

The French Population's Environmental Concerns

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



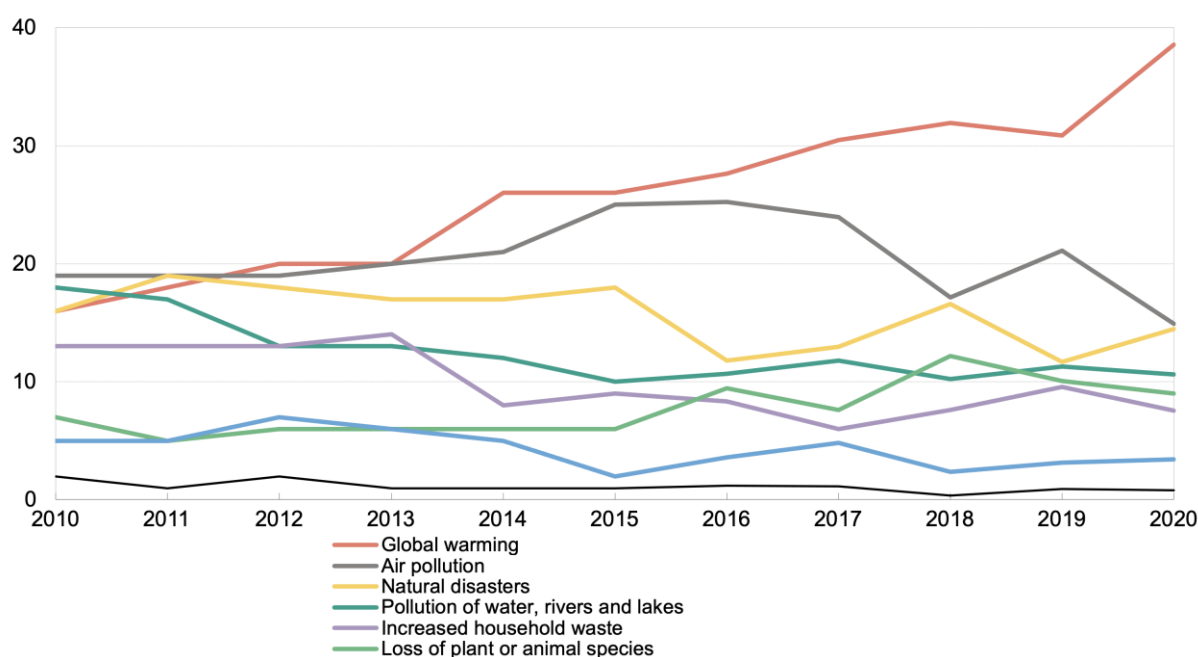
The French Population's Environmental Concerns

Since the 1990s, surveys of the French population have been conducted regularly to understand their perception of environmental issues. The results reflect trends in their concerns but also demonstrates the environmental problems they face and how they perceive associated risks. Global warming remains the French population's main concern, but problems related to noise, air and water pollution are also prevalent.

CLIMATE CHANGE: THE MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN FOR THE FRENCH POPULATION

Between 2010 and 2020, global warming was by far the French population's main environmental concern (+ 23 points). This issue, which hit a record high in 2020, is way ahead of air pollution and natural disasters. Concerns about water pollution and increased household waste have declined over the past decade, whereas concerns for biodiversity increased over the same period (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Changes in environmental concerns for the French population
In %



Note: the question was: "Which of the following issues related to the deterioration of the environment are you most concerned about?" The graph only shows respondents' first choice.

Scope: Metropolitan France.

Source: SDES, Camme survey environment platform, conducted by INSEE, November 2020

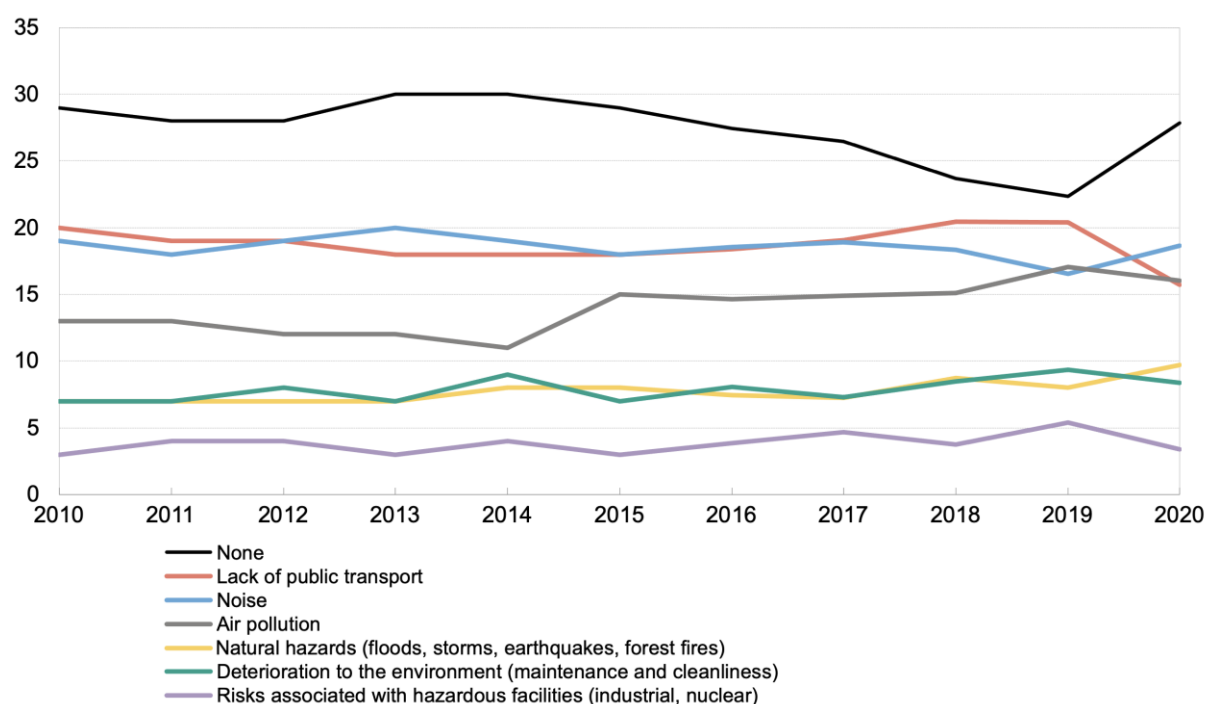
NOISE: HIGHEST ON THE LIST FOR NUISANCES EXPERIENCED BY THE FRENCH NEAR THEIR HOME

