

Climate Change in the Irish Mind

Wave 1: Insight Report No. 3 Worry About Climate Change Impacts

Key Learnings

In relation to the potential local environmental hazards, primary concern relates to water pollution, which causes 40% of Irish adults to be 'very worried'; the next highest concern is air pollution, followed by rising sea levels and severe storms.

A total of 2 in 3 Irish adults are *very worried* by at least one of the local environmental hazards. This group peaks across women; those aged 65 years plus; and in Munster (driven by worry around flooding, and severe storms).

18% of adults are acutely concerned by six or more of the local hazards. Note the distinction by age: this group is more likely to be above the age of 50 years; while the 'None' group (who are not very worried by any of the hazards) peaks among those 35 to 49 years.

23% of adults perceive the 10 year local risk of extreme weather to be high, and this group exhibit a strikingly balanced demographic pattern. They more regularly receive information about climate change through the media and are more trusting of Educators and NGOs in particular.

There is a very high correlation between the perceived 10 year high risk of extreme weather and acute worry about the range of local environmental hazards. Near 9 in 10 of the high risk extreme weather group are very worried by at least one of the local hazards.

Introduction

The ‘Climate Change in the Irish Mind’ project is a baseline 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.

Methodology

The fieldwork was conducted during 24th May to 29th July 2021 by the survey company Behaviours & Attitudes 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 84,961 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 4,030 interviews were completed (including 30 pilot interviews to test survey wording and timing), for a response rate of 5%. 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.

Topic Focus

The national survey questionnaire contained a series of topics and themes: Worry about climate change impacts/ex weather; Beliefs; Risk Perceptions; Policy Support; Behaviours (consumer and political); Norms; Personal Experience of Climate Change; and Media Sources.

This report 'Climate Change in the Irish Mind – Worry about Climate Change impacts' concentrates exclusively on the national responses in relation to that topic.

Key information areas covered in the Worry about Climate Change impacts topic included: ***How worried are you that the following (local environmental hazards) might harm your local area? In your opinion, over the next 10 years how much risk does extreme weather pose to your community?***

The analysis focussed on the demographic differences exhibited in the responses to the topic of **Worry about Climate Change impacts**.

Review of National Findings

Three in four people in Ireland think extreme weather poses a risk to their community*

The survey found that three in four people in Ireland (75%) think extreme weather poses either a “high” (23%) or “moderate” (52%) risk to their community over the next 10 years. Fewer think extreme weather poses either a “low” risk (20%) or “no” risk (4%).

A majority of people in Ireland are worried about harm from environmental hazards in their local area.

A majority of people in Ireland are at least “somewhat worried” about environmental hazards in their local areas, including water pollution (81%), air pollution (70%), severe storms (64%), rising sea levels (62%), water shortages (61%), flooding (56%), agricultural pests and diseases (56%), and invasive species (53%). Fewer are worried about droughts (46%), extreme heat (45%), wildfires (40%) or bog bursts or landslides (27%).

Review of National Findings

The following analysis focusses on the demographic differences exhibited in the responses to the topic of **Worry about Climate Change impacts**.

In relation to the local environmental hazards which might harm ‘your local area’, the levels of ‘very worried’ responses are discriminating across the 12 issues - ranging from 40% for water pollution to 9% for bog bursts/landslides. The analysis focussed on how levels of concern/worry vary across key demographic criteria; as well as how the environmental hazards typically group in terms of concern.

