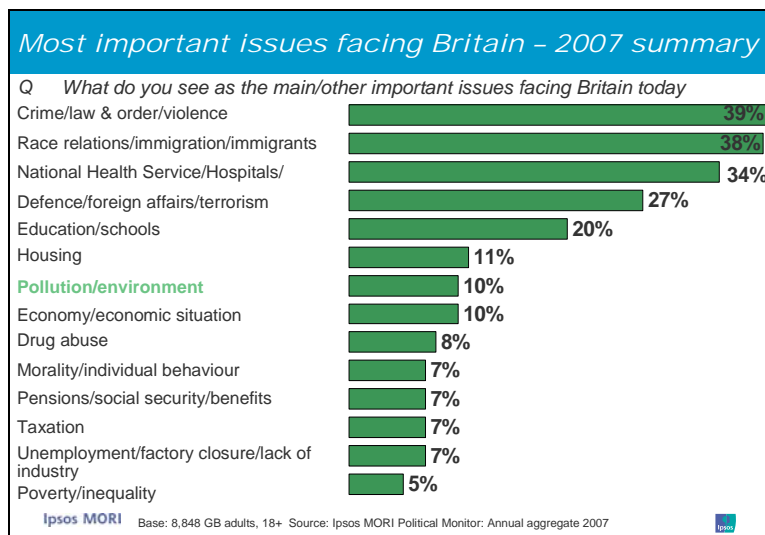


## The Environment: How important is it really to the public?

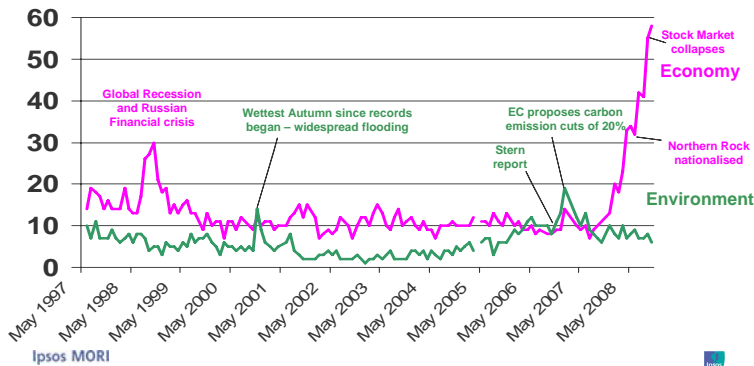
For those working closely on environmental issues it is difficult to get some perspective on how important they are to the public. Aggregated data from the Ipsos MORI Political Monitor for 2007 shows that while the environment is relatively important to the public it is still a secondary issue (identified by only 10% as a key-issue facing the country). It is of less importance than the "big four" of crime (39%), immigration/race relations (38%), health (34%) and defence/terrorism (27%).



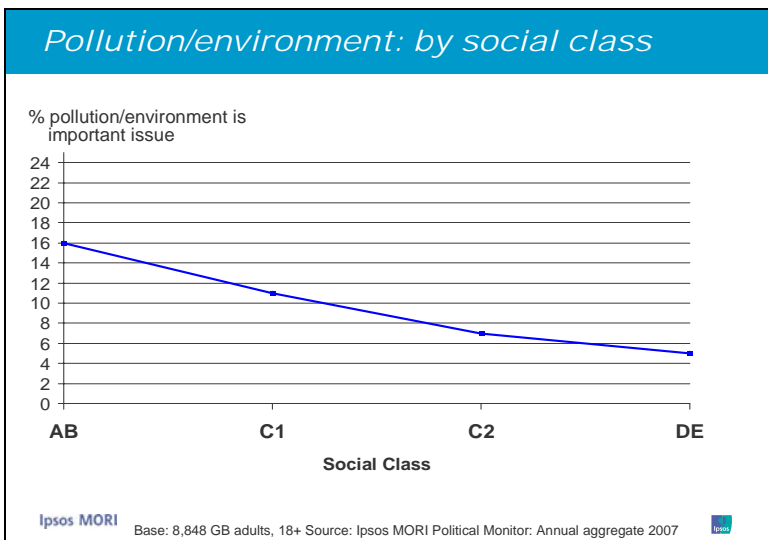
Analysis of how responses varied across 2007 demonstrates that the environment is subject to periods of greater recognition – in January 2007, for example, as many as 19% identified it as a key issue. However, it has not enjoyed the surge in public concern experienced by other issues. For example, while concerns about the economy were actually on a par with the environment across 2007 as a whole, the trend for 2008 shows the extent to which this issue has rocketed up the political agenda. By October 2008, 58% identified the economy as a key issue – the top response - compared to 6% for the environment.

