

# European Youth and Climate Change

A Community Baseline



IRELAND





# PEOPLE & PLANET

A COMMON DESTINY

## Mapa das Ideias

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## People and Planet: A Common Destiny

Pan-European campaign to mobilise youth citizens and *glocal* (global + local) authorities in the fight against climate change

### Our project

With the existing Climate Change scenario, by 2030, water scarcity in some arid and semi-arid places will displace up to 700 million people worldwide. Even though these are speculative numbers, the following years will be dramatic for our planet.

It is a global problem that will affect every part of the world and its inhabitants. Therefore, we call on every citizen to understand their place in this process, to recognise how impactful their actions are, and to realise their power to make a change in our common destiny.

To raise awareness, empower and mobilise Young European citizens and decision-makers, our project will implement activities in 8 EU Member States (Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain) and Cape Verde between 2020 and 2024.

It aims to contribute positively to the sustainability of development policies at the *glocal* level and promote the participation of youth citizens as change-makers.

### Our goals

Our project intends to raise awareness among European youth citizens about the challenges and consequences arising from climate change and, in this way, encourage them to take the lead in adopting more sustainable lifestyles.

Simultaneously to the mobilisation of European youth citizens, it also focuses on strengthening local decision-makers capacities to build more sustainable development policies while deepening their abilities to understand the intertwined relations established at the *glocal* level.



**Our activities**

A widespread pan-European awareness campaign named #WaterOfTheFuture focusing on the challenges and behaviours related to climate change, that plans to influence 59 million European youngsters and will be implemented in 8 EU Member States. From this general campaign, several other activities will emerge, namely street actions, advisory councils, activism labs, surveys and exchange programmes, focusing on the full spectrum of the SDGs.

A structured and sustainable coalition of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations will work together towards the informing and mobilising of its citizens regarding climate change and sustainable lifestyles.

Using innovative communication tools, dynamic methodologies for non-formal education, training and experience-sharing between partners, the project aims to contribute to:

- i. The enhancement of Local Authorities' potential in building and leading successful actions concerning the SDGs;
- ii. The promotion of Local Authorities' visibility as key actors in the implementation of national development strategies;
- iii. The support of initiatives aiming to establish stronger relations and links between Local Authorities and Non-State Organisations.

**Our path**

Our strategy, through participatory methodologies, directs its attention to the mobilisation of European youngsters calls on them to become key actors in the development and dissemination of campaigns about sustainability. This mobilisation strategy also considers the role of local decision-makers as key actors in disseminating sustainable values among their citizens.

The project will benefit multimedia tools and social media for the contact with the youth and will use methodological techniques suitable for training with Local Authorities personnel. Building the widespread campaign will consider all the information gathered and conclusions taken from previous projects on these topics and the contributions of the partners' experience.

### **Our impact**

Implementation of a pan-European awareness campaign named #WaterOfTheFuture focusing on the challenges and behaviours related to climate change, that plans to influence 59 million European youth citizens and will be implemented in 8 EU member states and a structured and sustainable coalition of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations from 8 EU member states and Cape Verde that will work together towards the information and mobilisation of its citizens regarding climate change and sustainable lifestyles.

With the creation of a European Local Authorities coalition aware and capable of promoting development policies coherent and aligned with the SDGs and the mobilisation of a large group of European youth citizens capable of promoting and encouraging sustainable lifestyles and behaviours, this project aspires to mitigate or even halt the ongoing environmental degradation of the Planet Earth.

The European Commission's Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme (DEAR) supports projects that engage the European Union public in worldwide social, economic, and environmental development issues.

### **Our campaign**

Water scarcity is one of the great challenges we must face now and in the years to come. "We are not camels" is the motto of the #WaterOfTheFuture campaign, launched on March 22nd 2022.

It aims to address issues in the public agendas, helping to change consciences and, above all, each person's behaviour.



## Brief description of the national context

Ireland is now operating under the 2021 Climate Action Plan, which promises to halve our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reach net zero carbon by 2050 in line with EU Directives. Key actions of the Climate Action Plan include:

- The use of indigenous renewable resources offsets a decreased reliance on fossil fuels;
- Jobs creation through the development of offshore wind farms, new agricultural methods and investment in forestry;
- A 3-pronged sustainable transportation strategy that includes electric vehicles, improved bike lanes and access and cleaner public transport.
- Working closely with our farmers for a just transition in the agricultural and peat sectors.

Greenhouse gas emissions have increased a net 6.1% from 1990 to 2020, although the last few years (including the pandemic) have seen decreases. Ireland's GHG emissions are the second highest in Europe due primarily to the large agricultural sector, accounting for 37.1% (EPA 2020) of Irish emissions and its low population. Ireland's transport and residential sector emissions are also higher than allowed under EU Directives. The European Environmental Agency predicts that Ireland will not meet its GHG targets without drastic actions.

Ireland is operating under the Water Services Policy Statement, 2018-2025, which has three broad aims: conservation, quality, and future-proofing. In terms of water conservation, over 80% of Ireland's water comes from surface water, which is not anticipated to change. However, Ireland's water infrastructure is ageing and not fit for purpose, so Ireland experiences shortages and contamination due to inadequate pipes and population concentrations. Ireland also continues to experience seasonal flooding as a result of climate change, and mitigation of the damage caused by floods must be part of any plan to combat climate change. However, as a general rule, most of Ireland's water legislation is rooted in EU legislation, specifically the series of Water Directives issued by the EU.

The Climate Assembly Eire (for young people) has recently convened and has issued a set of demands of the Irish Government, including youth engagement, education for political representatives, stopping pollution, just transition, and biodiversity protection. These demands were issued coming up to their Earth Day 2022 Climate Townhall.



