

Edinburgh Talks Climate Survey Results

May 2020



Climate-KIC is supported by the
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Overview

Last year, a landmark report by the United Nations warned that, unless urgent action is taken, the opportunity to avoid the worst effects of climate change will be missed.

The City of Edinburgh Council recognises the vital role of local government in addressing climate change and in May 2019 formally declared a climate emergency and committed for the city to reach net-zero by 2030.

We invited citizens to provide their views on the climate emergency through a survey. The results have helped us to begin a conversation about how we act locally to safeguard the planet for future generations.

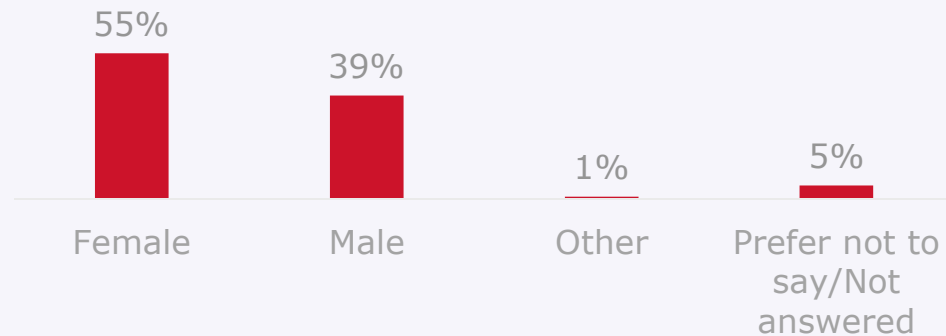
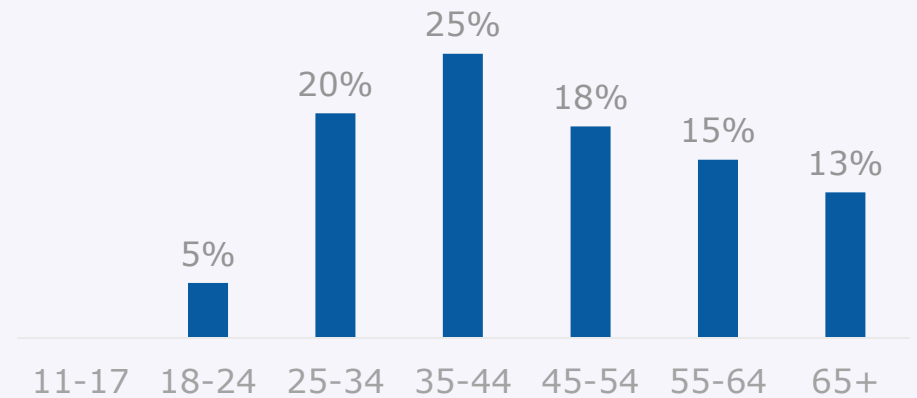
Method

- An online survey was run on Edinburgh's Consultation Hub (from Nov 2019 – Apr 2020) to understand citizens knowledge and attitude towards climate change and action.
- The questionnaire was based on the approach taken by Leeds, developed with input from Leeds University, and feedback from our own partners at ECCI.
- Interest was generated through network communications and targeted social media advertising designed to appeal to a broad set of attitudes.
- Factors associated with the Coronavirus crisis curtailed the response rate towards the latter stages of the survey. Along with all other consultations run by the Council, the survey was suspended earlier than planned due to accessibility reasons.
- It is recognised that the survey was self-selecting and those with an interest in climate change were more likely to respond. Further engagement work is being carried out to target a more diverse range of Edinburgh residents.

Survey responses

1,834 responses received

- 77% of respondents are home owners.
- Majority are aged between 25-64.
- Demographics show under-representation of under 24 and males.
- Majority have a high awareness of the topic area and a lot are already taking action on specific areas.



81% were concerned about the effects of climate change on them personally.

95% were concerned about the effects of climate change on future generations.

70% with children told us their children wanted them to take action to fight climate change.

Responsibility for tackling climate change

There was strong consensus that the private sector and the public sector have responsibility for reducing their own carbon footprint as well as helping citizens make more sustainable choices. Encouragingly, 87% of participants agreed that actions by individuals could help tackle climate change.

