relationships

Q: What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?



Source: British Social Attitudes c.2,000 per wave

to shift in the late 90s, it appears that sustained social marketing campaigns have had a significant impact. Social attitudes to same sex relationships have taken longer to shift but, given the nature of the issue, have also changed markedly in response to a clear framework and signals from Government (e.g. subsequent waves of equal opportunities legislation).

A third important variable is the *interrelationship* between behaviours, and the hope these can be used to elicit a more systematic approach by the public. Indeed, adapting Gladwell's²⁴ ideas on the "stickiness" factor of communications, there is considerable scope to explore the relative stickiness of behaviours i.e. one behaviour change 'attaching' itself to others and, in doing so, providing the catalyst for change. Some speculate that one small change can lead to a gradual progression towards larger behaviours, while others argue the reverse is true, that a large behavioural shift catalyses us to 'back fill' other related behaviours.

Finally, the *heterogeneity* of households and consumers is critical. While for the most part we have talked in this report about the public as if one, the reality is clearly more complex and, just as environmental behaviours vary in nature, so does the propensity of different sections of the public to adopt them. There are already several segmentation analyses in circulation that provide varying levels of sophistication and specificity, with one of the most up to date in terms of pro-environmental behaviour change forming part of Defra's forthcoming Behaviour Change Strategy. We do not dwell here on different models, other than to note that most are predicated on four basic groups and reinforce the need for distinct social marketing strategies in each case:

- **Engaged consumers** – sometimes called deep greens, pioneers or 'highs' - who are very engaged with the issues and proactively seek out alternatives and new behaviours;
- **Aspirational consumers** – otherwise known as light greens or 'mediums' – who are interested but passive and look to adopt behaviours established by the pioneers on an ad hoc or 'pick and mix' basis;
- **Basic engagement consumers** – often referred to as 'lows' – who, akin to dipping a toe in the water, do some things but are constrained from doing more; and
- **Disengaged consumers** - who actively resist or are constrained from undertaking environmental behaviours

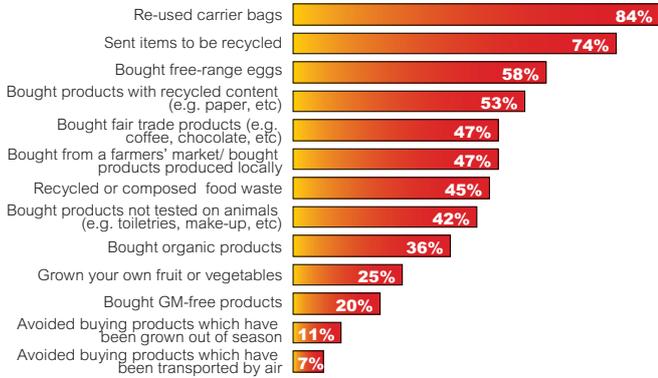
If these models establish the profile of sustainable consumption, from a communications and social marketing perspective there are well established Maslowian categorisations: the inner-directed or pioneers of change (Pioneers), the outer directed status seekers (Prospectors) and the security and sustenance driven (Settlers). Each group has very different emotional needs and very different attitudes towards risk²⁵.

²⁴ Gladwell, M (2000) *The Tipping Point: How little things can make a big difference*

²⁵ *Appropriate framing of climate change communications and the creation of effective calls to action*, Gallie et al, 2004

Environmental behaviours

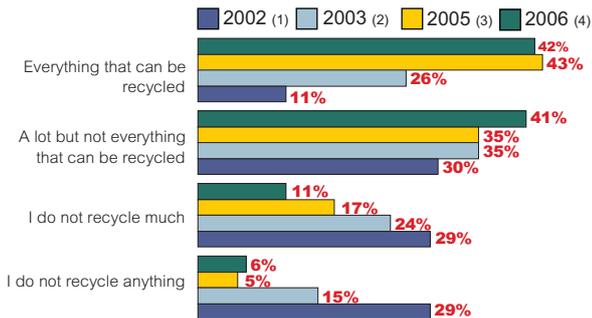
Q: Can you tell me which of the things from the following list, if any, you have done in the last 12 months?



Base: All adults 16 – 64 (1,131), April 2007

Radical behaviour change possible

Q: Looking at this card, which, if any, of the following statements comes closest to how much you recycle?