**Demographic  
characteristics  
of survey participants**





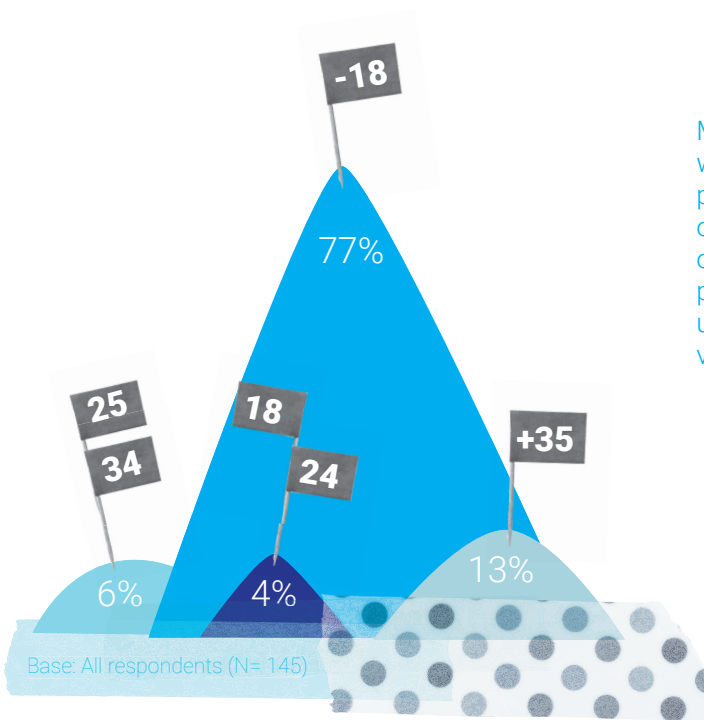


Chart 1.2. Baseline survey results. **Demographic characteristics of survey participants. Age**

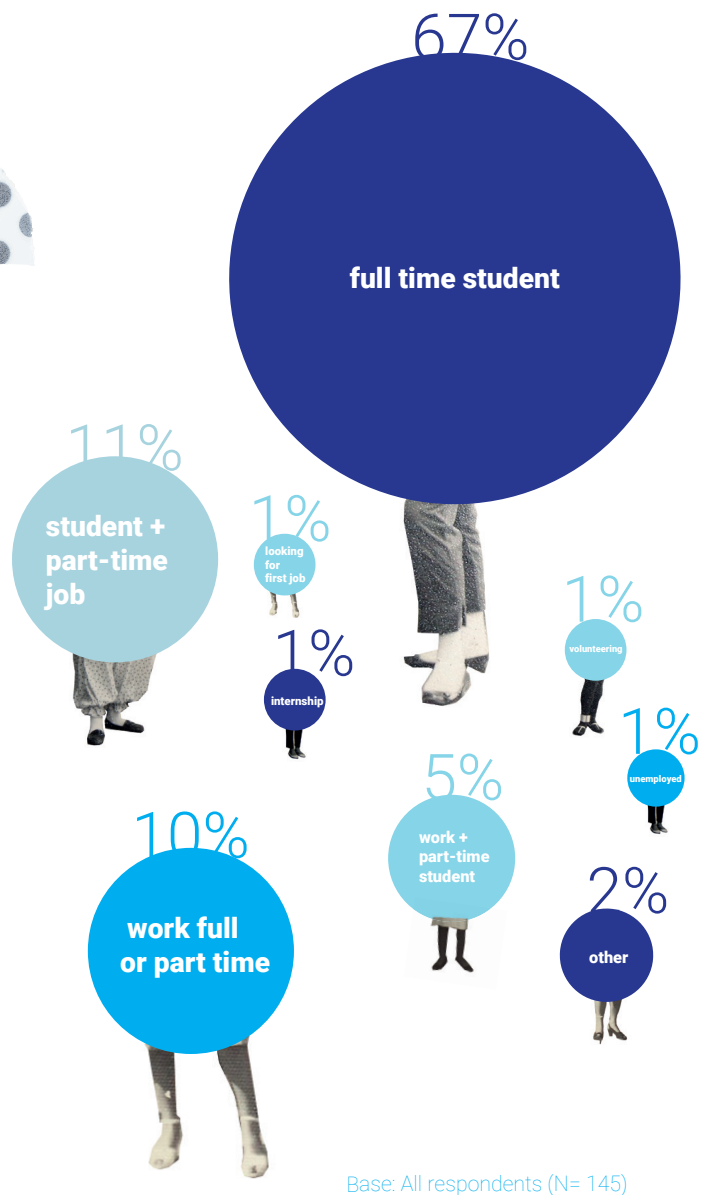
According to the project’s goals, our sample includes 87% of young European citizens (YEC - under 35 years), being the larger group age is from the population aged under 18 yo (76.6%).

According to the UN’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change Outcome Report (AAVV, 2020), working together has multiple facets for the youth:

- First, it is about sharing ideas and practices in climate education.
- Secondly, it gives no actor a free pass on not delivering on their climate commitments.
- Thirdly, working together requires ample intergenerational dialogue, a racially diverse discussion, inclusion of LGBTQ+, indigenous and traditional people, people with special needs, refugees and IDP (internally displaced people).

According to the Youth Study by TUI Stiftung (2019), most young people are quite optimistic about their expectations for the future. Young people perceive the issues of Climate protection and environmental policy (55%) and Digitisation (45%) rather as opportunities than as a threat (AAVV, 2019: 6).

