



The countryside charity  
Sussex

# CPRE Noise Attitudes Survey 2020

## Report of Findings



## Key findings

Rural respondents, and those who live where they do for quiet surroundings, are consistently more affected by aircraft noise than urban/suburban respondents and those living where they do for other reasons. 74% would not be willing to have planes fly over their home to give respite to those currently overflown. 76% of respondents are more concerned about climate change now than they were 3 years ago and 86% of respondents would be willing to fly less to combat climate change.

## Background

Between January and June 2020, CPRE Sussex conducted an aviation noise attitudes survey as part of the work of the CPRE Network Aviation Group (CPRE NAVG.) There were 821 responses to the survey which was open to participants across England and not limited to Sussex. It is important to note that this period coincided with 'lockdown' in response to the Covid-19 epidemic and during much of this period planes were not flying.

## This report covers key findings from the survey.

To enable analysis of responses, the first five questions asked where people lived; their proximity to an airport; why they had chosen to live there; and what they considered to be the most important global and local environmental issues.

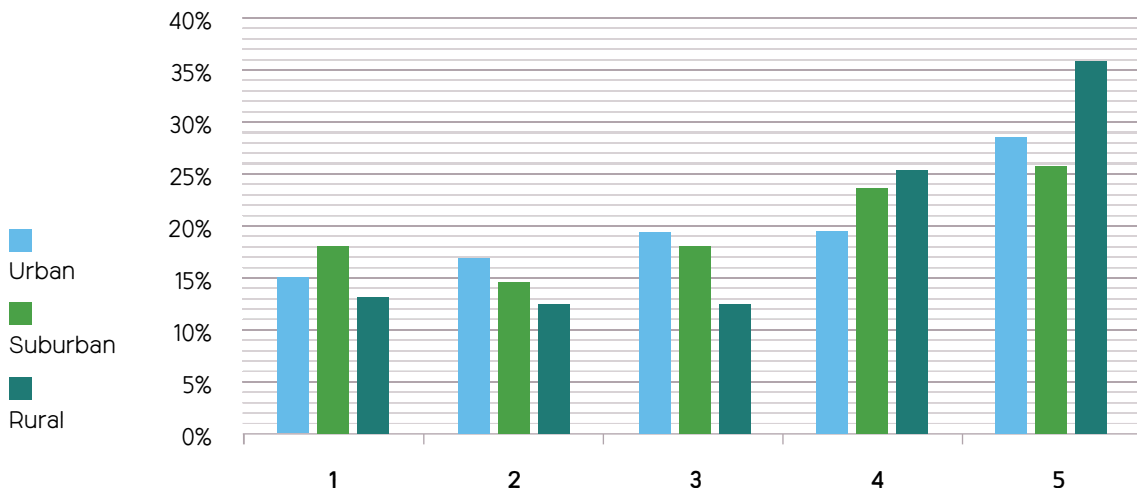
- Over half of respondents (54%) considered that they lived in a rural area (compared to 31% living in a 'suburban' area and 15% in 'urban' areas.)
- Almost half (44%) of respondents live within 30 miles of Gatwick Airport, while a quarter (25%) live within 30 miles of Heathrow Airport.
- A significant number of people (37%) had chosen to live in their location because of 'quiet surroundings' (compared to 14% 'born here' and 18% 'proximity to work.')

### Trends

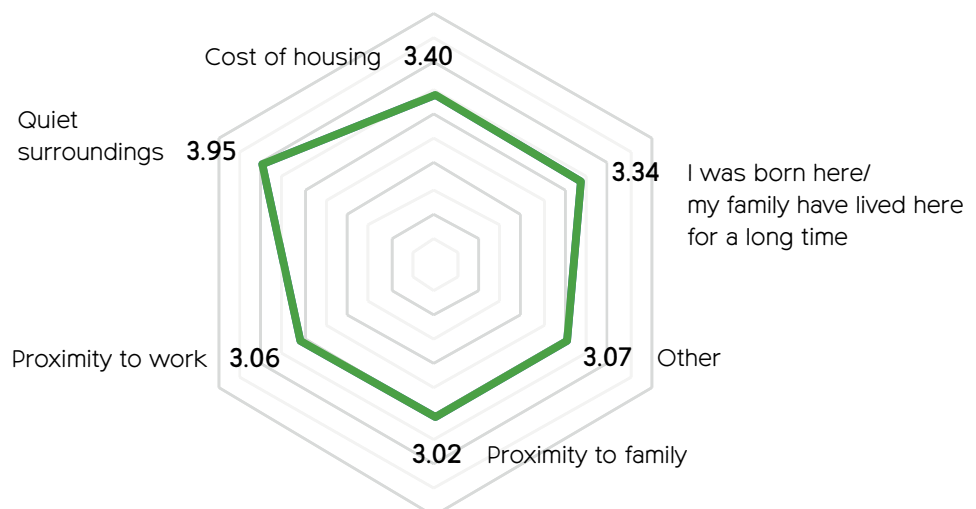
The most obvious trend is that rural respondents, and those who live where they do for quiet surroundings, are consistently more affected by aircraft noise than urban/suburban respondents and those living where they do for other reasons.

