

Climate Change

Methodology

In December 2020, a Climate Change Survey was issued to the residents of Bolton. This survey was designed to collect residents' opinions concerning activities to ensure Bolton becomes carbon neutral by 2030. The survey covered the overall attitude towards climate change and identified existing barriers to becoming more environmentally friendly. In addition, opinions regarding activities to promote individual and community change were also measured.

The survey was commissioned by Bolton Vision and developed with the involvement of various environmental groups keen to see change both in the region and nationally. It followed a similar format to work being carried out in other boroughs as they seek to achieve the 2030 target.

Due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the form was only made available online. To promote the survey, all Bolton Vision partners were provided with communication content and the link for the survey which was then promoted through their networks. There was publicity through the Council's website and social media feeds as well as through Bolton FM. The Council's youth engagement team contacted all schools to encourage them to participate as part of their curriculum work. The survey was also promoted to businesses through the Chamber of Commerce.

To further maximise the number of responses, they were collected over a two-month period which allowed provided adequate time for these communications to take place.

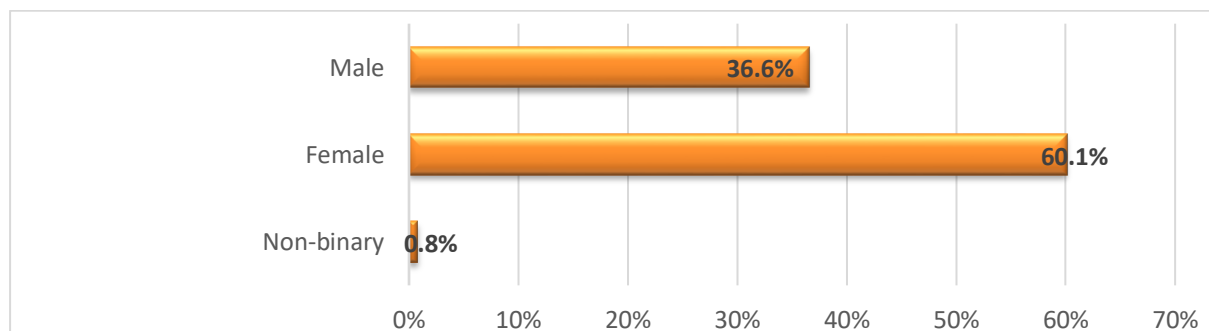
In total, 1180 surveys were returned, reflecting a wide response from many different groups living in the borough.

Respondents

Survey respondents were asked a small amount of information about themselves to ensure the views of a wide audience were taken into consideration.

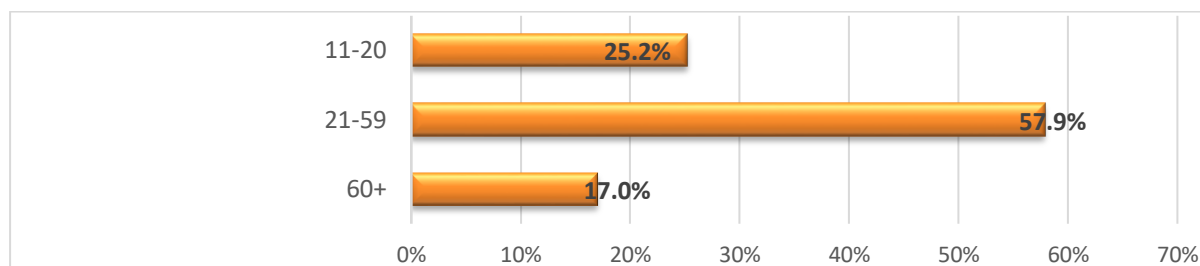
This information has been checked and although there were some anomalies, these remained relatively low in number. Examples included school aged property and business owners and ethnicity categories outside of the standard groups. Although there is no way of verifying all the information provided, it was concluded the level of inconsistencies would not impact on the overall findings. For this reason, the information was retained.

Gender



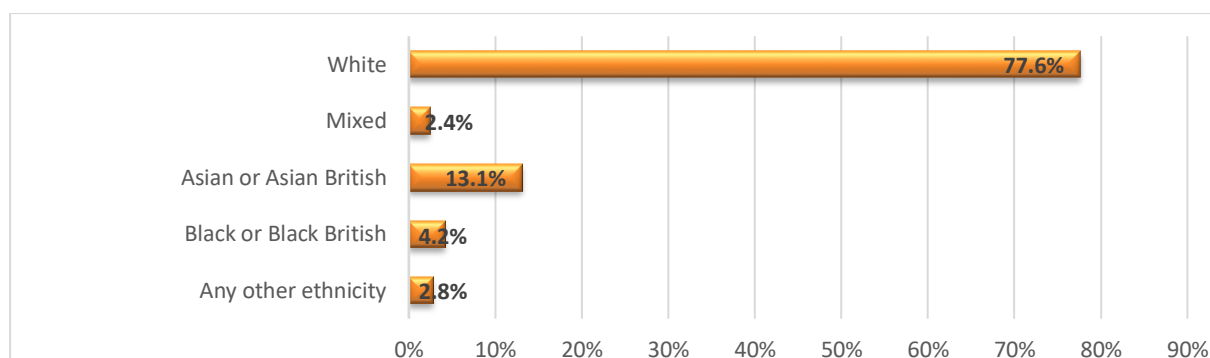
Survey respondents were slightly more likely to be female. Only a small number of respondents (9) identified as non-binary whilst the remaining 2.4% preferred not to provide gender. In 2019 Bolton Council estimated the gender of people living in the borough was almost equally split between male (49.7%) and female (50.3%). The results from this survey showed that females were most likely to reply.

