

# After Climate Assembly UK: did the views and behaviours of assembly members change?

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## Summary of key points

### Overview

This briefing explains the changes that occurred to assembly members' climate change and political attitudes and behaviours during and since participating in Climate Assembly UK (CAUK). The findings come from surveys conducted with assembly members over the course of two and a half years.

This is one of the first studies to look at the impact on assembly members' climate-related views and behaviours beyond the end of a climate assembly process. It is also one of only a handful of studies to look at impacts on assembly members' political views and behaviours over this longer timeframe.

The findings have implications for the commissioners, delivery teams and evaluators of climate assemblies and public engagement in climate governance more broadly. They also raise interesting questions about how, and to what end, citizens' assemblies and similar practices and techniques could be scaled in efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

### Key findings

Participating in Climate Assembly UK had a significant impact on assembly members' views and behaviours, both during and after the assembly itself:

- **Assembly members' concern for climate change increased during the assembly and has continued to increase since it ended.** The proportion of assembly members who said they are 'very concerned' about climate change rose from 46% to 56% over the course of the process (January to May 2020), increasing to 72% one year after the end of the assembly (April 2021), and 74% two and half years later (September 2022). In comparison, the percentage of the UK population who say they are 'very concerned' about climate change has remained relatively static: Ipsos Mori polling suggests 52% were 'very concerned' in July 2019 and 54% were 'very concerned' in July 2022<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The July 2019 figures are here: [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-08/topline\\_120819.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-08/topline_120819.pdf)  
The figures for July 2022 are here: [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-08/Ipsos%20UK%20July%202022%20Climate%20changes%20tabs\\_020822\\_PUBLIC.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-08/Ipsos%20UK%20July%202022%20Climate%20changes%20tabs_020822_PUBLIC.pdf)

- **Most assembly members said their views on a range of climate-related topics had changed because of their participation in CAUK.** One year on from the end of the assembly, 78%-89% of respondents reported that participating in CAUK had resulted in a small or significant change in their views on the following topics: climate change overall, travel on land, travel by air, heat and energy use in the home, what we eat and how we use the land, what we buy and where our electricity comes from.
- **Most assembly members said they had changed their behaviour since participating in CAUK:** 91% of the respondents reported they had made 1 or more changes to their behaviour since participating and 49% said they had made 10 or more changes. Analysis suggests that participating in CAUK had similar levels of impact on the behaviours of assembly members' with different initial views and backgrounds:
  - **There is no statistically significant<sup>2</sup> relationship between concern for climate change at the start of the assembly and the number of changes to their behaviour that assembly members have made since.** This indicates that assembly members' pre-existing attitudes to climate change did not affect how much they changed their behaviours after the assembly;
  - **There are no statistically significant relationships between assembly members' gender, age, level of education, ethnicity, whether they live in an urban or rural area, or their political persuasion (left-right scale) and the number of changes in behaviour they have made since the assembly.** This suggests that the assembly had an impact across its membership, rather than just or mainly on assembly members with certain demographic, geographic or attitudinal characteristics.
- **There was no specific aspect of CAUK (e.g. receiving information about climate change or discussing the issues with fellow participants) which contributed to changes in behaviour more than the others;** the assembly members reported that the whole process, as a learning experience with opportunities for deliberation, was influential.
- **Most assembly members (89% to 94%) 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that citizens' assemblies should be used more often.** Analysis indicates the extent to which assembly members hold this view has not changed since the end of the assembly. However, their belief that the CAUK recommendations will influence government policy and the commissioning select committees has fallen since the end of the assembly.
- **Assembly members' beliefs that 'they have a say about what the UK parliament does' and that 'the UK system works fairly well' increased during the assembly but have since decreased almost to their original levels.**

## 1. Introduction

This briefing focuses on the assembly members of Climate Assembly UK (CAUK) and the changes that occurred to their climate change and political attitudes and behaviours during, and since participating, in the assembly.

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<sup>2</sup> Statistically significant is defined as less than 5% likelihood of the relationship occurring by chance.

Climate Assembly UK was commissioned by six select committees of the House of Commons to advise them on how members of the public think the UK should reach its climate target of net zero emissions by 2050. It brought together 108 members of the public selected to reflect the wider UK population with respect to demographics, geography, and climate change attitudes. They met over six weekends in 2020 to examine the question, 'how should the UK reach its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050?'. Assembly members received evidence from speakers with a range of views on how the UK should reach its climate target. They then discussed the issues with one another, before reaching recommendations about what the UK should do to reach net zero by 2050.

## 2. Methodology

The assembly member surveys were conducted by Involve in partnership with the assembly's independent evaluation team. The assembly member surveys were issued before and after each weekend during the assembly<sup>3</sup>, and the results were published in the Evaluation Report<sup>4</sup>. Since the end of the assembly two additional surveys of assembly members have been undertaken - the first almost one year after the end of the assembly (April 2021), and the second two years after the launch of the assembly's final report (September 2022).