For example, when asked in question 6, “On a scale from 1 (not worried at all) to 5 (extremely worried) how concerned are you about the possible impacts aircraft noise could have on your health?”, over half of respondents (55%) stated that they are a 4 or 5 – i.e. worried or extremely worried. When broken down by area, more rural people were ‘extremely worried’ than people living in urban or suburban environments (Chart 1). Similarly, people who had moved to a location for ‘quiet surroundings’ were more worried about the impact of aircraft noise on health (Chart 2).

**Chart 1** Scores given for Q6, broken down by location type

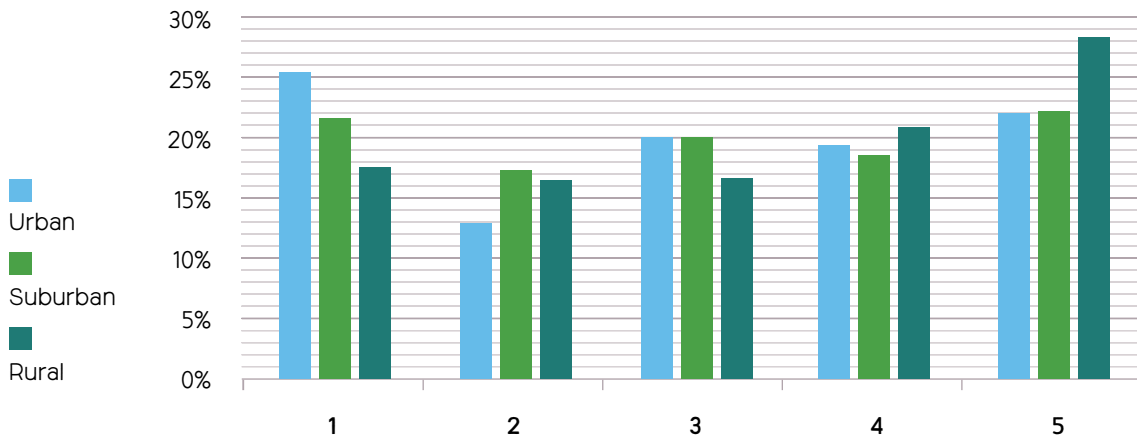


**Chart 2** Average score for Q6, broken down by reason respondent lives where they do

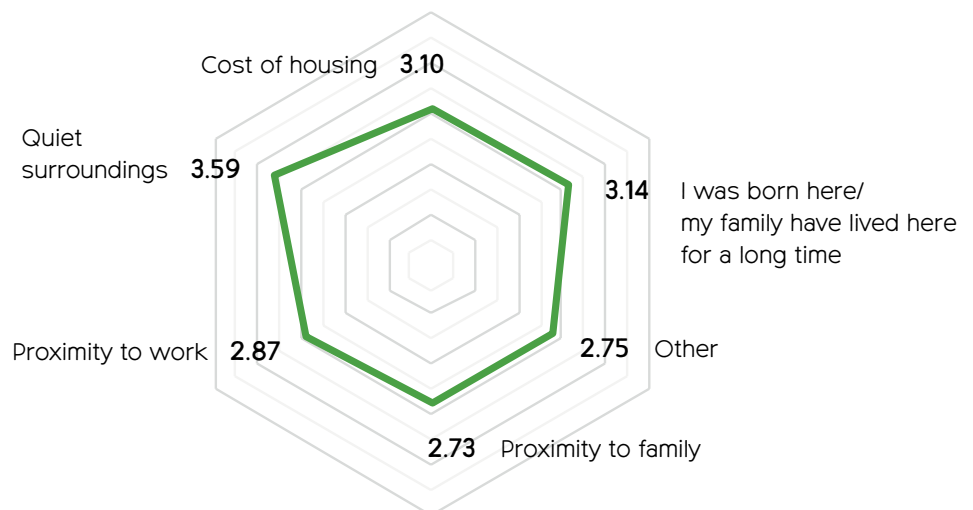


Question 7 asked, “When you consider the last 12 months, on a scale from 1 (not annoyed) to 5 (extremely annoyed), how much did aircraft noise affect you?” Again, people in rural locations and those who had chosen to live in quiet surroundings were most ‘annoyed’ (Charts 3 and 4).

**Chart 3** Scores given for Q7, broken down by location type



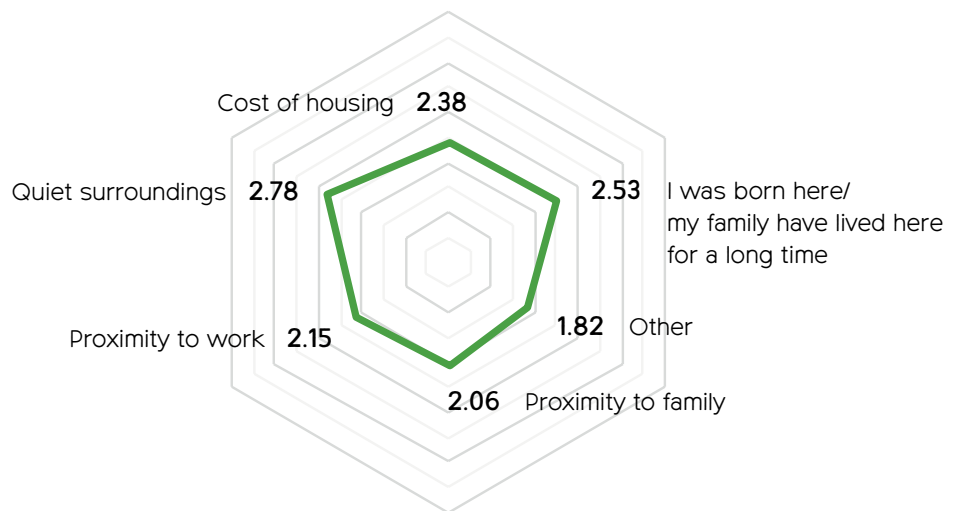
**Chart 4** Scores given for Q7, broken down by reason respondent lives where they do



One positive result from our study was the response to Question 8 “When you consider the last 12 months, on a scale from 1 (not disturbed) to 5 (extremely disturbed), how much did aircraft noise disturb you in your sleep period?”.