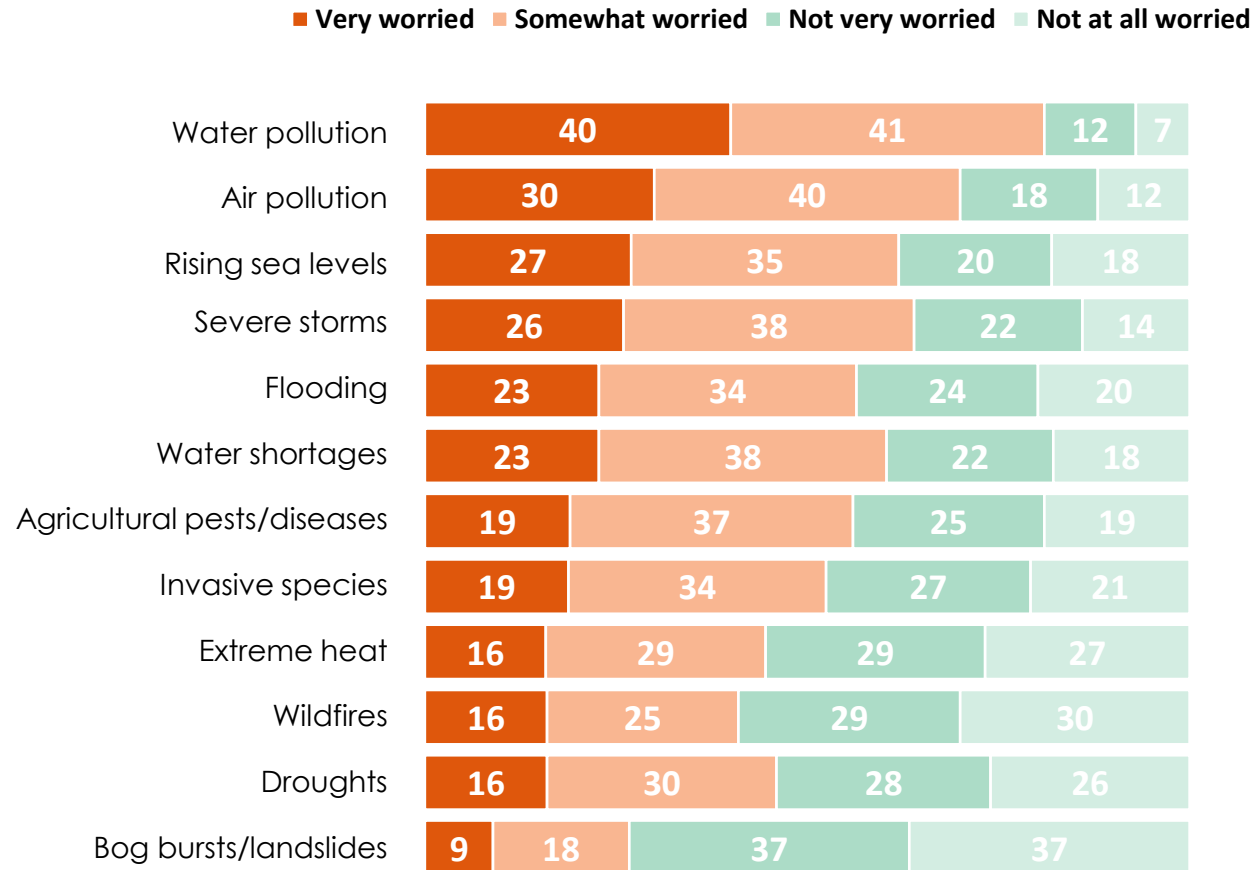
This topic also identifies 23% of Irish adults who believe extreme weather poses a high risk to their community in the next 10 years. This group was highlighted for analysis: who are they; where are they getting their information; and which of the local environmental hazards were they most concerned about.

Varying concerns for local environmental hazards

In relation to the local environmental hazards which might harm 'your local area', the levels of 'very worried' responses are discriminating across the 12 issues.

Our primary concern relates to water pollution, which causes 40% of Irish adults to be 'very worried'; our next highest concern is *air pollution*, followed by *rising sea levels* and *severe storms*.

In an Irish context, the local environmental hazards of least concern relate to *extreme heat*, *wildfires*, *droughts* and *bog bursts/landslides*.



Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.1)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 4,000

