

BBC AUDIENCES SUSTAINABILITY TRACKER: WAVE 8 (JULY 2023)

Wave 1 – March 2020
Wave 2 – Sept 2020
Wave 3 – March 2021
Wave 4 – Jul 2021
Post-COP26 – Nov 2021
Wave 5 – Jan 2022
Wave 6 – Jul 2022
Post-COP27 – Nov 2022
Wave 7 – Jan 2023
Secondary wave 7 - Feb 2023
Wave 8 – July 2023
Secondary wave 8 – July 2023



For more info please see appendix

Background

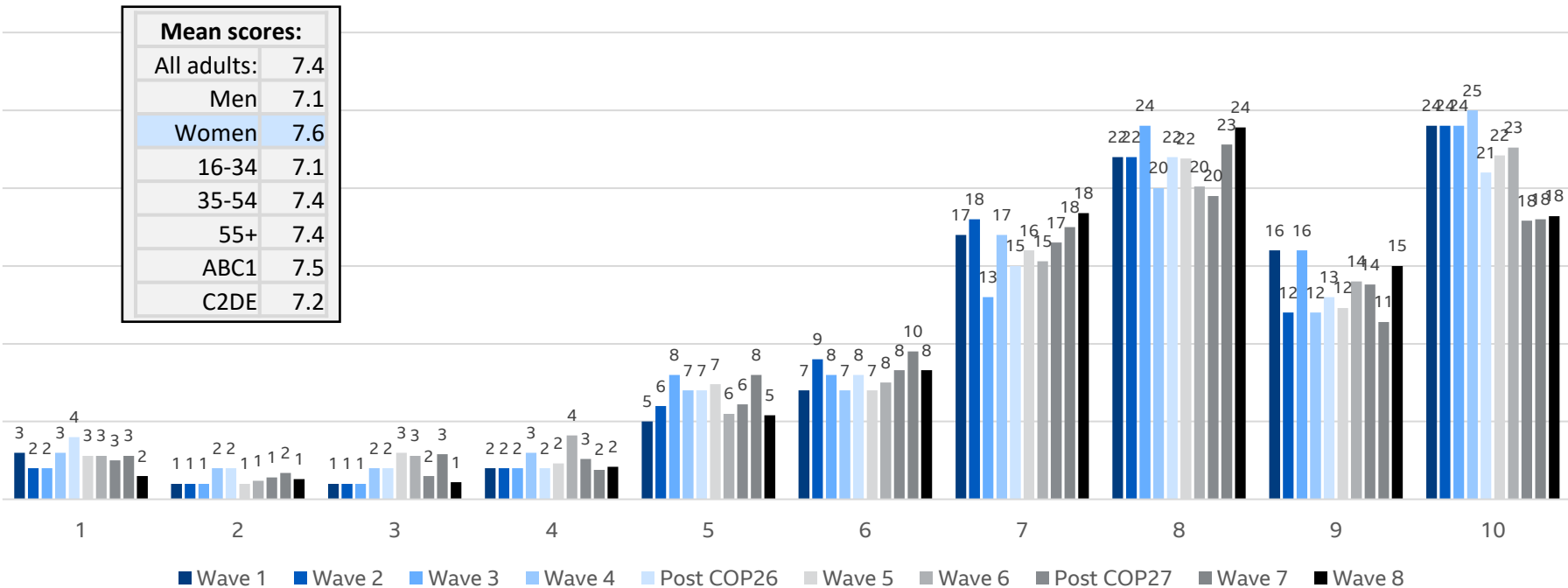
- BBC Audiences has commissioned regular polling of attitudes and knowledge around environmental topics, using nationally representative samples of UK adults, since March 2020. This latest, eighth wave was conducted in July 2023.
- The data in this report was gathered for BBC Audiences by GfK. As such, it should be referred to as ‘a poll by GfK, commissioned by BBC Audiences’.
- Its use is intended purely to inform content development, rather than inclusion of the findings in editorial.
- In the event of any reporting of the information it contains in BBC Content, this would be subject to the usual [Editorial Guidelines](#) around the reporting of polling by third parties.
- For full details of all the survey, with dates and sample sizes please see the Appendix.

Wave 8 findings: UK Attitudes

- 57% of people said that **environmental issues are very important** to them (ranking 8 or more out of 10) returning to levels seen in 2022 after a dip in the previous 2 waves (52%). Just 6% of people rank them as of low importance (1-4 out of 10) and this figure has fallen since the previous wave (when it was 10%).
- **There has also been an increase in those who say they have a 'good' understanding of environmental issues** since the last wave (28%).
- The **proportion of people saying they have a 'good' understanding of what they can do personally to help the environment has steadily increased** to 33%. However, half the population still say they have a broad understanding but don't know the details.
- The percentage of people who say they **understand the term net zero 'well' is now at 64%** - the highest we've seen since we began tracking. 30% still are not confident.
- However, 'COP28', 'regenerative farming or agriculture', 'sustainable infrastructure' and 'green jobs' are still not well understood by over a third of the population and understanding is lower for many environmental terms among C2DEs.
- Overall, **people are most interested in better understanding sustainable living**, and there's also been an uplift in those wanting to know more about regenerative farming or agriculture and sustainable infrastructure. However we still see over a quarter of people saying 'none of the above/don't know' to listed topic areas, suggesting we need to find new ways into a subject that the vast majority of people care about.
- Personally relevant stories about how people can make changes themselves, and positive stories about the environment are of highest interest and could provide softer ways into these topics for mass appeal. There's also been **a rise in those who want to know more about government responses to limiting climate change**.
- While 80% of people think Global corporations and governments should do more to protect the environment, **two thirds still think that the UK media should also do more**.
- Although this is stable over time the proportion of people saying they have seen sustainability content from at least one of the UK broadcasters has increased to 55% - above the levels seen post COP27 (52%).
- **Most people claim to feel connected to nature** in some way, believing it is something we are a part of or should protect. There is a gap between public opinion and recent findings from UK conservation organisations though. Contrary to recent research suggesting UK nature is experiencing serious and significant losses ([State of nature 2023](#)), only 8% believe it is in steep decline while 40% believe it is stable or thriving.

The numbers of those ranking environmental issues at 10 out of 10 for importance has remained lower than previous years at 18%, but just 6% rank them of low importance (1-4 out of 10), fewer than in any previous wave.

Q: How important would you say environmental issues are to you personally?

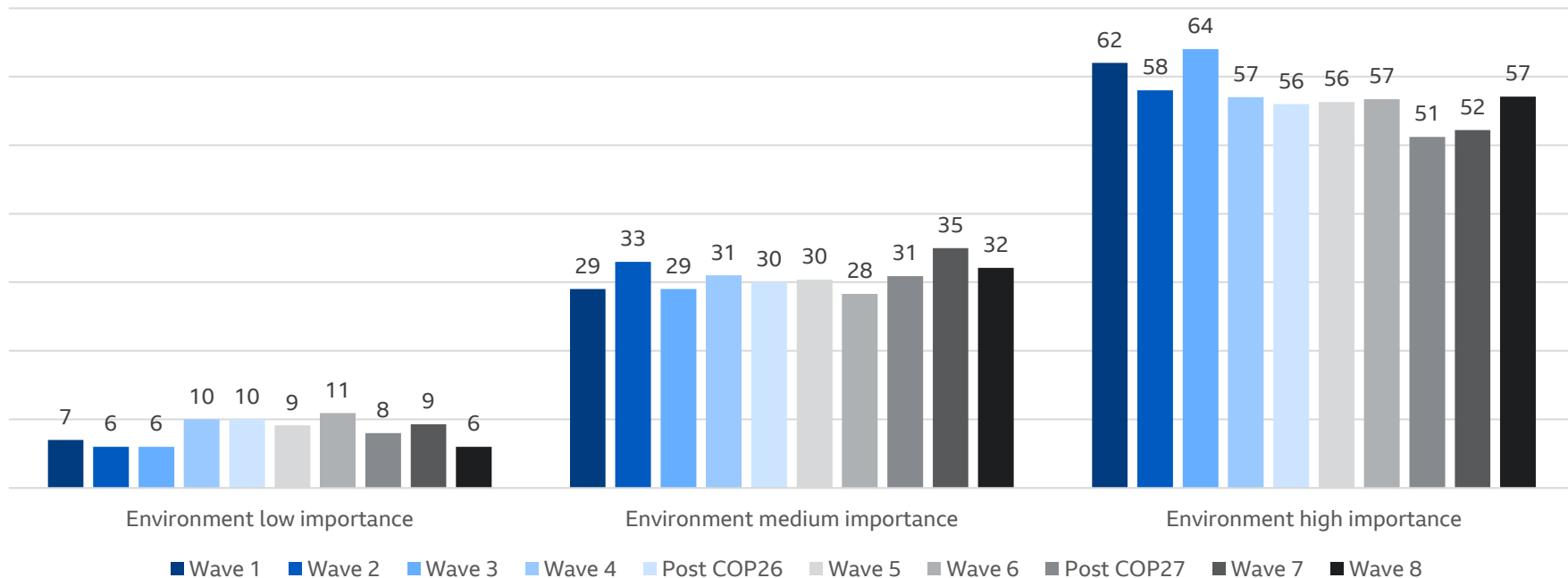


Mean scores:

All adults:	7.4
Men	7.1
Women	7.6
16-34	7.1
35-54	7.4
55+	7.4
ABC1	7.5
C2DE	7.2

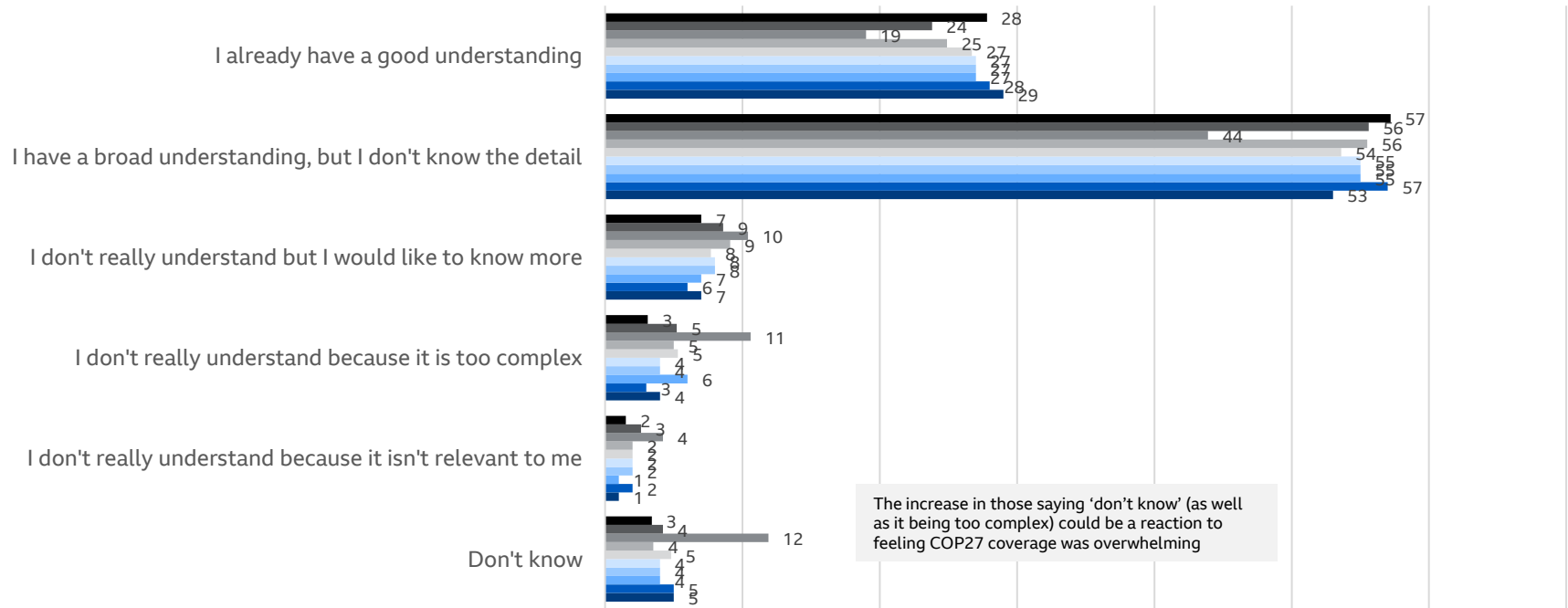
Overall, the majority of people say the environment is important to them personally - with 57% ranking it 8 or more in terms of importance, this wave up from 52% in January 2023.

Q: How important would you say environmental issues are to you personally?



We've seen an increase in those saying they already have a good understanding of environmental issues, now reaching levels similar to when we first started tracking in March 2020.

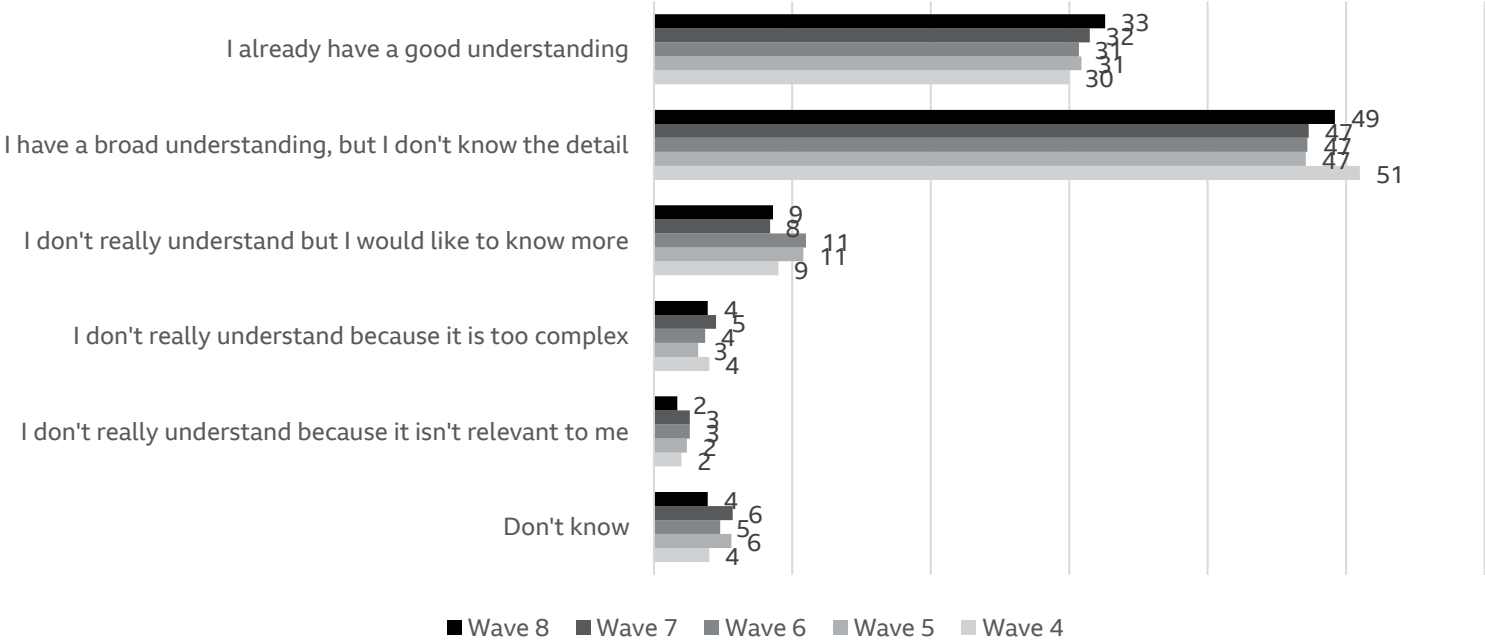
Q: Which statement best describes your current understanding about environmental issues?



The increase in those saying 'don't know' (as well as it being too complex) could be a reaction to feeling COP27 coverage was overwhelming

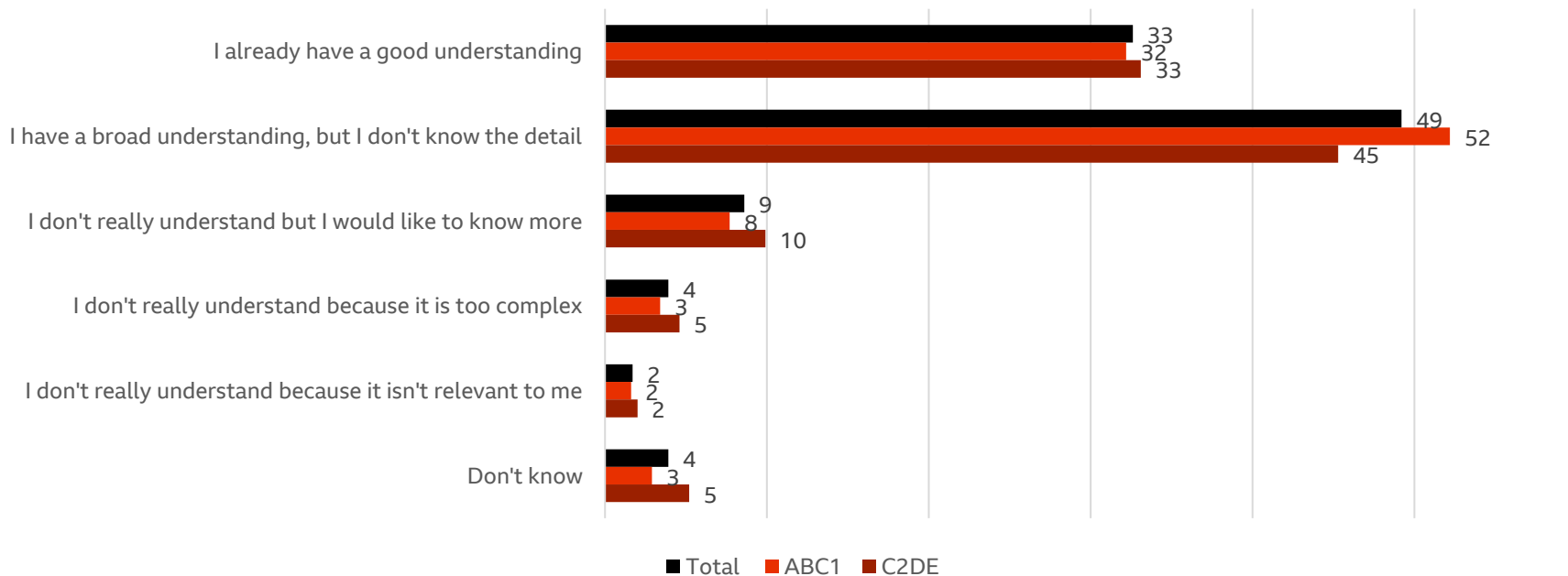
Almost half the population feel they have a *broad* understanding of what they can do personally to create change and live more sustainably while another third of people feel they have a *good* understanding.

