



# **Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort**

## **Commonwealth Youth in Climate Action for COP26 and Beyond**

### **Final Report**

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#### **Executive Summary**

Climate change is a critical threat that has increased levels of uncertainty about the planet's future. Despite the global efforts since the first COP in 1995, global carbon emissions keep rising rapidly. Young climate activists such as Greta Thunberg have drawn attention to the perspective and power of the youth's voice on climate change through massive school strikes in over 150 countries around the world. The participation of youth in sustainable development will determine the success of global efforts to limit global warming as there are around 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 to 24 - the largest generation of youth in history- that will inherit the planet in the next decades. However, the voice of the youth has been overlooked in climate change literature and policies.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate youth knowledge, awareness and participation in climate action in their local communities. In addition, to understand the motivations and barriers to youth participation in climate action activities and policymaking. To achieve the research goals, various research methods were implemented; a global survey, thematic analysis and netnography analysis for the social media platforms using SPSS and Octoparse software. The results indicate that the youth are extremely aware of climate change and its impacts on their communities, in particular, livelihood and economy. Moreover, the results show youth's frustration with the governments' approaches to tackle and mitigate climate change.



According to the participants, governments are primarily responsible for their limited involvement in the policymaking process. On the contrary, the results demonstrate the increasing role of social media platforms like Twitter to mobilise youth groups around climate action during and prior to COP26 to share their perspectives as well as to express their anger and disappointment. Thus, when given opportunities to engage in climate action, youth participation is valuable and authentic. Participants suggest returning power to academics and communities for practical and science-based climate solutions. The research proposes practical implications in order to enhance youth engagement and inclusion in the policymaking, for instance, (1) build effective and regular consultation between governments and youth organizations, clubs and universities; (2) develop academic courses on the fundamentals of policy and governance for tertiary education; (3) integrate climate change topics in curricula at the early stages of education; (4) establish an action fund that is specific to the needs of climate youth leaders and organisations and (5) collaboration between academia and NGOs and government authorities to research into practical ways to tackle climate change in the context of each community.



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	4
1. INTRODUCTION.....	5
2. Background / Context .....	6
3. METHODOLOGY / APPROACH.....	11
3.1.1 Digital ethnography: netnography.....	12
3.1.2 Sample selection .....	13
3.1.3 Data analysis .....	13
4. RESEARCH TO ACTION PROJECT RESULTS.....	15
4.1.1 Theme 1: Youth Discourse and Mobilisation Pre-COP.....	15
4.1.2 Theme 2: Youth Disenchantment during COP .....	17
4.1.3 Theme 3: Youth suppression and corporate influence.....	20
4.3.1 Climate change beliefs and concern .....	22
4.3.2 Climate change impacts on the community .....	23
4.3.3 National contributions to climate change and its solutions .....	23
4.3.4 Responsibility and engagement on climate change .....	24
4.3.5 Familiarity and engagement with climate policy.....	25
4.3.6 Barriers to youth action on climate change.....	25
5. SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS.....	29
6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.....	30
7. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	30
8. CONCLUSION.....	31
9. REFERENCES.....	31
10. ANNEXES .....	38
10.1.1 Climate change beliefs and concern .....	38
10.1.2 Climate change impacts on the community .....	39
10.1.3 National contributions to climate change and its solutions .....	40
10.1.4 Responsibility and engagement on climate change .....	46
10.1.5 Familiarity and engagement with climate policy.....	48
10.1.6 Barriers to youth action on climate change.....	48



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The impacts of climate change which are already being felt globally include, but are not limited to, intensified and frequent extreme weather events, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, rising sea levels, flooding, heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, increased air pollution, desertification, water shortages, the destruction of ecosystems, biodiversity loss and the spread of diseases (IPCC, 2018). The IPCC's sixth assessment report in 2021 recognises the irreversible damage caused by greenhouse gas emissions, and that the associated climate changes will be irreversible for centuries to millennia (IPCC, 2021). It further observes that global temperatures are now higher than at any other time and will worsen unless action is taken now (IPCC, 2021). Therefore, it is critical to act now to protect our collective present and future.

In the seminal case of *Case Concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project* (Hungary v. Slovakia, 1997) Judge Weeramantry recognised the principle of Intergenerational Equity and emphasised the “imperative of balancing the needs of the present generation with those of posterity.” The principle of Intergenerational Equity emphasises the importance of equitable sharing of natural resources between present and future generations. The principle is enshrined in key international instruments such as the Principle 3 of Rio Declaration (1992), Principle 1 and 2 of Stockholm Declaration (1972), as well as climate change instruments such as Article 3 of UNFCCC (1992) which provide that states should “protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind”. The Preamble of the Paris Agreement (2015) also provides that the parties “should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on ... intergenerational equity.” Climate change impacts the rights of youth, children and future generations with the brunt of consequences of climate change having to be faced by them in the future (Atapattu, 2019). Thus, being a classic example of an intergenerational environmental issue. Therefore, in the context of climate change the principle of intergenerational equity recognises the importance of protecting rights of future generations who are to face disproportionate consequences of climate change while balancing the needs of the present generation. Thus, voices of youth are critical in highlighting the importance of this intergenerational issue that impacts their rights and the rights of future generations.

The concept of sustainable development complements the concept of intergenerational equity and stresses the necessity of building up the above link between the present and future generations. Sustainable development has been defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present



without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (The World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). In the context of climate change, the concept is of seminal value in recognising the need for development while considering the ecological limits of the planet, including ensuring that global temperature rise in this century is limited. The concept is enshrined in international instruments including the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 which followed. At the Rio conference, youth were recognised as a 'major group' whose creativity and ideals should be mobilized in sustainable development.

The Precautionary principle is another that complements intergenerational equity. It requires taking precautionary measures with regard to acts that may cause serious or irreversible damage to the environment even though the causal links may not have been scientifically fully established. In the context of climate change, the irreversible damage is an uninhabitable environment caused by global warming, which would be inherited by future generations. The precautionary principle is enshrined in the Rio Declaration. The application of this principle implies the need for climate education of the world's present young adults to help them make informed decisions in the future. Present day young adults are the generation that will soon be holding responsibilities in dealing with natural resources. Thus, university education plays an important role in educating youth and should make them equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to face the future climate challenges.

In the Commonwealth more than 60 percent of the population are youth aged between 15 and 29 (Commonwealth Youth Climate change Network, 2021). This majority of the population are to face the brunt of climate change. Therefore, youth should play an active role in decision-making that relates to their future—in ensuring intergenerational equity. As recognised in Principle 21 of Rio Declaration the innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial spirit of youth could be utilised in developing modern and more sustainable solutions. Youth have already begun to engage this issue, with their voices stretching from school climate strikes to climate litigation, bringing to the attention of the public the dire need to address the defining issue of our time: climate change.

## **2. Background / Context**

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The earth's rapidly changing climate destabilises the natural temperature and weather systems, leading to a cascade of events (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). The World Health Organisation reports that climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of human health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, shelter and a secure world (World



Health Organisation, 2021). These concerns are becoming increasingly burdensome on global youths who fear for their future livelihood security, and have mobilised movements for change through social media platforms and online mediums (Avazz, 2021). According to the United Nations (UN), the world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 to 24 - the largest generation of youth in history. These youth will be the ones who have to deal with some of the direct impacts of climate change if action is not taken immediately, so their perspectives and ideas are important for consideration in decisions made now that will affect their future and the future of their children. Therefore, the youth plays a major role in facing the challenges posed by climate change and have a key role to play as future leaders. As highlighted by the study of Trott (2021), the negative emotions in our youth can be allayed through positive emotions created by youth-led climate action in family and community set-ups. Youth engagement for climate action can take many forms, including using science and arts, as recommended by Hendrickson Lohmeier J. et. al (2021) to use youth-generate art for communicating climate change issues to the general public. The coronavirus pandemic of 2019 brought the normalcy of life, as we knew it then, to a complete halt, forcing the postponement of the Conference of Parties (the supreme decision-making body for climate action) from 2020 to 2021 (UNFCCC, 2020); a year of delay for a global action response to the climate crisis, raising more concern of urgency among youths around the world.

The global pandemic also showed us the importance of online spaces to maintain socio-economic connections, operations and communication. It also improved collective action among youths online in this digital age and demonstrated what we could accomplish through virtual platforms. Before the advent of social media, it was difficult for young people to get their voices heard through conventional mainstream media, even though they represent the largest demographic of passive victims that would require long-term security and future protection (Marion Suiseeya & Zanotti, 2019). In recent years, this has changed enormously as youths are becoming more empowered, educated, and connected through online spaces and community networks. Youths are motivated by the perceived environmental injustices by high carbon-emitting corporations and countries that are seen as not doing enough to combat climate change (Taylor, Holden, Collyns, Standaert, & Kassam, 2021).

In a pre-pandemic era, gaining an insider's perspective and documentation of these experiences regarding issues like climate crises, by accessing the field regularly (physically) through an ethnographic design would have been an ideal option for research. However, to still pursue research that may gain a similar and nuanced data set during a pandemic and health crisis, researchers like sociologists are gradually developing novel responses including patchwork ethnography (Günel, Varma, & Watanabe, 2020) and nuanced ethnography (Miller, 2020). The evolution of netnography



from ethnography in 1995 has now become a contemporary pathway for other fields of study to utilize like sociology, anthropology, consumer research and others (Bowler, 2010).

Netnography has become widely used as ethnography for the virtual world to learn and better understand online communities and cultures (Kozinets, 2011). Online communication exchanges are weaved into every aspect of our daily life, and our social life has now been deeply penetrated by the internet (Beneito-Montagut, 2011). People, especially youths around the globe now use blogs, social networks, chat rooms, personal worldwide pages and other online channels to express their identity, share information, ideas, and values, build knowledge, standard practices and relationships (Addeo, Delli Paoli, Esposito, & Bolcato, 2019). Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have transformed from a straightforward mode of communication to a way that individuals can express their embodied selves to others online (Ghosh, Patgiri, & Aparajita, 2020). It is now a complex platform for our social realities often taken for granted (Hine, 2000). The virtual world has defied geographic separation, isolation, and now affords like-minded users to connect through online communities. For example, the global climate crisis has brought many online users together, especially youths, to engage in environmental dialogue and mobilise in a sense of ecological citizenship to combat this crisis collectively (Rokka & Moisander, 2009).

