

Brits will struggle to reach UK Government Net Zero targets

New research from Tandem Bank shows that over a quarter of Brits (c.19 million¹) are unaware, uninformed, unwilling or unsupported on how to approach greener living

Conclusive evidence Brits prioritise cost of living crisis over reducing their carbon footprint

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It is estimated that on average every home in the UK will have to reduce 3.6 tonnes of carbon emissions by 2030 to keep us on track for hitting the government's 2050 Net Zero goal².

But according to research conducted by leading digital bank Tandem, over half of Brits are most worried about the rising cost of living, not about the effects of climate change³ – an issue which has now fallen behind geopolitical risks in our worry list.

Looking at how consumers view the current climate change debate, Tandem's research points to significant challenges in the UK's race to Net Zero.

With consumers not prioritising the issue, there is a question on the UK's ability to reach targets. And even for those who may understand the priority, the research shows that just under one in four Brits don't think they need to change or don't even know where to start⁴.

But with over 80% of the population feeling that it is important to reduce their personal impact⁵, the issue remains of key importance. Again though, even despite last year's COP26 summit making clear just how real the dangers of climate change were, over half of Brits feel that the event made no difference in persuading them to change their carbon footprint – with almost one in ten not even knowing what the summit was⁶.

For British homeowners, the issue is even more pressing given that over 15% of emissions come from our homes. The Government, in the Heat and Buildings Strategy, has set out the need to retrofit over 29 million homes. Tandem's research shows that only 30% of Brits understand their EPC rating⁷ and less than one in five of the population think that making their home greener is the single biggest change they would consider⁸.

¹ UK population 67 million according to ONS, accessed 10 March 2022, [Link](#); 28% (18.76 million) responded negatively when asked what the single biggest change they could make to reduce their carbon footprint.

² Making our homes more carbon-friendly: The cost of doing nothing; Tandem Bank, March 2022, [Link](#)

³ Asked "From the below, what issues do you worry about the most in current changes in society?", 55% of respondents chose the 'rising cost of living', while only 11% chose 'climate change and your impact on the planet'. Notably, 19% selected 'global political issues / international relations'.

⁴ Asked "What is the single biggest change you would consider making to help reduce your carbon footprint and fight climate change?", 22% responded either 'I don't need to change anything' or 'I don't know where to start'. 31% felt lifestyle changes while 20% felt greening their home.

⁵ Asked "How important is it to you that you feel you are helping to reduce your personal impact on the environment?", 84% of respondents selected 'quite important' or 'very important'. 4% commented that it was 'not at all important'.

⁶ Asked "Has last year's COP26 global climate summit persuaded you to make any changes in your life to reduce your carbon footprint?", 52% said 'not at all' or didn't know what COP26 was.

⁷ Asked "Do you know what the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating is for your home?", 32% responded 'yes', 53% said 'no', and 15% 'not sure'.

⁸ See footnote 4

With the Climate Change Committee estimating that the total cost on individual homes to transition to become more energy efficient solutions is going to be £10,000 on average⁹, and a lot more for many homes, the research highlights both the affordability challenge and the information gap to make such changes. Almost half of respondents feel they cannot afford to make any changes to their home, with another 14% who think there's a lack of help and information on what to do¹⁰.

And while the Government has made clear its plans to replace around 1.7 million fossil fuel boilers annually by the mid-2030s¹¹, only around 3.3 million of the UK's population (5%) would consider changing their boiler to reduce their home's footprint¹²; with one in ten thinking their current boiler is working fine and they wouldn't consider greener alternatives¹³.

Commenting on the survey, Tandem's CEO, Susie Alier, said:

"This research shows conclusively the scale of the challenge for Brits to meet Net Zero commitments by 2050. Whilst greening homes is at the heart of the UK's plans, it's clear we need increased awareness and support to equip them to tackle this important challenge."

Tandem's made great progress in helping customers green their homes, supporting them with £230 million green lending for home improvements, which last year alone financed a reduction of 12,000 tonnes in CO2 emissions. But there's much more to be done – it will require a collaborative approach between Government and industry to ensure a comprehensive policy and funding landscape, and a coordinated plan."

Responding to these findings, Emma Harvey, Programme Director at the Green Finance Institute, who leads the Coalition for the Energy Efficiency of Buildings, commented:

"Improving the energy efficiency of UK homes offers a rapid solution to the cost of living, energy security and climate crises. A national retrofit drive can unlock multiple benefits, however today's research shines a light on the knowledge and funding gaps that homeowner's experience when looking to decarbonise one of the most energy intensive assets – their home."

