



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Overcoming barriers in communicating on Air Quality

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If you could see London's air, you'd want to clean it too.

The Mayor has introduced a £1 driving in central London. It's pa Find out what else he's doing at

#CleanAir



If you could see London's air, you'd want to clean it too.

People inside a car are exposed to up to 12 times more air pollution than those outside

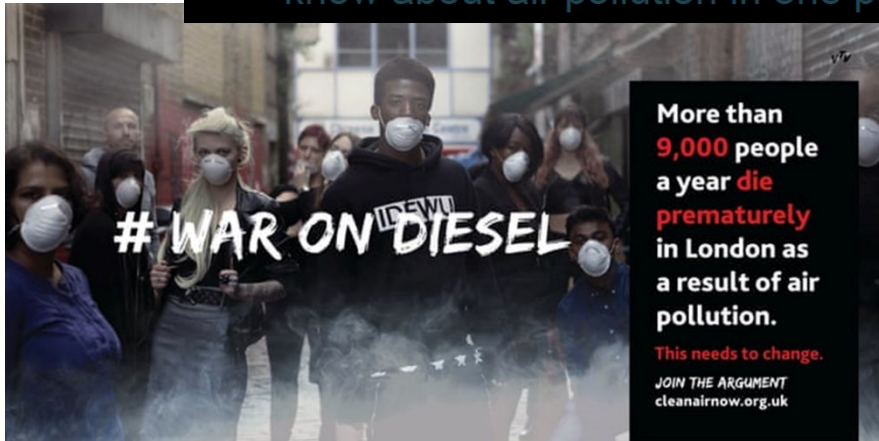


Take action today. If you can, leave your car at home.

Find out more [#CleanAir4Bath](#)

Clean Air Hub

We've collected everything you need to know about air pollution in one place



More than **9,000** people a year **die** prematurely in London as a result of air pollution.

This needs to change. JOIN THE ARGUMENT cleanairnow.org.uk

DIRTY AIR HITS THE VULNERABLE HARDEST



Let's clear the air

find out more CLEANAIRGM.COM



What I'm going to cover

1. Why air pollution is a tricky subject for gaining public traction on
2. Public understanding of air pollution
3. Good practice in AQ communications
4. The challenges of AQ behaviours
5. Where next

Why air pollution is a tricky subject

- What do we rely on to signal something is dangerous?
 - Our senses (and “common sense”)
 - Our experiences
 - The experiences of those around us
 - What we are warned about by parents, carers, doctors, teachers...
- Yet often air pollution (in the UK) is:
 - Silent
 - Largely invisible
 - Mostly unfelt or unattributed
 - Often odourless
- And...
 - Many sources seem ‘natural’ (burning wood, cows,...)

