Climate Action Survey Insight Report 2023

Example School Report

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What's it all about?

In your school you may be planning to deliver specific climate actions, such as trying to stop waste from the school canteen, reducing energy use, or influencing how people travel to school.

To successfully deliver these climate friendly actions you need to have the support of the whole school community - everyone will need to be aware of the changes you are making and why it is important to participate.

Students - and staff - have lots of different views of course, and there will be different activities that can help motivate them to support climate-friendly choices. It is therefore important to have a clear picture of these views and motivations. This is where your school's Climate Action Survey results come in.

Next steps:
- Such a lot of great information and understanding has come from your survey. An important follow-up activity is to **share what you have found out** so that everyone, from fellow students to the headteacher and governors, can hear the views of so many students. For example, listen to students from Lyndon School, Solihull being interviewed on the radio here.
- **ICN follow-up workshops and activities** enable participating groups to use the survey insights to create campaigns that help motivate climate action. Please do get in touch if you would like to run these: Schools@interclimate.org
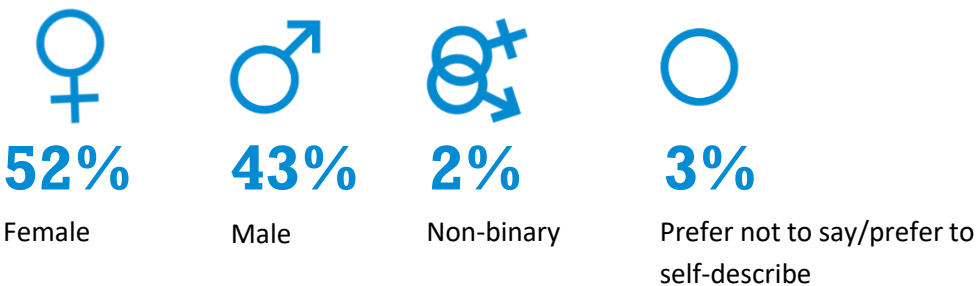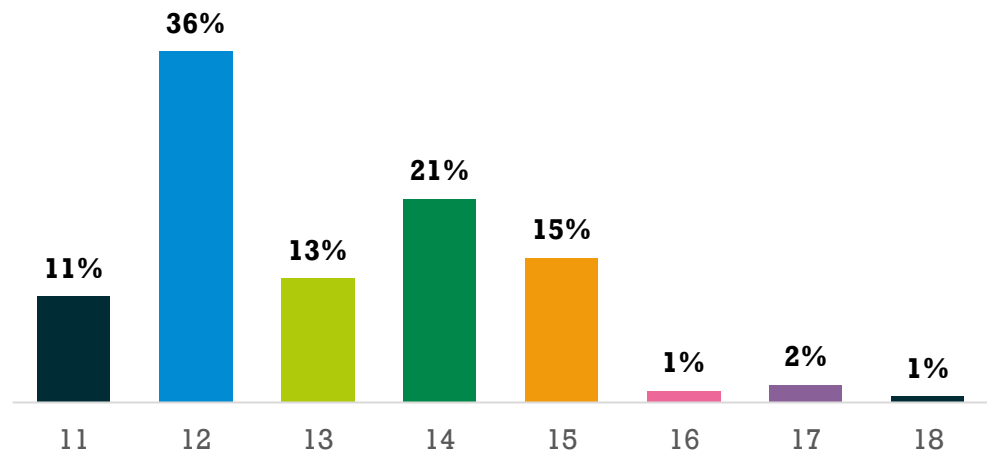
Contents

Who participated?

In total xx students responded to the Climate Action Survey: We don't know about the views of the xx% that didn't complete the survey, of course, and they shouldn't be forgotten in the school's work on climate action.
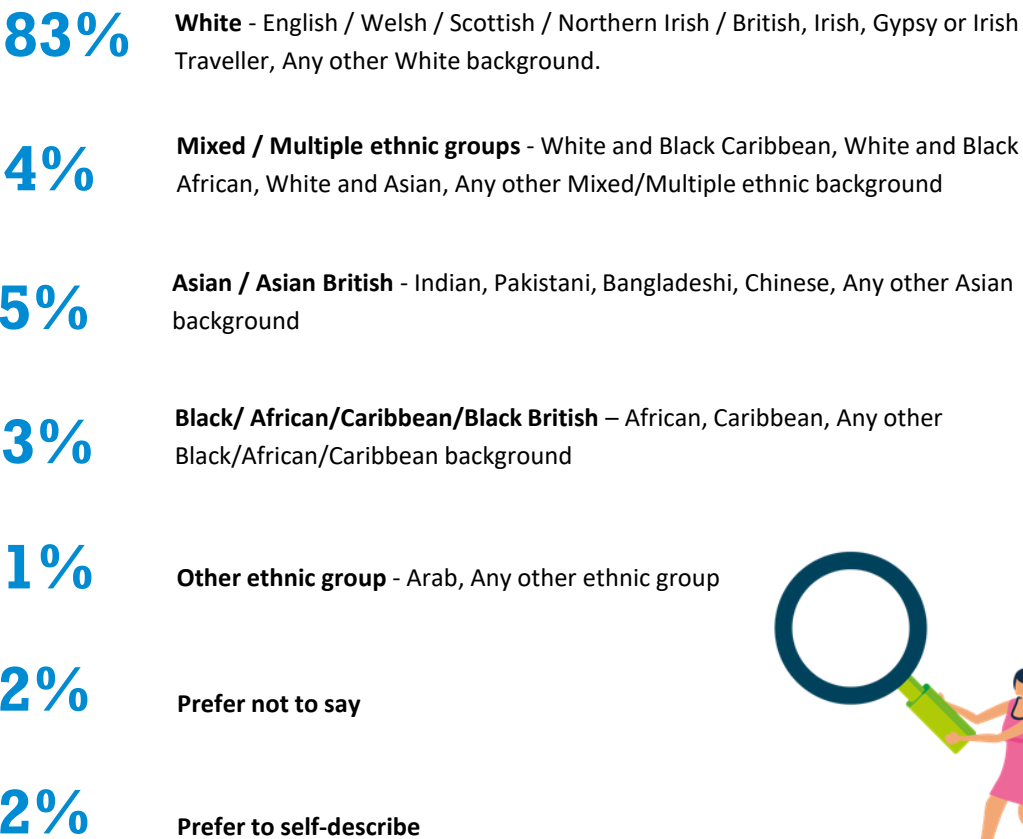
Gender Breakdown