My actions can help tackle climate change



Businesses have a responsibility to reduce their own carbon footprint and make it easier for individuals to make environmentally-friendly choices



Public sector organisations have a responsibility to reduce their own carbon footprint and make it easier for individuals to make environmentally-friendly choices



N=1,834

■ Strongly agree ■ Tend to agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Tend to disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Responsibility for tackling climate change

However, a small minority of respondents (6%) disagreed that their actions can help tackle climate change. Comments included:

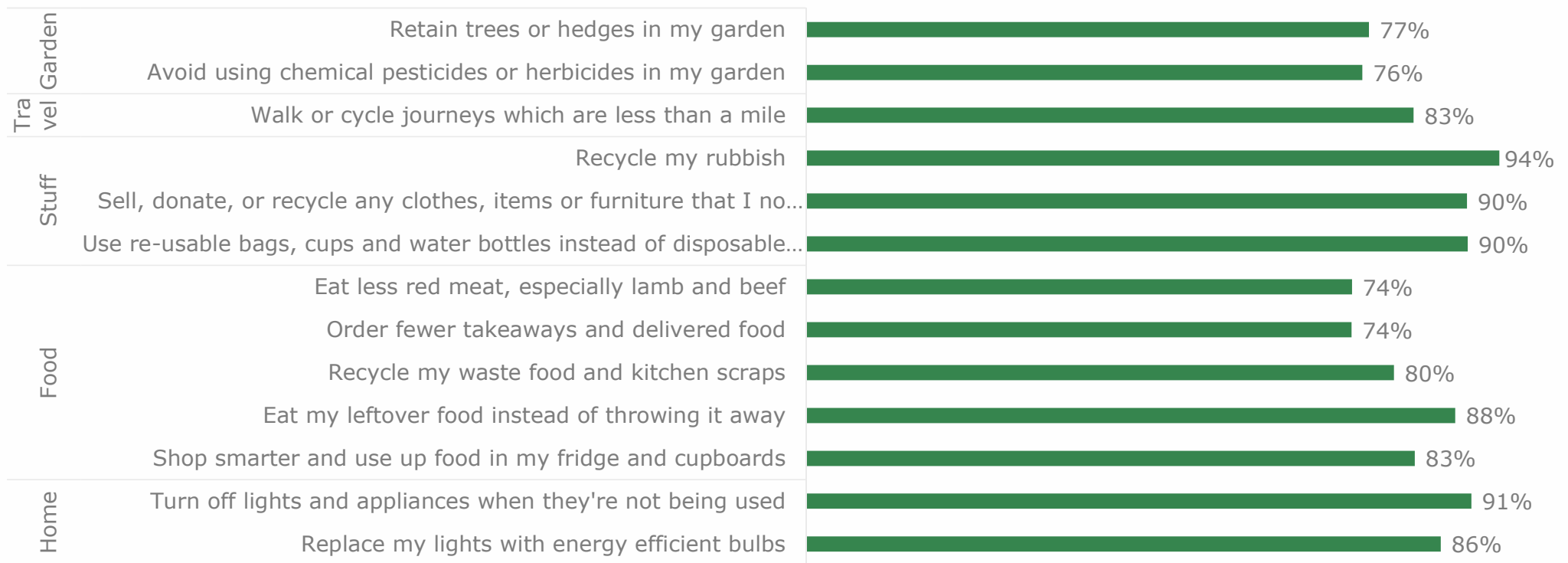
- *"I don't believe change by individual citizens is as important as systemic change i.e. tightening the regulatory framework around the corporations funding the fossil fuel industry. It will be hard to convince an individual to recycle more when corporations are such massive polluters that an individual's carbon footprint is irrelevant in comparison."*
- *"Unless America, China and India (the world's biggest polluters and contributors to climate change), change and introduce strict agreements/policies on their environment and work practices, then what we do in our country, is inconsequential globally. It does, however, makes us feel better that at least we are trying to do the right thing for the planet in our own small way."*

Actions people already take

Large proportions of respondents told us that they were already taking individual action with many things:

I already do this....

N=1,834



Actions people are willing to take

A substantial proportion of respondents were willing to make further individual changes:

I will do this...



