



LES Consultation Qualitative Research Programme

Heat

Michaela Rhode | Opinion Research and Statistics



Contents

1. Introduction

- Background and objectives
- Methodology
- Executive Summary

2. Background views

3. London's climate

4. Attitudes to heat

5. Strategies for coping with heat

6. Response to policies

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- As part of the publication of the London Environment Strategy (LES), a three month stakeholder and public consultation was conducted in the period August-November 2017
- The public consultation used the following methodologies:
 - Representative polling of 1,000 Londoners
 - Surveys of the Talk London community (38,000 Londoners)
 - Online discussions with the Talk London community
 - Focus groups and interviews with select sample of the Talk London community

Objectives

- This research aims to explore experiences older Londoners have had with high temperatures in London
- The discussion guide for the interviews covered the following topics:
 - Background views on the environment
 - Background views on London's climate
 - Experiences of heat and measures taken to cope with heat in the home, and elsewhere
 - Reaction to LES policies on heat

Methodology

- In September 2017, the Opinion Research Team conducted 8 x 40 minute in home interviews
 - Participants were recruited from the Talk London community, and were paid £30
 - At point of recruitment participants were told that the research was about coping with heat in London
- All participants were aged 70+, and 2 participants had long term health conditions (lung cancer/ COPD)
 - The age of the sample & the demographics of TL resulted in a sample of homeowners only, although this was not an objective of the research

*This method of recruitment results in a more engaged sample than would be the case in the general population. This sample were more **pro environment and civically engaged** than would be expected from the general population. Results should be read with this in mind.

Total sample size: 8									
Gender		Age	Ethnicity		Nationality		CW18 CW19sing tenure		
Women	Men	70+	White	BAME	British	Other	Home-owner	Private renter	Social renter
4	4		8	0	7	1	8	0	0

Slide 6

CW18 Were we deliberately going for homeowners here or just unable to recruit renters?
Christine Wingfield, 10/11/2017

CW19 actually - you have a quote from a renter later on - maybe these figs are wrong?
Christine Wingfield, 10/11/2017

Executive Summary

- Participants had a strong sense that London's climate was becoming more unpredictable, but were unsure whether London was becoming hotter
 - Participants said they found it difficult to remember seasons/ temperature
- Participants did not think heat was a problem for London today, but accepted that it might become more of a problem in the future
 - And thought that it was right to be preparing for that eventuality
- Apart from making life uncomfortable, participants did not have a strong sense of the risks of high temperatures
 - Participants had a vague sense that heat could cause health problems, but were unsure about what these problems were
 - Participants with long term health conditions said they found high temperatures difficult to cope with, especially when combined with pollution
- Participants thought that attitudes towards heat in the UK were outdated
 - Traditional view of the UK as a cold country means people tend not to worry about/ plan for heat, but rather focus much more on protecting against cold
- Participants showed concern for trend in construction of glass buildings, and reliance on air-conditioning
 - In terms of policies, participants most wanted to see planning laws changed to ensure building design takes cooling into account and more trees planted to give shade

2. BACKGROUND VIEWS

Participants had high levels of engagement on environmental issues

- Concern that increasing population and rate of development is leading to a deterioration in London's environment
 - Seen to be underlying driver behind many of London's environmental problems e.g. congestion, air quality, pressure on green space
- Issues which affected participants directly were cited as the most important
 - Air quality, noise and waste most frequently cited as top challenges for London
- Nearly all participants said they think about their impact on the environment regularly and try to do what they can to reduce it
 - Recycling and taking public transport top of mind actions for reducing individual environmental impact

"For me it's air quality. That is a huge and very important issue. We need to take really drastic action. It's a question of emergency."

TL Member

"I recycle. I walk as much as possible. I don't have a car."