Not all assembly members gave permission for their survey results to be passed to the independent evaluation team for analysis:

- For surveys during the assembly, 99 assembly members (92%) completed the surveys *and* gave their permission for their answers to be passed to the evaluation team;
- 75 (69%) responded to the April 2021 survey and gave their permission;<sup>5</sup>
- 62 (57%) responded in September 2022 and gave their permission;<sup>6</sup>
- 79 (73%) assembly members responded to one or both post assembly surveys and gave their permission.<sup>7</sup>

The April 2021 survey contained eleven questions, with space for open comments on two questions. The September 2022 survey contained ten questions, with space for open comments on three questions.

All assembly member surveys were anonymised. Each assembly member was assigned a unique research number to facilitate panel analysis and track individual changes between the surveys.

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<sup>3</sup> Assembly member surveys were completed before and after weekend's 1, 2 and 3. Weekend 4 was undertaken online over 3 weekend sessions (4a-4c) due to Covid-19 restrictions, therefore the member survey was before weekend 4a and after weekend 4c.

<sup>4</sup> Elstub, S., Farrell, D. M., Carrick, J., and Mockler, P. (2021) Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK, Newcastle: Newcastle University. Available at: [evaluation-of-climate-assembly-uk.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Eight additional assembly members responded to the April 2021 survey but did not give permission for their data to be passed to the independent evaluators. While Involve has access to this data, the analysis for this briefing was done by Stephen Elstub and Jayne Carrick at Newcastle University to ensure its independence. This data was therefore not included.

<sup>6</sup> Five additional assembly members responded to the April 2021 survey but did not give permission for their data to be passed to the independent evaluators. While Involve has access to this data, the analysis for this briefing was done by Stephen Elstub and Jayne Carrick at Newcastle University to ensure its independence. This data was therefore not included.

<sup>7</sup> Once duplicates and non-consenting ID numbers were removed.

## 2.1 Which assembly members filled out the post assembly surveys?

There are some variances in the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of assembly members who filled out different waves of the survey. These relate to age, educational level and whether assembly members live in urban or rural areas: respondents to both post-assembly surveys were slightly older and much more likely to live in a rural area than those who completed the surveys during the assembly; respondents to the final post-assembly survey were also more likely to have higher educational qualifications than survey respondents during the assembly itself (see Annex One for the full figures).

In contrast, survey respondents remained broadly consistent across the different waves of the survey in terms of their level of concern about climate change (as recorded at the start of the assembly), gender, ethnicity, and assembly topic group<sup>8</sup> (see Annex One).

Given the variances that did occur in respondents between survey waves, it is important to consider whether these could explain the changes seen in assembly members' attitudes and behaviours reported in this briefing. This seems unlikely:

- Analysis of assembly member survey data from during the assembly found very few instances where demographic and attitudinal factors had a significant effect on assembly members' responses.<sup>9</sup> For example, the pre-assembly survey showed no statistically significant relationships between age, gender, ethnicity, education, rural/urban dwelling or assembly topic group on the one hand, and concern for climate change and feelings of urgency about climate change on the other. This suggests that variances in respondents between survey waves is unlikely to have significantly affected the results reported in this briefing on attitude change or political behaviours (unless otherwise stated);
- We did not ask about climate-related behaviours in the surveys that took place pre- or during the assembly. However, there are no statistically significant relationships between the number of behaviour changes made by assembly members since the assembly and any of the demographic and attitudinal characteristics listed above.

## 3. Results and conclusions

### 3.1 Assembly members' knowledge of and concern for climate change has continued to increase since the assembly.

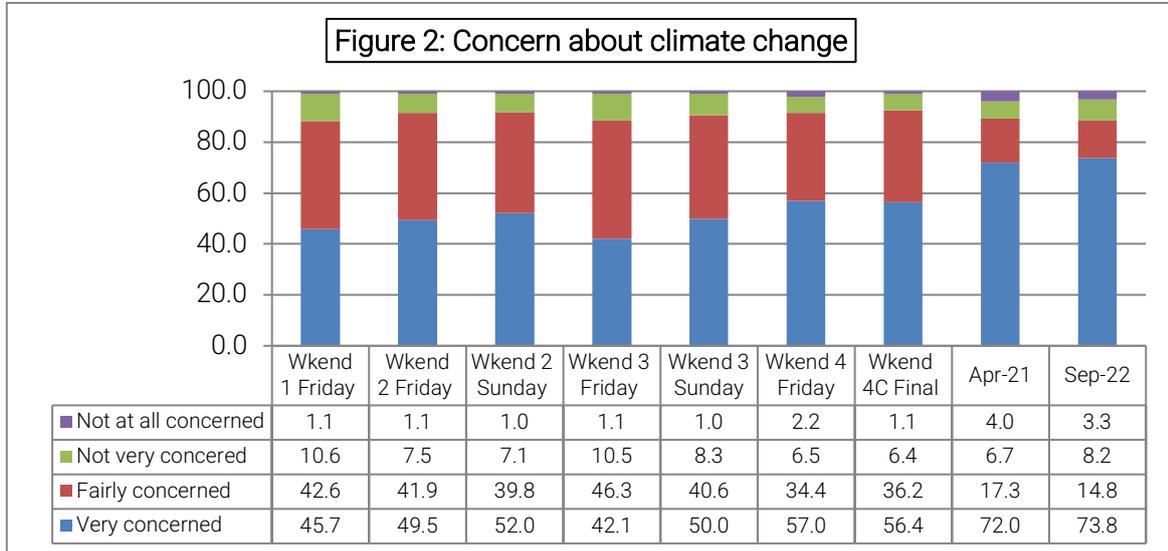
The proportion of assembly members who said they were 'very concerned' about climate change rose from 46% to 56% over the course of the process (January to May 2020), increasing to 72% one year after the end of the assembly (April 2021) and 74% two and half

