

Climate Change in the Irish Mind (Wave 2)

Insight Report No. 4: Climate Engagement



Key Findings

Over 3 in 4 Irish people report they “often” or “occasionally” discuss climate change with family and friends. However, it is evident that most frequent discussion is more common among women, older adults, while younger adults and men are less engaged. This suggests that while climate change is widely valued, who talks about it, and how often, varies in important ways.

Perceptions of risk and policy support are closely linked to discussion frequency. Those who often talk about climate change are more likely to see extreme weather as a serious local threat and show stronger support for ambitious climate policies, especially those requiring lifestyle or systemic change—highlighting how conversation can reinforce both concern and readiness to act.

While scientists are widely trusted on climate change, trust is generally lower among those who rarely discuss the topic.

In contrast, those who talk about climate change often show higher trust not just in scientists but also in family, NGOs, and media—suggesting social engagement shapes trust patterns as well as attitudes.

Understanding of which behaviours meaningfully reduce carbon footprints is generally weak across the population. Even those who frequently discuss climate change show a mixed grasp: Better recognition of some key actions (e.g., avoiding flights) but also a tendency to overestimate the impact of highly visible, low-impact behaviours, underscoring that engagement does not necessarily equate to accurate literacy.

Introduction

The 'Climate Change in the Irish Mind' study (CCIM) is a nationally representative study of the Irish people's beliefs, attitudes, policy preferences and behaviours regarding climate change.

This work was undertaken by the EPA and the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication in support of the National Dialogue on Climate Action.

The approach to the project is based on the established methodology of the "Climate Change in the American Mind" survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, which was tailored to meet Ireland's particular socio-economic context. This is the first nationally-representative survey of its kind in Ireland.

These Insights Reports are based on the findings of the [second wave of CCIM](#), which was carried out in 2023 (Wave 1 baseline survey of CCIM was undertaken in 2021)

Methodology

CCIM Wave 2 fieldwork was conducted between the 30th of August and the 6th of October 2023 by the survey company Ipsos B&A following a recognised industry standard. The survey was conducted with a representative sample of the Irish people, aged 18 years and over.

Survey respondents were recruited using a random digit dial sample of live Irish telephone numbers. A total of 22,862 numbers were contacted by telephone, about 80% of survey respondents were reached through mobile phone numbers and 20% through landline phone numbers.

A total of 1,355 interviews were completed (including 25 pilot interviews to test survey wording and timing), for a response rate of 5.9%*. All questionnaires were administered by call agents using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software. The survey took, on average, 25 minutes to complete.

Gender, age, work status, and region quotas were used to ensure sample representativeness. Key demographic variables were also weighted, post-survey, to match Central Statistics Office norms.

*Wave 1 of CCIM (2021) used a sample size of (N = 4,000) to build the statistical model underlying the CCIM Climate Opinion Maps. Wave 2 of CCIM (2023) uses a sample size of (N = 1,330) for the Main Report but builds on the statistical model from Wave 1 for the mapping output which uses an effective sample of (N = 5,330). Please see the Methodology and FAQ pages of the Climate Opinion Maps for more details.

Topic Focus

The national survey questionnaire contained a series of topics and themes:

Worry about climate change impacts or extreme weather; Beliefs; Risk perceptions; Policy support; Behaviours (consumer and political); Norms; Personal experience of climate change; Media sources; and Climate literacy in the Irish public.

This report, Climate Change in the Irish Mind – Engagement, explores how people in Ireland engage with climate change through everyday conversations and how this relates to their perceptions, trust in information, and policy support.

It highlights key demographic patterns in who talks about climate change and how often, showing that frequent discussion is linked with greater concern, higher trust, and stronger support for action. These findings offer valuable insights for future communication strategies.

Summary of National Findings

In summary, key overall findings from CCIM Wave 2 (2023) for climate engagement included:

The survey indicated that Irish people are highly engaged on the topic of climate change with most people in Ireland “often” or “occasionally” discussing climate change with family and friends.

About eight in ten people in Ireland (78%) say they either “often” (33%) or “occasionally” (45%) have such climate change discussions.