TL Member

Heat was not spontaneously recognized as an environmental challenge for London

- Heat was not raised spontaneously in any of the LES research as a challenge for London's environment
 - In the interviews, participants said it was not something they had ever considered before
- Heat most commonly associated with being on the continent/ abroad
 - When asked about heat, participants often started talking about experiences abroad, and didn't feel that they had had the same intensity of experiences in London
- But there was recognition that temperatures in London can get very high
 - Participants were all able to talk about moments when they had noticed heat in London and had found it uncomfortable

"It's not something I've ever really thought about it before. It's not surprising that this would be a problem. I've no idea how well equipped we are to deal with it."

TL Member

"Heat in London sometimes bothers me. But only during the day. It's not like on the continent."

TL Member

3. LONDON'S CLIMATE

Participants all had a strong sense that London's climate has changed

- All said that they struggled to remember weather once it had passed
 - And so felt uncertain about saying for sure whether things had changed
- But observations of nature, and comparisons with childhood memories, led them to conclude that there had been some significant changes
 - Participants nearly all spontaneously started talking about 'strange' things they had observed in their garden or in parks e.g. summer plants blooming in winter
 - Many recalled snow and frost from their childhood, and said they had noticed that this was much rarer in recent times

"Once summer is over you forget about it. Winter, autumn is a much bigger chunk of the year so you remember that more."

TL Member

"Sometimes the trees get very confused and get blossom in autumn and you think poor things. The Magnolia got itself into a right state last year."

TL Member

Participants had all observed greater unpredictability in the seasons, and in weather patterns

*"I find it difficult to say if it's been getting warmer. But what I do recognise is this **topsy turvy thing** with the weather."*

*"I think there have been a lot of changes. We had a very strange spring which came early. Generally **the seasons are getting very muddled.**"*



- All said they had noticed that **winter was starting later**, and was **milder** than it had been in the past



- Several said they thought there was **more rain** than there used to be and that that rainfall was **heavier**



- A couple of participants thought it had been getting **windier**

But were uncertain over whether London was experiencing higher temperatures than it had in the past

- Participants tended to say that they did not think the summers were any hotter today than they had been in the past
 - Many used the 1976 heatwave as proof of this
- But that they thought the heat was more uncomfortable today because London is more densely populated than it used to be
 - Increasing population rather than increasing temperature seen as the key problem for London
- Some also wondered at whether the heat is more dangerous today because of link with air pollution
 - Participants were unsure whether there was a link between heat and increased air pollution, but some thought there might be

"I can remember big heatwaves back in the sixties. I would need to see the statistics to know if we actually get more of them now or not. The difference is in how you experience them. London is a lot more crowded now than it was then."

TL Member

"The heat feeds into the air pollution and makes it worse. You get the smoggiest days in the summer."

TL Member

4. ATTITUDES TO HEAT

There is a strong perception that heat is not a problem in the UK

- Participants said they thought most people in the UK were more concerned about cold than heat
 - Some said you could see this reflected in the attitude people took to sun-bathing in the UK
- Participants spontaneously recognised that London's climate is different
 - Several participants had heard of 'urban heat island effect' and all spontaneously knew that London is the hottest part of the country
- But thought that people still applied the same mind-set to London as to the rest of the UK
 - Heat not something that people necessarily plan against or prepare for in the same way as they prepare for cold

"There's a 'you don't have to worry about the sun in England' type of attitude. Every time it's sunny people strip off and go lie in the sun and I'm not sure that's very wise."

TL Member

"I don't know whether many people think heat is a big problem. I think a lot of people like to be hotter than the weather."

TL Member

Heat in London seen to be unpleasant but bearable

- Participants all said they did not enjoy being in London in high temperatures
 - And actively avoided going into central London/ travelling at this time
- But felt that, compared to some other global cities, heat is not a major problem in London
 - Participants felt that the heat tends to only last a couple of days and for the most part does not affect them at night
 - Most said they did not feel they had observed anything to make them think that the city couldn't cope with the temperatures it was currently experiencing
- Several wondered as to how this might change in future, but level of concern over this was not high
 - Climate change, increasing population and development all seen to be factors that could lead to higher temperatures in the future
 - Compared to other problems London has e.g. air quality, this is not something participants saw as particularly concerning

"The centre of London on really hot days is horrible. I just avoid it completely."