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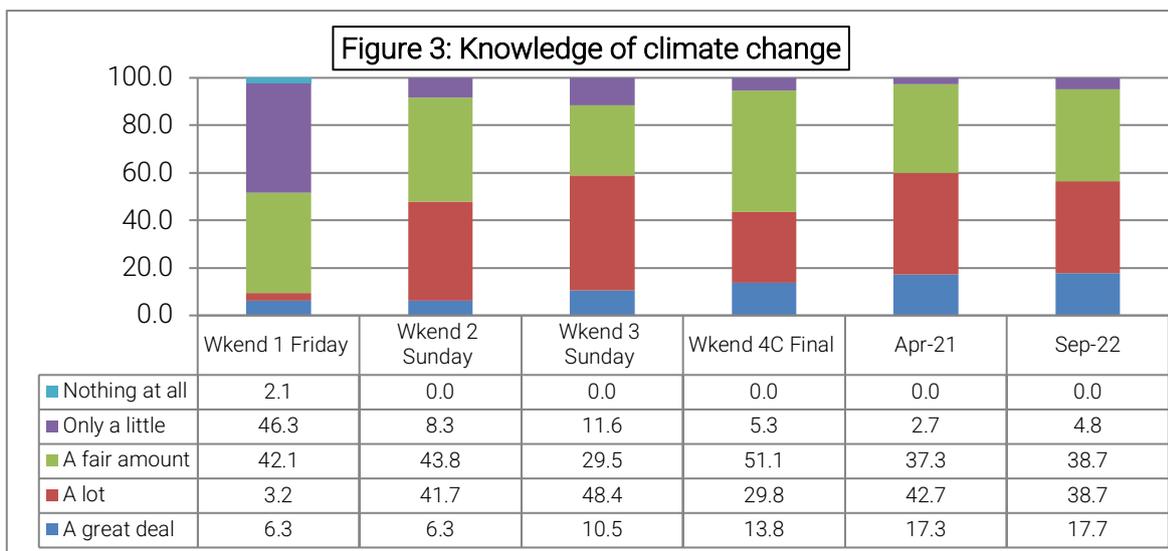
<sup>8</sup> All assembly members looked at some topics, such as the principles they felt should underpin how the UK reaches net zero; greenhouse gas removals, and where our electricity comes from. However assembly members split into three topic groups to consider the key demand-side topics of how we travel, what we eat and what we buy, and energy use in the home. This was to ensure assembly members had sufficient time to consider the topics in greater depth in the time available.

<sup>9</sup> There were a few instances which we will note as we discuss each characteristic.

years later (September 2022) (see Figure 2). In comparison, the percentage of UK citizens who say they are ‘very concerned’ about climate change has remained relatively static: Ipsos Mori polling suggests 52% were ‘very concerned’ in July 2019 and 54% were ‘very concerned’ in July 2022<sup>10</sup>.



Similarly, the proportion of participants that reported they knew a ‘great deal about climate change’ increased from 6% at the start of the assembly to 14% at the end of the assembly. This rose to 18% two years on from the launch of the report. Crucially, the proportion of participants that reported that they knew ‘only a little’ or ‘nothing at all’ about climate change fell from almost half (48.4%) before the assembly to less than 12% in all other surveys (see Figure 3).



<sup>10</sup> The July 2019 figures on which recruitment to Climate Assembly UK was based are covered on page 42 of the Climate Assembly UK report. You can also see them here: [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-08/topline\\_120819.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-08/topline_120819.pdf) The updated figures for July 2022 are here: [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-08/ipsos%20UK%20July%202022%20Climate%20changes%20tabs\\_020822\\_PUBLIC.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-08/ipsos%20UK%20July%202022%20Climate%20changes%20tabs_020822_PUBLIC.pdf)

Analysis shows these increases in concern for, and knowledge about, climate change during and since the assembly are statistically significant, see Annex 2. This indicates that participating in CAUK influenced these changes, as illustrated by the following comments from assembly members:

*"Climate Assembly has made me very aware of what is happening here and around the world. How important it is to start changing our habits and thinking differently."*

*"It has changed my views significantly. I am more aware of what's happening, what's at stake, how and what changes need to be made."*

*"Taking part in the Climate Assembly UK has expanded my knowledge and understanding of the world's need to do to reduce carbon."*

*"It has educated me, so I am a lot more likely to get an electric car and know more about options for heating my home."*

### **3.2 Most assembly members said their views on a range of climate-related topics had changed because of their participation in CAUK.**