Age



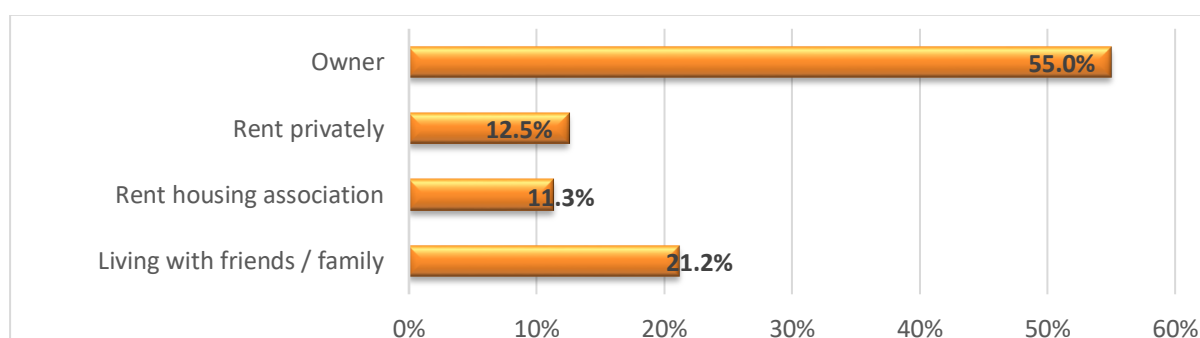
As the chart shows, most respondents were aged between 20 and 59. This would be expected as it also reflects the broadest ranges in age. Amongst younger respondents, 8% (92) were still of school age. The remaining 17.2% (199) were aged between 17 and 20. Of the 57.9% that were aged between 21 and 59, there were more respondents aged over 40 than younger. In total, 290 respondents were aged between 21 and 39 compared to 379 aged between 40 and 59.

Ethnicity



The vast majority of those completing a survey had a white background. The ethnicity figures above are representative of the borough. The 2011 Census showed the following breakdown across Bolton by ethnicity: White (81.9%), Mixed (1.8%), Asian or Asian British (13.9%), Black or Black British (1.6%) and Other (0.7%).

Tenure



The information in relation to the tenure of respondents is reflected in the chart above.

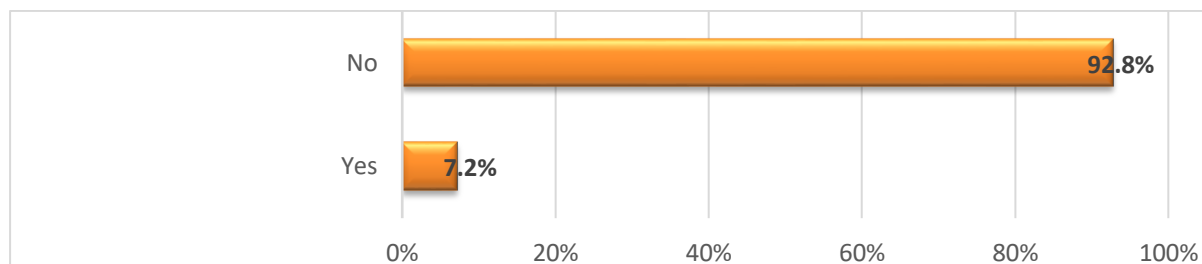
However, caution should be taken when looking at these figures as the option 'Living with friends or family' may sometimes overlap with other categories. Some respondents

reply as individuals whilst others reflect the household situation. Respondents may feel they fit into two of these categories and there is no way of knowing how the question was interpreted.

Further checks showed that within the age groups 11 to 16, just under 60% (54) respondents described themselves as living with friends or family. Of the remaining respondents approximately 20% felt they were property owners and a similar proportion rented, either privately or through a housing association.

This illustrates the understanding of this question and whilst data has not been changed, there should be caution when doing further analysis of groups by tenure.

Business ownership



Only a small number of business owners (81) completed a form. Further checks showed that a small number of these (5) were aged 20 or younger. Whilst postcode information was gathered, this related to the respondent and did not extend to business premises and it was unclear whether the business owners operate within the Bolton borough.

Although this does not invalidate the information, it is relevant if more detailed analysis is needed for this group.

Area

Information was collected in relation to postcode sector which included the first part of the post code. For example, the post code for Bolton Town Hall is BL1 1RU and the post code sector is BL1 1.

