

# Youth demands for quality climate change education



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UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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Published in 2022 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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Designed and printed by UNESCO

*Printed in France*

## Key findings

- The quality of the current climate change education is in question. Seventy per cent of the youth surveyed say that they cannot explain climate change, or can only explain its broad principles, or do not know anything about it, putting into question the quality of climate change education in our schools today.
- The younger the respondents, the higher the level of satisfaction of their learning experiences on climate change education.
- Girls have less confidence in dealing with climate change based on what they learnt in school compared to boys.

### Youth Demands

- Climate change education that helps them to understand, to take better action on climate change and to recognize the human place within nature.
- Diverse aspects of climate change taught across subjects in an interdisciplinary manner to address complexity and interlinkages.
- Learner-centred, experiential and reflective ways of learning making climate change education more fun, solutions-based and action-oriented.
- That their teachers are well supported to become ready to teach climate change. They are concerned that teachers are not confident enough and have limited resources to teach about climate change.
- That schools be important learning spaces for climate change.
- More say in decision-making on climate change action in school.
- Contextualized climate change education through engagement with the local community.
- Specificities of their geographic and demographic contexts be addressed. Youth coming from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in particular demand more climate change education than is currently offered.

70%

of young people surveyed say that they cannot explain climate change, or can only explain its broad principles, or do not know anything about it

## Introduction

*“The worst feeling is to want to do something about climate change, because it affects all and it will get worse, but you don’t have the resources, you don’t know where or whom to reach out to.”*

Poland (19 years)

The planetary crisis associated with climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution threatens the very survival of human beings. The UN Secretary-General calls the climate crisis ‘a battle for our lives’, as we still struggle to transform our societies to reach the 1.5-degree Celsius path recommended by the Paris Agreement. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world with a real, existential threat such as climate change, there is a growing call for education to enable individuals, as agents of change, to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that lead to the green transition of our societies. However, according to UNESCO’s recent findings, not enough is being done. [Nearly half of the 100 countries](#) reviewed had no climate change mentioned in their national curriculum frameworks. While most of the [58,000 teachers surveyed](#) (95 per cent) believe that it is important to teach about climate change, only about 23 per cent can explain thoroughly how to take climate action. These stark findings echo the intensifying eco-anxiety of young people, who note that they are frightened about their future.

Recalling [article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) and [article 12 of the Paris Agreement](#) which highlight the role of education,

UNESCO, the UN lead agency for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), launched the global [framework ESD for 2030](#) at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in May 2021, where over 70 ministers and vice-ministers of education as well as 2,800 stakeholders committed to integrating ESD, including climate action, as a core curriculum component. This was followed up by the [Milan Youth4Climate Manifesto](#) and the [Glasgow Work programme on Action for Climate Empowerment](#) at COP26 in Glasgow where, for the first time, climate change education occupied a central role.

Building on this momentum, the [Greening Education Partnership](#) was launched at the 2022 UN Transforming Education Summit, with the aim of getting every learner climate-ready. To contribute to the global efforts for coordinated actions through the Partnership, UNESCO is undertaking the [“Greening Every School”](#) project, the first component of which entails co-developing a green curriculum guide with young people. This project consists of two phases; 1) compiling youth demands and 2) translating youth demands into a curriculum guide for policy-makers and educators. This document presents the outcome of the first phase which focuses on gathering youth voices.

## Methodology

Data and information were collected through an online survey and focus group discussions. The web survey was developed in Lime Survey and disseminated to young people globally in collaboration with partners between 22 June and 8 August 2022.

In addition, five regional focus group discussions with young people aged 12-25 were held. Young people were selected based on recommendations from strategic partners of UNESCO, with geographical balance, diversity of age and of gender. The survey and focus group discussions were designed to explore the status of climate change education, levels of satisfaction and expectations of young people along the five key elements of whole-school approaches to climate change: learning content, ways of teaching and learning, the learning environment, school management and learning partnerships.

## Acknowledgements

UNESCO gratefully acknowledges the time and effort spent by those involved in the production of this document.

The document was produced under the overall guidance of Jun Morohashi and was coordinated by Won Jung Byun together with a project team of Simon Wanda, Sarah Margono Samsudin, Giulia Ceriani and Irina Sarikaya from the Section of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO. Special thanks go to Aditi Pathak, a former project officer at UNESCO MGIEP who kindly volunteered to prepare and conduct the focus group discussions. Bernard Combes, Alison Kennedy, André Luu and Camille Desrayaud provided important editorial support.