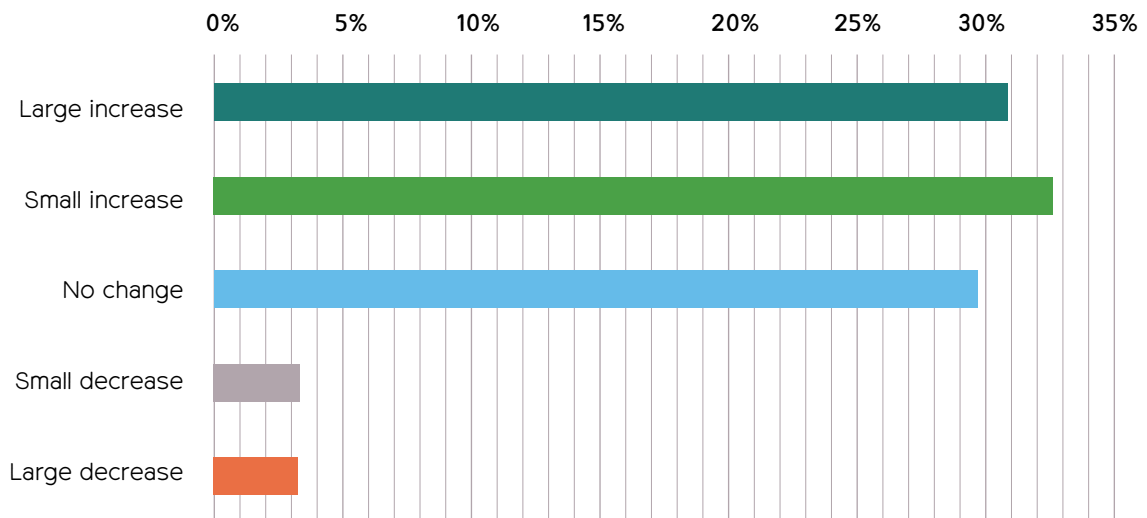
Nearly half of respondents (45%) were not disturbed, although people who had chosen to live in quiet surroundings were slightly more disturbed than other respondents (Chart 5).

**Chart 5** Average score for Q8, broken down by reason respondent lives where they do



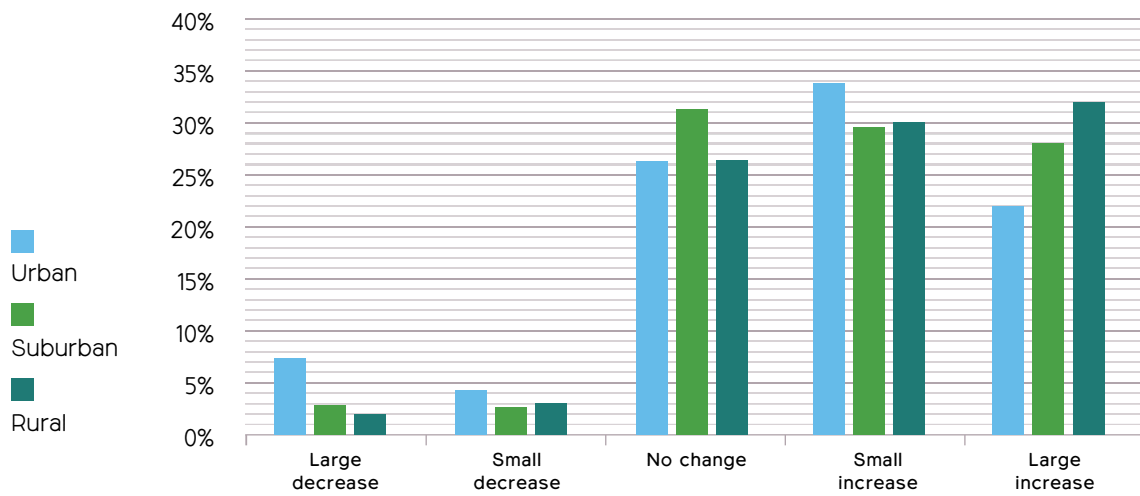
Question 11 asked if participants had experienced an increase or decrease in aircraft noise over the last 2 years. Interestingly, 64% of respondents had experienced an increase in aircraft noise (large or small – Chart 6).

**Chart 6** When you consider the last 2 years, how much of an increase or decrease in aircraft noise did you experience?