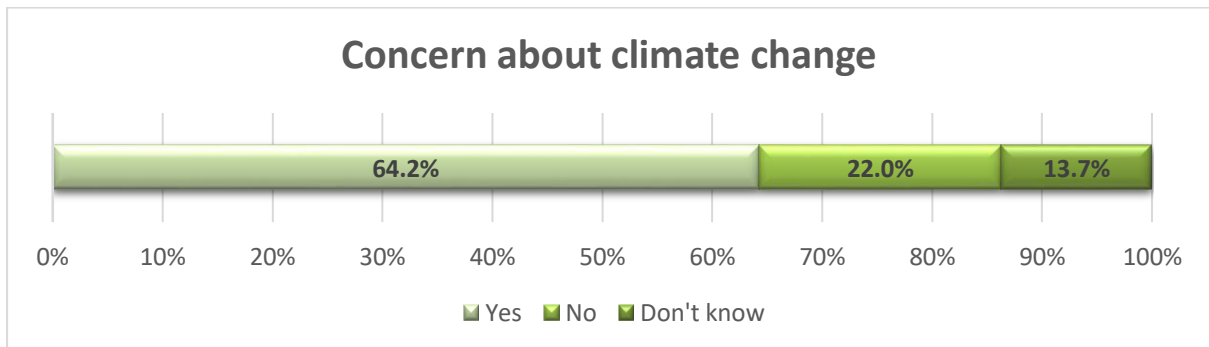
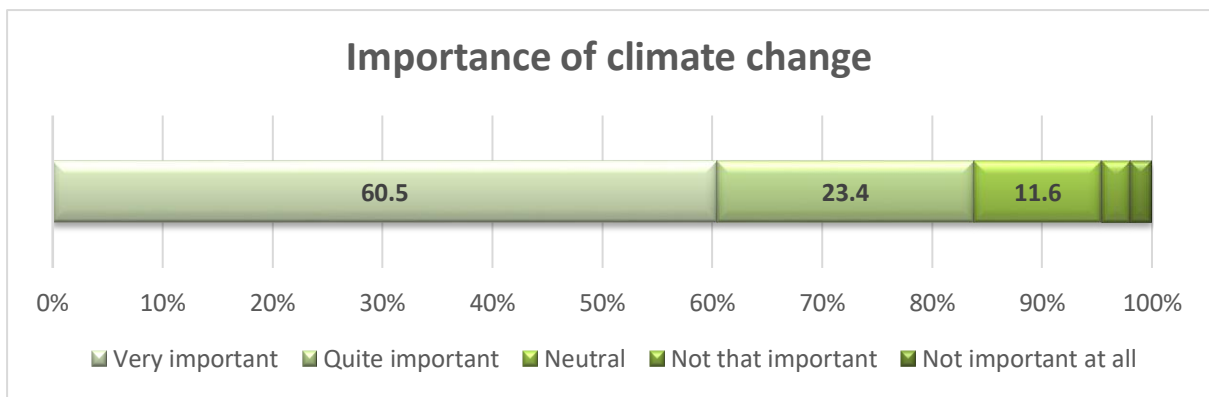
Although not all respondents provided the sector, in many cases at least some part of the post code was given. All the detail was cleaned and showed post code sector for 458 responses and the wider area (BL1, BL2 etc) for a further 546. There was no area information at all for 176 replies.

When area information was made available, it is shown the vast majority of respondents lived within Bolton.

Results

The charts below summarise the response to each of the survey questions. Although non-responses have been removed from the results, checks were carried out to ensure there was a high level of engagement with each topic. These checks showed the level of blank responses remained low.

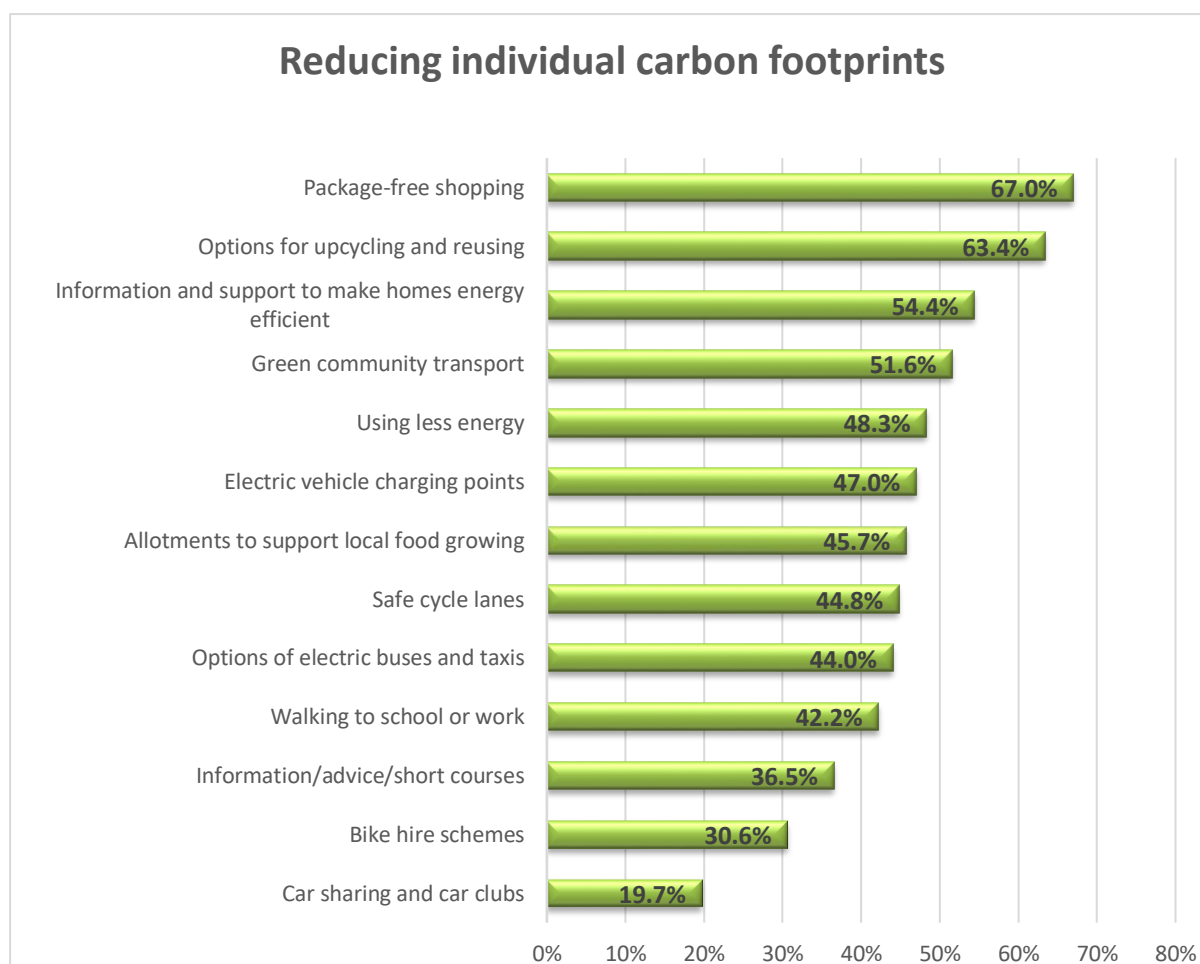
Importance and concern



There were no doubts respondents felt climate change was important with the large majority indicating this was a very important issue. Only 4.6% of respondents felt climate change was either 'not that important' or 'not important at all'. This will be key in engaging the Bolton borough in both accepting and making changes to behaviour.

