

VotesforCOP26 Data Report

Working alongside:

UNITED KINGDOM

unicef  | for every child



Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.

— “ —

Each week, VotesforSchools creates resources for teachers to facilitate an informed, considered, respectful discussion with their classes on pressing issues of the day.

We are totally passionate about children and young people having a voice on these matters, and having agency in their own futures by ensuring that their voice is heard and has an impact. There is no bigger issue for our children's future than climate change, so we are delighted to have



been able to work alongside UNICEF UK to create free resources, initiate debate and make sure these views are heard loud and clear in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow.

— ” —

KATE HARRIS, CEO & CO-FOUNDER,
VOTESFORSCHOOLS, OCTOBER 2021



VOTESFORCOP26

Between 09th Sep - 01st Oct 2021

46,045 children and young people

age 4 -18 have voted on the question:

**"Will climate change
affect children's rights?"**

95% are
concerned about
climate change.

89% think not
enough is
being done.

81% feel young
people are not
being listened to.

— “ —

If governments don't reduce emissions and prevent big corporations from damaging the environment it will affect children's health and wellbeing both physically and mentally. Governments fail to understand the toll that it takes on mental health knowing that the older generations are doing nothing to prevent a crisis that we will take the brunt of, and feeling powerless to stop it.

— ” —
AGE 17, BRISTOL - ENGLAND

— “ —
Children have a right to a future
with a healthy, safe planet.
— ” —

**AGE 11,
BRISTOL - ENGLAND**

— “ —
Climate change
affects what happens
in my future!
— ” —

**AGE 14,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND**

— “ —
Everyone is spending so much time thinking about what is
going on and talking about it but not taking enough action.
At somepoint between 2027 and 2045, climate change will
be irreversible. Additionally, it is the younger generation who
will have to clean up the older generations messes so it should
be our right to speak up for ourselves because, in the end, we
will have to deal with these problems. Climate change gets
progressively worse over time and if action isn't taken now, it
will be so much more difficult in the future. To conclude, I
would like to see more being done about climate change
because it will affect everything as we know it.
— ” —

**AGE 12,
LONDON - ENGLAND**

— “ —
Children have to live with the mistakes of adults,
their wrongs and opinions. But as we grow up we
as a generation understand what is going on
with the world and should have a valid say.
— ” —

**AGE 14,
LONDON -
ENGLAND**

— “ —
It's children's future so why don't they decide what will happen to them?
— ” —

**AGE 11,
BRISTOL - ENGLAND**

— “ —
We should stop climate change and I think children should have a right to have a voice in COP26. I think climate change affects our rights as children because it will affect our education and health, which will impact our ability to learn and become successful in our future.
— ” —

**PRIMARY VOTER,
LEICESTERSHIRE - ENGLAND**

— “ —
Because we (the next generation) will be the ones suffering from it.
— ” —

**AGE 12,
LONDON - ENGLAND**

— “ —
It can change the right to go outside and the right to a healthy amount of water. The earth is heating up, which will cause shortages of water in some areas and flooding in others, climate change needs to be helped. It needs attention and it needs it ASAP!
— ” —

**AGE 11,
HIGHLANDS - SCOTLAND**

— “ —
I think it will affect children's rights because the consequences are going to happen during our time and we don't get to have a say. More and more decisions will be made for us so that climate change can stop but we don't actually get involved.
— ” —

**AGE 13,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND**

VotesforSchools worked alongside UNICEF UK to create resources for schools to ensure that children and young people (aged 4 to 16+) had an informed vote.

They had one month to consider and discuss a number of issues and questions about the impact of climate change on children's rights.

We have been supported by a huge range of organisations who have commented on these results (see page 19).

We made a commitment to our young voters that their voices would be heard at COP26.

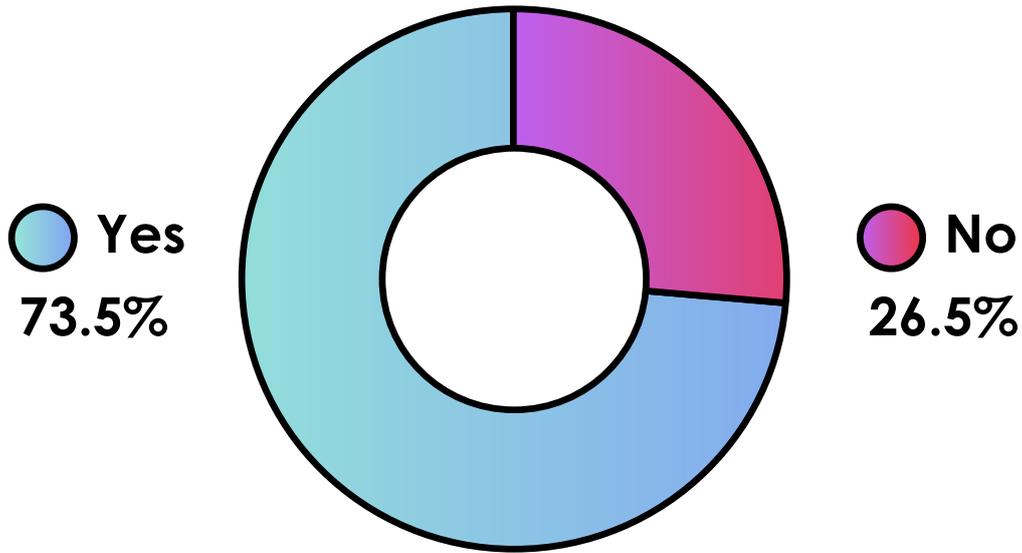
We invite you to read what children and young people think about this very important question at such a critical time and to use this data to support policy change for the future.

At the end of November, a further report will be published as feedback to the children and young people about the role their voices played at COP26 and the impact they have had.

