



OUR VOICE ON....

Climate & Health

PEOPLE ST

July 2025

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For permissions, enquiries, or partnership opportunities, please contact:
shabira@peoplestreet.uk

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O1 Introduction

At People Street, we campaign for Design Justice, that means we believe solutions are strongest when they are shaped by the people most affected. That's why we dedicated time and energy to understand how climate issues affect health in East London.

We chose East London, specifically Newham and Tower Hamlets, because these areas face some of the worst air pollution in the city. Pollution is high and rising, in part due to traffic through the Blackwall Tunnel and Silvertown Tunnel, combined with local wind flows and growing congestion. This mix creates a perfect storm for health problems like asthma. In Newham, one in seven people are exposed to nitrogen dioxide above legal limits.

Residents face PM2.5 levels around 35% higher than WHO guidelines, and 7.5% of deaths in Newham are linked to particulate air pollution [University College London](#) [Newham Council](#).

Meanwhile, in Tower Hamlets, deeply deprived yet densely populated and ethnically diverse, the borough has some of the highest rates of premature cardiovascular disease in England [GOV.UK](#).



Photo: May 2025 CANVAS event

We observe that climate and health conversations often lack diversity and inclusion, in every sense. Usually, the voices missing are those already suffering most, the communities living with high pollution, low income, and health burdens.

That's why we focused in East London.

Part of this effort is through CANVAS, a UCL East project bringing East London communities into climate and health dialogue. Through creative workshops and events, it amplifies local lived experience in climate research and solutions.

At People Street, we support and deepen these conversations. We believe that solutions must come from the ground up, led by those experiencing the poorest outcomes. Our vision is that the diverse, rich communities of East London, and beyond, feel engaged and knowledgeable about climate change, starting with climate and health. We aim to nurture local change agents, not just amplify expert voices.

Having listened to people directly, we'll continue this work in our upcoming Roundtable in September. We have a small number of spaces for professionals (especially keen to hear from policy makers), people committed to supporting community-led change.

[Contact us](#) for more information via our website.

02 How we did it

At People Street, we believe the best research is done **with** communities, not on them. That's why we trained and supported a team of Community Researchers, people who live and work in the same neighbourhoods as those we wanted to reach. These researchers speak the languages, understood the cultures, and know the places where people feel comfortable and safe. This approach helps us reach people who are often left out of conversations about climate and health.

Our Community Researchers didn't use online surveys or jargon. Instead, they held casual, friendly conversations in community spaces.

We spoke to 40 people over two weeks, always allowing people to share what mattered most to them. Some had never heard of climate change. Others knew a lot but had never been asked for their views. Everyone was treated as an expert in their own life.

This kind of participative research is at the heart of what we do. It doesn't just collect stories, it builds confidence, trust, and connection. It creates space for people who are rarely heard to take part, ask questions, and feel part of something bigger. It also gives policymakers and professionals insight they can't get from data alone. By doing research this way, we bring the "under-heard" into the centre and help create better, fairer solutions for all.

The research showed us that east London communities want to be a part of the conversation.

We ran a 2-week sprint of community conversations.

Our outreach team spoke to people in community spaces.

We kept the questions simple.

We didn't assume people already knew what climate change was.

Everyone's voice was welcome.

87.5%

Think
Climate
Change is
important

03 Who we spoke to

82.5%

Think there's a link between climate and health.

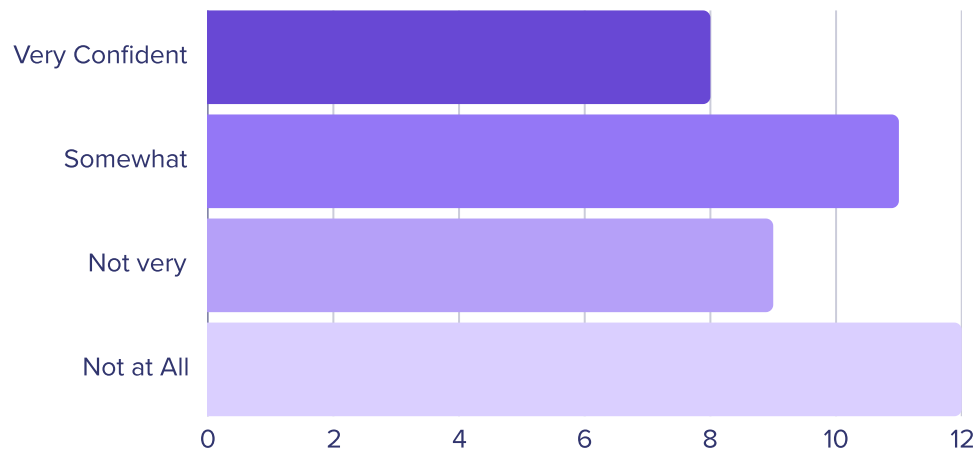
55.5%

Spoke English as a 2nd or 3rd language.