Most of the participants are students (83%) either working non-working (67%) a full-time job (5%) or a part-time (11%). There is also a significant amount of participants that work full or part-time without any other secondary occupation (10%). The remaining participants are actively looking for a job (2%), unemployed (2%), either doing an internship or volunteers (1%).



Base: All respondents (N= 145)

Chart 1.3. Baseline survey results. **Demographic characteristics of survey participants. Main occupation**





**Individual  
action**



Geiger et al. (2018) define sustainable consumption as a behaviour associated with a long-term understanding of the consequences of individual consumption. It is a deeply personal and complex decision-making process related to changes in consumer behaviour - such as purchasing certain products (Chen et al., 2018) and reducing consumption (Balderjahn et al., 2013).

According to Capiene et al. (2021), pro-environmental and pro-social consumer engagement starts with changes to personal behaviour expressed through consumption. This substantiates in three distinct dimensions:

- Participation (e.g., in events related to pro-environmental and pro-social issues);
- Social connections (by interacting and engaging others);
- And the conscious focusing of attention (interest in pro-environmental and pro-social issues).

**Ireland has 137000 functional farm enterprises so that is 137000 creative opportunities to place 137000 essential solar panels around our innovative little nation for much needed green energy. Easy peasy!**  
 Survey participant, 35 yo or older, I work and I am a part-time student

Our results suggest that recycling is the most important pro-environmental activity, with 81% of participants stating that they do it always and 18% sometimes. Also common activities among the participants seem to be related to water saving, since 89% of the participants assume taking showers instead of baths and 76% say that they always turn off the tap while brushing their teeth. The less common activities are the active participation in environmental campaigns (7%, always) and public transport (9%, always).

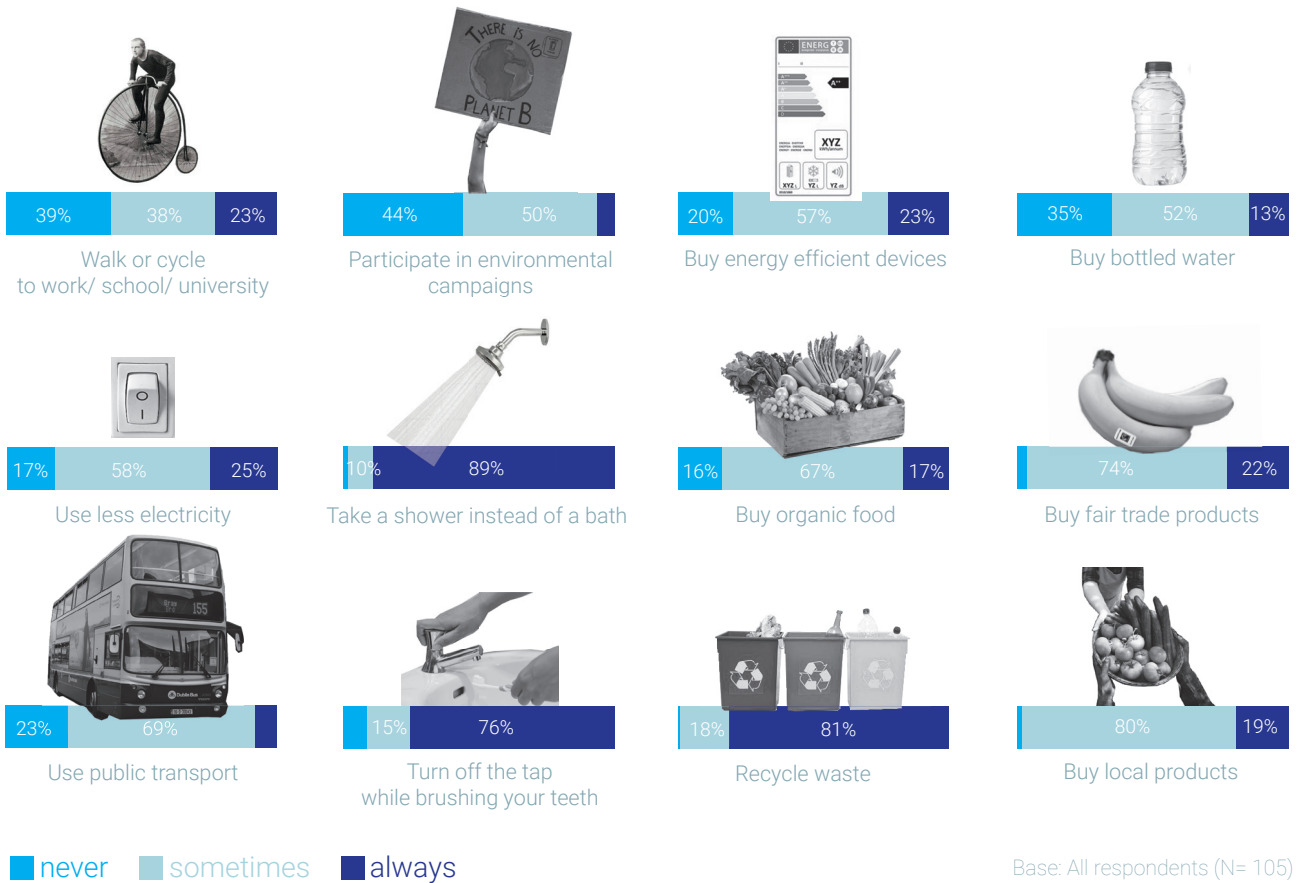


Chart 2.1. Baseline survey results. **Individual action. Daily activities. Average**

Kola-Olusanga (2018) refers to the importance of educational campaigns to contextualise environmentally conscious young people. According to this researcher, it is essential to provide theoretical knowledge and environmental experiences to have a behavioural impact.

