Savanta:

September 2021

Eco Index 2021: Will the Covid-19 recovery be green?

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all of our lives, but long-term the biggest impacts may be on the very world we live in.

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Has the global fightback against climate change suffered since Covid-19? Younger generations certainly think so.

This year's Savanta Eco Index, following on from last year's inaugural survey, reveals where people stand on a range of environmental issues and what action they want to see.

Savanta's latest Eco Index research, surveying over 6,000 respondents, explores attitudes to the environment in the UK, US and Canada. It also cuts the data by generation and gender, revealing how views differ demographically on such a widely debated topic.

For example, a key finding shows that 66% of Millennials and Generation Z in the UK, as well as the majority in the US and Canada, think the pandemic has slowed or reversed action against climate change.

At first glance this may seem surprising. During the worst of the Covid-19 crisis, there were times when it seemed the natural world may have the chance to rest and perhaps revive.

An unintentional benefit of imposing national lockdowns was an opportunity for the environment to show 'green shoots of recovery'. In some cases, this was true.

The global reduction in human activity – now known as the anthropause – is shown to have decreased daily levels of CO2 emissions by nearly a fifth year-on-year, according to a Nature Climate Change[1] article issued in July last year.

On the other hand, there is also clear evidence that worldwide, many governments let green policies fall off the agenda as they prioritised handling the economic fallout from Covid-19.

For example, deforestation in the Amazon rainforest increased 64% in April 2020 compared to the previous year, according to Reuters' analysis of data from Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE)[2]. This has been attributed to the scaling back of Brazil's environmental government agency after the coronavirus outbreak.

Despite heavy media focus on an unprecedented pandemic, coverage of environmental politics has never been higher.

Along with Covid-19, climate change was top of the agenda at this year's G7 summit. Recent high-profile documentaries have helped increase public awareness of environmental issues and the need for urgent action including – The Game Changers, A Life on Our Planet and Seaspiracy.

So, for the monumental post-pandemic economic rebuild, to what extent do we expect a green, government-led recovery – or are other issues more prominent? Do we all need to play our part? What role should be taken by the brands we buy from? These were key questions posed in our survey.

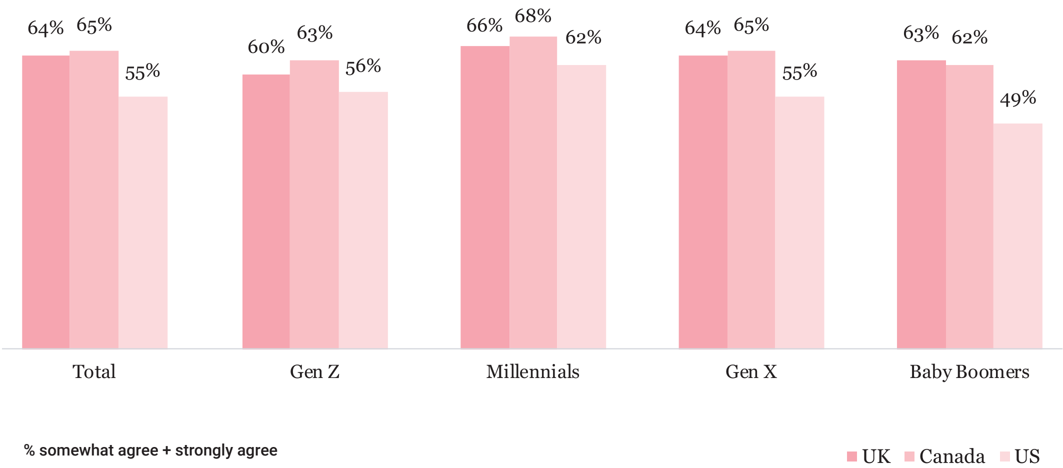
> *"The global reduction in human activity – now known as the anthropause – is shown to have decreased daily levels of CO2 emissions by nearly a fifth year-on-year"*

[1] Le Quéré, C., Jackson, R.B., Jones, M.W. et al; Temporary reduction in daily global CO2 emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement; Nat. Clim. Chang. 10, 647–653 (2020)
[2] Reuters staff; Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon surges, Bolsonaro readies troops; May 2020

Covid-19 and its impact on the environment

Chart 1: The level of agreement that the economic recovery from Covid-19 should prioritise a 'green recovery' and do so consistently

Q: To what extent, if at all, do you agree that [country]'s economic recovery from Covid-19 should prioritise a 'green recovery', that is, focusing on investment in clean energy, transport, heat and buildings?



% somewhat agree + strongly agree

In each country, the majority say the economic recovery from Covid-19 **should be green.**

The extraordinary financial implications of Covid-19 on individual countries mean that governments need to plan for years of economic measures to guide their recovery. This will likely mean cutting spending in some areas, but also investing in others to stimulate growth.

Chart 1 highlights how nearly two thirds in the UK (64%) and Canada (65%) think the economic recovery in their country from Covid-19 should prioritise a green recovery, focusing on investment in clean energy and infrastructure. The majority in the US (55%) also agree and in each country, Millennials are the most likely to approve – ranging from 62% in the US to 68% in Canada.

For many governments though, seeing through a green recovery will mean a significant shift away from their default policies. Recovery spending has only been 17% green so far according to the OECD[3] and this falls to 2% of total Covid-19 related spending.

One way the pandemic has made a visible impact on the world around us is through the amount of disposable face masks left lying in the streets, parks and the countryside. Nationwide collections firm TradeWaste claim a staggering 53m are sent to landfill every day in the UK[4].

Many want to see governments take decisive action against this new problem by introducing a financial levy to stop disposable masks being cheaper to buy than reusable ones. Nearly six in ten (59%) in the UK would support this and while the idea is less popular in the other countries, it has broad support amongst younger generations – particularly Gen Z, with 52% agreeing in the US and 57% in Canada.

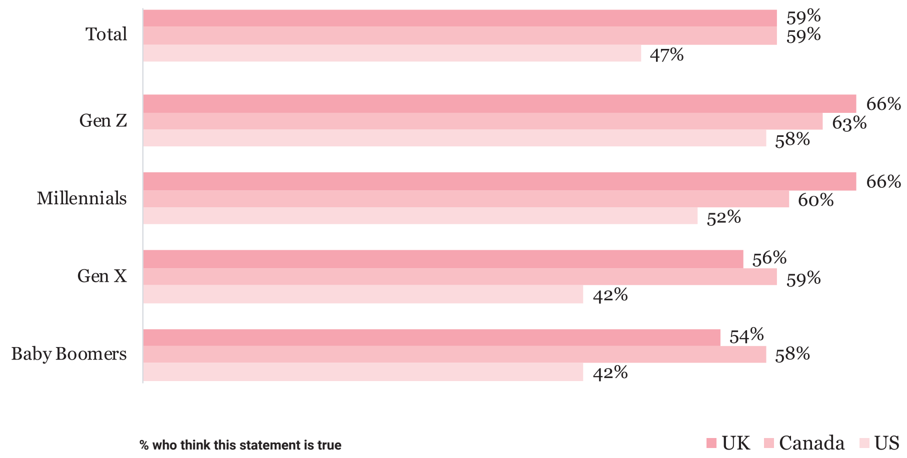
[3] OECD; The OECD Green Recovery Database: Examining the environmental implications of COVID-19 recovery policies; April 2021
[4] Charlotte Green; TradeWaste.co.uk; November 2020

> *"At least four in five think it's true that the effects of climate change are already apparent in their country."*

Ultimately the majority believe the focus on Covid-19 has resulted in a slowing down or even a reversal of action against climate change. Climate change is undoubtedly mainstream news now with 97% in the US, 98% in Canada and 99% in the UK saying they have heard of it. In the UK and Canada, 59% believe it's true that the pandemic has slowed or reversed action against climate change, and while only 47% agree in the US (see Chart 2), the majority of younger Americans think so – 52% of Millennials and 58% of Gen Z.

Chart 2: The level of agreement across generations that Covid-19 has slowed or reversed action against climate change by generation

Q: Is this statement true or false?
– The Covid-19 pandemic slowed or reversed action against climate change.

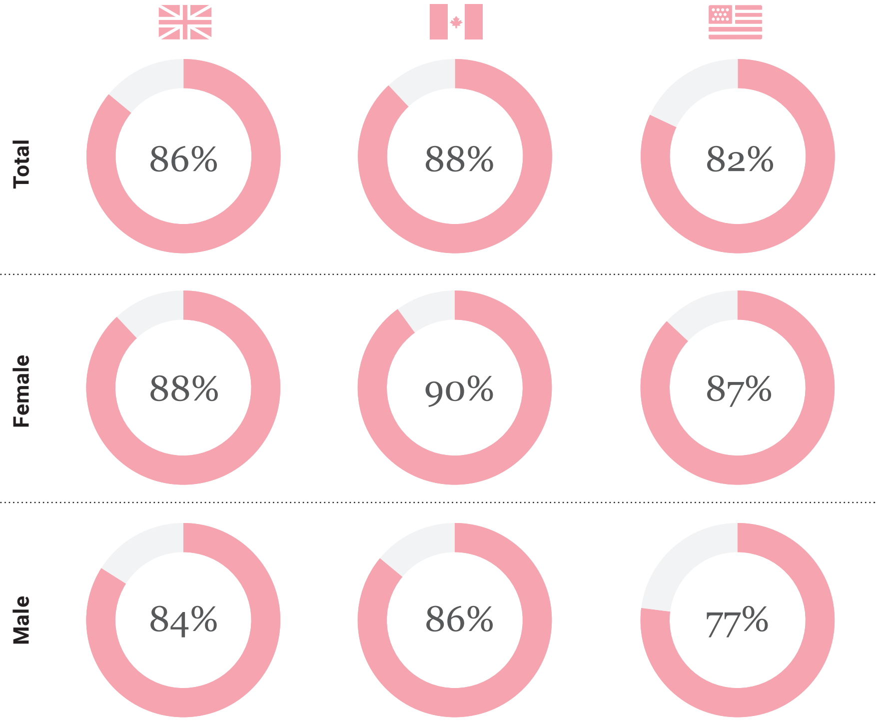


Something which most agree on though is that climate change is harming the world around us. As seen in Chart 3, at least four in five think it's true that the effects of climate change are already apparent in their country; 82% in the US, 86% in the UK and 88% in Canada.

