



Getting people pumped about heat pumps

November 2024



About Climate Outreach

At Climate Outreach, we help people and organisations tell a different climate story: from one of a lost cause to a story of people, progress and potential.

With 20 years of research and insight, we know how to make climate stories as powerful and impactful as possible.

We work with environmental groups, government and communities, helping them to understand their audiences and communicate powerfully with them. Armed with our insights, organisations and leaders can effectively engage and involve people at scale.



Acknowledgements

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The original Britain Talks Climate research was undertaken by More in Common, the European Climate Foundation and YouGov, in partnership with Climate Outreach.

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Heat pumps are an important part of the clean energy picture in the UK.

But hardly anyone has got one.

Only about 1% of UK homes have a heat pump today.

The Climate Change Committee says this needs to be nearly 10% of all homes by 2030 – just five years from now.

So what do people think about heat pumps, and how can we encourage more people to get one?

PART ONE

What do people think about heat pumps?

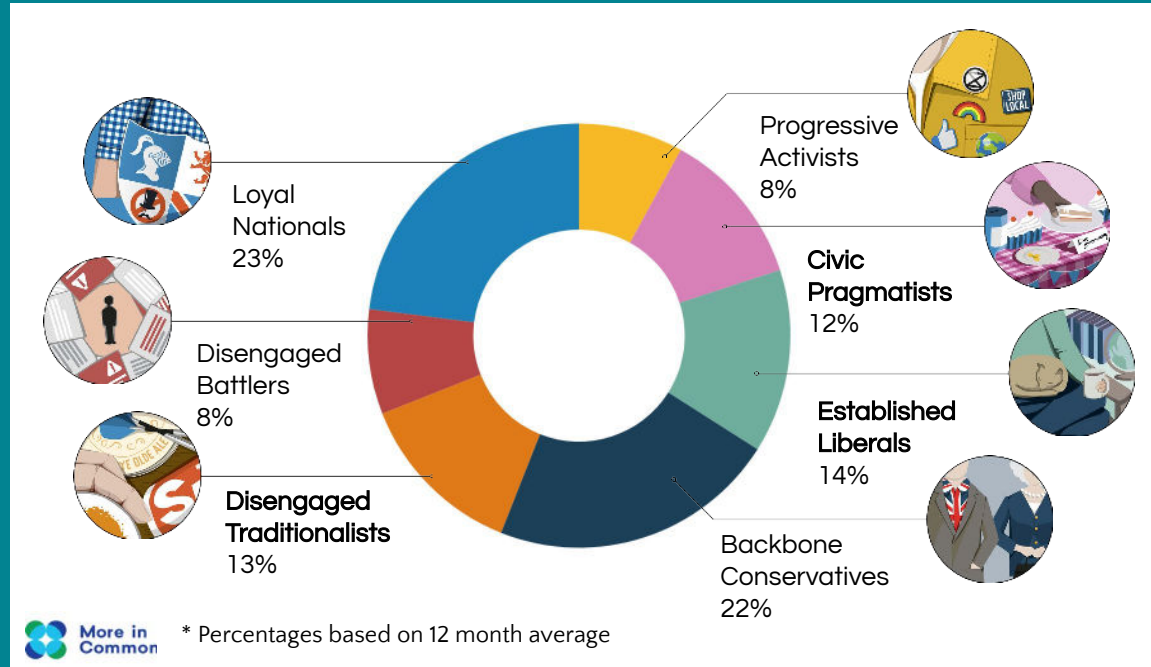
Britain Talks Climate insights

Who did we speak to?

Climate Outreach refreshed its Britain Talks Climate research toolkit in early 2024. The segments in the toolkit are based on More in Common's seven British segments.

One of the things we asked people about in our research was **how they felt about heat pumps**.

Here, we'll also take a closer look at similarities and differences between Established Liberals (early adopters in theory, but with practical questions), Civic Pragmatists (support climate action but feel a lower sense of efficacy), and Disengaged Traditionalists (more sceptical).