52%
Female

43%
Male

2%
Non-binary

3%
Prefer not to say/prefer to self-describe

Age breakdown

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
11%	36%	13%	21%	15%	1%	2%	1%

Ethnicity breakdown

83% **White** - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Any other White background.

4% **Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups** - White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background

5% **Asian / Asian British** - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Any other Asian background

3% **Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British** – African, Caribbean, Any other Black/African/Caribbean background

1% **Other ethnic group** - Arab, Any other ethnic group

2% **Prefer not to say**

2% **Prefer to self-describe**

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Key findings: what students think and do

Four groups have emerged from students' feedback to the survey according to how engaged they already are in climate action: **Acting; Ready for action; Not engaged; and Sceptics**. Each group is also characterised by what they think about climate change and the extent of actions being taken around them. This segmentation comes into its own when thinking about how to build climate action and campaigns that resonate. Further details can be found in the Youth Climate Action Research Report 2022-2023, page 29

76% Acting

These students are already taking some climate action (see p. 7 for details) and:

- Had the highest levels of concern about climate change.
- Were most likely to believe climate change is affecting their life now and will affect their life in the future.
- Put greater priority on causing less damage to the environment day-to-day than the other groups.

- Were much **more likely to have family taking climate action** *(82% said family were acting).*

6% Ready for action

These students who are not yet acting would like to be engaged, however:
- **65% unsure about what to do.**
- **35% had not got round to it yet.**

- They were concerned with climate change but did not feel as strongly as the acting group.
- Did not define their own personal impact as clearly as the 'acting' segment.
- **Were less likely to have family acting** *(59% said family were acting).*

16% Not engaged

These students are not acting, saying:
- **41% - individual actions will not make a difference.**
- **41% - powerless to make a difference.**
- **18% - responsibility for action lies with governments and big corporations, not individuals.**

- They were concerned about climate change but had a more **limited understanding of how climate change is affecting people** right now, and how our everyday choices are contributing to climate change.