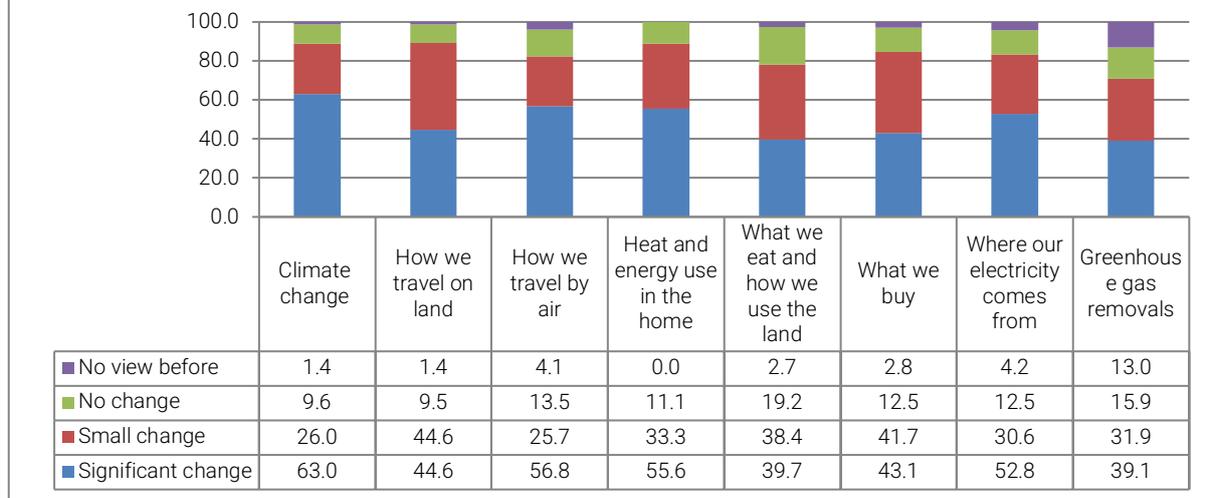
One year on from the assembly:

- 89% of assembly members reported a small or significant change in their views on climate change itself<sup>11</sup>;
- 78-89% reported a small or significant change in their views on key themes covered by the assembly: travel on land, travel by air, heat and energy use in the home, what we eat and how we use the land, what we buy and where our electricity comes from;
- Slightly fewer assembly members (71%) reported a change in their views on another topic covered at the assembly: greenhouse gas removals. 13% of assembly members said that they did not have a view on this topic prior to taking part.

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<sup>11</sup> Assembly members were asked: "To what extent, if at all, has participating in Climate Assembly UK changed your views about the following topics?"

Figure 4: Extent participating in Climate Assembly UK has changed views one year on from the end of the assembly



Most respondents, including some of those who said their views had not changed, made further comments about their answers (for a full list of comments made by assembly members see Annex 3). These included:

*"I now believe climate change is happening."*

*"I feel the climate assembly has given me an opportunity to learn and become interested in climate change. I am more aware of the consequences if we continue to do nothing and the legacies we will leave our future generations if we don't start changing now."*

*"Before I wasn't as educated on how we could change our lifestyles in order to reach net zero by 2050 but now I have learnt a lot more about the specific changes we can make e.g. in everyday travel so I have changed my opinion on this. I also was not as concerned about climate change previously but now I fully understand its impact."*

*"My views did not change all that much but Climate Assembly UK showed me the severity of the issues that were present and the urgency to which we need to address them."*

*"I was already very aware of issues concerning climate change so my life had already reflected this where it could. No change but more knowledge to share with others which is just as important."*

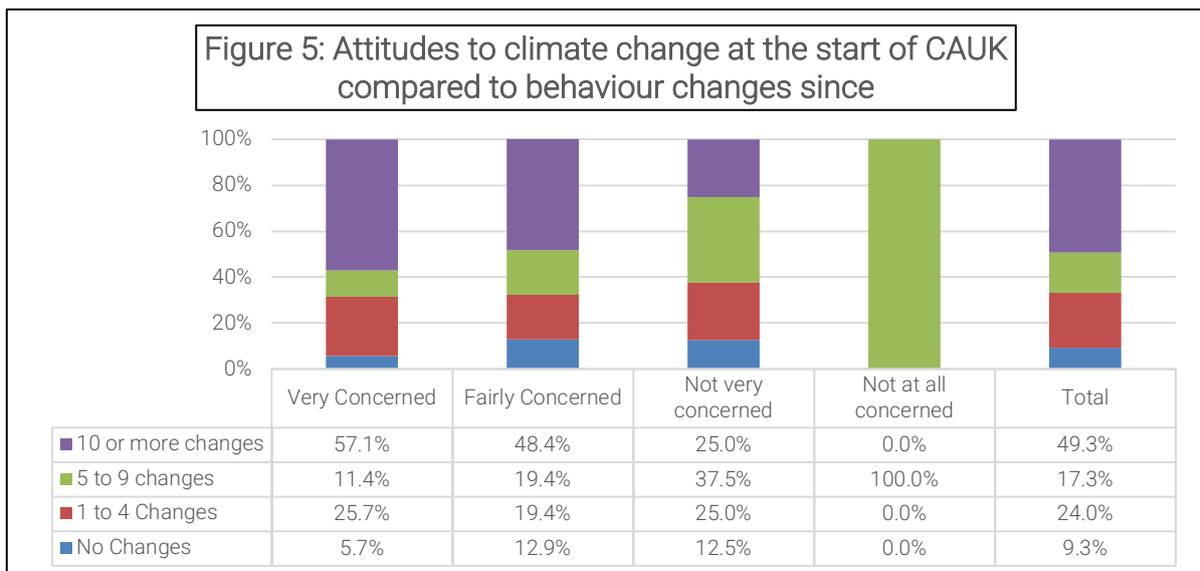
*"No change. I do not feel there's any evidence to require a significant change in my lifestyle. I do however feel that we should all take some personal responsibility to live our lives in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner."*

