

YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION RESEARCH REPORT 2022-2023



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Youth Voices



In conclusive feedback on climate action from nearly 10,000 students aged 11 – 18 years, clear findings stood out:

- Students are involved and willing to do more, but ask for encouragement and structural change to enable sustainable actions.
- Schools are providing the critical link to trusted information and awareness about climate change, and have a perceived role in support of climate solutions.
- Young people do not all have the same opportunity to participate, requiring appreciation of starting points to nurture their sense of agency and help overcome barriers.

Young people recognised that power to act on climate change resides with everyone. However, tackling gaps in current climate action cannot, they said, be the responsibility of individuals working alone.

There was an overwhelming message for decisive action from those in power, leading businesses and communities in the right choices. Reinforcing findings from adult surveys, they wanted leaders to get serious about making solutions part of their daily lives.

In feedback about using this report, young people wanted the point of view of students to be widely shared, so that they are represented, and their views acted upon.

Youth have given a clear call to action. Student feedback from across the country informs steps to motivate further climate action, and in support of young people's full participation in the societal transition that they recognise must take place towards greater sustainability.



My school has made efforts to teach us and show us the effects of climate change. I can say that they've opened my eyes to what's happening and inspired me to think about my actions.



Young people have lost faith in the government to keep their promises. We need to be shown the progress they are making to reach the targets they have promised.

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Let us know...

How you could support InterClimate Network to reach new levels

We are constantly seeking to engage, inspire and educate more young adults in climate change. If you are a business or potential funder and are interested in learning about how you could support us, please get in touch: info@interclimate.org

How this report supports your work

We would love to hear your thoughts and responses to this report, and how you are making use of what we have learned so far. Please contact us at info@interclimate.org and/or tweet us [@InterClimate](https://twitter.com/InterClimate).

If you are a school and would like to run the Climate Action Survey, or participate in our other activities, please get in touch: schools@interclimate.org

Key Findings

InterClimate Network's online Climate Action Survey saw nearly 10,000 respondents aged 11 to 18 share information about their current climate action, the barriers preventing greater action, as well as their motivations for doing more (April 2022 to January 2023).

Young people are concerned and willing to act

11–18-year-old students were concerned about climate change, and many believed that every individual has the power to effect change, young people included. A striking finding was the extent of willingness in this age group to either start action if not previously engaged, or to become more involved:



8 in 10

were concerned about climate change.



7 in 10

were already taking some form of climate action with a clear top three: Energy reduction; Reducing use, reusing and recycling; Transport alternatives.



Over 1 in 2

said they would start action in key areas: Energy reduction; Reducing use, reusing and recycling; Transport alternatives; Helping protect and improve nature.



Climate actions are not consistent

Whilst there was clear concern and intent to act, significant contrasts emerged between action at home and involvement in school and community. There were also marked variations in young people's interest in different areas of action:



9 in 10

students who were reducing use, reusing and recycling were doing so at home, dropping to

4 in 10 at school

3 in 10 when out



More than 9 in 10

had not been involved in climate strikes and campaigning.

8 in 10

were not willing to start taking part in strikes or campaigning.



3 in 4

said they had not looked to: help protect and improve nature; make their diets more environmentally friendly; influence family and friends.



6 in 10

did not want to make changes to their diet or think about the impact of what they buy and use.

Schools have a significant role in climate change engagement

Students consistently highlighted that schools provided the critical link to trusted information and awareness about climate change. Over 40% would like to get more involved in tangible climate action in their school, however:



7 in 10

had limited time devoted to action.



7 in 10

did not regularly spend time with nature or learning through nature.



6 in 10

did not feel part of decisions or discuss solutions in class.



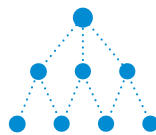
Greater leadership is essential to deliver change

Students believed that Government has both the responsibility and the most power to address climate change. Open comments and responses clearly showed:



7 in 10

believed Government has most influence over the course of climate change.



Students wanted greater structural changes

calling for more ambition, leadership, policy improvements and action from the Government.



Inaction from leaders has wider repercussions.

Reflections about the negative impact of inadequate action by Government included concern that it prevents businesses and individuals from changing, and respondents showed frustration that we are not getting on with it.

Climate action needs to be nurtured

There were striking differences in respondents' engagement in climate action reflective of:



A supportive community

There was a direct correlation between families already positively changing behaviours and talking about climate change and greater student action. Beyond the home, inspiration and empowerment to act came when those around them engaged in action and conversations, from individual teachers through to global activists – naming Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough as key influencers.



Students' sense of agency

Those already taking climate action had a stronger belief about their personal impact on climate change and the extent to which climate change will influence their futures. This link also coincided with a greater concern and higher placing for the environment in their list of day-to-day priorities.



Barriers faced

Students reported: not having the right infrastructure and opportunities including a lack of time and access, such as safe transport options; insufficient knowledge about what to do; and motivational barriers such as a lack of interest in certain actions or liking their meat-based diet too much to change.

Call to Action

These 5 steps are underpinned by what 11- to 18-year-olds told us would motivate them to engage in further climate action. They outline what you can do to support change: some are easy to start, others must become easier so that climate actions are accessible to everyone.



1 Talk about action

- Build on the trust in teachers, families, charities or well-known figures to unlock more climate conversations, even if they seem difficult.¹
- Share ideas and practical sustainable approaches so that taking climate action becomes the new norm in school and the community as well as at home.



2 Take views seriously

- Increase 11–18-year-olds' say in decisions that directly affect them: provide opportunities to be part of decision-making groups, support them to influence rules and targets, give them a say in what is bought and used.
- Empower students by building on their capacity for generating low-cost ideas to create inclusive campaigns for both young people and adults, strengthening impact as a result.



3 Be positive

- Think of the stepping-stones to change, assuring young people that getting part way, for example having one meat-free day, is better than no action.
- Harness co-benefits that tie in with young people's top priorities such as health and fitness or prioritising student wellbeing through nature.
- Encourage good choices through rewards and competitions.
- Create a good vibe by regularly showing how the many small changes add up to a sustainability 'revolution.'



4 Embed climate action in school

- Ask students, staff and parents/governors to co-create a school environmental policy, or set new targets within an existing policy.
- Integrate learning about solutions across the curriculum, from computer modelling of impact to sharing views about positive changes with language exchange students.
- Allow time to generate and systematically act on a 'What's Next?' list, drawing on behaviour change thinking² and external expertise available in every key area of climate action.



5 Change the environment

- Install more equipment and create environments that make good choices easier in daily life.
- Ensure changes take physical and social access into account so they are accessible for those with disabilities, and consider circumstances and affordability.

1. There are lots of available resources including: [InterClimate Network](#), [I-CAN Project](#), [ThoughtBox Education](#).

2. For support see our [Climate Action Toolkit](#)

1

Introducing the Climate Action Survey

“

Wow, this is fantastic!
There is so much
here that we can use.

Teacher





About InterClimate Network

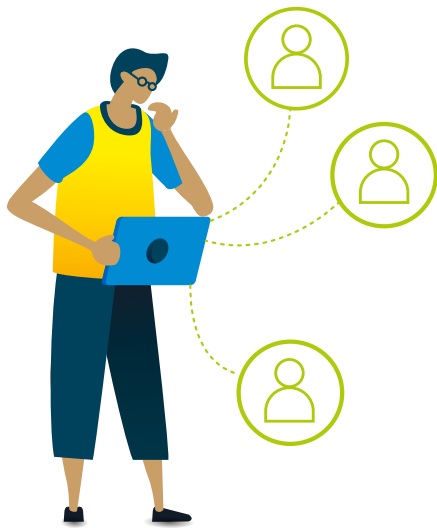
InterClimate Network (ICN) engages young people to effect meaningful change as part of our combined responsibility to reduce emissions. We have a mission to inspire young people in the UK to become leaders and advocates for action on climate change. We do this by working collaboratively to deliver programmes that engage young people (primarily aged 11 to 18) with the complexities of climate change, inspire and encourage their climate action, and promote their voices in their own sustainable future.

www.interclimate.org

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ICN Project team

Cecily Etherington (project lead), Isla Graves, Michila Critchley, Rachel Shepherd, trustee Ben Carroll, and UCL MSc Behaviour Change student Makayla Murphy.



Background

Without immediate and sustained changes to people's behaviours the target of net zero by 2050 is unachievable.³ Such behaviour change requires recognition that people can act both directly to reduce emissions – like driving less – but, equally, have the ability to shape wider structural change.

An increasing number of organisations are tracking public attitudes and behavioural trends on community action, so identifying how people can participate in transformation in their multiple roles as citizens, consumers, employees, business leaders, policymakers.⁴

Yet, gaps exist. Although those under 18 have the most to lose from the legacy of decisions being made now, their voices are not prominent. Research is frequently limited to those over 18, and youth voices often prove elusive in local decision-making forums. Consequently, there is a limited amount of knowledge around how young people engage with such a critical issue.