Only about two in ten (22%) say they either “rarely” (15%) or “never” (7%) discuss climate change.

Additionally, almost nine in ten Irish people (89%) say climate change is important to them personally.

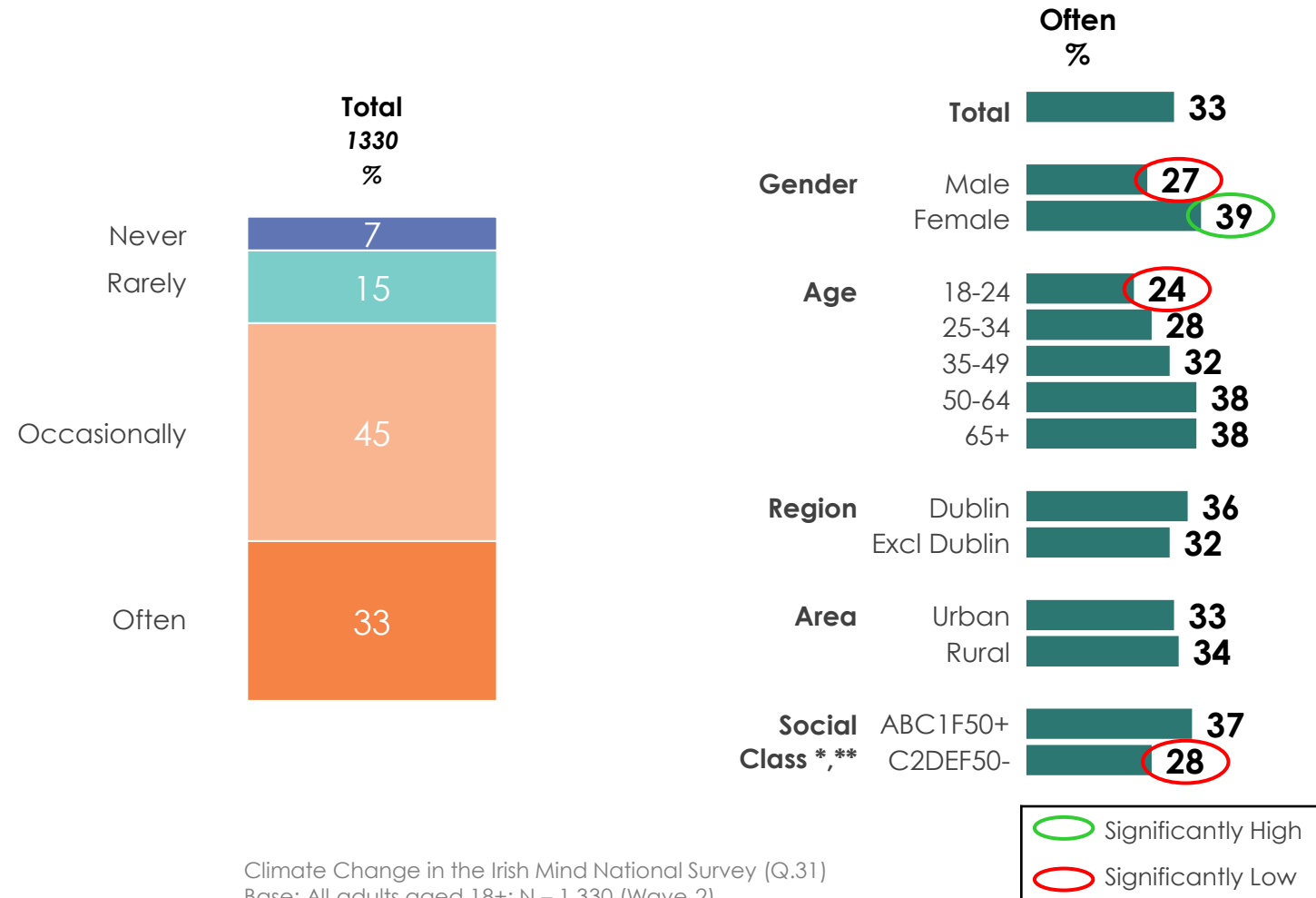
The following analysis examines how often people in Ireland discuss climate change, with whom, and how this engagement relates to their perceptions of climate risk, trust in information sources, and support for climate policies.