Interestingly, despite recognising climate change as important, just over 1 in 5 respondents were no more concerned about the issue than they were a year ago.

Reducing individual carbon footprints



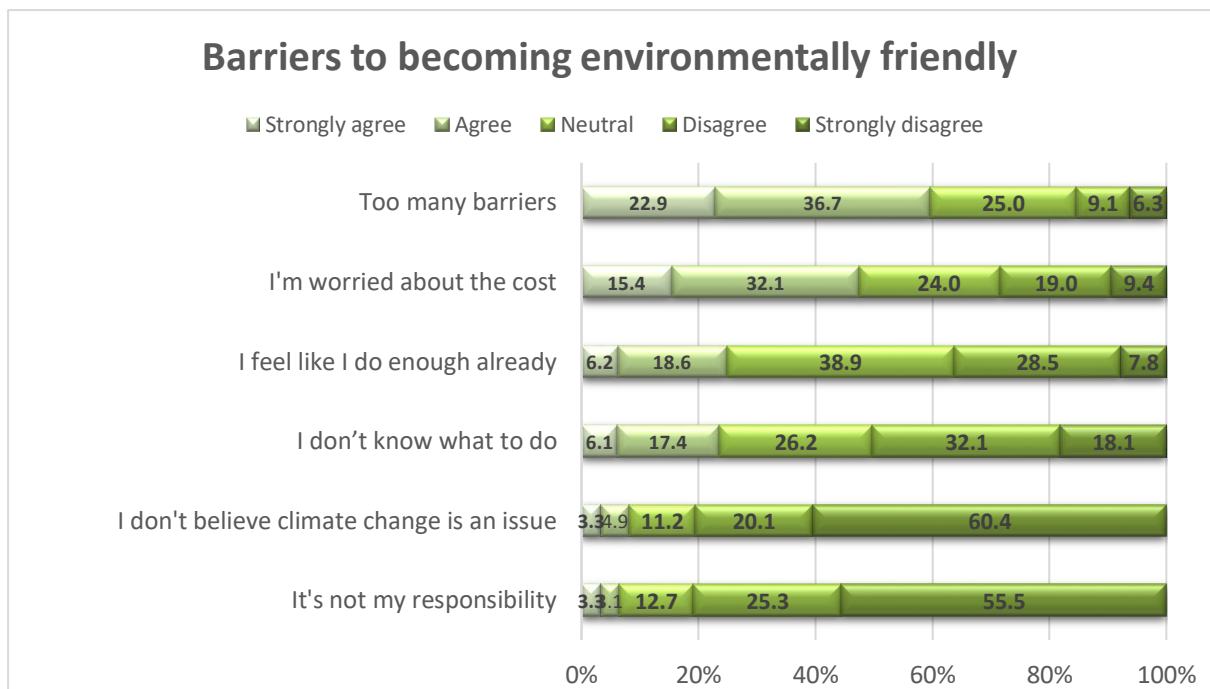
Respondents were presented with a list of options which could potentially be used to reduce an individual's carbon footprint. The chart above shows what people felt was important to reduce their own environmental impact.

The two changes that respondents felt would achieve most impact were reducing packaging on purchased products and increasing the current options for recycling. If these two issues were addressed at the same time, their potential impact could be combined. If packaging was reduced this should lead to less waste and therefore reduce the need for recycling.

It was agreed that travel could affect change with increased green community transport and the opportunity to use electric vehicles. These would require a change to the infrastructure with the provision in the number of charging points for these vehicles.

Using less energy was presented at the individual level with ideas to use less gas, unplug appliances and so on. Almost half of respondents felt this would potentially make an impact.

Barriers to becoming environmentally friendly



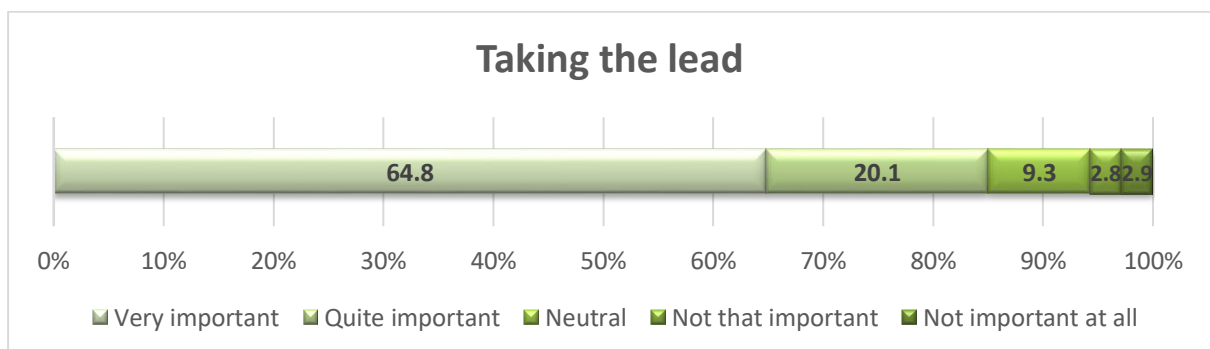
The chart shows over half of respondents felt there were simply too many barriers to becoming environmentally friendly. Whilst this is helpful, it does not allow us to pinpoint specific causes preventing change.

Although cost was an issue, this alone is not the overwhelming cause.