### 3.3 Most assembly members said they had changed their behaviour since participating in CAUK.

- 72 (91%) of the 79 assembly members that responded to the post assembly surveys reported they had made 1 or more changes to their behaviour since participating;
- 39 assembly members (49% of respondents) said they had made 10 or more changes since participating<sup>12</sup>.

Analysis suggests that participating in CAUK had similar levels of impact on the behaviours of assembly members who had different initial views and backgrounds:

- **There is no statistically significant<sup>13</sup> relationship between concern for climate change at the start of the assembly and the number of changes to their behaviour that assembly members have made since.** This indicates that assembly members' pre-existing attitudes to climate change did not affect how much they changed their behaviours after the assembly (see Figure 5). For example, all of the assembly members that were 'not at all concerned' about climate change have made 5-9 changes to their behaviour since the assembly;
- There are no statistically significant relationships between assembly members' gender, age, ethnicity, level of education or whether they live in an urban or rural area and the number of changes in behaviour;
- There was no statistically significant relationship between how assembly members viewed their politics on a left–right ideological scale and the number of changes in behaviour they reported they had undertaken since CAUK.



<sup>12</sup> The number of behaviour changes is calculated from assembly members' answers to the closed survey questions. Some respondents stated they had made additional changes in answer to open questions in the survey, but it was not clear if some of these answers were in addition to or complemented the answers to the closed questions. Therefore assembly members' answers to open questions about behaviour change are not included in the calculations.

<sup>13</sup> Statistically significant defined as less than 5% likelihood of the relationship occurring by chance.

The most common changes in behaviour, reported by assembly members since participating in CAUK, were:

- Paying more attention to climate change issues in the news (54 respondents, 68%);
- Discussing climate change more with people around them (50 respondents, 63%);
- Recycling more (48 respondents, 61%);
- Reducing things they buy (48 respondents, 61%);
- Reducing electricity use in the home (47 respondents, 59%);
- Seeking to educate themselves about climate change (47 respondents, 59%);
- Buying fewer plastic products (46 respondents, 58%);
- Perhaps surprisingly, **44 assembly members (56%)** said they had reduced the amount of meat and dairy in their diet since participating.

In response to questions about how participating in CAUK influenced these changes, assembly members' comments included that since the assembly:

*"I always watch more programmes on climate change now and make sure friends and family take an interest as well."*

*"I pay more attention to climate change issues in the news and I help to raise awareness about it."*

*"Educated myself further on climate change, and I am more open to learning more about it."*

*"I recycle more than I did before. I am more aware of switching off lights and plugs when not in use and do more research on efficiency before buying an electrical appliance."*

*"Checking if products are sustainable and made in the UK before buying them, and trying to buy less products with plastic packaging."*

*"I found myself taking time to consider the carbon impact of purchasing decisions, I will, if I can, buy local."*

*"Changed eating habits and type of milk."*

*"It has made me more aware of where food comes from and how far away. I try to buy food from farm shops or grown closer to home. I eat far less meat than I did. More careful with gas and electricity in the home. I also watch a lot more programmes on different aspects of climate change in different parts of the world."*

For a full list of comments made by assembly members see Annex 3.

Arguably these most common changes require less time and are less expensive than other behaviour changes made by smaller numbers of assembly members (see Figure 6). However, it doesn't necessarily mean that these changes are easier to make: for example, it can take

significant effort to discuss climate change with family and friends, particularly where their views may be different to one's own. It therefore does not necessarily follow that more assembly members made these changes because they are less resource intensive.

**Less common changes in behaviour reported by assembly members included ones requiring more time and capacity:**

- Flying less frequently (30 respondents, 38%);
- Using their car less (29 respondents, 37%);
- Switching to a renewable energy provider (25 respondents, 32%);
- Improving home insulation (20 respondents, 25%);
- Becoming involved in tackling climate change at work (17 respondents, 22%).

**The activities that the fewest assembly members had undertaken since CAUK were ones requiring significant time and capacity:** installing a heat pump at home (1 respondent); and running for an elected position to influence climate change (2).

