

Young People and Climate Change: Hear our Voice



June 2021

Dr Verity Jones

University of the West of England, Bristol

Young People and Climate Change: Hear our Voice.

Summary:

The consequences of climate change are becoming part of people's everyday worlds as they live with increased risks of drought, flood and wildfires. Such conditions bring with them associated difficulties in food production, disease control and conservation efforts that are negatively impacting on people and planet alike.

A [recent survey commissioned by Sky News](#) reported that a quarter of Britons are unwilling to change key habits to help tackle climate change with 69% of those polled reporting that they were not personally affected by climate change. This survey did not include participant under 18 years old. In response to this, a similar survey was undertaken with 1170 young people (7-18 year olds) from across Britain in May 2021. This report outlines the findings and recommendations based on the young people's survey responses and adds their voice to this discussion.

Key Findings:

- 7-18 year olds are confident in their understandings of key terms relating to climate change such as: carbon emissions, greenhouse gases, renewable energy and eco foot printing.
- Young people are more confident than adults in their understanding of fast fashion.
- A majority of young people recognise the importance of political leaders in the mitigation of climate change yet have little knowledge of political meetings such as COP26, the G7 Summit or who the current political leader for climate change is.
- Young people are more likely than adults to recognise climate change impacting on the lives of Britons.
- Young people are more likely than adults to recognise the impact of climate change on other people around the world.
- 72% of young people are willing to support key habits in reducing climate change compared to 62% of adults. These changes include not driving new diesel and petrol cars, paying more for flights, meat and heating homes.
- A majority of young people (53%) support the ban of the sale of new diesel and petrol cars (compared to only 29% of adults)
- 82% of young people support a shift away from a reliance on fossil fuelled power.
- 43% of young people are opposed to an increased reliance on nuclear power while the Government have committed to developing this sector and are constructing a site at Hinkley in Somerset which will be completed by the mid 2020's.
- There is a split in young people's feelings regarding a potential increase in the cost of meat (48% yes, 47% no).

Recommendations:

- Include young people in data collection that reflects a population in order to ensure this group's views are made visible.
- Develop a shared methodology to make the collection of widescale data from young people on climate education reproducible and comparable with each other and with adults.
- Develop climate change education policies and pedagogies in all schools to support young people in learning about and mitigating climate change and raise awareness of the Government's key targets, (in)actions and challenges to the issues.

- Design opportunities for young people to explore sustainable food and facilitate the discussion of a variety of options especially with regard the production and consumption of protein sources.
- Design opportunities for young people and adults to explore fast fashion and facilitate the discussion of ways of supporting more sustainable supply chains.
- Design opportunities for young people to explore the climate impact of domestic heating and facilitate opportunities for them to become informed about policies and practices that support our most vulnerable.
- Undertake further climate change education research and communicate the issues affectively through teacher, initial teacher education and young people's networks.
- Plan for and implement continual development programmes (CPD) for teachers and trainee teachers in all subjects and school phases in order to share good practice and support the progress and well-being of teachers and learners in relation to climate change education.
- When implementing climate change education, ensure that there is focus on how the individual is part of a complex system for change - rather than the only route to mitigation.
- The link between climate change and young people's well-being should be explored and supported in schools to reduce feelings of helplessness and negative responses to climate anxiety.
- Young people's counselling services, school councillors and wellbeing co-ordinators, teachers and trainee teachers to be made aware of eco-anxiety indicators and strategies to support young people with dealing with this.
- Improve signposting and reporting on climate change policies, processes and mitigation strategies for adults and young people in the community through recognised centres.

Contents

Introduction:.....	4
Method:.....	5
Results:	5
Limitations of the Report:.....	16
Conclusion:	16
References:	18
Acknowledgments:	18

Introduction:

The G7 Summit meets this week in Cornwall, where leaders from seven of the world’s richest countries gather to discuss the most pressing issues of the day; one of them being climate change. It is perhaps not surprising that Cornwall is the site for this summit being central to the UK's green technology sector. The county has abundant coastline and advantageous wind directions for off shore turbines, a bedrock of granite ideal to explore geothermal potential and is one of the sunniest parts of the UK with up to [1,600 hours of sunshine a year](#) - making it favourable for solar farms. Decarbonising electricity has been a focus of Cornwall Council with [37% of its electricity](#) already being generated from renewables and an aim for net zero carbon twenty years ahead of the rest of the UK. Politically, positioning the country's green credentials at the G7 is important ahead of the government hosting the UN’s Global Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow this November.