Q: Which statement best describes your current understanding of what you can do personally to create change and live more sustainably?



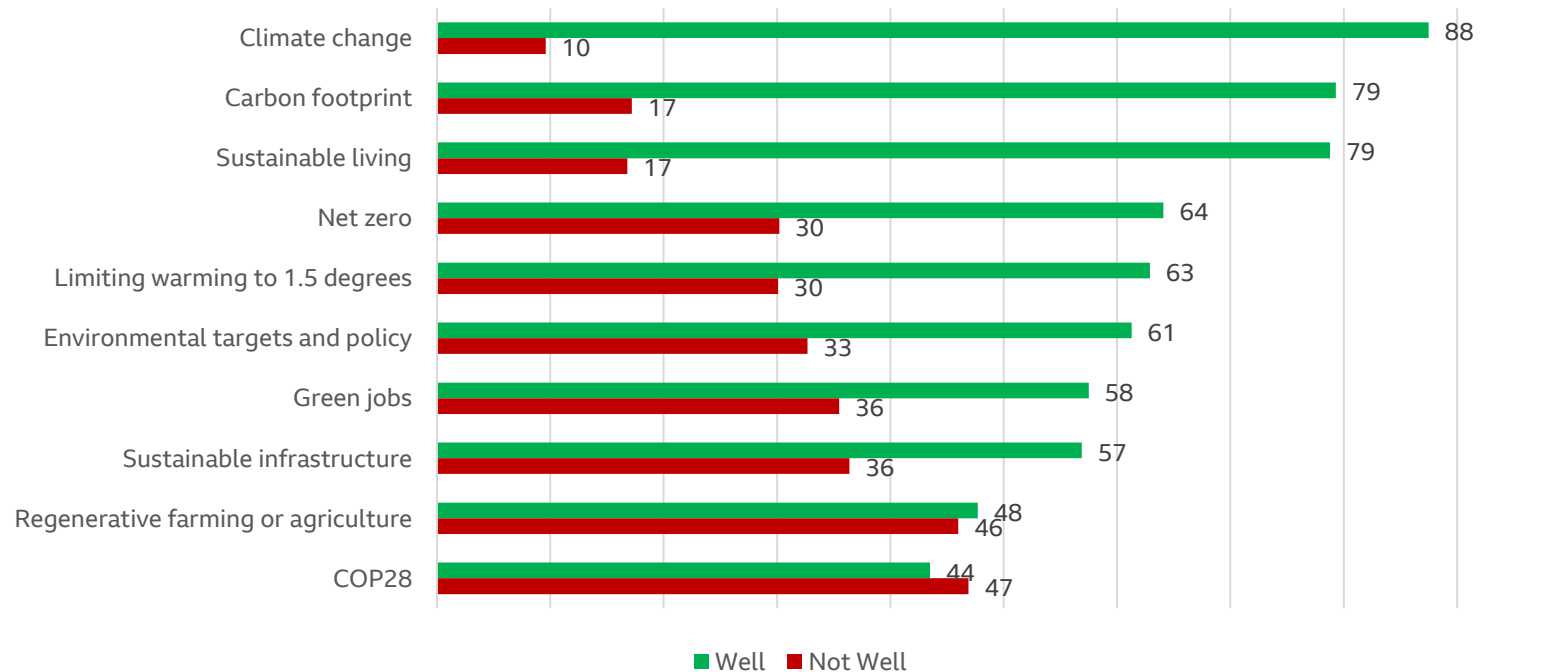
There are some differences by social demographic though, with C2DE audiences less likely to have a broad understanding on how to live more sustainably. Of both ABC1s and C2DEs, just 2% think the topic isn't relevant to them.

Q: Which statement best describes your current understanding of what you can do personally to create change and live more sustainably?



Large minorities still do not feel they understand key terms like 'net zero' and 'green jobs' well

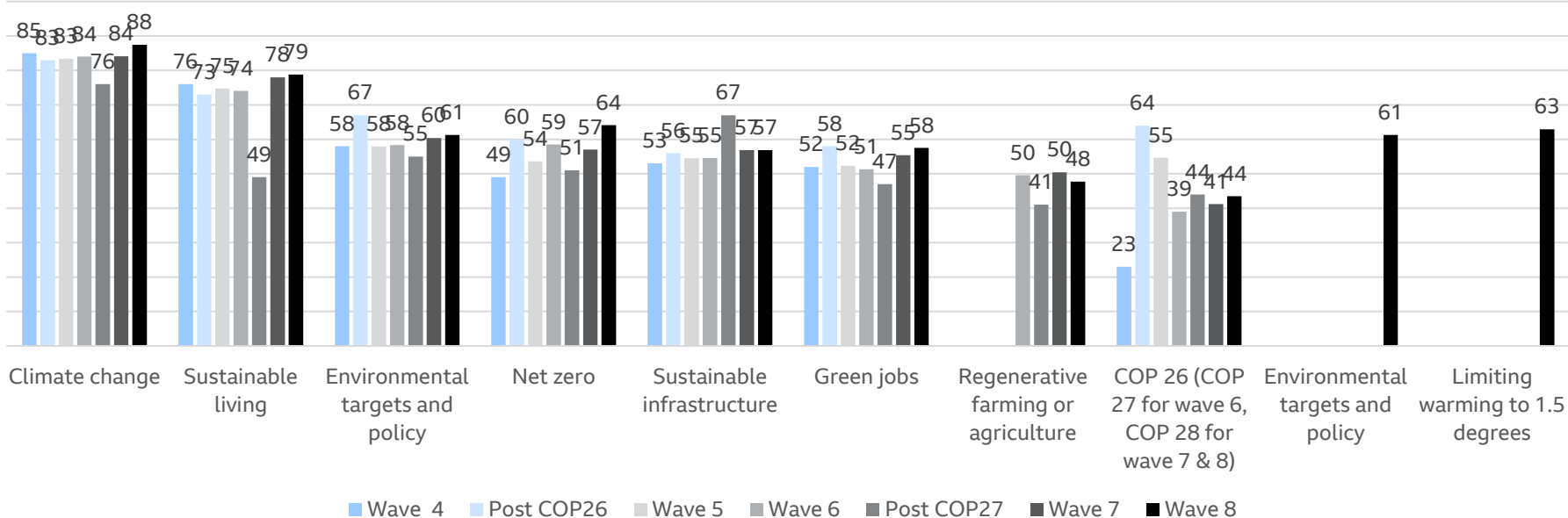
Q: How well would you say you understand what the following words or phrases mean?



Despite this, there have been marginal increases in understanding of environmental terms over time – with some spikes in the aftermath of COP coverage and the most marked increase overall in understanding of ‘net zero’.

Q: How well would you say you understand what the following words or phrases mean?

Understand ‘well’