Engagement: How often do we discuss climate change with family & friends

Irish people are highly engaged on climate change, with the vast majority saying it's personally important and 78% reporting they "often" or "occasionally" discuss it with family and friends.

Interestingly, frequent discussion is more common among women, older adults (50+), and those in ABC1F50+ employment categories*; while it is significantly lower among men, younger adults (18–24), and those in C2DEF50- employment categories**.

This pattern suggests that while climate change is widely valued, depth of conversation may reflect demographic differences in concern or social norms.



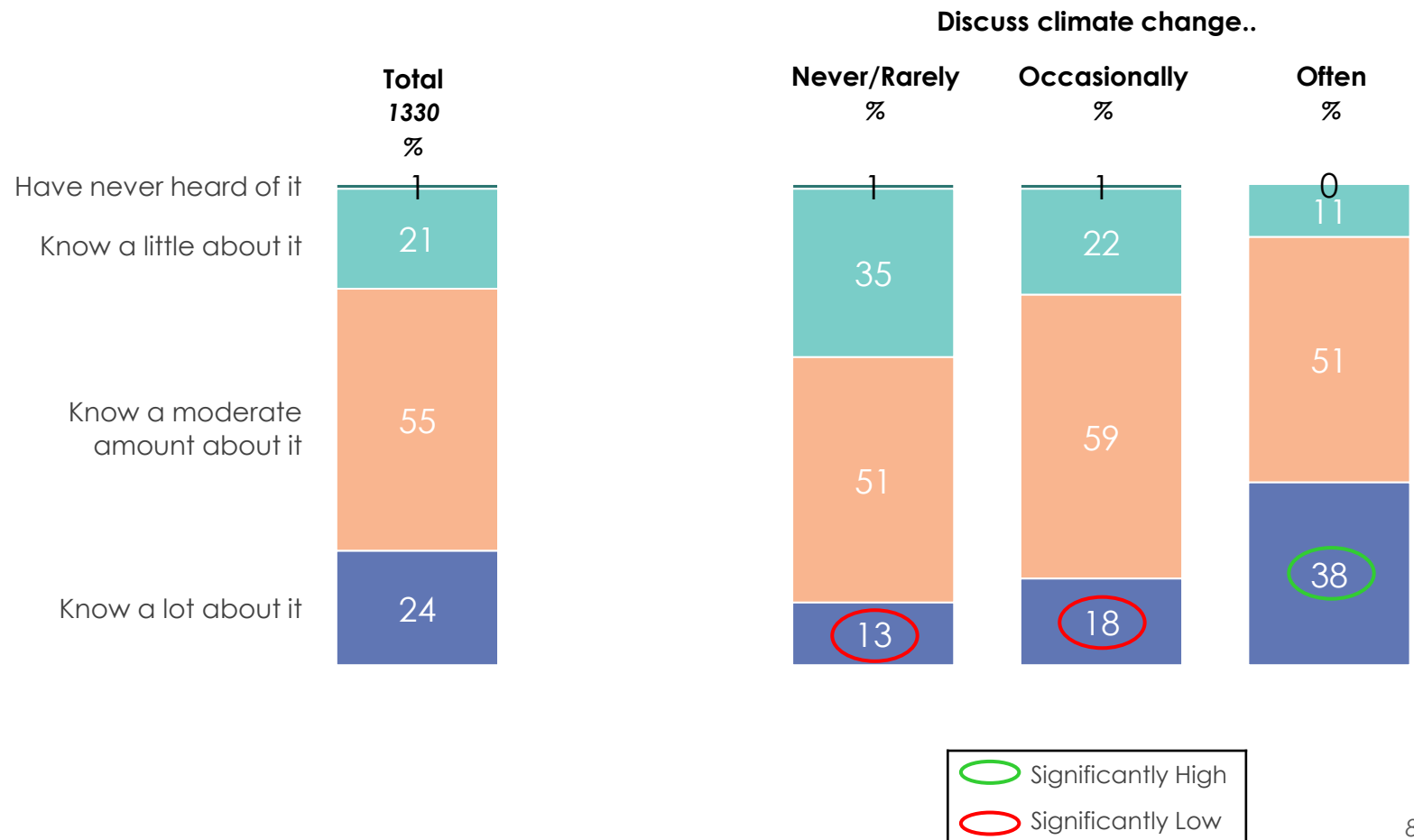
Understanding & Engagement: How much do we know about climate change

Most people in Ireland feel they know at least a moderate amount about climate change (78%), with 24% claiming to know “a lot” and very few (1%) saying they’ve never heard of it.