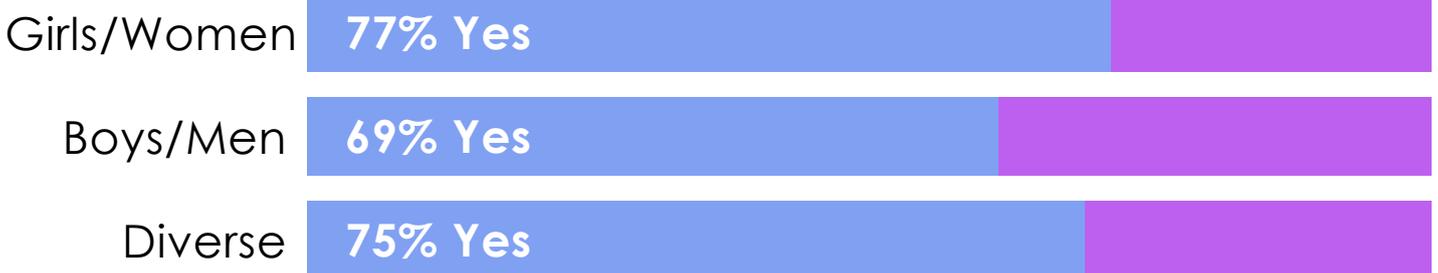
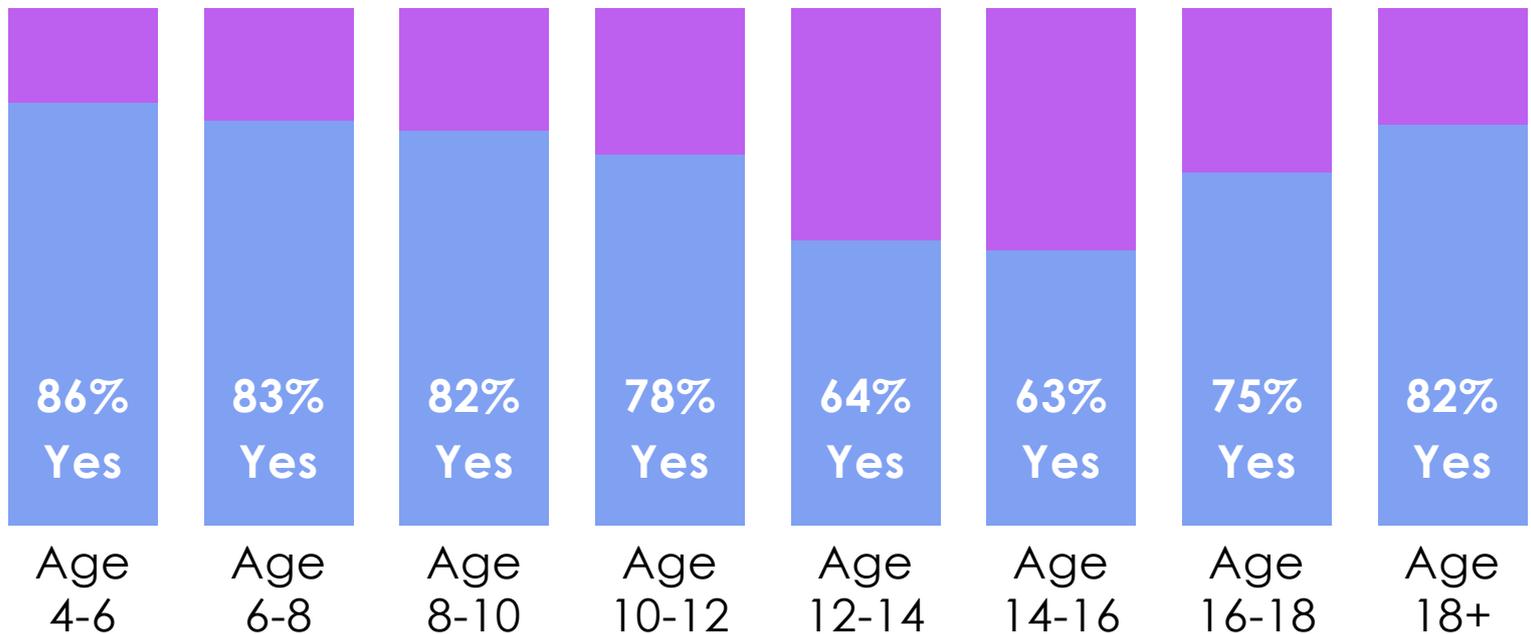
In order to support and empower the next generation, we believe that it's essential that they have agency in all matters that affect their future.

Vote Results

"Will climate change affect children's rights?"



We've received a **total of 46,045 votes**, including 215 from outside the UK. These results show that almost **3 out of 4 young people** believe climate change will affect children's rights.



Vote Results

Our voters gave a wide range of reasons for their voting choices.

For participants who voted 'Yes', the main focus was on the impact climate change will bring with it, such as limited access to food & water or changes in weather. One of the predominant themes amongst comments from learners who voted 'Yes' was the impact climate change will have on children's futures, with 25% of all comments making reference to this.

“

If we do not act now, when children grow up they will live in a world that can affect their everyday lives and health.

”

AGE 11, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

For the majority of voters who said 'No', the most common reason cited in their comments was a perceived missing link between children's rights and climate change.