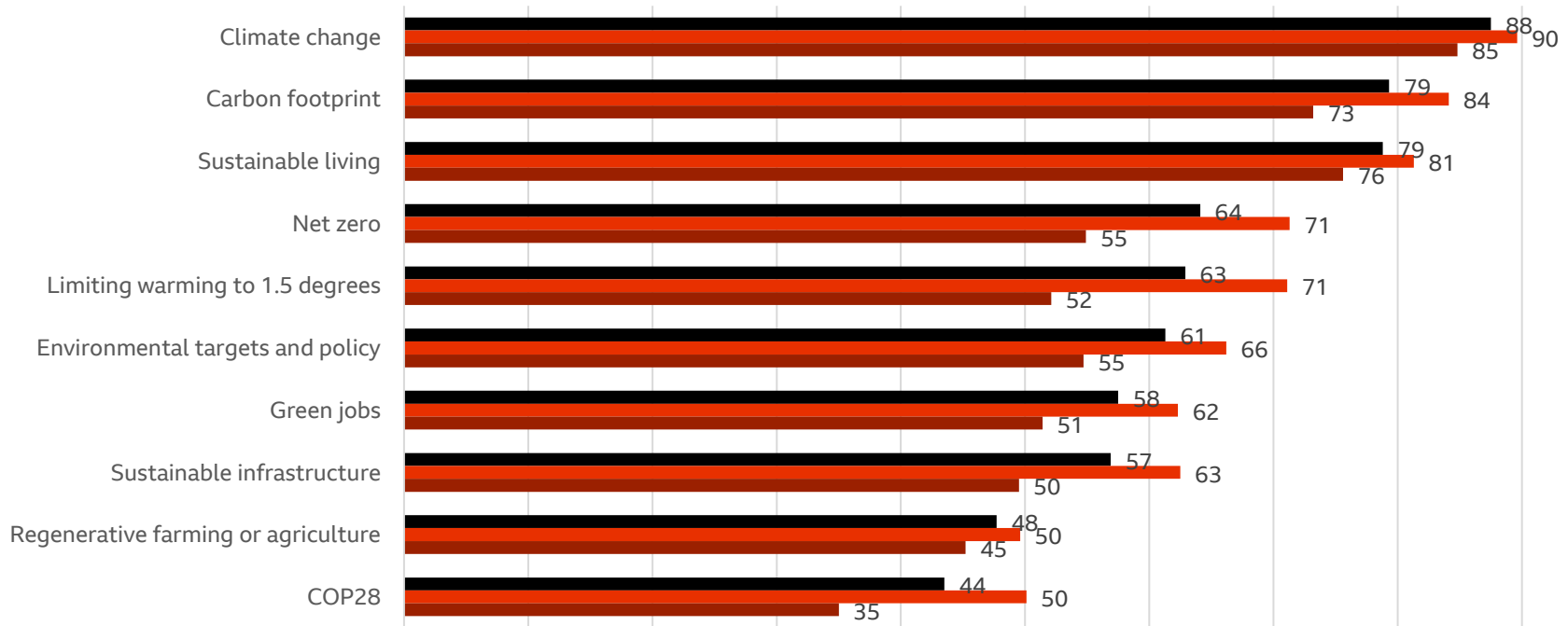


Base: All respondents

Some terms were added or removed from wave 6 onward

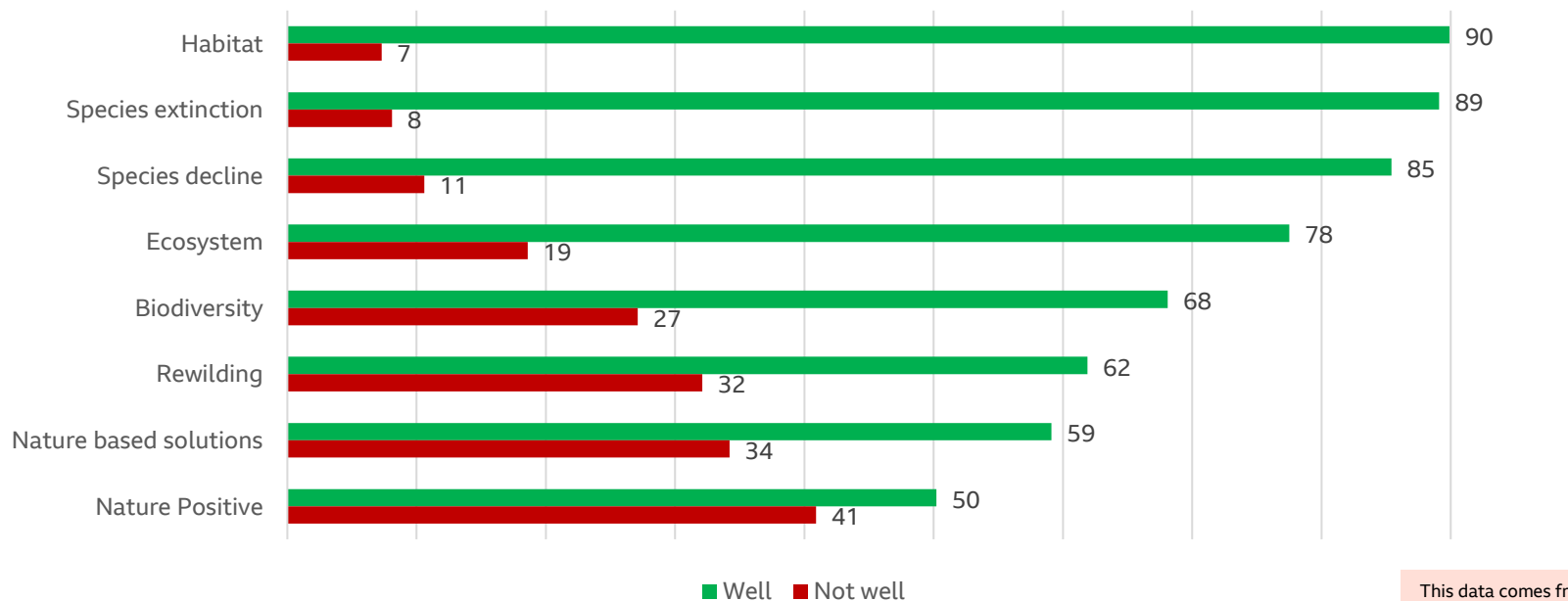
More can be done to make sustainability accessible for all, as C2DE audiences are consistently less likely to say they understand environmental terms 'well'

Q: How well would you say you understand what the following words or phrases mean? % 'well'



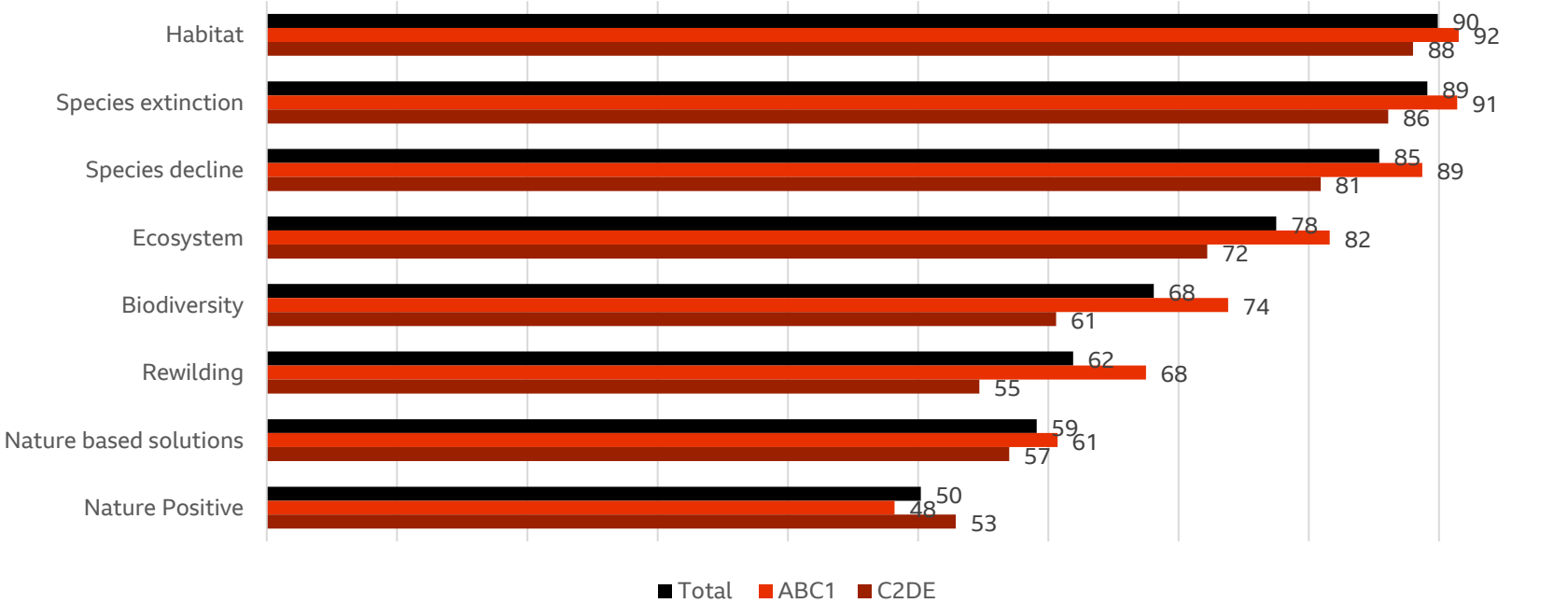
While 'habitat' and 'species extinction' are well understood, 'nature based solutions' and 'nature positive' are also not understood by large swathes of the population.

Q: How well would you say you understand what the following words or phrases mean?