Self-assessed knowledge strongly correlates with engagement: those who frequently discuss climate change with family and friends are far more likely to say they “know a lot,” (38%) while those who rarely discuss it tend to say they “know a little.”

This suggests that talking about climate change may both reflect and reinforce confidence and perceived understanding, highlighting the important role of social dialogue.

Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.3)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N = 1,330 (Wave 2)





Engagement & Trusted Information Sources

Scientists remain the most trusted source of climate change information in Ireland with the highest levels of trust being placed in the EPA (88%), educators (87%), and family and friends (85%).

However, trust varies by discussion habits: those who ‘never/rarely’ talk about climate change consistently show lower trust across most sources—below the national total for 10 of 13 sources—suggesting that low engagement and low trust go hand in hand.

In contrast, trust differences are modest between ‘occasionally’ and ‘often’ discussants, though the latter group shows notably higher trust in family and friends, environmental NGOs, and mainstream news.

	Total	Discuss climate change..		
		Never/ Rarely	Occasion -ally	Often
Base	1330	292	603	435
	%	%	%	%
Scientists	93	86	95	95
The Irish Environmental Protection Agency (the EPA)	88	79	90	90
Educators	87	80	88	88
Family and friends	85	78	85	89
Television weather reporters	84	74	87	87
Environmental non-governmental organisations (or NGOs)	81	70	82	86
The mainstream news media	68	56	70	74
Community leaders	68	58	70	72
Journalists	68	55	71	72
Political leaders	48	40	51	50
Corporations/Businesses	37	36	38	35
Religious leaders	35	34	37	31
Online influencers, celebrities, or media personalities	25	23	25	25
Average	66	59	68	69