- **Were much less likely to have family acting** *(27% said family were acting).*
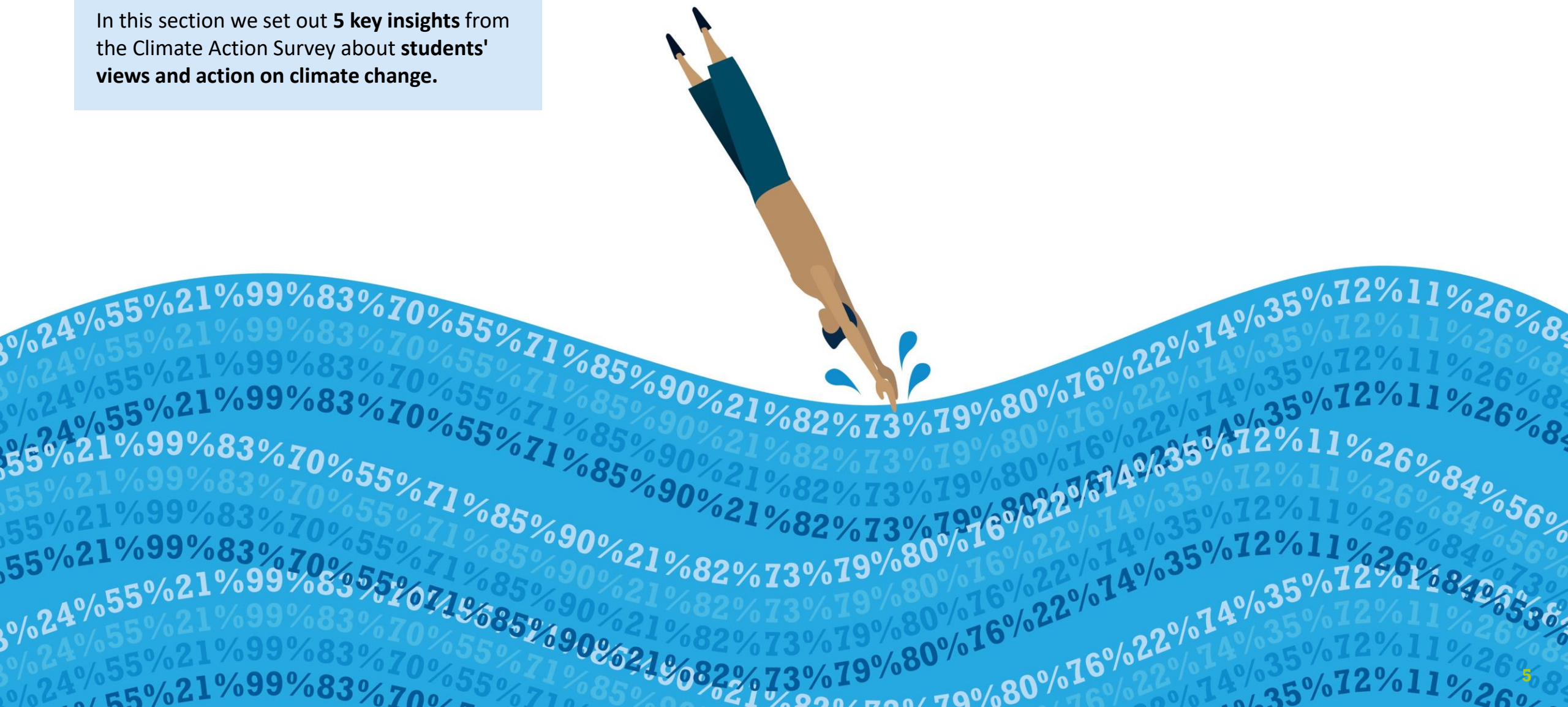
2% Sceptics

These students are not carrying out climate action because they do not believe in climate change.

- Were much less likely to have family acting.

Diving into the data

In this section we set out **5 key insights** from the Climate Action Survey about **students' views and action on climate change.**
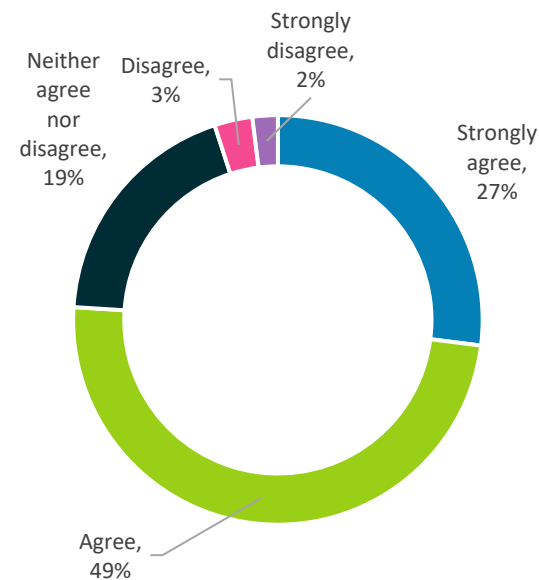
Students are concerned about climate change

