

Box 9.2 Comparing perceptions of risk: experts vs. the public

US Environment Protection Agency Scientific Advisory Board Unranked Priorities	US Public Opinion Poll March 1990 % Saying 'very serious'	UK Public Opinion Poll May 1989 % Saying 'very worried'
Ecological risks		
Climate change	48	44
Ozone layer	60	56
Habitat change	42	45
Biodiversity loss	n.a.	45
Health risks		
Criteria pollutants ^a	56	34-40
Toxic air pollutants ^b	50	33
Radon	17	n.a.
Indoor air pollution	22	n.a.
Drinking water	46	41
Pesticides	52	46
Issues regarded by the public as important but not by the experts		
Oil spills	60	53
Hazardous waste sites	66	n.a.
Industrial water pollution	63	n.a.
Nuclear accidents	60	n.a.
Industrial pollution accidents	58	64
Radioactive waste	58	58
Leaking underground storage tanks	54	n.a.
Contaminated bathing water	n.a.	59

Sources: UK Department of the Environment (1991); *Science* (1990).