TL Member

"It hasn't got that hot to start really worrying about it. Whether it will in future I don't know."

TL Member

"I definitely don't think heat is the most urgent thing. The Mayor could do circles around the heat island, by taking serious action on air pollution."

TL Member

Participants said they planned their activities around the weather

- Participants all spoke of heat as having a debilitating effect on their energy levels, and said this has an impact over what they choose to do
 - All said they avoided travelling or going into central London when it was hot, and that they would even cancel plans to avoid this
- All felt that as retired people they were fortunate to be able to avoid the worst of the heat
 - Several expressed sympathy for working people who were obliged to wear suits/ travel at rush hour in high temperatures
- Most said they found the cold more difficult to cope with
 - Whilst all participants said they noticed extremes of temperature more as they got older, most said they found the cold more unpleasant than the heat

"It just makes me slower. I'm lucky that I have decent lungs. Friends of mine notice it more."

TL Member

"I just don't get the train to Leigh after 5 o'clock during the summer because it will be intolerable. So hot."

TL Member

"The older you get the more you notice the extremes. We are not very big people so we notice the cold."

TL Member

Those with pre-existing medical conditions said they found the heat difficult to cope with

"I've had COPD for 15 years. The heat makes you feel like a wet lettuce. And it gives me trouble breathing. We have air text which tells me when air pollution is high. If it's a high pollution day then I don't go out"

Talk London Member

"In January I had half a lung taken away because they discovered I had lung cancer. I find it's a struggle with breathing and a struggle with getting exhausted when there's heat. It's worst when it's hot at night. I can't keep my windows open because of the fumes."

Talk London Member



Difficulty breathing
Sense of exhaustion
Concern that it worsens the effect of air pollution



Participants were unsure about the health impacts of heat

- Participants said they knew high temperatures could be dangerous, but they weren't sure why
 - Apart from dehydration, participants weren't sure how high temperatures could harm you
- There was an assumption that vulnerable groups would be more at risk
 - Again participants said they weren't really sure but assumed it would affect older people, young people and those with pre-existing medical conditions the most
- Most knew that it would affect breathing, and some thought it would affect heat conditions
 - Some thought there was a correlation between air pollution and heat, but others were unsure
- Participants showed spontaneous concern about the impact of heat on working people
 - Perception that they have less freedom to adapt their lives to high temperatures e.g. still have to wear a suit/ travel on the tube

"I must confess when I heard these statistics about how many people in England had died from heat I wondered what it was about the heat that actually killed people. I never understood what the actual problem was."

Talk London Member

"You have to discipline yourself to drink more. We learned that from my mother who got very dehydrated and then got confused and ended up in hospital."

Talk London Member

Participants were unsure what other effects heat might have on the city

- Participants said they had never given much thought to the effect of heat on infrastructure
 - Most assumed that it must cause some wear and tear damage to buildings
 - All had heard of heat causing railway lines to buckle but thought that new technology meant that this was a thing of the past
- There was a perception that glass buildings are not appropriate for hot cities, and concern over the current construction trend in London
 - Participants thought that glass buildings heat the surrounding area, and also worried about reliance on air-conditioning to cool glass buildings

"I don't know enough about it really. Do buildings decline when it's hot? A lot it must depend on what the buildings are made of. I don't suppose glass helps."

TL Member

"Working in an environment with a lot of glass has been proven to not be good for you. Is the glass properly insulated? Is the sun really coming through? The Shard was causing people problems."

TL Member

5. STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH HEAT

Participants were all confident in their ability to keep their home cool

Curtains closed during the day

- Seen to be useful if sun directly shining on a room
- One participant said he didn't like doing it because it stained the curtains

"Thick curtains. Keep them drawn. Open windows at night but keep them closed. I've no idea how I know that. It's just common sense isn't it?"