We wish to thank all partners involved, in particular, Care about Climate, Earthday.org, Fridays For Future Climate Education, the Foundation for Environmental Education, the International Telecommunication Union, Teach for All, Technovation, UN CC: Learn, UNESCO ASPnet schools, UNESCO Field Office colleagues, UNFCCC Action for Climate Empowerment,

## Overall responses

Nearly 17,500 young people (17,471) from 166 countries, spread across all regions, took part in the online survey, most of whom (88 per cent) were aged between 11 and 19 years. Overall 29 young people participated in the five focus groups, each consultation lasting 1.5 hours.

## Limitations

The views presented in this report do not reflect a representative sample of youth across the world, as the dissemination of the survey and the recruitment of discussants were done through UNESCO's partners, and as one country- the Philippines - has disproportionately large numbers of respondents (12,227). The survey was available online in three languages - English, French and Spanish - while the focus group discussions were conducted online in English and French. This may have excluded young people who do not have access to stable internet connections or do not speak any of the working languages.

UNITAR, UNU-IAS Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD, World Largest Lesson, World Organization of the Scout Movement, YOU-CAN and YOUNGO.

We also wish to thank the 17,471 young people who responded to the survey. Indeed we are especially grateful to those who took part in the five regional focus group discussions, to share their experiences, wishes and aspirations for quality climate change education for current and future generations: Alimatou Ly, Dante Rocío, Dylan Yap, Emma Dulong, Ezekiel Nyanfor, Faizah Makhdoum, Hermelan, Husam Shehadeh, João Vitor Moraes Duarte, Joy Chiadika, Julieta Marino Tartaglino, Julieta Martinez, Man Nguyen Mai Gia, Matheus Valois Serra, Miriam Egger, Nuraiym Aidarbekova, Rachida El Rhdioui, Reem AlShehhi, Rodrigo Daniel Mesia, Rui Yi Ang, Rumit Walia, Ryann Fineberg, Sagar Koirala, Salem Ayenan, Sofia Vergara Moya, Stavriana Heracleous, Temilade Salami, Zaina Saqfalhait and Zawad Alam. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, they are referenced only by country and age when quoted in the text.



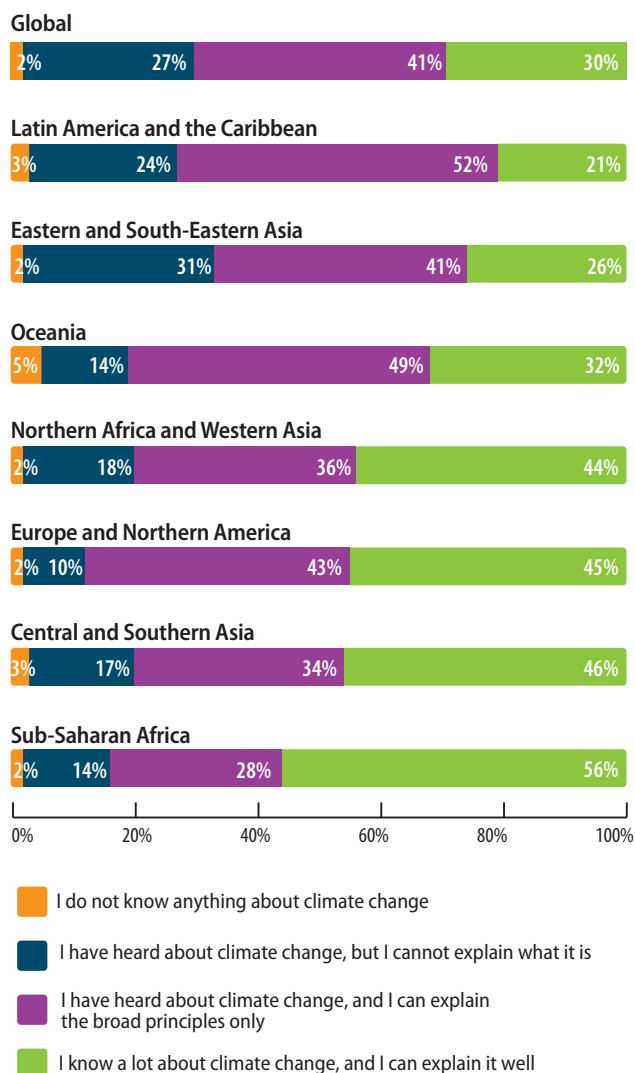
# Findings

## Finding 1

### The quality of the current climate change education is in question

Most young people (91 per cent) indicate they learnt about climate change at school. However, they expressed concerns about the quality of the climate change education that they received. Seventy per cent of young people surveyed said that they have heard about climate change but cannot explain what it is (27 per cent) or can only explain the broad principles (41 per cent), or do not know anything about it (2 per cent).