“

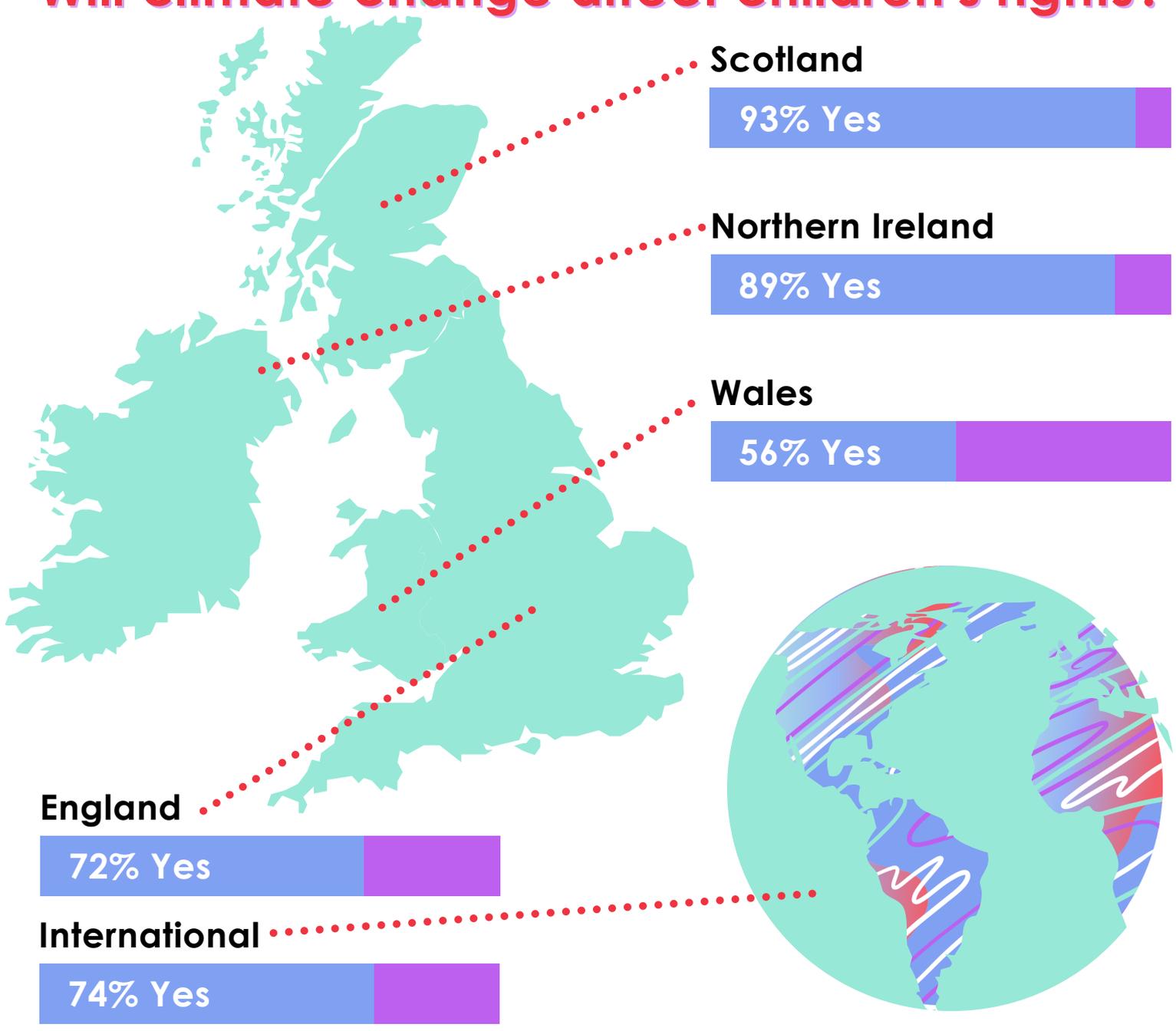
The rights of a child are vital. Nothing should change the rights of young people, not even climate change. Children should be able to have the freedom they need at such a young stage; they are still developing and need to have the freedom to do so. Climate change will definitely make changes to the world, but the rights of a human being should still be the same. Some powerful politicians will not agree with children when they [children] try to prove an important point about climate change, this is due to the fact that those politicians believe they are the highest of all, and should not listen to children.

”

AGE 12, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

Vote Results

"Will climate change affect children's rights?"



— “ —

World leaders need to strongly consider the effects that climate change is having and is going to have on the younger generation as it will affect them directly. We need to consider recycling more, using fewer vehicles and protecting our environment.

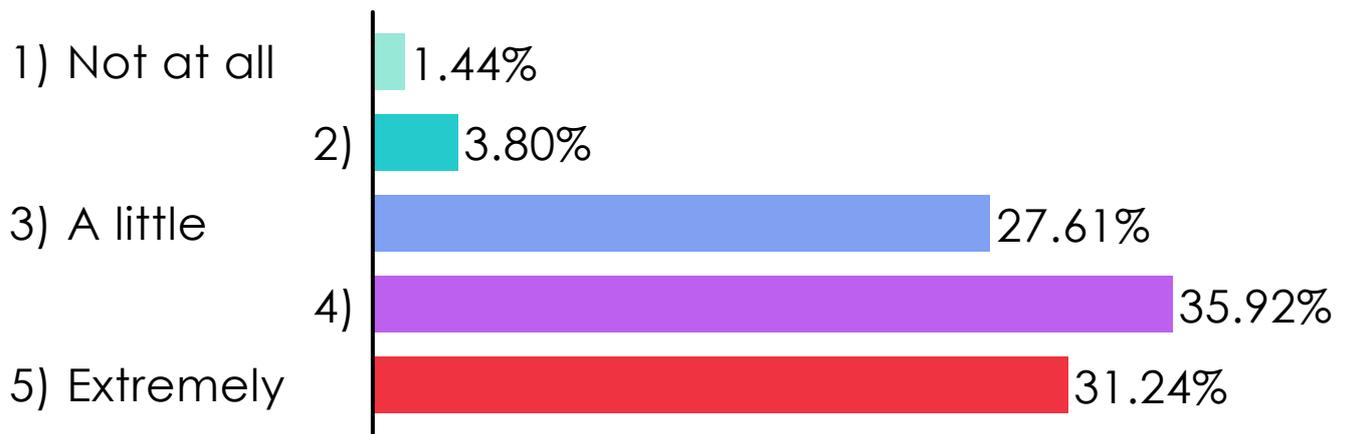
— ” —

PRIMARY VOTER, WEST MIDLANDS - ENGLAND

Big Questions

In addition to our main VoteTopic question, we gave our voters the option to also make their voices heard on our 9 Big Questions.