Global agendas and policies seem to have a more lasting impact on the survey participants. These findings concur with Kola-Olusanga's research, describing how young adults generally agree that the term "climate change" refers to an increase in temperature resulting from the trapping of carbon dioxide and atmospheric pollution that poses a great danger to the continuation of life and the survival of planetary functions.

**We need to review transport. As a cyclist the roads are lethal in Ireland. Cars park in cycle lanes near my sons school. School busses are almost extinct at this stage. We need to show how the Irish love affair with the car is not sustainable.**

Survey participant, 35 yo or older, I work and I am a part-time student

In September 2019, the Global Youth Climate Action Declaration (22) called for urgent action to achieve the long-term goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement (23) through ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to efficiently reduce carbon emissions and reach the net zero target by 2050. (24) Young activists recognise their key role in mobilizing governments and decision-makers to deliver on the NDC targets at the national level and to ensure accountability for climate action across all the SDGs (AAVV, 2021).

Regarding public actions related to climate issues, the Irish sample reports significant levels of participation, namely by joining online petitions at the local, regional, national, or EU level (47%), sharing political and civic posts (45%) or, to a lesser extent, by collaborating in voluntary activities (44%). On the other hand, the activity that the respondents assume to have joined less in the last three years is the in-person petitions (15%).

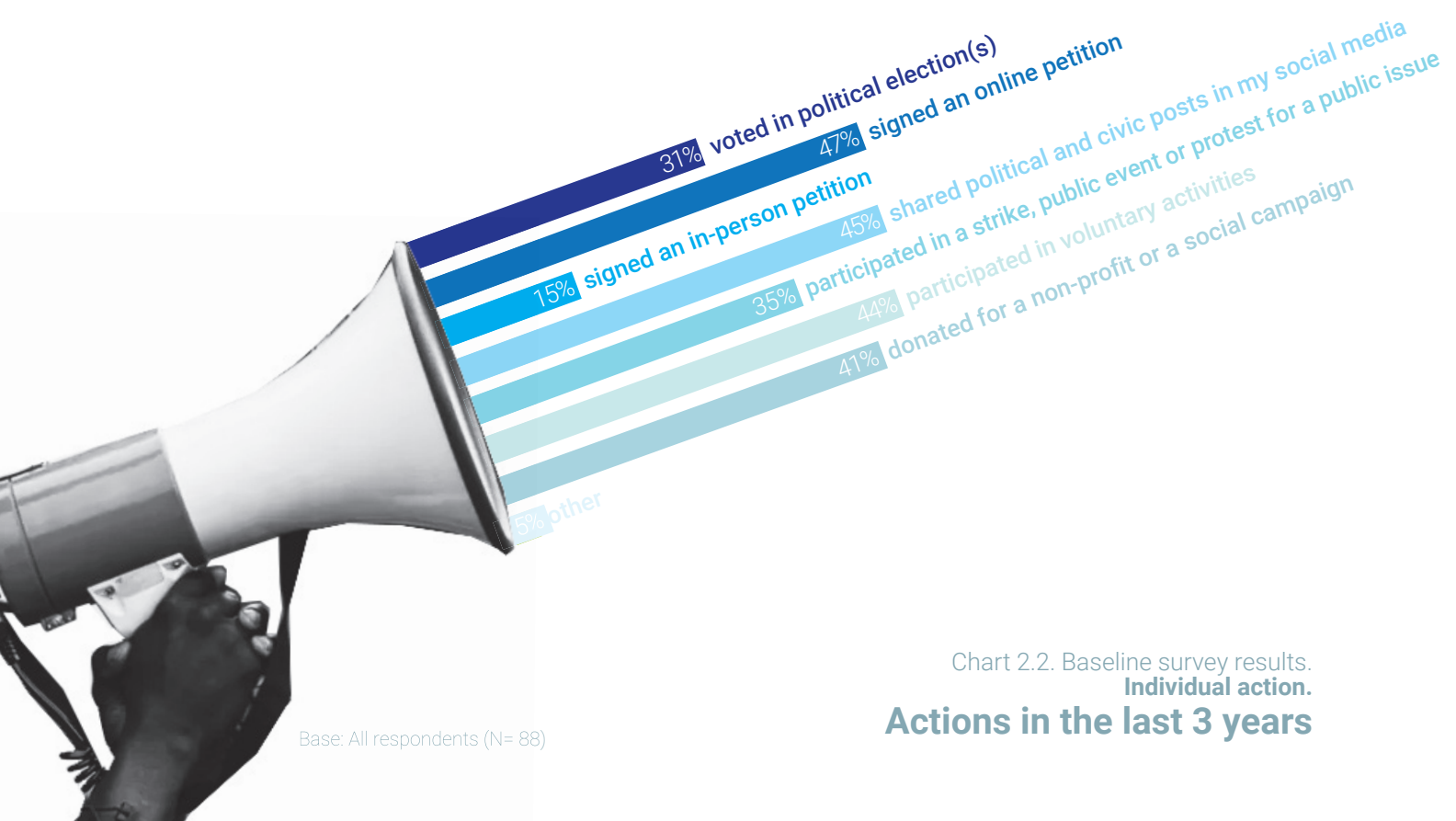
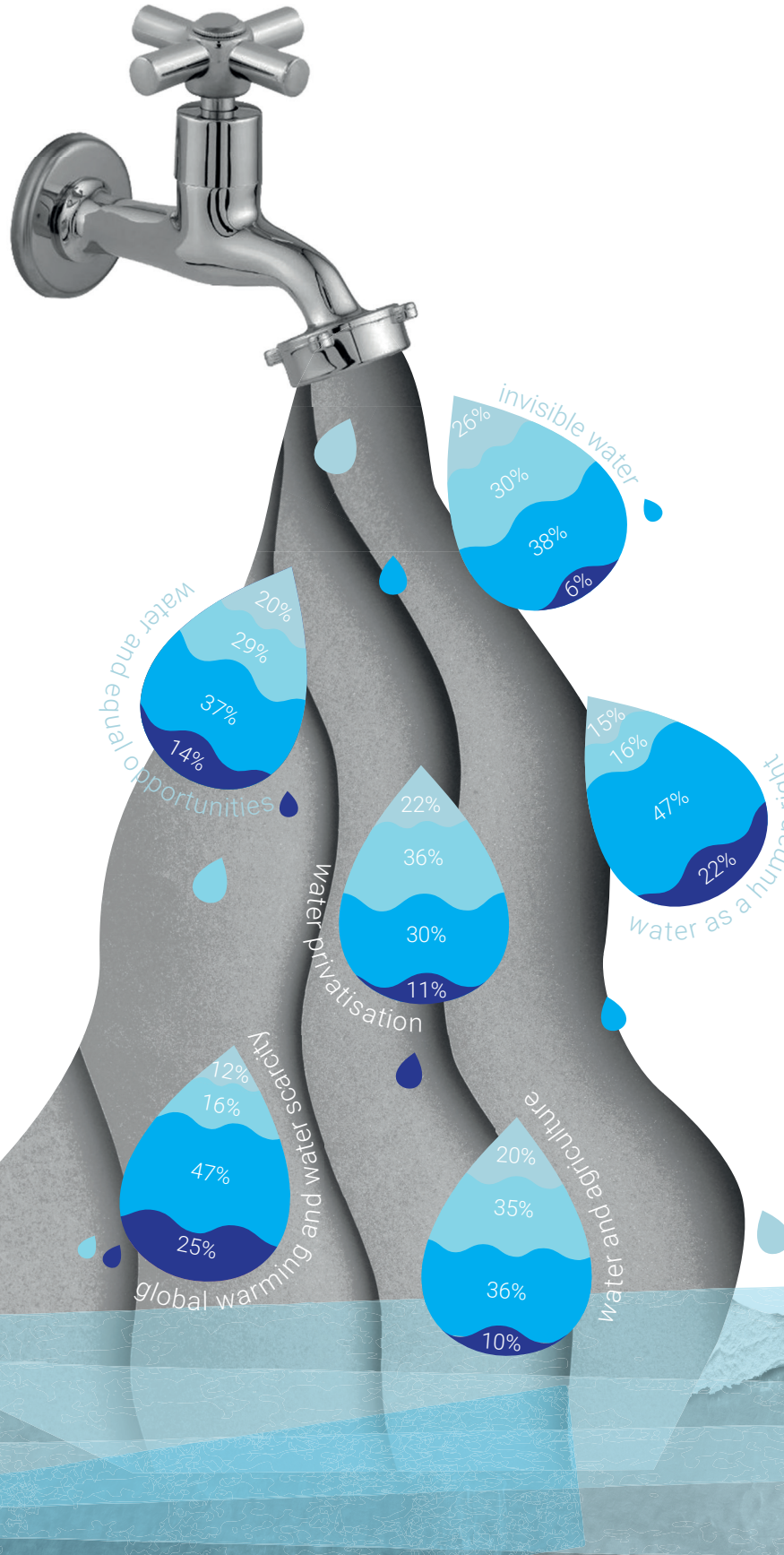