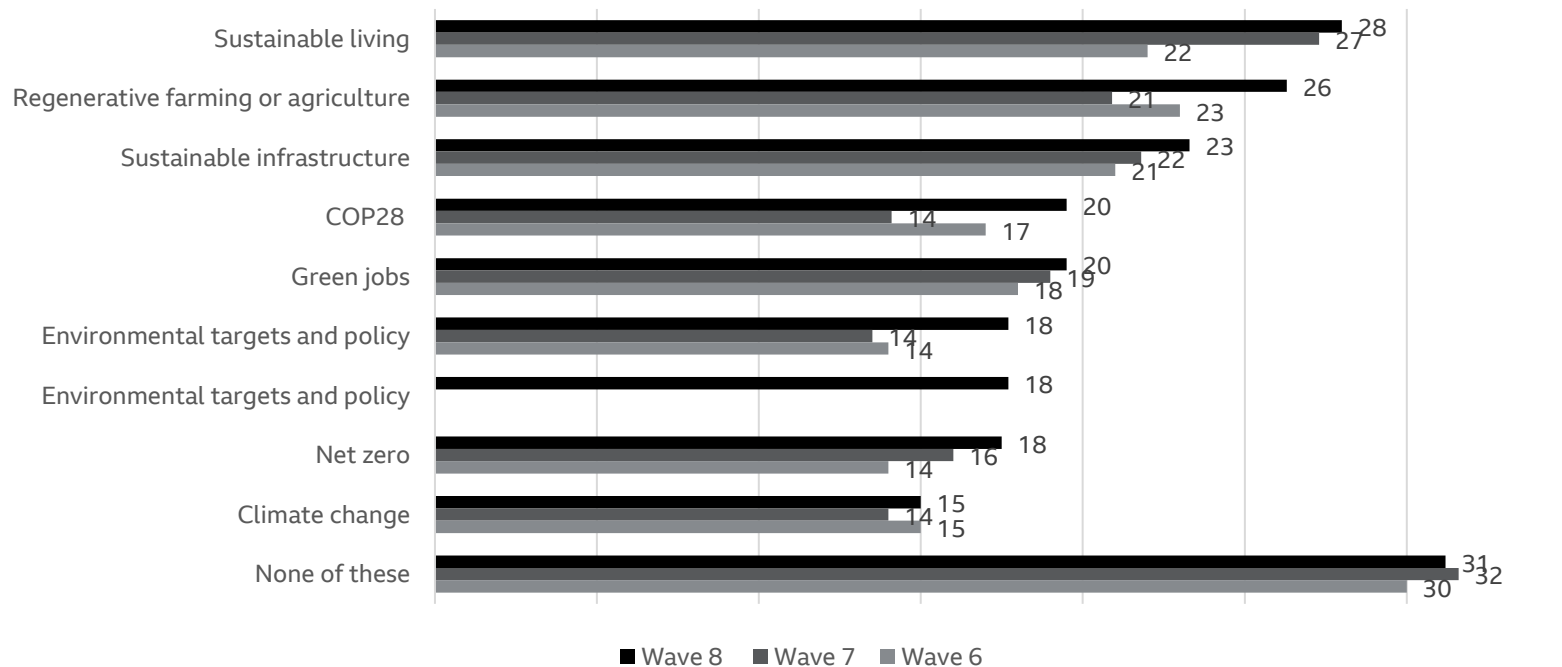
And these terms are similarly less well understood by C2DEs, with the exception of 'nature positive'.

Q: How well would you say you understand what the following words or phrases mean? % 'well'



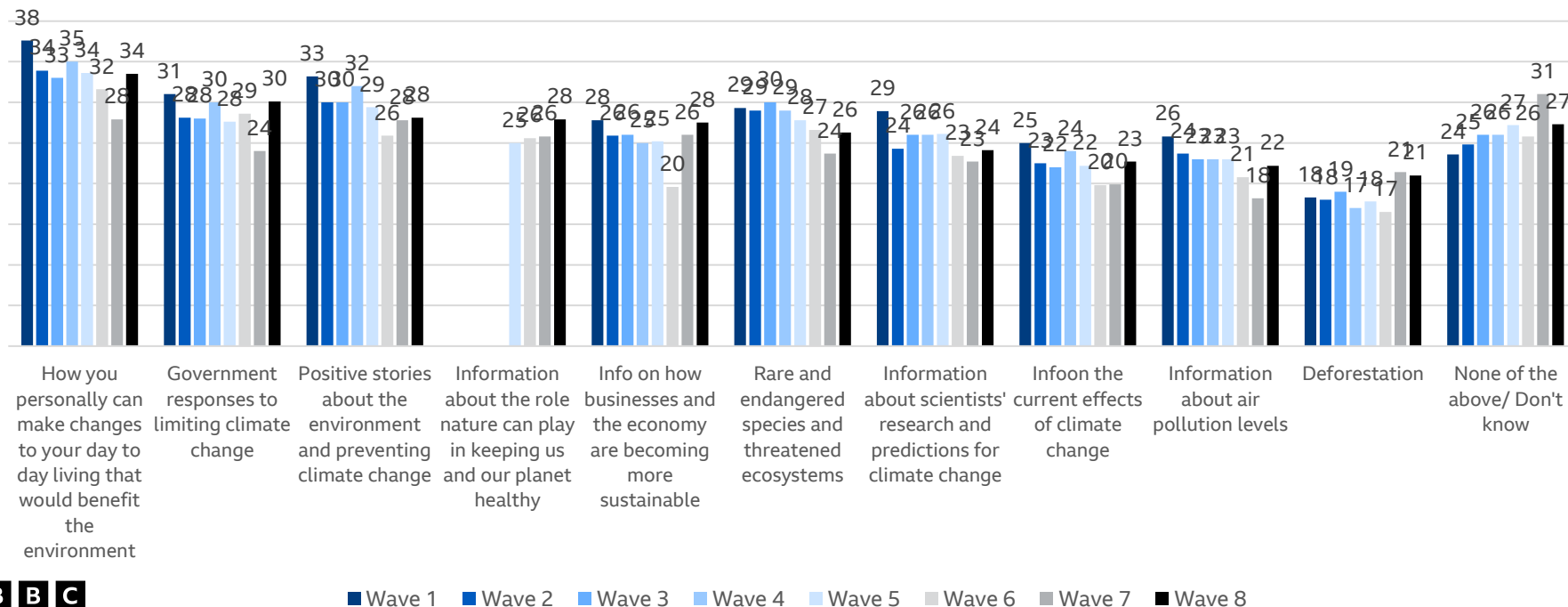
Overall, people are most interested in increasing their understanding of sustainable living, but almost a third of people aren't interested in understanding any of these areas better, suggesting we need to find other ways to engage people with these topics.

Q: And which of [these areas], if any, would you like to understand better? (asked to all respondents)



Personally relevant and positive stories are of highest interest. There are increases in interest across almost all areas vs the previous wave, but this is still generally lower compared to the first wave.