UK worst in Europe for pollution-linked childhood asthma cases. *shows*

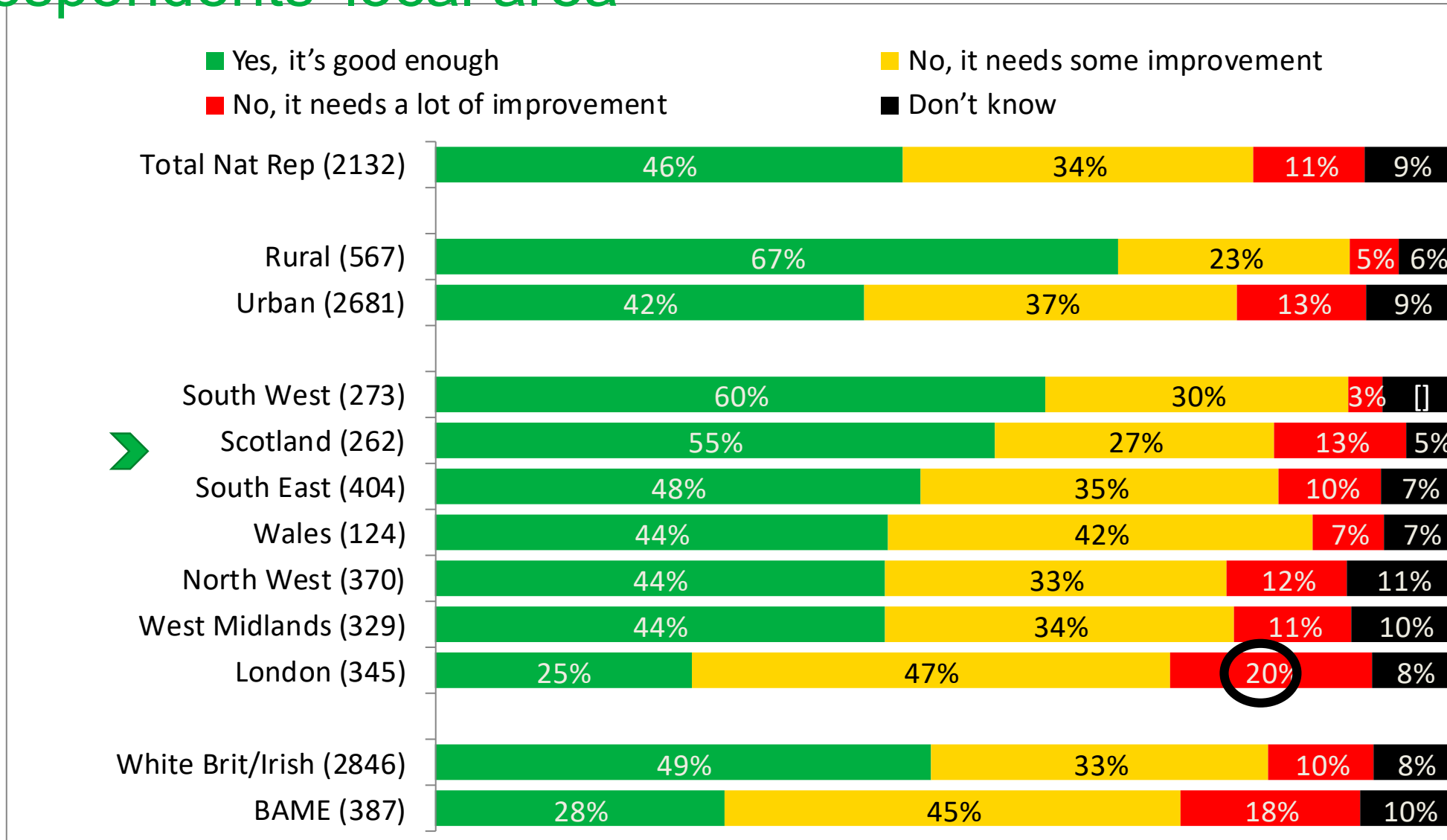
Wake up to air pollution, doctors tell ministers
Every person breathes 'equivalent of daily cigarette'

Revealed: two million Londoners live in areas with illegal toxic air



Lung cancer killing non-smokers due to toxic air, experts warn

Why air pollution is a tricky subject: perceptions of AQ in respondents' local area



Why air pollution is a tricky subject

In addition:

- There is fatigue – *“everything is bad for you” “what do they want me to stop doing this week?”*
- Air pollution can make people feel powerless:
 - *“Whatever I do is a drop in the ocean/ won’t make any difference to the air I breathe”*
 - *“It’s the fault of car manufacturers/ industry/...”*
 - *“It’s unavoidable”*

Public understanding of the problem

- For some people in some places, air quality is an issue
- But despite the headlines it is often “background noise”
- And it tends to be poorly understood:
 - What air pollution actually is (recognised in the [DAQI advice](#))
 - Where it comes from (just traffic...)
 - How much of a risk it poses (just to sick people...)
 - How it relates to climate change
 - What can be done (powerlessness; it’s not our fault...)

Addressing the issue - good practice in communicating on AQ

- 1) Don't raise public concern about air pollution unless you can at the same time **satisfy people's desire to do something to reduce their exposure**.
- 2) Focus on **what is known for certain** about the health consequences of air pollution.
- 3) Talk about air pollution as a **problem linked to specific places** – and not as a general problem of the atmosphere.
- 4) Keep the focus of communications on **practical improvements** – not long-term solutions.
- 5) **Demonstrate leadership and empower communities**, instead of just expecting individuals to change their behaviour.
- 6) Use information about **what particulate matter** is made of and **where it goes** to get the broader topic of air pollution onto the agenda – not statistics about health consequences.