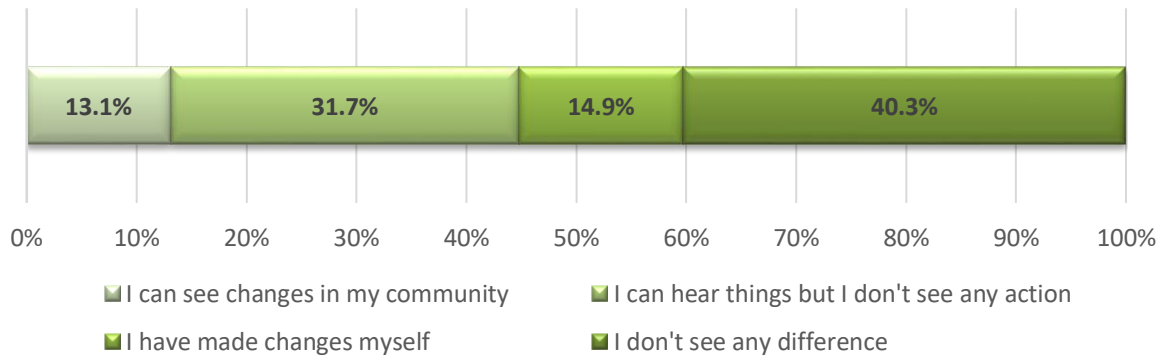
In addition, almost 40% of respondents opted for the 'neutral' option when asked whether they did enough already. This would suggest that respondents are unclear on the steps they need to take. In contrast to this, just over 50% of respondents indicated they did know what needed to be done to address climate change.

Despite mixed messages, respondents were clear climate change is a real issue and accept it is their responsibility to act.

Taking the lead and tackling the emergency

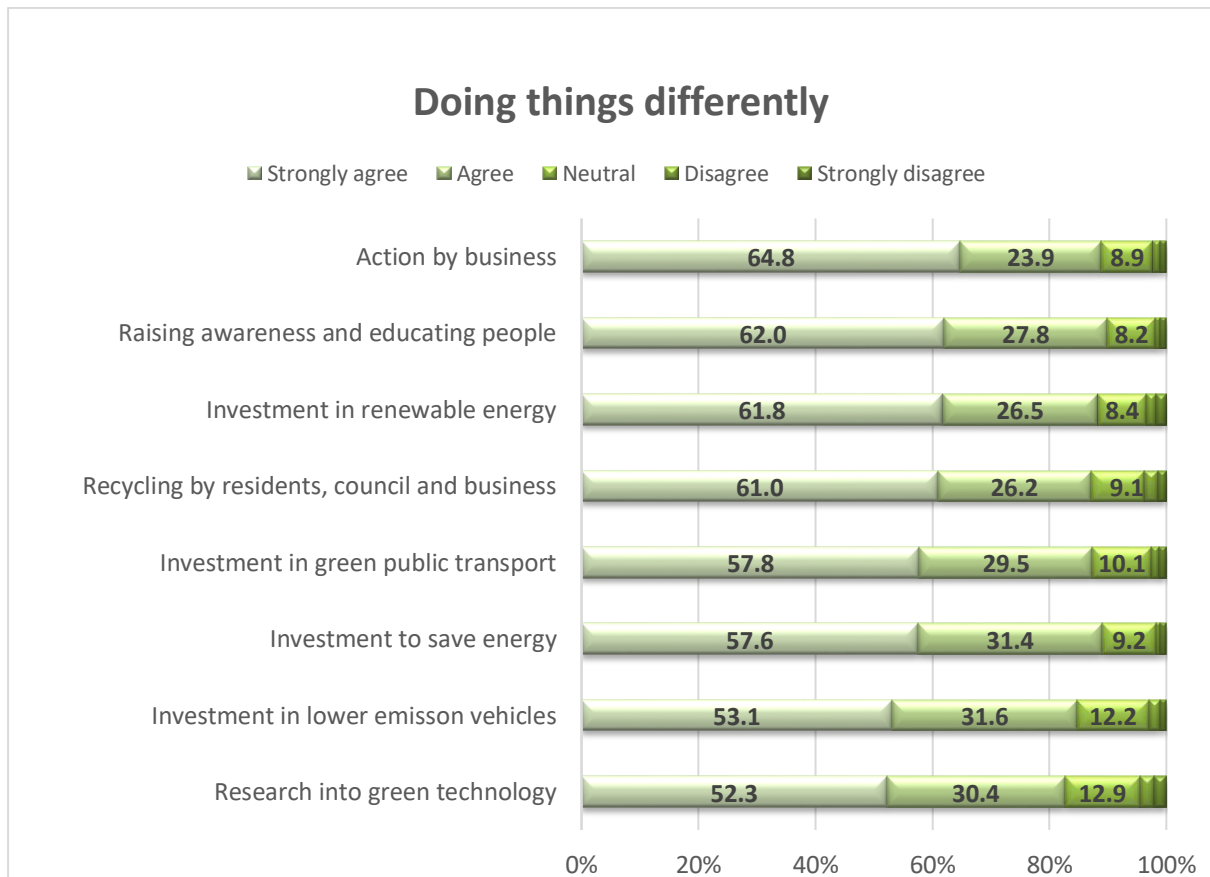


Tackling the emergency



Although there was overwhelming agreement Bolton should take the lead, most respondents felt they had not seen action taking place. Whilst almost a third of respondents were aware of initiatives, very few had seen these result in any action. Although some respondents had taken steps to make their own changes, the number of these was relatively low. A large proportion of respondents did not see any difference at all. This does not necessarily suggest that changes have not been made, just that respondents were not aware of these actions.