Women are particularly aware of this – in each country they are significantly more likely to agree than men. Clearly there's some public concern, suggesting many would welcome meaningful action to combat climate change.

Chart 3: Those who believe they can see the effects of climate change already in their country

Is this statement true or false? The effects of climate change are already apparent in [country]



% who think this statement is true.

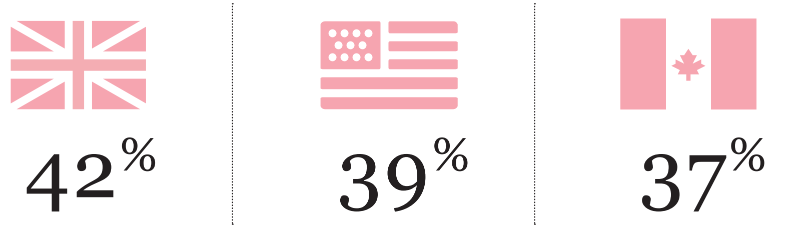
Climate change concerns

Worryingly though, the consensus is that countries won't meet their 2050 net zero emission targets intended to reduce global warming.

Outlined in the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015 – within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the UK, US and Canada are amongst the major economies worldwide pledging net zero emissions by the second half of the century[5], in order to fight the impacts of climate change.

However, it's seen as more unlikely than likely that the goal will be met. In the UK 42% think it's likely that the country will achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, compared to 46% who believe it's not. The ratio in the US is only 39% likely versus 47% unlikely and those in Canada are even more sceptical as only 37% think they will likely hit the target while more than half, 51%, believe they won't.

Q: I think it's likely that [country] will achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050

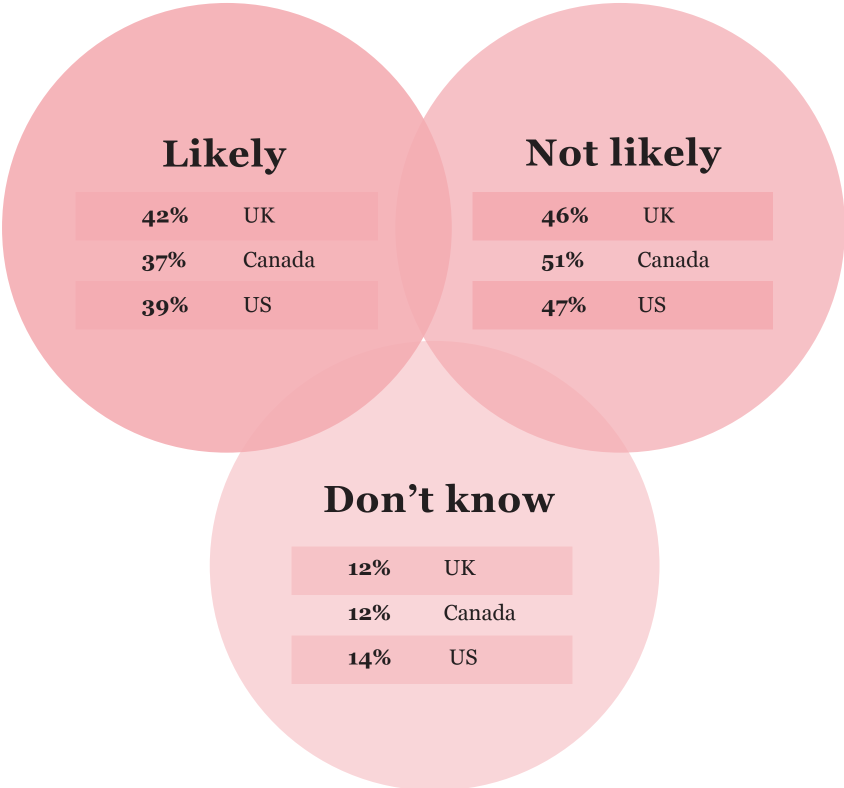


[5] UNFCCC; The Paris Agreement; December 2015

% saying quite likely + very likely

Chart 4: The level of agreement that countries will meet 2050 net zero emission targets to reduce global warming

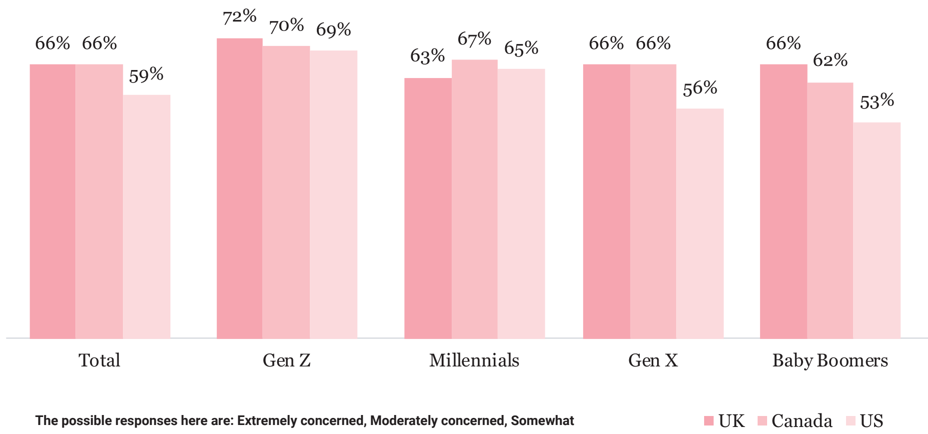
Q: How likely or unlikely do you think it is that [country] will hit the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050? Net zero refers to a state in which the greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere are balanced by removal out of the atmosphere.



% saying quite likely + very likely

Chart 5: The level of concern about climate change

How concerned are you about climate change?



The possible responses here are: Extremely concerned, Moderately concerned, Somewhat concerned, Slightly concerned and Not at all concerned. This chart shows the % of moderately + extremely concerned.

Perhaps this scepticism about meeting targets is behind overall concerns about climate change. The majority say they are concerned about climate change, ranging from 59% in the US to two thirds in the UK and Canada 66%.

Climate change concern is highest amongst Gen Z – some of whom will be in their late 30s by 2050. They will experience more of the impact in their lifetime than other generations. Hence, 69% of Gen Z in the US are concerned, rising to 70% in Canada and 72% in the UK.

In the US and Canada, women are significantly more likely to be concerned about climate change than men. The biggest divide is in the US, where it's 64% of women but just 53% of men.

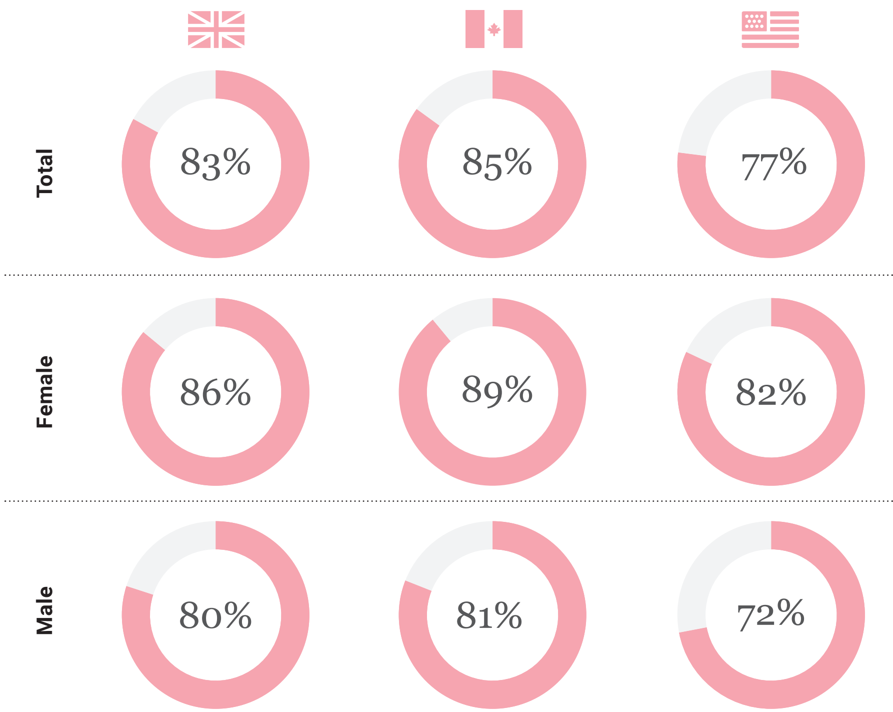
While some are more concerned about climate change than others, there's an overall mentality that our actions can have an impact – and everyone has a part to play.

At least three quarters in each country agree that when it comes to climate change, we should all do something because we can all make a difference. This is a sentiment shared by 77% in the US, 83% in the UK and 85% in Canada (see Chart 6) rising to 89% of Canadian women.

Dramatically, a high proportion of Millennials and Gen Z believe that the world will end if we don't take action. In the UK, US and Canada, these generations are significantly more likely to share this belief than Baby Boomers are.

Chart 6: The level of agreement that we can all make a difference in the fight against climate change by country

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the potential impact of your actions on climate change?
You should do something because we can all make a difference.