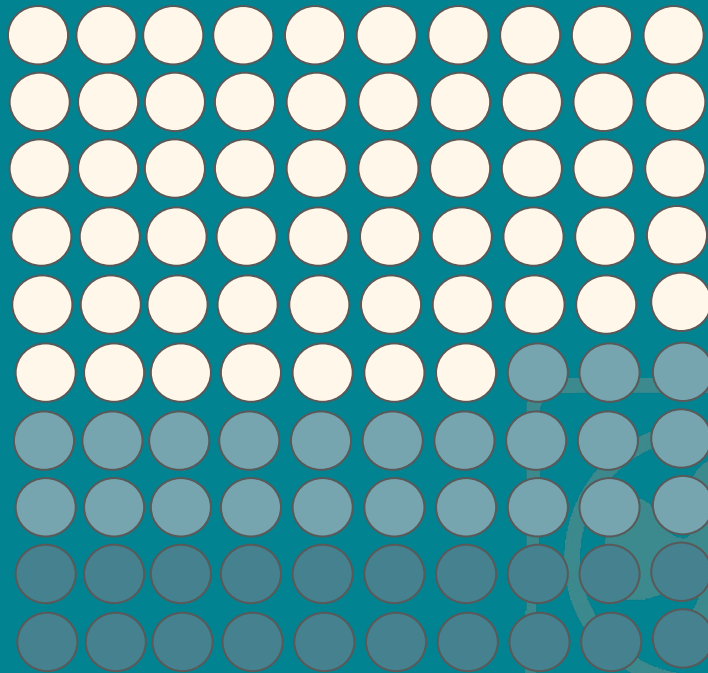
01

People say they know what heat pumps are

57%

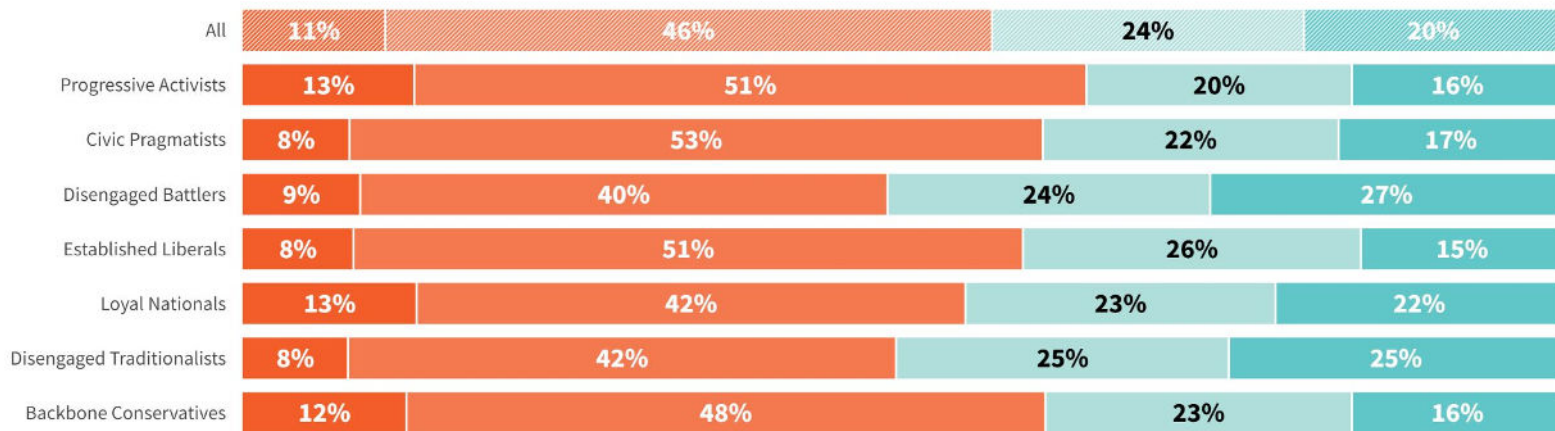
say they are in some way
'familiar' with heat pumps.