Base: (1) 1,300 residents 16+, face-to-face, in-home, London Western Riverside, Oct-Nov 2002, (2) 1,314 residents aged 16+, October-November 2003 (3) 1,249 residents aged 16+, March-April 2005 (4) 1,225 respondents aged 16+, 19 June – 21 July 2006

Here, the proportion claiming to recycle 'everything that can be recycled' has almost quadrupled over four years.

In the face of these successes it is tempting to conclude that all is well and that the behavioural shifts are well under way. However, there is more to this story than meets the eye and evidence elsewhere calls for a sharp reality check.

First, aside from a few behaviours, many of the trends we are observing are fledgling and the result of a relatively small number of active individuals becoming increasingly systematic in their lifestyles and consumption choices. Even organic food, for example, still accounts for a relatively small share of the total market in spite of its impressive growth, while other behaviours continue to remain at the margins.

Second, many key prevailing trends – the amount the public fly and drive as well as the number and size of electrical goods they aspire to and buy - continue to head in the wrong direction. A focus solely on these trends is in danger of perpetuating a form of 'Mississippi fallacy' - concentrating on a few little boats struggling upstream while ignoring the volume of water heading in the opposite direction²⁷. Indeed, what the OECD²⁸ refers to as the "infrastructure of consumption" remains intact. Household energy consumption, for example, has actually risen by 40% since 1990. In fact, our deliberative

ii. What are we already doing?

Alongside the unprecedented growth in environmental awareness, debate and policy, the past decade has also seen the emergence of a series of environmental and ethical behaviours. From niche, humble and often very worthy beginnings, some of these have now reached the social and commercial mainstream (recycling, energy conservation, free range eggs, organic food and fair trade, for example) while others lie in wait (e.g. microgeneration, carbon offsetting and 'responsible' tourism).

The Ethical Purchasing Index²⁶, a barometer of ethical spending in the UK, shows that in 2004 UK consumers spent a total of £25.8 billion in line with their values, an increase of 15% on the previous year. Ethical columns and supplements now feature in several national newspapers – both broadsheet and tabloid – while The Sun has its own spin by enticing its readers to "go green with Keely". We have tracked this growth in environmentally friendly and ethical behaviours, and recent data suggests how mainstream certain behaviours have apparently become.

Recycling is clearly the success story, with large and rapid shifts in certain parts of the country. One such example is in London Western Riverside, which we have tracked on behalf of Waste Watch to assess the impact of their social marketing campaign *alongside* changes in infrastructure and collection systems.

²⁶ *The Ethical Consumerism Index 2005*, The Cooperative Bank, New Economics Foundation and The Future Foundation

²⁷ *Redefining prosperity: Resource productivity, economic growth and sustainable development*, UK Sustainable Development Commission 2003

²⁸ *Towards Sustainable Household Consumption? Trends and Policies in OECD Countries*, OECD 2002

research suggests that many consumers do not perceive a need for a fundamental change in their behaviour in response to climate change. Rather, there is a feeling that life can and should continue as it has done, with green issues to be taken into consideration around the margins of day-to-day behaviour.

"I went to buy some asparagus the other day, I picked it up (and saw it was from Peru), and put it back down again. That's where I am about these issues."

Female, 35-54, AB

Third, there is a question of whether these behaviours are things that the public do habitually and comprehensively, or occasionally and piecemeal. Our recent research for the Environment Agency - using an unprompted question - suggests the latter is at least partly true and that our behaviours may in fact be less systematic and coherent than prompted questions would suggest. The most frequently cited response - by 37% - is "I am not doing anything" while 23% cite recycling as their top, and often only, response. A similar proportion say they 'don't know'.

There is therefore a serious question as to the speed and take up of low carbon behaviours - can these be encouraged as rapidly and systematically as the Government believes they need to? This is the focus of the subsequent sections.

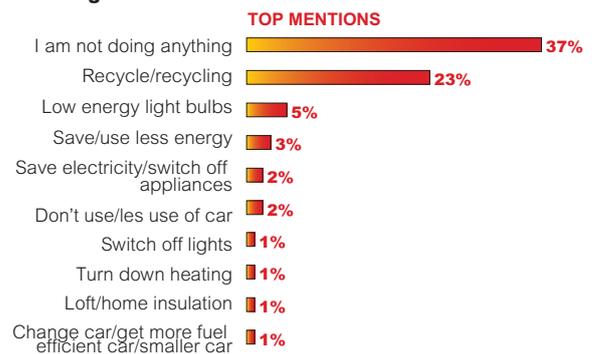
Trends towards a low carbon lifestyle

- less than 1% of the population has switched to an energy company supplying renewably-sourced electricity;
- under 0.3% has installed a form of renewable micro-generation such as solar PV or thermal panels;
- purchases of highly-efficient cars represent less than 0.2% of new cars sold;
- just 2% of people claim to offset their emissions from flying.