The consequences of climate change are becoming part of people’s everyday worlds as they live with increased risks of drought, flood and wildfires. Such conditions bring with them associated difficulties in food production, disease control and conservation efforts that have global impacts. Meetings such as the G7 Summit and COP26 provide a platform for world leaders to recognise these threats and work to combat their affects. However, a [recent survey commissioned by Sky News](#) reported that a quarter of Britons are unwilling to change key habits to help tackle climate change with 69% of those polled reporting that they were not personally affected by climate change. However, in a survey that purported to represent the voice of Britain, it is notable that this survey did not include any responses of those people under 18 years old.

There are [over 13 million young people](#) in Britain who were not represented in the Sky News survey. While the under 18s (and under 17s in Wales) may not be able to vote, many are not passive in their position on climate, making their concerns heard through, for example, ongoing school climate strikes. In addition, while young people of Britain may not experience the day to day extremes of droughts, floods and wildfires, that young people from other areas of the world face, [greater numbers are reporting](#)

[eco-anxiety](#). Young people are experiencing increased emotional burden in response to climate change. This is impacting on their well-being with Climate Psychology Alliances’, [Caroline Hickman](#) commenting that adults should learn from young people regarding how we should take responsibility and use these concerns as a catalyst for change. Yet, the voices of young people were not represented alongside those of adults by Sky News.

Asking young people’s opinions on climate change is nothing new. In 2008 the United National Environment Programme (UNEP) released results from a survey of 12-18 year olds from five countries (Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa and the United States). Here, 85% of youth were ‘somewhat concerned’, with 58% being ‘very concerned’ about climate change. These results were higher than for their adult counterparts ([Brechin, 2010](#)) indicating a difference in experience and level of engagement with the issues.

As a significant, actively political group within the British population whose lives will be impacted by climate change more than current adults, it is essential that any survey representing the populations’ views include young people. [Dr Verity Jones](#) (University of the West of England, Bristol), on behalf of the [Global Goals Centre](#), developed a survey for young people that mirrored the survey with adult respondents in order to make young people’s voices visible in this debate.

Method:

Ethical clearance was gained from the University of the West of England, Bristol to undertake this research.

Questions from the [You.Gov survey](#) in March 2021, commissioned by Sky News, were re-written for the clarity of young people with a focus group of 7-16 year olds. A link to an online survey with an additional information sheet about the nature of the survey and why it was being undertaken was then distributed to schools and youth organisations around Britain. The survey was ‘live’ from 10th – 31st May after which time data was compared to the adult’s survey responses and this report written.

Results:

Of the 1170 participants, 1010 agreed their responses could be used in this report. All reference to adult data below refers to responses from [the Sky News survey \(2021\)](#).

Table 1: Sample size

Total	Gender			Age													Region						
	Boy	Girl	Pref er not to say	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Sc	N	Mi d	SE	SW	Wa	Don 't know	
Total	1170	334	541	56	23	51	34	81	92	21	153	51	59	89	65	32	2	44	15	86	542	172	64
%		35.88	58.11	6.02	2.48	5.52	3.67	8.75	9.94	19.6	16.53	5.51	6.37	9.61	7.02	3.46	0.22	4.75	1.62	9.29	58.53	18.57	6.91

How much do you trust the UK Government to make the right decisions about sorting out climate change?

The UK Government are central to national and international discussions and policy making about climate change and the mitigation of its impacts. As the UK hosts both the G7 summit and COP26 meeting in 2021, the international role of the state is brought into focus.

Table 2: Trust in the Government

	Total	%
Trust them a lot	28	3.14
Trust them quite a bit	234	26.23
TOTAL TRUST	266	29.37
Do not trust them very much	337	37.78
Do not trust them at all	175	19.62
TOTAL DO NOT TRUST	512	57.4
I don't know	118	13.23
	892	

57% of young people reported that they did not trust the UK Government to make the right decisions about mitigating the impact of climate change. This is consistent with figures from the Sky News survey that reported 54% of adults did not trust the Government to act appropriately on this topic.

How well do you understand words used about climate change?

Climate change is a complex issue that integrates global and local processes with impacts and solutions. The survey asked for clarity on understanding of renewable energy, carbon emissions, fast fashion, carbon foot printing and COP26.