Chart 2.2. Baseline survey results.  
**Individual action.**

## **Actions in the last 3 years**

Base: All respondents (N= 88)



We can also evaluate how active people are regarding environmental issues, analysing their openness to discuss particular topics with family, friends, and colleagues. When asking Irish participants to rate how likely it could be for them to discuss some topics, we found that global warming and water scarcity (71%) and water as a human right (69%) are the most likely to be debated. Water privatisation and invisible water are, on the other side, only appointed by an average of 43% as debatable issues.

Chart 2.3. Baseline survey results.

**Individual action.**  
**Discussing climate change with those closest to you**

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very Likely

Base: All respondents (N= 421)



Base: All respondents (N= 338)

Chart 2.4. Baseline survey results.  
Individual action.  
**Advocacy interests**

Climate change is the topic that joins more consensus amongst the survey participants as a topic worth joining advocacy campaigns (74%). The other topic gathering high referral is discrimination (65%). Accounting for the age distribution of our sample, it is particularly interesting to find that access to education and healthcare is mentioned by an average of 53% as a topic worthwhile joining and for advocacy campaigns.

**Young people appreciate when they are given the space to use their voice, feel heard and are invited to be part of the solution.**

Survey participant, 18-24 yo, student

These findings are consistent with the research undertaken by Kaiser and Byrka (2011) and Kadic-Maglajlic et al. (2019), that distinguish two symbiotic types of engagement in sustainable consumption: pro-environmental and pro-social engagement.

Yet, children and young people have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes in all parts of the world. A paradigm shift is occurring, as society is starting to recognise them as social actors and citizens. The importance of hearing their voices individually and collectively is beginning to be felt within development policy and practice, local governance, education systems (O'Kane, 2003).

**Make a list of important reading for people to be aware of the latest insights from experts in climate change. Or summarise the latest literature on a web page.**

**Encourage people to engage in open debate about what it means for our community**

Survey participant, 35 yo or older, intern







## **Knowledge and perception about climate change**



According to Handoyo et al (2019), environmental awareness is a result of a combination of motivation, knowledge and skills. Knowledge refers to the information that shapes attitudes and beliefs, which in turn the attitudes and beliefs leads to desired action.