Big Question #1: Where 1 is the least and 5 is the most, how concerned are you about climate change?



(Out of 12,751 who responded to this question.)

— “

We are worried about the effect climate change is having on the world and the environment currently and in the future.

” —

AGE 14-15, LONDON - ENGLAND

— “

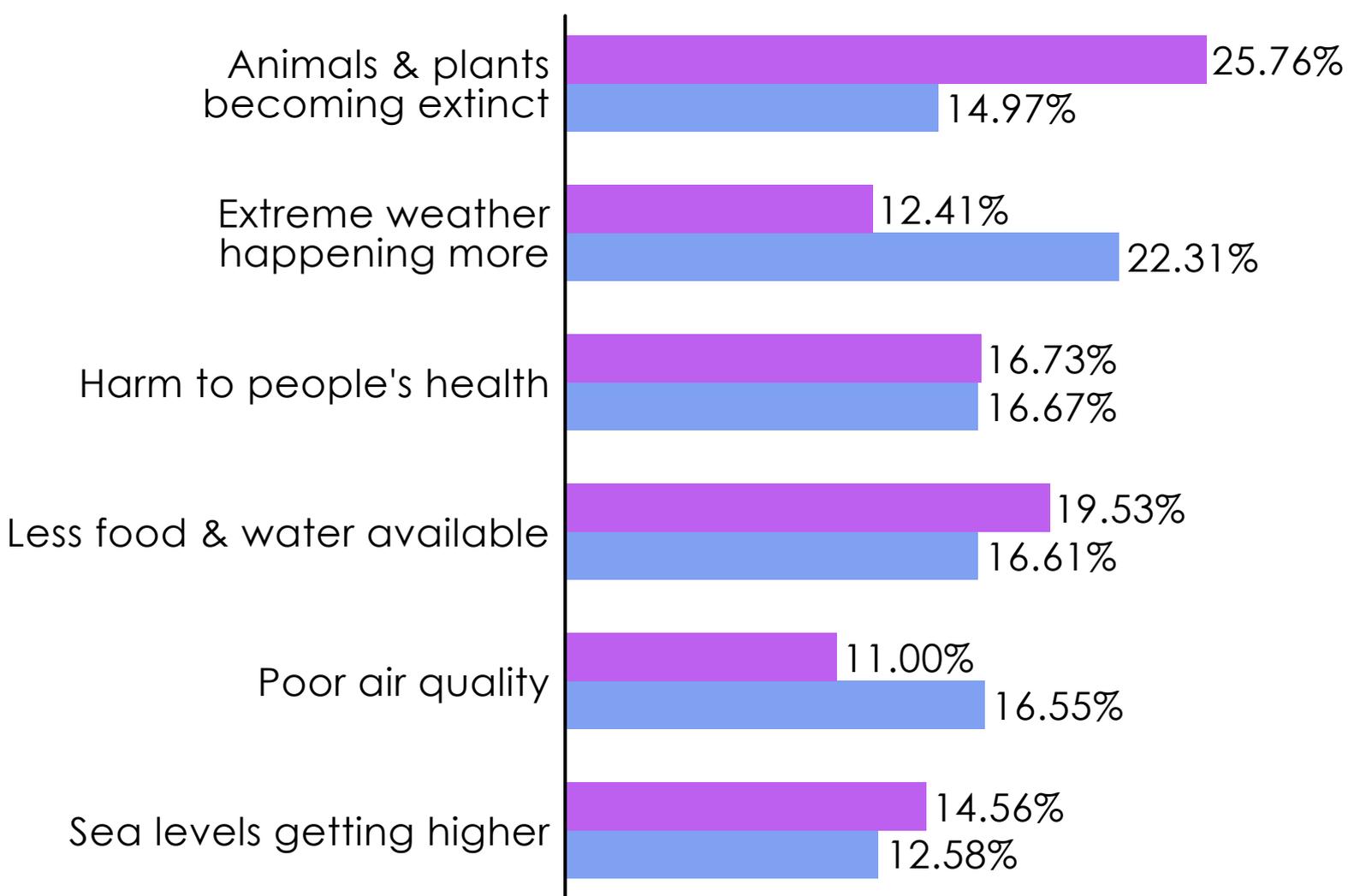
It affects children and more and more animals are getting extinct plus, more and more sea levels are rising. People also keep chopping down trees and throwing rubbish into the sea and I'm very concerned about climate change and really want to vote.

” —

AGE 11, DERBYSHIRE - ENGLAND

Big Questions #2 & 3:

What do you think is the biggest concern about climate change worldwide vs. where you live?



(Out of 13,302 who responded to biggest concern worldwide and 11,647 to the biggest concern where you live.)