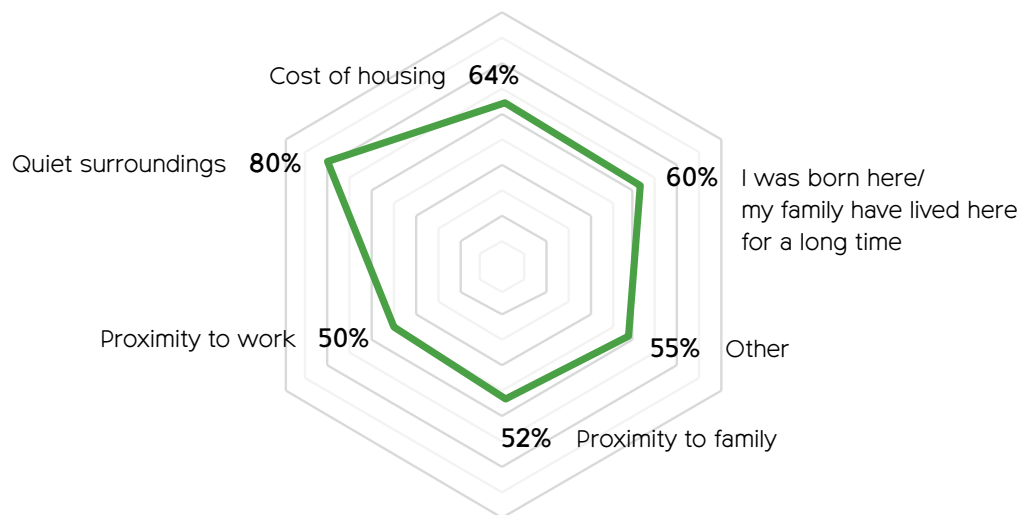
Once broken down by where the respondent lives, it can be seen that rural respondents are more likely to say there's been a large increase in aircraft noise. Urban residents are more than twice as likely to say aircraft noise has decreased compared to suburban or rural residents (12%, 6%, and 5% respectively – Chart 7).

**Chart 7** How much of an increase or decrease in aircraft noise did you experience over the last two years, broken down by where respondent lives

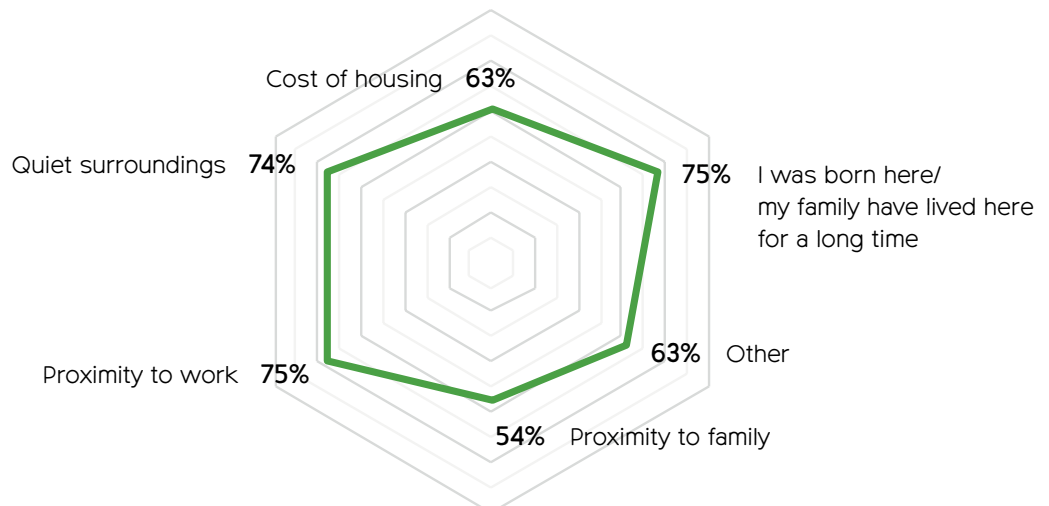


The responses on changes in aircraft noise differ greatly depending on which airport they live near. In general, those living near large airports say aircraft noise has increased in comparison to those not living near a large airport. Additionally, those who live where they do for the quiet surroundings overwhelmingly believe aircraft noise has increased, as opposed to those who live there to be near their family or work. Many of the respondents lived in close proximity to several airports so it's hard to get airport specific results. For example, of the 100 respondents living near London City airport, 96 of them also live near another large airport (Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted, or Luton). That being said, there are still clear differences in how much respondents are affected by aircraft noise depending on where they live (Charts 8, 9 and 10).