N=1,834

Actions people are not willing to take

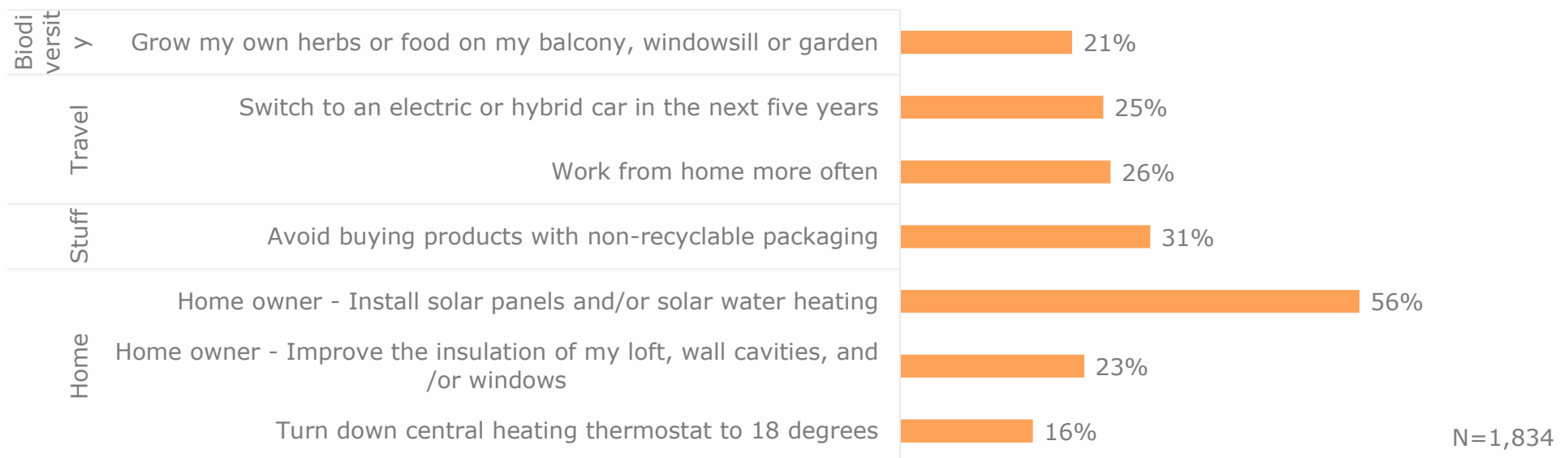
Actions respondents were less willing to take:

- When it came to food, a sizable proportion of respondents were willing to eat less dairy (21%). However, a substantial proportion were not willing to eat less dairy (31%).
- Most respondents were not willing to eat only a vegetarian diet (51%).
- In addition, 23% of home owners were not willing to install low-flowing fitting to taps/showers and 30% were not willing to convert hard surfaces to garden or lawn in their garden.

Actions people are willing to take but barriers prevent them

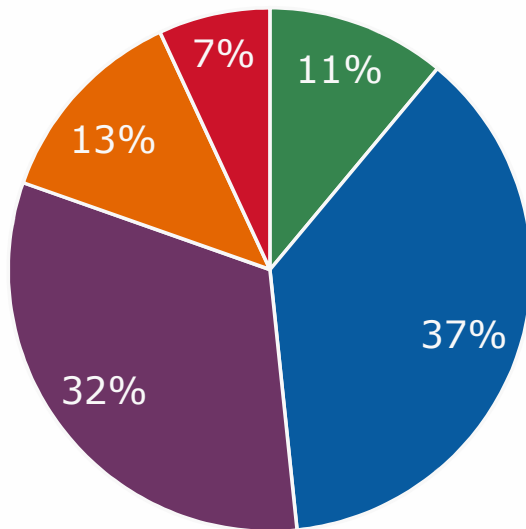
Respondents also told us that they were willing to act, yet, there were some recognisable barriers preventing them from doing so. Examples of actions respondents would take if barriers did not prevent them include:

I would do this, but barriers prevent me...



Actions people are willing to take but barriers prevent them

A considerable 69% of those living in rented accommodation are willing to pay more for a property that is more energy efficient, however, just under half of this group say that barriers prevent them from doing this.