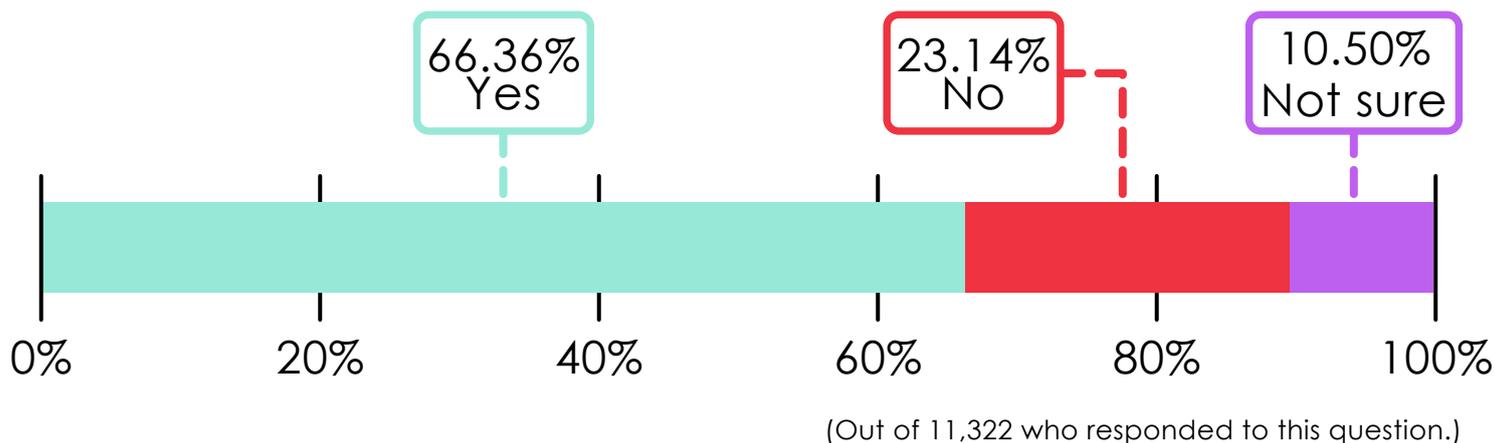
“

Weather changes affect children e.g. forest fires. Plastic pollution on beaches or in the water affects children and wildlife and could stop holidays. The actions of adults right now whilst we're children affects our rights as adults when we grow up. Green spaces for children will disappear. Global warming will become worse. Pollution affects our safety and habitats of animals, ice caps are melting and land is eroded and soon, there will be nothing left and nowhere to live. We're not ready to live on another planet.

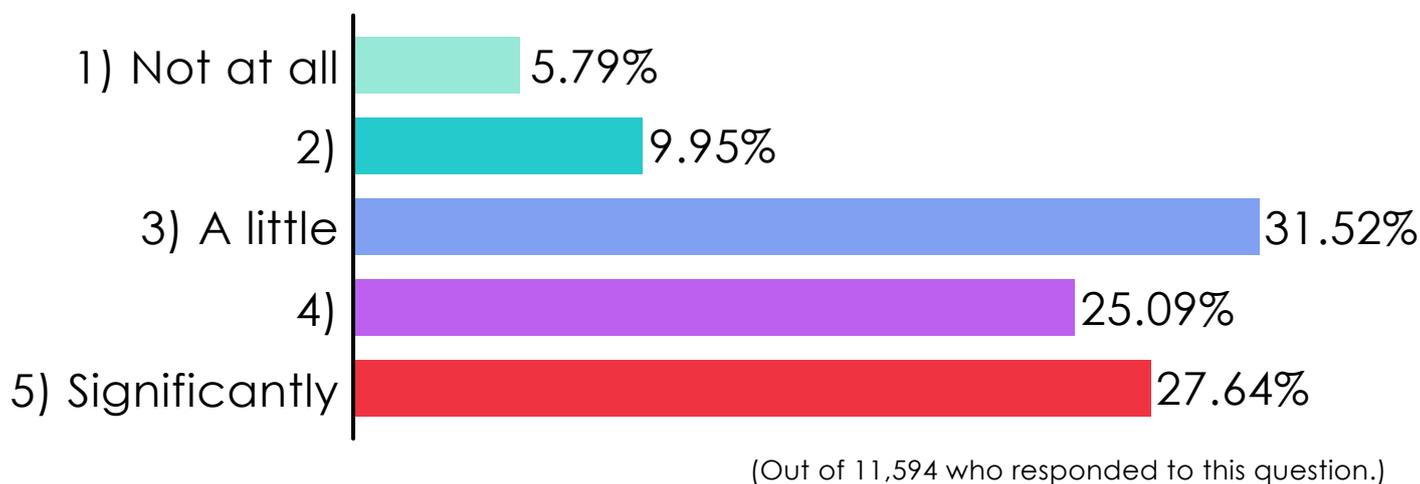
”

AGE 9-10, LONDON - ENGLAND

Big Question #4: Before the lesson, did you know that children had their own list of rights?



Big Question #5: How much do you believe climate change will affect your rights?



“

Some of our rights include living in a clean and safe environment and if pollution rates increase this will become impossible, there is also the fight for clean water and this will become more impossible due to droughts.

”