3 in 4 (76%) students expressed concern regarding climate change. Looking beyond climate issues to broader life priorities, "friends and family" was a clear top response, with environment and climate change being the 6th priority. Students also responded to other survey questions giving their thoughts about the impact of climate change: Over **8 in 10 (85%) believed that climate change is already having a negative effect on people's lives around the world** and **7 in 10 thought that their lives will be affected by climate change**. 1 in 2 (54%) thought that their everyday choices have an impact on climate change, in either a positive or negative way.
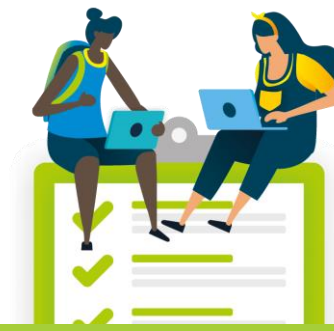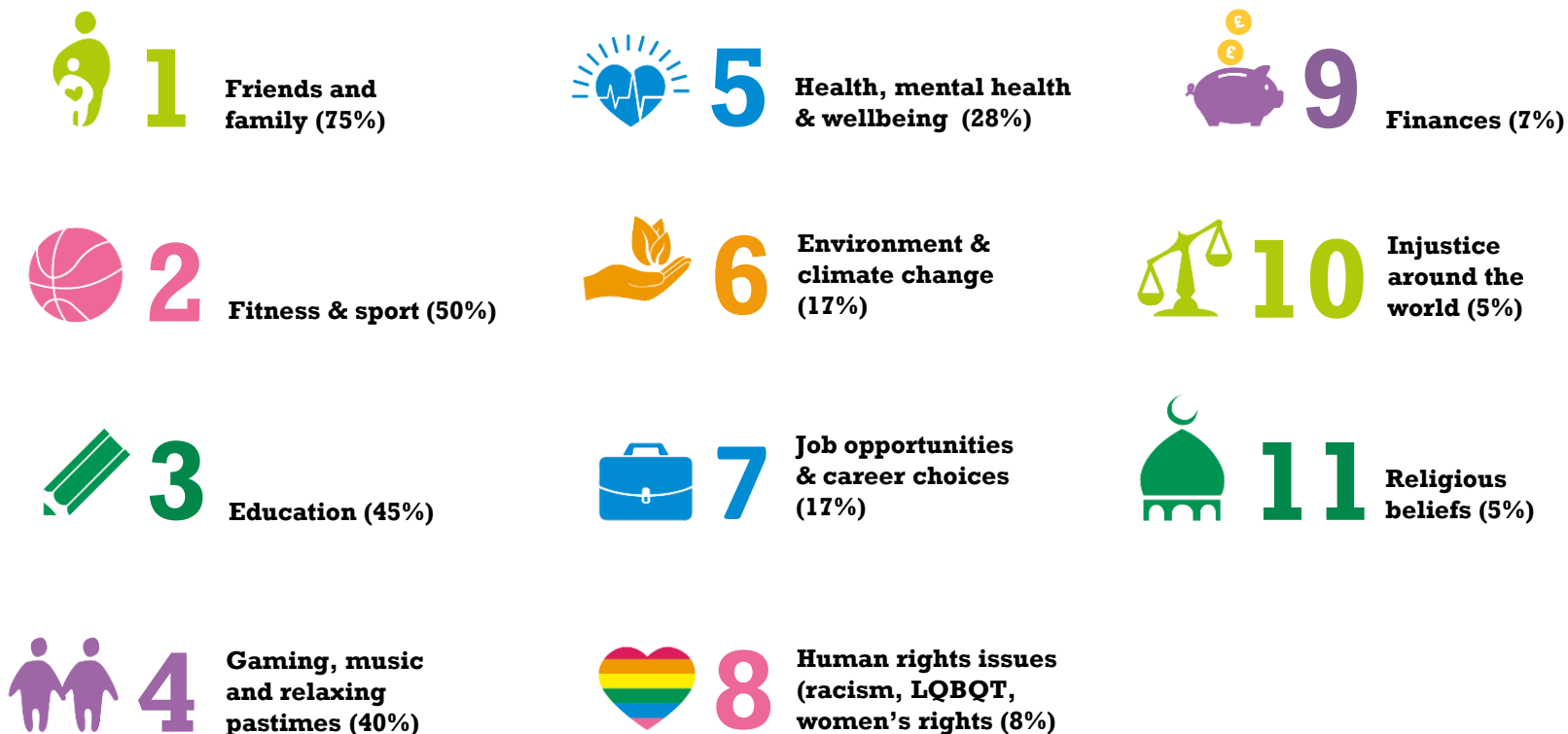
Student concern about climate change

Students indicated the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'I am concerned about climate change.'

Strongly disagree, 2%

Disagree, 3%

Neither agree nor disagree, 19%

Strongly agree, 27%

Agree, 49%

Student priorities: where does climate change fit?

1 Friends and family (75%)

2 Fitness & sport (50%)

3 Education (45%)

4 Gaming, music and relaxing pastimes (40%)

5 Health, mental health & wellbeing (28%)

6 Environment & climate change (17%)

7 Job opportunities & career choices (17%)

8 Human rights issues (racism, LQBQT, women's rights (8%)

9 Finances (7%)

10 Injustice around the world (5%)

11 Religious beliefs (5%)

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Students are willing to act

The survey presented students with eight potential actions towards reducing greenhouse gases and the restoration of biodiversity, encompassing actions at home, school and out and about. Over **7 in 10 students (76%) were already taking some form of climate action,** showing their will and commitment to contribute through personal actions and behaviour modification. There was a **willingness by many of those not yet under-taking specific actions to start, notably being willing to: reduce energy use, reduce waste, reuse and recycle and help protect and improve nature.**

Of the 76% who are already taking action, what are they doing?

82%
Reduce their energy use

9%
Campaigning (including online)/climate strikes

47%
Think about the impact of what I buy

27%
Make their diet more environmentally friendly

38%
Help protect and improve nature

39%
Try to influence family and friends to take action

66%
Less impact in how they travel

79%
Reduce waste, reuse and recycle

How willing are students to start actions?

Here are the total percentages and preferences for students who don't yet do the action but say they are willing to start.