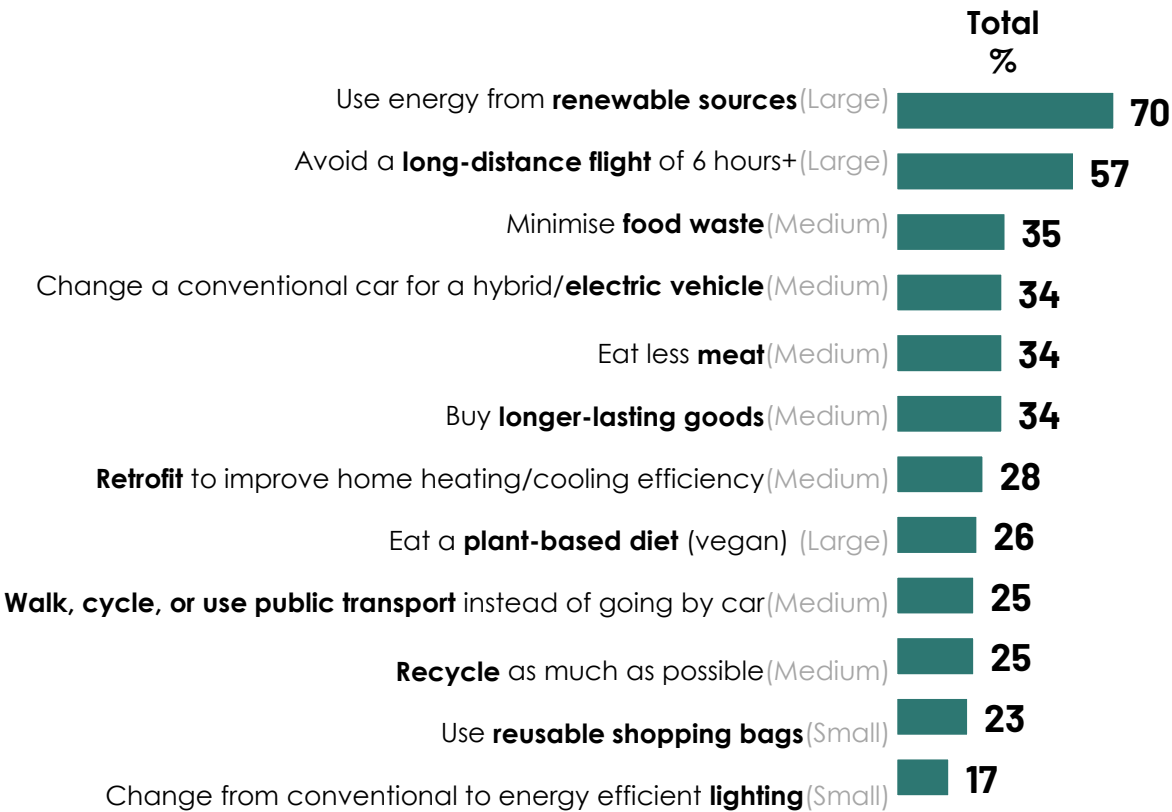
 Significantly High
 Significantly Low

Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.35)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N = 1,330 (Wave 2)

Engagement & Climate Literacy:
Understanding contribution of individual behaviours to carbon footprint (percent giving correct answer*)

Across engagement groups, differences in understanding carbon footprint impacts were smaller than expected. While most Irish people correctly identified that avoiding long-distance flights and switching to renewable energy has a large impact, many overestimated low-impact behaviours like reusable bags and energy-efficient lighting, and underestimated diet choices.

Among those who ‘often’ discuss climate change, only three behaviours—avoiding long flights, using renewables, and eating a plant-based diet—were better understood. Interestingly, this group also tended to overestimate the impact of actions like walking, cycling, or home retrofitting, suggesting that greater engagement does not always translate to more accurate climate literacy.



Discuss climate change...		
Never/ Rarely	Occasion- ally	Often
292	603	435
%	%	%
55	72	77
43	58	65
31	40	30
33	36	33
28	36	34
35	37	28
34	30	22
18	23	35
28	28	18
22	27	24
23	22	26
19	16	17

