

World Athletics: Every Breath Counts Consumer survey results

We surveyed 4,000 citizens across the UK, USA, France and India to learn more about their personal experiences of air pollution, as well as finding out how much they know about the scale of the issue and whether they think governments are going far enough to tackle it.

Research was conducted by 3Gem on behalf of World Athletics. The sample polled 4,000 adults, split equally across the UK, USA, France, and India. Polling took place 17th May – 25th May 2022.

Experiencing air pollution

- Only one in ten people (11%) can imagine a world in which it is unsafe for themselves and their families to go outside and breathe air.
 - This rises to 13% of people in both the UK and USA who can imagine a world in which it is unsafe to go outside and breathe air.
 - Fewer people (9%) in India and France can imagine this.
- Nearly half (45%) of people believe they have experienced asthmatic symptoms as a result of being exposed to air pollution.
 - This is significantly higher among Indians with 69% reporting that they have experienced this.
 - The UK and USA are below the average, with 34% and 35% respectively reporting they they have experienced this.
 - 41% of people reported experiencing this in France.
- Three in ten people (36%) report that they have experienced black mucus when blowing their nose after visiting a city or heavily polluted area.
 - This figure doubles among Indians, with six in ten (63%) reporting that they have experienced this.
 - Fewer than the average have experienced this in the UK (27%), USA (23%), and France (30%).
- Over half (55%) of people would choose not to exercise if the air was unsafe.
 - This rises to 61% among Indians.

- The UK is slightly above average, with 56% of people who would choose not to exercise.
 - The USA and France are slightly below the average, with 50% and 53% of people respectively who would choose not to exercise.
- Over half (53%) of people are scared about air pollution levels affecting their running or ability to exercise outside.
 - Among Indians, this rises to four in five (80%) of people.
 - This is a higher figure in France (55%).
 - The UK and USA are below the average, with 37% and 42% respectively who are scared about air pollution levels affecting their ability to exercise outside.
- People are more concerned about the effects of air pollution in the future than in the present, with almost two-thirds (66%) of people worried about air pollution levels affecting the younger generation's ability to exercise outside.
 - This rises to 86% in India.
 - The UK, USA and France are slightly below the average with 61%, 56%, and 63% respectively.
 - In all four countries, concern about air pollution levels affecting exercise rises when thinking about the younger generation, compared with their own ability to exercise outside.

Awareness of air pollution

- Nearly six in ten people (59%) do not know the extent of poor air quality, stating they were previously unaware that nine out of ten people breathe air that exceeds World Health Organisation recommended limits.
 - Awareness ranged widely between countries, with lowest awareness in the USA (19% of people aware) and highest levels of awareness in India (73% of people aware)
- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of people were previously unaware of the impact of air pollution, stating they did not previously know that there are 4.2 million deaths every year from exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution, or that there are 3.8 million deaths every year from exposure to smoke from dirty cookstoves and fuels.

Climate justice

- There is a wide consensus that air pollution disproportionately affects the poorest people:
 - Seven in ten (69%) think that poor/marginalized people are the hardest hit by climate change and air pollution

- Seven in ten (72%) also believe that air pollution and climate crisis place a disproportionate burden on vulnerable or marginalized communities, the elderly, women and young people.
- Over four-fifths of people (83%) believe that access to clean air is a human right.
 - This rises to 90% in India, and 86% in the UK.
 - The USA and France are slightly below the average, with 77% and 81% of people respectively believing that access to clean air is a human right.

Taking action to tackle air pollution

- The majority of people want to see governments and businesses doing more to tackle air pollution:
 - 65% feel that governments are not taking steps to tackle air pollution seriously.
 - The UK, India and France are above the average with 67%, 67% and 68% respectively.
 - The USA is slightly below the average with 57% feeling that governments are not taking steps to tackle air pollution seriously.
 - Three-quarters of people (75%) want stronger targets and monitoring from governments and businesses to tackle air pollution.
 - This rises to 85% of people in India, and 78% of people in France.
 - The UK and USA are slightly below the average, with 74% and 62% of people respectively.
- When thinking about their government's response to air pollution:
 - 64% are frustrated by the lack of action.
 - This rises to 72% in India and 68% in France.
 - The UK and USA are slightly below the average with 61% and 54% of people respectively.
 - Three-quarters (76%) want strong global coordination and action to address air pollution and accelerate the energy transition.
 - This rises to 86% of people in India and 78% of people in France.
 - The UK matches the global average with 76% of people wanting strong global coordination.
 - The USA is below the average with 65% of people wanting strong global coordination.
 - Three-quarters (75%) want to tackle the air pollution crisis now, instead of being forced to adapt in years to come.
 - This rises to 83% in India and 78% in France.

- The UK matches the global average with 75% of people wanting the tackle the air pollution crisis now.
- The USA is below the average with 64% of people wanting to tackle air pollution now.