Renewable energy refers to those means of energy capture that do not rely on the use of fossil fuels and their associated high carbon emissions. Renewable energy can include wind, solar, geothermal and hydro, tidal and biomass.

Table 3: Understanding of Renewable Energy

	Total	%
Totally understand	477	55.85
Understand a bit	266	31.15
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	743	87
Don't understand a bit	48	5.62
Don't understand at all	63	7.38
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	111	13
	854	

Similar results were reported by both adults (84%) and young people (87%) with regard understanding of what renewable energy was. 13% of young people did not understand this term.

Carbon emissions, when referred to in the media, tend to relate to changes in the atmosphere's composition. Increased carbon emissions through, for example, industrialisation, deforestation and

agricultural practices that rely on fossil fuels have seen an increase in atmospheric carbon which is contributing to global climate change. Global climate carbon cycle models are used in order to make global warming targets that can be converted into fossil fuel emission targets.

Table 4: Understanding of Carbon Emissions

	Total	%
Totally understand	349	41.01
Understand a bit	283	33.25
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	632	74.26
Don't understand a bit	121	14.22
Don't understand at all	98	11.52
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	219	25.74
	851	

While there was no detail required to inform participants' answers to questions regarding understanding climate change related terms in the survey, 74% of young people and 84% of adults felt confident in their understanding of carbon emissions. 25% of young people did not understand this term.

The term fast fashion relates to the design, manufacturing, and marketing method based on rapidly producing high volumes of (often) cheap clothing which have short trends. This quick turnaround encourages the consumer to buy new and buy (and discard) often. The [World Bank](#) reporting that 40% of purchased clothing is never worn. As a high gain, low overheads, linear economic model the people and supporting environment in the supply chains are often put at risk. The industry contributes [10% of global carbon](#) emissions.

Table 5: Understanding of Fast Fashion

	Total	%
Totally understand	257	30.27
Understand a bit	165	19.43
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	422	49.7
Don't understand a bit	178	20.97
Don't understand at all	249	29.33
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	247	50.3
	849	

Young people are slightly more likely (50%) to understand the term fast fashion than adults (44%). 50% of young people do not understand this term.

Greenhouse gases include, but are not limited to, water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone. These gases are essential in maintaining the greenhouse effect. This process results in the planet being able to absorb light energy and maintain a temperature that is appropriate for life to exist. With increased concentrations of greenhouse gases (for example, carbon and methane from human activities such as more intensive agriculture and industrialisation) the effect is enhanced leading to global warming.

Table 6: Understanding of Greenhouse Gas

	Total	%
Totally understand	520	61.10
Understand a bit	206	24.21
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	726	85.31
Don't understand a bit	60	7.05
Don't understand at all	65	7.64
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	125	14.69
	851	

A majority of both adults and young people are clear in their understanding of greenhouse gas (81% and 85% respectively). 14% of young people did not understand this term.

In November 2021, COP26 will be held in Glasgow, having been postponed in 2020 due to the Covid19 pandemic. This 26th 'Conference Of the Parties' has been referred to as being humanities '[last chance](#)' and '[last hope](#)' of agreement on how to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Table 7: Understanding of COP26

	Total	%
Totally understand	49	5.77
Understand a bit	106	12.49
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	155	18.26
Don't understand a bit	164	19.32
Don't understand at all	530	62.43
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	694	81.75
	849	

Less than 20% of either young people or adults understood what COP26 was. 82% of young people did not understand this term.

Carbon foot printing is a term relating to a measure of the total greenhouse gas emissions caused either directly or indirectly by a person, organisation, event or product. For more information regarding the different types of carbon foot printing see the [Carbon Trusts' Introductory Guide](#).

Table 8: Understanding of Carbon footprint

	Total	%
Totally understand	467	55.01
Understand a bit	226	26.62
TOTAL UNDERSTAND	693	81.63
Don't understand a bit	74	8.72
Don't understand at all	82	9.66
TOTAL DO NOT UNDERSTAND	156	18.38
	849	

Adults and young people have the same level of understanding regarding carbon foot printing at 82%. 18% of young people do not understand this term.

Who in government is responsible for climate change at the moment?

Participants were asked who was responsible for climate change in the UK government at the moment. They were asked to choose from: Dominic Raab, Liz Truss, Michael Gove, Priti Patel, Alok Sharma, someone else or don't know. Participants were encouraged to indicate 'don't know' rather than guess an answer.