Figure 1. How much do you know about climate change?



While 90 per cent of the respondents at least moderately agree that schools should be places where people get prepared for climate change, only 79 per cent note that schools are currently functioning as places to prepare people for climate change. One in five respondents report that they do not feel prepared for climate change based on what they have learnt at school and most of the respondents (91 per cent) would like to have more climate change taught at school. In particular, young people are concerned that climate change is only covered in a generic way and not connected to specific action.

“I was not taught climate change in school and I would really like to see that change for upcoming generations.”

Nigeria (25 years)

“In English class, we talked about climate change but we never talked about climate change mitigation. We spoke about climate change in a really general way, nothing specific.”

Chile (19 years)

## Finding 2

### Youth demand climate change education to understand and take better action on climate change and to help reconsider the human place within nature, through whole-school approaches.

While overall the top three purposes of climate change education identified by respondents are to gain scientific knowledge about climate change and its consequences; understand what human activities cause climate change; and be able to take action and make a positive change, there are some regional variations: respondents from Europe and Northern America (67 per cent) and Central and Southern Asia (69 per cent) are most likely to note the central role climate change education plays in making a positive change in society, while those from Northern Africa and Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (58 per cent and 54 per cent respectively) are more likely to note the purpose of climate change education is to develop skills to adapt to climate change.

“The interrelation of sustainability and how it’s not only about the environment, but also [covers] the inequalities that it causes, and how inequalities are propagated by environmental injustice. I think those things are really important to counter this misconception that climate change is just this issue that hardcore activists are advocating for whereas it’s something that actually affects everyone in the whole world.”

**Philippines (17 years)**

Young people who took part in the in-depth discussion expressed the need for education to revisit how we view the human relationship with nature. The recognition of the human place within nature away from a human-centric, dualistic perspective should be the values basis of the new climate change education.

“I feel like a guest of nature, we have to respect nature for it to respect us back.”

**Cyprus (17 years)**

“The problem is that in the pedagogy, [teachers] don’t connect the people or students to nature so that they feel empathy and respect towards it”.

**Morocco/Tunisia (23)**

“We should divert from the anthropocentric view that human is the greatest creature that has ever been [on earth]. There is always the belief that we are the best and we know best, but we are supposed to be here, on earth to discover many other important facts, knowledge and wisdom from other species, other beings, now and in the future”.

**Poland (19)**

Of the young people surveyed, 60 per cent noted that they learn about climate change largely through teaching and learning in the classroom (Figure 2), followed by partnerships and community engagement (26 per cent); and school management (23 per cent). Learning through school facilities and operations is limited (16 per cent). When asked where they would like climate change to be incorporated at school, young people placed greater emphasis on partnerships and community engagement (43 per cent) and school management (33 per cent), as well as in school spaces (24 per cent) in comparison to what they are currently experiencing.

To have a better understanding of youth demands, the following sections zoom into each of the areas of whole-school approaches to climate change education, i.e., learning content, ways of teaching and learning, the learning environment, school management and learning partnerships.

## LEARNING CONTENT

### Finding 3

#### Youth demand diverse aspects of climate change taught across subjects

Climate change education is most commonly taught within natural sciences (50 per cent) according to the respondents. Only 25 per cent of young people note that climate change education has been embedded in several subjects and 40 per cent of respondents said that it is taught as a standalone subject. It is interesting to note that the higher the age bracket, the less climate change tends to be taught as a standalone subject. Twenty-two per cent of respondents from countries in Europe and Northern America noted that climate change education was embedded in several subjects in their curriculum, the highest among all regions. Oceania had the lowest percentage (five per cent) of respondents who noted that climate change is embedded in several subjects. Respondents from Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (38 per cent) said that climate change was taught as a standalone subject, the highest among all regions.

**Figure 2. Where is/was climate change incorporated at your school?**

Learning content and teaching methods

60%

Partnership and community engagement

26%

School management

23%

In school spaces

16%

None of these

7%

On the question of how they would like climate change education to be taught, preference for it to be taught as a stand-alone subject or across several subjects rose, while the preference for it being a part of natural sciences fell. This cuts across all age groups and all regions. More respondents from Northern Africa and Western Asia, Europe and Northern America, and sub-Saharan Africa (42, 40 and 38 per cent respectively) would like to see climate change taught in different subjects compared to responses from other regions.

“I think it’s really important to see climate change not as something separate, but as something interlinked, not only ecological but also social and economic. As I’m becoming a teacher for economics, I really try to do that in my first practical training to show the students how climate change and topics can be interlinked. And I think that’s something really important because our society is also an interlinked system and so also is climate change”.