Our work seeks to close this gap. Informed by behaviour-change approaches, ICN's online Climate Action Survey is designed for use by 11- to 18-year-old students across the UK.

3. Analysis includes; Committee on Climate Change (www.theccc.org.uk); The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC — www.ipcc.org)

4. Includes: [Climate Outreach](http://www.climateoutreach.org), Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (cast.ac.uk - [The Centre for Climate and Social Transformations](http://www.climateandsocialtransformations.org))

5. <http://www.behaviourchangewheel.com>

Roll out of the survey

Our approaches are rooted in empowerment and student agency. Eco-groups or other lead students roll out the online survey across their school or college. ICN analyses the data and provides a bespoke report for each school, carefully designed to inform a way for lead students to inspire and enable peers to undertake climate action.

Apply insights to support change

For ICN, and this initiative, it is critical that understanding should inform action. Follow-up workshops and activities enable participating groups to use the survey insights to create campaigns that help motivate climate action. The activities:

- apply behaviour change approaches, notably based on the Behaviour Change Wheel.⁵
- can be done in stages to fit with limited group time.
- are intended for use multiple times, to be applied to every idea for climate action.

We offer opportunities for student feedback at each stage of development to make the resources as accessible as possible.

See our resources at:
[Climate Action Toolkit - InterClimate Network.](http://www.interclimate.org)

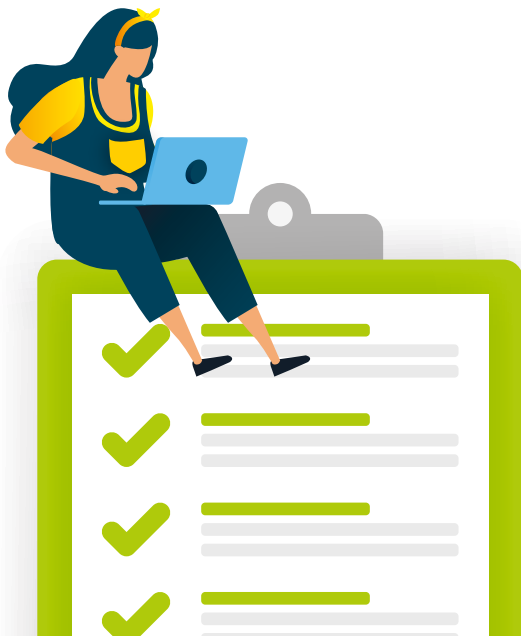
Impact

Data can be brought together from individual schools and analysed on a regional and national level.

See this Gloucestershire-wide youth survey and presentation of findings to county council: interclimate.org/gloucestershire-climate-change

Through this national report, our goal is to provide a depth of understanding of young people's climate perspectives to help ensure:

- Youth voices directly inform decisions in their schools and wider school communities, from youth led campaigns through to strategic local authority consultations;
- Key messages and recommendations are represented and acknowledged in wider political discussions.



Benefits now and in the future

- By completing the survey and hearing about who this report has reached, students realise that their views matter.
- By running the survey in school, those already active are better informed to help those not active to become involved.
- By developing skills and using opportunities, young people gain reinforcement to continue to have a say and lead positive action into the future.

For schools

We intended that school management would gain a valuable insight into the concerns and priorities of their students with regards to climate action. Many of the schools shared their findings to headteacher, senior staff and governors and more widely across school.



Thank you so much for the brilliant work that you do. The survey results were shared during an INSET with all staff and there were gasps!

Teacher



We have used the Toolkit to prove that our school does want to make a change and we have used it as part of our funding campaign.

Teacher

Thanks to

In producing both the Climate Action Survey and this report, we are indebted to:

- All participating schools' lead groups of students and their teachers for their commitment to leading change. The high response rate is a testament to their commitment to acting on the climate crisis.
- Sam Auden of Design and Tonic for her design skills to make the complex accessible.
- Dr Hazel Roberts and sociology students at the University of Gloucestershire for their initial research, analysis and survey design support.
- School students from nine schools who helped shape the survey (see here: [New survey to have a genuine say - InterClimate Network](#)).
- Research firms GlobeScan and Humankind Research for the contextual input they generously provided to the survey design.
- Those organisations who supported our engagement with schools: Buckinghamshire Sustainable Schools Network, Bristol Education Partnership, Climate Change Education Network, Creative Sustainability, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group, Hounslow Education Partnership, Liverpool World Centre, Planet Cheltenham, Restorative Justice Working Cornwall, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
- Bill Gouldstone for his expertise around key messages.
- abrdn Charitable Foundation, AVIVA Community Fund, Dr. Martens Foundation and Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards for their funding and support

Who participated?

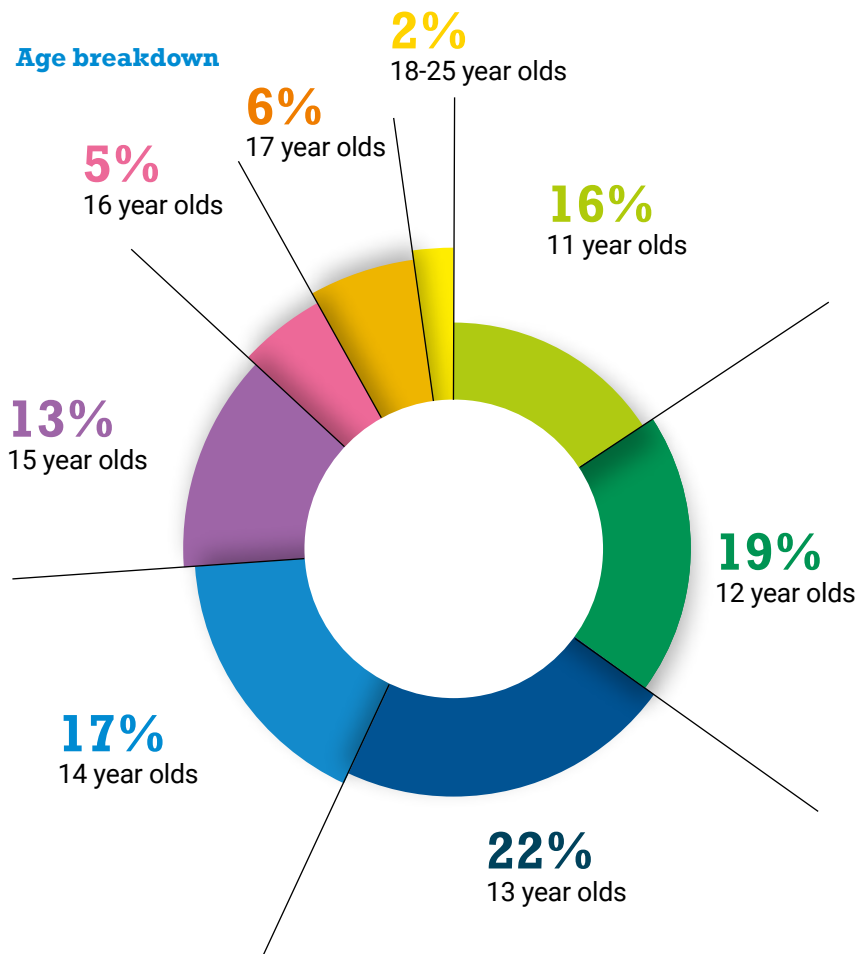
More than 9600 people aged 11 to 18 years responded to the Climate Action Survey, from 21 schools across England, between April 2022 and January 2023. The survey's high return rate, averaging 46% of those offered the survey, has gathered responses from a cross-section of young people in each school, from the very engaged in climate action to those not so interested.

The survey asked young people about themselves to see whether the survey results fairly reflect the UK's demographic makeup along ethnicity, gender, regional, and age lines. By aggregating the results for further analysis, this report now provides a snapshot across participating schools: from rural and urban areas; with high pupil premium rates to very low pupil premium rates; single sex grammar and inner-city academies.

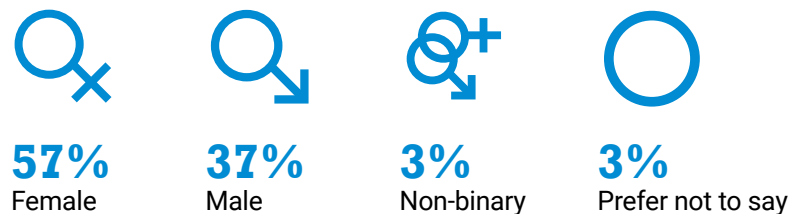
- A higher number of female responses were recorded which reflects that the survey was run in a number of all-girls schools. In mixed schools, the average return rate was 49% female to 46% male.
- Although direct comparison with the England and Wales Census 2021 is not possible (aged 18+), it does provide an indicator that the survey sample reflects a good representation of views of young people from ethnic minorities.
- The report brings in the views of a small number of 18-25 year olds, included in the Gloucestershire-wide survey in partnership with youth groups, and represented in the 18+ age bracket.