When requested to evaluate a list of statements about climate change as true or false, we found that the majority of the Irish interviewed correctly recognize them as true. The comparison of such findings with the European Youth Eurobarometer (2017) allows us to conclude that data is coherent.



Base: All respondents (N= 117)

Chart 3.1. Baseline survey results.  
**Perceptions about Climate Change.**  
**Statements concerning climate change. Average**

According to the Eurobarometer, we can outline three ideas for the future of Europe that are central for young people:

- The promotion of critical thinking and the ability to search for information to combat fake news and extremism;
- Easy access to information for young people who want to move and work abroad to encourage youth employment;
- Promoting behaviour change through environmentally friendly projects such as sustainable transport or recycling systems across Europe.

Our participants from Ireland are aware of the impact of climate change in all aspects of global life. The items more believed to be true refer to the knowledge that Climate change has had an impact on every ocean and every continent over the last few decades (95%) and those relative to human role either as the origin of climate change (90%) but also as able to deliver change (93%).

**Intersections between social justice and climate change. Climate change impacts social injustices. Climate change impacts racial injustice. Climate change impacts gender equality, etc.**

Survey participant, 35 yo or older, volunteer

It is also relevant to understand how these perceptions about the climate change phenomena are affecting the participants' personal lives and experiences. To address such conceptions, the survey included questions that specifically request the participants to evaluate the perceived impact in a number of dimensions. The results are insightful about the participants' concerns, revealing that, on average, 81% of the participants recognize some kind of impact of the listed climate change phenomena.

The items selected as more impactful, meaning that they are classified as having a major impact more often, are the Air pollution (55%), the Water scarcity (54%).

53% of the sample does recognize the Declining in the bee population and Fewer food resources as affecting them personally, probably related to the fact that Ireland is an island. In the same manner, the Melting of the glaciers and Drought are only classified as active stressors by "only" 79% of the sample.

When requested to rate how worrisome the same phenomena related to climate change are from a national perspective, the participants from Ireland believe that the Soil degradation (67%), More floods (64%) and the Declining bee population (58%) are the most impactful phenomena for their country.

Overall, the Irish participants recognise the major impact of climate change both at a personal and at a national level. Acknowledging the environmental issues that we are facing may be seen as a very important step, since it may ground future climate advocacy and action. In the following we will present results related to these shared perceptions about who is best equipped to fight climate change.



Chart 3.2.1. Baseline survey results.  
Perceptions about climate change.  
**Climate change impact  
in your own life  
and the people closest to you**

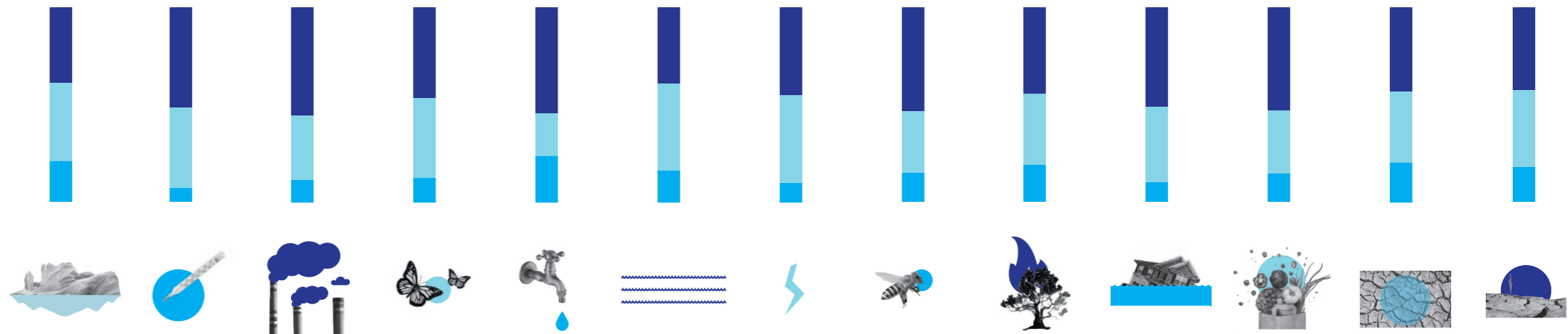


Chart 3.2.2. Baseline survey results.  
Perceptions about climate change.  
**Climate change impact in your  
country**