**Austria (23 years)**

“It’s very important for us to use a holistic approach. (...) For example, how does climate change apply to policy? How does it impact science? How does it affect ethics, including environmental ethics? How does it have an impact on the economic status of a geographical location like agriculture?”

**Nigeria (25 years)**

#### **Finding 4**

### **Youth demand climate change education that addresses complexity and interlinkages.**

#### **What youth want to know about climate change**

On the cognitive dimension of climate change education, young people expressed interest in knowing more about historical responsibilities for climate change, climate justice, and what climate change means in their own national and regional context. Also, there is noticeable interest to learn more about the latest discussions on climate solutions, ranging from how to respond to natural disasters and help restore nature to learning about alternative economic systems such as the circular economy so that young people can learn to find positive alternatives to tackle the crisis.

“It’s very important that the right thing is taught in context to my country, to me, to my location in Africa.”

**Nigeria (25 years)**

“If I had been taught about climate change in school, I would be more prepared for disasters we are facing today. I would have liked to learn about the historical responsibility of emissions, climate restoration, the Paris climate Agreement, how young people can be prepared for policy participation and negotiation processes, issues linked to the polluter pays principle.”

**Liberia (23 years)**

“Circular economy should be a focus not only educating us on what are the current issues that are being faced, but also potential ways that we could integrate solutions into our lives and our future initiatives and actual ideas on how to improve it because realistically not one person can solve climate change, but at the same time, I feel like it is important to emphasize the new solutions and the big structures that we can help to support, so that people not only know what climate change is, but how to move forward with climate change in our future”.

**Brunei Darussalam (17 years)**

#### **How youth want to learn to address feelings about climate change**

In practice, the nexus between emotional implications of climate change, such as climate anxiety, and sense of well being, and climate education remains relatively low, with only 13 per cent of respondents noting that they are involved in writing about feelings on climate change. Thirty-one per cent of the respondents from Eastern and South-Eastern Asia said that they are involved in activities such as writing about their feelings on climate change, compared to only 13 per cent from Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Climate change education should be a comprehensive discussion, a way to engage communities, for instance, indigenous communities. It is also essential to tackle climate anxiety and climate despair.”

**Argentina (25 years)**



## What youth want to learn to be able to take action on climate change

Young people called for more action-oriented learning on climate change to help them seek concrete solutions - from hands-on practical skills to making their own lives more climate-friendly (such as growing their own vegetables); from developing entrepreneurship to learning how to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making processes and take civic action. This involves learning leadership, negotiation and digital skills.

“We need to learn skills that are useful, like how to plant a tree, how to recycle, how to do practical things. I think if you keep learning things like what is the best kind of soil to plant a tree, how to properly recycle and have more practical skills that would make the learning much more interesting.”

**Brazil (22 years)**

“I think the first thing for me would be leadership skills because that’s the most important thing, having a sense of responsibility for our environment. And the second thing would be communication skills, because it’s one thing to understand climate change and not to be able to communicate it properly. And I think for me, because the world is changing and a lot of things are changing, it will also be digital skills because we’ve seen how movement has been created just via digital platforms and being able to connect with other people.”

**Nigeria (25 years)**

“It is essential for students to acquire business skills in order to tackle climate change from a business and economic perspective. We have to look at climate change from the green economic perspective or the business perspective so that young people can prepare themselves how they can create their own business and tap into.”

**Liberia (23 years)**

“Make those companies or actors respect the different climates engagement that they have signed.”

**Côte d’Ivoire (24 years)**

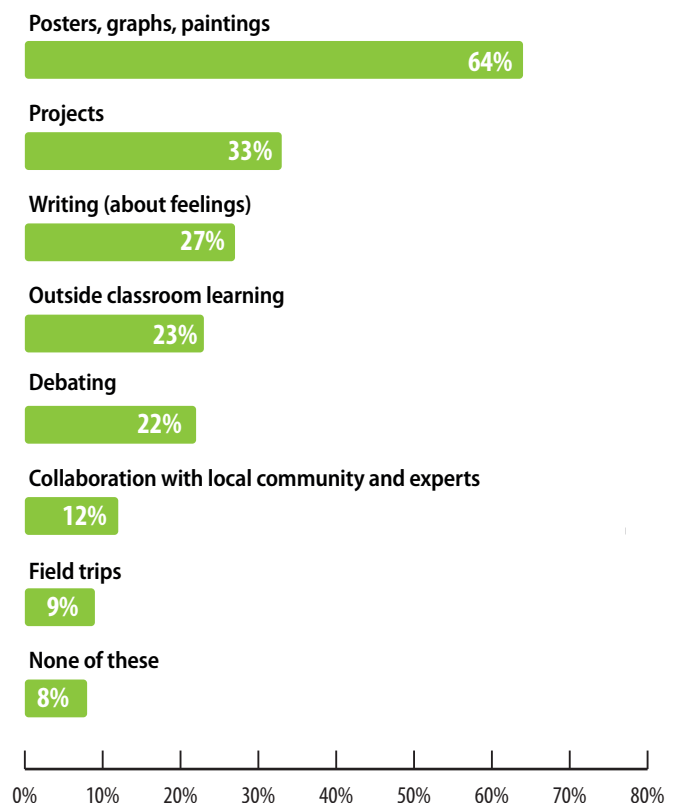
## WAYS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