Age breakdown



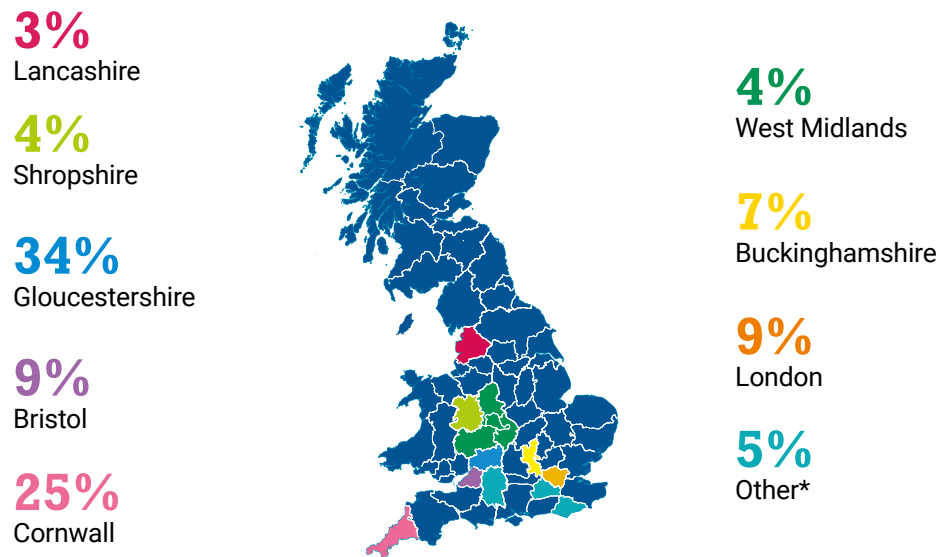
Gender breakdown



Ethnicity breakdown

- 74%** White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Any other White background
- 7%** Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
- 10%** Asian / Asian British - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese
- 4%** Any other Asian background - Black / African / Caribbean / Black British African Caribbean, Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
- 1%** Other ethnic group - Arab, Any other ethnic group
- 4%** Prefer not to say

Regional breakdown



*Other areas included Brentford, East Sussex, Isleworth, Middlesex, South Gloucestershire, Surrey.

2

Diving into the data

“

As much as the people have power to make a difference, nothing will truly change without the government investing in infrastructure to support the environment, and businesses making an effort to cut carbon emissions and the utilisation of single-use plastic.





Current priorities

Looking beyond climate issues to broader life priorities, **“friends and family”** and **“education”** were the **top responses**, consistent across all regions, in all ages and for males and females.

“Health and wellbeing”, **“fitness”** and **“social life”** were also key priorities. **Minimising damage to the environment** averaged as the sixth most important priority to respondents across age, gender and regions.

Demographic insights

- Friends and family were said by females to be of higher priority (78% vs 69% males).
- Fitness was of higher priority for male respondents (40%, vs 22% female and 20% non-binary), whilst health and wellbeing were of greater concern to females (40% vs 30%).
- For respondents identifying as non-binary “gender, sexuality and race” was identified as their second most pressing concern (at 48%) behind friends and family. For those identifying as male and female this emerged as their least pressing priority (4% and 7% respectively).
- The top priority for younger students was friends and family, whilst education emerged as the primary focus amongst older respondents (15 and over).

Young people’s priorities: where does climate change fit?*



1 Friends and family (73%)



7 Injustice in our world (13%)



2 Education (63%)



8 Job opportunities (13%)



3 Health and wellbeing (36%)



9 Finances (12%)



4 Social life (32%)



10 Gender, sexuality and race (8%)



5 Fitness (28%)



11 Religious beliefs (7%)



6 Causing less damage to the environment (22%)

*Respondents were asked ‘Looking at the below, which 3 are the most important to you at the moment?’

Concern for climate change

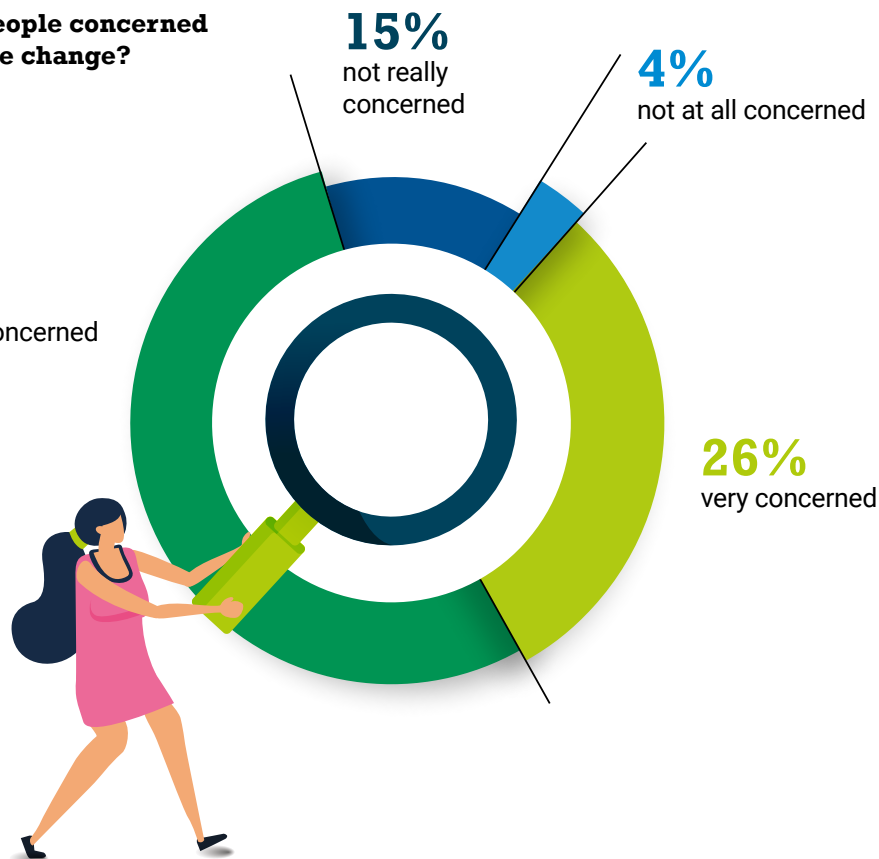
Climate change was a pressing matter for young people with 8 in 10 expressing concern over the issue. The vast majority believed climate change is an ongoing global crisis, driven by human activities and with immediate consequence. **More than 8 in 10, in common across all respondents, said that climate change is already having a negative effect on people's lives around the world.**

3 in 10 students responded that climate change is already impacting their own lives. Looking forward, a far greater number of **7 in 10 respondents thought that their lives, and the way they live in the future, will be affected by climate change.**

Whilst 8 in 10 students recognise that climate change is driven by human activity there is a **disconnect between this and personal accountability** for climate friendly decisions, with only 57% agreeing that their actions have an impact on climate change, in either a positive or negative way.

Are young people concerned about climate change?

53%
somewhat concerned



Demographic insights

There was a consistent response to climate concern across ages and survey regions. Older students were however slightly more inclined than younger to perceive climate change as impacting their own lives, both now and in future. Furthermore, with age came greater recognition that their personal actions had an impact (54% for 11 year olds increasing to 76% for 18 year olds).

Mirroring the findings of numerous surveys conducted with over 18s,⁶ our data shows differences in gender responses, specifically, a lower level of engagement among males:

- Whilst concern about climate change was high across all surveyed genders, females expressed greater concern (85%) than non-binary (79%) and male (71%) participants.
- Fewer males, (though still a clear majority of 66%), thought that climate change will affect the way they live their future lives (77% females and non-binary).
- Male respondents (51%) were also less likely than female and non-binary respondents (61% and 62% respectively) to respond that their own actions may have an impact on climate change.

6. See U.S. research in Adam R. Pearson, Matthew T. Ballew, Sarah Naiman, and Jonathon P. Schuldt (2017) Climate Change Communication in Relation to Race, Class, and Gender (p.21) PRINTED FROM the OXFORD RESEARCH ENCYCLOPEDIA, CLIMATE SCIENCE (climatescience.oxfordre.com) [Accessed on-line 24 March 2023 researchgate.net]

Power to effect change

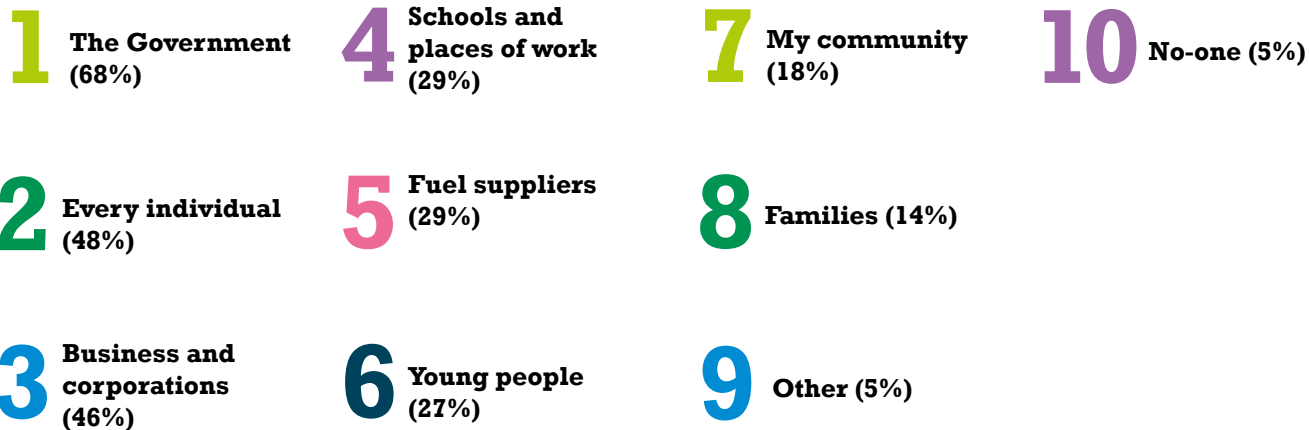
A widely held perception across all survey respondents regardless of gender, age or location was that **the Government has the greatest power to address climate change** most effectively.