Doing things differently

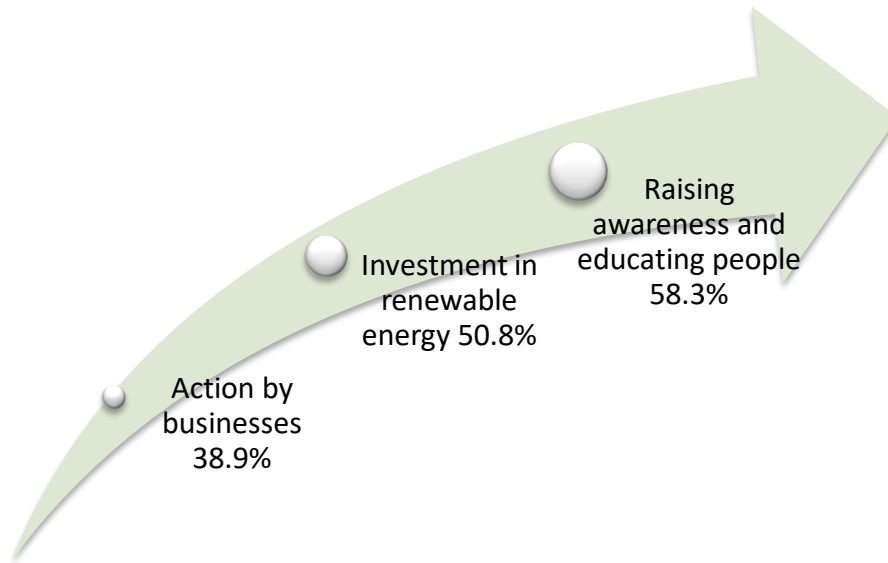


It is accepted that to be carbon neutral by 2030, Bolton will need to do things differently. Whilst there were some slight differences, there was overwhelming support for each of the options presented. For each of the above, less than 5% of all respondents disagreed action was necessary. However, it is slightly less clear who may be responsible for action. Although 'action by business' is at the top of the list, most respondents were not

business owners themselves. It is not necessarily clear whether all business owners would agree with this.

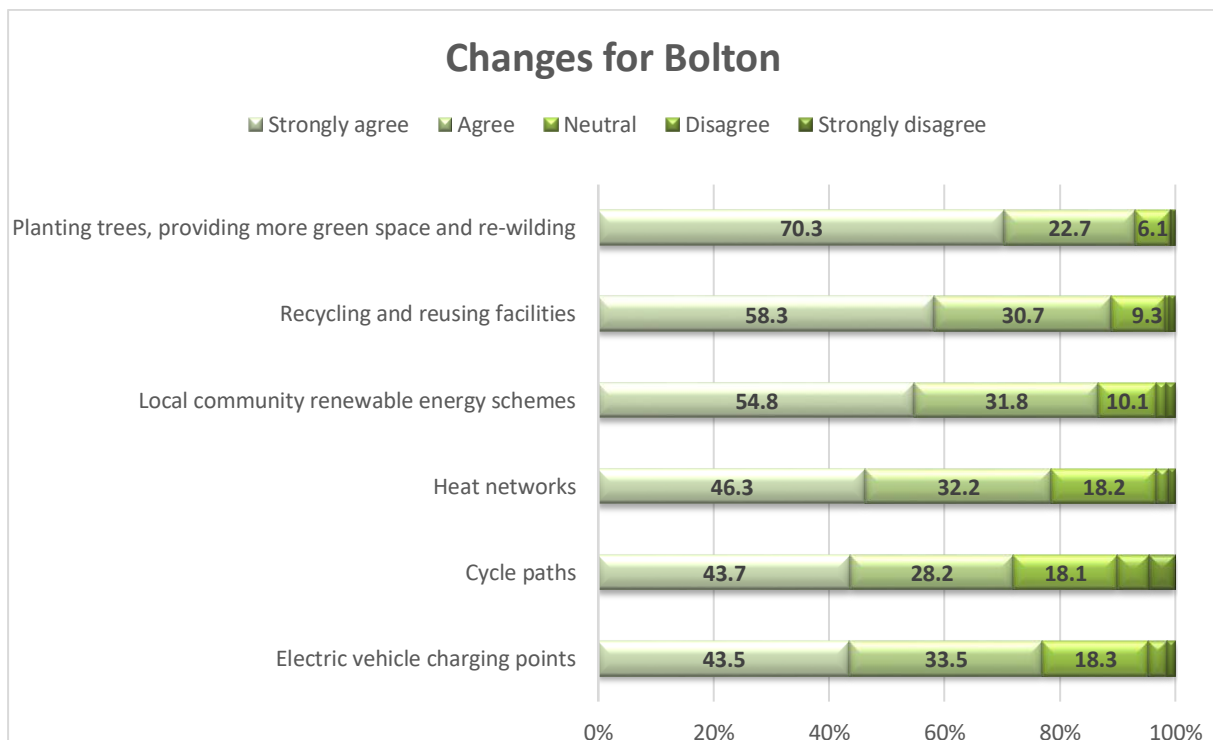
Whilst the overall support is positive, it may make it more difficult to prioritise actions.

Priorities for Bolton



When respondents were asked to narrow down this selection, the above three were the most popular. It is worth noting the 4th most popular option was 'Investment to save energy' (37.3%). This scored almost as highly as action by business and included initiatives to save energy for homes, businesses and the Council.

Changes for Bolton



To drive environmental action, it is accepted that Bolton itself will need to change. A question was included to assess what changes would be acceptable and popular with

respondents. Several measures were presented to reflect changes and respondents were asked the extent they agreed or disagreed with each.

Once again, there was overwhelming support for all the measures with planting trees, providing more green space and re-wilding being the most popular.

For almost all options, the level of disagreement remained below 5%. The only exception to this was in relation to the provision of more cycle paths where the level of disagreement rose to 10%. This is an issue that tended to divide opinion and is discussed in more detail within the summary of open comments.

Respondents were also given the option to select none of the above measures. Although this response has been removed from the chart, only 11.6% felt none of these changes were required.

Support in communities



Respondents were asked how Bolton should support communities to tackle climate change. Once again, a range of potential options were presented, and the results measure the levels of agreement or disagreement with each.