In November 2021, the COP26 meeting will be held in Glasgow, the president for which is the UK's Alok Sharma.

Chart 1: Who in government is responsible for climate change?



Similarly to young people's understanding of COP26 in an earlier question, participants had little knowledge of who the leading UK political figure for climate change is at present. 87.5% of young people said they did not know who in the government was currently responsible for climate change, compared with 84% of adults.

Who has been impacted by climate change?

The survey asked respondents who they felt were being impacted by the affects of climate change, choosing from 'you', 'people in the UK' and 'people in other countries'.

The impacts of climate change in Britain may not be as obvious as in other countries. For example, Britain has not had the wildfires seen in Australia in 2019/20, or droughts that required the import of water from neighbouring countries such as those seen in Spain in 2008. While growing numbers of Britons may experience food poverty, [Oxfam](#) reports that there are 10 million people worldwide facing emergency famine conditions in areas such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Yemen.

Table 9: Impacts of climate change on you

	Total	%
A lot	100	11.86
Some	222	26.33
TOTAL A LOT/SOME	322	38.19
A little bit	308	36.54
Not at all	135	16.01
TOTAL A LITTLE BIT/NOT AT ALL	443	52.55
Don't know	78	9.25
	843	

38% of young people think they have been affected by climate change compared to 21% of adults.

Table 10: Impacts of climate change on people in the UK

	Total	%
A lot	190	22.54
Some	367	43.53
TOTAL A LOT/SOME	557	66.07
A little bit	204	24.29
Not at all	26	3.08
TOTAL A LITTLE BIT/NOT AT ALL	230	27.37
Don't know	56	6.64
	843	

Young people (66%) are more likely than adults (50%) to think that people in the UK have been affected by climate change.

Table 11: Impacts of climate change on people in other countries

	Total	%
A lot	541	63.35
Some	177	20.73
TOTAL A LOT/SOME	718	84.08
A little bit	63	7.38
Not at all	8	0.94
TOTAL A LITTLE BIT/NOT AT ALL	71	8.32
Don't know	65	7.61
	854	

Young people (84%) are much more likely than adults (69%) to think that people in other countries have been affected by climate change.

Who is most responsible for climate change happening?

Many [different groups](#) have been accused of being responsible for climate change and the ongoing lack of action. For example, [the Carbon Majors Report \(2017\)](#) showed that there are just 100 active fossil fuel producers linked to over 70% of the global industrial greenhouse gas emissions. However, the complexity of supply chains and the power and politics within these make it difficult to identify who has the power over what choices - is it the extractors of fossil fuels, the manufacturers who make products using those fuels, the local governments who regulate the production and sales of those products, the consumers who buy them? The solutions chosen to mitigate climate change will inevitably impact many, if not all in this chain. The survey asked who was thought to be most responsible for climate change happening from: ordinary people, businesses and factories, governments of rich countries, governments of poor countries or someone else

Table 12: Comparison of young people’s and adult’s response to who is responsible for climate change.

	Young people (%)	Adults (%)
Ordinary People	14	15
Business and Factories	50	27
Governments of rich countries	20	37
Governments of poor countries	3	6
Someone else	2	1
I don’t know	11	14

Young people are most likely to say that ‘business and factories’ (50%) are responsible for climate change in comparison to adults (37%) who identify governments of rich countries being most responsible. The identification of ordinary people as being responsible may indicate a great self awareness of the need for personal climate change action. 14% of young people identified ordinary people as being the most responsible for climate change. Further research would be needed in order to ascertain whether there is a link between this and feelings of eco-anxiety associated with self blame.

Who do you think has the BIGGEST role to play in stopping climate change?

When asked who has the biggest role to play in mitigating the impact of climate change, participants could choose from: ordinary people, business and factories, governments of rich countries, governments of poor countries or someone else.

Identifying how individuals can mitigate climate change on a personal basis has long been a way of encouraging involvement in addressing climate change. For example the UK Government released a ‘[are you doing your bit](#)’ campaign in 1997. However, with the identification of the 100 active fossil fuel producers (as noted above), the impact of personal activity has been questioned.

Table 12: Comparison young people’s and adult’s response to who has the biggest role to play?