AGE 14, LONDON - ENGLAND

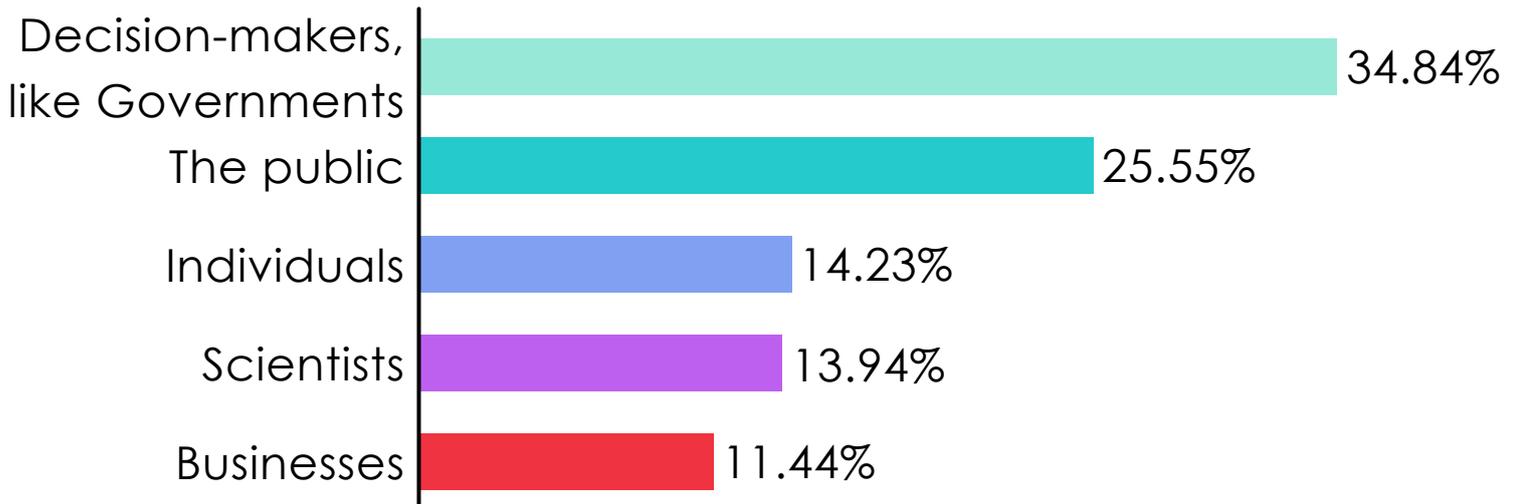
“

Droughts will take away the right to clean water and rising sea levels will take away the right of living in a safe environment.

”

AGE 13, CITY OF EDINBURGH - SCOTLAND

Big Question #6: Who has the biggest responsibility to tackle climate change?



(Out of 24,223 who responded to this question, where each voter was asked to select up to 3 choices.)

“

Climate change will affect everything about life. Many children won't be able to go to school. People won't get access to the hydration they need. But we cannot ignore a very serious problem. 100 corporations are responsible for 70% of all carbon emissions. We need severe, radical change and we need it now. No amount of cycling to work and short showers will ever solve the problem because you will still have 100 corporations responsible for 70% of emissions.

”

AGE 14, SURREY - ENGLAND

“

[I would like to see] the public taking more responsibility in climate change and other issues. At the moment it is all unloaded onto the government and, although they do have power, nothing is more powerful than the will of the crowd themselves.

”

AGE 16, WEST MIDLANDS - ENGLAND

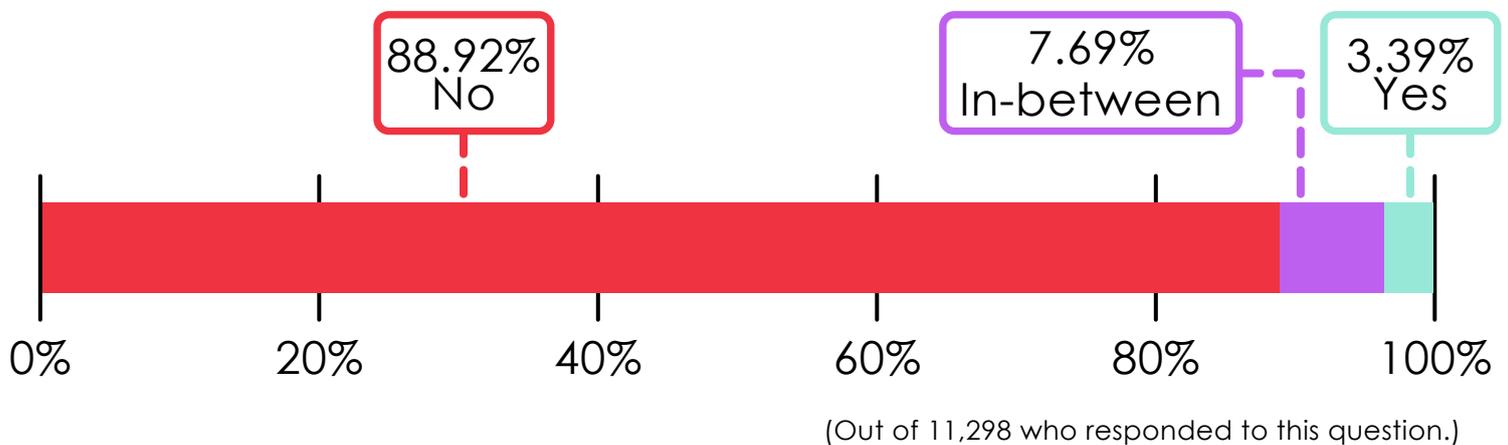
Big Question #7: Do you think enough is being done about climate change?

“

There are so many voices out there and information that shows us how dangerous climate change will be to our future way of life. I just wish that the people in power would take action, NOW - before it is too late. Enforce the rules that might just save us and preserve life as we know it. There is nothing more important. No other policy comes close to being as important.

”