20% are not familiar.



A heat pump is an energy-efficient and climate-friendly way of heating a home that works by capturing heat from outside and transferring it to your heating system (like a refrigerator in reverse). Before today, how familiar were you with what a heat pump is?

● Very familiar
 ● Somewhat familiar
 ● Somewhat unfamiliar
 ● Very unfamiliar



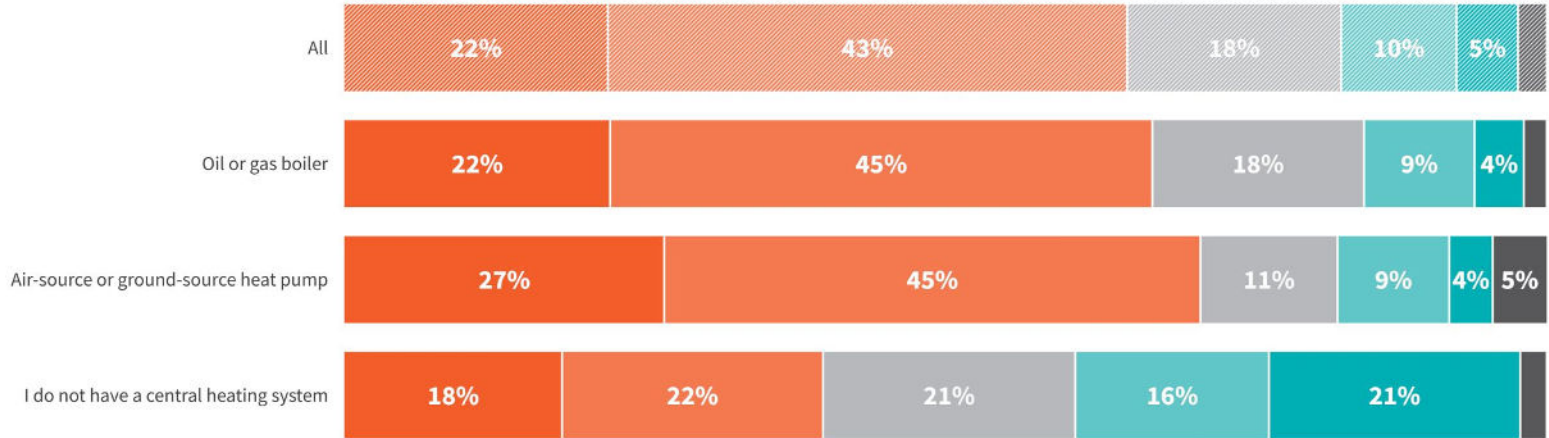
Source: More in Common, January 2024

02

People with a heat pump are happy with their choice – and more so than those with gas boilers...

How satisfied are you with the way you currently heat your home?

● Very satisfied
 ● Fairly satisfied
 ● Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
 ● Fairly unsatisfied
 ● Very unsatisfied
 ● Don't know



Source: More in Common, January 2024

... and there is power in word of mouth

“ My parents got a grant to get an air source heat pump. They got it installed. It's already saving them money. They're finding it really good.”