Source: Positive Energy: Harnessing people power to prevent climate change, IPPR 2007

Efforts to tackle climate change

Q: What is the number one thing you are doing to tackle climate change?



Base: 2,130 British adults, 9-15th and 23-29 March 2007

iii. What more are we willing to do?

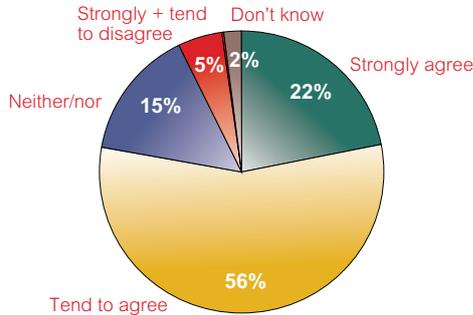
At face value the public appear willing to go further to change their behaviour - the majority agree they would personally be prepared to change their behaviour to help limit climate change, although agreement for many is not particularly strong.

Two challenges are evident. First, the public - when asked to identify what actions they could take that would have the most impact on climate change - do not identify those with the larger carbon footprint. So, as the graph below demonstrates, most identify recycling. In contrast, those behaviours with larger CO2 implications - such as flying on holiday less - are actually at the wrong end of the scale (our work in other areas has also identified low public awareness of certain carbon intensive choices, such as high levels of meat consumption).

In fact, the prominence of recycling - a success story in its right - gives rise to a concern that, in the context of climate change, it is a 'totem' behaviour that acts as a block on wider action across a suite of behaviours. It may also suggest that individuals may be using recycling as a means of discharging their responsibility to undertake wider changes in lifestyle (in the same way as

Willingness to change behaviour

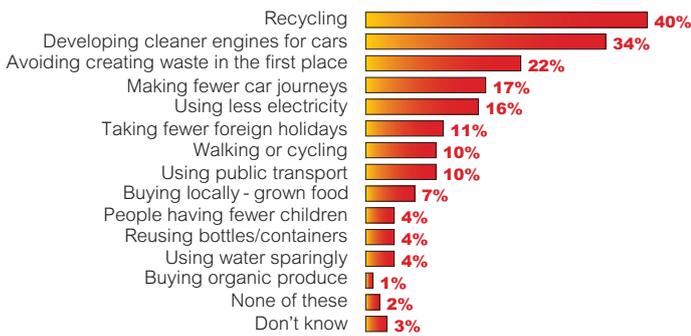
**Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following:
I would be prepared to change my behaviour to help limit climate change?**



Source: DfT, August 2006 NS Omnibus. Base number = 1,218

Which behaviours? Perceptions of impact on climate change

Q: Which of the actions on this list, if any, do you think will do the most to help reduce climate change?

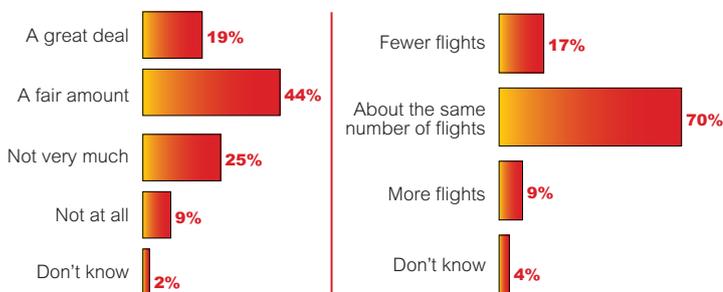


Source: All respondents 2,037. Fieldwork dates: 14th – 20th June 2007

Flying: concern v behaviour

Qa: To what extent, if at all, would you say you are concerned about environmental damage caused by air travel?

Qb: In the next 12 months do you think you will take...?



Base: Qa – All respondents 2,037. Fieldwork dates: 14th – 20th June 2007; Qb – 2,012 adults, 1-3 June 2007 (ICM/Airport Watch)

some argue that giving to Comic Relief once a year gives only the illusion of fulfilling obligations to the developing world).

Second, recent deliberative work for the Commission for Integrated Transport suggests that *caveats* and *opt outs* play an important part in the discourse of what the public are willing to adopt. For each individual there is a balance between the behaviour they consider best for the environment and what is acceptable to them in terms of time, effort, money and, perhaps most of all, the restrictions on personal mobility and consumption. The behaviours most jealously guarded are those that provide individuals with a high degree of personal utility or mobility.