SECONDARY VOTER, WILTSHIRE - ENGLAND



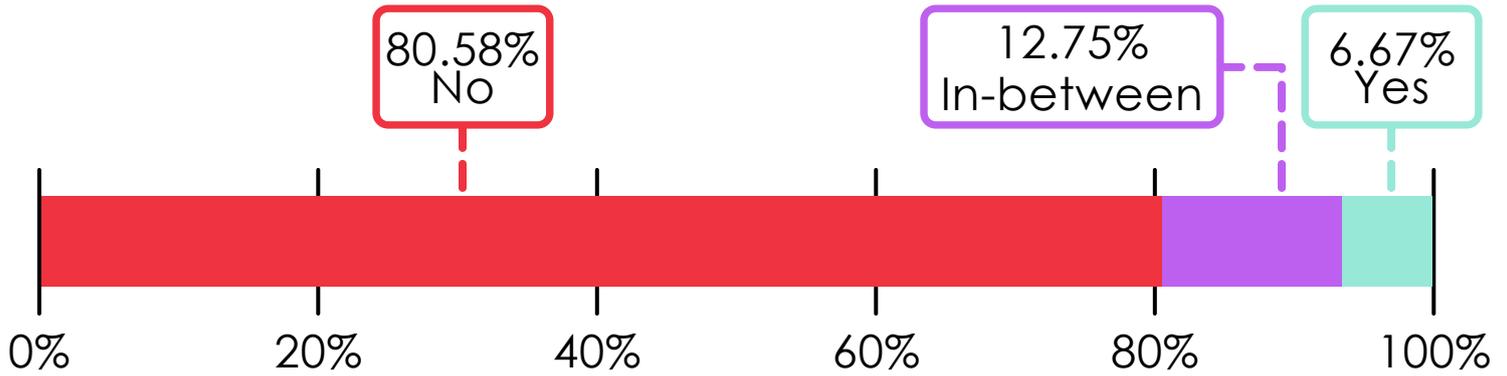
“

For a long time now climate change has just been getting worse and worse. Lots of people know about this matter but in fear chose to just forget about it. Lots of people are doing all they can to prevent climate change but in order to properly stop it we all need to act upon it. Climate change won't just go away, and it has already affected us. If we don't do something now then climate change will get worse and worse and will affect everything. It is not fair that because we are not doing anything now that children in the future will have to pay the price.

”

AGE 12, LONDON - ENGLAND

Big Question #8: Do you think young people are being listened to about climate change?



(Out of 11,496 who responded to this question.)

— “ —
The children of today are the ones being left to deal with it tomorrow, so it makes sense that children/young adults can get more voting privilege to decide how we can tackle climate change.

**AGE 13,
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE
- SCOTLAND**

— “ —
As our world heats up, it's becoming more important for everyone to have a say rather than just adults.

**AGE 12,
LONDON - ENGLAND**

— “ —
We should be given more rights such as a say in the vote as it's our future.

**AGE 14,
LONDON - ENGLAND**

— “ —
As a child, we are disregarded and undervalued due to age. Age doesn't mean anything in this situation, if anything we are the ones whose futures are affected and any further generations. Our rights should be respected and our opinions need to be heard and valued.

**SECONDARY VOTER,
WEST MIDLANDS -
ENGLAND**

Big Question #9: What more would you like to see being done about climate change?

The majority of our voters' suggestions fell into one of the following categories:

Governments listening to the public/young people

— “

Climate councils should be set up in schools where representatives from each borough can meet with the local council to voice their concerns. By doing this young people can do their part to help stop climate change whilst also learning from it.

” —

AGE 16, LONDON - ENGLAND

A change in attitudes

— “

I would like to see people taking action like recycling. People are doing this, but I would like to see more. I think we need to see more adults taking action. I am aware it does happen, but it's mostly just kids. Some listen to kids, but not all because we're smaller and they think we don't understand.

” —

AGE 10-11, SWANSEA - WALES

— “

People attempting to change things because all I'm hearing is people talking about what they are going to do and not seeing that they have done it or are doing it.

” —

AGE 13, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

Big Question #9: What more would you like to see being done about climate change?

Companies & businesses changing their practices

— “ _____

Large scale businesses and oil companies being challenged about their contribution to climate change.

_____ ” —

AGE 15, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

— “ _____

We should force factories to change their factories to release fewer greenhouse gases. We should hold people responsible for their litter. The burning of toxic materials like plastics should be illegal.

_____ ” —

AGE 10-11, GLASGOW - SCOTLAND

Reducing emissions

— “ _____

We should enforce areas where only electric cars are allowed to lower pollution. It should be enforced that we must change to electrical alternatives. Governments should fine people. Electric cars should be more affordable for people to encourage them to buy.

_____ ” —

AGE 10-11, GLASGOW - SCOTLAND

— “ _____

Fossil fuel industries to face their responsibilities and help reverse climate change by changing to environmentally friendly means of creating energy.

_____ ” —

AGE 13, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

Big Question #9: What more would you like to see being done about climate change?

Protecting animals & the natural world

— “ _____

Stop cutting down trees for useless reasons like furniture and Christmas trees. Walk more, take more of an interest in nature, try to use electric cars, stop littering, plant flowers for the bees, use public transport more, be kind to animals, use fewer fossil fuels and use solar panels instead.

_____ ” —

AGE 6-7, AYRSHIRE - SCOTLAND

Reduction in fishing & farming

— “ _____

People reducing the amount of meat they eat.

_____ ” —

AGE 12, LONDON - ENGLAND

— “ _____

Actual big changes done by the government that puts in place laws against over farming and over fishing.

_____ ” —

AGE 12, LONDON - ENGLAND

Increased recycling & bans on single-use plastic

— “ _____

Less talking more doing. Sort it out now before everything is completely irreversible. Because as we are going that's the road we are headed. Less plastic, more recycling, make public transport cheaper, use more renewable energy!

_____ ” —

AGE 14, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

Big Question #9: What more would you like to see being done about climate change?

More accessible information & education

— “

More people understanding how threatening climate change is, and realising they have the power to help stop it.

” —

AGE 12, CAMBRIDGESHIRE - ENGLAND

More individual or public engagement

— “

I think that many people are aware of climate change yet aren't doing anything as they don't think that their actions will do much as they are only one person/family. If there were more reports on how one person can affect the world, even by just a little, it may encourage more to make changes. Various governments and businesses have done things to try and alter/slow down the rate of climate change; however, I believe that more can, and should be done.

” —

AGE 14, DORSET - ENGLAND

More financial or technological investment

— “

Get rid of huge general waste dumps and put more research into electric vehicles and cutting fuel-hungry vehicles, removing dependency on fossil fuels. Research different materials which aren't bad for the environment.

” —

AGE 10-11, CITY OF EDINBURGH - SCOTLAND

Other Voices

So far, the following organisations have wanted to respond to this powerful data and comments. Some of their reactions are included here; further comments will be shared in the Impact Report.