At COP26 in Glasgow, youths demanded more real action and less 'greenwashing' from world leaders, words that cast doubt over the transparency of the commitments being made at this COP (Quiñones, 2021). Youths around the world have used social media to mobilise protests, marches, and strikes. An excellent example of this was at the beginning of 2018 when youths from different countries have initiated activism, led by Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg, and mobilised around the hashtag "Fridays for Future" on social media to execute a series of strikes every Friday for over a year (Boulianne, Lalancette, & Ilkiw, 2020). At COP26, thousands of youths walked out of school to join a climate strike for the sixth day of the UN Climate Summit, sending a message to world leaders that they demand action on the climate crisis (O'Hare, 2021). The youth's passion for increasing youth participation and engagement to fight climate change and persuasion of governments to meet targeted commitments by 2030 can be summed up through the words of Khishigjargal of Mongolia, "We are the last generation that can end climate change. We can and we will" (UNICEF, 2019).

The rise of the digital world and an increase in online users have paved the avenue for ethnographers to study, analyse and understand the shifting dynamics of human social engagements, norms and perspectives online in a clear or more nuanced way. Digital ethnography outlines an approach to conduct ethnography in a contemporary world by considering how we live and research in a digital,





material and sensory environment (Pink et al., 2015a). Social media has revolutionized the way people worldwide can develop and maintain connection and engagement, with an active global social media population worldwide currently at 4.2 billion - a 53.6% global penetration rate and a global annual user growth of 5.8% (Statista, 2021a).

Platforms like Facebook amass approximately 2.91 billion monthly active users, as of the third quarter of 2021. For the same period, Twitter has 211 million users, a 13% year-over-year increase (Statista, 2021b). Social media has proven to provide new opportunities to organize large groups of loosely connected people of interest towards a common goal, in this case, combating the climate crisis, including the development of new forms of political engagement (Kryger Pedersen, 2017). One new form of political engagement through social media is by indigenous youth voices, who remain largely invisible in conventional, mainstream, and academic accounts of COP (Marion Suiseeya & Zanotti, 2019). This year, indigenous people, who are more agents of environmental conservation rather than just victims of climate change, launched the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform (LCIPP) web portal, marking the first-time indigenous knowledge holders have worked with Parties to design an online space (UNFCCC, 2021). The LCIPP web portal now gives indigenous peoples and local communities worldwide a new and direct way to share their knowledge and facilitate their engagement in climate action with Parties and other stakeholders.

Online platforms like Twitter maintain a 'threaded sociality', a generic sociality commonly found with many social media platforms. Threaded sociality on Twitter may exhibit features such as polylogical (i.e., it is neither a monologue nor a dialogue, but may instead involve three or more conversational partners), sequential (thread posts succeed one another within the bounded domain of the Twitter platform), asynchronous (latecomers can scroll up and down a thread to join the conversation either as silent listeners/lurkers or as Tweeters), emoticonic (gifs, memes or symbols like a smiley face that compensate for the relative poverty of online bodily cues), and publicly intimate (because of the narrow-cast, quasi-oral nature of online threads, participants may feel as if they are sharing a conversation with a close-knit group of conversational partners) (Pink et al., 2015c, pp. 137-139).

The influence and authority that social media has grown to possess over its users should not be underestimated. Social media platforms have slowly but progressively been found to now impact people's belief formation and influence social norms (Schwarz, 2017). For example, there has been increased polarization around the climate crisis, and social media has exacerbated this through consumptive echo chambers; online algorithms filter and personalised content based on users prior behavioural patterns (i.e. homophily), then use the site contents personalised by the individual, and



further refined by the algorithms, to entice an increase in user engagement, thus creating opposing camps/communities of online users who have contrasting ideologies, which in turn reinforces their beliefs whether right or wrong (Gladston & Wing, 2019).

Polarization of ideas can be affected by online users' tendencies, like homophily in communication about the reality of climate change and by the certain nature of the information itself, including its credibility (Samantray & Pin, 2019). Twitter has become a modern platform for news dissemination and opinion exchanges, with essential topics like climate change. It is probably not surprising that several tweets, both, in favour and against the statement that climate change is a genuine concern (Samantray & Pin, 2019). The advancement of online bots (artificial intelligence software programs that perform automated, repetitive, sophisticated predefined tasks) and an increase in user vulnerability to less credible interpersonal engagements and information exchanges has exacerbated the formation of echo chambers on social media platforms even further (Duncombe, 2019; Ferrara, Varol, Davis, Menczer, & Flammini, 2016). One of the main concerns with the advancement of bots is that their artificial intelligence development and improvements may give the false impression that certain information, regardless of its authenticity, is widely accepted and endorsed, thus wielding much authority (Swain, 2016). User vulnerability to poorly informed materials online allows bots to acquire significant influence over the users, even unintentionally. Measuring its effects is not like measuring rising sea levels or air pollution, as it is inherently ephemeral and subject to human cognitive bias (Swain, 2016).

In early May 2020, at the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Twitter introduced fact-checking labels to thousands of Tweets, disrupting the widespread misinformation on its platform (Culliford & Paul, 2020). Twitter is distinctive due to its collaborative nature and story-changing with broadcasting tools like hashtags that allow users posts to reach a greater audience and have more than a person's followers get involved in the conversation (Egan, 2020). Twitter users tend to anchor their tweets to specific topics with trending hashtags, providing other online users with beacons to follow those topics and participate in online discussions (Small, 2011). For example, the social media app discovered an annual increase of 50% for English Tweets that mentioned the phrase "climate change" or hashtag #climatechange (Raj, 2021). When the Australian bushfires made headlines in recent years, there were nearly 10 million Tweets related to it from people around the world between December 2019 and March 2020 (Raj, 2021). The hashtag #PrayForAustralia trended on Twitter with 1.07 million tweets in early January 2020 alone during the uncontrollable bushfires (IndoAsia News, 2020). In essence, the nature of Twitter's distinctive online interactions and exchanges by its users creates measurable trends in interests and engagement levels that allow for conventional Twitter performance analysis to



be employed in research. This may be in the form of direct measures of the number of retweets, likes or occurrences of hashtags that would indicate support for a particular cause.

## **2.2. Need for Research-to-Action (R2A)**

In order to address the abovementioned perceived shortcoming, the proposed research to action project aims to carry out an online survey targeted at the youth of commonwealth countries. The results of the survey will gauge the differences between youth participation for climate action and engagement in policymaking, and understand the enablers and barriers to youth participation. The research findings will be placed within the context of previous research work reported in the literature so that recommendations can be made to increase the participation of youth through bespoke or general measures, and a selection of youth stories will be shared in an online platform to give voice to their ideas and solutions for policymakers.

## **2.3. Objective(s) of the R2A project**

The project's main objective was to present and spread youth's perspectives and insights on climate change issues and reduce the gap between youth and policymakers in order to encourage youth participation in climate action activities and policies.

1. To assess the Commonwealth youths' awareness of climate change adaptation and mitigation with a focus on climate change action and policy decision-making issues;
2. To identify the knowledge gaps that affect active youth participation in climate change action in policy-decision making in the Commonwealth.
3. To understand online dialogue among youths relating to climate change to better visualise youth perspectives, social media influence penetration via trending hashtags, and possibly leading outcomes of these online engagements.
4. To strengthen or create incentives for effective Commonwealth youth participation in climate change action agenda.

## **3. METHODOLOGY / APPROACH**

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The project included two studies: a social media netnography analysis and a global survey. The research to action project also included a community engagement workshop organised in Mauritius. This section provides an overview of these activities carried out in the research to action project, followed by the detailed results obtained in the next section.



### 3.1 Social Media Netnography Analysis

#### 3.1.1 Digital ethnography: netnography

This research incorporated a netnography approach to understand youth online engagement related to climate change, COP26 and climate action through online mobilisation within the Commonwealth countries and beyond. This paper quantifies how principles of digital ethnography can be utilised to recognise youth empowerment and mobilisation through the virtual world of Twitter, as a base model for social media platforms. In doing so, we situate ethnographic practice and stakeholder relationships within the digital-material world of Twitter to understand online dialogue among youths relating to climate change to better visualise youth perspectives, social media influence penetration via trending hashtags, and possibly leading outcomes of these online engagements. The use of fundamental principles for doing digital ethnography allows the researcher to use their own experience on the platform and positionality to properly document and gain an insider's perspective, with as much nuance as possible. There are five fundamental principles that the researcher can utilise through digital ethnography (Pink, 2016):

1. **Multiplicity:** There are several ways to engage with the digital, and all these ways have a clear impact on the research, the interlocutors and the researcher (Pink et al., 2015b, p. 27).
2. **Non-digital-centricities:** It has to be remembered that even when research is conducted online, relationships cannot be purely digital, so it is important to look beyond it to understand how relationships are played out (Pink et al., 2015b, pp. 28-29).
3. **Openness:** Openness and flexibility is shaped in relation to particular research questions, institutional contexts and ways in which the participants in the research engage with it (Pink et al., 2015b, p. 30).
4. **Reflexivity:** Digital ethnographers theorise and encounter the world as a digital-material-sensory environment and reflexively engage in asking how we produce knowledge (Pink et al., 2015b, p. 31).
5. **Unorthodox:** Digital ethnography acknowledges and seeks out ways of developing knowledge about social realities that might otherwise be invisible and unanticipated (Pink et al., 2015b, pp. 32-33).



### 3.1.2 Sample selection

Following previous studies (Holmberg and Hellsten, 2015; Pearce et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2015), we chose (#) “climate change”, “fossil fuel”, “race to zero” and “COP26” to identify English-language tweets concerning global climate change around COP26 using the Octoparse tool (version 8.4.2). As a general web page data collector, Octoparse is a tool for information extraction such as web locomotion, information locomotion and information scraping into structured format (Rahim & Mohamad, 2021), which meets the data collection requirements of this study. Therefore, like other studies (Gatjal, Balogh, & Hluchý, 2018; Tan, 2020; Yang, Pan, Jiang, Mo, & Liang, 2020) we used Octoparse to grab the open-source data information from the Twitter platform. We collected 34,172 tweets for November 2021, among which 34% of tweets contained (#) “climate change”, 58% contained (#) “fossil fuel”, 38% contained (#) “race to zero” and 84% contained (#) “COP26”, with some tweets anchoring its posts with more than one of the search tags. We randomly sampled 100 parent tweets (i.e. primary tweets that are posted by a user and does not fall under a successive thread of tweets such as a retweet, quoted tweet or replies).

### 3.1.3 Data analysis

We used Excel software for statistical analysis, analysing and summarizing the status of user online Twitter engagement with the specific hashtags mentioned above. Using R (version 4.1.2), we found 98.5% of the sample were related to COP26, suggesting that our dataset was suitable for a (pre to post) COP26 thematic discourse analysis. One noticeable feature of our data was that COP26 attracted lots of attention during the early period of data collection, with (#) “greenwashing” mentioned in almost 80% of the sampled parent tweets (not threaded from the parent tweet) as a probable climate emergency. The themes identified herein are (i) Youth Discourse and Mobilisation Pre-COP; (ii) Youth Disenchantment during COP; and (iii) Youth suppression and corporate influence.