Q. Which of the following, if any, would you like to know more about?
(asked to all respondents)

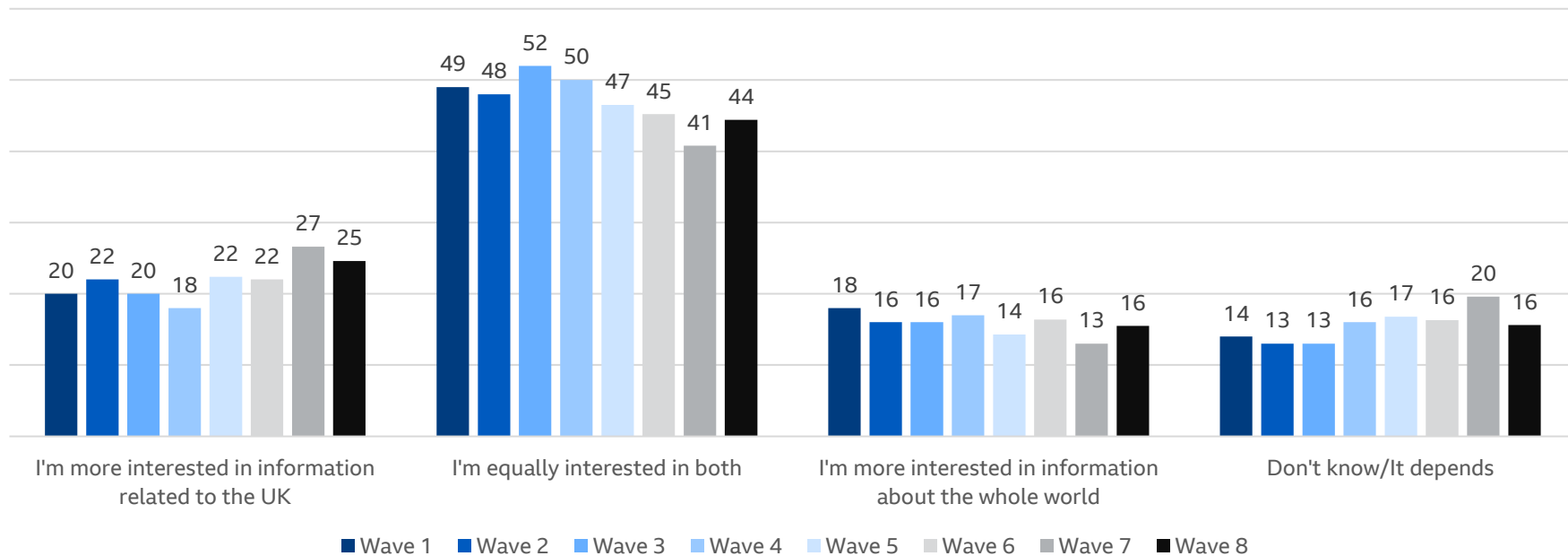


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Base: All respondents

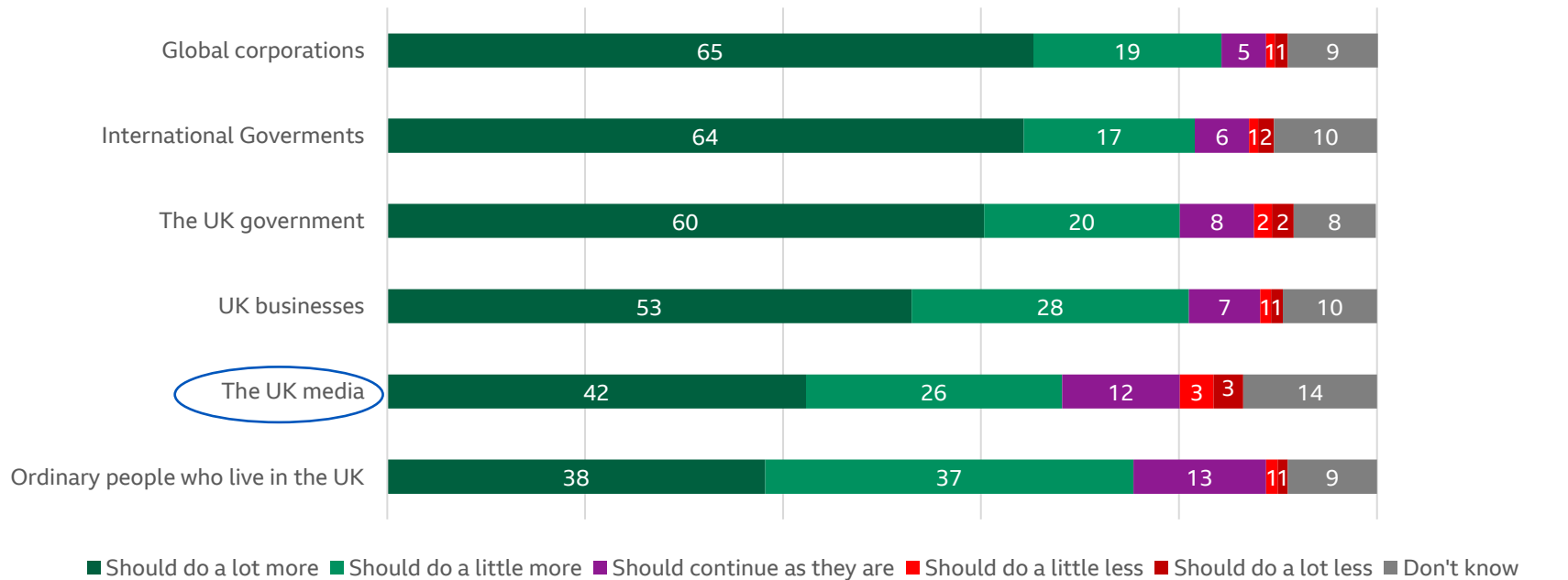
Most people are still interested in both the UK and global perspective, but we still see slightly higher interest in the UK than in early waves.

Q: Thinking about any of the issues you chose in the previous question, which of these are you most interested in?



While over 80% say global corporations, UK and international governments need to do more to protect the environment, two thirds think the media should do more

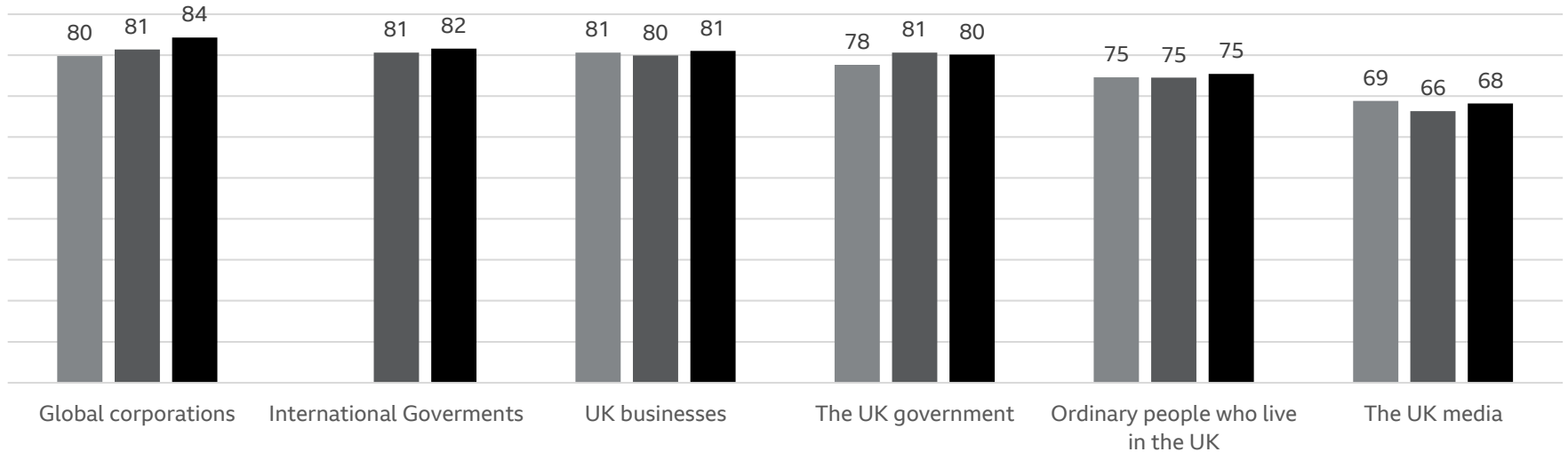
Q: Thinking mainly about how things might change in the UK, do you think any of these groups below should do more, less, or the same as they do at the moment – around protecting the environment and transitioning to a more sustainable world?



These levels have stayed relatively consistent, although we've slight increases in the most recent wave

Q: Thinking mainly about how things might change in the UK, do you think any of these groups below should do more, less, or the same as they do at the moment – around protecting the environment and transitioning to a more sustainable world?

% choosing 'more'



■ Wave 6 ■ Wave 7 ■ Wave 8

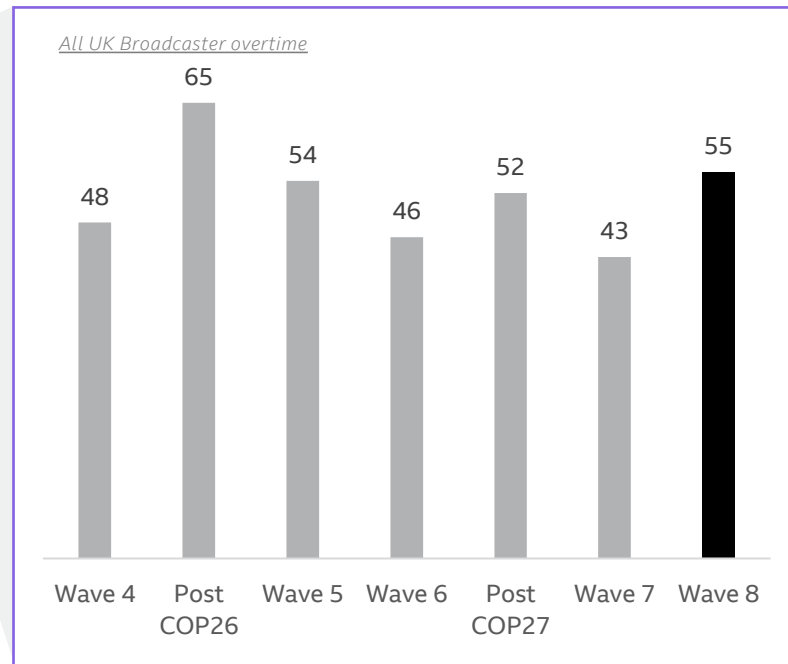
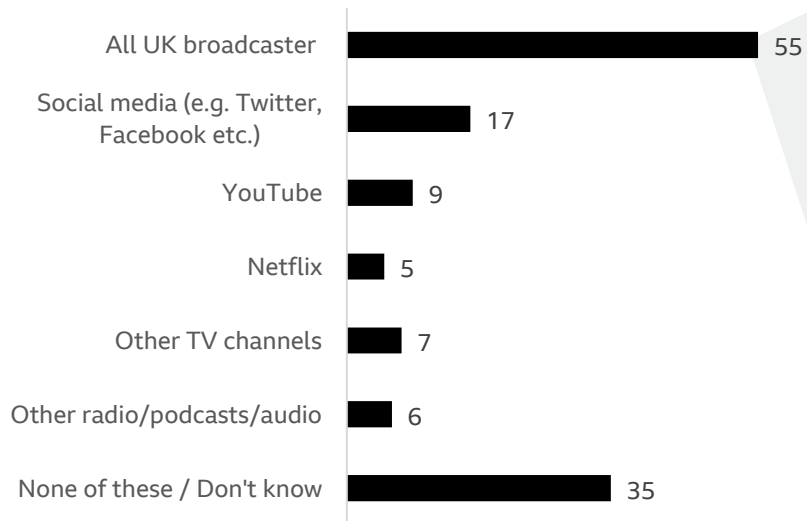


Base: All respondents

'International governments' wasn't provided as an option in Wave 6 therefore no data to compare

UK Broadcasters are the prime source of information from the media on environmental issues. 55% of people said they have heard or read something from one or more of the UK broadcasters – an increase vs the previous wave and the levels we saw post COP27

Q: Have you seen, heard or read anything about environmental issues from any of the following in the past few months?