"The finance community can play a vital role in educating customers on the benefits of an energy efficient home, as well as innovating financial solutions that are attractive to customers and help achieve their net-zero ambitions. The Green Finance Institute welcomes today's findings and looks forward to continuing to work with organisations like Tandem Bank to co-design, pilot and rapidly scale the financial solutions and data tools needed to help consumers on their decarbonisation journey."

Ends

Notes to Editors:

⁹ Source: Climate Change Committee, Independent Assessment: The UK's Heat and Buildings Strategy, March 2022, [Link](#)

¹⁰ Asked "15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use in our homes – what prevents you from reducing your home's carbon footprint?", 48% responded 'I can't afford to make any changes in my home' and 14% responded 'there's a lack of help and information on what to do'.

¹¹ Source: Climate Change Committee, Independent Assessment: The UK's Heat and Buildings Strategy, March 2022, [Link](#)

¹² Asked "15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use in our homes – what changes would you consider making to reduce your home's carbon footprint?", 5% responded 'Change my gas boiler for a carbon neutral alternative like solar panels or heat pumps'.

¹³ Asked '15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use in our homes – what prevents you from reducing your home's carbon footprint?', 10% responded 'My gas boiler works fine – I don't want to change it for new technology like solar panels'.

1. Tandem launched in 2014 as one of the UK's original digital challenger banks providing customers with simple, transparent and fair products across its range of savings, green home improvement loans and mortgages.
2. Tandem acquired Harrods Bank in 2018 and Allium Lending Group in 2020 – a business focused on the home improvement lending sector.
3. Tandem acquired leading consumer lender Oplo in January 2022 – a profitable consumer lending business focused on the new mainstream of UK borrowers underserved by traditional high street banks.
4. Tandem has offices in London, Blackpool, Cardiff, Durham and Manchester and employs over 500 people.
5. The research was conducted online by Find Out Now across March 2022, with a set of eight multiple choice questions. Sample size c. 4,000, with 2,000 nationally represented in results.
6. Full survey results provided below.

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Full survey results¹⁴



From the below, what issues do you worry about most in current changes in society?	
Brexit	2%
Climate change and your impact on the planet	11%
Global political issues / international relations	19%
PostCovid economic recovery	2%
The rising cost of living (eg. energy bills and inflation)	55%
Your health – not related to Covid	7%
Your health – related to Covid	1%
None of the above	5%
How important is it to you that you feel you are helping to reduce your personal impact on the environment?	
Very important	33%
Quite important	51%
Not very important	12%
Not at all important	4%
Has last year's COP26 global climate summit persuaded you to make any changes in your life to reduce your carbon footprint?	
Yes – I've made small changes since COP26	41%
Yes – I've made significant changes since COP26	7%
Not at all	42%
I don't know what COP26 is	10%
What is the single biggest change you would consider making to help reduce your carbon footprint and fight climate change?	
Changing my car for a hybrid or electric vehicle	12%
Driving less	6%
Flying less	2%
I don't know where to start	8%
I don't think I need to change anything	14%
Lifestyle changes – ie. buying and consuming less	31%
Making my home more green – ie. installing better insulation and using renewable / carbon friendly energy in the home	20%
None of the above	6%
Do you know what the Energy Performance Certificate / EPC rating is for your home?	
Yes	32%
No	53%
Not sure	15%
15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use in our homes – what changes would you consider making to reduce your home's carbon footprint?	
Change my gas boiler for a carbon neutral alternative like solar panels or heat pumps	5%
I can't afford to change anything	28%
I wouldn't know where to start	7%
Improve insulation in my home	9%
Switch to an electricity supplier that only uses renewable energy	8%
Turn the thermometer down by a few degrees	14%

¹⁴ Nationally representative data as provided by Find Out Now. May not add to 100% due to rounding.

Use less energy in my home by changing the way I use my washing machine, dishwasher etc	19%
None of the above	9%
15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use in our homes – what prevents you from reducing your home's carbon footprint?	
I can't afford to make any changes in my home	48%
I don't trust new technology like solar panels or heat pumps	3%
I have bigger priorities	8%
It's not worth doing anything – climate change is too big an issue for one person to solve	3%
My gas boiler works fine – I don't want to change it for new technology like solar panels	10%
There's a lack of help and information on what to do	14%
None of the above	15%
If your boiler was broken, would you ever replace it for a 'green' alternative like solar panels or zero emission heat pumps?	
Yes – even if it cost more than £5,000	3%
No	21%
Maybe – if somebody could guarantee my energy bills would be lower	34%
Maybe – if it cost less than £5,000 to make the switch	10%
Maybe – if it cost less than £1,000 to make the switch	31%