	Young People (%)	Adults (%)
Ordinary People	29	15
Business and Factories	23	27
Governments of rich countries	35	37

Governments of poor countries	2	6
Someone else	2	1
I don't know	9	14

Governments of rich countries are seen as having the biggest role to play in reducing the impact of climate change for both adults (37%) and young people (35%). This indicates that conferences and summits such as G7 and COP26 may be considered significant – yet previous questions have identified that little is known about these. It is notable that young people's second most popular response to this question was 'ordinary people' (29%) and again indicates the importance this group place on personal mitigation practices. Similarly to the previous question, more research is required to ascertain links between this and feelings of eco-anxiety associated with self-blame or feelings of helplessness at the situation.

Which of actions would you support to mitigate climate change?

The Government have set out a [10 point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#) (2020) which includes a strategy delivering more nuclear power, shifting vehicles to zero emissions - including aviation emissions – and improving energy efficiency of homes. The green house gas emissions associated with the farming of meat (especially beef), is well documented. In 2017 the [National Farmers Union](#) reported that 10% of UK greenhouse gas emissions were the result of agricultural practices with 5.7% of those emissions being accounted for by cattle and sheep.

In the survey, all participants were asked what actions they would personally support in order to stop / reduce the affects of climate change. These included: stopping selling new diesel and petrol cars (a policy to come into place by 2030 in the UK); building new nuclear power stations, stopping the use of fossil fuel powered stations, increasing the price of meat; increasing the price of flights for holiday and work; and increasing the cost of domestic heating.

Table 13: Should we stop selling new diesel and petrol cars?

	Total	%
Yes	430	51.13
Maybe	240	28.54
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	670	79.67
Maybe Not	68	8.09
No	65	7.73
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	133	15.82
I don't know	38	4.52
	841	

By 2030, when legislation regarding the selling of new petrol and diesel cars come into force, 92% of respondents will be 17+years old and so legally able to take a driving test. 80% of all young people in the survey were likely to support stopping selling diesel and petrol cars – a 30% increase on adults (50% supporting this).

90% of young people in the survey will be 18+ years by 2030 when much of the Government's Green Industrial Strategy will come into force. At this point these participants will be in a position to vote. At present [EDF](#) are currently constructing a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C that will provide low carbon electricity to meet 7% of the UK demand. The government have also made commitments to extending the UKs reliance on nuclear power.

Table 14: Should we build more nuclear power stations?

	Total	%
Yes	165	19.83
Maybe	204	24.52
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	369	44.35
Maybe Not	105	12.62
No	255	30.65
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	360	43.27
I don't know	103	12.38
	832	

43% of young people think that nuclear power stations should not be built compared to 35% of adults. 44% of young people are in support of the development of more nuclear power stations.

The Government have committed to reducing the demand for fossil fuel powered stations. They are planning to quadruple the UK's offshore wind power in the Green Industrial Strategy and promote low carbon hydrogen production for industry, transport, power and homes. The first town heated by hydrogen is planned by 2030.

Table 15: Should we stop using fossil fuel power stations?

	Total	%
Yes	508	60.84
Maybe	178	21.32
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	686	82.16
Maybe Not	52	6.23
No	49	5.87
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	101	12.1
Don't know	48	5.75
	835	

Young people are very clear that fossil fuel power stations should not be used (82%), compared to 39% of adults.

People in rich nations eat more than the recommended amount of red meat – a practice that is linked to increased heart disease, strokes and diabetes. [Research](#) has found that a 20% tax on red meat would reflect the healthcare costs incurred by those people eating it. The resulting higher price would also lead to a cut in meat consumption. Currently people in rich nations consume on average one portion of meat a day and taxes would reduce this to twice a week – leading to decreases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with farming. With recent sugar taxes being implemented by the UK government, [researchers](#) note that there are strong grounds for a similar taxing of meat that could be implemented in the next decade.

Table 16: Should we make meat cost more?

*Sky News asked about new taxes on meat, like beef that produces a lot of carbon emissions

	Total	%
Yes	198	23.66
Maybe	204	24.37
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	402	48.03
Maybe Not	140	16.73
No	253	30.23
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	393	46.96
Don't know	42	5.02
	833	

While 55% of adults felt that meat products should not increase in price, young people were divided equally (48% yes and 47% no). Further research is required to explore what changes in diets, especially with regard protein, might be acceptable to young people in order to address agricultures' impact on the climate.

In the Government's Green Industrial Revolution plan, increasing low carbon air travel is a target. The current COP presidency (culminating in the COP26 summit in November 2021) has been identified as a time to develop the UK as a sector leader in sustainable aviation fuel.