## 3.2 Global Survey

The online survey was designed based on the aforementioned literature. The survey (see **Annex 10.2**) was deemed by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) as meeting the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and was granted approval due to its low risk to participants (MUHREC Project ID 30336). The survey was administered using the Qualtrics survey platform and was distributed through a range of local and global networks via electronic newsletters, social media, and email by the research team and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Data collection occurred from 5 October to 5 November 2021.



The survey was open to youth aged 18 and 24 years of age, consisting of a combination of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to gather the level of understanding and awareness of climate change phenomena and its impacts on communities, and the degree of participation of the youth in climate advocacy and climate action. The role of the various stakeholders for tackling climate change and how far they are aware and use local and international climate documents such as NDCs and IPCC reports were also part of the questions as well as what they think should be the response to climate change. The total number of valid responses was 142. The general demographic characteristics of the sample are listed in Table 1. The sample included slightly more female (66%) than male (32%) respondents, with a mean age of 21 years. The largest numbers of respondents were from Mauritius (51%), Australia (23%) and Sri Lanka (13%).

Data analysis was conducted in SPSS (Version 27) and using the Six Americas Super Short Survey (SASSY!) online audience segmentation tool (Chryst et al, 2021).

Table 1: Participant demographics

Variable	Category	No. of respondents (%)	Variable	Category	No. of respondents (%)
<b>Age</b>	18 years	7 (4.9%)	<b>Country</b>	Australia	33 (23.2%)
	19 years	9 (6.3%)		Canada	5 (3.5%)
	20 years	24 (16.9%)		India	7 (4.9%)
	21 years	41 (28.9%)		Mauritius	72 (50.7%)
	22 years	23 (16.2%)		New Zealand	3 (2.1%)
	23 years	17 (12%)		South Africa	1 (0.7%)
	24 years	21 (14.8%)		Sri Lanka	19 (13.4%)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	94 (66.2%)		Uganda	1 (0.7%)
	Male	46 (32.4%)		Non-Commonwealth country	1 (0.7%)
	Other	1 (0.7%)			
	Prefer not to say	1 (0.7%)			



## 4. RESEARCH TO ACTION PROJECT RESULTS

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### 4.1. Netnography Analysis Results

As a social media platform, Twitter has taken a lot of initiatives for COP26 on its platforms, including the creation of an events page for COP26 that aggregates commentary and resources from environmental specialists and key organisations for the event (Cohen, 2021). Additionally, Twitter added hashtag-triggered emoji for tweets that contained #COP26, #RaceToResilience, #RaceToZero or #TogetherForOurPlanet, and prohibited climate deniers from being able to monetize their content (Fischer, 2021). While our study does not account for climate change deniers and non-deniers, a study by Chen, Zou, and Zhao (2019) found that of 107,453 climate change-related tweets collected in 2016, the Deep Neural Network model classified 9,112 (8.48%) as climate change deniers, and the rest 98,342 (91.52%) as non-deniers, with a classification accuracy of 92.5%, indicating that 92.5% of the tweets are correctly classified. Twitter's approach to prohibit climate change deniers (or genuine sceptics who are ill-informed) from being able to monetize their content during the COP26 event made it difficult to include a similar data classification of climate change content in our study. Furthermore, in doing so, it is highly likely that Twitter's approach has created an echo chamber of sorts around climate change content, including its users, on the social media platform, though unintentionally. However, if an echo chamber did exist on the Twitter platform during COP26, it would be difficult to validate it accurately in our study, thus being a drawback, as data collected would be skewed towards content by climate change advocates, activists and/or academic or journalism materials and so forth. It is for this reason that our study focused on a qualitative content analysis approach using data collected on Twitter, based on three thematic areas around the COP26 event.

#### 4.1.1 Theme 1: Youth Discourse and Mobilisation Pre-COP

In a pre-COP26 event held in Milan, Italy, over 400 young leaders worldwide prepared a comprehensive manifesto of what they expect world leaders to deliver at COP26 (Figure 1). The Youth4Climate manifesto covered 4 thematic areas, in particular, Youth Driving Ambition, Sustainability, Non-state actors' engagement, and climate-conscious society (Youth4Climate, 2021). The manifesto detailed propositions for multilateral stakeholders, national, and local actors, with strategic bridging areas that included meaningful participation, capacity building, energy transition and green jobs, food and entrepreneurship to name a few.

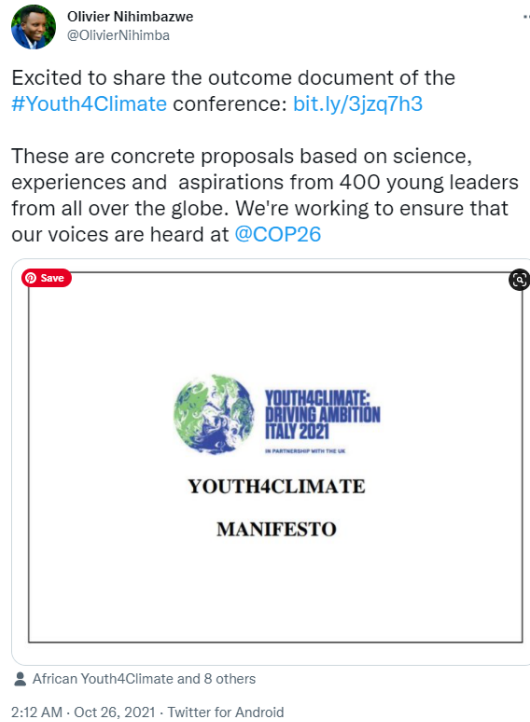


Figure 1: A member of the Youth4Climate conference in Milan Italy releasing their manifesto.

The climate summit in Milan, Italy also had youth activists march ahead of the UN Climate summit, with around 50,000 young climate advocates voicing their frustration at politicians and big companies during the march, saying not enough action has been taken, despite international meetings like the COP (Euronews, 2021). The rally took place on Friday (the final day of a preparatory meeting for delegates) as a continuance of the ‘Fridays for Future’ movement, mobilised through social media, and had gathered youths to the streets in cities worldwide, before the COVID-19 pandemic (Aljazeera, 2021).

The COP26 conference started with the attendance of over 120 world leaders and around 20,000 global delegates in Glasgow, Scotland. The first day of COP26 was heavily criticized in the opening remarks by the UN secretary-general, who dismissed the suggestion that the climate situation was improving, and urged world leaders to “choose to safeguard our future and save humanity” instead of continuing with their high dependence on fossil fuels (Levitt, 2021). The New York Times also tweeted (Figure 2) that the President of China, Brazil and Russia were to be absent for the global conference, despite countries like China being one of the top contributors to global carbon emissions and their coal production currently at an all-time high (Kuo, 2021).





Figure 2: New York Times reports the absence of notable world leaders who are key participants to the success of COP26.

#### 4.1.2 Theme 2: Youth Disenchantment during COP

At the commencement of COP, youths and activists rallied around world leaders to show a force of empowerment for change and climate action. Many youths gathered in plenary discussions and COP26 workshops or side events to ensure that their concerns were heard and addressed (Figure 3). One Tweet showed a picture of a youth activist and climate negotiator, Lina Yassin, passionately pushing through a crowd of delegates to ensure her input and participation. Tweets of youths from around the world were posted on Twitter showing strong engagement in the negotiations and advocacy for their future security. Issues ranging from education to healthcare crisis, indigenous displacement and extreme natural phenomena all linked and impacted by climate change were covered by youth leaders at COP26.

As the COP event continued, youth voices were being excluded from the negotiations (O'Sullivan, 2021), and tension among youths grew due to “weak commitments” by world leaders and “greenwashing” by the fossil fuel industries (Figure 4). Protests and marches organised by youths were seen across Glasgow, and climate defenders like Fridays for Future were at the forefront of these protests fighting for more climate action. Youth activist, Phoebe Hanson, stated that “COP 26 is a youth-washing project”, referring to young people’s voices being used in a performative way without paying attention to them or acting on concerns raised by this group (Brown, 2021).

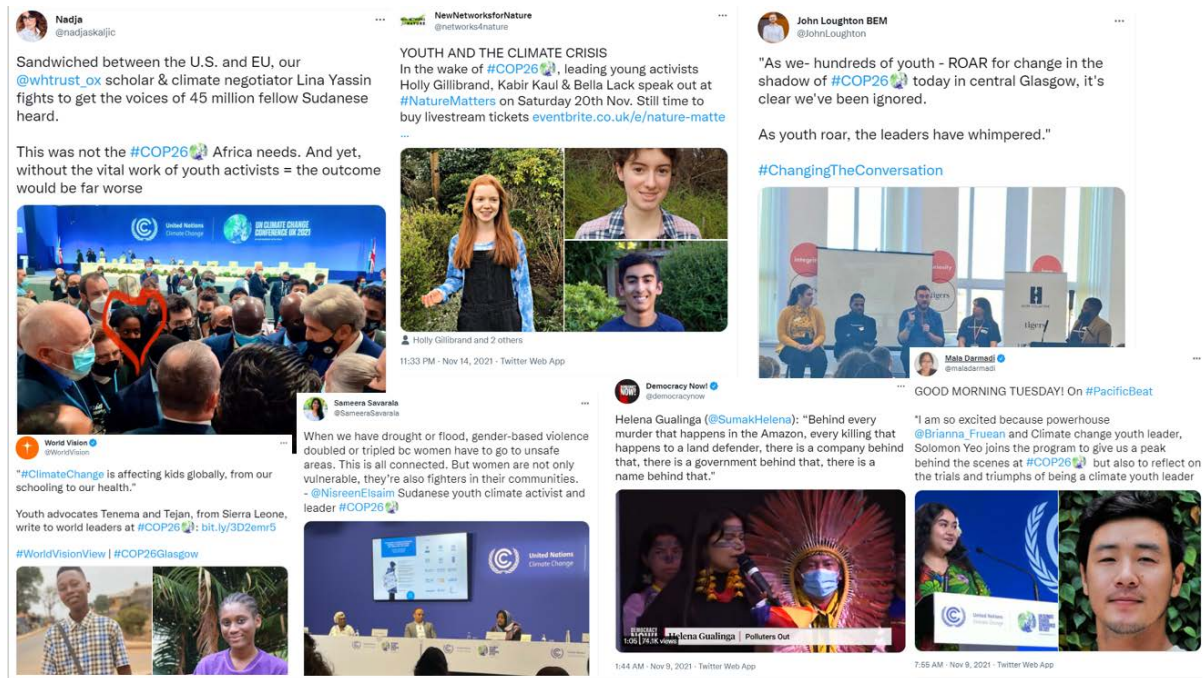


Figure 3: Youths swiftly engage in climate negotiations and sharing of their experiences and concerns at COP26.