Action	%
Reduce their energy use	49%
Make their diet more environmentally friendly	24%
Less impact in how they travel	17%
Campaigning (including online)/climate strikes	17%
Help protect and improve nature	37%
Reduce waste, reuse and recycle more	43%
Think about the impact of what they buy	22%
Try to influence family and friends to take action.	26%

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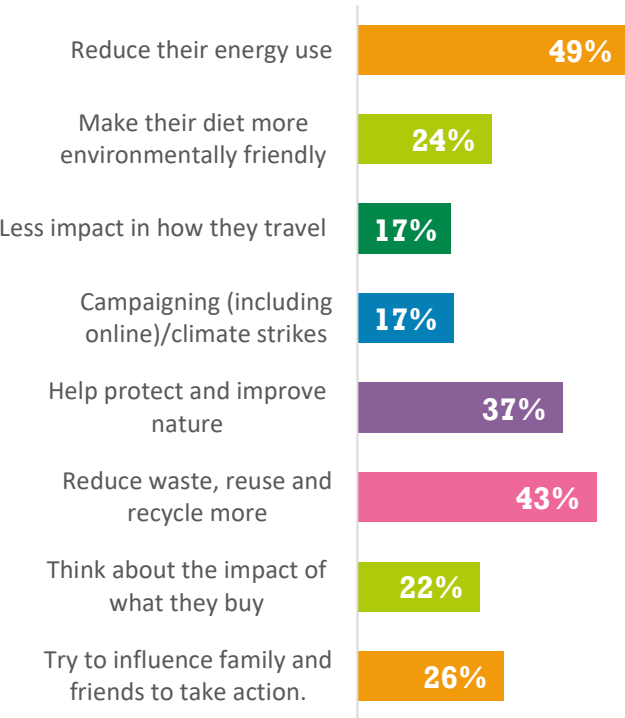
Climate actions are not consistent

Whilst there was clear concern and intent to act, contrasts emerged between action at home and involvement in school and community. **6 of the 8 actions were dominated by changes taking place in the home**, and these actions were largely done with families. The link between families and student action is highlighted in our segmentation (p. 14). Many students were also involved in action independently.

Of the 76% of students who are already taking climate action where are they acting and who with?
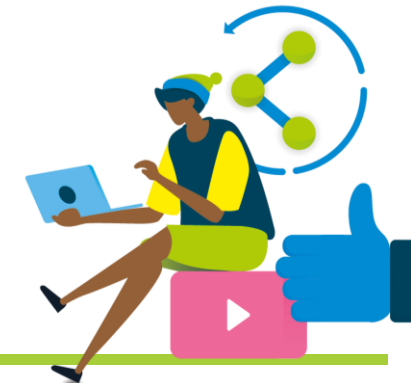
	Percentage doing this	At home	At school	Out and about	Alone	Organisation in school	Organisation outside of school*	With family	With friends	Other*
		Where are students acting?			Who are students acting with?					
Reduce their energy use	82%	92%	22%	18%	37%	11%	4%	68%	16%	7%
Make their diet more environmentally friendly	27%	86%	36%	38%	35%	5%	3%	71%	11%	2%
Less impact in how they travel	66%	N/A	81% *(to and from school)*	58%	48%	6%	3%	56%	60%	4%
Campaigning (including online)/climate strikes	9%	47%	42%	37%	32%	26%	16%	26%	32%	16%
Help protect and improve nature	38%	61%	28%	58%	44%	10%	12%	52%	26%	10%
Reduce waste, reuse and recycle more	79%	81%	37%	50%	48%	10%	3%	67%	22%	4%
Think about the impact of what they buy	47%	59%	13%	64%	52%	7%	0%	67%	23%	2%
Try to influence family and friends to take action.	39%	79%	38%	38%	50%	8%	4%	58%	38%	1%

* These included numerous students saying they were taking action as part of Scouts and Guides.

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Greater leadership is essential to deliver change

Whilst students thought that every individual has the power to act on climate change, **1 in 2 thought the Government should be responsible for doing more to tackle climate change.** A strong desire for governmental leadership is clear: students expressed that they feel **dissatisfied about a lack of action by governments so far**. 1 in 3 also thought schools should be responsible for doing more. In the open comments students felt that young people should be given a greater voice, as they have the most to lose from the legacy of decisions being made now. Several students also said those who are wealthier, whether an individual or business, should use their money to help address climate change.

Who do students believe should be responsible for doing more to tackle climate change?

1 National Government (51%)

2 Fossil fuel companies (41%)

3 Every individual (38%)

4 Businesses and Corporations (38%)

5 Schools (33%)

6 Wealthiest in society (29%)

7 Local community/local council (26%)

8 Young people (16%)

9 No-one (7%)

10 Other (2%)

Students were given the opportunity to openly respond in more detail and a sample is showcased here (see Appendix 1 for further comments).

"The **Governmen**t has the most power over climate change. I think **families should be given help** like money towards electric cars or solar panels."

"I think that **children should vote** on things because it is their planet where they will grow up."

"I believe that to successfully tackle climate change, **we must show our progress to others and tell people what they can do to help.**"

"I think that **everyone should do everything they can to ensure** that they have a sustainable and eco-friendly life and not endangering the world and their future."

"**Large corporations should use their overwhelming profits** to create a more eco-friendly company instead of using it for corruption and performing capitalism."