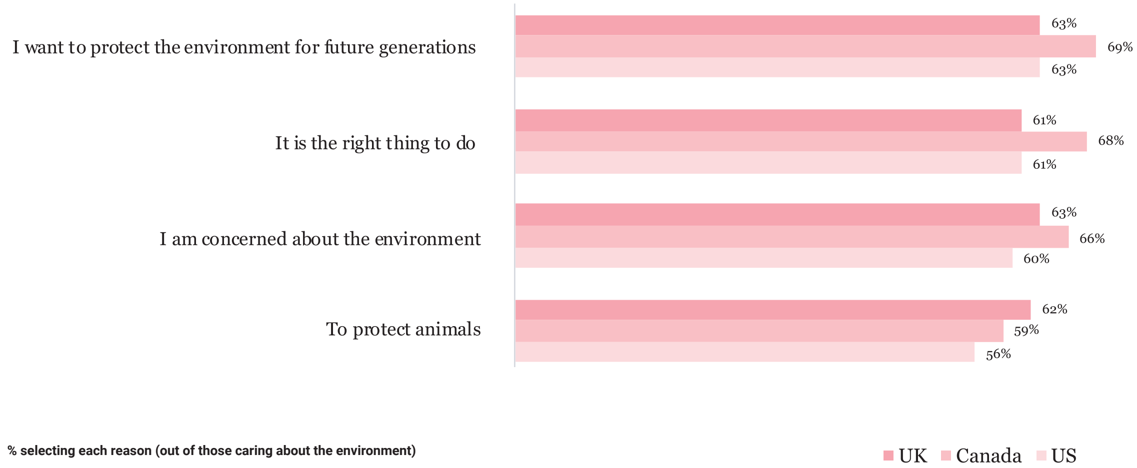
Nurturing mother nature

What's really behind the spirit of we're all in this together, the planet needs us and everyone can make a difference?

In each country, the top or joint top reason for caring about what happens to the environment is to protect it for future generations. Around two thirds who say they care about the environment have this view – 63% in the UK and US, rising to 69% in Canada. Older generations are the most likely to think this way, with Baby Boomers – 74% in the UK, 75% in the US and 77% in Canada – significantly more likely to say this, than Gen Z and Millennials, who may not (yet) have children.

Chart 7: The main reasons for caring about the environment by country

Q: What are your reasons for caring about what is happening to the environment?



When it comes to nurturing mother nature, younger generations are more likely to have additional, personal reasons for caring about the environment. For example, in each country Gen Z is significantly more likely than both Gen X and Baby Boomers to say people around them influence their environmentally friendly attitude, or that someone close to them is passionate about the environment, or that celebrities and public figures are their inspiration.

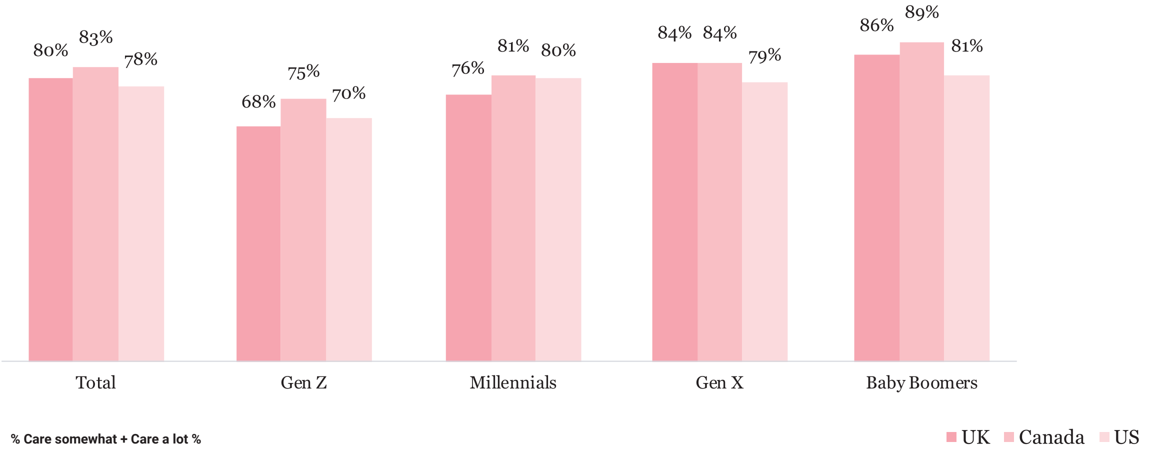
In all countries the other reasons in the top four are feelings that it's just the right thing to do, a general concern for the environment and a desire to protect animals. The next most important reasons are fears about climate change, wanting to protect rainforests, wanting to feel like they are doing their bit and the argument that ultimately, it's just as easy to be environmentally friendly as not.

Overall, many of these are macro-level reasons, part of a more pervasive outlook intent on preserving nature at a global level. As highlighted in Chart 8, most also say they care either a little or a lot about what is happening to the environment in their local area - that is what they can see around them where they live – 78% in the US, 80% in the UK and 83% in Canada.

This is particularly true of Baby Boomers, who are significantly more likely than Gen Z to care about the environment where they live – the level of care increasing with age in the UK and Canada. The US is a slight exception, but while Gen X may appear to care slightly less than Millennials, they are actually the most likely generation to say they care 'a lot' about it.

Chart 8: The level of care about what is happening to the environment in their local area by generation

Q: Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about what is happening to the environment in your local area? I don't care at all, I don't care that much, I neither care nor don't care, I care somewhat and I care a lot



This suggests that those most likely to have established roots somewhere are those who say they care most about their local area. Perhaps younger generations, who may not have settled down long-term, don't yet have the same sense of attachment to their local area.

Most say they care about the environment on a global – and political – level too, in terms of what they learn about in the news, talking points such as Greta Thunberg's activism, or famous documentaries like Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth for example. This is true of 65% in the US and 72% in the UK and Canada.

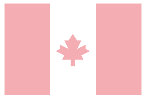
However not everyone cares about what happens to the environment...

For those who say they don't care about the environment*, either at a global or at a local level, the main argument in the UK and Canada is that it's not a top priority right now as shown in Chart 9. It's also the second most popular reason in the US. This stance could mean that other issues, such as Covid-19, or perhaps just general challenges in their daily lives, dominate their thinking and leave little time for other concerns.

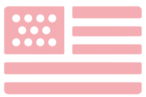
In the US the primary reason given for not caring about the environment is not believing in climate change. This view clashes with the recent stance taken by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[6] – which reported in August this year that the last five years have been the hottest on record since 1950. It also reported that since the 1990s human influence is very likely the main cause of the global retreat of glaciers.

I don't believe in climate change

18%



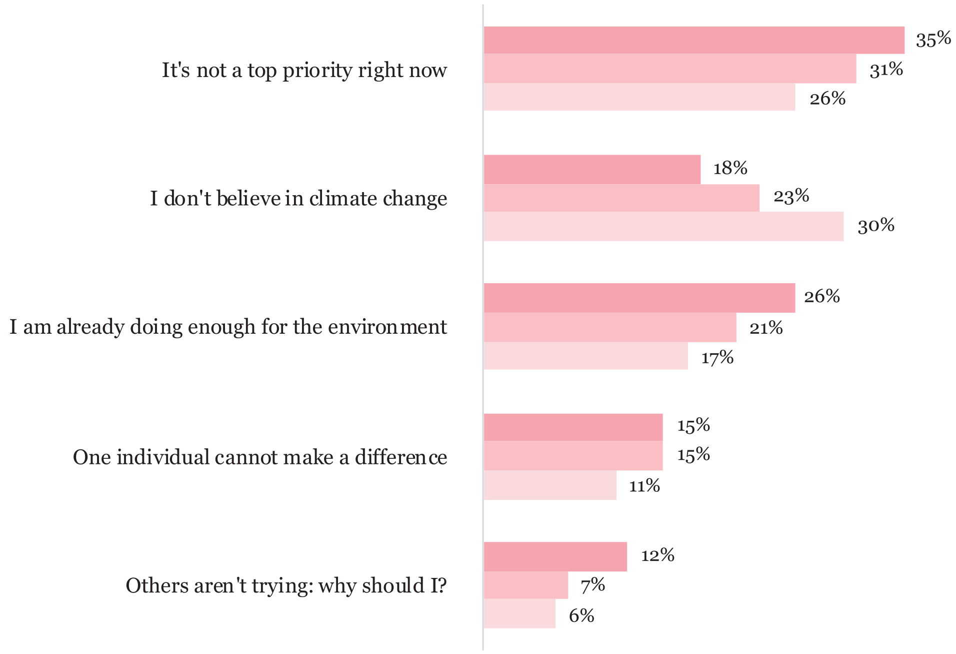
23%



30%

Chart 9: The top 5 reasons for not caring about the environment by country

Q: What are your reasons for not caring about what is happening to the environment?



% selecting each reason (out of those who say they do not care about the local and global environment) UK Canada US

[6] IPCC; AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis; August 2021

* This is approximately one in eight of our sample in the UK and Canada, one in five of our sample in the US

Climate change scepticism or denial is often reported to be higher than average in the US, usually attributed to past lobbying by fossil fuel corporations, papers from conservative think tanks or public comments by outspoken public figures. For example, in a tweet sent in 2012, Donald Trump claimed that "the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese"[7] to make US manufacturing less competitive. However, supporters may have missed that he then went on to say this was a "joke" in January 2016.

Not believing in climate change is the second most common reason given in Canada for not caring about the environment. In the UK it's the argument that they are already doing enough for it, this is also the third reason given in the US and Canada. The fourth reason in all countries is the argument that one individual can't make a difference by themselves.

However, throughout this research the majority of the public suggest they do really care about the natural world, with many feeling a sense of collective responsibility to live their lives in an environmentally friendly way.

> *"Climate change scepticism or denial is often reported to be higher than average in the US, usually attributed to past lobbying by fossil fuel corporations."*

[7] Jérôme Viala-Gaudefroy; Why is climate scepticism so successful in the United States? The Conversation; January 2020

Mutual responsibility

For some, this idea of environmental responsibility also causes feelings of guilt about not doing enough to save the planet.