Transport is a case in point. The car is something of an icon for personal freedom but traffic congestion and pollution consistently feature near the top of most respondents' "to do" lists in our surveys for local authorities. Aviation is another, and recently our surveys have found growing public support for a policy aimed at slowing down the growth in air travel, even if they remain hostile to taxation and increasing the cost of flying. Deliberative work uncovers a complex picture, with people's willingness to consider personal behaviour change lagging behind their support for the principle of environmentally friendly policies. This may help explain why what the public say they'll do does not always match with what they *actually* do.

Indeed, on the subject of what the public are currently doing in respect of aviation, there is a gap between our recent survey on attitudes and ICM's recent survey on intended behaviour in the next 12 months. While the proportion who say they are 'very' concerned about the impact of flying on climate change closely tallies with the number who say they are in fact cutting back on how often they fly, this is not true of the group who say they are fairly concerned. Indeed, the prevailing pattern is that of 'business as usual', with 70% saying they intend to carry on taking as many flights as they do currently.

This suggests that we are willing to take action and "do our bit", but so long as it doesn't intrude or impinge on the most important aspects of our lifestyles. As Tara Garnett of the Food and Climate Research Network²⁹ asserts, the public act "sporadically, inconsistently and when it suits/doesn't inconvenience them". So the

idea of giving up cheap foreign holidays, for example, is simply non-negotiable at the current time. More research is needed to test different scenarios and trade offs around sacrifices, sanctions and rewards.

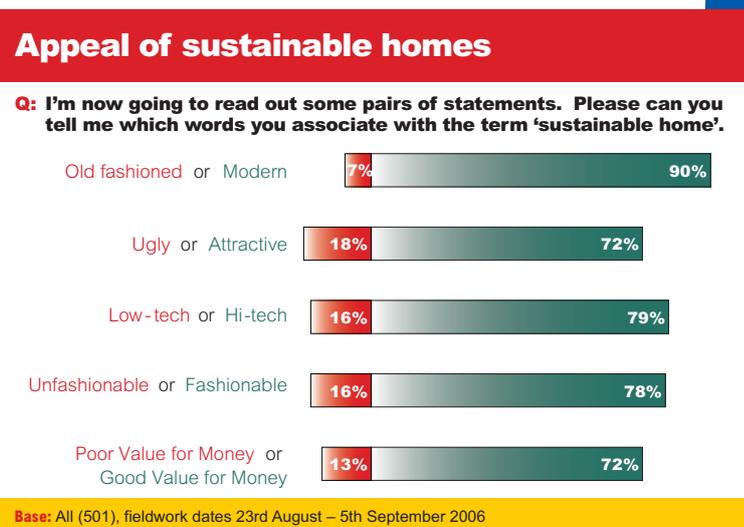
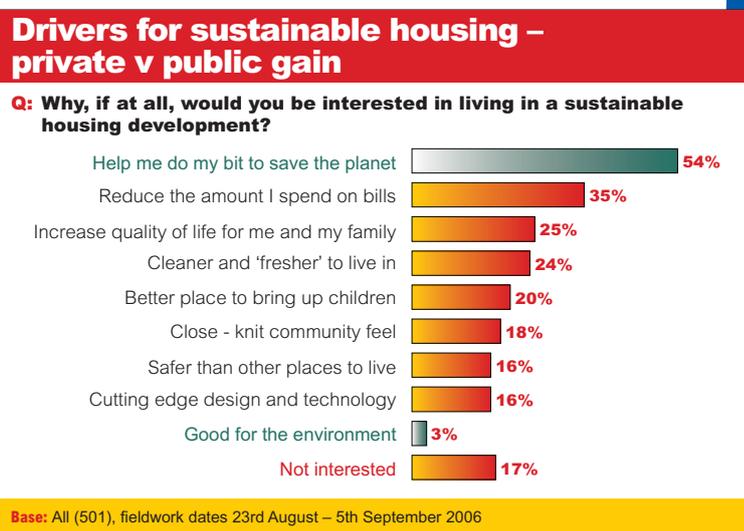
iv. What underpins our willingness (or resistance) to change?

The report has already reflected on a number of barriers to change and challenges for social marketing – for example ‘buy into’ the climate change message itself, uncertainty about what best to do about it and trust in Government and business to do “the right thing” rather than simply use climate change as a means of raising revenue and improving profit margins, respectively.