Civic Pragmatist, Edinburgh

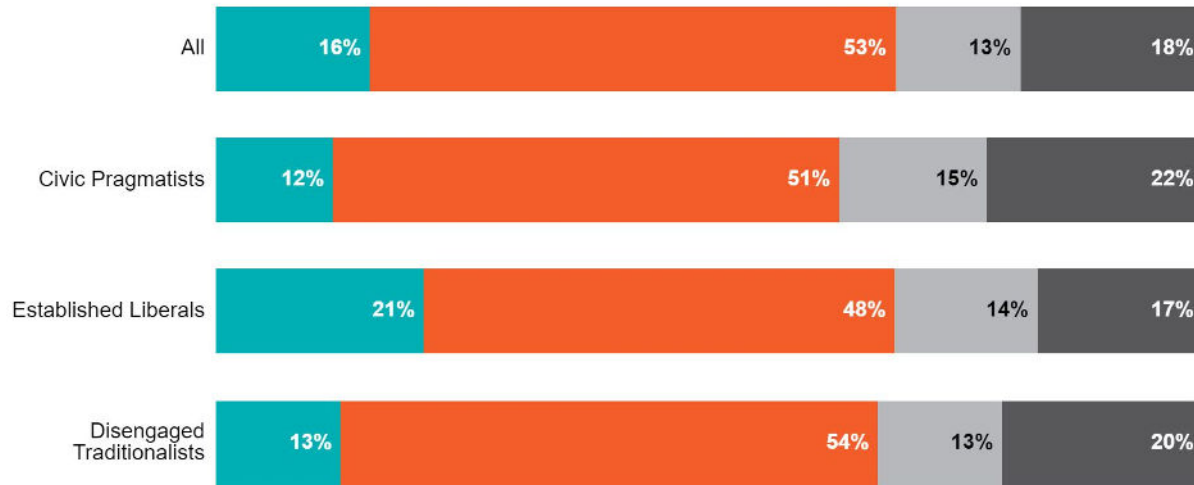


03

People aren't yet convinced a heat pump keeps your house as warm as a gas boiler...

A warmer home

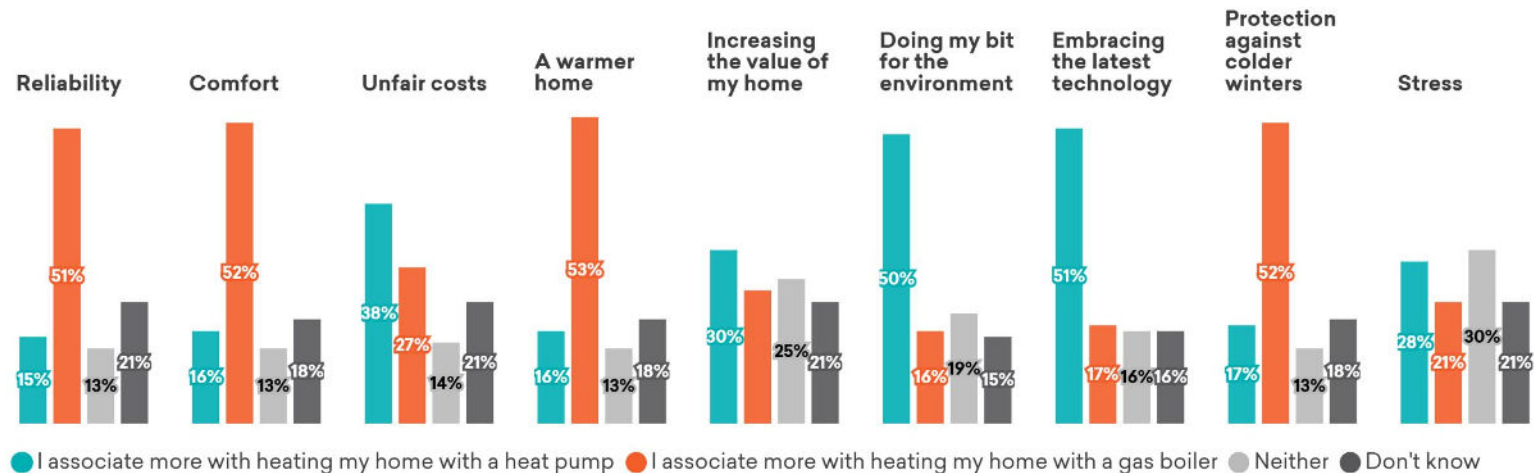
■ I associate more with heating my home with a heat pump
 ■ I associate more with heating my home with a gas boiler
 ■ Neither
 ■ Don't know



04

... although more positively heat pumps are seen as exciting new technology and good for the environment...

For each of the following items, please indicate whether you associate them more with heating your home with a heat pump, or with a gas boiler.