The group Fridays for Future have organised activist groups across the globe that mobilise protests in multiple countries and have a massive grassroots support base of mainly youths. During the COP26 event, their Twitter pages released posters calling for strikes across Glasgow (Figure 5), and the movement was able to mobilise tens of thousands of people to join in their call through social media. Minority and marginalised peoples like indigenous groups were also highly mobilised through social media and on-the-ground protests during the COP26, organised by movements such as the Indigenous Environmental Network and the NDN collective, that brought together over 150,000 people in protest and held a virtual climate festival and side events for indigenous peoples to voice their concerns and fight for a better and secure future (Figure 6).



# The Association of Commonwealth Universities

**Yusuf Baluch** @yusufbaluch  
POLLUTERS OUT!! We walked out from the plenaries today to stand in solidarity to all those Frontline defenders who are underrepresented in these negotiations. #FridaysForFuture #COP26

**StopCambo** @StopCambo · Nov 6  
BREAKING: Inside the climate summit, youth activists walk out on @COP26 President @AlokSharma\_RDG  
They do this in protest, as he tells young people to hold governments to account - while the UK plans to open new oil & gas developments. #StopCambo  
#NoNewOilAndGas @ukycc

Although all was quiet inside the #cop26 venue yesterday, protestors took to the streets to make some noise despite the weather - they were joined by many others around the world calling for climate justice and an end to greenwashing

Youth activists gathered to protest world leaders inaction at the UN's #COP26 summit in Glasgow on Friday, accusing them of "greenwashing" and "pretending" to take the climate crisis seriously

Greenwashing isn't the only thing Big Corporations and the fossil fuel industry were engaged in at #COP26, they've deliberately tried to buy out youth voices and use us to make their agenda's more appealing. #youthwashing

Climate Activists Say They're Sick of Being 'Youthwashed' at COP26  
Younger activists and climate defenders fear they are being tokenised, and ignored by companies and world leaders.

Backed by @Fridays4future activists from 32 countries.

Read their demands at [fossilfueltreaty.org/youth-letter](https://fossilfueltreaty.org/youth-letter)

Figure 4: Youth activists and advocates walk out of climate summit to protest lack of inclusiveness, greenwashing and demand for a fossil fuel treaty

**Fridays For Future** @Fridays4future  
Today is the first day of the UN Climate Summit (#COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland! On Friday, November 5th, the youth are striking!  
Join us to hold world leaders accountable and be as loud as possible about climate justice. Everyone is welcome & everyone is needed! #FridaysForFuture

**FFF Scotland** @FFF\_Scotland  
We are on strike tomorrow! At 11 am we will rally at the gates of cop to call for radical, immediate action, not government and corporate greenwashing. Listen to the science and voices of those already affected! #UprootTheSystem

**Fridays For Future** @Fridays4future  
"What do we want?"  
"Climate justice!"  
Yesterday, we joined the @FFF\_Glasgow strike with over 30,000 people demanding #UprootTheSystem!  
The people united will never be defeated!

**COP26 CLIMATE STRIKE GLASGOW**  
5th Nov. 2021  
11am at Kelvingrove Park march to George Square  
All ages welcome  
Wear masks + follow COVID Guidelines

5:11 AM · Nov 1, 2021 · TweetDeck

5:36 AM · Nov 12, 2021 · Twitter Web App

8:40 AM · Nov 7, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 5: Fridays for Future using social media to mobilise youths to take to the streets in a series of strikes and protests demanding action from world leaders.

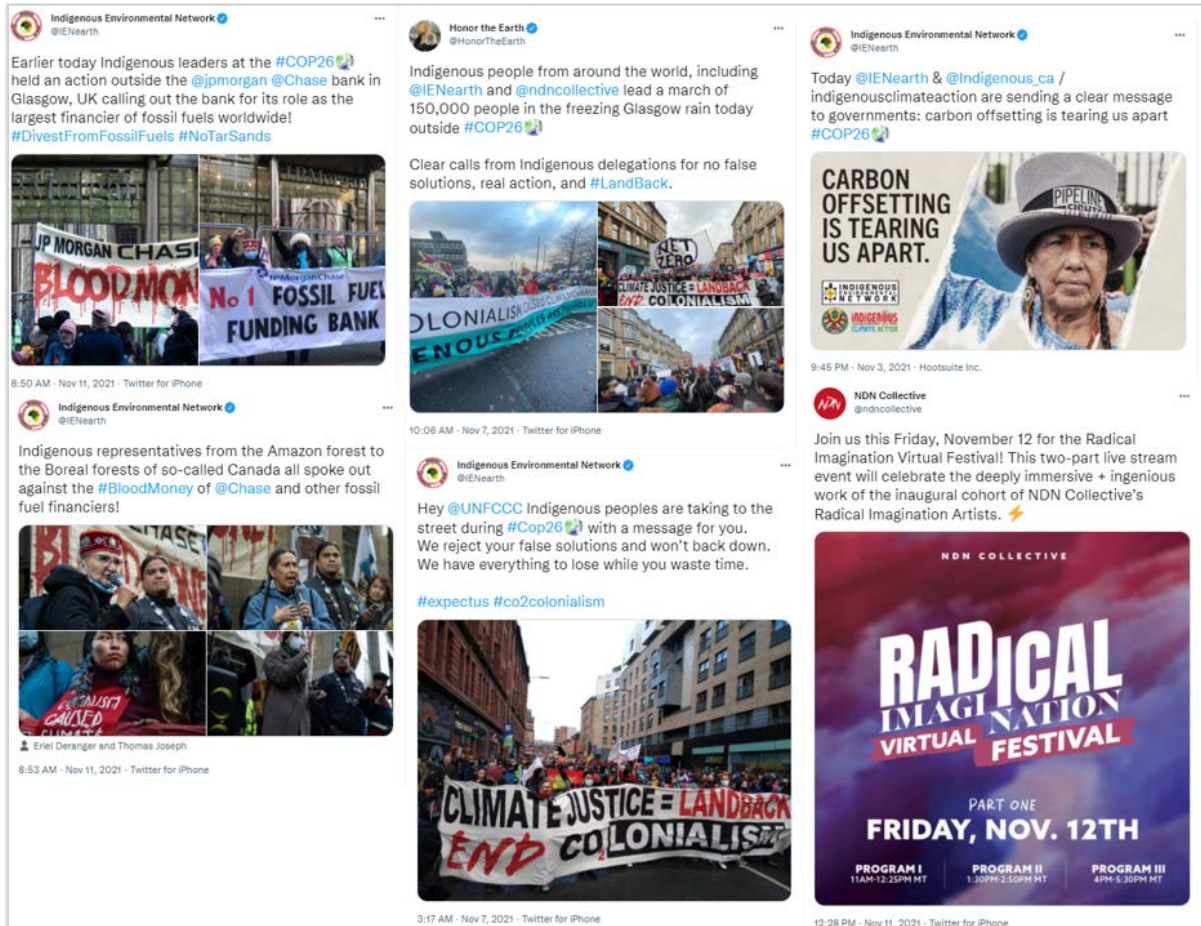


Figure 6: Indigenous environmental groups using social media to advocate and voice their concerns and mobilise people to protest climate action

#### 4.1.3 Theme 3: Youth suppression and corporate influence

Campaigners led by the Global Witness (2021) reported that the COP26 climate talks had more fossil fuel lobbyists (503) than any national delegation, two dozen more than the largest country delegation, with representatives of over 100 fossil fuel companies with 30 trade associations and membership organisations. Countries like Saudi Arabia, China, Australia and Japan who are big producers of fossil fuel, all supported carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a potential tool for actively phasing out fossil fuel (Rowlatt & Gerken, 2021), despite evidence of its associated environmental concerns (Dautzenberg; & Bruhn, 2013; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021; Koornneef, Ramírez, Turkenburg, & Faaij, 2011; Smit, Park, & Gadikota, 2014). Countries acknowledged the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions drastically in the final document called the Glasgow Climate Pact, however, following objections from China and India, the text ‘phase out’ coal was replaced with ‘phase down’ (Masood & Tollefson, 2021), and climate groups laying the blame (Figure 7) of this watered-down text firmly on fossil fuel lobby groups and corporate interests (Battersby, 2021). In an article



published in the Guardian, Monbiot (2021) describes the Glasgow Climate Pact as a suicide pact due in part to its “restrained and diplomatic language...after so many squandered years of denial, distraction and delay”.

It was evident from the data collected that youth sentiments around climate change were genuine and deeply rooted in concern for their future security on this planet. The Glasgow Climate Pact was also ambiguous on what the youths had proposed in the pre-COP26 manifesto. While Twitter had played an important role in amplifying the youths worry and distress about their future, including mobilisation of online users to gather for street marches and protests, the outcome of COP26 and the decision of the world leaders fell short of youth expectations and demands, and just as important, the Paris Agreement challenge commitment of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

As of 2021, the planet has a warming of +1.2°C, and collective pledges and targets on climate action are projected to move warming towards +2.1°C by 2100, while current national policies for countries collectively expected to raise earth’s warming to +2.7°C by 2100 (Maizland, 2021). Governments also agreed in the Glasgow Climate Pact that a mechanism would be established to help vulnerable countries prone to climate change effects, though the most central part of this, i.e. the details and particulars, were not worked out. Commitments by countries seem to have improved in COP26 after six years of negotiation to approve pending items from the Paris Agreement. This includes financial contributions per year, methane reduction, transition away from coal, and halt and reverse deforestation. However, it is clear that the Glasgow Climate Pact still does not measure up to the Paris Agreement, and the probability for the world to meet the +1.5°C target on time is uncertain or any more within reach than it was at COP21.