This is the case for the youngest generation, as a staggering nine in ten of Gen Z feel guilty about their environmental footprint.

For Gen Z, 88% in the US as well as 91% in the UK and Canada agree that they experience guilt – either occasionally, often or all the time – about the impact of their own environmental footprint (see Chart 10).

This feeling of environmental guilt appears to be a relatively modern phenomenon, as in all countries it decreases with age. Gen Z are significantly more likely to feel guilty about their footprint than both Gen X and Baby Boomers.

This is also consistent with our results from last year's research in the UK, where younger generations were again more likely to experience guilt while 35% of Baby Boomers claimed they never do. This year the proportion of Baby Boomers never feeling guilt is 26% in Canada, 32% in the UK and 42% in the US.

Notably this environmental guilt also appears to differ by gender as in each country, women are significantly more likely than men to feel it.

9/10

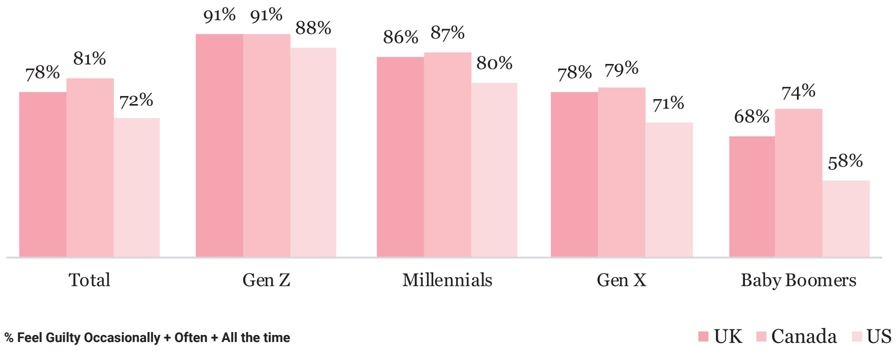
Gen Z feel guilty about their environmental footprint.

7/10

Baby boomers feel guilty about their environmental footprint

Chart 10: The level of guilt different generations feel about their environmental footprint by generation

Q: Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the impact of your own environmental footprint? By an environmental footprint we mean the harmful effect we have on the environment, e.g. through the amount of natural resources used up [...] as a result of our behaviour. I feel guilty all of the time I feel guilty often, I feel guilty occasionally or I never feel guilty



% Feel Guilty Occasionally + Often + All the time

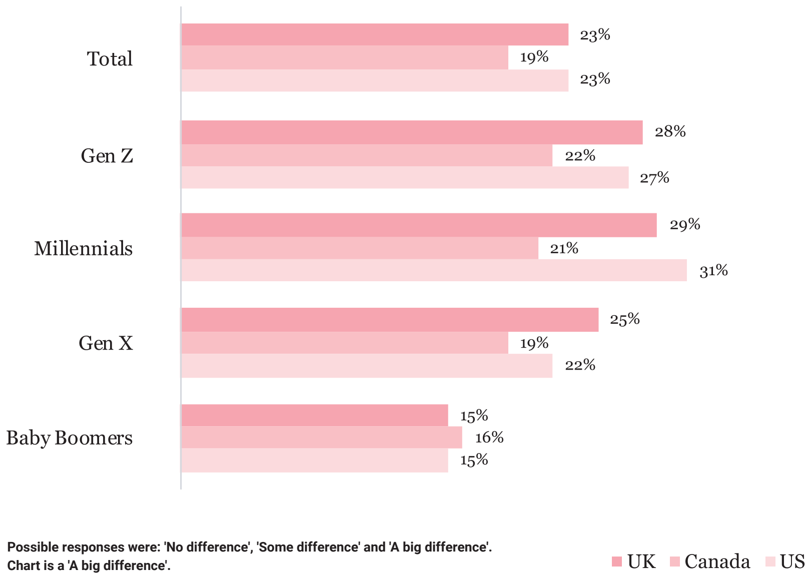
Environmental guilt syndrome

This contrast in attitudes could be partially explained by how much of a difference people think their own personal actions can make in terms of supporting the environment.

In the US and UK, the younger generations, Gen Z and Millennials, as well as Gen X, are all significantly more likely to say their actions make a 'big difference' than Baby Boomers. In the UK, US and Canada, men are significantly more likely than women to say their actions make no difference at all (see Chart 12).

Chart 12: Those who believe their personal actions make a big difference to supporting the environment by generation

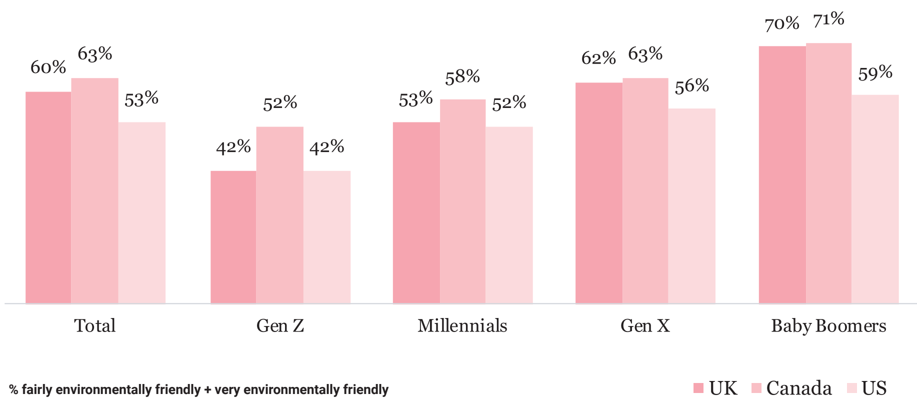
Q: How much of a difference do you feel your own personal actions make in terms of supporting the environment?



Possible responses were: 'No difference', 'Some difference' and 'A big difference'. Chart is a 'A big difference'.

Chart 13: Those who see themselves as environmentally friendly

Q: Being environmentally friendly covers many different elements: reducing, reusing, and recycling; upcycling; donating; not littering; living sustainably; conserving energy; conserving materials; [...] and many others. Thinking about all aspects of your life, how environmentally friendly are you now?



% fairly environmentally friendly + very environmentally friendly

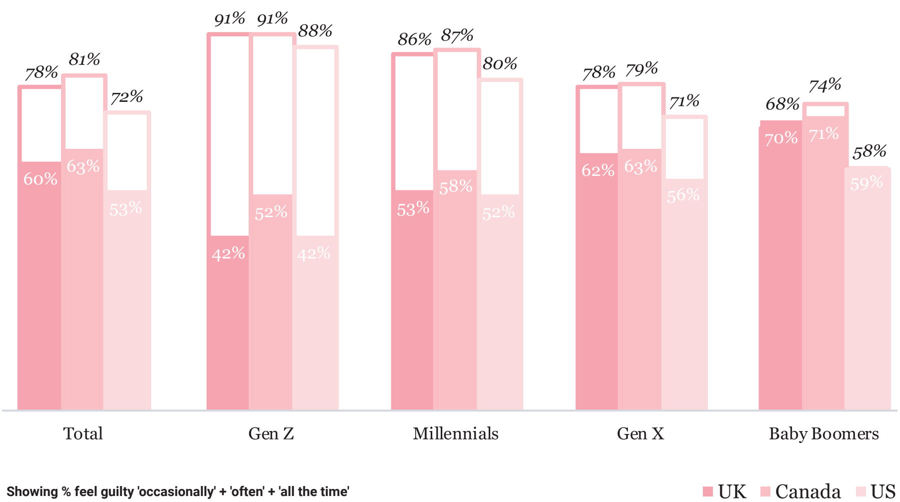
The likelihood of seeing yourself as environmentally friendly increases with age, with Baby Boomers in all three countries seeing themselves as the most environmentally friendly. The difference in outlook could also be due to how green people believe they are in the first place. As shown in Chart 13 around two thirds think they've become more environmentally friendly in the last five years, 62% in the US as well as 71% in Canada and the UK.

As shown in Chart 14 on the following page, while environmental guilt decreases with age in each country, the likelihood of people seeing themselves as environmentally friendly increases with age.

Taking into consideration a range of lifestyle choices including recycling, not littering, living sustainably, conserving energy, flying less and driving hybrid or electric cars, and so on – Baby Boomers in Canada, the US and UK are significantly more likely to say they are environmentally friendly than Gen Z and Millennials.

Chart 14: Those who feel guilty about their environmental footprint vs those who see themselves as environmentally friendly now by generation

[Black italic %s]: Proportion feeling guilty about their environmental footprint
[White plain %s]: Thinking about all aspects of your life, how environmentally friendly are you now?



Showing % feel guilty 'occasionally' + 'often' + 'all the time'
Showing % 'fairly environmentally friendly' + 'very environmentally friendly' now

This negative correlation between environmental guilt and environmental friendliness as age increases could be interpreted in two ways, either:

- Baby Boomers feel relatively less guilt because they believe they're 'greener' in their actions than they actually are
- Or their more limited guilt is because they truly are more environmentally friendly than other generations

For insight into which is the most likely, we can look at key considerations impacting their buying choices – and how these have changed since our last UK research conducted before the pandemic.

How purchase decisions have changed since Covid-19

It's often claimed our spending habits say a lot about who we really are...

So, we asked the public how their buying habits are impacted by environmental considerations when travelling, purchasing household items or choosing between providers. We provided a list of 15 categories spread across these three areas – for example, personal travel, travel to work, purchasing food, buying household appliances, insurance and so on.

We also presented a range of potential scenarios – would people spend more, to be more environmentally friendly? Would they accept product or service compromises if that made a difference? Would providers' proof of eco-friendly credentials influence their decisions?