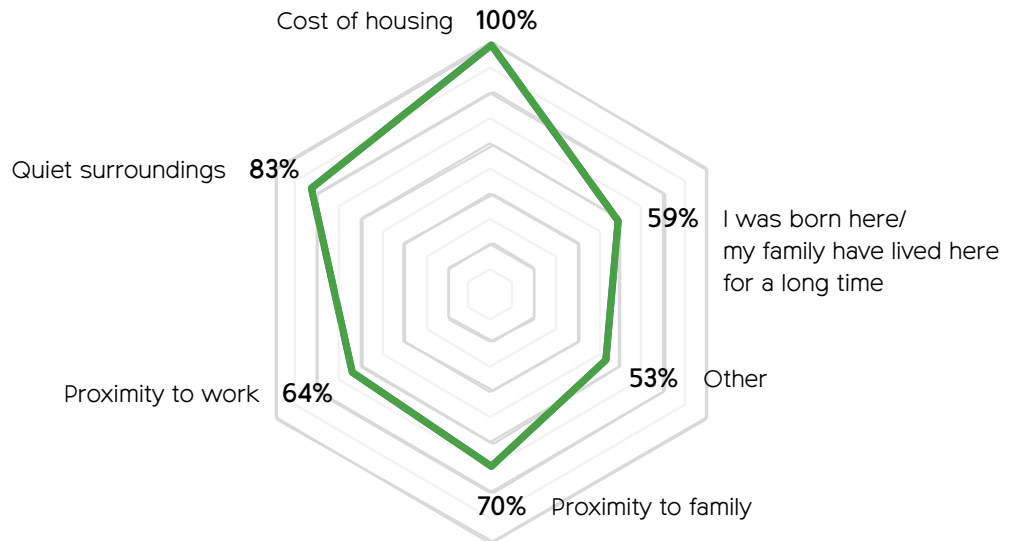
**Chart 8** Respondents living near Gatwick who say aircraft noise has increased, broken down by reason they live where they do



**Chart 9** Respondents living near Heathrow who say aircraft noise has increased, broken down by reason they live where they do



**Chart 10** Respondents living near Luton Airport who say aircraft noise has increased, broken down by reason they live where they do



Questions 12 and 13 asked if aircraft noise stops respondents from opening windows and reduces reduce enjoyment of the outdoors or deters participants from going outdoors. Chart 11 shows how rural respondents are more likely to keep their windows closed or be deterred from going outdoors due to aircraft noise.

**Chart 11** How much does aircraft noise affect daily life?

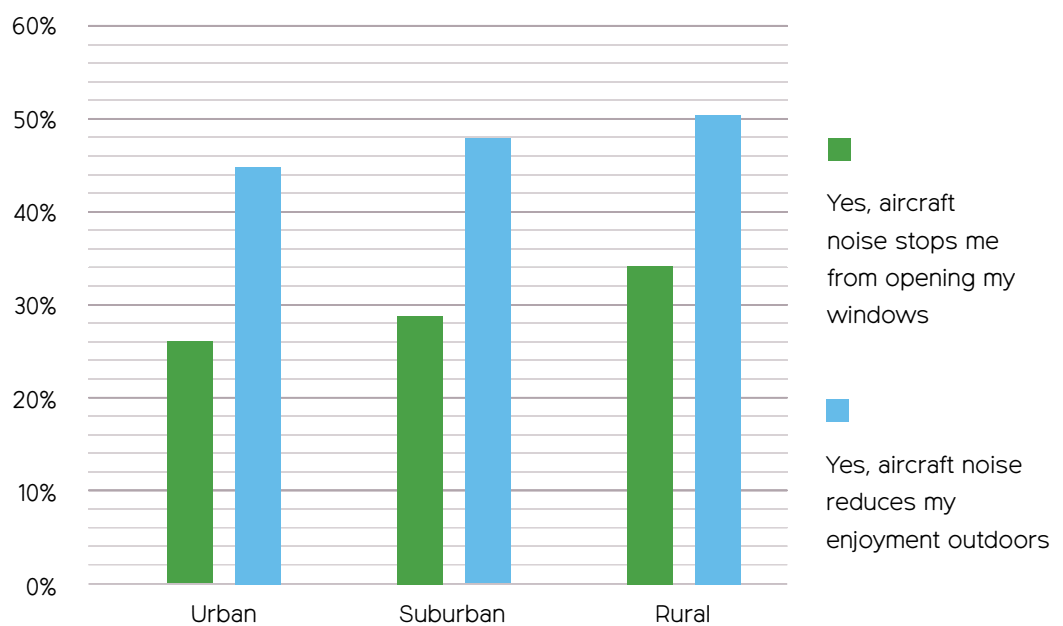
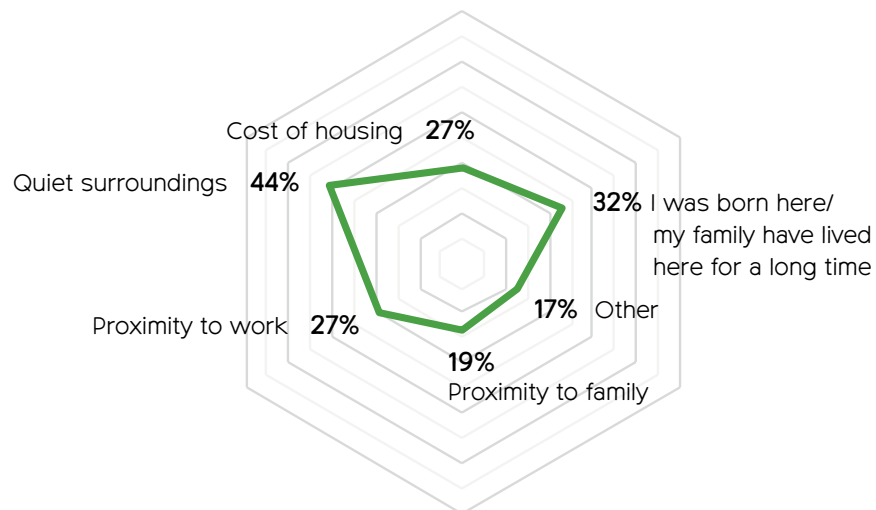