Although only five assembly members reported that they had changed their job or started a business focusing on tackling climate change since participating in Climate Assembly UK, the changes made by these members were considerable, as illustrated by the following comments, which were received anonymously in response to open survey questions:

*"Climate Assembly UK has had a large and positive impact on me. It led to me taking a new post as Sustainability Manager at work and consider [sic] my future career. It has helped shape my work on our company's Sustainability Policy and Environmental Management System to place more focus on emissions in addition to plastic. It has led to me to push for more sustainable changes at work and to make more low emissions choices in my own life."*

*"Climate Assembly UK has deeply impacted my life in a positive way; I'm in the process of starting up my own eco-friendly business."*

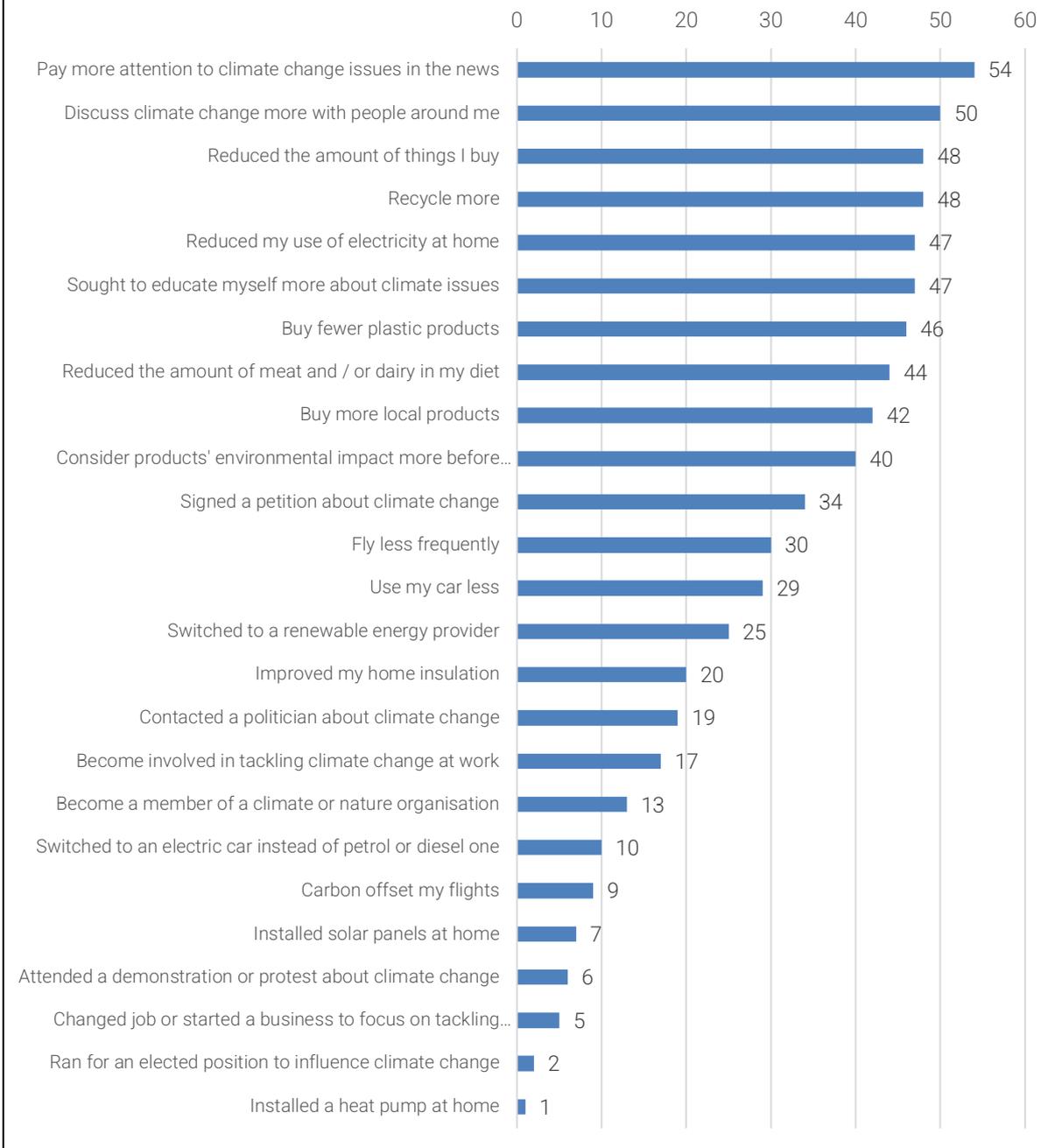
*"I have applied for climate related jobs in the civil service and become part of the Civil Service Environment Network leadership team."*

*"Change of career, resulting in launching new business selling ladies preloved clothing locally to reduce waste and prolong the life of clothing."*

The following comment was received by Involve via email from an assembly member:

*"My business has been selected as a finalist in the Friend to the Environment category in my District Council's Business Awards being held next month. This would not have been possible had I not been a member of Climate Assembly UK. What I learnt during taking part and the effect it has had on me has led me to where I am today. Thank you all for this life changing opportunity, it really has been one of the best experiences of my life."*

Figure 7: Changes in behaviour since CAUK (number of assembly members)



Assembly members reported making many of their behaviour changes for environmental reasons and/or at least partially because of their participation in Climate Assembly UK (97% of all reported changes)<sup>14</sup>. However, some may have also been influenced by external factors

<sup>14</sup> Data on the behaviour changes comes from four questions across the two post assembly surveys. Three of these questions asked explicitly about changes made 'for environmental reasons' or that were 'contributed to' by taking part in CAUK, as follows:

- "Climate Assembly UK wasn't about asking you to make changes in your own life. However, we would be interested to know whether or not you have done any of the following for environmental reasons since the assembly" [multiple choice question asked in the final post assembly survey only]
- "Think about whether or not Climate Assembly UK has contributed to you changing anything about your work or personal life that wasn't covered by the last question. If it has, please briefly tell us about it here" [open ended question asked in both post assembly surveys]

such as the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic or the cost-of-living crisis, as indicated by the following comments:

*"I found myself taking time to consider the carbon impact of purchasing decisions, I will, if I can, buy local. The Covid-19 pandemic has reduced the travelling I did but I find it hard to conceive that I will travel as much again. I also look for and read more articles on companies who are actively reducing their carbon footprint."*

*"I have made small changes in different areas. It's very difficult to make complete changes to your whole lifestyle but the Coronavirus pandemic has helped to make some changes such as less travelling by car, eliminated taking any foreign holidays and I've ended up buying less as non essential shops were closed."*

The two assembly members who made the above comments both reported making other changes to their behaviours that they did not attribute to Covid-19 as follows:

*"My views have changed in the following areas - When I make large purchases I take time to consider the carbon impact and consider possible alternatives - I look for ways to repair and mend broken or damaged items where possible - My diet has changed to reduce the amount of meat I consume - The amount of money I spend on luxury items has reduced, partly due to Covid but also questioning my need against the environmental impact - I invest more in companies which have clear carbon reduction policies."*

*"I have purchased a lot more eco products and have changed some habits like walking when doing school runs and shops that are close by instead of driving."*

### **3.4 There was no specific aspect of CAUK which contributed to changes in behaviour more than the others.**

Between 84% and 94% of respondents agreed that the following aspects of CAUK affected changes in behaviour they had taken since the assembly: hearing information about what climate change is and its impacts; hearing information about what we can do to tackle climate change; being able to ask the speakers questions and have them answered; discussing the issues with other assembly members; and having dedicated time away from home to think about climate change and how to tackle it. As illustrated by the following comment, the whole process as a learning experience, with opportunities for deliberation, was influential:

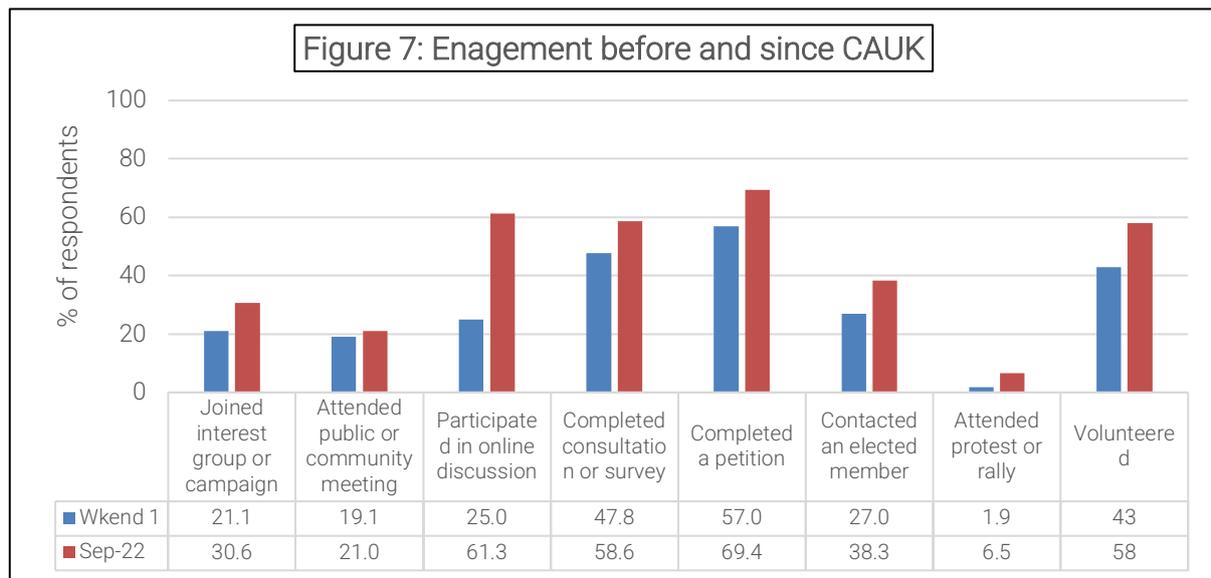
*"The intent, information and discussions made a positive impact on me. I learned more than I thought."*

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The only question that did not explicitly make a reference to causality was the multiple choice question from the first post assembly survey (April 2021). This simply asked: "Climate Assembly UK wasn't about asking you to make changes in your own life. However, we would be interested to know whether or not you have done any of the following since the assembly?" Only 23 (out of 693) changes were reported in response to this question that were not also reported in response to one of the other questions above.

**3.5 Levels of political engagement reported by assembly members have generally increased since their participation in Climate Assembly UK (see Figure 7).**

However, without comparable population-wide data, it is unclear to what extent this change may or may not be attributable to assembly members’ participation in CAUK. Assembly members were asked about their participation in general, rather in relation to climate change specifically.



**3.6 Most assembly members (89% to 94%) ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that citizens’ assemblies should be used more often.**

Analysis indicates the extent to which assembly members hold this view has not changed since the end of the assembly.