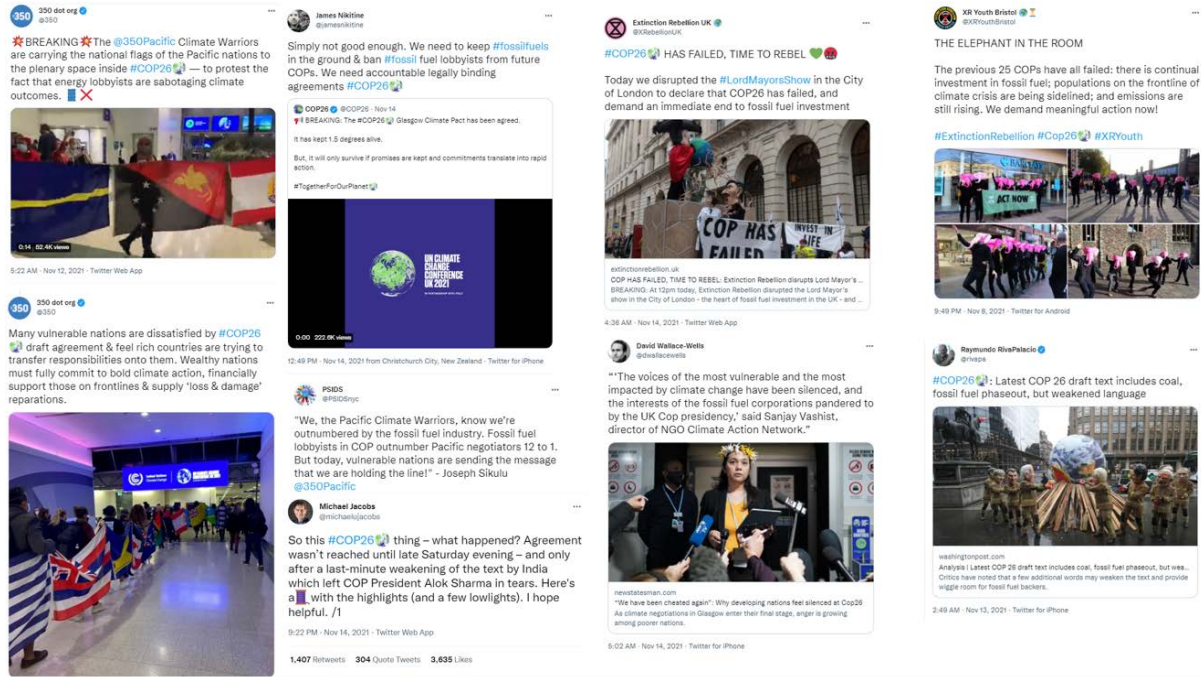


Figure 7: Climate activists and groups concerned with the outcome of the Glasgow Climate Pact and hold fossil fuel lobbyist groups and corporations responsible

## 4.2. Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement Framework

The main stakeholder for the research-to-action project was the youth around Commonwealth countries, to gather information on their perspectives and barriers they face to contribute to national policies and bring their ideas into practice. Furthermore, as part of the online training sessions, other stakeholders were involved, including the local ministries, private companies and civil society organisations. The survey results were presented to these stakeholders so that they are made aware of the youth feedback, and can contribute to empowering the youth.

## 4.3. Survey Results

This section provides a brief summary of key findings from the global survey. For more detailed results, see **Annex 10.1**.

### 4.3.1 Climate change beliefs and concern

Survey respondents are familiar with climate change (93% 'moderately' to 'extremely' familiar), and see it as close and personal for them and their communities. All respondents think that climate change is already affecting livelihoods in their community, with most respondents indicating it is affecting this 'a lot' (55%) or 'a moderate amount' (32%). These beliefs lead respondents to be 'very' (39%) or



‘extremely’ (40%) worried about climate change, and to give it high importance (80% rating it as ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ important to them).

#### 4.3.2 Climate change impacts on the community

These levels of concern reflect the prevalence of impacts on the community identified by respondents, with the most commonly identified impacts including Extreme temperatures (78% of respondents), coastal or land erosion (68%), and droughts (63%) and an average of around five different climate change impacts identified by each respondent.

#### 4.3.3 National contributions to climate change and its solutions

The highest-rated perceived local contributors to climate change were deforestation/land clearing, transportation, and the use of fossil fuels. For the sampled youth, the highest priorities for local action on climate change were protecting coastal areas, planting trees/conserving forests, and switching to renewable energy sources. An open-ended question asked participants how they would contribute to climate change action in their community if they had the opportunity. Thematic analysis of the responses yielded seven themes:

- **Government policies and national priorities:** The responses show a certain level of frustration and anger from the youth towards leaders, some responses even using words like ‘stupid’ and ‘disappointing’ to the extent of proposing climate action policies separate from government intervention. There are suggestions for putting in place legal measures and tribunals which can react fast to environmental concerns so that quick action can be initiated to prevent nature degradation. Our youth believe that governments need to be coerced into taking appropriate measures for climate action and the community should push such an agenda through petitions.
- **Education and Gender Equality:** A large portion of the responses pertained to raising awareness on climate change in the community, by using factual, transparent, trustworthy sources of information and easy-to-understand language, while linking the effects of climate change to impacts on human life and the economic advantage of developing sustainably. There is a strong push for integrating the fundamental principles of climate change and how to tackle it in the school curricula right from kindergarten stage through to primary and secondary levels by using suitable pedagogical techniques such as storytelling.



- **Energy, Water and Environment:** Clean sources of energy with an associated shift in consumer preferences are encouraged, backed by financial incentives. The important role governments should play, especially those of developed countries, has been highlighted so that they set the example for others to follow. Technologies such as electric vehicles, hydrogen fuel, solar, wind and hydropower have been mentioned as sustainable energy sources to result in a concomitant move away from mining and use of fossil fuels. Protection of marine coastal areas has also been highlighted as well as efforts for planting trees and protecting our forests.
- **Livelihood and Skills Development:** This is another area that has been strongly referred to in the open-ended responses, with more power to be returned to the community to take ownership and co-create climate solutions. There is a suggestion to learn from the past and from communities who are knowledgeable of how natural ecosystems were respected and protected back in time, and that know-how is relevant today in times of crisis to find effective solutions. A change in lifestyle to a more sustainable model, with less reliance on meat and dairy products, is encouraged, given their significant environmental impact. Use of healthier and less polluting modes of transportation such as cycling is encouraged. As part of the initiative to include the community more in taking action for how their lives are impacted down the line, nature-based and nature-oriented paradigms are supported and move away from capitalism.
- **Waste Management and Infrastructure:** A shift to a circular economy is proposed focused on composting and recycling of our waste, and a move away from the use of plastics. There is also a suggestion to use legal instruments to make sustainable waste management mandatory.
- **Agriculture and Risk Management:** The use of smart technologies to reinvent food production methods is recommended.

#### 4.3.4 Responsibility and engagement on climate change

Participants placed the highest responsibility for action on government and private companies, with non-government organisations typically held least responsible, however, respondents' high levels of concern translated into one or more forms of engagement on climate change. The most common form of engagement was attending climate-related conferences (76% of respondents), however,





respondents have also implemented climate-related projects (43%), participated in youth consultation on climate change, and/or advocated/ lobbied for climate policies (28%).

#### 4.3.5 Familiarity and engagement with climate policy

Participants were somewhat familiar with their country's carbon emissions targets and tended to doubt the sufficiency of those targets.

Respondents' thought that involvement of youth in the development of carbon emissions targets in their country was seen as slight to moderate to date and consultation with youth in the development of these targets was seen as very important. Youth consultation in developing solutions to address climate change was also seen as very important.

#### 4.3.6 Barriers to youth action on climate change

Participants rated several barriers to youth helping address climate change. The lack of involvement in decision and policymaking was the most commonly selected barrier (35%), followed by lack of funding to implement projects (16%), and lack of awareness of climate issues (14%).

### 4.4. Youth Engagement Results

Given the serious implications of climate change for our world, one way to start the much-needed concerted action is to brainstorm what can be done, and create a common, well-structured, practical action plan, and this can be brought to the decision-makers as one voice. Youth advocacy has been considered as a vital vehicle for bringing about the fundamental transformation required, and hence the voice of the youth, as future leaders and change makers for our country need to be heard and incorporated into policies. Youth engagement can take two broad forms when it comes to climate action, that of climate activism to continue the important fight for world leaders to integrate climate policies in the national strategic plan, and also in terms of concrete action taken at the grassroots level, either through volunteering or as business pursuits to offer to support technological solutions. It is with this goal that the University of Mauritius and JCI Curepipe have collaborated together for the Youth Voice to COP26.

The focus of the Youth Voice to COP26 was to give the youth a platform to voice their ideas and views, to join forces, connect and construct synergies for concrete actions that can be taken to tackle issues related to climate change and unsustainable practices, broken down into the following six thematic areas:



- Education and Gender Equality – empowering the community through awareness
- Energy and Environment – access to energy and support of environmental-friendly practices
- Livelihood and Skill Development – Empowering people to bring innovative, sustainable solutions.
- Water and Sanitation – Improve the quality of life by providing access to clean water and sanitation.
- Waste Management and Infrastructure – Developing circularity in dealing with materials and resources.
- Agriculture and Risk Management – using appropriate technology and methods improve agricultural practices.

Under the umbrella of the Youth Voice to COP26, several training programmes were organised with key stakeholders from the public, private and civil society as well as other stakeholders. The range of events organised started with an online survey to gauge the perspectives of the youth, based on which customised training programmes were organised founded on their expectations and preferences, culminating into a workshop for spurring community action by evolving the concept of a circular home based on energy, water and materials nexus, where they can co-design solutions for their homes and through concerted action for their communities.



# Workshop

*on*  
Green building design and Circularity at  
Household level as powerful  
Climate action levers for the community.



**Dr. Mahendra Goorochurn**  
CEng, LEED AP BD+C, Edge Expert, MIET, MASHRAE  
Ellen McArthur Foundation Circular Economy Pioneer for Mauritius  
ACU COP26 Climate Research Cohort Member for Mauritius

Date: Saturday 23 October 2021  
Venue: Maritim Crystal Beach Hotel  
Time: 09.00 a.m to 1.00 p.m  
Register: Link in description



Figure 8: Community engagement advert



Figure 9: Workshop pictures



*Figure 10: Participant individual and collective deliberations for climate action*

The workshop on sustainability in the built environment, with the formulation of a circular home concept, meant to be a non-technical synergy with members of the public, provided a great first experience of community outreach to educate, raise awareness and seek participation around concrete actions the community can bring to tackle climate change. By presenting the fundamental principles governing climate change at the household level as far the energy, water and materials perspectives are concerned and upon knowing their impacts, how they can contribute at their household levels came as a very powerful motor for community engagement and action. Indeed, it came as a real inspiration and revelation for the participants when they learned about the influence of the sun on the thermal comfort of their homes, and how they can take simple measures to improve comfort in their homes without relying on carbon-emitting HVAC systems. Similarly, when they learned about how the impermeability caused by their homes causes flooding, solid waste they generate contribute to landfills and greenhouse gas emissions, and how by being more circular and sustainable, they can actually derive huge benefits from these natural resources, which otherwise become undesirable and hazardous, they clearly found simple means to bring their support. The youth voice to COP26 in Mauritius has been a success in forging ties for continued collaboration with the community and like-minded organisations beyond COP26.



## 5. SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS

It has been noted that digital technologies are heavily used by the young generation to express their views and concerns on climate change and social media plays an important role in amplifying youth voices and concerns around climate change and Twitter has exemplified social media's importance to mobilise youth groups around climate action for COP26. Therefore, a netnography approach to understand youth perspectives on social media discussions has proven to be especially useful for a global social media study. When applied correctly, digital ethnography provides meaningful insights around conversations, debates and awareness outreaches on many issues like the climate crises and portrays the importance of dialogue in these discussion platforms like Twitter's threaded sociality. Netnography tools allowed to understand its 'affordances' to users through their own positionality on the platform to absorb and process online discussions in a nuanced way, for which thematic areas were identified for a proper analysis of the social media data.