TL Member

Windows closed during the day

- Opening windows when it's hot seen to be a common misconception

Blinds on the outside of windows

- One participant had constructed his own blinds to keep his kitchen cool, and felt that the advantage of outside blinds was not fully appreciated in the UK

"People don't realise how much of a difference it makes to have the blinds on the outside."

TL Member

Fan

- Several participants said they had fans 'for emergencies' i.e. when it's hot at night
- Most felt that they were not particularly effective

"I bought a fan this summer for the first time just for very hot nights. We don't use it very much."

TL Member

But felt that Londoners in general are not knowledgeable about how to stay cool

- Participants attributed their knowledge of how to stay cool to common sense, and experience of hot countries
 - A couple of participants had lived in hot countries and said this made them much better informed than most
- But felt that most people in the UK are not well informed as to how to stay cool
 - Perception based on observation of neighbours and general population
- And felt that this led to some common misconceptions
 - E.g. keeping curtains/ windows open during the day to cool down the home, designing homes to maximise light, lying out in the sun

"Thick curtains. Keep them drawn. Open windows at night but keep them closed. I've no idea how I know that. It's just common sense isn't it?"

TL Member

"My impression is that most people don't know. I notice that people are obsessed with light and getting light into their house. I think a time will come when people will quite appreciate having shade and verandas over the doors"

TL Member

Participants said they noticed the heat the most on public transport and crowded places

- Increasing population rather than rising temperatures seen to be the main problem in London
 - Overcrowding blamed for uncomfortable temperatures on public transport
 - Congestion on roads seen to be a contributing factor to heat in the city
- The tube seen to be the worst mode of transport for heat
 - Trains to outer London at rush hour also mentioned as getting very hot
- Buses not seen to be as bad, although heat still a problem
 - Most said they had not had any really bad experiences on buses, but thought this might be because they tended to only use them for shorter journeys
 - One anecdote of getting on a new Routemaster and finding it sweltering



"Traffic churns out exhaust fumes. It's hot. The vehicles are hot. It's unpleasant. Reducing the amount of traffic would make a difference."

TL Member

"I nearly fainted this summer. It was a hot day and the train was packed. The windows were open but it made no difference."

TL Member

Heat seen to mainly be a problem for workers, and those in public buildings



"Lots of the schools I taught in you couldn't open the windows and no air conditioning. It was very unpleasant teaching in the heat. Kids tempers rise as well as their body temperature."

TL Member



"Working in the heat is horrible. You do see people dressed up in the hottest weather. It interferes with work badly."

TL Member



"Hospitals have always been too hot. They say it's because the old people want to be warmer."

TL Member



"We had to go to our local GP a couple of months ago and it was like an oven. She had the windows open but it didn't make any difference."

TL Member



Participants recognised that high temperatures in such environments could have serious adverse effects e.g. lower productivity, affect mood, increase risk of infection

Participants showed strong dislike of air conditioning as a solution to heat

- Participants mainly opposed air conditioning on environmental grounds
 - High awareness of high energy costs of air conditioning
- Also concern over health impacts
 - Perception that it leads to lower quality air
- Participants wanted to see a focus on ways of reducing reliance on air conditioning through good building design
 - Participants thought there was too much air conditioning in London, especially in shops and offices

“Air conditioning seem to be everywhere now. The interior is cool but outside it’s getting hotter. It can actually damage the environment outside of the building.”

Talk London Member

“What we need to do is try to ensure that the buildings don’t get hot in the first place because then you’ve got to put in air conditioning and fans which consume energy.”