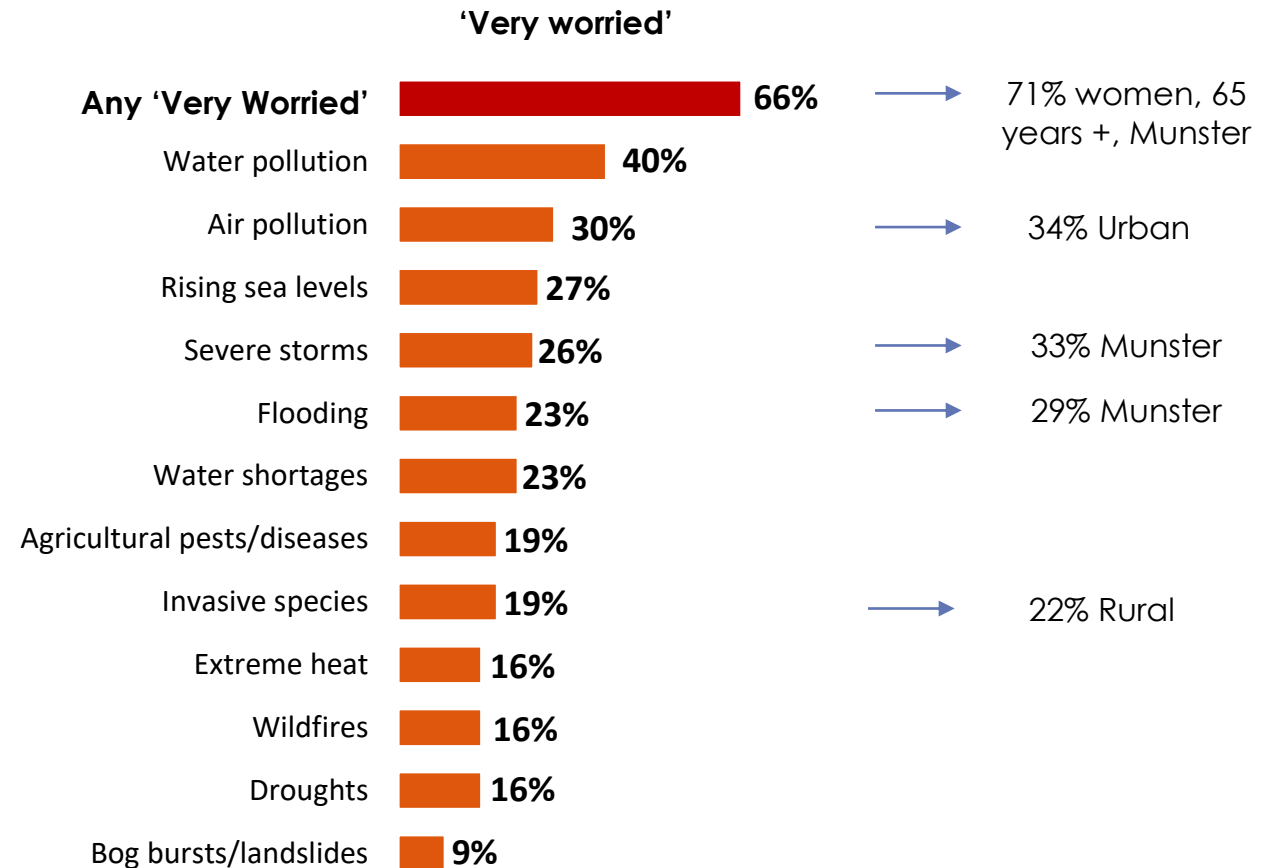
2 in 3 adults are ‘very concerned’ by at least one of the local environmental hazards

When reviewed in aggregate, a total of two in three Irish adults are *very worried* by at least one of the local environmental hazards.

This overall *worried* group peaks across three demographic groups: women; those aged 65 years plus; and in Munster.

The relatively high acute concern in Munster is driven by two specific hazards ; worry around flooding, and severe storms.

Concern for air pollution is much higher among urban adults, while the rural community exhibit higher acute concern in relation to both invasive species and severe storms.



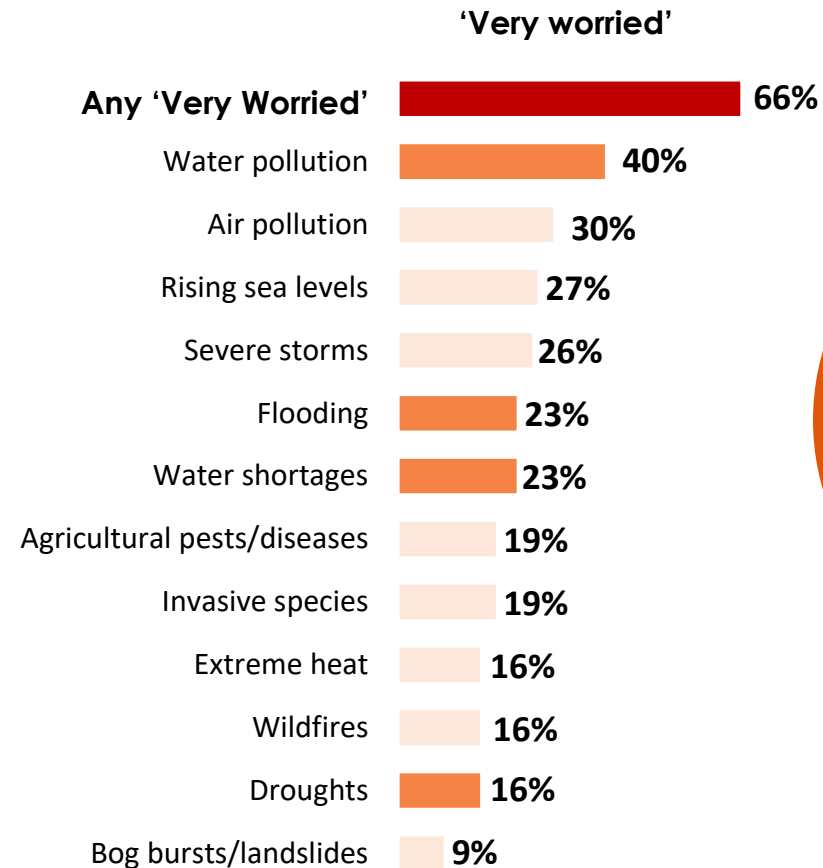
Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.1)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 4,000

