

Environmental Practices in Europe

**Extract from France's 2021 Environmental Performance
Review**



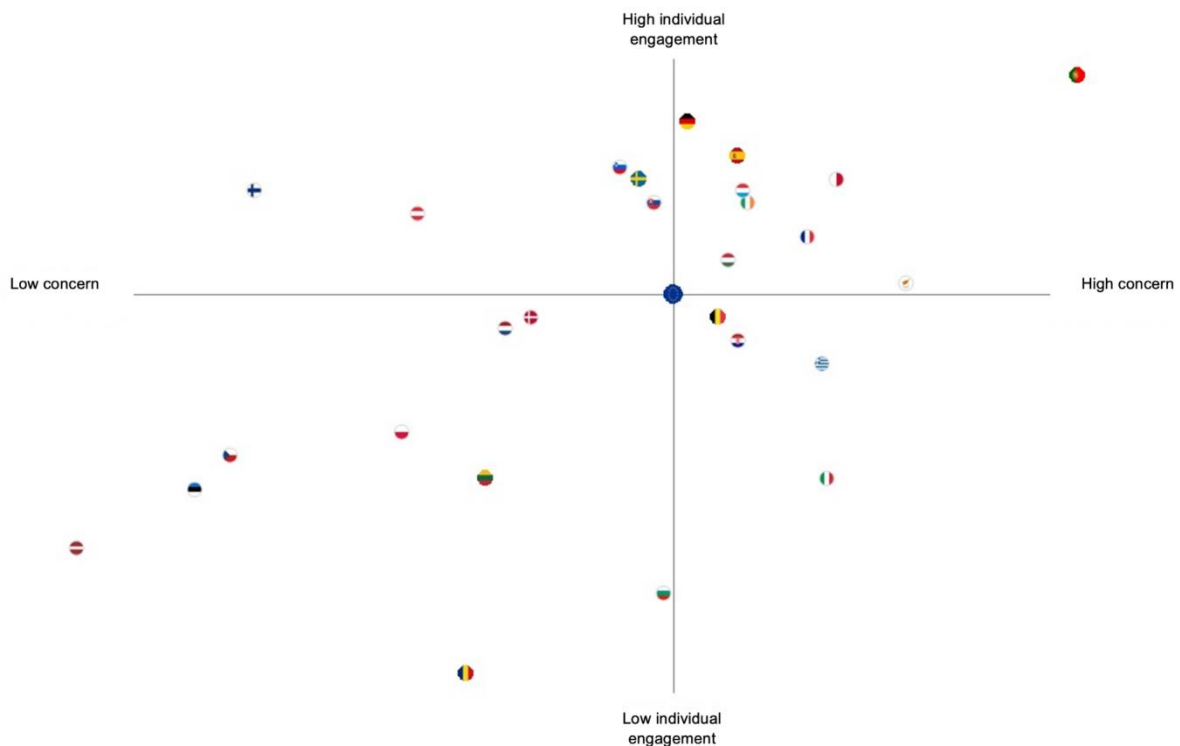
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Opinion polls following trends in environmental concerns over several years indicate that climate change is the main concern for French and European citizens. Faced with this threat, citizens are regularly encouraged to take action themselves to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. Waste sorting and consumption of organic products are more frequent in France than in the rest of the European Union. This is not the case for actions to reduce the environmental impact of travel.

CLIMATE CHANGE: VARIED LEVELS OF CONCERN AND INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPE

The results of a Eurobarometer survey (conducted in 2021 by the European Commission) show that the level of concern of French people about climate change is higher (8.20) than the average observed in Europe (7.93)¹. The same applies to individual involvement: 69% of respondents in France say they contribute to the fight against climate change, compared to 64% for the EU 27 – (Figure 1).

Figure 1: European comparison of levels of concern and commitment to climate change
Difference from the European average (EU 27)



Note: the questions were: “How serious a problem do you think climate change is at this moment? Please use a scale from 1 to 10, with ‘1’ meaning it is “not at all a serious problem” and ‘10’ meaning it is “an extremely serious problem”.” and “Have you personally taken any action to fight climate change over the past six months?”. The axes intersect at the level of the European averages and each country is mapped in relation to the gap between them.