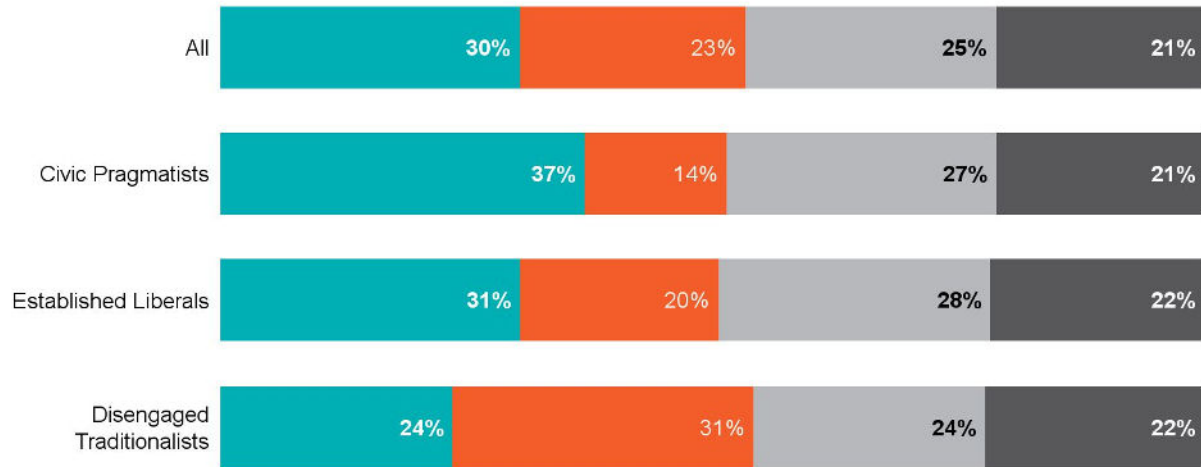


Source: More in Common, January 2024

...and reasonably good for the long-term value of your home

Increasing the value of my home

■ I associate more with heating my home with a heat pump
 ■ I associate more with heating my home with a gas boiler
 ■ Neither
 ■ Don't know

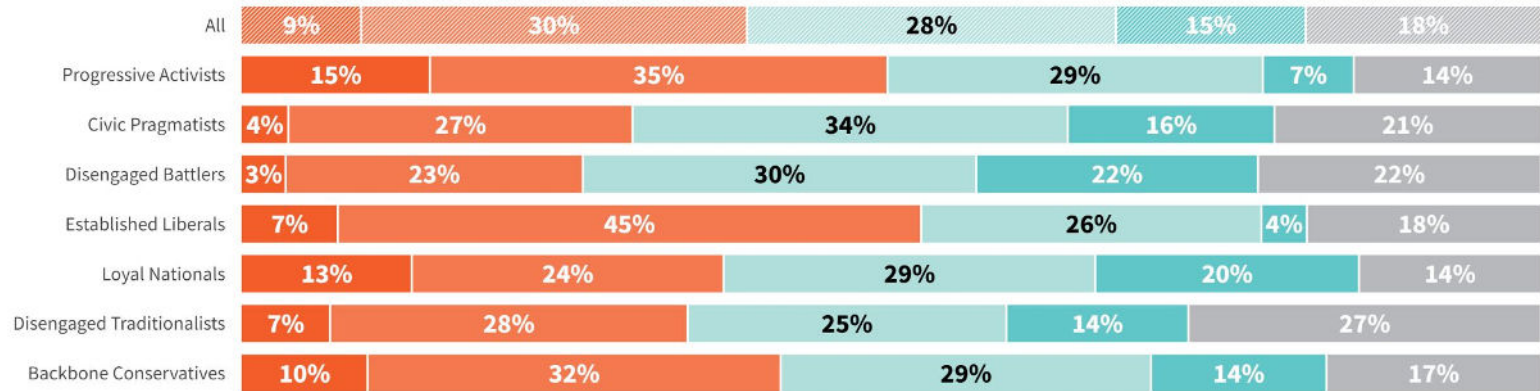


05

A more general worry people have is that moving away from gas boilers might be unfair to people 'like them'

Thinking about the policies relating to home heating that the government could put in place over the next 10 years to transition away from gas boilers, do you think they will...