NATURE: AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS

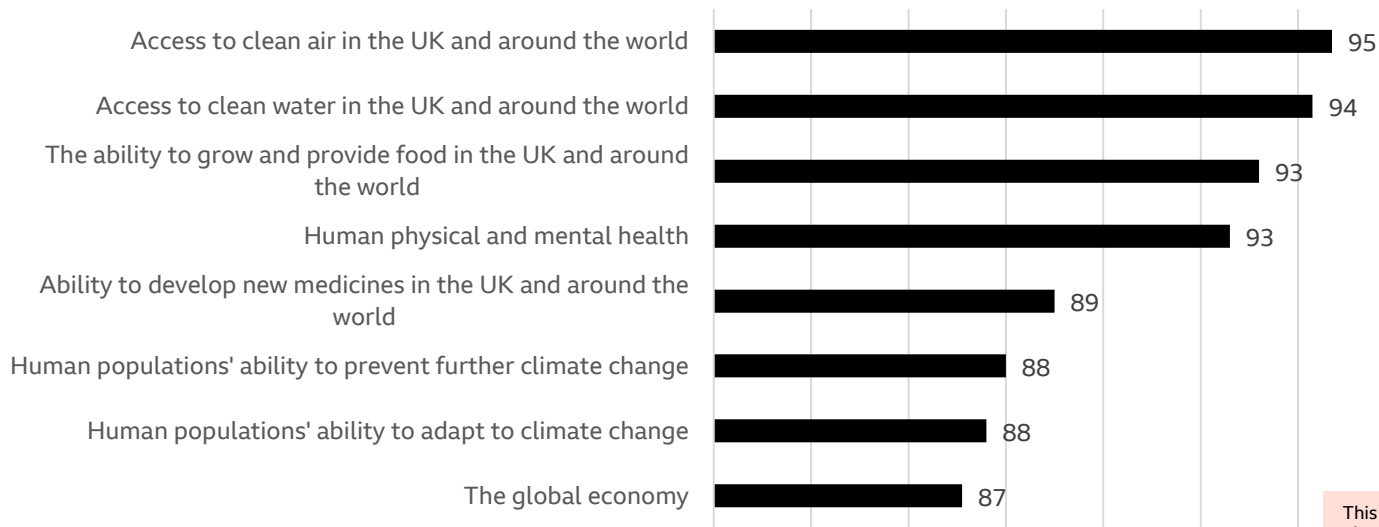
WAVE 8 (JULY 2023)



Audiences report they think nature is important to a wide range of things but are most likely to agree that the natural world is important to accessing clean air and water. 87% think it's important to the global economy.

Q: How important do you think nature and a healthy natural world is to the following:

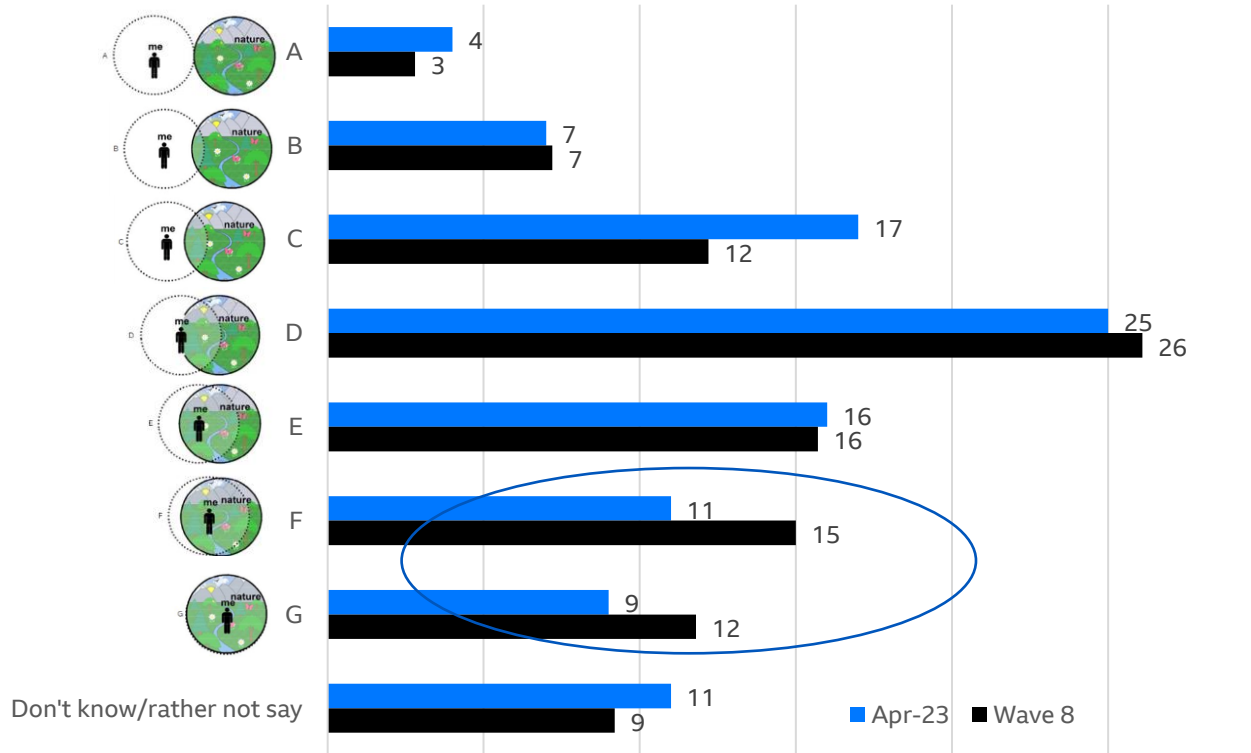
% choosing 'Very/fairly important'



This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

Most people feel somewhat connected to nature – between April and July there was an increase in those feeling very connected, perhaps reflecting the transition to summer.

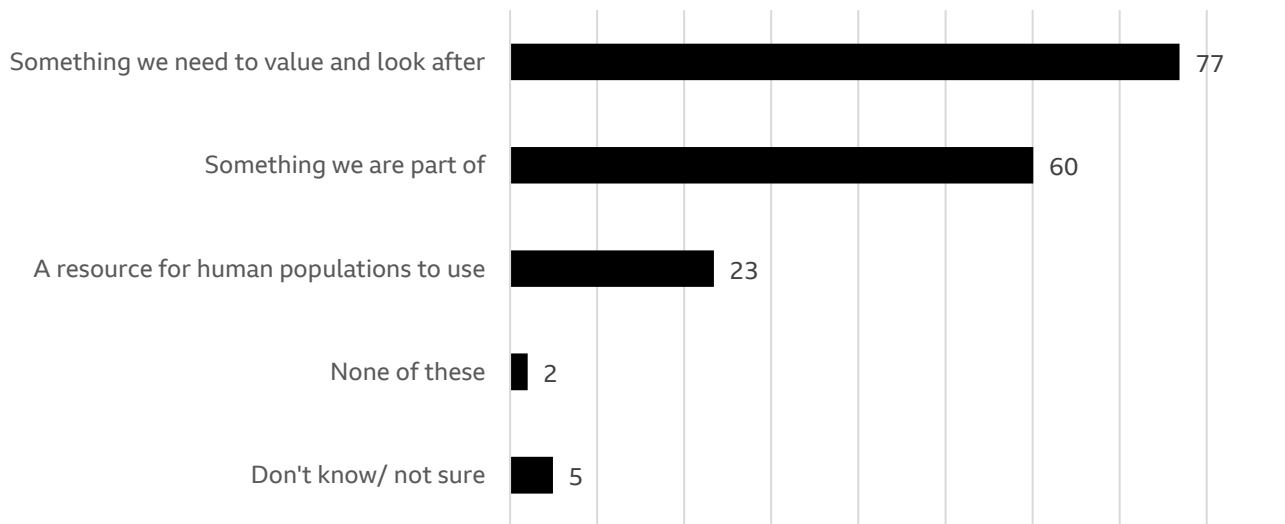
Q: Which of the images below best describes your relationship with nature?



This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

Over three quarters of people feel nature and the natural world is something we need to value and look after.