In general, it was found that youth utilised social media for collective climate action and engagements, however, their concerns and manifesto propositions that were prepared pre-COP26 were not heard, addressed or taken seriously. Despite youth leaders making an effort to mobilise and drive their agenda during the UN climate summit via on the ground meetings and negotiations, it was unmatched to big corporate lobbyists rallying around country leaders. In disappointment, youth leaders and campaigners took to social media to mobilise protests and marches in an effort to express dissatisfaction at the outcomes of COP26 like the Glasgow climate pact, and their discontent with current world leaders and big industries.

The survey findings confirm the adherence of our youth to the climate cause, are concerned about its consequences and are able to identify climate-related phenomena in their communities. The responses received also confirm the frustration of youth with respect to government responses to climate change, and have ideas for how climate change should be addressed, including:

- changes to lifestyles
- adoption of a circular economy
- communication and education on climate change
- government support for shifting energy, water and environmental systems and management, including international support for local implementation
- returning power to community for climate solutions

Several barriers were identified, with the top barriers including: the lack of involvement in decision and policymaking, lack of funding to implement projects, and lack of awareness of climate issues. The



community engagement workshop, on the theme of circular homes as a means for community involvement for climate action reinforced the high interest of the public at large to understand and learn how to contribute in their own ways. The community members are keen to share their own experience and perspective on how each one can make a difference, e.g., a participant surmounting the challenge of waste segregation and doing her own sorting at home and travelling kilometres once a month to reach central collection facilities which allow separate collection of waste.

## **6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

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The main stakeholder engaged with through the campaign was the youth, who participated via the online survey, and follow-up was made to those interested through training and workshop. More stakeholders were brought on board over the course of the project, including the private sector, local public authorities, and associations once the youth network was set up, and it really mattered to these stakeholders on finding means to engage with the young participants on climate action possibilities and good practices, and how they are bringing their own share.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Based on the survey findings, netnography analysis and community engagement experience, the following recommendations are made to promote youth participation in climate change discussions and policymaking at the national level in the short and medium terms:

- Regular communications by the government on their strategies and programmes for climate action, including seeking feedback from youth and the population in general on their perceptions.
- Develop or enhance youth engagement and inclusion (youth capacity building) at a national level for climate action, climate justice, and disaster response frameworks or programmes, including legislations that consider international conventions like the Global Conference of Youths.
- Establish an action fund that is specific to the needs of climate youth leaders/organisations, defenders, and activists in commonwealth countries to assist with grant opportunities, climate investments for youths and other activism-related activities, like climate justice, for climate youth leaders or organisations.
- Working with the ministry of education and associated authorities to seek ways to integrate climate change topics in curricula at the early stages of education.
- Develop academic courses on the fundamentals of policy and governance for tertiary education.



- Collaboration between academia and NGOs/government authorities to research into practical ways to tackle climate change within the context of each community, and develop practical programmes to communicate these ideas to the communities in a non-technical language.
- Actively engage youth clubs in community action through capacity building, team building, and application of skills learned in bettering resilience in communities.

## 8. CONCLUSION

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This research to action project was conducted to explore the knowledge and engagement of the Commonwealth youth in climate action activities in their local communities. To that end, the research implemented various research methods (i.e., a global survey including a follow-up with a community engagement workshop and social media netnography analysis). The findings revealed that the youth have sufficient knowledge on climate change impacts on livelihood in their communities, for example, the rising temperature, coastal and land erosion, and droughts. However, youth participation in climate action activities remains a challenge due to several reasons such as the lack of transparency and communication with the government and policymakers. The majority of youths showed a certain level of frustration towards their governments' actions and national climate action policies. Although less than one-third of the participants engaged in climate policies activities, the results of the Twitter netnography analysis demonstrated that youth are extremely active on social media sharing their voice and perspectives on major climate change events such as COP26. The results of this study provided a holistic picture of the youth perspectives on climate change since they are considered future leaders and valuable contributors to climate action. Furthermore, the study proposes some recommendations for enhancing youth participation in climate action and policymaking; (1) effective and transparent communication and consultation between youth and policymakers, (2) integrating climate change into tertiary education as well as early education stages (3) encourage collaboration between academia and government authorities in order to introduce science-based emissions reduction targets that can be accepted and implemented by the youth and communities.

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## 10. ANNEXES

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### 10.1 Global survey full results

#### 10.1.1 Climate change beliefs and concern

Survey respondents are familiar with climate change (93% 'moderately' to 'extremely' familiar) and see it as close and personal for them and their communities. All respondents think that climate change is already affecting livelihoods in their community, with most respondents indicating it is affecting this 'a lot' (55%) or 'a moderate amount' (32%). This increases when projected into the future, with most respondents thinking that climate change will harm future generations 'a great deal' (92%). Beliefs about the personal risk of harm from climate change are similar as evidenced by 42% of respondents indicating they think it will harm them personally 'a great deal', and 52% saying 'a moderate amount'. Only three respondents (2%) did not accept that climate change is caused by human activity.

These beliefs lead respondents to be 'very' (39%) or 'extremely' (40%) worried about climate change, and to give it high importance (80% rating it as 'very' or 'extremely' important to them).

Analysis of the four questions that form the Six Americas (SASSY!) audience segmentation approach, categorises this survey's respondents as all falling within the three most concerned segments (see Figure 1): Alarmed (74%), Concerned (23%), and Cautious (4%). Alarmed individuals are the most concerned segment and see the most urgency for action. Concerned individuals are the next most worried about climate change but see less urgency. Cautious individuals are typically more uncertain about climate change and its urgency, but generally accept that it is occurring. With a self-selecting, non-representative sample of young adults, this is not surprising. Young adults tend to be more concerned about climate change than older generations (Bell, Poushter, Fagan, & Huang, 2021), and those who are more engaged on the issue are more likely to respond to surveys about it.



### Frequency vs Climate change segment

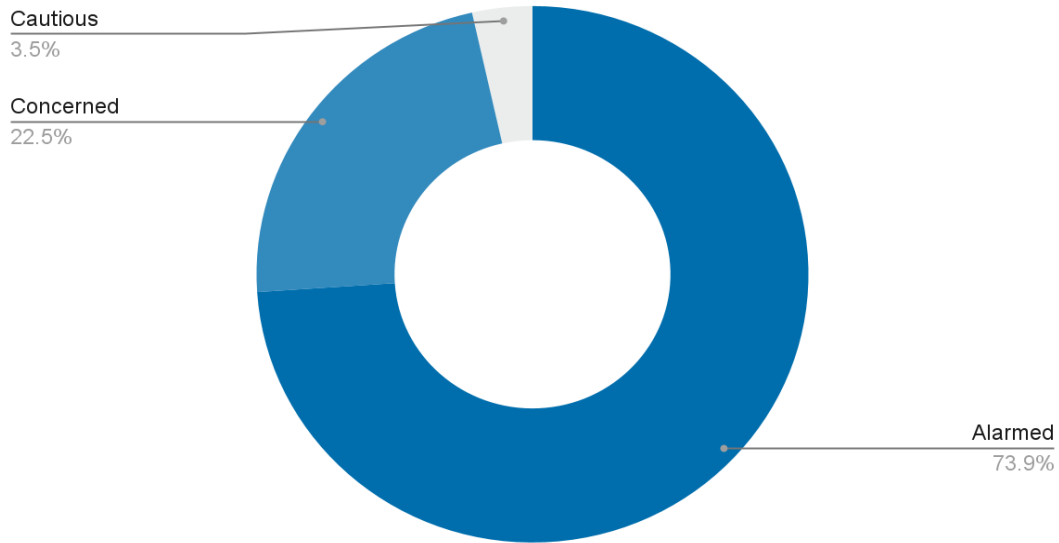


Figure 11: Respondents' climate change audience segmentation

#### 10.1.2 Climate change impacts on the community

These levels of concern reflect the prevalence of impacts on the community identified by respondents (see Figure 2). On average, respondents identified around five different climate change impacts affecting their communities (mean = 5.4). Extreme temperatures (78%), coastal or land erosion (68%), and droughts (63%) were the most commonly identified impacts.

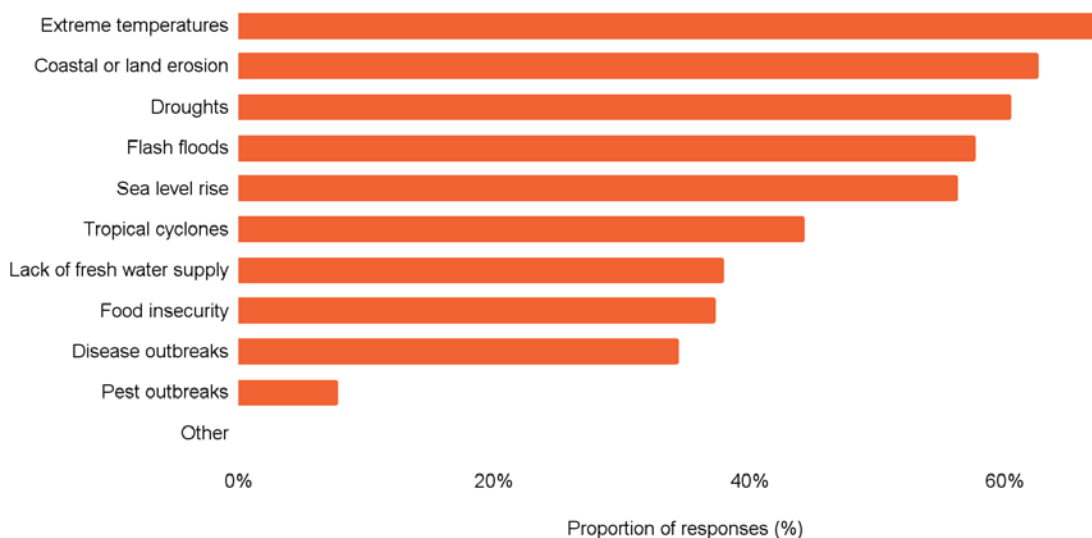


Figure 12: Climate change impacts on communities identified by respondents



### 10.1.3 National contributions to climate change and its solutions

The highest-rated perceived local contributors to climate change (and thus to the impacts on the community) were deforestation/land clearing (mean rating = 4.3, on a scale from 1 = none at all to 5 = a great deal), transportation (mean rating = 4.2), and the use of fossil fuels (mean rating = 4.2).