As with other questions, levels of disagreement were extremely low, and accounted for less than 5% of responses for all options. For the vast majority of options, the level of disagreement was lower than 3%.

Once again, this support may make it difficult to prioritise actions.

Open questions

Planning for the future

In addition to structured questions, respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comments concerning what Bolton needs to do to become carbon neutral and what else may be needed to tackle the climate emergency.

Many comments further supported the findings throughout the survey and, once again, it was shown there was little doubt our climate footprint needs to be reduced and the climate emergency is real.

Analysis showed that very few comments included suggestions beyond the options already listed on the survey.

However, respondents felt Bolton needed a plan, based on a clear understanding of the issues surrounding climate change. To make the plan achievable, it was regarded as essential for individuals, business and the Council to work together. It was felt the Council should take a decisive lead and take the responsibility to ensure all policy would support a wider environmentally friendly agenda. Beyond this, it was felt the Council should role model behaviour and take actions themselves that supported this agenda.

'Any of the option mention in the previous comments will beneficial. Bolton shouldn't wait for consensus around the right opportunity - we need to act decisively now. Communities will respond to action and despite some of the negativity around this agenda, I believe the majority of Bolton residents care and are willing to take action. Children understand the need for urgent action and we owe it to them to protect our town and our planet for future generations to come.'

'Businesses also have a great chance in reaching out to the citizens so they should also be encouraged to do their bit.'

'Prioritise it as council business and cascade it to town councils. Encourage town councils to be involved as they reach grass roots. Link with religious organisations to cascade further. Encourage everyone to take part making even small changes. Publicise initiatives'

For any wide scale plan to succeed, there were 3 other factors that emerged as essential. These were engaging the community, encouraging behavioural change and communication.

Engaging the community

It was felt existing groups and facilities should be relied upon to support activities and deliver actions. The groups mentioned included faith centres, schools, community groups and voluntary organisations.

'Engage with local environmental groups, I know the council can't afford the changes so get local groups on side.'

Encouraging behavioural change

To support changes in behaviour of individuals and/or business, respondents felt that both sanctions and incentives could be introduced. These often included individual sanctions in relation to fly tipping and littering alongside incentives to make homes recycle and makes homes environmentally friendly. Others felt that policy and incentives could be aimed towards environmental housing and developments. It was also recognised that there was potentially a need for financial support to encourage change.

'Very encouraging to see Bolton proposing to substantially increase fines for littering - particularly litter thrown from car windows.'

'I think the general public need a bit of incentive - maybe a points or reward system where you could earn money off energy bills.'

'Create fines for companies that don't recycle or take responsibility for their waste, lower business rates for local, zero waste businesses'

'The onus is on the user, and it is correct that this is the point at which change needs to happen, but it needs to be made easier for people to do. Suppliers need to make changes to make it easier for the user.'

'Change planning policy so that all new houses in Bolton must be carbon neutral and reduced water measures over current standards. Start New council led development where old terrace housing is replaced by carbon neutral housing stock.'

Communicating key messages

The comments showed that both raising awareness and clear communication were regarded as essential. Respondents felt the actual content of communication should be directly related to an overall plan whilst, once again, references were made to the Bolton Council lead and working together.

'Better communication from Bolton Council, Bolton at Home and other large institutions on what they are doing and why i.e. how these actions will be effective. Build partnerships with residents, supporting and recognising voluntary groups who contribute massively to environmental improvements.'

'Learn from other councils and share best practise. Have a regular column in local news and media to highlight the issues and show people what can be done. Work through schools and partners to ensure that this is a higher priority than increasing consumption. Make sure that an energy audit is in place in all council buildings and housing associations so that progress can be measured and success can be celebrated. Work on this with faith groups and become a beacon of hope.'

Although the majority of comments did not offer additional measures Bolton may adopt, they did provide additional information around the options already listed throughout the survey. The following section illustrates a summary of these comments and provides further insight into respondents' opinions.

Greener travel (192)

There were general comments on investment into green transport technology, improvements to the way we travel and having the infrastructure in place to make all of this possible.

To achieve this, the following initiatives were mentioned:

- Improved public transport
- Infrastructure so walking is possible, safe and more appealing
- Engines switched off when stationary
- Improved traffic flow
- Discouraging the use of cars where possible

'Massively improving public transport, alongside deprioritising cars in favour of walking and cycling would be a good step - making public transport green within the current system misses the point.'

'Our borough appears to currently be stuck in the past prioritising free car parking and more parking/drop off places with more petrol stations and drive thro's when we should be looking at changing our relationship with these modes when the future is away from these if we pioneer public transport and active travel now we will reap the rewards as everywhere will need to do this in time to come.'

'Enable people to walk more - footpaths across grass verges, gaps in hedges, gates open during the day etc. A lot of the time people have to walk a long way around as the quickest way is blocked.'

'Adjust traffic lights to reduce stop start traffic. Can't be right that journeys result in more lights being on red than green. Stopped traffic is worse for emissions.'

One area of contention was in relation to cycle lanes. Some respondents felt these should be maintained whilst the numbers were increased. Others argued cycle lanes were underused and added to traffic congestion by making roads narrower.

'More cycle lane provision and ensure they are fit for purpose. This means the following: 1. Ban parking in cycle lanes - anyone who does gets fined. 2. Ensure cycle lanes are maintained and cleared of glass/grit/debris/rubbish. If this is done, more people will cycle and use them. If you will not do this, as is the case at present, they will not be used to their potential. Do not waste any more taxpayers money on cycle lane provision if this is the case.'

A final area of discussion concerned electric vehicles. Some felt the numbers of electric vehicles should be increased and to support this, incentives to change and more charging points were needed. Others felt the approach should be more cautious and a switch was not necessarily a solution.