Table 17: Should we make flying for holidays and work cost more?

* Adult survey asked should we make air travellers pay more in taxes the further they fly?

	Total	%
Yes	131	15.73
Maybe	201	24.13
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	332	39.86
Maybe Not	174	20.89
No	286	34.33
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	460	55.22
I don't know	41	4.92
	833	

40% of young people support increasing air fares – 10% less than adults. Further research is required to identify why this is the case and how this may relate to future travel practices. Routes of enquiry may consider young people's knowledge regarding aviation and its impact on the climate, lack of financial responsibility (compared to adults) and enjoyment of holidays and benefits to well-being.

The Government's Green Industrial Revolution plan sets out ways in which new buildings will be made more energy efficient and move away from fossil fuel boilers. Encouraging a shift from gas and coal is essential to cut carbon emissions and in 2013 the [Government reported](#) how they would support the impacts of energy and climate change policies on energy prices, including policies to protect the most vulnerable.

Table 18: Should we make heating homes cost more?

* Adult survey asked should we raise gas bills to encourage people to swap to electricity.

	Total	%
Yes	63	7.54
Maybe	143	17.13
TOTAL YES/MAYBE	206	24.67
Maybe Not	189	22.63
No	392	46.95
TOTAL NO/MAYBE NOT	581	69.58
I don't know	48	5.75
	835	

Both young people (70%) and adults (60%) would not support making heating more expensive for homes. The data suggests that this is a considered response. When analysing the data by age groups, 58% primary age (7-11) and 54% of secondary + ages (12-18) say no to paying more for flying; 51% primary and 45% secondary say no to paying more for meat, while 70% in both categories say no to paying more for heating. This strength of feeling requires further exploration. Lines of enquiry may consider the level of understanding for both young people and adults regarding the costs, impacts and policies that can support (or are needed to support) the most vulnerable with regard heating poverty and how young people can help communicate these through intergenerational relations as well as in preparation for independent living.

If you had to do ONE of these to reduce the UK's carbon emissions, which would it be?

Young people were asked to choose one action they felt would be able to reduce carbon emissions from: never using petrol or diesel cars; paying more for flights; paying more for meat; and paying more for heating homes. Respondents were also given the option of choosing not having any of these things happen.

Table 18: What would you do to reduce the UK's carbon emissions?

	Young People (%)	Adults (%)
Never use petrol or diesel cars	53	29
Pay more for flights	8	20
Pay more for meat	9	13
Pay more for heating homes	2	2
I don't want any of these to happen	15	23
I don't know	13	13

Overall, 72% of young people were willing to support one of these key targets, compared to 64% of adults. Both adults and young people were most likely to say that they would never use a petrol or diesel car. However, this was by far the most popular option for young people (53%).

2% of young people referred to not wanting an increase in heating of homes. The [Government reported](#) that 3.8million (13.4%) households in the UK suffer fuel poverty with [Save the Children](#) noting that fuel poverty impacts all young people. They note that infants from fuel poor homes have a 30% increased likelihood of admission to hospital, children have a greater risk of respiratory problems and poor weight gain, and adolescents are at a greater risk of multiple mental health conditions. So, while young people may be unable to manage finances, many are aware of living in thermal discomfort.

15% of young people did not want any of these actions to be taken, compared to 23% of adults. As there was no opportunity for participants to state what other actions they would support, it cannot be assumed that this proportion of the population does not support climate change mitigation. The survey suggests that these particular actions are not popular and further detailed insight is needed.

Think about climate change and then chose the sentence you think is true

The survey asked participants which of two sentences they felt was true, one porporting to humanity mitigating climate change, the other not.

	Children (%)	Adults (%)
It is possible for the world to sort out climate change	74	68
It is impossible for the world to sort our climate change	9	10
Neither	8	9
I don't know	9	13

74% of young people were positive about the future and that we will be able to make appropriate decisions in order to combat the problems associated with climate change, compared to 68% of adults. 18% of young people either feel there is no way of mitigating climate change or are unsure whether the problems can be reconciled. This indicates that there is uncertainty and possible negativity surrounding these issues that may lead to eco-anxiety. This may require well being support to explore climate change education sensitively.

Limitations of the Report:

The survey was distributed to schools after which time there was no administration oversight by the research team. This may have resulted in surveys being completed by young people with different levels of support.