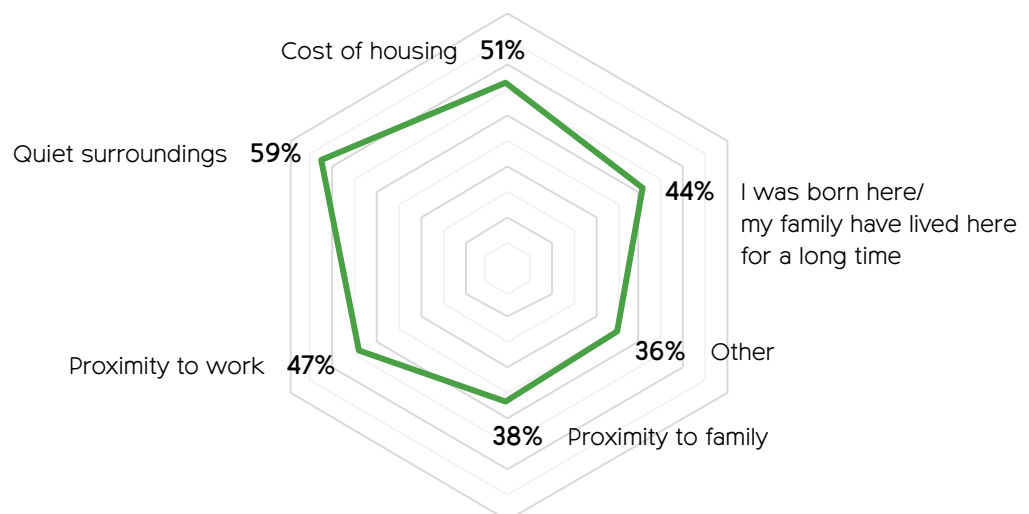


Chart 11 shows that 34% of rural inhabitants say they close their window due to aircraft noise, in comparison to only 29% and 26% of suburban and urban dwellers respectively. Additionally, 50% of rural respondents say their enjoyment outside is reduced due to aircraft noise, in comparison to 48% and 45% of suburban and urban dwellers, respectively. After breaking the two questions down by the reason the respondents live where they do (below), it becomes clear those living where they do for the quiet surroundings are more affected by aircraft noise than those living where they do for other reasons (Charts 12 and 13.)

**Chart 12** Respondents answering yes to Q12, broken down by reason they live where they do

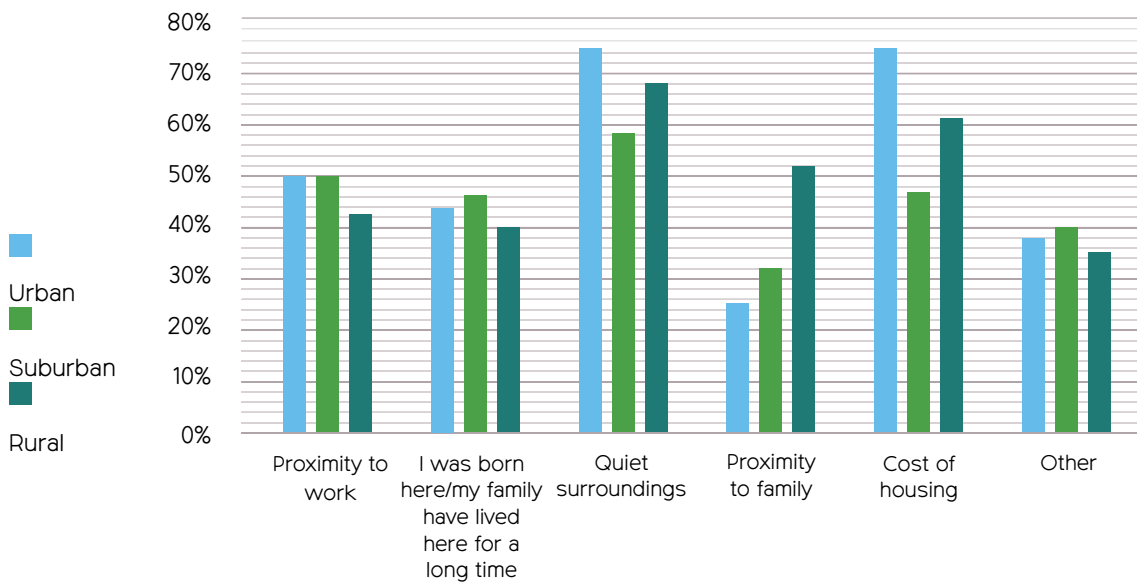


**Chart 13** Respondents answering yes to Q13, broken down by reason they live where they do



The survey showed that only 24% of respondents would consider moving house due to aircraft noise. Urban and suburban respondents (29% and 28%) were more likely to agree with this statement compared to rural respondents (20%). However, more can be learnt from dividing the responses to this question by the reason the respondent lives where they do. Two thirds (66%) of respondents who live where they do for a quiet surrounding would consider moving house due to aircraft noise. Whereas this applies to only 40% of respondents who live where they do to be near family (Chart 14.)