"I believe **governments** can make a positive difference because they are responsible for making decisions however, they can't do everything themselves and need the **people to help** and therefore everyone should help but **I believe my age group should have a greater say.**"
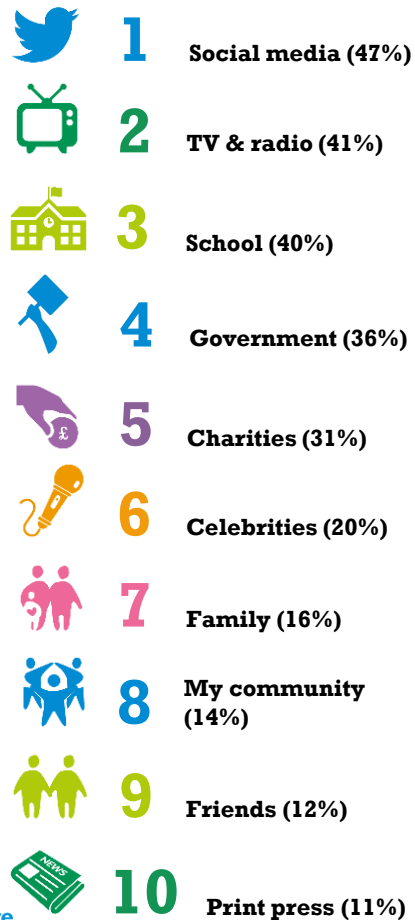
"I believe that **popular people and people who are famous** can make the most difference by convincing their fans and people who follows them in their footsteps. I believe that **schools should do more for the environment.**"

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Students welcome inspiration and support

Social media has a clear impact on students, being the foremost source of climate change information, alongside being inspiring and representative. School and TV and radio were also an important source of trusted information, whilst families provided the most inspiration. In the open comments (Appendix 1), students mentioned **teachers and individual family members** as having had a big impact, alongside climate activists like **Attenborough** and **Thunberg.**

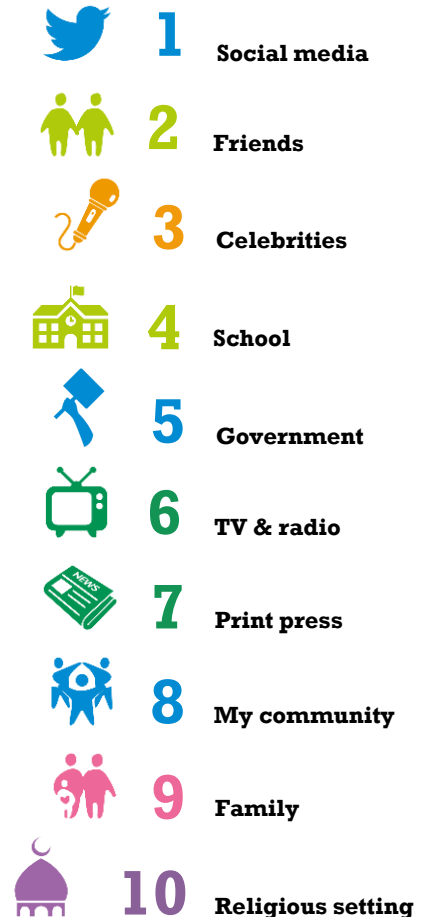## Where do students hear climate change talked about the most?

1. Social media (47%)
2. TV & radio (41%)
3. School (40%)
4. Government (36%)
5. Charities (31%)
6. Celebrities (20%)
7. Family (16%)
8. My community (14%)
9. Friends (12%)
10. Print press (11%)

Who inspires students to get involved in climate action?

1. Family
2. Social media
2. Celebrities
4. Charities
5. TV & radio
6. Friends
7. My community
8. School
9. Religious setting
10. Government

Which information sources do students trust?

1. Family
2. School
3. Charities
4. TV & radio
5. Government
6. My community
7. Friends
8. Social media
9. Religious setting
10. Print press

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

1. Social media
2. Friends
3. Celebrities
4. School
5. Government
6. TV & radio
7. Print press
8. My community
9. Family
10. Religious setting

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Transforming climate action in school

The survey asked students for their views about climate action in school, alongside barriers to action and what would motivate them to do more.

Feedback in this section can inform plans and help shape your climate action campaigns.