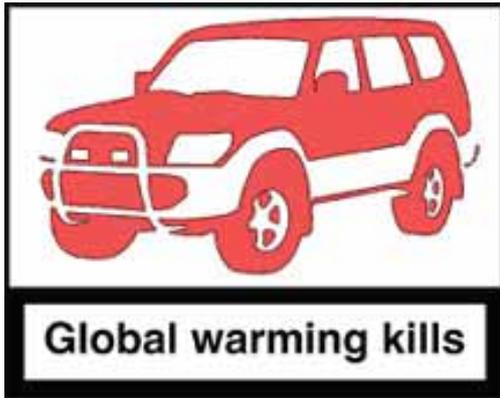
Here, in relation to the range of influences that mediate the public’s willingness to undertake low carbon actions, we identify four more that are particularly worthy of further discussion:

Aspirations and desires - environmental behaviours clearly stand a better chance of adoption if they are set within the grain of prevailing aspirations rather than against them. As Green Engage Communications note in *Painting the Town Green*, there is a need to consider the prevailing orthodoxy behind certain behaviours in order to understand their root cause. In the case of lower washing temperatures, people have hitherto resisted washing at 30°C because they believe 40°C is needed to make clothes clean, pristine and ‘safe’. Much has been made of the demise of the “rational man” model of decision making, although the fact that individuals do not always act in an *economically* optimum manner does not necessarily mean that their choice sets are any less rational, simply that our definition of rational needs also to encompass social, psychological and emotional factors – we do things to fit it, for status and for love.

Therefore, these are the messages and motivations that offer opportunities to reposition low carbon products as desirable and sought after. For some products there are already some encouraging signs. Eco-cars, for example, have long been derided by many and certainly not an aspirational or positional good, although there are indications that public attitudes are changing in response to aesthetic, as much as technical, advancement by car manufacturers. Sustainable housing is another case in point, and our recent research for Sponge Network shows that consumers identify a range of private, ‘quality of life’ benefits as well as more altruistic ‘doing my bit’ rationale. Moreover, the language used to describe a sustainable home is perhaps most instructive of all, demonstrating the potential to re-frame traditional environmental associations (worthy, collectivist, self sacrifice) as ‘modern’, ‘stylish’, ‘healthy’ and ‘fashionable’.



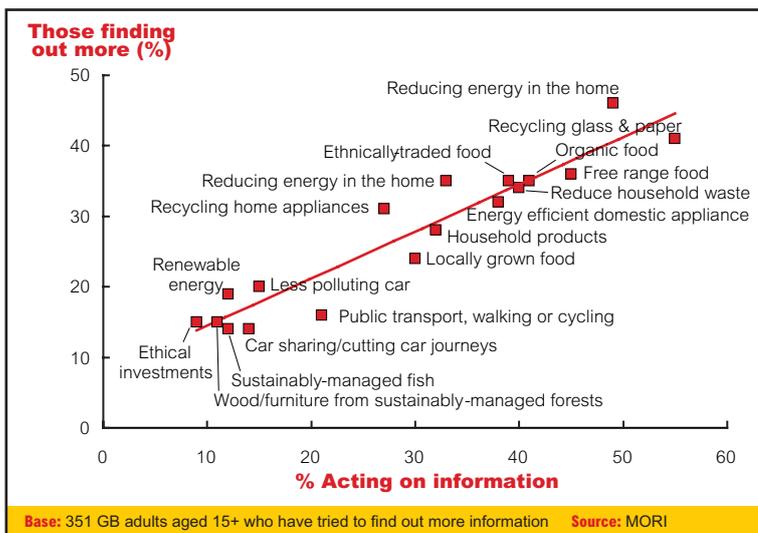
In a similar vein, Governor Schwarzenegger comments that the environmental movement needs to shed its “tree-hugging weirdo” past and embrace a new confident “sexy” image as it enters the mainstream. There is no doubting the power of establishing and using effective behaviour change ‘hooks’ - whether these are financial, health-related or fashion based. Deliberative techniques can be particularly effective at establishing underlying motivations – our work for Transport for London on cycling demonstrated the importance of communicating the cycling for leisure message as a ‘bridging’ behaviour to commuting by bike.