Talk London Member

6. RESPONSE TO POLICIES

We tested the below policies with participants

- *The Mayor will help develop and promote a communications plan for severe heat events to keep Londoners safe*
- *The Mayor will work with partners to develop mapping to show how the Urban Heat Island effect impacts on critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and care homes and vulnerable groups in London*
- *Through the new London plan the Mayor will consider policies to minimise the risk of new developments overheating and reduce their impact on the urban heat island effect*
- *The Mayor will work with TfL and the boroughs to provide shaded areas for Londoners to enjoy*
- *The Mayor will work with TfL to put in place initiatives that will minimise heat on the underground and bus networks*

Overall participants were very positive about the policies

- Policies taken as a sign of forward thinking on the part of the GLA
 - Whilst most participants did not think that heat is a major problem for London now, they thought it might become more of a problem in the future
- Participants wanted to know how much the GLA was building on international expertise
 - Perception that many cities around the world are much hotter than London so there must be a lot to learn from them
- Participants saw a lot of cross-over with over policy areas
 - Reducing traffic, increasing tree cover, greening of buildings all measures participants spontaneously identified as key to coping with rising temperatures

"I think it is an important thing that will help make sure our city is fit for the future. We can see that it's going to be a problem so we need to be adapting to it now. We need to plan for heat, just like we need to plan for flooding."

TL Member

"There are countries where the temperature is consistently higher than ours. What do they do about this? There must be things we can learn from that."

TL Member

Planning law seen to be critical to ensuring future resilience

- Participants felt that making buildings resilient to heat is not something that has been done well in the past
 - Participants thought this had resulted in an over-reliance on air conditioning
 - Glass buildings taken as a symbol of this- high level of concern over the difficulty of keeping them cool, and the warming effect they have on the surrounding area
- Participants thought this could be due to an outdated perception that the UK is a cold country which doesn't experience high temperatures
 - Meaning there would need to be a shift in attitudes/ understanding towards climate resilience, both from the public and from the construction sector
- Participants showed strong support for building heat resilience into planning law
 - Taking best practice from other cities

"I do wonder how some of these offices that are going up in London which are all covered in glass keep cool. I suppose it must be air conditioning."

TL Member

"I think they need to consider the risk of new buildings overheating. There was a programme on Qatar and how they have buildings that shield the sun and have walkways at the bottom so you don't have to have air conditioning. Our architects should be thinking about that."

TL Member

Creating shaded areas the most popular idea for tackling heat

- Across the LES research, planting of trees has consistently enjoyed high levels of support and is seen to have cross-cutting environmental benefits
 - High level of emotional attachment to trees but also recognition that they are key to reducing heat
- Participants also showed spontaneous interest in creation of more pedestrianized areas
 - A couple of participants mentioned water fountains as being effective in giving the impression of feeling cool
- Policies around mapping and changes to TfL too technical for participants to comment on
 - All said they sounded like good ideas but were unable to comment further

"I think increasingly we'll want trees. I was looking at the plane trees along our street the other day and thinking what a good job they do."

Talk London Member

"Creating pedestrian zones is really good. The King's Cross area is lovely. Those little fountain things that shoot up from the ground are great. They cool the air and give you the feeling of being refreshed."

Talk London Member

"I suppose mapping is good but then what do you do about it if you find that you are in the middle of a heat island?"

Talk London Member

Participants thought more information about what to do in a heat wave would be a good thing

- Participants thought there was a need for Londoners to be better informed about what to do in high temperatures
 - E.g. carry water with you, stay out of the sun, wear sun cream, take a shady break etc
- Participants drew a parallel with air quality warnings, and thought that the same channels could be used for messaging around heat
 - Weather forecasters on television/ radio seen as a natural place to be giving out such messages
- But participants also thought there was a danger that this kind of messaging could come across as 'nanny state'
 - If information feels too obvious or is given out in an inappropriate way then there is a risk that people will feel patronised

"I don't think British people are given much advice on how to stay cool."

TL Member

"I think forecasts of exceptional heat, cold or pollution, and advice about what to do is helpful. Not the way the Daily Express does it but something you can trust."

TL Member

"Unless people have dementia you should really know what to do when it's too hot. Nanny state and all that."

TL Member