Recycling, reusing and refuse (147)

Respondents provided a range of comments on this theme addressing a number of key areas. More specifically, there were suggestions to improve and increase provision of recycling facilities, making it easier to recycle and making the symbols and guidance easy and simple to understand. In particular, the opportunity for residents in Bolton to recycle all plastics waste was also welcomed.

'Better recycling facilities - make it easier for people to recycle without too much effort'

'Bolton Council are still completely behind on recycling waste, a lot of plastics which can be recycled and have the recycle logo on them, Yet still, Bolton council still don't accept most of these recyclable items in their recycle bins. While other county accept a lot more.'

Alongside this, were recommendations to reduce packaging and utilise re-usable packaging on goods brought from shops. Whilst some respondents felt consumers should take responsibility for this, others felt retailers had a role too.

'They should be fighting for businesses to reduce the amount of packaging and helping people recycle the packaging that they do have.'

These support earlier findings where respondents identified package free shopping and increased recycling would reduce their own carbon footprint.

There were further comments focused on refuse, more collections and bins and litter picking.

'there is so much litter around the streets and parks - bottles, cans etc. which could be recycled.'

Education and Awareness (126)

As expected, there were many comments on raising awareness and education and these often directly linked back to clear communication with simple, easy to follow guidance. Many mentioned that awareness should be raised into the impact and damage being caused. Education should start from a young age and following through into teenage and adulthood and be embedded into the school curriculum rather than a one-off exercise. Once again, some comments reflected how key the Bolton Council is in influencing change and taking a lead on action.

'Education is critical - many people are not aware of the impact that global warming is having - and how soon it will affect them and their families.'

'People need to be educated, if this is possible. Even in Council buildings, rooms are over-heated, causing people to open windows! Lights remain on all day in rooms which are empty. Unfortunately, Bolton is such a densely populated town, I fear this will be a severely uphill struggle.'

Greenspace, planting and being more local (95)

As well as being an option in the questions above respondents reiterated planting more trees, plants and flowers as well as nurturing and preserving wildlife. Opting for locally sourced food and growing your own in allotments was also mentioned. It was felt more greenspace is needed and the public should be encouraged to use these areas. Comments were also made on preserving greenbelt land and opting to build on brownfield sites.

'Off-setting our carbon emissions by planting as much, in as many places, around Bolton as possible.'

'Planting fruit trees in public spaces to allow people to pick them, community allotments, increasing green spaces.'

'More local food production, agroforestry and wild space for diversity. Incentivize sale of local food and other production to reduce road/air miles.'

'Have the ability to reject planning applications, that use up green belt land. Try to enforce building firms to use brown field sites first.'

Linking to the references for greener travel options, comments were also made on shopping local and services/facilities being within walking distance so would not need to use a car.

'Support 'village/local area' retail and entertainment so people can access on foot.'

There were a small number of comments made on the impact of eating meat on climate change and moving towards a plant-based diet.

'Encourage people to move to a plant based diet (the greatest single contribution to reducing their carbon footprint that an individual can make).'

Research, green Technology and renewable energy (66)

Whilst some thought research way key, many comments related to ideas for investing in green technology. This included different types of renewable energy, whilst solar panels were mentioned frequently as respondents indicated they should be installed in domestic homes, council buildings and private businesses.

'Stop using fossil fuels and switch completely to green energy. Invest invest invest. It's the only way.'

'Increase access to renewable energy options.....everybody I know would happily have solar panels on their houses but nobody can afford to buy themselves! Council buildings should setting an example and Bolton at home etc. should be adding solar panels to all of their properties. There's no excuses. We are past the point of small token changesaction on a grand scale is needed now.'

Once again, there were references to new builds with new technology whilst others felt existing homeowners could make adaptations.

These suggestions were often closely linked to incentives and rewards for individuals, developers and public bodies and led onto mentions of ways to encourage and support this switch.

'People cannot afford to do these alone which therefore will not evoke change unless they receive financial help'

Next steps and recommendations

This survey addressed a broad range of environmental concerns including the general attitudes towards the emergency, individual carbon footprints and changes for the borough. Each of these has been examined as we have assessed what contributions can be done at the individual, community and borough wide level. The survey has also begun to explore attitudes towards responsibility for these actions.

In addition, the response to the survey was high with over 1000 residents from various backgrounds sharing their opinions. Whilst this can only be described as positive, the scope for further analysis is extensive. At this stage, it is necessary to reflect of the overall findings and identify areas for further examination. Whilst there is scope to carry out more detailed analysis, this needs a clear focus and rationale.

Although not exhaustive, the following are suggestions for further areas of work.

First, it would be possible to look at the results in more detail and examine specific groups against key questions. These groups may be in relation to personal characteristics, tenure, business owners or geographical areas. For example, it would be possible to look in more detail at the barriers younger people face in reducing their carbon footprint or it may be necessary to further examine how communities in the BL1 area could be supported to tackle climate change.

Secondly, it may be important to look further at how it may be possible to use these results to establish priorities for all Bolton. The survey demonstrates there was very little resistance or disagreement to proposed changes. It is possible to examine where feelings were strongest and attempt to identify key priorities for Bolton.

Further analysis could also be done on the open questions. In response to this form, almost 700 comments were received and many of these covered several different topics. This report has highlighted key themes and, whilst it has been recognised there were few new suggestions, there is a high level of detail available. For example, in providing a summary, incentives and sanctions were combined. If required, there is more detail on specific incentives.

Finally, how and where these results are made available to a wider audience needs to be considered. It would be possible to select individual questions for a specific purpose or display the findings to suit specific audiences. From the raw data it would be possible to create further reports, presentations alongside leaflets, infographics and word clouds.

A copy of the survey has been made available (Appendix 1).

For any further information regarding this research or additional details not included in this document please email Cath Robinson at cath.robinson@boltonathome.org.uk