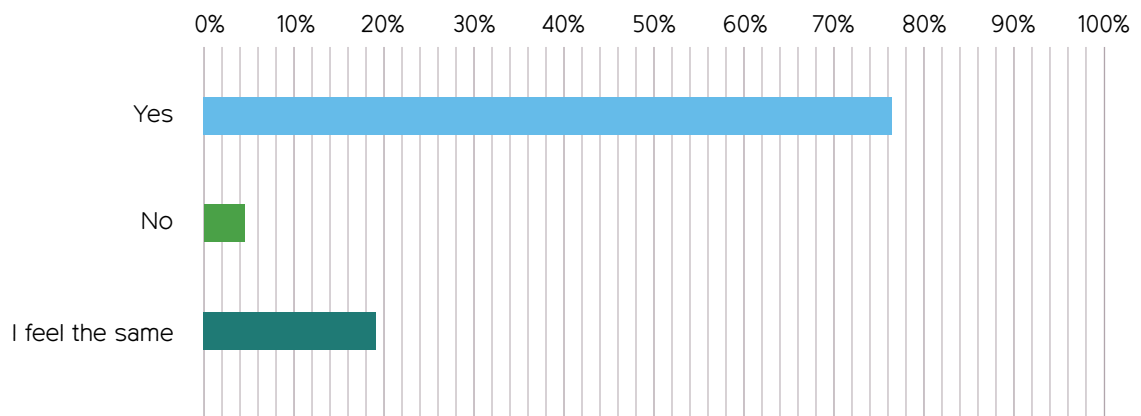
**Chart 14** Would aircraft noise cause you to consider moving house?  
Broken down by reason they live where they do



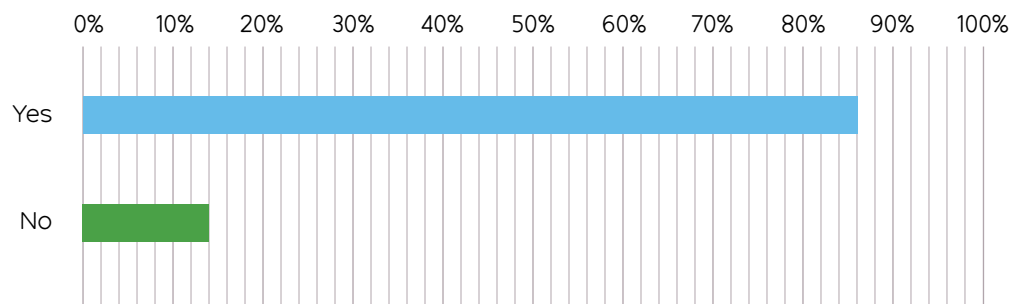
## Climate Change

The survey showed that 76% of respondents are more concerned about climate change now than they were 3 years ago (Chart 15) and that 86% of respondents would be willing to fly less to combat climate change (Chart 16).

**Chart 15** Are you more concerned now about climate change than you were 3 years ago?



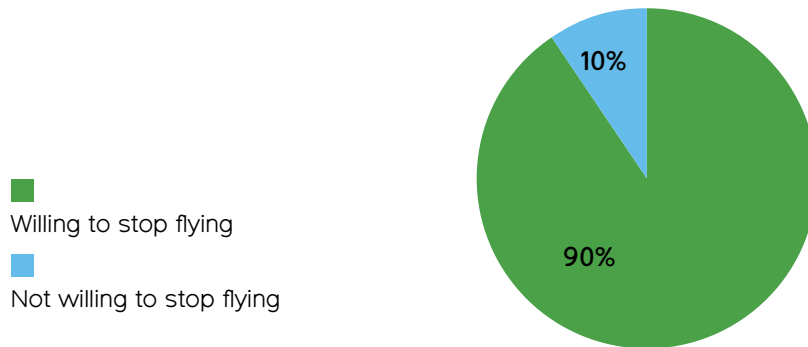
**Chart 16** Would you be willing to fly less to combat climate change?



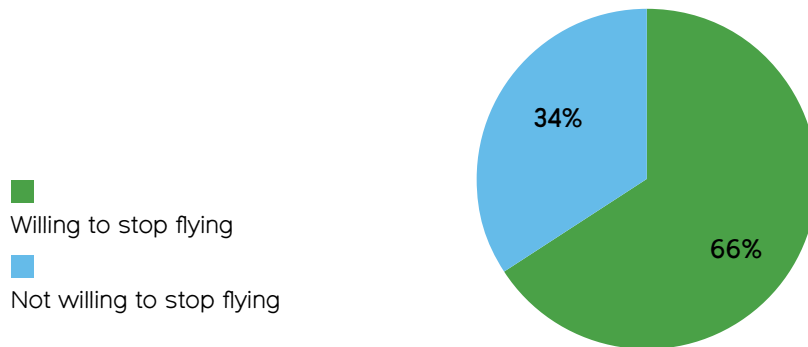
The pie charts below show how respondent's perception of climate change affects their willingness to fly.