When asked about impact on quality of life or the environment in their neighbourhood, 28% of French people say they experience no particular inconvenience. This is the case for the vast majority of French people over 70. For the others, noise pollution generally is not a serious environmental concern, but it is a real issue in their immediate environment, ranking higher than air pollution and the lack of public transport. Natural or technological risks are rarely raised by respondents because the survey concerns their daily living environment (Figure 2).

Fact Sheet: The French Population's Environmental Concerns

Figure 2: Trends in local environmental concerns

In %



Note: the question was: "Which two of the following apply to your neighbourhood the most?" The graph only shows respondents' first choice.
Scope: Metropolitan France.

Source: SDES, Camme survey environment platform, conducted by INSEE, November 2020

Problems related to noise, air pollution and the deterioration of the living environment were mostly listed by respondents living in big metropolitan areas. On the other hand, the lack of public transport was mainly mentioned in rural areas with low population density. Finally, concerns about natural and technological risks were most frequent among the least qualified respondents.

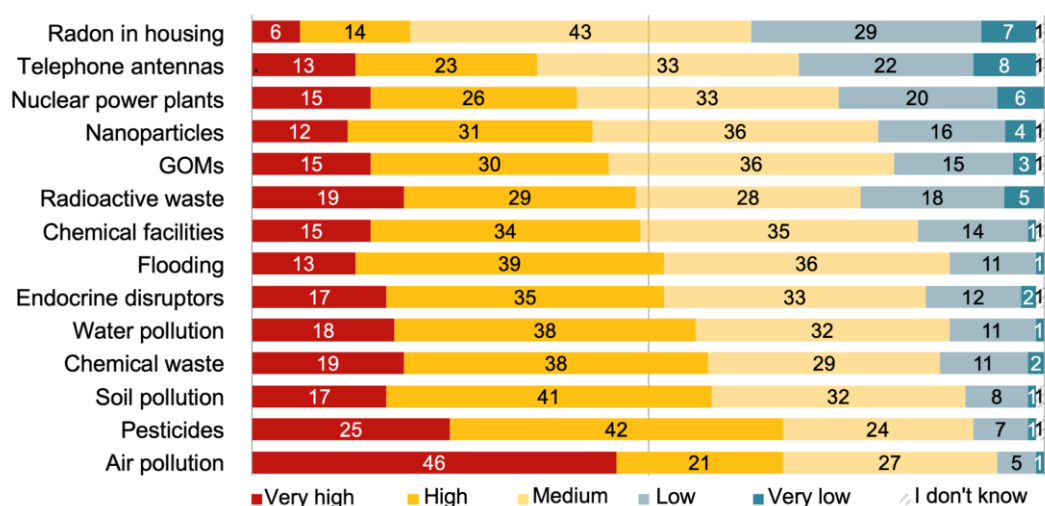
AIR POLLUTION AND PESTICIDES TOP ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

In 2020, two out of three French citizens consider pesticides and air pollution to be a high or very high risk for the French population. As was the case in previous years, respondents rank pollution risks to water and soil as the most threatening. On the other hand, concerns about the nuclear industry have decreased. In 2018, over half the French population considered risks caused by radioactive waste and nuclear power plants to be high or very high. Two years later, this fell by 11 and 13 points respectively. Finally, the perception of risks due to chemical activities (facilities and waste) was still fairly high in 2020 (Figure 3).

Fact Sheet: The French Population's Environmental Concerns

Figure 3: French perceptions of environmental risks in 2020

In %



Note: the question was: "In each of the following areas, do you consider the risks to the French in general to be very high, high, medium, low or almost zero?"; data collected between 17 and 25 November 2020.

Scope: Metropolitan France.

Source: IRSN, 2020 barometer on the perception of risks and safety by the French

The perception of flood risks changed considerably in recent years. Between 2011 and 2020, the proportion of respondents who considered this risk to be high or very high increased from 32% to 52%. In addition, concerns about endocrine disruptors and nanoparticles reached a new high in at the end of 2020. The issue of radon in homes is less well known to the general public and inspires less mistrust.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *Baromètre 2020 sur la perception des risques et de la sécurité par les Français*, IRSN, May 2021
- *Ménages et société*, SDES, 2021