The most prominent overlap among acute concerns in an Irish context relates to water

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most prominent overlap among acute concerns in an Irish context relates to water.

We are most likely to bundle being very worried for each of water pollution, droughts, water shortages and flooding.

The highest common concern across the hazards is between droughts and water pollution.



73% of those very worried by flooding are also very worried by water pollution;

70% of those very worried about droughts are highly concerned by water shortages.

Likewise, 77% of those very worried about droughts share this concern about water pollution.

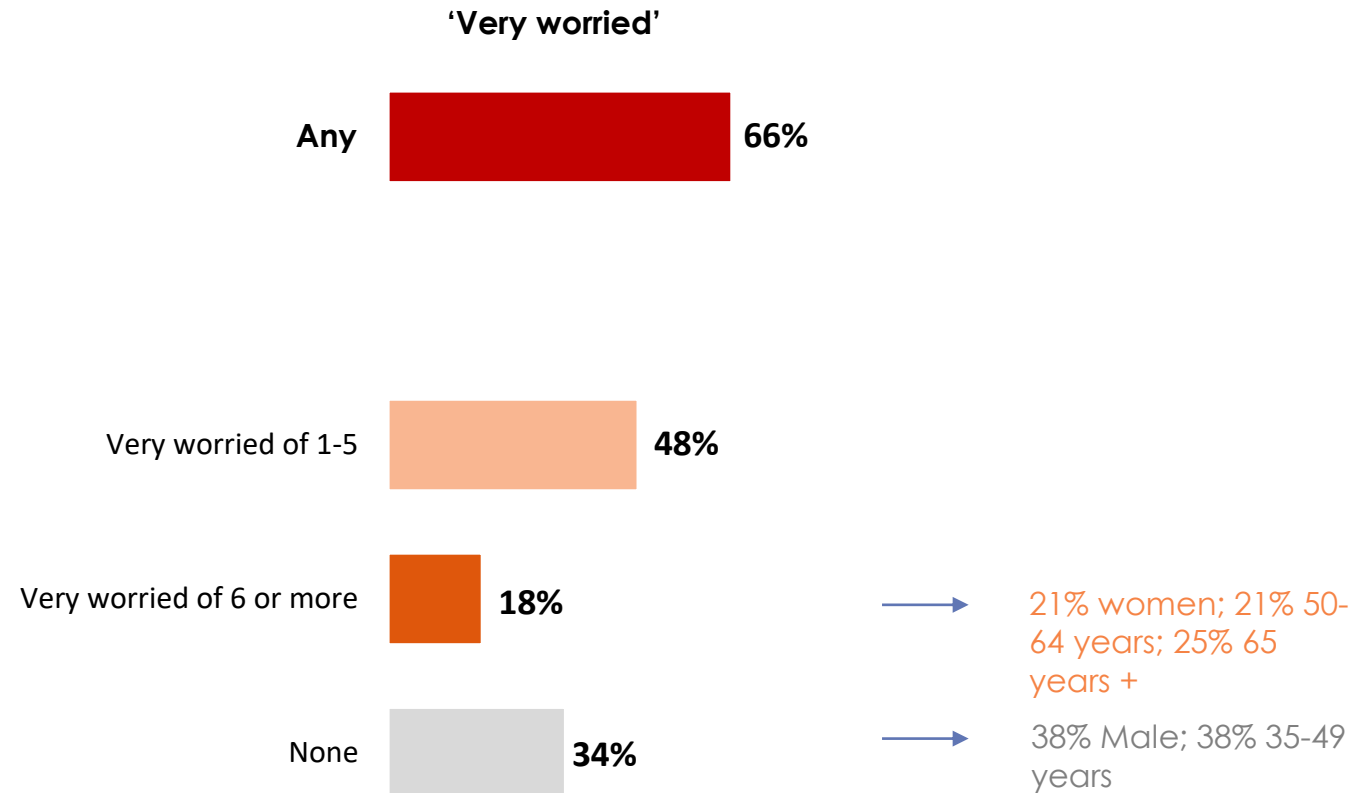
Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.1)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 4,000