*Economy vs. environment*

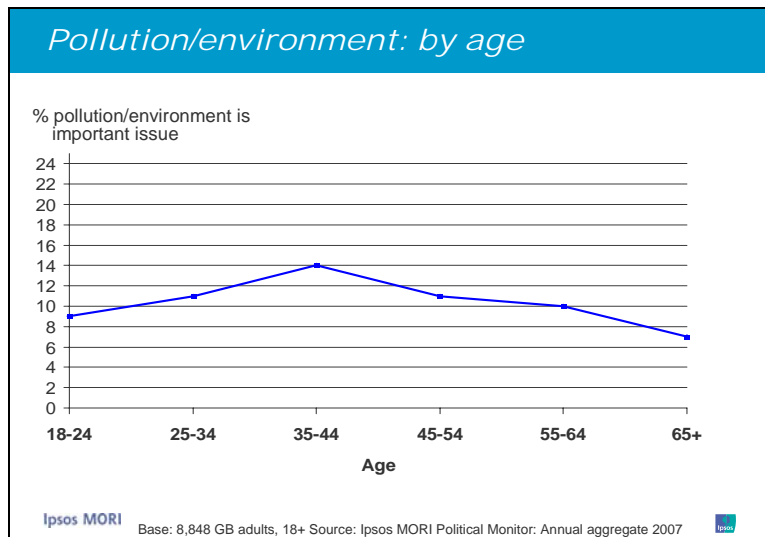
Q What do you see as the main/other important issues facing Britain today?



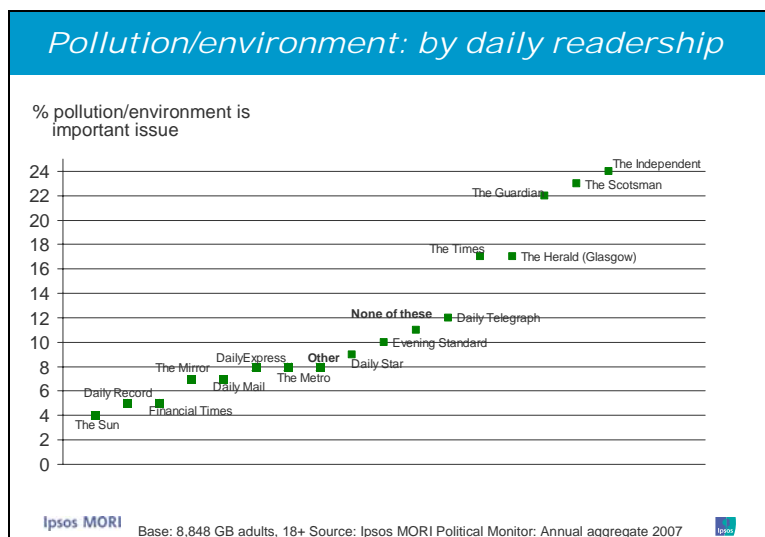
The aggregated data from 2007 also shows how recognition of the environment as a key issue varies across the public. For example, there is a clear gradient by social class, with 16% of those in social class AB identifying the environment compared to 5% in social class DE.



There is less of a variation by age, although those aged 35-44 are most likely to identify the environment (14%), in contrast to those aged 65+ (7%). Furthermore, the data casts doubts on claims that younger age groups are more concerned about the environment – only 9% of those aged 18-24 identify the environment as a key issue facing the country.



One of the key variations is actually in relation to newspaper readership. It is not clear whether the relationship is causal, or – if it is – which factor is driving which (i.e. do people gain an opinion by reading a paper or buy a paper based on their opinion). However, there is a substantial variation in the proportion of broadsheet readers citing the environment as a key issue facing the country compared to the mid market and tabloid press. This is particularly true of readers of The Independent (24%) and The Guardian (22%) compared to readers of The Sun (4%) and The Mirror (7%).



In conclusion, the environment remains a secondary issue overall for the public, with up to around 10% naming it as an issue. In addition the profile of the issue varies

widely in terms of demographic group. There is still a long way to go to convince many of the urgency of the environmental agenda.