### Finding 5

### Youth demand learner-centred, experiential and reflective ways of learning

Of all respondents, 64 per cent noted that they learned about the impacts of climate change through activities such as creating posters, graphs and paintings (Figure 3). Relatively fewer learned through projects (33 per cent), collaboration with local organizations and experts (12 per cent) and field trips (nine per cent). When asked which types of activities they want to engage in related to climate change, young people prefer to do more experiential, project-based activities, including those held outside the classroom and working with local organizations and experts, and less of passive activities and to have more active engagement. Also, 77 per cent of respondents strongly agree that climate change should be learnt with people from various backgrounds, to address the complexity of the issue.

**Figure 3. Which of the following activities do/did you do at school to learn about climate change?**



According to young people, climate change education today is not engaging and interesting enough and is focused on a generic concept of climate change not on practice, or on what it means in their own community. Also, there is little space for young people to express their climate anxiety, which calls for more diverse pedagogy such as through art, music, local cultural performances and storytelling.

“I don’t think [I was given the space to express myself]. Because at school, teachers are just delivering a talk about the environmental issues or the programme that they are required to do. There is no space to actually think about the problems. And we are supposed to just listen and then use that experience as a student.”

**Viet Nam (17 years)**

“Everyone should be able to contribute to the discussion and implement actions. With children, we should use art much more (drawing, dancing, singing, story-telling) to talk about sustainable development and climate change. These kinds of activities can help children to become interested in these topics and to better understand the messages.”

**Benin (23 years)**

“100% on the action and less on the concept.”

**Chile (19 years)**

“In my country we have the Jordan river, I would make a trip there to show how it was affected by climate change. We could do the same for other cultural and natural spaces. I would like students to see natural spaces before and now, animals, trees...”

**Jordan (24 years)**

“Participating in democratic processes, like protests, is a good way to take action. It is a way to empower students to take action locally. Students should be given the opportunity to engage in the community, while sharing opportunities and treating students as young adults can help them understand the seriousness of the issue. Providing learning opportunities outside of the classroom is really important to empower students at a local level”

**Canada (15 years)**

Young people wish to be involved in interactive activities such as brainstorming on sustainability issues in their schools, participating in evaluating their schools’ waste and energy use as well as being involved in innovative climate change projects. They also note the important role that mentoring younger students on acting for climate change has in efforts to create awareness and take urgent action for the climate crisis.

## Finding 6

### Youth demand that their teachers are well supported to become ready to teach climate change

In 2021, a global survey<sup>2</sup> of 58,000 teachers from 144 countries showed that fewer than 40 per cent of teachers surveyed are confident in teaching about the severity of climate change, 32 per cent felt they can explain climate change in their local context and only 23 per cent felt ready to teach about climate action, even though 95 per cent of teachers believe that it is important or very important to teach. The frustration among teachers was also shared and noticed by youth who saw that their teachers need more support to address climate change in classroom, in particular through more teaching resources and collaboration with community experts.

“I hope to see teachers who have experiences on the ground, they could invite young people to take innovative actions, teachers should show passion and inspire young people.”

**Morocco/Tunisia (23 years)**

“My teachers tried hard but they didn’t have the knowledge, there were not well prepared, and students did not have a space to express themselves.”

**Brazil, (22 years)**

“So, it’s very important that they get dedicated materials to support their learning, relevant materials, manuals, , resource guides and all of those things because they can’t support a student when they themselves do not understand it”.

**Nigeria (25 years)**

2 UNESCO, 2021 "Teachers have their say: motivation, skills and opportunities to teach education for sustainable development and global citizenship" <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379914> and [hyperlink](#)

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### Finding 7

#### Youth demand that schools be important learning spaces for climate change

While 89 per cent of respondents agree that schools should be places where people get prepared for climate change, only 78 per cent note that schools are currently functioning as such. Among regions, only 43 per cent of participants from Europe and Northern America agreed, moderately agreed or strongly agreed to this statement, the lowest among all regions, while the most positive responses were from respondents in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (88 per cent). Ninety-one per cent of all respondents agree that green spaces are important in school and many activities need to be outdoors. This resonates with the call that “transforming school grounds into nature-rich environments is a powerful tool that improves physical and mental health, social and cognitive skills, creativity, and academic performance”.<sup>3</sup>

“If you see nature and engage with it regularly, it becomes like your good friend, you want to value, and that’s something really important because a lot of young people especially, are only growing up in big cities where they have only parks where every tree has the same size, the same shape and so on. So, they’re not growing up with what we want to tell them to protect. And that makes it really hard to understand”.