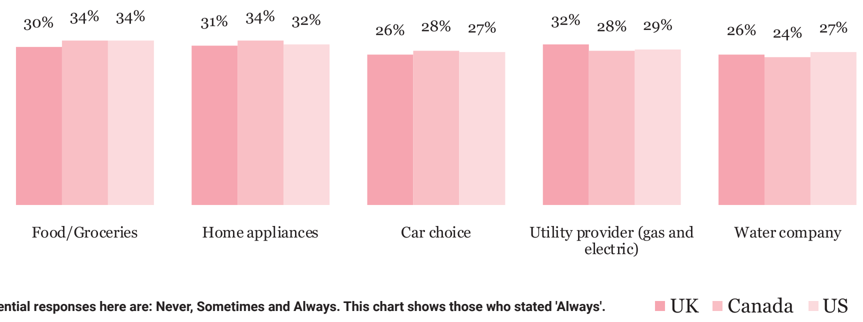
In our last survey, with fieldwork taking place in the UK in the pre-Covid era, in most categories there were more people saying their purchases are 'never' impacted by environmental considerations than 'always' impacted. The exception was the following categories where our respondents were more likely to say their decisions were 'always' impacted by environmental considerations:

- Food and groceries
- Home appliances
- Utility providers for gas, electric and water

In 2021 this trend has been reversed in several cases, with all higher for 'always' except insurance where the response of 'always' has an equal number of mentions as the response of 'never'.

Chart 15: Top 5 purchasing decisions most likely to 'always' be influenced by the desire to be environment friendly by country

Q: In these different areas of your life, can you please indicate how often, if at all, the purchasing decisions you make now are influenced by the desire to be environmentally friendly?



Potential responses here are: Never, Sometimes and Always. This chart shows those who stated 'Always'.

In 2021 for the UK, there are now several more categories where the public are more likely to state that their choices are 'always' rather than 'never' influenced by the desire to be environmentally friendly namely:

- Food and groceries
- Home appliances
- Utility providers for gas, electric and water
- Car choice
- Clothes
- Holidays
- Travel for personal life
- Travel for work

Indeed across all surveyed countries this year, there are more people saying their purchase decisions are 'always' influenced by environmental considerations than 'never' influenced, for:

- Food and groceries
- Home appliances
- Utility providers for gas, electric and water
- Car choice
- Clothes

Additionally, this is also true for personal travel in the US, as well as for eating out and personal electronics in both the US and Canada.

Chart 16: Top 5 areas where consumers would compromise on their choice to be more environmentally friendly by country

Q: Are there any areas of your life in which you would compromise on your choice to be more environmentally friendly? For example, would you accept compromise in order to be more environmentally friendly in terms of your choice of ...

Ranking #	UK	Canada	US
1	Utility provider (gas and electricity)	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)
2	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)	Eating out	Eating out
3	Clothes	Personal electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers)	Food/Groceries
4	Furniture	Clothes	Utility provider (gas and electricity)
5	Food/Groceries	Food/Groceries	Clothes

Ranked order for categories most likely to say they would accept compromise on their choice to be more environmentally friendly (#1= most likely)

In Chart 16 we can see that the category which those in the US and Canada say they would accept compromise in, if it meant being more environmentally friendly, is for home appliances such as fridges, microwaves and TVs. In the UK it's their utility provider (gas and electricity).

Domestic energy usage is the key theme here. Canada and the US may be looking for eco-friendly, energy-efficient appliances, whereas the UK's focus is their home's energy source, which the appliances ultimately use, to be green and efficient in the first place.

Looking now to Chart 17, if a provider offered proof of their environmentally friendly credentials, food and groceries are the categories in which proof of environmentally friendly credentials makes the most difference on likelihood to purchase, in all countries. This is consistent with the results from our last UK survey too.

It could be very timely therefore that this autumn in the UK, a traffic-light system of 'eco-scores' will be piloted on food labels[8], backed by the government and major brands to help consumers assess products' environmental impact.

The next key category where eco-credentials impact buying decisions is home appliances, followed in the UK by utility providers (gas and electricity), in Canada and the US it is followed by personal electronic devices and by car choice in the US – continuing the energy consumption theme.

> *"Food and groceries are the category in which proof of environmentally friendly credentials makes the most difference on likelihood to purchase, in all countries."*

[8] Nosheen Iqbal; Traffic-light system of eco-scores to be piloted on British food labels; The Guardian; June 2021

Chart 17: Ranking of the top 10 products and services where proof of environmentally friendly credentials would make purchase more likely by country

Q: If a provider offered you proof of their environmentally friendly credentials, would this make you more or less likely to purchase their products or services?

Ranking #			
1	Food/Groceries	Food/Groceries	Food/Groceries
2	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)	Home appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, TVs)
3	Utility provider (gas and electricity)	Personal electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers)	Car choice
4	Clothes	Car choice	Personal electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers)
5	Personal electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers)	Clothes	Clothes
6	Water company	Furniture	Eating out
7	Travel for personal life	Eating out	Utility provider (gas and electricity)
8	Furniture	Travel for personal life	Travel for personal life
9	Eating out	Utility provider (gas and electricity)	Furniture
10	Holidays/holiday destinations	Holidays/holiday destinations	Water company

Ranked order for categories most likely to purchase if provider offered proof of environmentally friendly credentials (#1= most likely) by % Somewhat more likely + Much more likely

Money talks

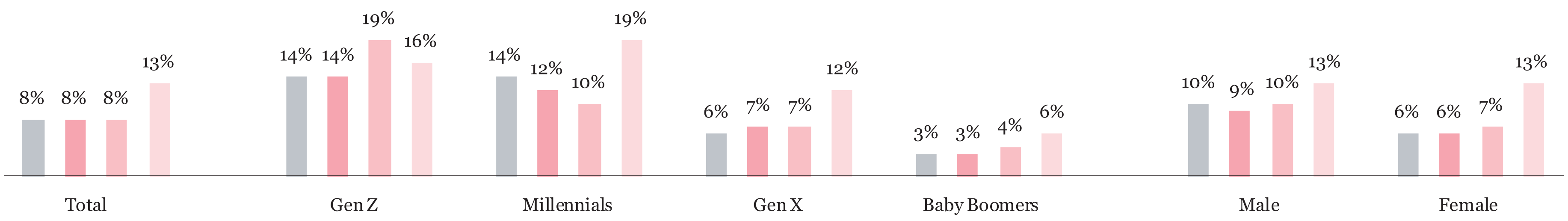
The public claims to be willing to spend more money, if being more environmentally friendly came at a measurable direct financial cost, for most categories.

In each country, Gen Z and Millennials (also Gen X in the US) are significantly more likely than Baby Boomers to say they would spend 'much more' money to be environmentally friendly, consistent with our previous UK based research. This is the case for all 15 categories. Below we show the data demonstrating this for just one key category, food and groceries.

The US is more likely than other countries to claim they would spend much more – and men are more likely than women, in all categories except for food and groceries. That said, it's never more than 19% of Gen Z or Millennials, or 13% of men, or 13% of Americans who say they'd be willing to go this far.

Chart 18: Food and drink is the key area consumers would be willing to spend 'much more money' to be environmentally friendly by generation and by gender

Q: If being more environmentally friendly came at a direct financial cost to you, would you be willing to spend more money than you currently do, to purchase the following products or services?



Possible responses here are: 'Yes, much more money', 'Yes, a little more' and 'No'. The chart shows, 'Yes, much more money'.

At the end of the day, the overall cost of products and services is still the most important criteria in purchase decisions.

Using energy as an example again, given a choice of three priorities - reducing the cost of energy, increasing the security of supply and reducing the impact on the environment – reducing the cost is the first priority in each country, for 44% in Canada, 45% in the US and 51% in the UK. Reducing the impact on the environment is of secondary importance and this is the same overall trend we saw in our last research, conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic.

This pattern is true for all generations – suggesting that ultimately, money talks. That said, Baby Boomers in the US and Canada are significantly more likely than Millennials to choose reducing the impact on the environment as their first priority, and in the UK they're significantly more likely than both Millennials and Gen Z.

Similarly, for household items, as seen in Chart 20, cost and durability are the top two most important decision-making criteria in each country, the same as last year. Recyclability, sustainability and eco-friendly credentials are lower down the list.

Chart 19: Ranking of the priorities in energy provision by country

Q: We are now going to look at your thoughts on energy provision. If you had to prioritise the following 3 factors in the future supply of energy how would you prioritise them? Here 1 is the top priority, 2 is the second priority and 3 is the third priority. I would prefer energy solutions that ...