Near 1 in 5 adults are acutely concerned by six or more local hazards

18% of adults are very worried by six or more of the (12) local environmental hazards

This 'Local Hazard Acute Worry' group is much more likely to be female and above the age of 50 years. However no significant demographic variation is evident by either region or area(urban/ rural).

The 'None' group (the 34% who do not indicate being very worried by any of the local hazards) peaks among men and interestingly among those 35 to 49 years.

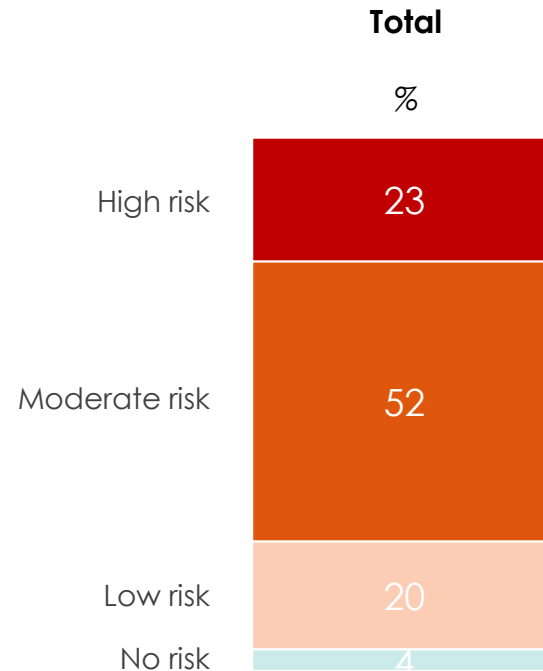


Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.1)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N – 4,000

23% consider the 'local' risk extreme weather poses in the next 10 years to be high

When asked to adopt a 10 year perspective and assess the risk extreme weather poses to their community over that period, 23% of adults perceive the risk to be high. (Only 4% of adults considered there to be 'no risk').

This Extreme Weather 'high risk' group was then highlighted for analysis: who are they; where are they getting their information; and which of the local environmental hazards are they most concerned about.



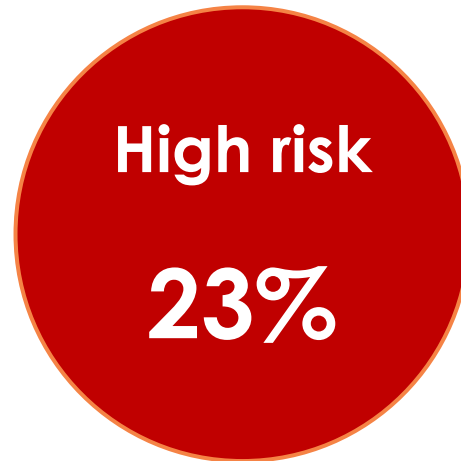
Climate Change in the Irish Mind National Survey (Q.2)
Base: All adults aged 18+; N = 4,000

This extreme weather ‘High’ risk group are..

Those that assess extreme weather posing a ‘high risk’ to their community in next 10 years exhibit a strikingly balanced demographic pattern showing little variation overall by either gender or age.

They do more regularly receive information about climate change through the media, and they are more trusting of a variety of sources, particularly Educators and NGOs.

There is a very high correlation between perceived high risk of extreme weather and acute worry about the range of local environmental hazards. Near 9 in 10 of the high risk group are very worried by at least one of the local hazards.



Who are they?

- Strikingly there are no significant variations across the main demographic groups (Gender, age, Region etc.). Only among young women (18-24 years) does the high-risk group rise to 30%.

Where do they get their information?

- They are significantly more likely on a weekly basis to hear about climate change in the media; and to strongly trust as sources of information ‘Educators’ and ‘NGOs’.

Which local hazards are of most concern?

- 88% are ‘very worried’ by any of the local hazards’ and 39% are ‘very worried’ by 6 or more (versus 18% of all adults). Their concern also peaks for Water Pollution.

Climate Change in the Irish Mind – Worry About Climate Change impacts