See our step-by-step toolkit for how to make use of these findings: Climate Action Toolkit - InterClimate Network
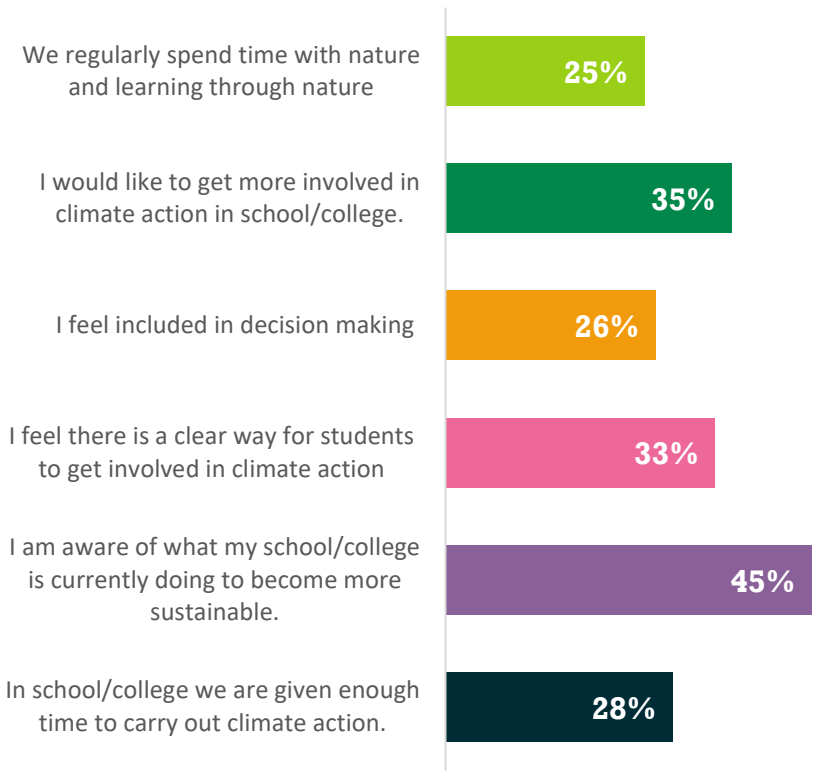
Students' view of school action

It is positive that almost **1 in 2 respondents were aware of what school is doing to become more sustainable** and over **1 in 3 would like to get more involved in school climate action. Enabling more time for action, engaging with nature, and creating more opportunities for student views in decisions** on sustainability would serve as good places to focus on going forward. Strong priorities emerged for more action in school, with energy transition and cutting waste, as top. 1 in 2 also thought that helping to protect nature should be prioritised.

How do students see climate action in school?

Statement	%
We regularly spend time with nature and learning through nature	25%
I would like to get more involved in climate action in school/college.	35%
I feel included in decision making	26%
I feel there is a clear way for students to get involved in climate action	33%
I am aware of what my school/college is currently doing to become more sustainable.	45%
In school/college we are given enough time to carry out climate action.	28%

Which actions do students think should be most prioritised in school?

1 **Energy:** Reduce use and move to renewable sources **(61%)**

2 **Waste:** Cut down on what we throw away by reducing use **(57%)**

3 **Nature:** Help protect and improve outside spaces and nature **(51%)**

4 **Travel:** Choose ways to get around that have less impact **(37%)**

5 **Food:** Make our diets more environmentally friendly and throw less away **(36%)**

6 **What we buy:** Think about the impact of what is bought and used **(28%)**

7 **Engage:** Try to engage and influence others to act **(22%)**

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Investigating barriers to action

Students outlined the challenges that they felt were preventing them from engaging in climate action, and looking to overcome these barriers can help inform your planning*.
Students most frequently said that they were prevented from doing more by a perceived lack of time and being unsure of what to do.

	I don't have the right equipment or facilities.	I (or my family) can't afford to do it	I don't always have the time	I am unsure of how to do this action	I am not allowed or supported to by my family and/or school	I don't care strongly enough to want to do it	I don't feel that my contribution will make a difference	Other**
Reduce their energy use	19%	8%	41%	25%	4%	11%	12%	11%
Make their diet more environmentally friendly	15%	12%	23%	27%	8%	19%	17%	15%
Less impact in how they travel	13%	6%	33%	19%	9%	12%	17%	10%
Campaigning (including online)/climate strikes	11%	6%	35%	33%	4%	26%	12%	10%
Help protect and improve nature	23%	7%	38%	28%	5%	12%	18%	6%
Reduce waste, reuse and recycle more	8%	4%	37%	19%	6%	7%	21%	11%
Think about the impact of what they buy	4%	10%	24%	25%	4%	27%	15%	10%
Try to influence family and friends to act.	5%	2%	25%	28%	6%	25%	18%	13%

*It's 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.

Other frequent reasons given included **forgetting to do the action (notably around energy saving); **enjoying meat too much** to give it up; and **distance being an issue with travel** ("I live too far away). In terms of campaigning several students felt 'that the people that strike for climate are usually annoying and I don't want to annoy anyone' or "I'm afraid that I will get in trouble."

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Influencing 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. Students gave their feedback about what would inspire their action. Combining responses to the first two columns allows you to see the top motivational techniques. These can then be applied to any campaigns for action in school.

What techniques did students say would motivate them to take climate action?