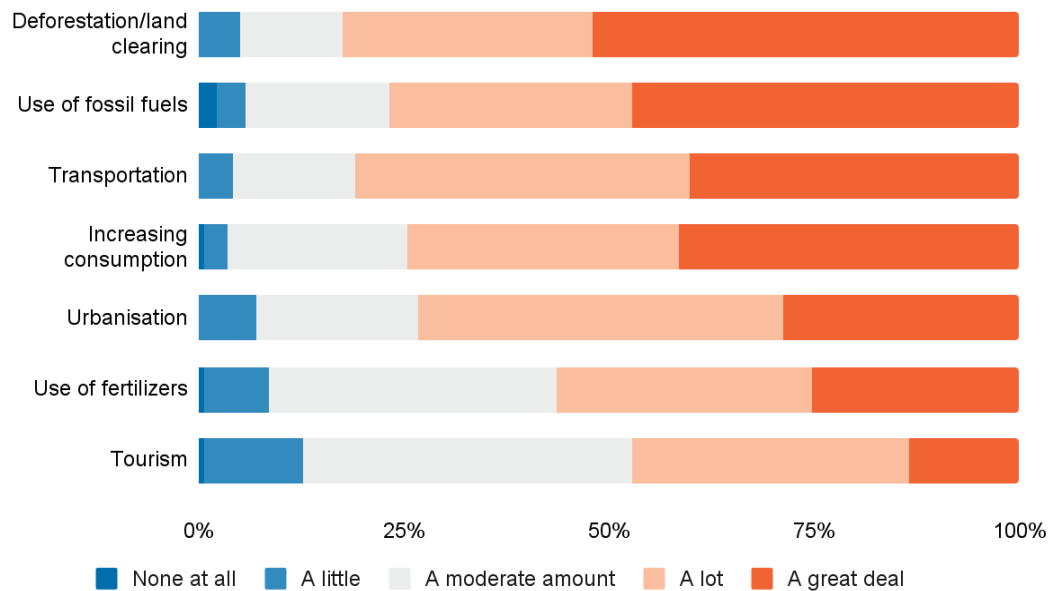


Figure 13: Perceived local contributors to climate change

For the sampled youth, the highest priorities for local action on climate change were protecting coastal areas (mean rating = 4.1, on a scale from 1 = not a priority to 5 = a very high priority), planting trees/conserving forests (mean rating = 4.0) and switching to renewable energy sources (mean rating = 4.0). Figure 4 illustrates these relative priorities.



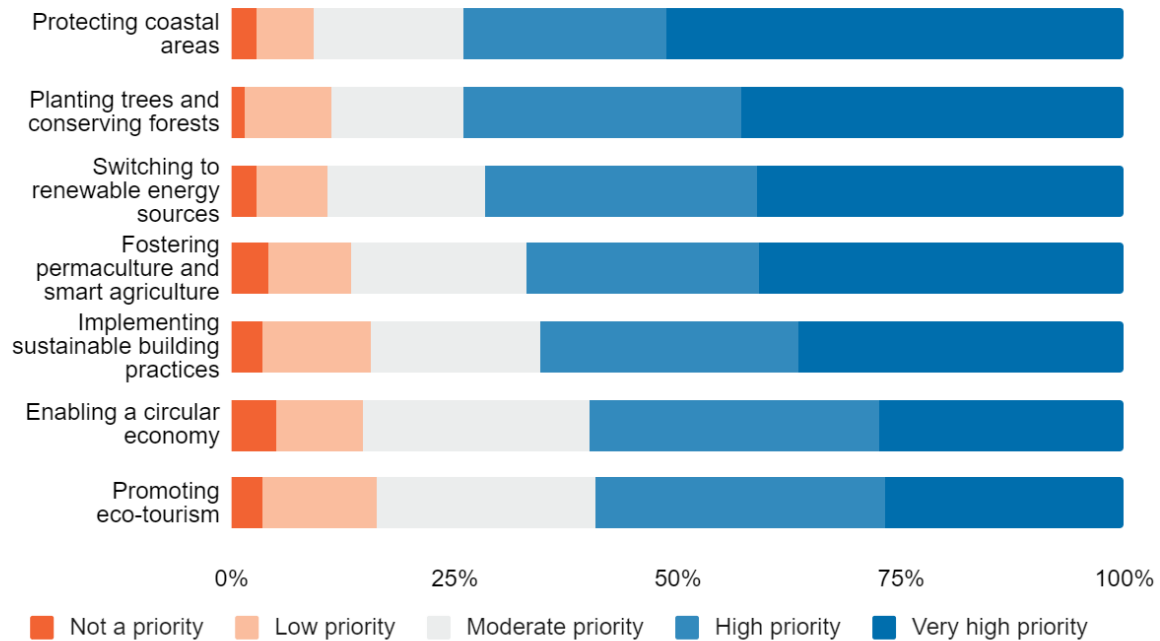


Figure 14: Local priorities for action on climate change

How would you contribute to climate change action in your community if you had the opportunity?

- Utilising science-based evidence to target specific demographics who are not onboard with anthropogenic climate change. I think it is especially important to target those people through a fiscal lens by putting the environmental cost of climate change into a monetary value.
- Recently, there has been a shift in Australia towards the general population accepting anthropogenic climate change, but there is still a long way to go. I think climate change action needs to be primarily driven from a federal level, however, given the current government and COVID at the forefront of our minds, it is difficult to make progress in terms of policy when we don't even have a net-zero 2050 target.
- Helping disseminate information, contributing labour where necessary, participating in any local initiatives, making personal changes to my lifestyle.
- Considering the role that industry has within contributing to climate change, it would be wonderful if the government prioritised climate action over the desires of industry stakeholders. Transitioning towards sustainable development requires the support and funding of the government or NGOs to ensure that those working within sectors such as the fossil fuel industry have opportunities in more sustainable alternatives.
- Encourage family planning, provide contraception to young women, so help reduce the population growth, thus reducing the consumption in the next generation.



- Educate young children on behavioural changes they can make or engage them in activities to make them think of their behaviours. E.g. have them build bee hotels, or grow their own vegetables, or go on group excursions to composting facilities or go on rubbish-collecting trips in the community.
- The government recently put a tax on electric cars. This was a stupid idea, and it is working as a disincentive when we should be encouraging electric car usage. If they were to implement this tax, they should have waited at least 5 years, where electric cars were more common and not JUST starting to gain popularity.
- Increasing educational awareness for both adults and children. This could be done by creating and implementing programs targeted to share the importance and urgency of fighting climate change together as a whole community. For children, this could be through impactful story telling in kindergarten, at primary and secondary school projects that will help generate ideas or help the students learn more about climate change and its different facets. At work, I believe sustainability ethics should be implemented in terms of programs, training and even giving out sustainability prizes.
- Personally, I would devise a very simple environmental program based on the UN SDGs with habits and lifestyles while addressing circular economy.
- More collaboration from public, private organisations and government is needed to really create change for the environment. More funding is needed in that field.
- Renewable energy
- Mandatory composting + recycling
- Better waste management
- Electric vehicles + public transport
- Overconsumption of animal products, particularly meat + dairy.
- I think the most important consideration in climate change action is the involvement of First Nations peoples. In Australia, the First Nations people lived on this land and cared for it for longer than we can imagine, and they have such a wealth of knowledge that need to be respected and listened to. I believe that land back action is a huge step in addressing climate change in Australia, especially to do with land clearing and mining. In addition to land back, the action of First Nations people in community leadership of climate action is imperative for actual climate action in Australia.
- Australia, especially Western Australia is a huge producer of fossil fuels, however we have the resources to be a huge producer of sustainable energy.



- Other countries have shared the sentiment that if Australia started to produce green hydrogen fuel they would increase H-fuel infrastructure and funding.
- Australia also has the potential to become a huge producer of solar power, hydropower, wind power etc. as we have the space and resources. This would lead the world in transitioning to sustainable energy.
- Australia continues to provide funding and tax cuts for mining when we should be transitioning away from the mining industry to the renewable energy industry (which would provide just as many jobs).
- However, our government targets and actions are still not looking to meet the Paris agreement targets. At this point it is big industry players that must call for action for this change to occur.
- Another major concern is Australia's coastal environments (such as the Great Barrier Reef) which are negatively impacted by tourism and climate change.
- Meet with like-minded individuals to discuss actions we can implement in our neighbourhoods, to meet with local MPs, etc.
- Start petitions that are important to us and will gain traction
- Help educate people on the urgency of climate change & what they can do
- Advocacy and personal involvement in physical initiatives
- Lobbying politicians to put pressure on the government to move away from fossil fuels.
- Educate individuals about the importance of systemic change to battle climate change, and thus hopefully encourage them to lobby the government too!
- There needs to be a strong shift away from the fossil fuel industry, here in Australia. It is so disappointing that there is still such great support for an industry that is ruining the planet and people's health. This requires large governmental level and private industry change, and it must be ensured that job replacements are found for the people who would be put out of work if the fossil fuel industry was shut down. But it needs to be shut down and shut down quickly!
- Political advocacy
- Advocacy in the workplace
- Write to local MPs to vote for State and Federal Action
- Organising community groups that discuss climate change in the context of local issues. At the same time, providing educational resources and practical tips on how to reduce your individual impact on climate change.
- Having climate change as an essential learning area in the Australian curriculum would be a great starting point.