Scope: European Union 27; 26,564 respondents including 1,014 in France.

Source: Eurobarometer, “Climate Change” (EBS 513), April 2021

Portugal stands out in Europe with high levels of concern (8.75) and individual engagement (83%). Concern about climate change is also high in the Mediterranean islands (8.4 in Cyprus and 8.26 in Malta), as well as in Greece and Italy (8.23 and 8.24) but the last two have lower levels of individual engagement. Individual

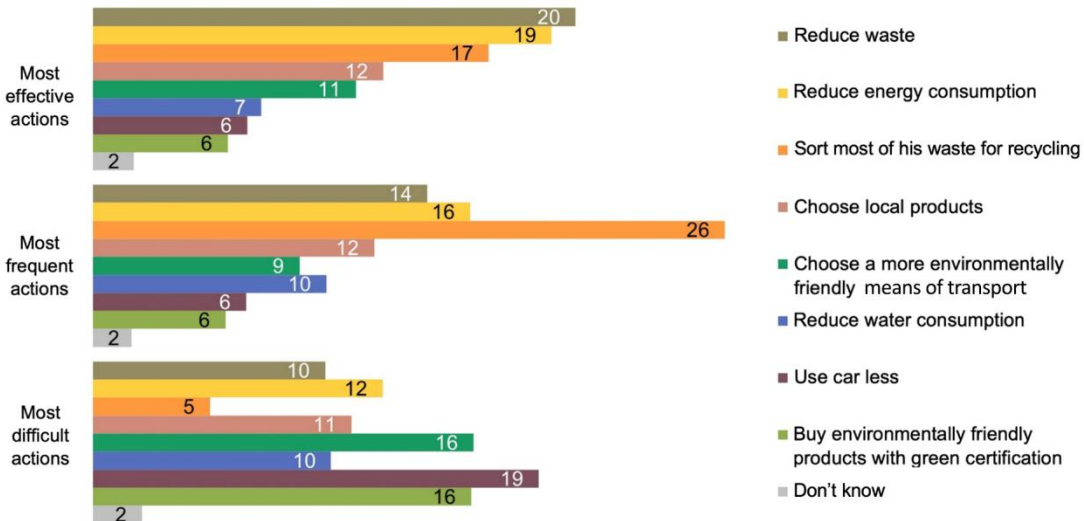
¹ These values correspond to average scores (on a scale of 1 to 10) given by respondents in the context of the question: “How serious a problem do you think climate change is at this moment?”

engagement is frequently high in northern Europe (Germany 79% and Sweden 74%). The Eastern European countries show the lowest levels of concern and individual engagement: more than two thirds of Romanians and more than half of Bulgarians say they do not act personally to combat climate change. Estonia and Latvia have low levels of concern and individual involvement.

THE BURDEN OF DIFFICULTIES WHEN ACTING IN FAVOUR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Waste sorting for recycling was the main environmental practice of French households in 2021 with the wide availability of municipal selective collection services. It is not, however, considered to be the most effective for environmental protection. The French think it would be better to produce less waste or reduce their energy consumption. Logically, actions considered easy, such as waste management are often implemented, while those considered more complicated are rarer, such as using cars less and purchasing eco-labelled products. On the other hand, reducing water consumption is perceived to be quite simple, but is rarely implemented (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Individual actions to protect the environment: presumed frequencies, difficulties and efficiencies in 2021
In %