A desire for strong government leadership and meaningful action was widespread. Common responses referenced the scale of the changes they felt were necessary for the Government to urgently facilitate. Of clear importance were the Government's responsibility and influence to effectively allocate resources, create and enforce necessary legal frameworks, and enact policy decisions that affect our future choices.

There were stark feelings that **responsibility and action need to be shared fairly across society.** Notably, there were reflections about the negative impact of inadequate efforts by those in power on our own actions as individuals. Businesses and corporations were cited by many as the cause of significant emissions, and, again, there were strong critiques about the current social structure that limits climate-friendly choices.

A small number emphasised the global nature of the crisis. Examples include a belief that countries with higher emissions bear most responsibility; or, until other countries act, net zero is impossible to attain. On a local scale, there were positive comments about collaboration as a driver of change and the role of families, schools, community and young people. Comments about families were, however, surprisingly uncommon. This is especially noteworthy given that most climate action is reported to be taking place at home ([see Youth Climate Action page 16](#)).

Who do young people believe has the most power to change the course of climate change for the better?⁶



6. Respondents were asked "Who do you believe has the most power to make a positive difference on climate change? Please select your top 3 answers." They were further invited to let us know why they selected these answers.



All governments have a role to play in reducing the emissions of their country but wealthier nations have a specific responsibility to provide for poorer nations, who had suffered under a euro-centric colonialism for decades.



If individuals live in societies structured to support emission-producers they are not to blame for acting accordingly.



Everyone can change their habits; the community is a strong collection of all.



The government are in charge and should put in rules that help the environment such as everybody having solar panels or making non plastic options in shops cheaper.



I think that every individual has the power to draw attention to the climate crisis, young people especially, but ultimately, as a society heavily swayed by capitalism, businesses and corporations have a responsibility to change their practices or the movement will not work. This requires the Government to introduce stricter laws on climate change and those who continue to damage the environment, consciously.

Youth climate action

The survey presented students with nine potential contributions toward reducing greenhouse gases and the restoration of biodiversity, encompassing actions at home, school and out and about.

7 in 10 young people were already taking some form of climate action, showing their will and commitment to contribute through personal actions and behaviour modification.

A significant finding is the vital role played by families in supporting students with most actions. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, 7 of the 9 options for action were dominated by changes taking place in the home: this was regardless of age, gender or location. ([Appendix 1, p.34](#)) for details.

Action in the home did not automatically cross into other areas of young people's lives: there were considerable differences between actions at home, involvement at school and while 'out and about' for instance, in terms of those cutting waste 91% are doing so at home, 45% at school and 27% whilst out ([Appendix 1, p.34](#)).

Many students were also involved in action independently. Only two actions (helping protect nature and climate strikes/campaigning) showed in any numbers as being carried out with the help of organisations whether within or outside school (albeit small across the whole survey) ([Appendix 1, p.34](#)).



Of the 70% who are already taking climate action what are they doing?



85%

Reduce their energy use



45%

Think about the impact of what they buy and use



36%

Make their diet more environmentally friendly



74%

Cut down on what they throw away by reducing use, reusing and recycling



39%

Try to influence family and friends to act



25%

Other actions



70%

Walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train instead of by car



38%

Help protect and improve nature



9%

Climate strikes/campaigning

Willingness to start climate action

Importantly, there is an evident willingness shown by a good many of those not yet undertaking specific action to do so. Here are the total percentages and preferences for students who don't yet do the action but say they are willing to start.



64%

Reduce their energy use



59%

Cut down on what they throw away by reducing use, reusing and recycling



55%

Walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train instead of by car



50%

Help protect and improve nature



37%

Try to influence family and friends to act



36%

Think about the impact of what they buy and use



33%

Make their diet more environmentally friendly



21%

Climate strikes/campaigning

Demographic insights

More females (76%) and non-binary (74%) students reported they were taking climate action than males (61%). Once engaged, however, there was little difference between all gender groups in the types of actions being carried out, and the manner of such action. Some notable exceptions:

- Male students were less likely than female and non-binary students to **modify their diet** (27% 48%, 40% respectively) and **seek to influence family and friends to take action** (29% 42%, 48% respectively).
- Females were more likely to be joining with their friends in seeking to influence others (41% female, 34% non-binary, 31% male).
- Those identifying as non-binary were slightly less likely to be acting with family, and more likely to be acting independently across each of the actions. They were also more involved in **climate strikes** through an "organisation outside school" (27% v's 14% male and 13% female).

There was a general trend towards older students becoming more engaged in climate action, although the data also revealed a tendency for engagement to decline between the ages of 13 and 15 before recovering. An exception was **improving nature**, which declined with age with only a slight recovery in students aged 18+.

Older students were more likely to be focused on **climate strikes, campaigning, modifying their diets** and **making conscious choices in their consumption** to limit impacts. Older students were also increasingly more likely to be carrying out action independently than with their family. This is possibly driven by the greater agency and choice older students are afforded.

In terms of 'with who' and 'where' student action occurs, results remained largely static across age groups. An exception being **climate strikes** which saw a greater increase of older students engaging with an "Organisation outside of school" (7% 11-year-olds vs 25% 18+).

As with existing climate action, females reported a slightly greater willingness to initiate presented actions than male and non-binary respondents. The exception was transport as an action that males were marginally more willing to take up.

Climate action in schools

ICN's long-standing work with secondary schools means we know that students and teachers have a strong commitment to, and apply great creativity in, helping reduce their school emissions and achieve sustainability goals. Yet, eco-groups told us they struggle with wider engagement across their school community.

To further support schools, and their eco groups, with engagement this section allowed students to give their views about climate action in school. It is positive that **over 1 in 2 students were aware of their school's work to become more sustainable (56%)**. More than half of all students also saw a clear way to get involved in climate action.

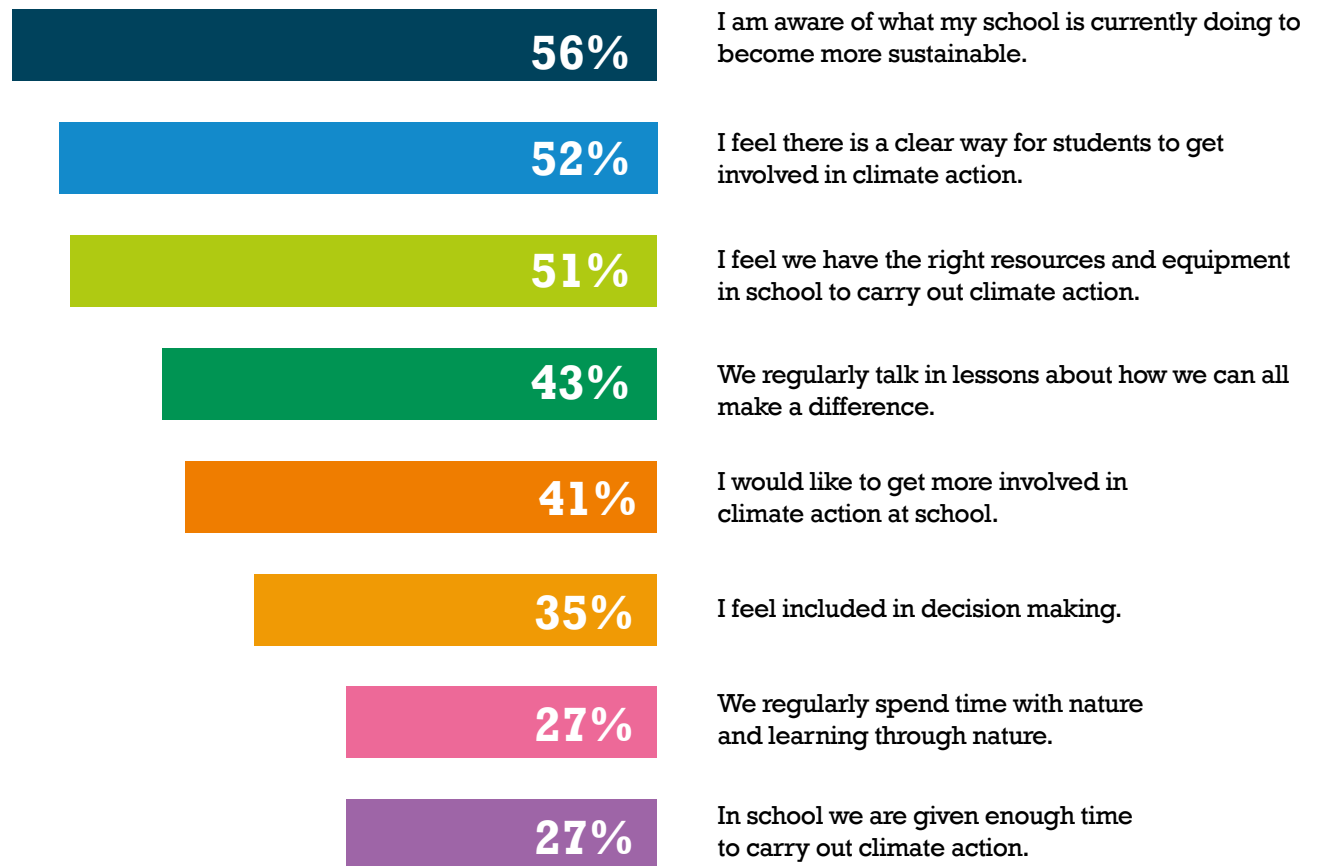
Across the survey, 2 in 5 (41%) said they would like to get more involved in climate action in school.