01

Reduce cost of energy

49% Last survey (UK only)
51% UK
44% Canada
45% US

02

Reduce impact on the environment

39% Last survey (UK only)
37% UK
43% Canada
34% US

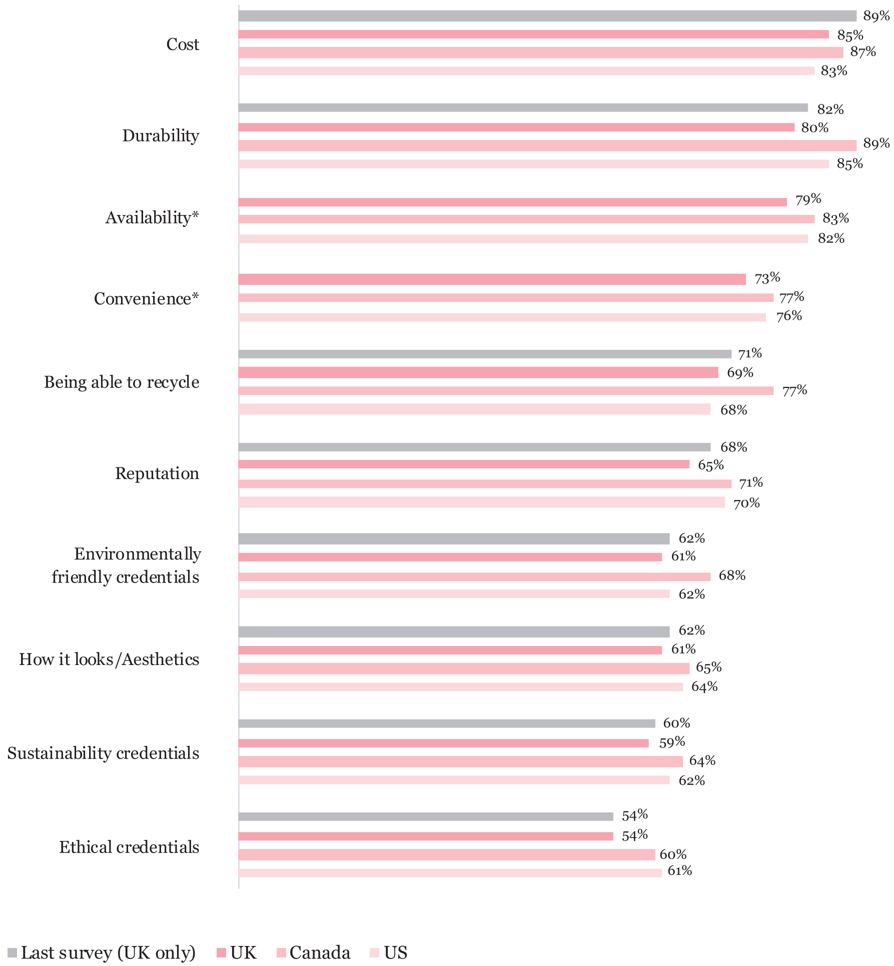
03

Increase supply security

12% Last survey (UK only)
13% UK
12% Canada
20% US

Chart 20: The importance of each of the following factors in purchase decision making

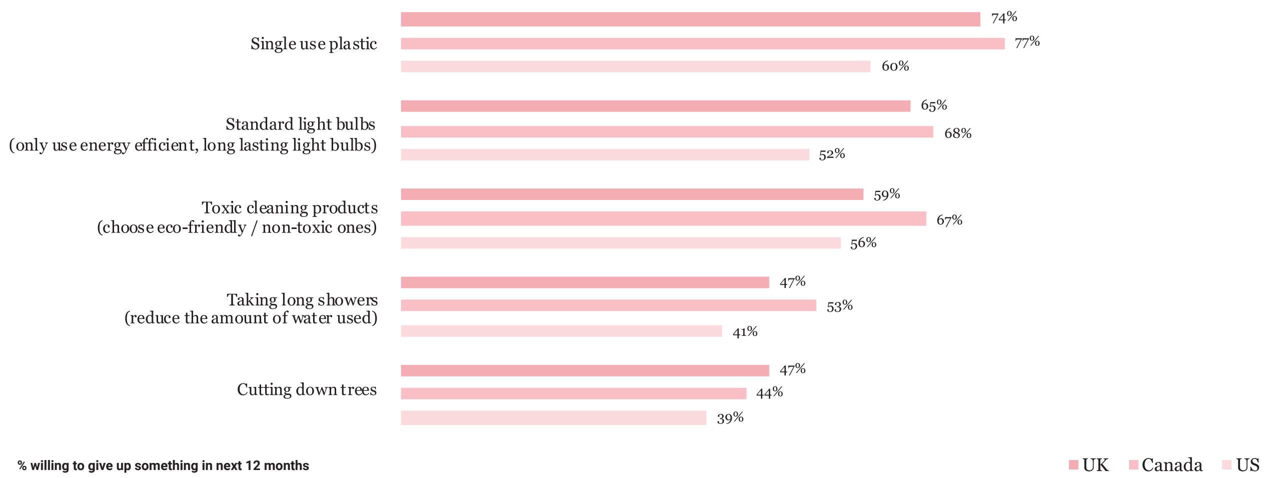
Q: When you purchase an item for your home, how important are each of the following factors in your decision making?



% rating purchase decision-making factors as Important + Very important

Chart 21: Top 5 things consumers are willing to give up to halt and reverse climate change in the next 12 months

Q: What, if anything, would you be willing to give up to halt and reverse climate change in the next 12 months?



So, if it all comes down to money, then what sacrifices will people make to help protect the planet?

Given a list of ten potential changes to make in the next year, the majority say they're willing to give up single use plastics, standard light bulbs and toxic cleaning products to help halt and hopefully reverse climate change. Baby Boomers are more likely to stop using these than Gen Z – in the US, Gen X are the most likely to make these three changes, whilst in the UK the willingness to give up each of these increases in direct proportion with age.

Gen Z are significantly more likely to make dietary changes than Baby Boomers, by being willing to give up meat or dairy products. However, this is all near the bottom of the overall list, with under three in ten willing to make these changes in each country.

Overall, it's perhaps too simplistic to declare that any one generation, or gender, or another demographic is doing more for the environment than another. There are more nuances than that – providers looking to win hearts and minds with eco-friendly credentials will need to consider these differences in detail.

Electric vehicles

A key talking point is the take up of electric vehicles, but are consumers really willing to pull the plug on petrol?

When presented with five options and asked about the biggest factor limiting the uptake of electric cars, in each country cost is cited as the main reason limiting the uptake of electric cars. But there are a host of other factors which come into play. One in five cite range and the distance electric cars can travel, and the frequency of charging required as key deterrents, closely followed by the availability of charging points. This is no surprise in the US and Canada in such vast countries where long distance journeys are a norm and often a necessity.

Q22. The main factors limiting the uptake of electric cars by country

	UK	Canada	US
The cost of electric cars	40%	44%	34%
The range (distance) of electric cars and the frequency of charging required	18%	20%	22%
The availability of charging points	21%	17%	19%
The speed of charging	8%	5%	7%
Lack of choice	5%	6%	7%

Green governance and eco-education

How do you solve a crisis like climate change? How do you make an impact, at a national or global level, to improve sustainability and encourage a green lifestyle?

The answer is more education, followed by government intervention – according to the public in the US, UK and Canada.

Out of a range of 17 statements about the role individuals, brands and governments should play in supporting a more sustainable future, the solution with the most support in each country is for more education to encourage greater sustainability.

As we see in Chart 23, this approach gets the vote from 69% in the US, 73% in the UK and 77% in Canada. Gen X and Baby Boomers are significantly more likely to agree with this statement than Gen Z.

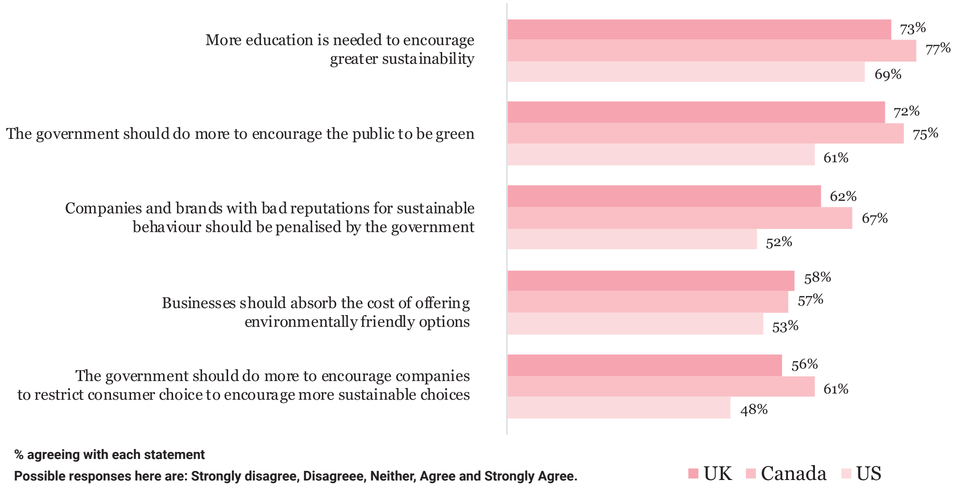
After that, all generations agree that their government should do more to encourage the public to go green. In the UK this again increases with age, as Gen X and Baby Boomers are significantly more likely to agree than Millennials and Gen Z. However, in the US, Millennials are significantly more likely to support this approach than Baby Boomers.

Much lower down the list are the sceptical views that meaningful change is impossible, but younger generations are more pessimistic here than others.

As shown in Chart 24 Millennials and Gen Z are significantly more likely than Baby Boomers to believe that for a lot of environmental problems, it's already too late to make a difference and that one person can't achieve anything. Men are significantly more likely to agree with both of these statements than women, but the consequence of such a mentality is that it could lead to passivity and a lack of action.

Chart 23: Top 5 policies the public want to see to improve sustainability by country

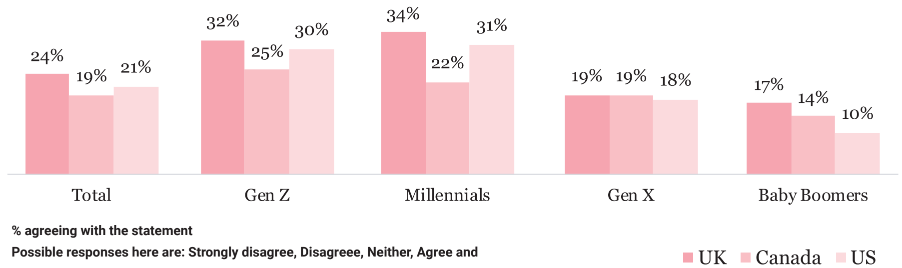
Q: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



% agreeing with each statement
Possible responses here are: Strongly disagree, Disagreee, Neither, Agree and Strongly Agree.
The chart includes Agree + Strongly Agree

Chart 24: The level of agreement that it's already too late to make a difference by generation

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
For a lot of environmental problems, it's already too late to make a difference?