**Austria (23 years)**

“[The] learning space should be such that it inspires and sparks critical thinking and curiosity. Students should be immersed in the learning process. This way they are more encouraged to learn about the environment.”

**Nigeria (25 years)**

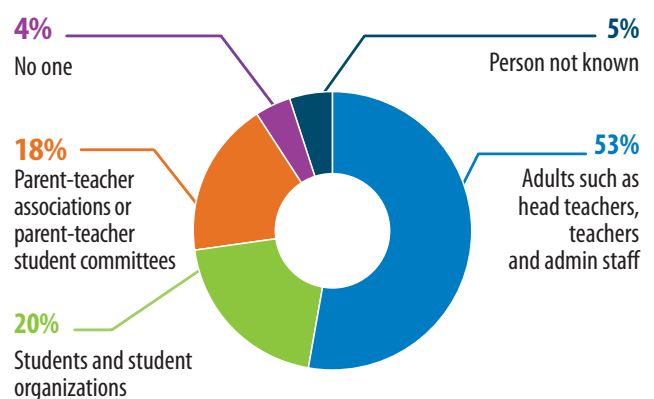
## SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

### Finding 8

#### Youth demand more say in decision-making on climate change actions in school

Climate change efforts in school are more often led by adults (53 per cent) such as head teachers, teachers and school administrative staff than by students, their representatives or student organizations (20 per cent), according to the survey. There are only limited participatory decision-making processes (18 per cent) through parent-teacher associations or parent-teacher-student committees.

**Figure 4. Who leads climate change activities in schools?**



In climate change education experiences, only 32 per cent of respondents have brainstormed on what makes the school sustainable. Only 32 per cent of respondents participate in evaluating their school’s waste and energy use. Young people demand that students should have a greater role in decision-making processes in school and connect it with their learning activities on climate change, so that schools become innovative hubs for all relevant stakeholders to engage in climate action.

3 The Salzburg Global Seminar, 2022 “The Salzburg Statement for Greening School Grounds & Outdoor Learning”

“Giving students the creative freedom to be able to make these decisions and not like overseeing them too much, allow them to have the creativity to actually make these changes. allowing students to make their own clubs, giving the public the ability to actually make change within the school.”

**Philippines (17 years)**

“We don’t have particular councils related to climate change decisions, but we have a Parents Association that can make decisions, it involves parents and teachers. There are students’ bodies that can talk about many decisions. However, environment and sustainability are not specific topics covered in these councils. But these topics should be.”

**Nigeria (25 years)**

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## LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

### Finding 9

#### Youth demand contextualized climate change education through engagement with the local community

Currently, the most popular forms of community engagement activities on climate change that learners experience at school are through social media and TV, newspapers, and radio (33 per cent), and community events about climate change such as energy saving campaigns (29 per cent). Young people would like to see more partnership activities in the local community to strengthen relevance of climate change education, such as organized community events on climate change, joint projects with local organizations and other schools as well as tours showing their school’s action on climate change. They note that it would be informative to invite guest speakers from local stakeholders including civil society.

“Oftentimes, a lot of schools and a lot of students live in this bubble where climate change doesn’t really affect them. But I think immersing themselves in a community where it does affect them allows people to gain a whole new perspective to act differently.”

**Philippines (17 years)**

“Having guest speakers going out to the nature, (...) they have been the most engaging ways for me to learn about climate change because you’re learning about it head on and you’re learning about it from a real experience and a real lens.”

**Canada (15 years)**

“Parents also need to be involved so that when children go home the learning process continues.”

**Liberia (23 years)**

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## CONTEXTUAL SPECIFICITIES

### Finding 10

#### Youth demand specificities of their geographic and demographic contexts be addressed

##### Eastern and South-Eastern Asia

While the region had the highest proportion of respondents (96 per cent) compared to other regions, who said that climate change was taught in their schools, the quality of the education was in question. For instance, only 26 per cent of respondents from this region said that they could explain climate change well, the second lowest among all regions. It had the highest number of respondents (38 per cent) who noted that climate change education is taught as a stand-alone subject, compared to other regions. Respondents from the region particularly raised the importance of contextualizing the learning experience and linking it to the local community.