Crucially for empowerment, **3 in 4 students said they didn't have sufficient time for them to carry out action** and only 35% felt involved in decision-making. With time always at a premium in schools, embedding opportunities for learning and action through the curriculum can be even more important.

Around 3 in 4 students also said that they don't currently make links with nature within school. A resulting question is how to continue this engagement throughout school years, particularly as one of the four aims of the recent Department for Education strategy on Sustainability and Climate Education included, *'increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings'*.⁷ Repeating this survey may help to monitor this area of action.

7. Department for Education (21 April 2022) Sustainability and Climate Change: a strategy for the education system and children's services. [On-line, accessed 28 March 2023] Sustainability and climate change strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

How do young people see climate action in their school?



Demographic insights

As with other areas of climate engagement, female and non-binary respondents said they were more willing to become involved in school action than male students (47%, 45%, 31% respectively). Female respondents were also more likely to agree that they saw a clear way to get involved in climate action than those that identified as male or non-binary (57%, 44% and 45% respectively).

Across all questions in this section **younger students were most likely to agree with the statements about their involvement in school, with more negative responses coming with age**. As with the general Youth Climate Action section there was often a drop in engagement in the middle years (14- and 15-year-olds) before recovering ([Appendix 2](#)).



The school earth club, as we work on improving stuff together and I find out more about stuff to do that I hadn't known.

School geography teachers by showing me new ways I didn't know before of how to help.

Trusted Sources

School was the foremost source of climate change information, was the most trusted, and provided the most inspiration to act. Additionally, in the open comments provided by 1,445 students, 1 in 5 (20%) mentioned their school, notably Geography lessons, as having had a clear impact on their views on climate change. Primary school, assemblies, specific members of staff and eco-groups were also cited as being influential, endorsing the inspiration that is being provided by individuals, often in their own time.

Television and social media were important both as sources of information, and inspiration for action. However, they both slid down the table in terms of trust. Social media and television engagement by activists **Greta Thunberg** and **David Attenborough** has fuelled dissemination and enabled them to become major sources of climate information. Almost 1 in 6 specifically mentioned Thunberg and 1 in 8 Attenborough as making a big difference to their views on climate change. In most comments about Greta Thunberg, she was not only seen as inspirational and

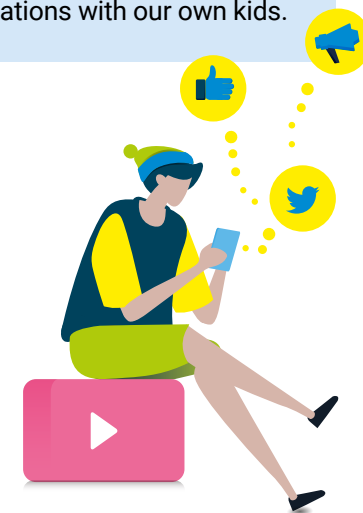
courageous but also as relatable - just a schoolkid like them. David Attenborough was viewed as a sage, honest and a hugely respected voice that students have grown up with. The influence of his documentaries was keenly reflected.

Family was a key trusted source of inspiration, perhaps a reflection that most climate action is taking place at home ([ref Youth Climate Action, p.16](#)). Almost 1 in 6 commented that their family have had a large influence, with parents, siblings and grandparents serving as role models via their actions and sometimes their work: there were 50 specific mentions of mums, 35 of parents, and 20 of dads.

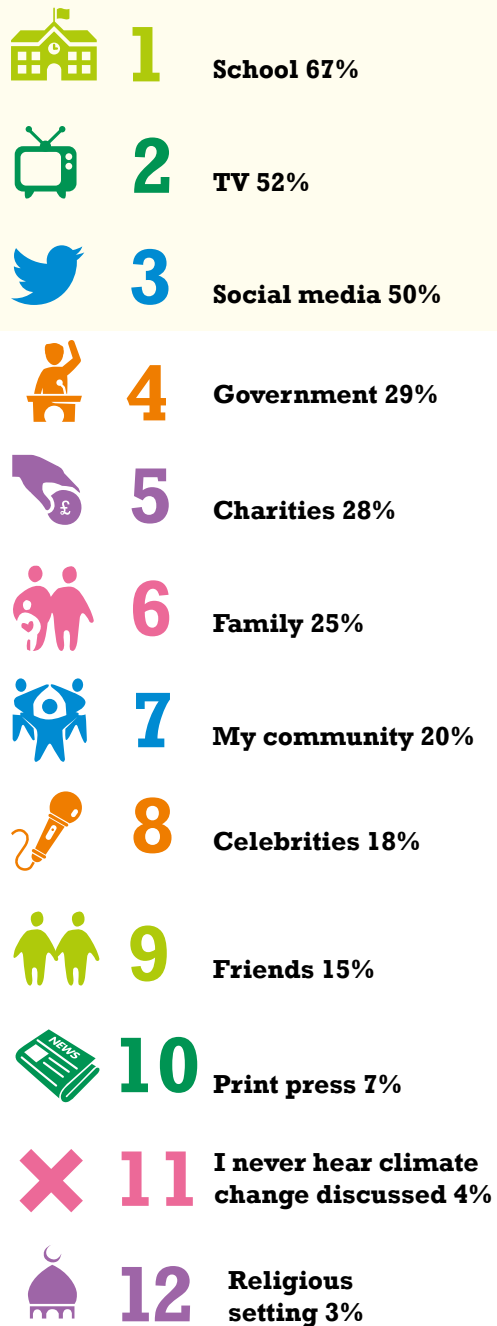
Government was a trusted source of information for many. Yet, government scored poorly in terms of inspiration and representation, being thought of as one of the least representative. In the open comments only **2% cited Government as making a big difference to what they think about climate change.**

We learned a lot from young people

From reading the open comments, the ICN team felt hopeful about a positive force for change. We have learned much and have been inspired to: follow activists on Instagram; look up films on YouTube; check out a good example of a community energy scheme; find out about aspects of climate change politics that we hadn't known previously (via the film 'Vice'); read books; and have more conversations with our own kids.



Where do young people hear climate change talked about the most?



Which information sources do young people trust?



Who inspires young people to get involved in climate action?



Which information sources do young people see as the most representative (age, gender, race)?





To be honest, Greta Thunberg is pretty inspirational to me, how she's so young and is so confident to do what she does. She's just helped me realise how actually important what's going on is. Also, geography lessons in school are very informational and give me a logical understanding of what is happening, but just seeing the world around me burn and get destroyed from climate change (which is mostly caused by humans) has made me become quite passionate and quite scared for our future. Seeing animal habitats getting flooded or burnt, humans suffering in extreme weather conditions, it's made me think about what the government are actually doing to help as it's pretty obvious what needs to be done but it's getting pushed aside by them.

Demographic insights

There was consistency between age and gender groups regarding where students received their information, who was most trusted, inspirational, and representational. Understanding the slight preferences expressed, however, may help inform choice of medium for any new messages:

- **School:** females gained more information about climate change from school (71% as compared to 65% non-binary and 61% male).
- **Social media:** males found less information here (43% compared to 60% non-binary and 53% female) and found it less inspirational. Older students gained more information from, and trusted social media more, than the younger students (63% for 18+ as compared to 39% for 11-year-olds).
- **Government:** males were more likely than females and non-binary students to say they trusted this source.
- **Family:** provided greater inspiration to male students than females and non-binary students.
- **Friends:** were a more important, and inspiring, source of information for those above 18 years (36% compared to 11% for 11-year-olds).
- **Celebrities:** generally had low influence but were regarded slightly more by male and non-binary students than females.
- **Greta Thunberg** was specifically mentioned as a source of inspiration by 15% of females compared to 9% of males. David Attenborough was cited by 12% of males and 10% of females.
- **Inspiration from all sources dipped** for students aged between 14 and 16 before recovering, excepting inspiration from Government, which declined steadily from ages 11 to 18.