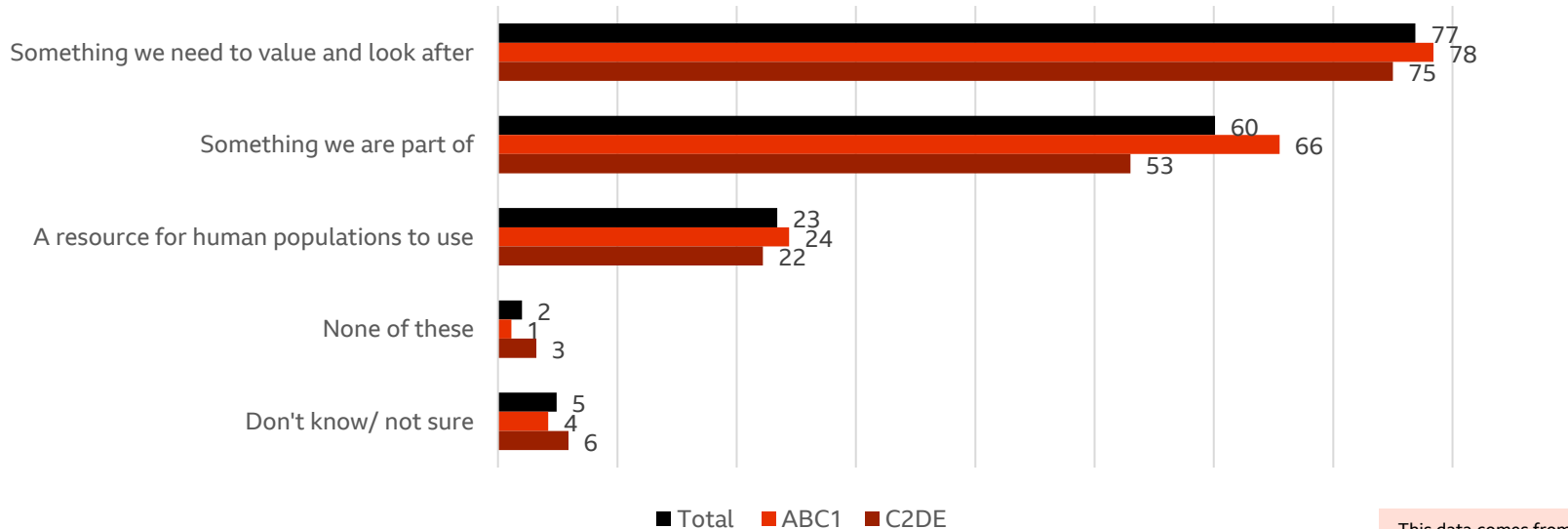
Q: When you think about nature and the natural world, do you think of it as any of the following? Please select all that apply.



This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

ABC1s are far more likely feel like nature is something we are part of than C2DEs.

Q: When you think about nature and the natural world, do you think of it as any of the following? Please select all that apply.

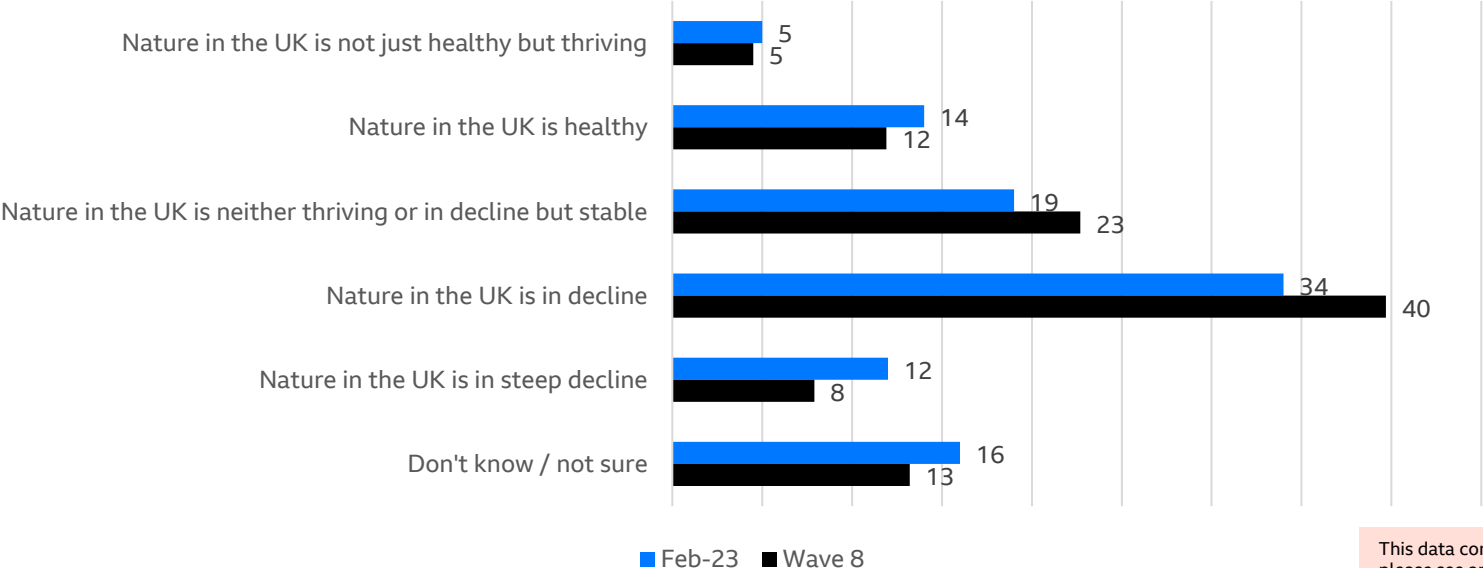


This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

While we have seen an increase in those who feel nature in the UK is in decline in the last six months, there has been a fall in those who believe it is currently in steep decline. 40% think UK nature is stable or thriving (up from 38%), contrary to recent reports¹.

¹ [State of Nature 2023 Report](#)

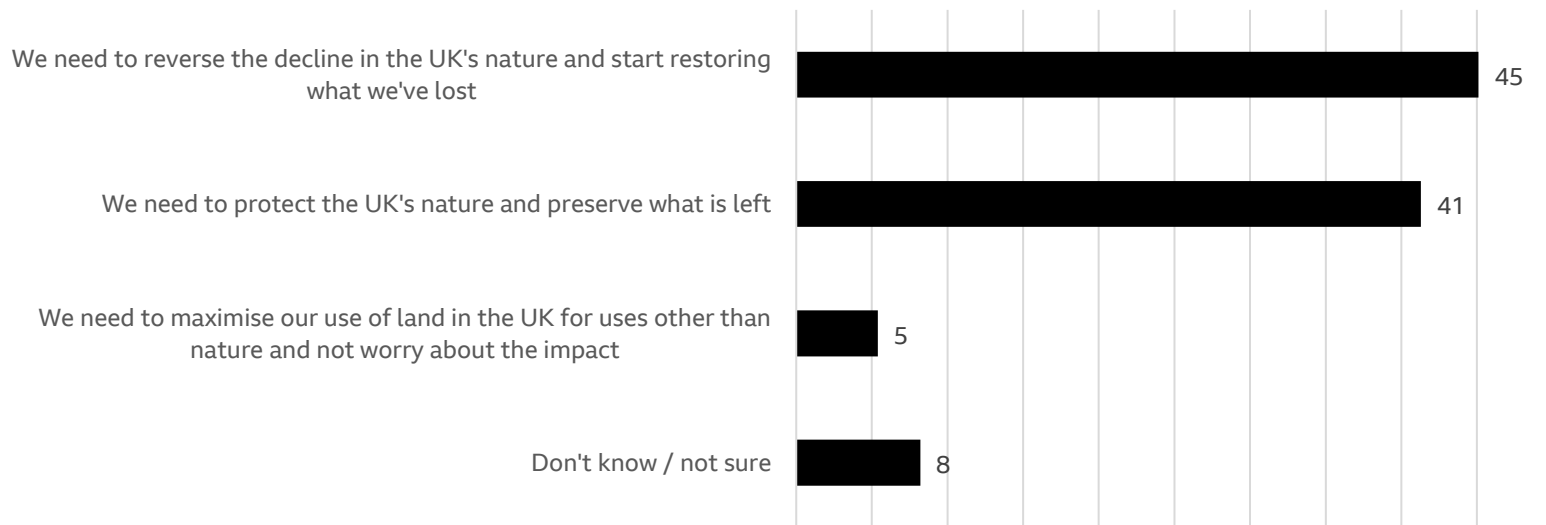
Q: People have different views on the state of the natural world (wildlife and plants) in the UK. Which of the following is closest to your view?



This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

This is reflected in the proportion of audiences who think we need to preserve what is left (40%), compared to those who think we need to reverse the overall decline in UK nature (45%).

Q: Some people say we need to protect and preserve UK's nature. Others say we need to maximise land for uses other than nature (e.g. for houses, businesses, other economic development). What comes closer to your view?



This data comes from a secondary survey – please see appendix for details

Appendix: Survey details

This is the eighth wave of an ongoing survey to track views on climate change and environmental issues.

The surveys are carried out on the BBC's survey panel.

- This Wave (8) was conducted 17th July – 23rd July 2023, with a nationally-representative sample of 1077 UK adults (online method)
 - A secondary survey was conducted 24th July – 30th July 2023, with a nationally-representative sample of 1353 UK adults (online method)
- Wave (7) was conducted across 30th January – 05th February 2023, with a nationally-representative sample of 702 UK adults (online method)*
 - A secondary wave 7 survey was conducted across 20th – 26th February 2023, with a nationally-representative sample of 847 UK adults (online method)
- Post COP 27 survey was conducted across 21st – 27th November 2022, with a nationally-representative sample of 1377 adults (online method)
- Wave 6 was conducted across 25th – 31st July 2022, with a nationally-representative sample of 1072 UK adults (online method)
- Wave 5 was conducted across 17th – 23rd January 2022, with a nationally-representative sample of 1002 UK adults (online method)
- Post COP 26 survey was conducted across 22nd – 28th November 2021, with a nationally-representative sample of 1813 adults (online method)
- Wave 4 was conducted across 25th July- 1st August 2021, with a nationally-representative sample of 1032 UK adults (online method)
- Wave 3 was conducted across 15th-21st March 2021, with a nationally-representative sample of 1173 UK adults
- Wave 2 was conducted across 6-13 September 2020, with a nationally-representative sample of 1290 UK adults
- Wave 1 was conducted across 2-9 March 2020