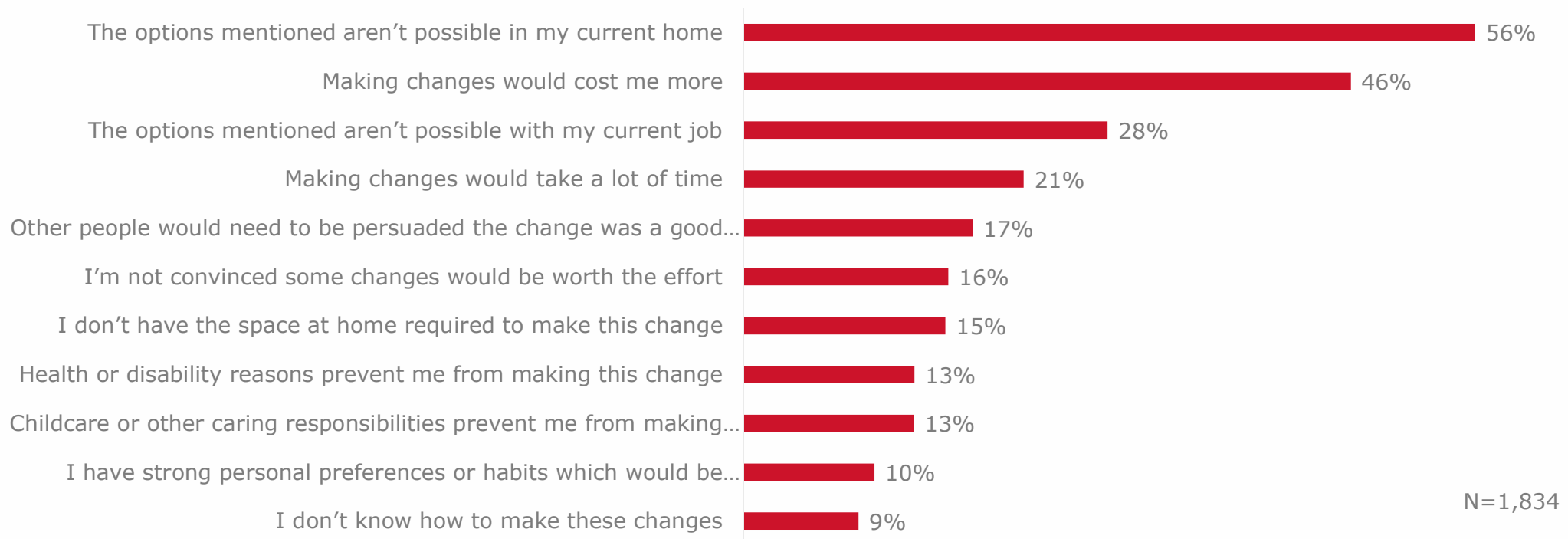


- I already do this
- I am willing to do this
- I would do this, but barriers prevent me
- I won't do this
- Don't know/No opinion

N = 363

Barriers preventing people from taking action

Circumstances around housing and employment, along with the cost and time of making changes, topped the list of barriers preventing residents for taking action. Interestingly, 16% were not convinced some changes would be worth the effort and just under 10% didn't know how to make these changes, which could present areas for awareness raising.



Barriers preventing residents from taking action

"Working from home is not an option with my job as it requires specialist equipment and software"

"Shared tenement makes gardening sustainably a source of conflict. Listed building status of tenement and shared ownership makes solar PV impossible."

"We'd love to install solar or ground source heat and get more insulating windows but can't afford to. I don't drive but my partner would like to switch to an electric car but again we can't afford to yet."

"I would like to use a renewable source of home heating but the options are very limited and costs are prohibitive"

Barriers preventing residents from taking action

"Changes are not possible in current neighbourhood. E.g. within walking/cycling distance, there are only supermarkets that don't offer products with less packaging. So either I have to accept packaging, or I have to buy a car and drive somewhere else."

"I would love to cycle much more. I would cycle to the train station, to work and to the shops, but the roads are far too dangerous and frightening. I need segregated cycle lanes"

"We have a communal garden shared by many households. I don't know enough about gardening to argue for change in the way it is managed."

What else do you think the city's private and public sector organisations should be doing?

"We need really radical measures to discourage private car use in the city centre, with a total ban in many areas."

"Close offices, reduce staff travel, fewer employees."

"Make real change to move away from funding and endorsing the fossil fuel industry."

"More information to citizens... So many people don't consider it their responsibility to do things like plant bee friendly flowers. The recent awareness of plastic pollution has had some impact so the right awareness campaigns can make a difference."

- *"Close the city centre to private vehicles*
- *Introduce a no-mainland UK flights policy to workplaces*
- *Introduce far more vegetarian and vegan options into workplace food outlets*
- *Introduce workplace parking charging with the income being used to subsidise public transport for colleagues."*

"The climate issue can't be tackled in isolation to other sustainable measures needed in terms of social and economic development."

How is this data being used?

- Response to the survey is guiding our selection of ongoing engagement methods. Additional engagement work is being carried out to target a more diverse range of Edinburgh residents.
- Survey results will continue to shape weekly themes on our [Edinburgh Talks Climate online discussion forum](#). This will allow us to determine a level of support for sustainability ideas and activities, on topics such as travel, home energy and food waste, whilst encouraging citizens to share and learn from others, as well as take independent action.

What next?

- Findings from all our ongoing public engagement will be shared widely with teams within City of Edinburgh Council to help inform strategic planning and service delivery.
- Insights from our engagement work will also inform the development of our Sustainability Strategy for the city.

Thank you