Greatest influences for climate action



My school eco committee has made a big difference to what I think about climate change because it has shown me how to work with others to save the environment in an organised way and working with priorities.



My mummy because she has been litter picking in Harrow for 4 years now and has raised a volunteer group of over 300 Harrow residents. She has cleaned hundreds of thousands of bags of rubbish and inspired many people, including me, to take action.



I follow a lot of influencers specifically devoted to fighting climate change, one is @mikaelaloach, I think influencers often have a lot to say about fighting climate change, making us aware of the government's failings and what more we can do.



My geography teacher has given me a clearer understanding of climate change and how it happens. He has also taught me different ways to help reduce and resolve climate change.



I think my mum has the biggest impact, as she is very attentive and knowledgeable, and ensures we know what's going on, stay on top of recycling and other ways we can help. We talk about the issue often within the family, albeit usually in a negative way. It was her idea to get an electric car, and she definitely stays on top of us in turning off lights, saving water etc. She has also encouraged us to eat less meat, by buying alternatives - we've been sampling the Quorn collection recently!



Greta Thunberg as she isn't that much older than me but was courageous enough to try to make a difference. This showed me that no matter your age you can help save the world.



His documentaries were so out of a comfort zone that they made me realise how big of a problem climate change was, he made a difference by being, in my opinion, one of the first people to without any reassurance, talk about climate change.



David Attenborough who was my own legend and inspired me to start planting bushes, flowers, trees and making owl, bat and bird nests in the park.



Greta Thunberg rage at the fact that the governments of our world have taken hardly any action towards this existential threat shows how incompetent they are at major issues. She has shown me that anyone, ANYONE can do their bit, even become a major voice in the tidal wave of action that is necessary to save humanity.



My grandmother has made a big difference because she is very smart and is always aware of what is going on. She reuses plastic bags and buys things that that can be recycled.



My dad because he sits me down and has a deep conversation about it and answers all of my questions.



3 Transforming climate action



If one person does it then they can tell others and spread the word and big communities such as schools and places of work encourage more people.

Effective behaviour-change approaches hinge on simple principles: **make it accessible, make it easy, make it compelling.**

Drawing on a detailed understanding of 11 to 18 year olds' barriers and motivations to act on climate change, as presented in this section, can only help strengthen such approaches and help further engagement and support for young people's climate action.



Overcoming barriers

Students outlined the challenges or constraints that they felt were preventing them from engaging in climate action. Whether or not students were already taking climate action, the barriers that emerged were consistent in that young people most frequently said that they were prevented from doing more by: a perceived lack of time; a lack of access (such as safe transport options); lack of knowledge about what to do; motivational barriers (certain actions not being important to them, liking their meat-based diet too much to change).

From our systematic analysis of this data, four interlinked 'enablers' that support successful climate action were applied based on the COM-B model of enabling behaviour change.⁸ These are presented in Table 1: Grouping barriers to deepen understanding (page 25).

What is preventing climate action?⁹	I don't know how to do this activity	I don't have the right equipment (e.g. no recycling bins, no bike)	I don't have the time	I (or my family) can't afford to do it	My family and/or school are not supportive of this	It's not important to me	Other reason¹⁰
Reduce my energy use	22%	15%	23%	7%	8%	16%	28%
Make my diet more environmentally friendly	17%	6%	17%	9%	11%	29%	27%
Walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train instead of travelling by car	8%	17%	31%	7%	10%	11%	34%
Climate strikes/campaigning (including online)	27%	7%	38%	4%	8%	25%	17%
Help protect and improve nature	24%	14%	34%	5%	6%	11%	22%
Cut down on what I throw away by reducing my use, reusing and recycling	18%	11%	21%	6%	8%	15%	33%
Try to influence my family and friends to take action	18%	5%	24%	4%	10%	25%	26%
Think about the impact of what I buy and use	17%	7%	24%	9%	7%	22%	27%

8. The COM-B model, as defined within The Behaviour Change Wheel ([The Behaviour Change Wheel Book - A Guide To Designing Interventions](#)), recognises that for any behaviour to be enacted people must have the capability, and the opportunity, and they must be more motivated to undertake that behaviour than any other. In our analysis we adjusted COM-B headings to ensure more student friendly language: Physical Opportunity became Opportunity, Social opportunity became Community, and Motivation was renamed 'Being Positive'.

9. Students could select more than one choice in the options provided or give their own opinion in the open comments. It is important to recognise that self-reported information has limitations. People are often biased when they report on their own experiences. For example, many are more likely to report experiences that are socially acceptable or preferred. Yet this data when used alongside other information in the survey can create a more accurate picture of why students are not undertaking certain actions.

10. We asked students that selected 'other reason' to provide their reason in an open comment. 401 responses were analysed and are discussed alongside all the barriers presented here in Table 1: Grouping barriers to further understanding.

TABLE 1 Grouping barriers to deepen understanding


Capability

We need to be clear about the everyday actions that will help make a difference, and then have the skills and physical opportunity to do them.

A lack of knowledge was noticeable especially for **campaigning/climate strikes** and knowing what to do to **protect and improve nature**. The latter was more apparent for females than males and non-binary students.

A number of students talked about their physical disabilities and health issues that were preventing certain actions.



Disabilities limit what I can do in terms of using public transport and going to strikes, though I would love to do both of these things.



Opportunity

We need structures in place (resources, equipment, time) so that we have opportunities to do things differently, and importantly, that it becomes easy to do so.

A **perceived lack of time** was seen as a major barrier across all actions discussed, and particularly for **campaigning/climate strikes, protecting and improving nature and using alternative transport to cars**.

Lack of **structures, access** to public transport/school buses, **distance and safety concerns** were frequently talked about in the open comments as barriers to using alternative transport to cars.

- Females and non-binary students were more likely than males to say they don't have the equipment to walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus.



The route to school is difficult/inaccessible via bike without travelling on roads, up steep inclines and through busy junctions and heavy traffic.



Community

We need a community that supports us to undertake climate friendly activity. We need to see what others are doing, to learn from, and encourage each other.

Despite students not frequently selecting 'lack of support' as a barrier a strong correlation emerged across the survey between low levels of family action and students' own action ([see p.29](#)).

In the open comments, social and cultural norms in the students' family and community were revealed to have an impact on their own climate action:

- Many students reflected that they had **no say over decisions in the home** whether about travel or purchasing choices and especially about their diets.
- Wider community issues emerged, for example, support for local meat production in a farming community.
- Social opportunity barriers such as family members dealing with illness or disabilities were also reported.



My family isn't supportive of the fact that I don't want to eat meat because protein is very good for me and it's also hard to make a separate meal.



Being Positive

We need to establish climate actions as routine, feel positive and stay motivated because of the difference we are making.

Motivational barriers were significant brakes on action. Many students selected that the action was '**not important to them**' especially for **diet, climate strikes/campaigning**, and **trying to influence friends and family**.

In the open comments:

- Many found **current choices convenient and loved them too much**, especially in relation to eating meat.
- Some students said they thought climate strikes had little impact, whilst others were **nervous or scared to campaign**.
- A few students said honestly that they **simply forgot** to undertake specific climate actions.



I like eating meat and I eat it a lot of the time and I don't think I would be able to cut down on it, as I love it so much.



Motivating action

When it comes to changing behaviours, the way that you approach it matters. A range of techniques, from education and incentivisation to feedback and modelling, can be employed to motivate action.¹¹

Having more equipment in place was the top response when students were asked which approaches would most motivate them to act, indicating that young people recognise the need to have better opportunities. **The next top two responses were about reinforcing good choices.** It may well be useful to apply these motivational techniques in any campaign.

Student monitors, for instance having students responsible for ensuring their peers turn off lights, were consistently low down on the list of choices.

Other ways to motivate change may well be needed and prove useful, although not as obviously popular. One example is that students would not be so motivated by hearing from local inspiring people, although elsewhere in the survey individuals, including their mums, dads, and grandparents, have proven inspirational (p.19).

It is interesting to note that whilst more females responded positively than males to each of the choices, the top 3 and least popular choices were consistent across all gender groups. The responses according to age also continued a pattern identified elsewhere in the survey, that younger and older students responded more positively, with a small drop off between the ages of 12 and 15. The top three and least popular choices were predominantly the same across the ages.

Top 5 approaches that students say would motivate them most to take climate action?*



77%

Install more equipment that make it easier to undertake action.



74%

Track results and showcase the positive impact of our actions, for instance how much energy or waste we have saved.



74%

Rewards and competitions to encourage action.