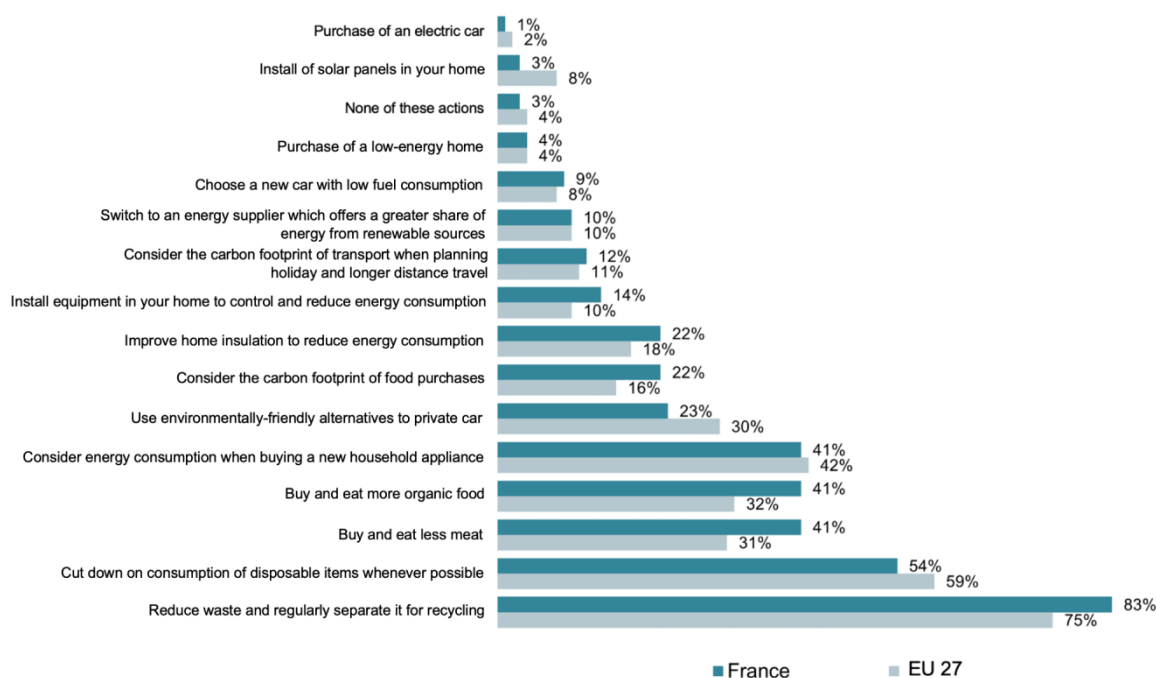
Note: the question was: "To protect the environment, what are the two most effective individual actions? Which ones do you implement the most frequently on a daily basis? Which ones do you find most difficult to implement?"; cumulation of the two answers given.
Scope: Metropolitan France
Source: SDES, Environment component of the 2021 survey on living conditions and aspirations of French people by Credoc

According to the 2021 Eurobarometer, French people are acting slightly more for the environment than the average European. Among the actions that are mentioned more frequently in France than in other EU-27 countries, waste sorting is widely popular (83% compared with 75%). To a lesser extent, 41% of French people say they buy more organic food and consume less meat, which is 10 points higher than the European average (Figure 3).

Fact Sheet: Environmental Practices in Europe

Figure 3: Individual actions in 2021

In %



Note: the question was: "Which of the following actions, if any, apply to you?" The answers "Other" or "Don't know" do not appear here. They represent between 0 and 1% of the responses.

Scope: Metropolitan France and the European Union at 27.

Source: Eurobarometer, "Climate Change" (EBS 513), April 2021

This general observation requires nuance. For other actions such as reducing the use of disposable products, France has the lowest implementation. This should increase with the ban of single-use plastic provided for by the law dated 10 February 2020 to fight waste and for the circular economy.

The French are also lagging behind other Europeans in action regarding mobility. For example, less than a quarter of them say they do not need their car and opt for environmentally friendly means of transport, whereas more than one in two respondents in the Netherlands take this action. The Dutch are five times more likely than the French to say they bought an electric car. There is also a clear difference between France and Sweden when it comes to considering carbon footprint for long-distance journeys at 12% compared with 27%.

Finally, certain practices are less cited in France than in other European Union countries. For example, using a green electricity supplier (10% of French compared with 25% of Belgians) or the installation of solar panels (twelve times less by the French than the Dutch).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *Modes de vie et pratiques environnementales des Français*, SDES, *Théma Analyse*, April 2018, 100 pp.
- *Pratiques environnementales des Français en 2020 : agir à l'échelle individuelle*, SDES, 2021
- *Special Eurobarometer 513: Climate Change*, European Commission, 2021