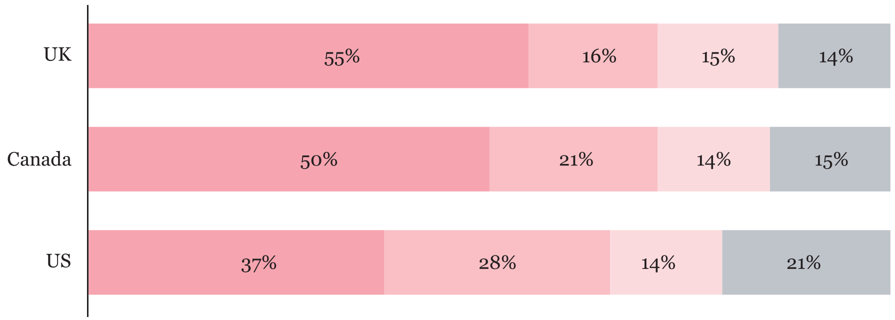
% agreeing with the statement
Possible responses here are: Strongly disagree, Disagreee, Neither, Agree and Strongly Agree. The chart includes Agree + Strongly Agree

Ultimately, given only one choice of who should take the lead in encouraging sustainability, the clear verdict is that it should be the government, rather than the public or businesses. In the US, the gap is closer, with 37% advocating for government and 28% for the public. In the other countries, at least half want their government to lead – 50% in Canada and 55% in the UK, with no differences by age and gender (Chart 24).

Businesses come third in this vote, but in the UK in particular, this is a close call. However, while brands are evidently not expected to set the national agenda on encouraging sustainability, because the public expects the government to do it, brands will inevitably still need to prepare for the public to hold them accountable to high green standards.

Chart 24: The level of agreement as to who should lead on sustainability by country

Q: Who should take the lead in encouraging sustainability?



% voting who should take the lead in encouraging sustainability

The role of brands in sustainability

All this suggests brands may not receive as much appreciation as they would like for taking a stand on sustainability.

Arguably, brands should be more concerned that they will be appraised for their sustainability credentials. At least three quarters think it's true that businesses use environmentally friendly credentials to promote their image, without taking real action – 76% in the US, 78% in the UK and 80% in Canada.

A further note of caution for brands is around consumer willingness to pay more, to be more environmentally friendly. While we saw earlier that most claim to be willing to do this, it is clear that brands in some sectors should exercise more caution around marking up their prices than others.

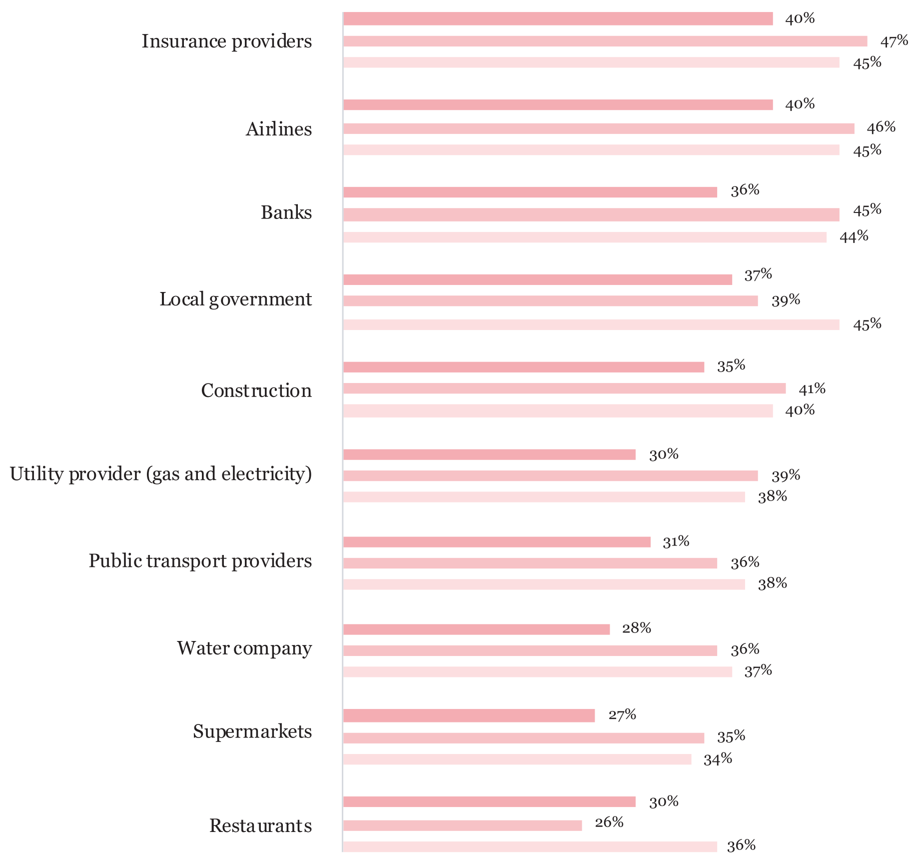
Hypothetically if a 5% 'eco-surcharge' were added to bills to support environmental initiatives, lack of trust is highest for insurance providers, airlines and banks. Lack of trust would be highest amongst older generations in particular.

3/4

Think it's true that businesses use environmentally friendly credentials to promote their image, without taking real action

Chart 25: The level of distrust that a surcharge of 5% would be used to support environmental initiatives, by providers

Q: If the following types of providers automatically applied a surcharge of 5% to your bill to support their own environmental initiatives, how much would you trust them to use it solely for this purpose?



For each provider the possible response is on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is 'No trust' and 10 is 'Complete trust'. The chart shows the level of distrust, which is defined as a rating of 1-4.

UK Canada US

Chart 26: Ranking of sectors by how environmentally friendly they are perceived by country

Q: Which industry sector do you think is the most environmentally friendly?

Ranking #	UK	Canada	US
1	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
2	Charities and voluntary sector	Charities and voluntary sector	Charities and voluntary sector
3	Water suppliers	Education	Education
4	Education	Healthcare	Healthcare
5	Healthcare	Professional, scientific and technical services	Professional, scientific and technical services
6	Electricity and gas suppliers	Water suppliers	Water suppliers
7	Professional, scientific and technical services	Electricity and gas suppliers	Electricity and gas suppliers
8	Construction	Technology, media, telecoms	Finance and insurance
9	Retail	Information and communications	Construction
10	Finance and insurance	Finance and insurance	Technology, media, telecoms

% ticking sector as the most environmentally friendly.

For brands in these sectors planning to work with their customers to fund environmental goals, perhaps the answer is to partner with a brand in another sector, with better perceived green credentials.

In each country the public sees agriculture, forestry and fishing as the most environmentally friendly sector – with this perception highest amongst older generations – followed in distant second place by the charities and voluntary sector – particularly indicated by younger generations. In all countries agriculture, forestry and fishing are at least twice as likely to be deemed the most environmentally friendly sector compared to the charities and voluntary sector.

Alternatively, given that we saw earlier how cost considerations still come first, brands may need to make it cheaper for their customers to be eco-friendly. Alternatively offer money back at a later date – for example, UK pharmacy chain Boots, in partnership with No7, now offers customers money back in-store for returning product packaging as part of its recycling scheme.

Aside from impressing the public with their environmentally friendly credentials, brands may also need to be prepared to fall in line with new government inspired green agendas.

> *“In each country the public sees agriculture, forestry and fishing as the most environmentally friendly sector – with this perception highest amongst older generations”*

The public's wish list for an eco-economic recovery

The public expects their government to take the lead on a sustainable economic recovery from the pandemic, by adopting the stick first and the carrot second approach.

When presented with a list of six types of potential government actions to encourage sustainability, the top three recommendations from the public are the same in each country, two policies of punishment or containment, followed by one of reward, to increase the uptake of electric vehicles.

As shown in Chart 28 the majority want to see stronger penalties for large industrial polluters – 51% in the US, 56% in the UK and 62% in Canada. Baby Boomers are significantly more likely to demand this than the other generations.

These three recommendations broadly match leaders' green agendas. It was announced earlier this year that US president Joe Biden and Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau were working on joint environmental plans to penalise countries with poor pollution records[9]. Trudeau has also advocated that the two countries collaborate more closely on electric vehicle production[10]. In the UK, the government plans to increase current investment by giving £582m in grants to drivers buying electric or low emission vehicles[11].

[9] Theophilos Argitis, Kait Bolongaro, and Derek Decloet; Biden-Trudeau climate plan may target polluting trade rivals; Bloomberg; February 2021
[10] Steve Scherer; Trudeau sees 'real opportunity' for collaboration with U.S. on electric vehicles; Global News; February 2021
[11] Jane Merrick; Drivers to be given grants to buy electric cars as Boris Johnson announces 10-point 'build back greener' plan; i newspaper; November 2020

Chart 28: The top three government recommendations to encourage sustainability by country

Q: In which of the following ways should the Government encourage sustainability and build toward a more environmentally friendly future [country]?

01

Harsher penalties for large industrial polluters violating current restrictions

56% UK
62% Canada
51% US

02

Increasing industry regulation of pollution-causing activities

45% UK
52% Canada
42% US

03

Increasing EV uptake via tax incentives / subsidies

41% UK
48% Canada
40% US

% supporting each action

That's all at a national level, but the public in each country also agree on what the agenda should look like at a local level.