	Would motivate	Might motivate	Would ignore	Don't know
Limit options: **Stronger rules** to ensure climate friendly behaviour by everyone e.g., about cutting energy use or food waste.	22%	51%	13%	14%
Shape knowledge: Greater **engagement with students** so they understand how to help e.g., provide information about what to do, have drop-in sessions.	21%	50%	14%	15%
Compare and support: More opportunity for **students to have influence** and feed in ideas. e.g. climate forums, elected eco-reps, suggestion boxes.	23%	49%	14%	15%
Feedback: Track results and let people know how well they are carrying out the action e.g., how much energy has been saved.	27%	43%	16%	14%
Benefits: Linking climate **action to other campaigns** that make life better e.g., improving your health or saving money.	20%	48%	19%	13%
Reward: Bring in rewards and competitions to encourage action.	41%	39%	9%	11%
Limit options: Bring in a **financial cost** e.g., increase the price of drinks for those that do not use reusable cups.	20%	34%	29%	17%
Have **student monitors** e.g. energy and recycling monitors.	19%	39%	25%	17%
Change the environment: Introduce equipment or changes that make it easier to undertake action e.g., more recycling bins	23%	47%	16%	14%
Compare & support: show examples of action for people to aspire to or imitate e.g. hear from inspiring people.	22%	40%	20%	18%
Prompts: Provide prompts and cues to remind us to do the action e.g. stickers or text messages to remind us to reduce food waste.	19%	46%	18%	16%

Top 5 techniques that students said would motivate them to take climate action

80% **Reward:** bring in rewards and competitions to encourage action.

74% **Limit options:** Stronger rules to ensure climate friendly behaviour by everyone.

72% **Compare and support:** More opportunity for students to have influence and feed in ideas.

71% **Shape knowledge:** Greater engagement with students so they understand how to help .

71% **Change the environment:** Introduce equipment or changes that make it easier to undertake action.

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Call to action

5 steps for embedding climate action (p. 16) outlines what you can do to help support change: some are easy to start, others must become easier so that climate actions are accessible to everyone.

They are underpinned by what 11- to 18-year olds told us would motivate them to engage further (Youth Climate Action Research Report 2022-23).

5 steps for empowering climate action

1 Talk about action

- **Start the conversation**
Build on trust in teachers, families, charities or well-known figures to unlock more climate conversations, even if they seem difficult.[1]

- **Discuss practical actions**
Share practical approaches and ideas so that taking climate action becomes the new norm in school and the community as well as home.

2 Take views seriously

- **Engage in decision-making**
Increase 11–18-year-olds' say with opportunities to be part of decision-making groups, to influence rules and targets and ethical consumption choices.

- **Act on concerns and ideas**
Build on their many low-cost ideas to create new campaigns. Include both young people and adults to strengthen impact and empower students.

3 Be positive

- **Encourage small easy steps**
Think of the stepping-stones to change, assuring young people that getting part way is better than no action.

- **Respect and link to priorities**
Harness co-benefits that link with young people's top priorities such as the tie with nature as an every-day essential for wellbeing.

- **Build positivity and rewards**
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

- **Co-create environmental policy**
Ask students, staff, parents and governors to co-create a school environmental policy, or set new targets within an existing policy.

- **Embed across the curriculum**
Integrate learning about solutions in all lessons, from computer modelling of impact to hearing others' views about change within languages.

- **Develop a long-term action plan**
Allow time to create and act on a '*What's Next*?' list, drawing on behaviour change thinking[2] and external expertise available in every key area of climate action.

5 Change the environment

- **Make action easier**
Install more equipment and create environments that make good choices easier.

- **Make sure it's accessible**
Ensure physical and social access is considered so changes are accessible for those with disabilities and are affordable.

1.Resources include: InterClimate Network, I-CAN Project, ThoughtBox Education.
2.For support see ICN's website: Climate Action Toolkit and Action in Schools.

Appendix 1: Open comments

Students were given the opportunity to openly respond to two questions saying who most inspires them to act on climate change and who they believed had the most power to change the course of climate change for the better. Here is a selection of their comments.

Greatest influences for climate action

"**David Attenborough** has influenced how I see the natural world my entire life and is a huge inspiration across the world. By watching his documentaries, people can learn a lot about how we are effecting nature and how we can help."

"**My mum** because she always tells me what's happening with climate change and what's in the news."

Greta Thunberg...because you are never too small to make a difference.

"The **school community** has inspired me to care more about the world and the climate."

"**My family**. My parents have experience in the world. Both my parents have travelled far and love learning people's culture. Both also have degrees in science and a love for psychology."

"I think the **school** has influenced my view on how serious climate change is. I know this is important because I occasionally see Mr Harty litter picking around the school."

The bad news on social media makes me worried enough so that I help

"**My geography teacher Miss Davies.**"

"People who have had their whole lives changed (negatively) because of climate change."

"My **geography teacher** has made a big difference to my views on climate change as I didn't know much about it, but she explained it."

Power to change the course of climate change for the better

"The **government** need to take action and stop being lazy just because they have power over their countries."

"I do think **my age group should be given a greater say** on tackling climate change, because in the future we will be running the government and councils etc."

"**Maybe rich people should use their insane hoard of money to do something actually useful**. I'm saying that people like Elon Musk should stop buying Twitters and losing money and instead actually help people- he could solve world hunger, he just won't."

"Personally, I believe that it might be **too late to stop a true catastrophe**."

"**Large corporations** with influence should motivate their consumers."

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