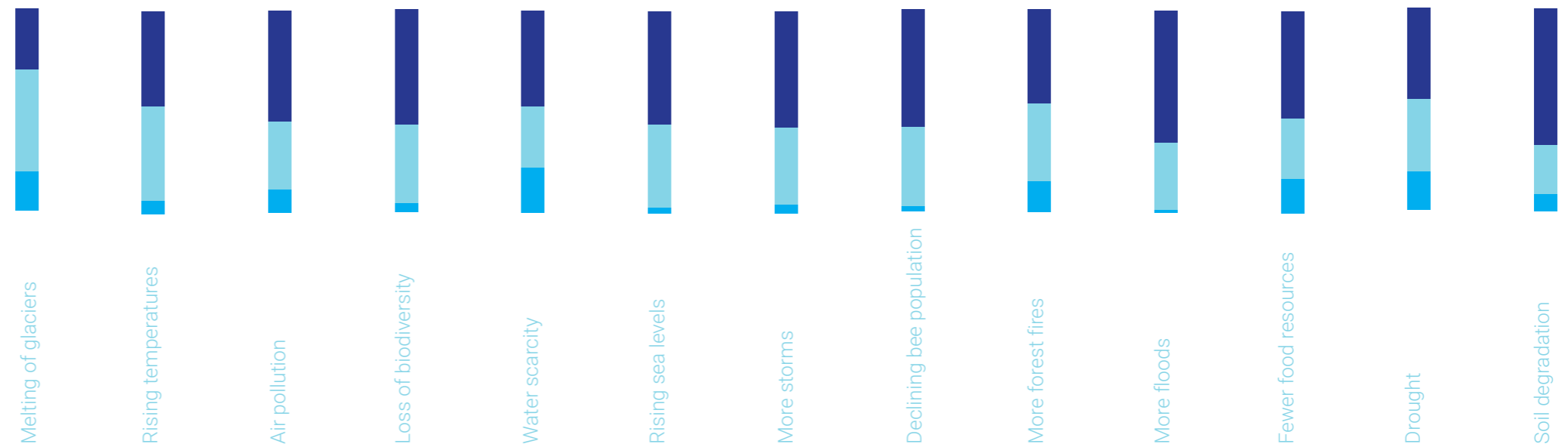


Chart 3.2.3. Baseline survey results.  
Perceptions about climate change.  
**Global climate change impact**



■ yes, a major impact   ■ yes, a minor impact   ■ no, no impact

Base: All respondents (N= 116)





**Policy  
awareness  
and action**

Base: All respondents (N= 105)

Since policy awareness is crucial for social advocacy to exist, we investigated participants' knowledge at their policymaking level. To some extent, the level of knowledge that each participant has may limit or enhance their potential as a young activist, with individual advocacy priorities and action capabilities.

Irish participants believe they have policy awareness, with 81% stating that they know global policies or activities to reduce climate change.

Such awareness decreases when the question is framed at a national level, with only 68% recalling policies or actions implemented by Ireland to address climate change.

**I have found through showing my students the impact climate change and pollution is having on the world for them to see with their own eyes really helps. Also raising more awareness on who the main culprits of pollution/environmental damage helps too!**  
 Survey participant, 25-34 yo, fulltime employed

Such results may be due to the active targeting of children and younger citizens by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, such positioning regarding the youngsters is clearly present in the following statement from 2015:

"The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation, who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible."



Chart 4.1. Baseline survey results. **Policy Awareness and Action. Participants' knowledge about global policies or initiatives to reduce climate change**

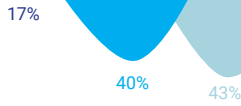


Chart 4.2. Baseline survey results. **Policy Awareness and Action. Participants' knowledge about environmental policies in your country**

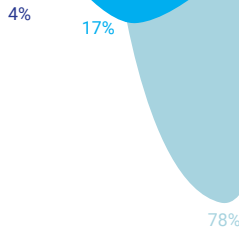
The survey participants seem to link expertise and capacity to fight climate change, as they identify the International organisations and European Institutions as best equipped for that particular task. On the other hand, Individuals and families (90%), as well as Local associations (87%) are the least able to tackle climate change.



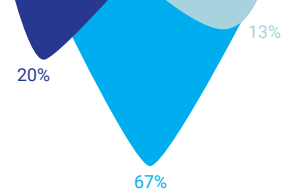
**Business and industries**



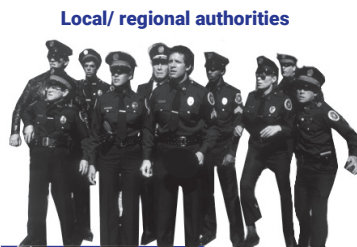
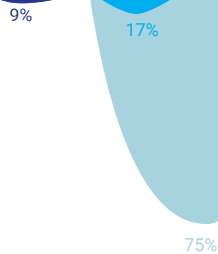
**European Institutions**



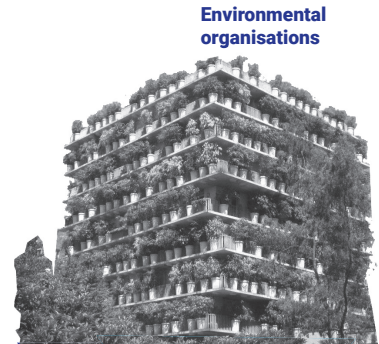
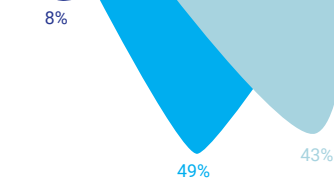
**Local associations**



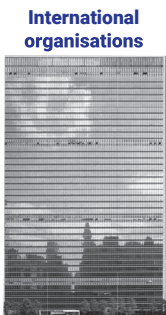
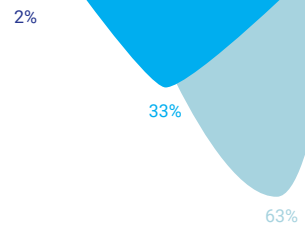
**Country's government**



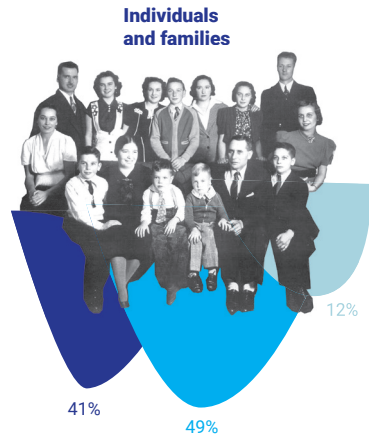
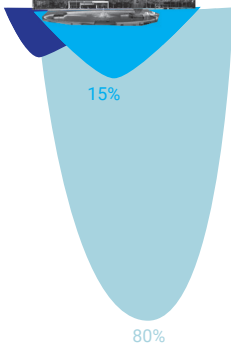
**Local/ regional authorities**