**3.7 The extent to which assembly members think that their recommendations will influence government policy and the commissioning select committees has fallen since the end of the assembly.**

- At the end of the assembly, 42% of respondents thought that CAUK would influence Government policy ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’, falling to 26% by April 2021 and to 14% by September 2022;
- At the end of the assembly, 46% of respondents thought that CAUK would influence Parliament ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’, falling to 39% by April 2021 and to 31% by September 2022;
- This change may be reflective of the response to the CAUK recommendations from Parliament and Government.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See Elstub, S., Farrell, D. M., Carrick, J., and Mockler, P. (2021) Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK, Newcastle: Newcastle University. Available at: [evaluation-of-climate-assembly-uk.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/evaluation-of-climate-assembly-uk.pdf) for a detailed discussion of the uptake of CAUK recommendations by Parliament and Government.

### 3.8 Assembly members' beliefs that 'they have a say about what the UK parliament does' increased during the assembly but have since decreased.

The proportion of respondents that 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they do not have a say about what the UK Parliament does decreased from 46.3% at the start of the assembly (January 2020) to 24.5% at the end (May 2020). The change occurred during a period in which external factors, such as the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown, may have been expected to influence assembly members in the opposite direction.<sup>16</sup>

Assembly members' increased feelings of agency in relation to Parliament have not lasted. The proportion of respondents that 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they do not have a say about what the UK Parliament does had risen to 41.1% by April 2021 and to 43% by September 2022.

There is a statistically significant relationship between assembly members who changed their minds (between the end of the assembly and September 2022) about the influence their recommendations would have on the parliamentary committees, and assembly members who changed their minds (during the same period) about how much say they think they have in what Parliament does. **Assembly members who reduced how much influence they thought their recommendations would have on Parliament, were more likely to increasingly agree that they do not have a say in what Parliament does**, and vice versa. It is important to state that the statistics do not tell us which way this influence goes; we do not know if increasing pessimism about the impact of their recommendations changed assembly members' view of Parliament, or the other way round.

### 3.9 Assembly members' belief that 'the UK political system works fairly well' increased during the assembly but has since decreased.

The proportion of respondents that 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the UK political system works fairly well increased from 45.3% at the start of the assembly to 57.6% at the end, rising again to 65.3% by April 2021. However, this figure had fallen back to 48% of respondents by September 2022. These changes may be unrelated to CAUK, but rather to do with other events in British politics during that period of time<sup>17</sup>. Certainly, research for the Constitution Unit at University College London shows that satisfaction with democracy in the UK also declined amongst the population as a whole between 2021 and 2022: in July 2021 54% of the UK population said they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with "the way democracy works in the United Kingdom"; by late August-early September 2022, this figure had fallen to 38%.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Elstub, S. et al. (2021) 'The Resilience of Pandemic Digital Deliberation: An Analysis of Online Synchronous Forums,' *Javnost - The Public*, 28:3, 237-255

<sup>17</sup> Climate Assembly UK started around 6 weeks after the 2019 general election. The first national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic started between assembly weekends 3 and 4. Lockdown restrictions were being eased by the time of the first follow-up survey in April 2021. By the end time of the second follow-up survey in September 2022, no lockdown restrictions were in place, and there was an election within the Conservative Party to select a new leader and Prime Minister following the resignation of Boris Johnson.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research-areas/deliberative-democracy/democracy-uk-after-brexit/population-surveys>

## Conclusion

The analysis of opinion<sup>19</sup> and behaviour change<sup>20</sup> in participants of citizens' assemblies and related processes is quite common. These studies indicate participation in this type of process can change the opinions and political behaviour of participants. However, only a few studies look beyond the end of the process to see whether these effects last, and why.

Moreover, previous research on participants in citizens' assemblies on climate change has not considered effects on climate-related behaviour. While CAUK was not commissioned to influence the behaviour or views of those who participated, our results indicate that there can be longer-term effects on assembly members. CAUK assembly members meaningfully engaged with climate change to the extent that they made lasting changes to their lifestyles and views.

These results matter. They raise questions for democratic institutions and others about the additional value processes like assemblies might provide for them, and how they might want to support or work with assembly members after the assembly itself has finished. They provide food for thought for evaluators and their commissioners about what areas evaluations should consider and what period of time they should cover. And finally, they raise questions for governments and practitioners alike about how and to what end citizens' assemblies and related processes, practices, and techniques could be scaled in efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

## Useful resources

Report: [Evaluation of the Climate Assembly UK](#) by Stephen Elstub, David M. Farrell, Jayne Carrick and Patricia Mockler (July 2021).

The annexes to this report are available as a separate document.

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<sup>19</sup> For an overview of research on participant opinion change in mini-publics see Thompson, A.G.; Escobar, O.; Roberts, J.J.; Elstub, S.; Pamphilis, N.M. The Importance of Context and the Effect of Information and Deliberation on Opinion Change Regarding Environmental Issues in Citizens' Juries. *Sustainability* 2021, 13(17), 9852

For an overview of research on participant behaviour change in mini-publics see <sup>20</sup> Boulianne, S., Chen, K., & Kahane, D. (2020). Mobilizing mini-publics: The causal impact of deliberation on civic engagement using panel data. *Politics*, 40(4), 460–476.