The challenges of AQ behaviours

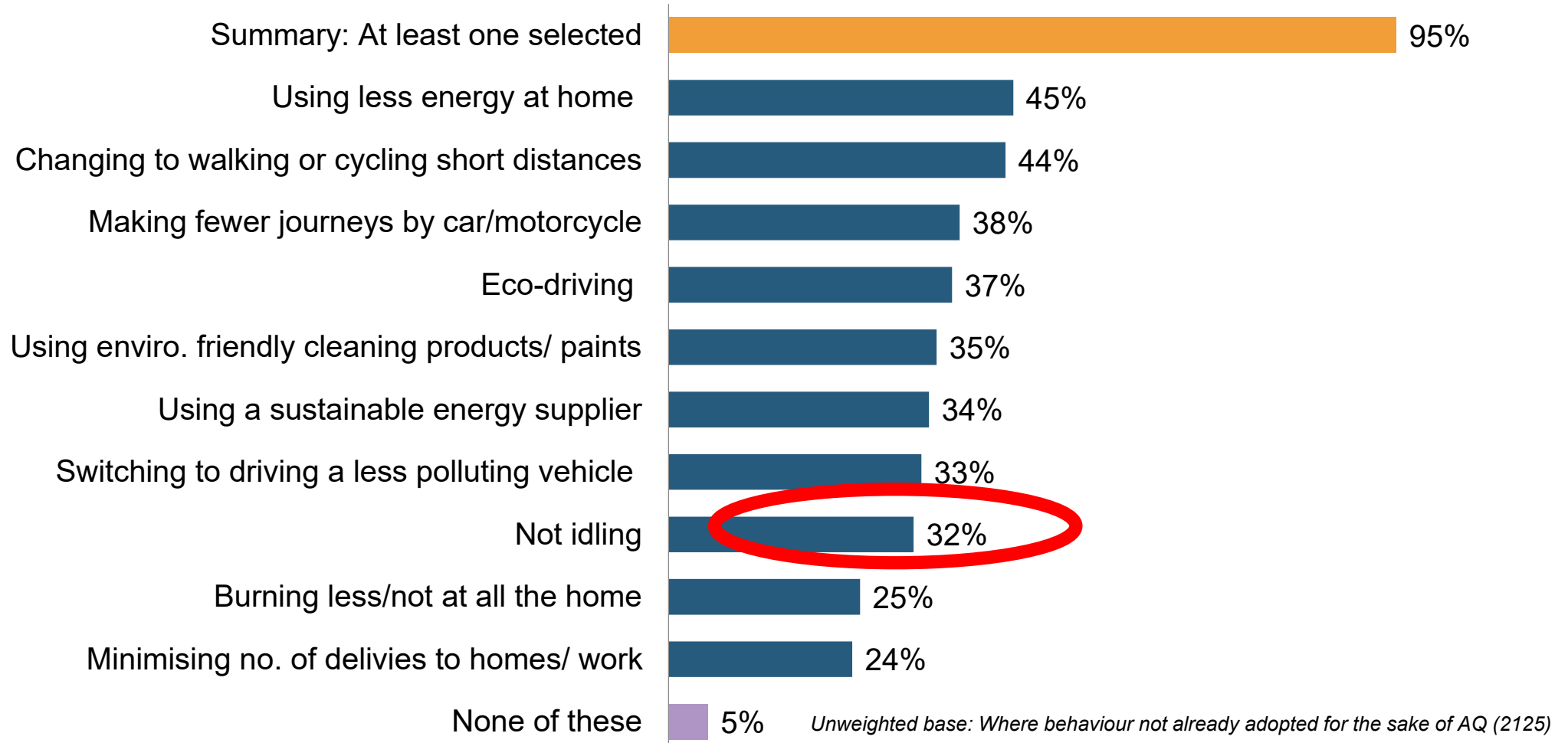
- Good communication is the start but
 - Understanding the problem doesn't mean you know what to do about it
 - And knowing what to do about it doesn't mean you do it
 - COM-B model – capability, opportunity, motivation, leading to behaviour
 - Many others also put individuals at the heart of decisions
 - Others don't (e.g. social practice theory)
- Pro-environmental behaviours are known for their value-action gap
 - especially if these involve changing current practices or making (perceived) sacrifices

The challenges of AQ behaviours

- Breadth of behaviours
- Long term/ habitual nature of many of the choices
- Variety of motivations we are appealing to
 - Protecting yourself
 - Reducing your contribution
- Variety of audiences (who are not always easy to find)
- Complexity of the science (what *is* the advice)
- Invisibility of the threat

The challenges of AQ behaviours

Q. Which of these others would you be willing to do in order to improve air quality, if you felt they would make a difference?



Where next

- Collectively, we have ambitious programme of work on AQ
- But without public acceptance to underpin it, it's likely to be an uphill battle
- Good communication is likely to be most effective as part of a broader package addressing specific behaviours
- We won't be able use the same approach each time
- But let's make sure we're using best practice
 - Based on the evidence we have
 - Building evidence where needed
 - Evaluating what we're doing wherever possible
 - Sharing learnings



Where next

- Support:
 - Support to GAP who run Clean Air Days and the Clean Air Hub
 - AQ Grant for many projects supporting behaviour change and communications activity
- Outputs
 - AQ briefing for directors of public health
 - Clean Air Zone communication toolkit for LAs
 - Practical guide on open fires and wood-burning stoves
 - Improvements to UK-AIR
 - Publication of Clean Air Strategy
- Forthcoming communications activity:
 - National-level campaign to support implementation of Clean Air Zones
 - Domestic burning communications campaign



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Thank you

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