Social norms - personal wants and desires are strongly influenced and moderated by social norms. In short, the public look to others for guidance and clues on how to behave³⁰, and Tim Jackson³¹ distinguishes between two types of social norms: ‘Descriptive norms’ that teach us how most people around us behave; and injunctive norms’ which alert us to what is sanctioned or punished in society. Both of these norms allow scope to encourage pro-environmental behaviour, either in terms of making such behaviours more commonplace and desirable, or making unsustainable behaviours less so.



To an extent there has already been some evidence of this. There is little doubt that descriptive norms have played a key role in normalising recycling, as have injunctive norms in stigmatising ‘wastefulness’. Furthermore, campaigns against 4x4s – whether by the public³² or by policy³³ - also illustrate the use of injunctive norms. Indeed, as Solitaire Townsend puts it, “if a big 4x4 is such an embarrassment that their kids don’t want to be dropped off at school in it, then that’s a success for us. You can’t stop people wanting status symbols, but you can make them aspire to different ones”. Again, signals from government are very important here, for example the increased road tax for high emission vehicles which – even if not economically punitive for the owners themselves – still reinforce and demonstrate injunctive norms to the public at large.



Information – there has been much discussion of late about the inadequacies of ‘information only’ campaigns. As Paul Steedman notes in research for the National Consumer Council³⁴, “information alone, even when simple, accurate, well presented and action focused, will be insufficient to produce the shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption”. Our research supports the assertion that just because consumers are provided with information, or say they are interested in finding out more, it does not necessarily mean that action will follow. For example, our research for DfT in the run up to the carbon labels for cars, based on the A-G guide for White goods, found 80%+ of consumers said information on CO2 emissions would be *useful*. However, when asked about the factors *important* to them in choosing a car, only a small percentage cited environmental concern or carbon emissions.

³⁰ Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: The State of Knowledge and its Implications for Public Policy, Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit 2004

³¹ Motivating Sustainable Consumption, Tim Jackson in SDRN Briefing One

³² See www.stopurban4x4.org.uk, or http://www.whatwouldjesusdrive.org/

³³ Recent policy measures linking parking charges to a vehicle’s emissions, e.g. Richmond

³⁴ Desperately Seeking Sustainability, National Consumer Council 2005

Nonetheless, information should not be dismissed too quickly, and very evidently can play a key role in behaviour change. For example, research by Ipsos MORI – again for the National Consumer Council - established a correlation between the level of information sought and propensity to act upon it. Therefore, the debate appears to be more about which *kinds* and what *level* of information is needed to help facilitate, if not trigger, behaviour change.

Ease of action – there is a strong public demand for sustainable choices that are simple, easy and straightforward. This is equally true for the behaviours we undertake on ‘autopilot’ as well as the big choices the public make at key consumption points (i.e. which fridge to buy, or which airline to fly with). The barriers in each case will be different and issue-specific. Using recycling as just one example, the key barriers are around ‘amenities’, i.e. in home storage and local infrastructure, and effective systems have arguably made recycling as easy an option as throwing something in the bin. To this end it has reached a point where it is less a green choice and more a household norm. A similar model is likely for household energy management where cost savings and personal habits are likely to be more powerful factors than environmental concern.

Life stage – surveys have rightly become increasingly sensitive to variations in climate change behaviour across different sub sections of the public. Here, a recent survey by Forum for the Future paints an interesting picture of attitudes among young people, whose habits and values will clearly be key as they become economically active and their consumption increases. The study, of university applicants, found that the vast majority thought that in 25 years time the effects of climate change would be “hitting the world” hard. James Goodman of Forum concludes that *“this group is super-engaged on climate change but they may not be thinking about doing something about it for a few years”*. Another key demographic is the ageing population and in particular the “baby boomer” generation who are nearing retirement and have higher levels of disposable income compared to previous cohorts. While concerned about climate change, we recently found that they “plan to take as many holidays if not more” in the next 10-15 years.

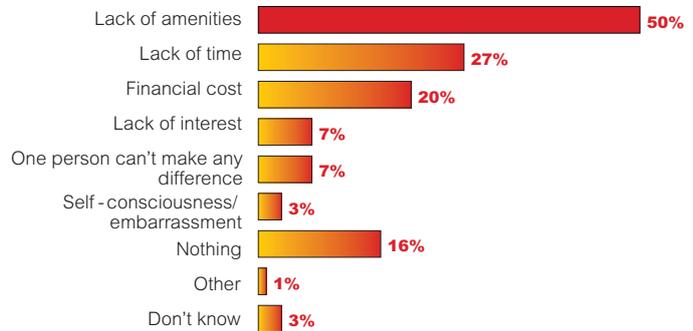
This mix of behavioural change intervention points and levers provides government with a much more sophisticated toolbox of policy instruments with which to stimulate consumer demand. Indeed, as Tim Jackson notes:³⁵

“The rhetoric of ‘consumer sovereignty’ and ‘hands off’ governance is inaccurate and unhelpful. Policy makers are not innocent bystanders in the negotiation of consumer choice. Policy intervenes continually in consumer behaviour both directly (e.g. through regulation and taxes) and more importantly through its extensive influence over the social context within which people act. This insight offers a far more creative vista for policy than has hitherto been recognised”.