Other Voices

— “

These findings highlight the increasing anxiety that children and young people living in the UK feel about their future. And they have every right to be concerned. [...] At the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK), we often hear that climate change is a priority that young people want to see definitive action on, yet nearly 89% of respondents said not enough is being done to tackle the climate crisis.

The UK Government has the unique opportunity at COP26 to demonstrate global leadership, by showing the world's children that they are taking decisive action to tackle climate change and that they are listening to what children and young people have to say. As one child stated, 'children should have a valid say in what happens next'. We urge the UK Government to recognize that the climate crisis is a child rights crisis, and ask that they work to ensure children's voices are heard and taken into account by every world leader when making decisions at COP26.

” —



ANNA KETTLEY, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY,
PROGRAMMES AND SAFEGUARDING, THE
UK COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF (UNICEF UK)

— “

I stand with children and young people around the world as they make their voices heard in the weeks leading to COP26. The VotesforSchools survey shares their hopes and fears, aspirations and anxieties –Government, it's time to listen!

” —

UNICEF UK YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Other Voices

— “ —

The VotesforSchools report is a prime example of the meaningful contributions that young people can make to big decisions, when they are given a platform to do so. This is an important step forward, but it's only one step. It's important that we continue this discussion, and keep building a platform for children and young people to express themselves. The future starts here.

— ” —

UNICEF UK YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

— “ —

Students say Governments have the biggest responsibility to tackle climate change. This is a vital and timely message. Dear Governments, your children need you – now, at COP26 – to find a way to cooperate to resolve the climate crisis – and stop competing to ignore it.

— ” —



**DEMOCRACY
WITHOUT
BORDERS**

JOHN VLASTO,
DEMOCRACY WITHOUT BORDERS

— “ —

This report is loud and clear, young people are demanding to be heard and action on climate change. This should start in schools with giving young people and skills, knowledge and mindsets to help tackle this most pressing of issues.

— ” —

JIM KNIGHT, RT HON LORD KNIGHT OF WEYMOUTH

Other Voices

— “

The powerful prophetic voice of the young has long led the call for an urgent response to the climate emergency.

We hear you, and we hear the cries of God's creation and of the world's poorest communities which are affected most severely and soonest by climate change.

In the Church of England, we are committed to 'net zero' by 2030, and this means making the right decisions as individuals, organisations, communities and nations to take our slim window of opportunity to prevent irreversible catastrophic damage to our planet and habitat.”



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

— ” —
CANON NIGEL GENDERS,
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

— “

VotesforSchools have done such an incredible job of capturing the views and opinions of children and young people on such an important issue. The comments from the children and young people in the report are a stark reminder of the impact that the climate crisis is having on those who will inherit whatever mess we leave this beautiful planet of ours in. If only all the leaders of the world and key decision-makers would stop and read and listen to the concerns of and the solutions given by the children and young people, we would all be in a better space. Thank you Votes for schools for doing this and inspiring us all to continue the hard work to save our planet for future generations.

SUPPORTED BY

MAYOR OF LONDON

— ” —
REBECCA PALMER, SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER,
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES PARTICIPATION,
GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Other Voices

— “

Many thousands of children have correctly recognised that climate change will affect children's rights. Climate change is indeed wrecking lives, homes and livelihoods and pushing people deeper into poverty. And while the climate crisis is affecting us all, it's people who have done the least to cause it who are suffering the most. This report clearly demonstrates how many thousands of children think that not enough is being done to address climate change and that their voices are not being adequately heard. We agree and call on Boris Johnson and other world leaders to take bold and decisive action at COP26 for the sake of present and future generations. Now is the time to act.

” —



OXFAM

OXFAM

— “

At The Wildlife Trust, we know that children and young people are really worried about climate change and the state of our natural world. We fully support their ask to be heard more and believe they should be empowered to express their needs and aspirations. In this way, they can really help shape decisions that are impacting on their life and environment.

” —



THE WILDLIFE TRUST

Other Voices

— “ —

It's incredibly concerning to see children as young as eleven worrying about how climate change will affect their future. Young people are our future, and more action must be taken to fight for them and their planet. We all have a role to play – Governments, individuals, and certainly business – and we all need to co-operate because nobody can solve this on their own, but we can all play our part.

That's why, as part of our wider plan to tackle the climate crisis, we're partnering with the Count Us In campaign, which encourages us all with small, practical steps which combined have the potential to have a huge impact. Everyone must act together, as individuals, businesses and communities, to create a fairer world.



STEVE MURRELLS,
CEO, Co-op

— ” —

— “ —

This generation of young people have spoken out and we need to hear what they are saying and we need to really listen. We owe it to them to take them, and this issue, seriously and find ways of ensuring that their fears do not become our world's reality.

RACHEL JOHNSON,
CEO, PiXL



— ” —

Other Voices

— “ —

It is clear from the tens of thousands of votes received from all over the UK that young people are overwhelmingly concerned about climate change affecting their rights and that their concerns are currently going unheard.

We welcome the valuable VotesforCOP26 report as a key contribution to the growing discussion on climate action, as we enable learners, educators, schools and wider communities to build a socially just society, supporting young people's development and understanding of the world around them. YouthLink Scotland will continue to work alongside youth workers, sharing information, training, and best practice of the vital role youth work practitioners play in supporting young people on issues affecting them and their communities. We look forward to sharing this important report with our networks and being part of further initiatives on climate change in and around COP26 and beyond.



— ” —
YOUTH LINK SCOTLAND

— “ —

The results of this survey send a very clear message that young people are concerned about climate change and that they want to see more action taken to combat it. To everyone that took part, please continue to shout loudly about this most vital of issues and take action to protect the wildlife on your doorstep.



— ” —
SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST

VOTESFORSCHOOLS

Find out more on our website:

www.votesforschools.com

Or contact us at:

info@votesforschools.com

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Be informed.



Be curious.



Be heard.