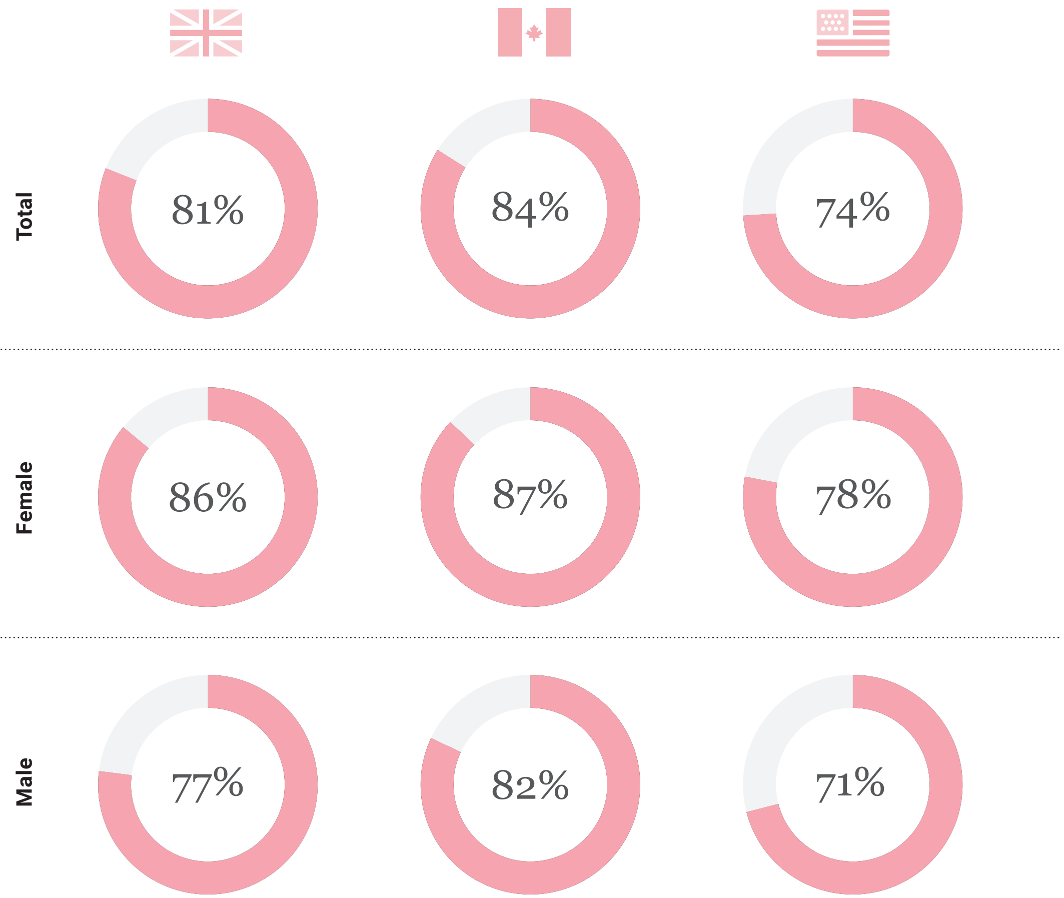
When presented with a choice of eight potential initiatives for the town or city they live in, the top three in popularity are the same, albeit in a different order for the US, with only 1% difference between all three ideas in the UK and Canada:

- Encouraging policies that cut waste
- Creating more green space
- Generating electricity using renewable resources

Creating more green space is the top initiative in the UK and Canada, third in the US – it is also a key focus in particular for women, who are significantly more likely than men in the US, UK and Canada to put this initiative in their top two.

Chart 27: Level of support for creating more green space by country

Q: How supportive would you be of the town or city you live in becoming more sustainable through taking the following actions? – Creating more green space



The possible responses here are Not at all supportive, Not very supportive, Neither, Fairly supportive and Very supportive. The chart shows Fairly supportive + Very supportive.

Aside from what governments and the public need to do, respondents also see several ways in which brands can support a green recovery from Covid-19.

The most popular ideas for sustainability initiatives which brands, rather than governments, can lead on and which have majority support in each country, are:

- Lower rates for insurance products with an ethical heritage
- Clothing clearly labelled with heritage
- An energy monitoring device that builds up a profile of your habits and performs them automatically on your behalf

While these examples may appear initially to be quite sector-specific, these are themes which can be applied to most industries. The key message from the first two initiatives here is to clearly show how products have been produced for those who want to know their heritage. The third idea, speaks to consumers' desire to save energy and by default money, via greater efficiency through the use of smarter technology.

In essence, consumers are looking for transparency, as well as environmental efficiency and cost savings from their favourite brands.

Executive summary and next steps for a green recovery from Covid-19

Here's a quick recap of our top ten headlines from the Eco Index 2021:

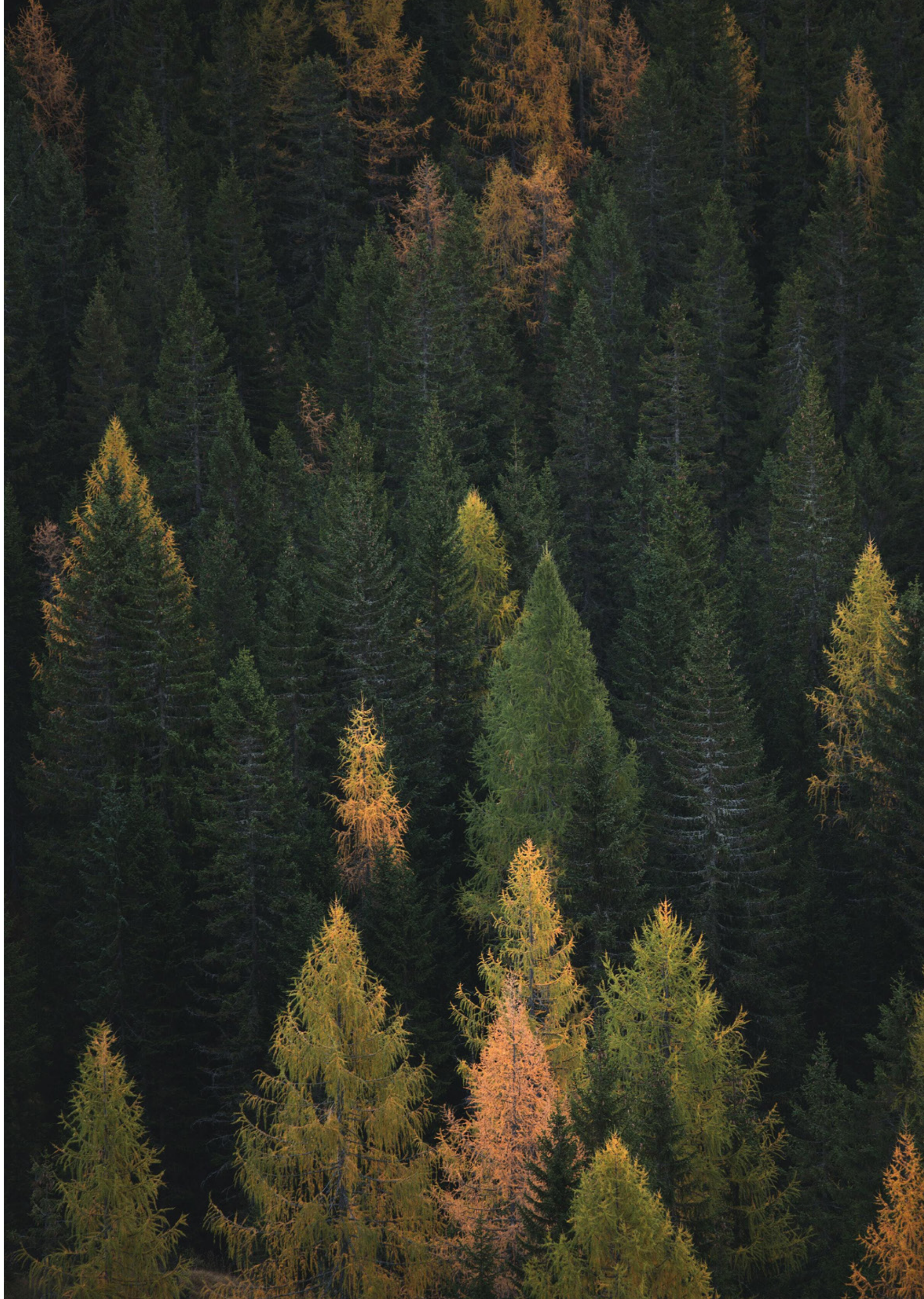
1. **Covid-19 has slowed or reversed action against climate change** say the generations most likely to live through the consequences – Millennials and Gen Z
2. **Protecting the environment for future generations** is the top reason in the UK, US and Canada for caring about the planet
3. **The economic recovery from Covid-19 should be green** say nearly two thirds in the UK and Canada, plus the majority of the US
4. **However, the public think it's unlikely that 2050 net zero targets will be met**
5. **Nine in ten Gen Z feel guilty about their environmental footprint**, significantly more than Gen X and Baby Boomers
6. In our last survey, more people said concern for the environment 'never' impacts their purchases than 'always' – in 2021 this is reversed for several categories
7. **Not everyone cares about the environment** – amongst those who don't, in the US the main reason is due to not believing in climate change
8. **Next steps for governments:** the public wants to see more intervention, including harsher penalties for large industrial polluters, as well as more education
9. **Next steps for brands:** clearly signpost the ethical heritage of products and efficiency savings for customers
10. **Warning for brands:** take care not to be seen as hypocritical, as three in four think brands use eco-friendly credentials to promote their image, without taking real action

We hope you've enjoyed reading this report. Get in touch to see how we can give you actionable and informative insights into your environmentally conscious audiences.

Savanta, as part of the Next 15 Group plc, has accelerated its commitment to running a more sustainable, equitable and diverse organisation that displays leadership in governance and values. We are using the internationally recognised B Corp framework to focus our strategy on people, planet and profit.

It is also a signatory to the Market Research Society (MRS) Sustainability Pledge, committed to achieving a Net Zero business, by as early as 2022. This pledge is a central part of Savanta's commitment to being more sustainable, to operate in a carbon neutral manner and to do so in a way that doesn't acquiesce to in-action. Nick Baker (CRO) is also a founder member of the Insight Climate Collective aiming to create an industry action plan to address climate issues.

Savanta believes sustainability is integral to all aspects of client work, as we collectively work towards the Paris Climate agreement 2050 Net Zero requirement.



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