³⁵ *Motivating Sustainable Consumption*, Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRN) briefing one

Acting responsively isn't easy

Q: Which, if any, of these things would most prevent you recycling or being more environmentally friendly?

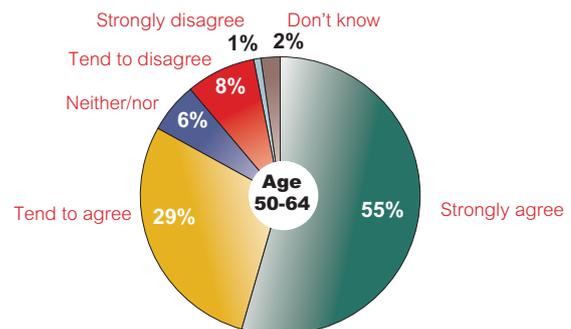


Base: 957 GB Adults aged 15+, May 2002 (face-to-face, in-home)

Travel aspirations: baby boomers

Q: To what extent to do agree or disagree with the following statements?

'I plan to take as many if not more holidays over the coming 10-15 years'



Base: 144 British Adults aged 50-64, 2nd-4th June 2006

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND REFLECTIONS FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE POLICY AND PRACTICE

The report has provided a wide range of data on the subject of climate change. On attitudes it has shown that many have bought into the concept and are concerned about its implications, while for others the debate is far from over and more information and discussion is required. In terms of who should take the lead, Government is widely considered the main actor to effect change and industry a key means of implementing it.

Turning to behaviour, the environment has long been a litmus issue when it comes to the clash between individualist consumerism and wider world citizenship, and our research indeed finds conflicting and competing mindsets. The public are keen to protect their own individual lifestyles and choices but, at the same, appreciative and supportive of the need for change. They look to Government and business to act on their behalf, but aren't always so sure when a specific policy or price premium looms into view.

This pattern is evident throughout the climate change debate. The public want to avert climate change and play their part *but at the same time* they also want to go on holiday, drive to work, own a second (or third or fourth) home and buy the latest electrical products. This climate change equivalent of Orwellian *Doublethink*, or cognitive polyphasia, does not mean the public don't care about the environmental consequences, but rather, for certain behaviours and en masse, they don't care enough. They hope for technical innovations or efficiency improvements – such as airplanes and cars that don't emit CO2 - rather than contemplate radical changes in lifestyle.

Where does this leave behaviour change policy and social marketers, especially on the big issues of aviation and car travel? We argue that the research community need new ways of understanding the tensions pulling the public in different directions and the way they elect to trade off, or simply ignore, competing demands. Detailed quantitative research allied to deliberative fora offer an important avenue for research and, in this respect, the forthcoming results from Defra's research³⁶ on sustainable consumption and production will be very important.

Furthermore, we believe that modelling on the basis of semiotics offers an important and insightful method for social marketers to go beyond segmentation by socio-demographics alone. **This approach recognises not only that individuals vary from one another in their attitudes and behaviour, but also that they face conflicts within themselves as they shift between, and adapt to, different situations and surroundings.** The key battlegrounds here are between the public's citizen and consumer personas, their perceptions about their rights and responsibilities, and their aspirations and values. It is

³⁶ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/>

also something we have explored in the context of different policy agendas in our recent *Blair's Britain Report*³⁷.