72%

Linking climate action to other campaigns that make life better.



72%

Stronger school rules to ensure climate friendly behaviour by everyone.

*Here we combined the percentage of those that said the approach 'would motivate me' with those that said the approach 'might motivate me' (Appendix 3).

11. For instance, see: [Behaviour Change Techniques and Theory | UCL Psychology and Language Sciences - UCL - University College London](#)

TABLE 2 **Spotlighting views: Snapshot of four schools**

The table below shows the differences and similarities between schools in different areas as an addition to the age and gender comparisons provided elsewhere. Whilst this is a very small sample, patterns emerged that encompass differences and similarities.¹² Factors at work in generating variations are revealed throughout this report and are further explored in [4. Engaging Different Groups](#).

Although outside the remit of this research, it is useful to draw on surveys with adults that explore equality of access and what might help to support agency in relation to climate change, wherever they live and whatever their backgrounds and values .

Area where school is located and their ranking in the 2019 Indices of Deprivation	This Lancashire school in an area ranked in the lower half of most deprived districts.	This Greater London school is in an urban area ranked in the top half of most deprived districts.	This Cornish rurally located school is in an area which was just below the upper quartile of most deprived districts.	This Gloucestershire school is in an area ranked in the lowest quarter of most deprived districts.
Pupil premium allocation (2021-2)	36%	45%	20%	5%
Students taking some form of climate action	46%	60%	66%	84%
Students with family currently acting	34%	51%	55%	81%
Concerned about climate change	59%	75%	80%	95%
Belief climate change will affect their future life	63%	70%	66%	84%
Top priorities	1. Friends and family 2. Education 3. Fitness ... 9. Causing less damage to the environment	1. Education (exams, applying to university) 2. Friends and family 3. Health and wellbeing ... 7. Causing less damage to the environment	1. Friends and family 2. Education 3. Health and wellbeing ... 6. Causing less damage to the environment	1. Education 2. Friends and family 3. Causing less damage to the environment
Where students hear climate change talked about the most	1. School (74%) 2. TV (53%) 3. Social media (46%) ... 8. Family (13%) 10. Friends (7%)	1. School (68%) 2. TV (51%) 3. Social media (48%) ... 6. Family (18%) 9. Friends (12%)	1. School (67%) 2. TV (53%) 3. Social media (46%) ... 6. Family (23%) 9. Friends (15%)	1. School (65%) 2. TV (55%) 3. Social media (49%) ... 4. Family (40%) 7. Friends (21%)

12. Similar patterns were observed across a wider analysis of participating schools.

Climate action in school

Area where school is located	This Lancashire school in an area ranked in the lower half of most deprived districts in the 2019 Indices of Deprivation.	This Greater London school is in an urban area ranked in the top half of most deprived districts in 2019.	This Cornish rurally located school is in an area which was just below the upper quartile of most deprived districts in 2019.	This Gloucestershire school is in an area ranked in the lowest quarter of most deprived districts in the 2019 Indices of Deprivation.
Regularly talk in lessons about how to make a difference.	54%	45%	47%	36%
Aware of what their school is currently doing to become more sustainable.	57%	41%	65%	51%
Regularly spend time with nature and learning through nature.	32%	27%	48%	24%
Feel there is a clear way to get involved in action.	40%	42%	61%	65%
Are given enough time to carry out climate action.	32%	24%	38%	22%
Feel included in decision making.	38%	32%	43%	30%
Feel they have the right resources and equipment in school to carry out action.	41%	50%	57%	44%
Would like to get more involved in climate actions in school.	29%	42%	39%	52%

4 Engaging different groups

“

I don't want to go to climate protests or strikes because I am conflict averse.



Respondents have been segmented into four groups according to how engaged they already are: **Acting; Ready for action; Not engaged; and Sceptics.**

This segmentation comes into its own when thinking about how to build climate action and campaigns that resonate, either when trying to motivate the most involvement or looking to engage particular groups.

Despite differences, consistencies between groups included:











- Climate actions students were most willing to start and those least popular;
- Barriers and motivations to climate action*

*Exception being 'Sceptics' who were significantly more likely to select 'it's not important to me' as a reason for not engaging in action (p.24).



70% Acting

**These students are already taking some climate action.
See Youth Climate Action (p. 16) for details of what they are doing.**












<p>Had the highest levels of concern about climate change (90%).</p> <p>A majority recognised their own personal impact on climate change (65%).</p> <p>Were most likely to believe climate change is affecting their life now (38%) and will affect their life in the future (81%).</p>	<p>Important priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">  1 Friends and family  2 Education  3 Health and wellbeing  4 Social life  5 Causing less damage to the environment 	<p>Trusted Sources</p> <p>Accessed information on climate change predominantly from school (68%), TV (54%), social media (53%).</p> <p>They were more likely than the other groups to hear climate change talked about amongst their family, community, and friends.</p> <p>Most inspired to act by school, social media, family and TV.</p> <p>Most trusted messengers on climate change were school, charities and family.</p>	<p>Actions most and least willing to start</p> <p>Most:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Reduce energy use.  Reduce waste/cut down on what they throw away.  Help protect and improve nature. <p>Least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Make diet more environmentally friendly.  Participate in climate strikes / campaigning.
<p>Were much more likely to have family that are taking climate action: 80% of those acting also had family taking action.</p>			
<p>The Government, every individual and businesses and corporations were seen as having the most power to effect change.</p>			



9% Ready for action

These students who are not yet acting would like to be engaged, however:

- 55% unsure about what to do.
- 45% had not got round to it yet.












<p>Are concerned about climate change (80%).</p> <p>A majority recognised their own personal impact on climate change (54%).</p> <p>23% believed climate change is affecting their life now, rising to 71% who said it will do in the future.</p>	<p>Important priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">  1 Friends and family  2 Education  3 Health and wellbeing  4 Social life  5 Fitness ...  6 Causing less damage to the environment 	<p>Trusted Sources</p> <p>Information was predominantly sourced from school (70%) TV (51%) and social media (49%).</p> <p>Most inspired by school, social media, TV and charities.</p> <p>Most trusted messengers on climate change are school, charities, and the Government.</p>	<p>Actions most and least willing to start</p> <p>Most:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Reduce energy use.  Reduce waste/cut down on what they throw away.  Transport: walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train. <p>Least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Make diet more environmentally friendly.  Participate in climate strikes / campaigning.
<p>Were noticeably less likely to have family acting (36%).</p>			
<p>The Government, every individual and businesses and corporations were seen as having the most power to effect change.</p>			



18% Not engaged

These students are not acting. They felt:












- **38% responsibility for action lies with governments and big corporations, not individuals.**
- **34% individual actions will not make a difference.**
- **28% powerless to make a difference.**

<p>The majority were concerned with climate change (58%).</p> <p>Had a more limited recognition of their own personal impact on climate change (39%).</p> <p>20% believed climate change is affecting their life now, and 60% of this group felt it will affect their life in the future.</p>	<p>Important priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">  1 Friends and family  2 Education  3 Social life  4 Fitness  5 Health and wellbeing ...  8 Causing less damage to the environment 	<p>Trusted Sources</p> <p>Information was predominantly sourced from school (64%), TV (50%) and social media (45%).</p> <p>Most inspired by social media and school (joint), celebrities and TV.</p> <p>Most trusted messengers on climate change are school, charities, and the Government.</p>	<p>Actions most and least willing to start</p> <p>Most:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Reduce energy use.  Transport: walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train.  Reduce waste/cut down on what they throw away. <p>Least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Make diet more environmentally friendly.  Participate in climate strikes / campaigning.
<p>Only 1 in 4 (28%) said their family are acting.</p>			
<p>Did not see individual responsibility as having much impact compared with the other groups. The Government, business and corporations and fuel suppliers were seen as having the most power to effect change ('every individual' came in at fourth).</p>			



3% Sceptics

Not carrying out climate action because they do not believe in climate change.

	Important priorities	Trusted Sources	Actions most and least willing to start
Do not believe in climate change	<p> 1 Friends and family</p> <p> 2 Fitness</p> <p> 3 Social life</p>	<p>Received most of their information, albeit less exposure than other groups, from school, TV and social media (50%, 38%, 27% respectively).</p> <p>Significantly different to other groups as 1 in 4 said they never hear climate change being talked about (23% compared with 2% of those acting and ready for action and 6% of those not ready for action).</p>	<p>Most:</p> <p> Transport: walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train.</p> <p> Reduce energy use.</p>
Were the least likely to have family engaged (17%).	<p> 4 Education</p> <p> 5 Finances</p>	<p>Most inspired by celebrities, family and the Government.</p>	<p> Reduce waste/cut down on what they throw away.</p>
Predominantly believed no-one has the power to effect change, before mentioning the Government, business and corporations .	<p>...</p> <p> 11 Causing less damage to the environment</p>	<p>Trusted messengers were TV and Charities (joint) and the Government.</p>	<p>Least:</p> <p> Think about the impact of what to buy and use.</p> <p> Try to influence family and friends to act.</p>

APPENDIX 1

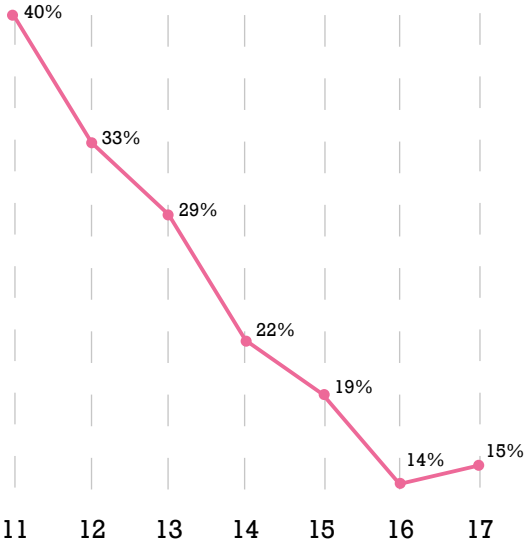
Of the 70% of young people who are already taking climate action where are they acting and who with?