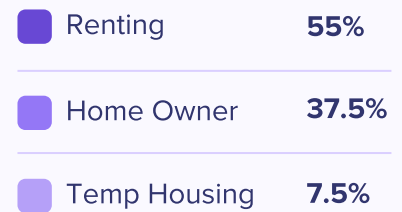
75%

Say they have been affected by climate change.

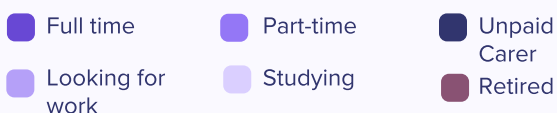
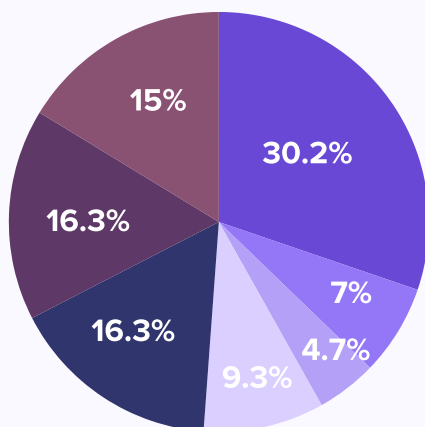
Confidence talking about Climate Change



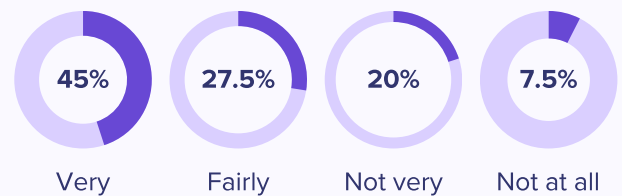
Housing Status



Employment Status



Digital Confidence



Health Status: Living with a disability or long-term condition



42.5%



57.5%

04 What people said...

People were honest, thoughtful, and often emotional. Many shared that they had never been asked about climate change before. Some didn't know what it was, while others had strong opinions but felt left out of the bigger conversations.

What was clear is that people are noticing changes such as hotter weather, more skin problems, worsening asthma, and strange seasons. But they don't always have the words, support, or space to understand what's happening or why it matters.

There was also a deep feeling of unfairness. Many said their communities are already struggling with the cost of living, poor housing, and health problems, so climate change feels like just one more thing. Some talked about how countries they came from are already suffering badly, even though they did the least to cause the problem.

People want more information, more education, and a chance to be part of the solution. They want action, but they want it to be fair, local, and rooted in real life.

I don't know what it is

"What is climate change?"

"It's the first time I'm hearing about climate change."

"I heard people talking about it but I don't have information."

We can feel something's changing

"Weather becoming too hot and unbearable."

"I have asthma and allergies and it has gone worse recently."

"Skin drier, more rashes, hayfever, more sunblock."

"We have seen it raining and few later is sunny – is this climate change?"

It's unfair

"We are suffering from something we never contributed to."

"My country back home is suffering – children are dying from starvation because of climate change."

"Nobody is taking responsibility."

We want to learn more

"We need to have sessions to talk about this."

"Only educated people talk about it in our community."

"We need more information about climate change and how it impacts our environment."

There are other worries too

"I'm worried about cost of living and the war in Gaza – I don't think climate change is priority now."

"Air quality very poor inside and outside the house."

"Pollution increased – so has hayfever."



Photo: June 2025 CANVAS event

05 Final thoughts..

This is not about people not caring.

It's about people being left out of the conversation.

Let's start climate talks that feel real, local, and respectful of people's everyday lives.

Good climate = good health.

Let's build the conversation together.

www.peoplestreet.net

Acknowledgements

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To our Community Researchers and Outreach team, thank you for your continued commitment and dedication.