The survey was live for 3 weeks, during which time A-Levels and GCSE's were being 'tested' – traditional examinations not in place due to Covid19. However, these local testing arrangements may have reduced the time and possible distribution to these cohorts.

Conclusion:

Climate change is a complex concept with multiple processes and routes to mitigation that are difficult to navigate. This report indicates that young people are more likely to feel affected by climate change than adults and that they have a greater recognition that people in other countries have been affected. Whilst climate change is complex, the survey indicates that young people feel confident with many of

the terms used in relation to it (e.g. carbon emissions and greenhouse gases), and with regard 'fast fashion', are more informed than adults. However, there are significant numbers of young people who are still unclear with regard all of these terms. As climate change is not explicitly mentioned in the Primary National Curriculum (DfE 2013), there is still room to grow this understanding and ensure all young people are well informed citizens. Of particular note is the understanding of fast fashion which, while greater than in the adult's survey response, still only accounts for half of young people. This is an area that requires more research which in turn needs to be communicated to teachers and education facilitators through ongoing continued professional development.

While many young people acknowledge the important part, governments have in mitigating climate change, there is a general lack of awareness for the forthcoming global conferences and summits where issues of climate change will be discussed, as well as who within UK Government leads on these issues. How young people may be better informed regarding these issues should be considered and planned for, in relation to key targets.

A majority of young people are willing to support the key habits recognised by the Government and researchers as ways to mitigate climate change – 10% more than adults. Young people are particularly willing to support the ban of new diesel and petrol cars and a shift from a reliance of fossil fuelled energy. However, there is uncertainty from young people regarding supporting a focus on growing the nuclear power sector and a majority do not support increasing the cost of meat and home heating. It is suggested that this is explored in future research and opportunities for young people to explore these issues are enabled.

With 74% of young people feeling that humanity will be able to mitigate climate change there is general positivity for the future. However, there are growing numbers of young people suffering the symptoms of eco-anxiety and with 9% of the population feeling there is no route to sorting out the problems occurring because of climate change, greater levels of anxiety and related emotional responses may be occurring in this group. Such challenges and the teaching of sensitive issues need to be carefully planned for and supported with ongoing research, training and communication.

Recommendations:

- Include young people in data collection that reflects a population in order to ensure this group's views are made visible.
- Develop a shared methodology to make the collection of widescale data from young people on climate education reproducible and comparable with each other and with adults.
- Develop climate change education policies and pedagogies in all schools to support young people in learning about and mitigating climate change and raise awareness of the Government's key targets, (in)actions and challenges to the issues.
- Design opportunities for young people to explore sustainable food and facilitate the discussion of a variety of options especially with regard the production and consumption of protein sources.
- Design opportunities for young people and adults to explore fast fashion and facilitate the discussion of ways of supporting more sustainable supply chains.
- Design opportunities for young people to explore the climate impact of domestic heating and facilitate opportunities for them to become informed about policies and practices that support our most vulnerable.
- Undertake further climate change education research and communicate the issues affectively through teacher, initial teacher education and young people's networks.
- Plan for and implement continual development programmes (CPD) for teachers and trainee teachers in all subjects and school phases in order to share good practice and support the progress and well-being of teachers and learners in relation to climate change education.

- When implementing climate change education, ensure that there is focus on how the individual is part of a complex system for change - rather than the only route to mitigation.
- The link between climate change and young people's well-being should be explored and supported in schools to reduce feelings of helplessness and negative responses to climate anxiety.
- Young people's counselling services, school councillors and wellbeing co-ordinators, teachers and trainee teachers to be made aware of eco-anxiety indicators and strategies to support young people with dealing with this.
- Improve signposting and reporting on climate change policies, processes and mitigation strategies for adults and young people in the community through recognised centres

References:

Department for Education (2013) *The national curriculum in England: key stages 1 and 2 framework document*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum> (Accessed: 6th June 2021)

MarchHansen J, Kharecha P, Sato M, Masson-Delmotte V, Ackerman F, Beerling DJ, et al. (2013) [Assessing “Dangerous Climate Change”: Required Reduction of Carbon Emissions to Protect Young People, Future Generations and Nature](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0081648). PLoS ONE 8(12): e81648. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0081648>

Acknowledgments:

This work was funded by UWE, Bristol. Data analysis was supported by Dr Tessa Podpadec.