**Environmental organisations**



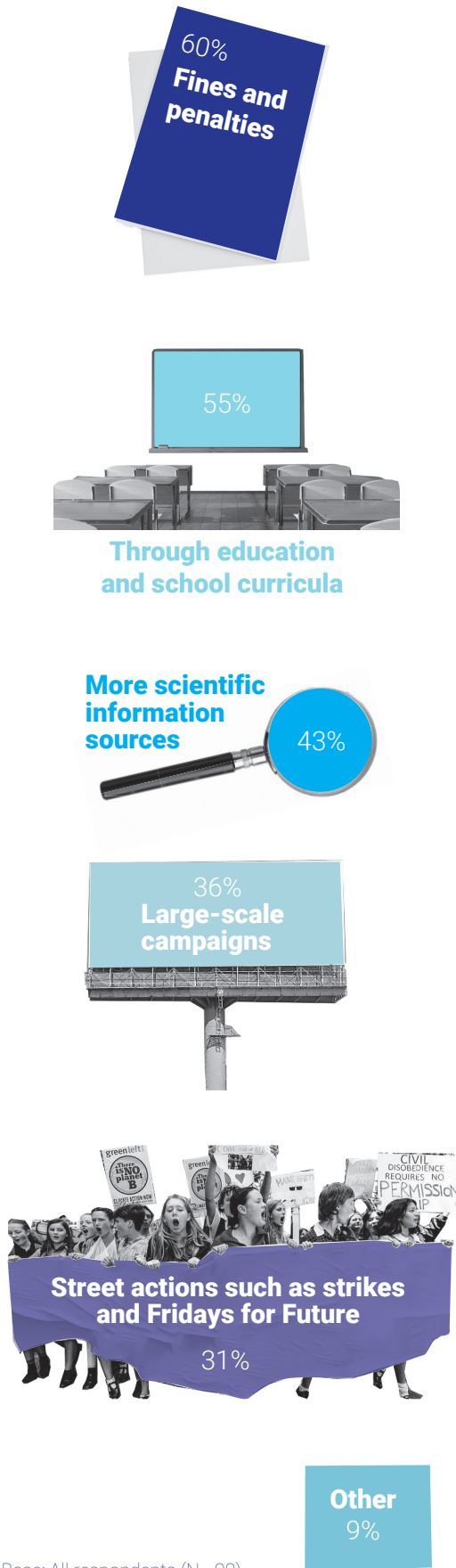
**International organisations**



Not equipped at all ● More or less equipped ● Best equipped ●

Base: All respondents (N= 115)

Chart 4.3. Baseline survey results.  
**Policy Awareness and Action.**  
**Who is best equipped for fighting climate change**



Base: All respondents (N= 98)

Chart 4.4. Baseline survey results. Policy Awareness and Action.

### What would motivate people to act on climate change

Multiple answers possible

According to the UN's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change Outcome Report (AAVV, 2020), investments in green jobs are prioritised on the youth agenda, as climate anxiety

is currently intertwined with uncertainty about the future of jobs, and these can be enhancers of both sustainability and competitiveness credentials of their countries.

55% of the Irish participants believe that Education and scholar curricula could motivate people to become more active about climate change, 43% highlight the need for scientific information sources to provide more information and 36% that large scale campaigns could be effective. A more punitive form stands out, in which 60% believe that this change in behaviour patterns could be triggered by the increase in fines and other penalties

Also, to enhance population mobilisation and action, participants were requested to state how local authorities can support sustainability campaigns and other related initiatives by youngsters. The most common measures relate to the need to engage this group in community based funded projects (61%) and the need to financially support this group (59%). Importantly, only 9% of the participants believe that youngsters are not interested in any kind of support.

With this in mind, survey respondents were asked about advocacy suggestions. The majority of respondents highlight the need for effective communication, for example, a clear, simple and relatable transmission of information, in which anyone, regardless of their experience, understands it. Also, importantly, the need for proper schools and adequate education was the second most mentioned theme, meaning that besides having access to information, people need the ability to grasp such information.

**Education courses in methods of easy ways to slow down and prevent climate change.**  
 Survey participant, 18-24 yo, student

**Two sides put by scientists that agree and disagree do people can judge for themselves.**  
 Survey participant, 35 yo or older, unemployed

**A competition for people to create something out of recycled materials and also zoom meetings for people to participate in but make it well advertise so it will reach a wide range.**  
 Survey participant, under 18 yo, student



Chart 4.5. Baseline survey results.  
**Policy Awareness and Action.**  
**How can local authorities support young people's sustainability campaigns and other sustainable activities**

Multiple answers possible

Base: All respondents (N= 98)







**Useful resources**



## Useful resources for individual action

Comhairle na nÓg  
Youth Councils for Leadership  
<https://www.comhairlenanog.ie/>

STAND: Organisation for University and College  
Students to take action on climate  
<https://stand.ie/>

Eco-UNESCO: Ireland's Environmental Education  
and Youth Organisation  
<https://ecounesco.ie/>

## Useful resources for community action



National Youth Assembly on Climate  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-children-equality-disability-integration-and-youth/>

Citizen's Assembly Support  
the recommendations made by  
the Assembly to the Government  
on Climate Change  
<https://citizensassembly.ie/en/>

Public Participation Network,  
Environmental Pillar work to address  
climate issues at the local level  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/a58b8-community-groups-public-participation-networks/>

Climate Action Plan, Annex of Actions 2021  
[file:///C:/Users/jen/Downloads/207876\\_ab5e4b34-e381-4ee7-acf3-1e59e1a1b57d.pdf](file:///C:/Users/jen/Downloads/207876_ab5e4b34-e381-4ee7-acf3-1e59e1a1b57d.pdf)