- Definitely be fair to people like me
- Probably be fair to people like me
- Probably be unfair to people like me
- Definitely be unfair to people like me
- Don't know



Source: More in Common, January 2024

PART TWO

Five engagement recommendations

01

Build awareness and sell the benefits

“ They're probably a good idea, but I don't know enough about them. I just know they're quite expensive to put one in and it wouldn't actually be any use in this house anyway, because of the way the house is heated.” – **Kim, Clacton**

Awareness has a way to go and people aren't sure heat pumps are a good idea. The first step is tackling this head on.

Websites such as '[Get a Heat Pump](#)' from NESTA and The MCS Foundation are great examples of a one-stop advice shop.

We need much more public awareness through, for example, advertising and social media.

While costs fall, the best frame might be 'future proofing' your home – [used in home improvement services](#) offered by the Centre for Sustainable Energy.



02

Make them feel (and actually be) cheaper and easy to do for everyone

“It's almost like the electric car situation, isn't it? Oh, we don't want you to own that particular type of boiler. You can't have gas, you've got to have heat source or electric. ... it's like a cost and I get it's probably to do with the environment, but certain people just can't afford to buy these new things. They're not cheap.”

Established Liberal, Surrey

Getting a heat pump is still pretty expensive and can feel like a lot of hassle. People know that and so driving down the costs and making it easier to do is obviously important.

Home heating is one of those things most people only upgrade when it's essential.

This underlines that engagement needs the right 'enabling environment' – making it easier and more affordable for more people to choose this option, particularly those without lots of money or those already highly engaged with climate action.

03

Find relatable and trusted heat pump messengers

Part of great communication isn't just what you're saying but finding the best people to say it.

Who is trusted to help answer questions about heat pumps? Who can make heat pumps feel like something that everyone's getting these days?

For example:

- Energy installers – like British Gas engineers – can be a good source of advice on what the smart thing is to do with our homes.
- [This brilliant piece](#) in Grand Designs magazine is the kind of thing that makes heat pumps feel not just normal, but aspirational.



04

Tell stories of how heat pumps (genuinely) work for people on low-incomes

Heat pumps – or everything for that matter – can't just be for the well-off.

As well as this being unfair on its own terms, it feeds the idea that climate action is about spending money most people don't have.

There are many local authorities and housing associations doing great work to get heat pumps to their residents as part of energy efficiency retrofits – saving them money and turning more everyday people into ambassadors for their comfortably heated home.

See [this case study](#) from Osprey Housing, [this customer story](#) from Broadacres and [this piece](#) in The Guardian.

We need to hear more of their stories nationally, and locally.

05

Help people experience a heat pump for themselves

Seeing is believing. There is no substitute for the power of trying something out for yourself, to make you a positive messenger for those who trust you.

Heat pumps keep your house warm and are easy to use, but people may not believe that until they spend some time in a warm home heated by one.

Ultimately we aren't as rational about this as we think, which is why brilliant stories and 'seeing is believing' is key. NESTA's [visit a heat pump scheme](#) is a great example of this.



A photograph of a white rectangular unit, likely a boiler or water heater, with a complex network of copper pipes connected to its base. The pipes are arranged in a grid-like pattern with various elbows and fittings. The background is a solid orange color with a faint, large-scale graphic of a speech bubble containing a fan icon.

Summary

Summary



There's a way to go on building awareness - this isn't just about facts, but also using culture, sharing positive news stories, and audience-focused marketing.



The two big communications challenges are that heat pumps are seen as too expensive and not warm enough - messaging needs to take this head on.



Seeing is believing and word of mouth matters - the most effective messengers for heat pumps are people who already have one.



Policy and engagement go hand in hand - driving down costs will make heat pumps a better story for everyone, which will in turn increase demand.



Thank you for reading.

Don't forget to share if you found this resource useful!

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