“(...) interact with the local community and see how it does impact some groups or local areas, where you can interact with the community and gain a whole new perspective.”

**Philippines (17 years)**

##### Central and Southern Asia

The region has the second highest percentage of respondents (46 per cent) who noted that they knew a lot about climate change and could explain it well. The region had the highest proportion of respondents (60 per cent) who called for experiential learning activities such as tours showing their school’s climate action activities.

“Not just in the school, but outside, where they can actually connect with the community who is actually practicing climate action, [...] the people that are actually living in harmony with nature.”

India (25 years)

### Sub-Saharan Africa

The region has the highest percentage of respondents (56 per cent) who noted that they know a lot about climate change and can explain it well. Young people from sub-Saharan Africa stressed the importance of historical responsibility for climate change and the need to develop entrepreneurship skills to address climate change.

“When it comes to learning about climate change, we need to cover major themes, starting from what is climate change and the causes of climate change [...]. We need to learn about the policies, economic processes, politics and negotiation which relates to umbrella processes such as the Paris Agreement itself, and more importantly the post-Paris Agreement related to loss and damage, finance, polluter pays principle, extensive producer responsibilities. All the topics that have very current consequences and impact.”

Nigeria (25 years)

### Northern Africa and Western Asia

Respondents from Northern Africa and Western Asia were more likely to note that climate change was taught through extra-curricular activities (26 per cent of respondents in this region), which was the highest among regions. Notable comments from discussants from the region include the need for digital and critical thinking skills.

“The most important skill is searching because climate change is a huge topic, schools can’t cover it entirely. Young people can search the things that they care about. I didn’t learn anything about climate change at school”.

Saudi Arabia (20 years)

### Latin America and the Caribbean

The region had the highest percentage of respondents (79 per cent) who said they have limited knowledge about climate change (do not know anything (3 per cent); heard about climate change but could not explain (24 per cent); can only explain

its broad principles (52 per cent)). The region reported the lowest proportion of respondents (10 per cent) who noted that their schools engaged communities in teaching and learning about climate change. Young people from the region were particularly interested in learning from indigenous knowledge.

“Climate change education should be a comprehensive discussion, a way to engage communities, for instance, indigenous communities. It is also essential to tackle climate anxiety and climate despair. To do that, we need to learn the tools and skills to mitigate climate change. We have a lot to learn from them, and each other”.

Argentina (25 years)

### Europe and Northern America

The region had the highest percentage of respondents (37 per cent) who reported that they did not receive climate change education in school, compared to other regions. Around half of the respondents from the region (47 per cent) replied that they are not well-prepared to respond to climate change based on what they learned at school, which is the highest proportion of dissatisfaction in comparison to other regions. Notably, there were comments on the importance of learning to participate in decision-making processes on climate change.

“Participating in democratic processes, like protests, is a good way to take action. It is a way to empower students to take action locally. Students should be given the opportunity to engage in the local community, sharing opportunities and treating students as young adults to understand the seriousness of the issue. Providing learning opportunities outside the classroom is really important to empower students in a local level”.

Canada (15 years)



### Oceania

The region had the lowest representation among respondents in the survey, with only 37 young people responding to the survey. With this limitation in mind, this region had the second highest proportion of respondents (76 per cent), compared to other regions, who noted that schools are currently functioning as places to prepare people for climate change.

### The younger the respondents, the higher the level of satisfaction of their learning experiences on climate change education

Compared to older respondents, younger respondents feel they are better prepared to deal with climate change based on what they learned in school (81 per cent of 14-16 year olds; 63 per cent of 23-25 year olds), though they may not feel as confident as older groups to explain climate change well. This is also confirmed by testimonies of discussants where younger people tended to express a higher satisfaction regarding their learning experiences of climate change education as opposed to older age groups who tended to express high disappointment and dissatisfaction of their learning experiences. This observation could be an indication of an improvement in recent years in the integration of climate change education in schools.

### Girls have less confidence to deal with climate change based on what they learnt in school compared to boys

Twenty-four per cent of all female respondents report that climate change education they have received in school has not prepared them to deal with challenges posed by climate change, compared to only 15 per cent of male respondents.