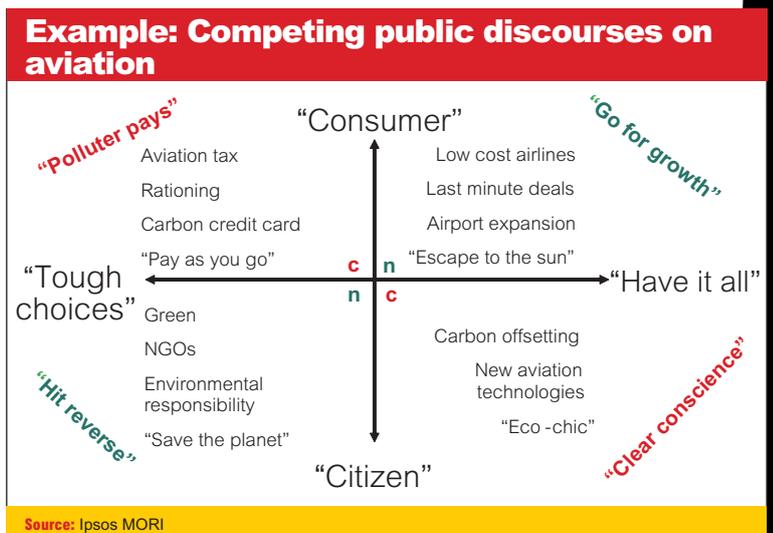
To explore this idea further, the graph below explores the issue of aviation through two axis – on one the conflicts between “tough choices” and the “have it all” mindset, and on the other the tension between “consumer” and “citizen” oppositions.

The *consumer/have it all* perspective provides us with our mainstream discourse. We have described this as “Go for growth”, and here individual and consumer needs

are paramount and the arguments in favour of low cost airlines, frequent holidays, and airport expansions. These are currently well embedded in our mindsets and remain in the ascendancy. In contrast, the *tough choices/citizen* mapping, on the bottom left, is the directly opposing argument and, in the context of aviation, is currently a minority position. This is the discourse of NGOs and involves stopping, limiting or reversing development. It could be tagged as “Hit reverse”.

If these are the norms of discourse on aviation then behavioural change policy and social marketing will need to find ways to disrupt this dichotomy.

While emerging efforts are currently in their infancy, the focus has been on the actions outlined in the *have it all/citizen* quadrant to the bottom right. These actions attempt to resolve the tension between peoples’ desire for greater personal mobility and foreign travel on the one hand, and their recognition that this carries with it negative environmental impacts on the other. They represent a combination of supply side measures - including technological advances in the efficiency of aircraft – alongside social marketing and behaviour change tools to encourage the development of either “eco-chic” or “eco conscious” behaviours. Here, the behaviour itself remains intact but efforts are made to mitigate negative impacts, such as voluntary carbon offsets or choosing an environmentally conscious travel company or airline (helped, for example, by some airline companies’ efforts to adopt a version of the colour code label for white goods or promote the efficiency of their fleet).



Source: Ipsos MORI

³⁷ *Blair's Britain: the cultural legacy 1997-2007*, Ipsos-Mori 2007

In addition, the current debate on aviation and its environmental footprint has triggered a consideration of actions in the top left, *consumer/tough choices* part of the map. Examples include the possibility of incorporating aviation within the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, or directly increasing taxation on aviation (whether on a per passenger or per flight basis). This section of the map contains a contradiction; assumptions of consumer rights and benefits, along with an assumption that tough choices must be made. At the current time the public do not seem as willing to countenance tough choices, and issues of taxation in relation to aviation are generally perceived negatively. Choice and the presence of alternatives may have a strong bearing on public buy in – calls to single out domestic and short haul flights, for example, may have more resonance with the public given that comparable alternatives exist (even if they are not always perceived as competitive).

This framework, in our judgement, offers social marketers and decision makers an important means with which to develop a more sensitive and targeted package of social marketing, commercial and legislative measures to bring about the shift to low carbon lifestyles.

And what of social marketing itself? The research indeed points to the versatility of social marketing and its potential role in selling policy ideas as well as products, services and/or lifestyles. It confirms that social marketing offers a wider, and more sophisticated, range of options than communications and information alone. However, it also demonstrates that social marketing is most effective as part of a wider package of behaviour change interventions and legislative shifts, rather than acting in isolation. Political leadership and courage remain vitally important ingredients of the success, or otherwise, of major policy shifts. A range of measures will be required, simultaneously and on a number of fronts, in order to meet the challenge of climate change, and ensure that the public are truly engaged, encouraged and enabled to play their part in adopting low carbon behaviours.

TIPPING POINT
OR TURNING POINT?

SOCIAL MARKETING & CLIMATE CHANGE



Ipsos MORI

Social Research Institute



Environment
Ipsos MORI

79-81 Borough Road
London SE1 1FY

t +44 (0)20 7347 3000

f +44 (0)20 7347 3800

e phil.downing@ipsos-mori.com

www.ipsos-mori.com