As expected, if you think climate change is a significant global issue, you're much more likely to stop flying in order to combat climate change (90% vs 66%)

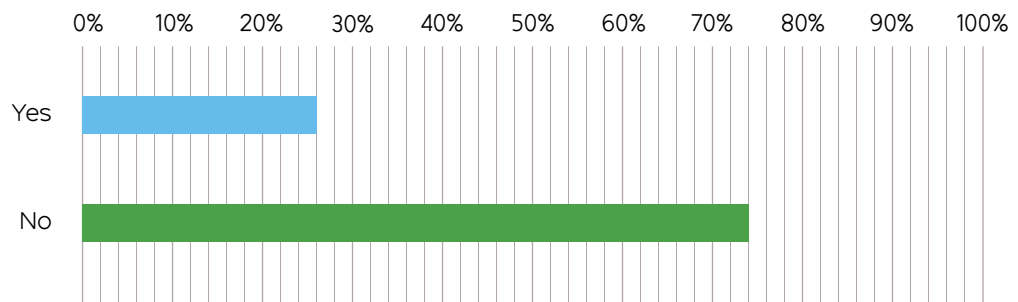
**Chart 17** Those who think climate change is a significant global issue



**Chart 18** Those who think climate change isn't a significant global issue

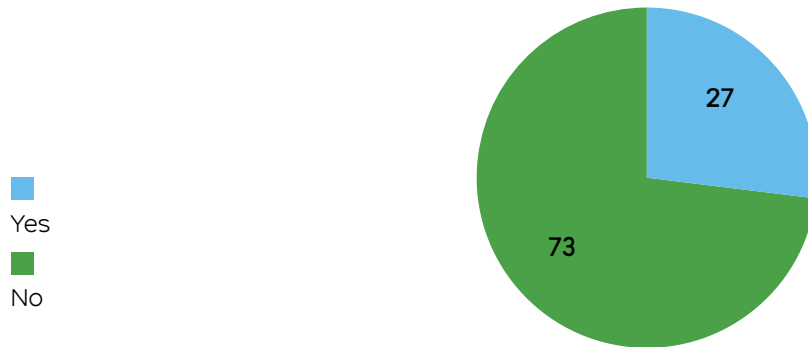


**Chart 19** Q21 Are you willing to have planes fly over your home to give respite to those currently overflowed?

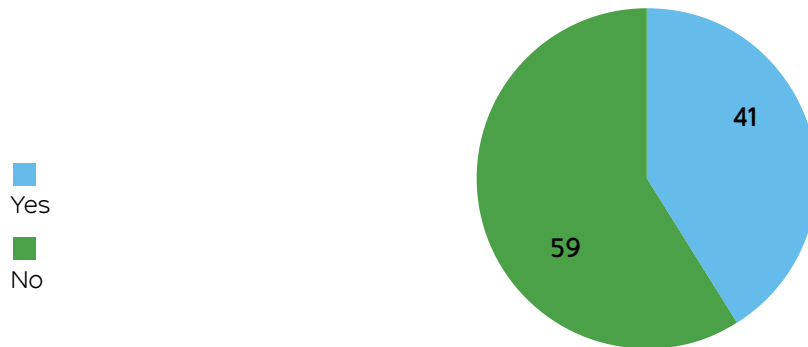


By removing people who are already overflowed and then breaking down the response by the area they live in (rural, suburban, or urban), it becomes clear that the trend of rural responses being less keen on aviation noise applies here too (Charts 20, 21 and 22).

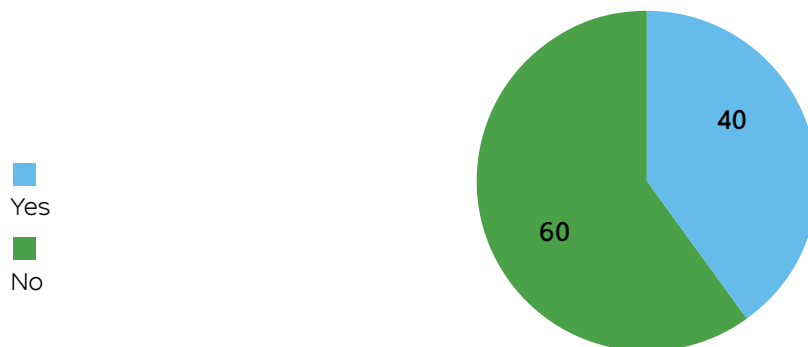
**Chart 20** Rural (319 valid responses)



**Chart 21** Suburban (175 valid responses)



**Chart 22** Urban (85 valid responses)



## Conclusions

The survey revealed clear differences in attitudes to aircraft noise between urban, suburban and rural residents. Rural respondents, and those who live where they do for quiet surroundings, are consistently more affected by aircraft noise than urban/suburban respondents and those living where they do for other reasons. Rural residents reported increases in aircraft noise and consequential impacts of having to keep windows closed or a reduction in enjoyment when outdoors. The strength of feelings about aircraft noise is reflected by 74% of respondents not being willing to have planes fly over their home to give respite to those currently overflowed.

Climate change is now widely recognised as an urgent global issue. Reflecting this, 76% of respondents are more concerned about climate change now than they were 3 years ago. However, the survey suggests that some people need further convincing before accepting that climate change is a global emergency.

86% of respondents would be willing to fly less to combat climate change. There could still, however, be some way to go to ensure that actions match intentions. The dramatic reduction in flights during the Covid-19 pandemic may have led to considerable pent-up demand for foreign holidays.

If flights return to pre-pandemic levels when Covid-19 is under control, the increase in aircraft noise could be keenly felt. People have experienced quieter skies, so are likely to be more sensitive to future aircraft noise. This is particularly more likely in rural areas where there is less background noise. This, in addition to the impact of flights on climate change, is a further factor to consider for future airport planning.

CPRE Sussex  
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