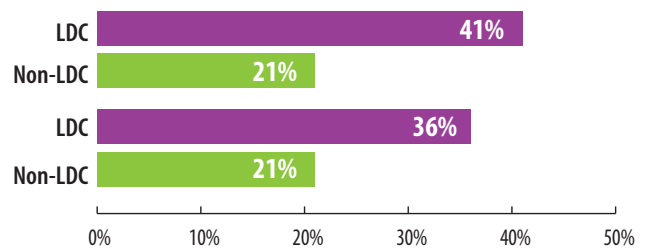
#### Finding 11

### Youth coming from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in particular demand more climate change education than is currently offered

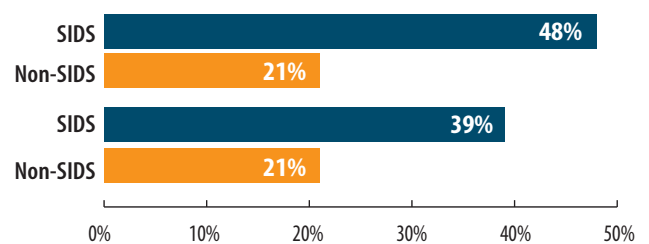
Twenty-one per cent of all respondents from LDCs reported that they did not learn about climate change in school compared to eight per cent from non-LDCs.

Young people from SIDS tended to report that they learned about climate change as a separate subject and were more likely to report that they did not feel prepared for climate change based on what they had learned at school, compared to other respondents. Thirty-six per cent of respondents from SIDS and 41 per cent of respondents from LDCs reported that they did not feel prepared to deal with climate change based on what they learned at school, compared to 21 per cent from both non-SIDS and from non-LDCs. Similarly, 48 per cent of respondents from SIDS and 39 per cent from LDCs said that schools are not currently functioning as places to prepare people for climate change, compared to 21 per cent of respondents both from non-SIDS and from non-LDCs.

**Figure 5.** Percentage of young people who feel prepared to deal with climate change based on what is learnt at school



**Percentage of young people who feel that schools are not currently functioning as places to prepare people for climate change**



## Recommendations

- ▶ **The quality of climate change education should be improved so that youth gain a deeper understanding of the complex and interlinked nature of climate change and are able to take action.** Content coverage should be extended to highlight the socio-economic and political causes and ramifications of climate change. This may include stronger emphasis on human-induced causes of climate change, historical responsibilities for climate change, climate justice and alternative economic systems, indigenous knowledge and traditions, responses to natural disasters, and building upon renewed values recognizing the human place within nature away from human-centric perspectives.
- ▶ **Climate change education should be interdisciplinary and embedded in all subjects within curricula.** The learning should draw upon both formal and non-formal education practices to include art, music and local culture to engage 'head', 'heart' and 'hands' through developing cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural skills.
- ▶ **The purpose of climate change education should be clearly established to prepare young people to tackle the climate crises by providing them with the ability to take action and bring about positive change in societies.** This entails an action-oriented approach, providing a place in decision-making processes and engaging with local communities so that young people can put their learning into practice.
- ▶ **Teachers should be supported with sufficient and adequate resources,** professional development opportunities, and collaboration with community actors to have the confidence and passion to empower learners to learn and engage with climate action.
- ▶ **The learning content should be both global and contextualized to local realities.** The gaps found in different experiences of young people across regions, gender and age should be addressed when designing quality climate change education curricula. The demands of young people from Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries require particular attention.

### Key references

[Article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) : encourages people to take the lead and cooperate in creative climate change education and training.

[Article 12 of the Paris Agreement](#) calls for parties to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to information.

[Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs \(ESD for 2030\) framework](#) and its [roadmap](#) is the overarching guiding framework on ESD under which climate change education is considered as one of the thematic focus areas.

[Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development](#) adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development calls for climate action to be a core curriculum component.



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# Youth demands for quality climate change education

This document summarizes the findings of a global survey and focus group discussions on young people's learning experiences and demands on quality climate change education, based on responses from about 17,500 young people across 166 countries.

The findings shed light on how young people are currently experiencing climate change education and what they want to see differently in the future around five key aspects: learning content, ways of teaching and learning, the learning environment, school management and learning partnerships. Currently, 70 per cent of the youth surveyed cannot explain, can only explain the broad principles, or do not know anything about climate change, as they feel a lack of quality in the current way climate change is taught.

The observations gained through the study are intended to inform the discussions on climate change education and Action for Climate Empowerment at Climate Change Conferences of Parties and beyond. Under its global framework on Education for Sustainable Development 'ESD for 2030' and through the Greening Education Partnership launched at the UN Transforming Education Summit, UNESCO aims to get every learner climate-ready by supporting Member States' efforts to integrate climate change education holistically in education policy and practice. Based on the demands of young people presented in this document, UNESCO and its partners will work to translate youth demands into a curriculum guide for policy-makers and educators.

To participate in efforts to get every learner climate-ready through quality climate change education, commit to your action for the Greening Education Partnership. <https://bit.ly/3Cwi2Ua>

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