Significantly High
Significantly Low

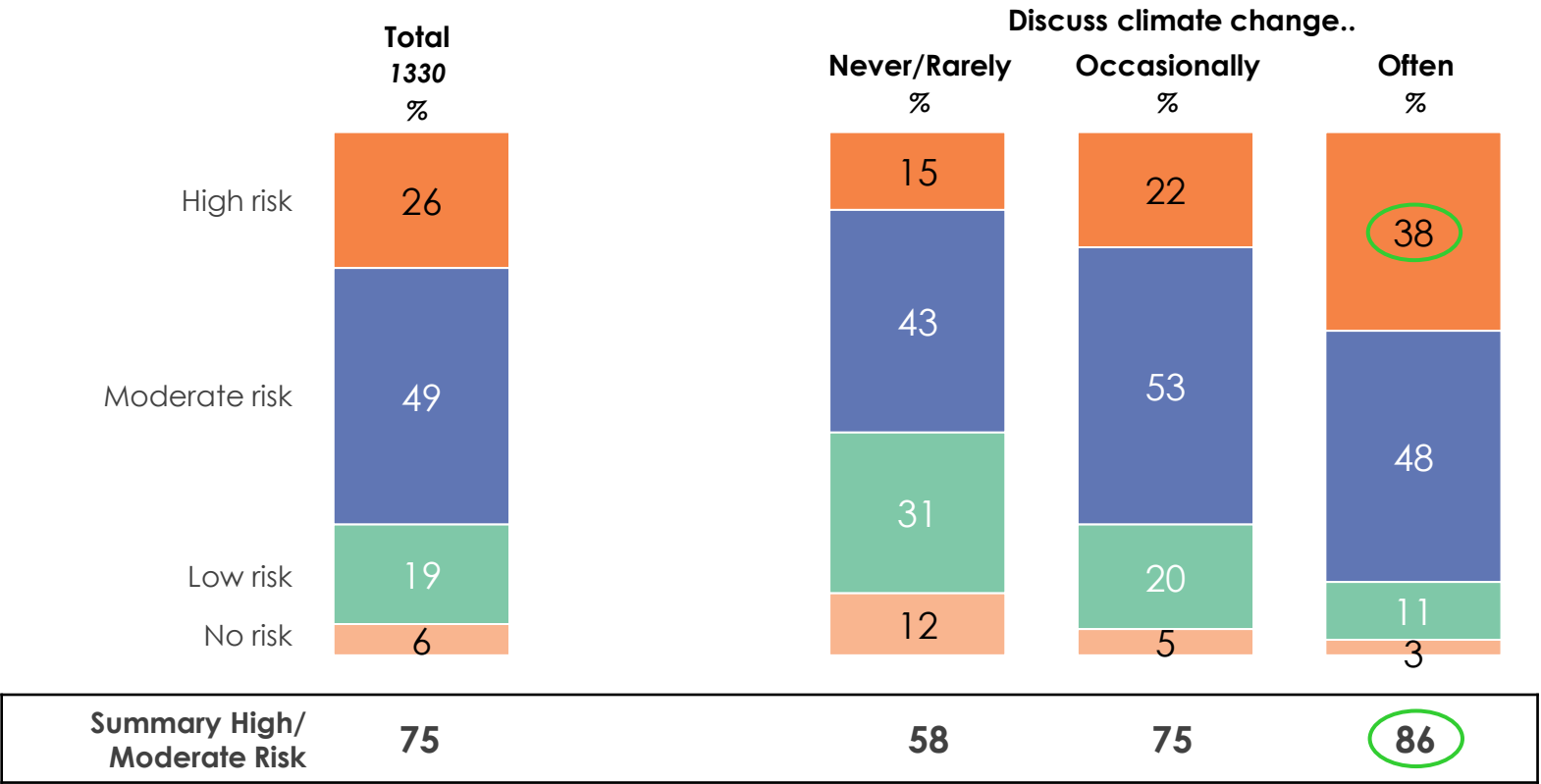
Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.40)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 1,330 (Wave 2)

*To gauge the public's understanding of what behaviours can help reduce the carbon footprint of an average person, respondents were presented with a list of activities, and asked to consider if each activity would make a Large (5% or more), Medium (between 1-5%), or Small (less than 1%) contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of an average person.

Perceived Risk & Engagement

Three-quarters of people in Ireland view extreme weather as a “high” or “moderate” risk to their community in the next decade, reflecting widespread concern. This perception intensifies among those who ‘often’ discuss climate change: 86% see a risk, and 38% perceive a ‘high risk,’ well above the national average of 26%.

This suggests that regular discussion not only reflects heightened concern but may also deepen people’s awareness of climate-related risks facing their local communities.



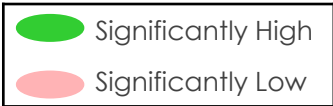
Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.2)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 1,330 (Wave 2)

Engagement & Policy Support

Support for sample climate policies is closely tied to how often people discuss climate change. On average, 58% of Irish people support the surveyed policies (13 in total), but this rises to 64% among those who ‘often’ discuss the topic, and falls to 48% among those who ‘never/rarely’ do.

Frequent discussants show notably stronger support for more demanding policies, such as banning peat, coal and oil for home heating, taxing petrol and diesel cars, and reducing the cattle herd—suggesting that regular conversation may both reflect and reinforce greater willingness to back ambitious climate action.

Support	Total	Discuss climate change..		
		Never/ Rarely	Occasion- ally	Often
Base	1330	292	603	435
	%	%	%	%
Banning peat, coal and oil for home heating purposes	25	14	24	33
Higher taxes on cars that use petrol and diesel	24	13	23	32
Reducing the size of the national cattle herd to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	29	22	25	37
Average support (13 policies)	58	48	57	64



Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.21/Q.22/Q.23)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N = 1,330 (Wave 2)

Climate Change in the Irish Mind (Wave 2)

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CCIM Insights Reports are based on the findings of the main CCIM study Wave 2, which was carried out in 2023. [The study homepage can be accessed Here](#)