Action	At home	At school	In the community	Alone	Organisation in school	Organisation outside of school	With family	With friends	Other
	Where are young people acting?			Who are young people acting with?					
Reduce their energy use	93%	26%	13%	38%	11%	5%	70%	16%	5%
Cut down on what they throw away by reducing use, reusing and recycling	91%	45%	27%	44%	16%	9%	74%	20%	6%
Walk, cycle, scoot or use the bus/train instead of by car	55%	68%	50%	48%	14%	10%	44%	49%	7%
Think about the impact of what they buy and use	79%	31%	39%	55%	10%	7%	57%	20%	8%
Try to influence family and friends to act	77%	43%	27%	41%	13%	8%	53%	38%	10%
Help protect and improve nature	65%	41%	51%	41%	24%	13%	56%	30%	9%
Make their diet more environmentally friendly	81%	45%	21%	42%	11%	7%	60%	14%	8%
Other actions*	70%	39%	40%	38%	16%	18%	37%	22%	26%
Climate strikes/campaigning	38%	35%	44%	30%	21%	14%	22%	19%	30%

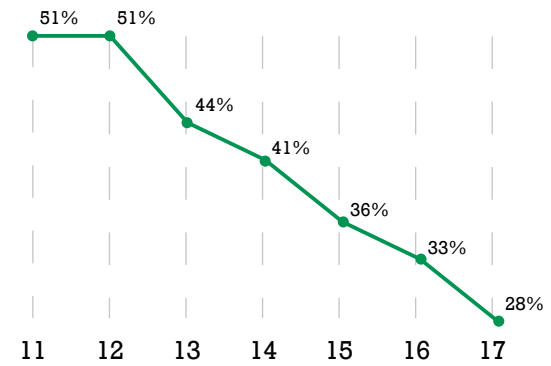
APPENDIX 2

Climate action in schools: Breakdown by students' age

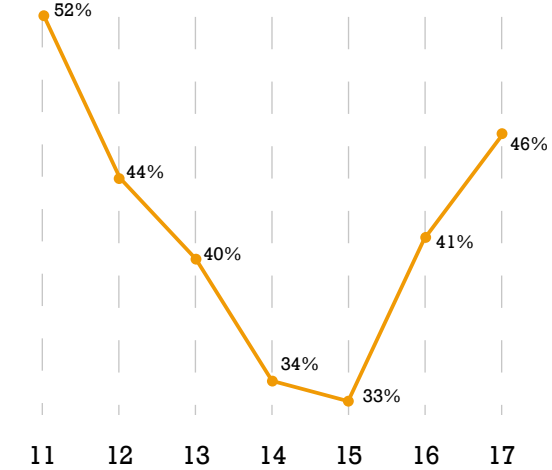
We regularly spend time with nature and learning through nature.



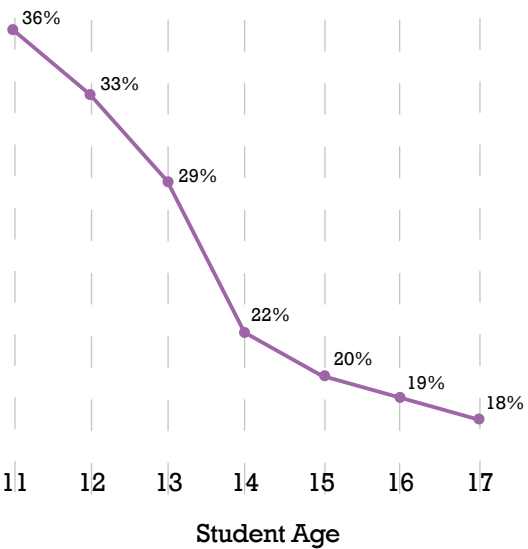
We regularly talk in lessons about how we can all make a difference.



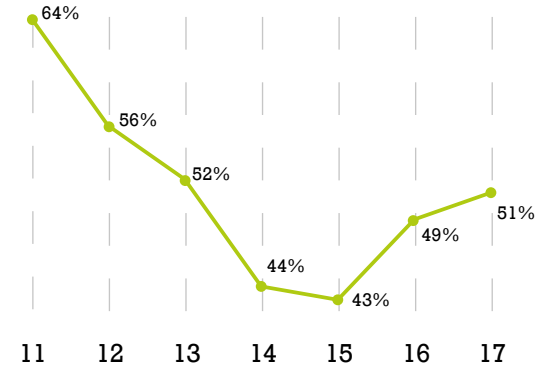
I would like to get more involved in climate actions in school.



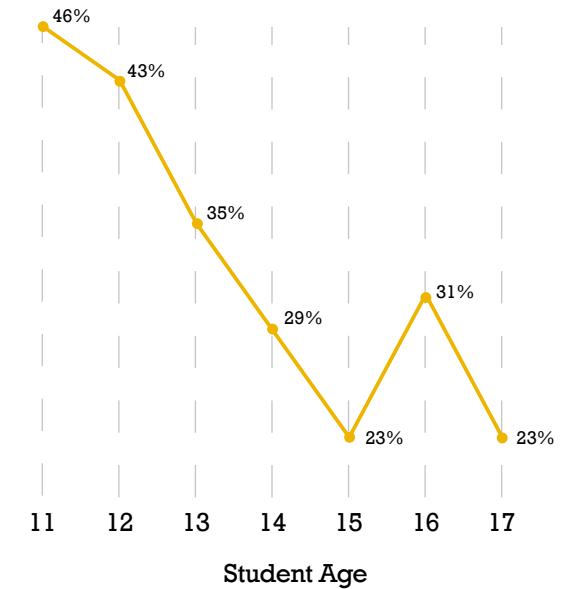
In school we are given enough time to carry out climate action.



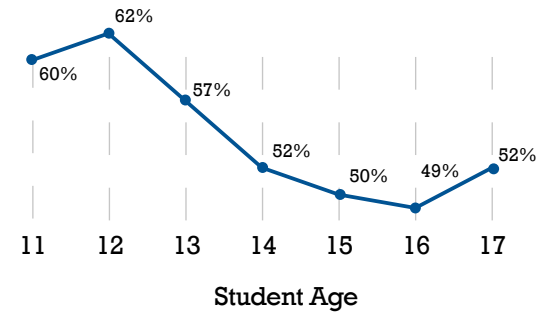
I feel we have the right resources and equipment in school to carry out climate action.



I feel included in decision making e.g. I am asked for my opinion about decisions to reduce waste or save energy.



I am aware of what my school is currently doing to become more sustainable.



APPENDIX 3

What approaches do students say would motivate them most to take climate action?

	This would motivate me	This might motivate me	I would ignore this approach	Don't know
Install more equipment that make it easier to undertake action, e.g. more recycling bins around school.	41%	36%	8%	15%
Rewards and competitions to encourage action.	39%	36%	12%	13%
Track results and showcase the positive impact of our actions, for instance how much energy or waste we have saved.	37%	37%	10%	16%
Linking climate action to other campaigns that make life better, such as improving your health.	32%	40%	12%	17%
Introduce changes that we are not really aware of e.g. mix more vegetarian options into the rest of the canteen menu.	31%	30%	21%	18%
Stronger school rules to ensure climate friendly behaviour by everyone, for instance about cutting energy use or food waste.	30%	41%	12%	16%
Greater engagement with students so they understand the rules and how they will help.	30%	40%	13%	17%
Sustainability taught across all subjects.	29%	39%	14%	17%
Careers guidance on 'green' skills and jobs that are going to be needed.	27%	39%	14%	20%
More opportunities for students to feed in and influence rules and targets, e.g. forums, elected eco-reps, anonymous suggestion boxes.	26%	40%	16%	18%
Hear from inspiring (local) people about the positive difference they are making.	25%	38%	19%	18%
Have student monitors, e.g. energy and recycling monitors.	23%	36%	22%	19%
Access to more groups and activities to discuss and carry out action e.g. climate forums.	22%	40%	20%	18%