



You and the environment

Anonymised High School took part in a survey on young people's views on the environment, which was carried out by the University of Edinburgh. Anonymised High School is an 'eco-school' and encourages whole-school action on the environment. This achievement has been recognised by being awarded the Green Flag several times.

This is a short summary of what we found when we asked your views on the environment and the environmental choices which you make.

Eco-school

Most pupils (85%) know that Anonymised High School is an eco-school. For half, being an eco-school is important.

Most pupils are aware of the 'big global issues of today' (climate change 82%, animal extinctions 81%, oil running out 71%, increased carbon footprint 65%) but they find it harder to be motivated by these issues (animal extinctions 55%, oil running out 51%, climate change 39%, increased carbon footprint 23%).

It is often easier to get engaged with local environmental issues. We asked about action projects which you might want to get involved with: of these the most popular was the international dimension of climate change, such as discussing how Scotland can help African countries to deal with climate problems (27% would like to take part), clearing litter (20%) and growing fruit and veg (18%).

Personal choices

People can make a real difference to the environment through the everyday choices which they make. Anonymised High School pupils are very active recyclers, with four-out-of-five people recycling packaging, at least some of the time. They're also great at turning off unused lights. Almost half of pupils took care to switch off a TV rather than leave it on standby, saving a useful amount of electricity. The biggest environmental savings which we asked about come from reducing the amount of meat in our diets: here, Anonymised High School students were less successful in changing long-standing habits, with only one-in-four people having meat-free days or vegetarian meals. Something to think about!

Pupils are very 'litter aware' and are particularly good at never dropping litter. One-in-five would be interested in taking part in litter clearing activities in their local area.

Carbon footprint

Most pupils have *heard* about 'carbon footprint' (85% say they have) but almost half of them (46%) are not quite sure what it means. Two-out-of-three have heard about the carbon footprint through school, with a quarter of pupils being interested in this topic. Pupils are interested in the 'big issues' – such as animal extinctions and the oil supplies running out - which are affected by our carbon footprint and our choices.

Talking about the environment with your friends and family

Pupils think that their parents' generation is more environmentally savvy than they are: they say that their parents are more interested in the environment and know more about environmental issues than they are. Perhaps because parents have been around for longer? Pupils use their family's knowledge, as they are more likely to talk about environmental issues with their family than with their friends.

Transport

Almost all pupils know how to cycle (92%). Of these, half (52%) have a bike which they can use to cycle places. However, almost none cycled to school. Fewer than 10% of pupils cycle regularly, at least once a week. Three-quarters of pupils have at least one bike in their household, with most having several bikes at home.

Most pupils walked to school that day (70%) with 18% arriving at school by car and 11% by bus.

Some 90% of pupils have flown by plane at some point in their lives. Most homes have a car (84%), with some having two, three or four cars.

Grow your own

Growing food in our gardens is environmentally friendly, as it reduces the number of miles which food has to travel and because it might help us eat more vegetables and fruit instead of meat. Almost all Anonymised High School students live in houses with their own garden or with a shared garden, though only one-in-five say that they currently enjoy gardening: it is much more likely to be something which other people in the family do. About half of pupils with access to a garden say that it is used to grow things. Being prepared to 'grow your own' is something which might make a real difference to the overall carbon footprint of a place. And it's good for your health, too. Get digging!

Contact

This survey was done by Professor Lynne Jamieson, who works at the Sociology Department of the University of Edinburgh. If you would like to know more about this survey or about other work which we do at the University of Edinburgh, do please look at our website: www.sociology.ed.ac.uk