- I would tell my community of the far reaching benefits of decarbonising our economies and ways of life.
- In my country, the activism and politics need to be removed from the solutions to climate change. They should be something everyone, regardless of demography/political belief can take ownership in
- Volunteer for organisations and groups that promote or contribute to climate change action. Promote climate change action and adopt sustainability goals in groups I am already a part of. Joining more events/etc regarding climate change to stay informed. Signing petitions.
- Pushing government to make decisive goals and changes towards climate action.
- I am quite involved in the health aspect of climate change and I would love to spread information and see change within the healthcare sector which is 7% of Australia carbon emissions.
- I think the local and federal governments are key to make lasting change but are not making powerful decisions in Australia and we need a major shift.
- Reduce use of plastic , cycle to work and class.
- Education on the impact both small changes in individuals lives and big companies have on climate change. Encouraging people to contact government officials as to show the community wants something done.
- Focus on renewable energy, some sort of accountability / tax for companies with large emissions, sustainable farming
- Addressing public misinformation through various mediums of publication
- Lobbying for large corporations to change their practices
- Advocating for policy change in all levels of government – particularly regarding sustainable energies and preserving the natural environment
- Implementing more severe penalties for use of fossil fuels and other environmentally damaging practices
- Giving recommendations to responsible institutions on climate change and how environmental law should be developed locally
- Introduction to the causes of climate change in school curricula
- Organizing projects at the grassroots level to promote the responsibility of individuals
- Formulate direct laws that are not subject to political interference
- I would like to make people aware about the impact of human activities on climate change and to involve in projects to mitigate such harmful human activities.
- Introduce good and natural alternative methods for safe nature. As well as we must change thinking patterns about our nature and importance of climate change



- First thing should be raising public awareness on value of environmental conservation from grassroots level since my country is a developing country and we are sometimes habitually used to dumping garbage here and there and cutting valuable trees for agriculture.
- Initiating more tree planting programs.
- Lack of public awareness on environmental conservation and climate change.
- lack of encouragement from the government in initiating and executing environmental policies coupled with corruption of public authorities.
- So public awareness should be raised and establishing green tribunals to exclusively hear matters relating environmental pollution and illegal deforestation.
- making stringent policies, laws, and a statutory body to dive into the matters of climate change.
- Initiating and sustaining programs to conserve and preserve the existing forest reserves and coastal area.
- speedy litigation process and more transparency, accountability and public participation in decision making when approving projects exploiting natural resources.
- Reducing use of plastic materials
- Educate agricultural communities regarding smart agriculture and helping find solutions to move towards smart agricultural practices.
- By taking the responsibility by my own for protecting the environment and doing my utmost contribution towards the earth
- Educate the community about climate change.
- Minimize deforestation, recycling waste, use public transportation, informing community about climate change will be fruitful ways.
- As a law student, I can give my contribution by my academic knowledge. I can let people know about environment securities like regulations, state policy, Acts & etc of my country. Writing about certain climate change topics with legal aspect. If I had the opportunity, I would contribute in the above-mentioned ways.
- Sri Lanka is a small island surrounded by the ocean, therefore, all the time we are at risk. They are like Tsunami, rising sea level, not only that, but Sri Lanka is also an equatorial country therefore most of the areas of our country have high temperatures. As a result of it, most areas of our country suffer from drought, lack of food, and lack of freshwater. Cleaning forests and land for government projects not having standard policy all of these climate change issues are raised.
- Informing about climate changes; what are the reasons for those changes, who should be responsible for this, what can we do, and how can we prevent these arbitrary and non-standard actions



- \* Must be strong country's environmental policy and legal side.
- I work for a climate justice organisation, so my job is to focus on climate change action in a socially just manner. We advocate for Indigenous sovereignty, post submissions on climate-related government policy and work with marginalised groups and aim to build resilient communities. I think climate change actions should be more people-focused. Otherwise, solely focusing on nature-based approaches can become a slippery slope into eco-fascism and white environmentalism.

The entire framework of our GDP-driven society needs to be radicalised. It is not ecologically sustainable, nor is it fair for humanity (major inequalities). Capitalism needs to go!

- Further educating the community.
- More political action.
- Raise awareness. Help with preserving wildlife and planting trees. Litter picking around coastal areas. Not using single-use plastics.

#### 10.1.4 Responsibility and engagement on climate change

For many respondents, these high levels of concern have translated into one or more forms of engagement on climate change (see Figure 5). Most respondents listed one (59%) or two (21%) forms of engagement. The most common form of engagement was attending climate-related conferences (76%); however, respondents have also implemented climate-related projects (43%), participated in youth consultation on climate change, and/or advocated/ lobbied for climate policies (28%).



## How have you been engaged in climate actions?

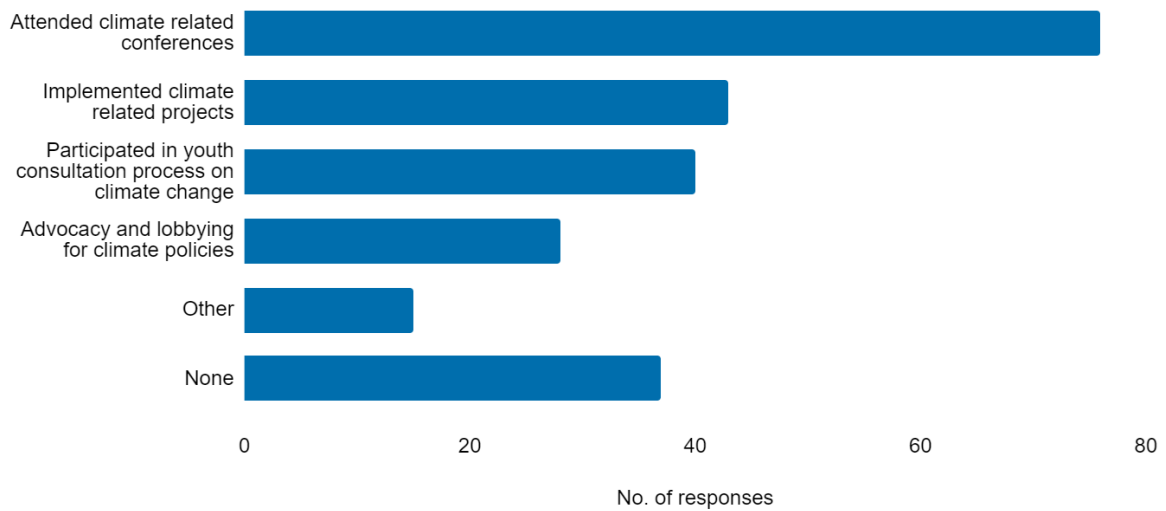


Figure 15: Participants' climate action.

When asked who should be responsible for taking action on climate change in their country, participants placed the highest responsibility on government and private companies, with non-government organisations typically held least responsible (see Figure 6). Very few respondents felt that any of these had no responsibility to act.

## Who should be responsible for taking action on climate change in your country?

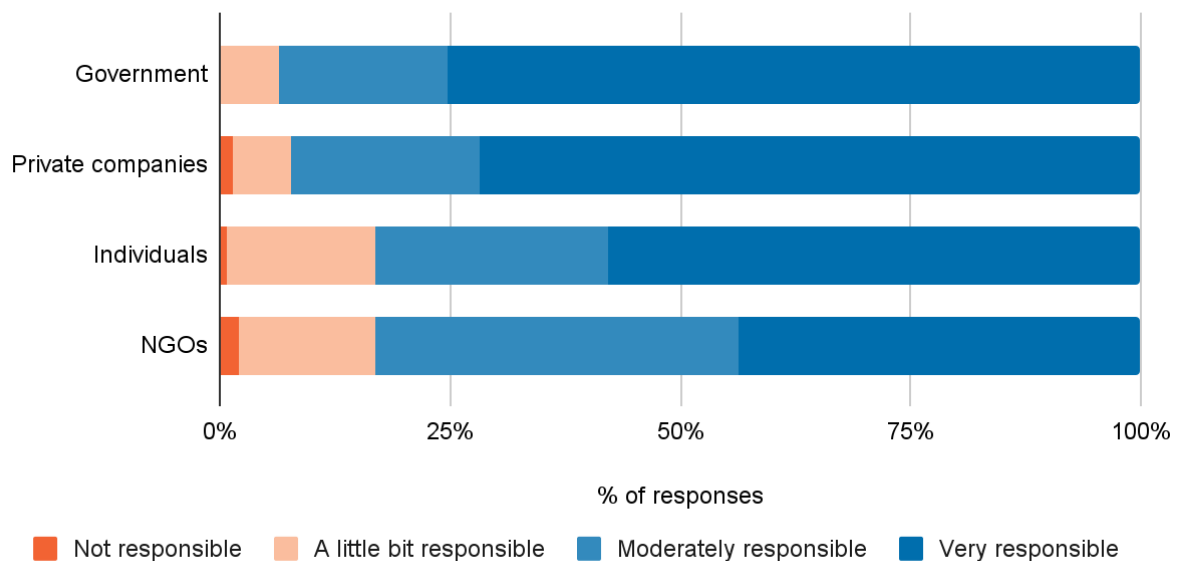


Figure 16: Responsibility for acting on climate change



### 10.1.5 Familiarity and engagement with climate policy

Participants were somewhat familiar with their country's carbon emissions targets (mean rating = 2.7, on a scale from 1 = not familiar at all to 5 = extremely familiar) and tended to doubt the sufficiency of those targets (mean rating = 2.2, on a scale from 1 = definitely not to 5 = definitely yes).

Respondents' thought that involvement of youth in the development of carbon emissions targets in their country was seen as slight to moderate to date (mean rating = 2.6, on a scale from 1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal) and consultation with youth in the development of these targets was seen as very important (mean rating = 3.9, on a scale from 1 = not at all important to 5 = extremely important). Youth consultation in developing solutions to address climate change was also seen as very important (mean rating = 4.0).

### 10.1.6 Barriers to youth action on climate change

Participants rated several barriers to youth helping address climate change. The lack of involvement in decision and policy-making was the most commonly selected barrier (35%), followed by lack of funding to implement projects (16%), and lack of awareness of climate issues (14%).

Which of these are barriers for youth who wish to help address climate change in your country?

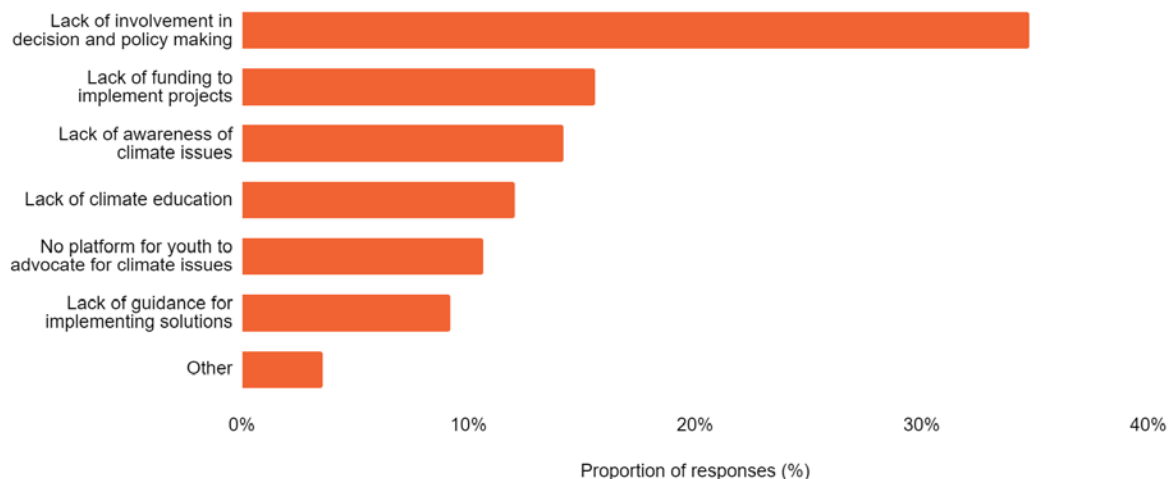


Figure 17: Barriers to youth action on climate change

## 10.2 Survey questions

Following are the questions included in the online survey.

Tell us a little about you ...

What is your age (in years)?





What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

In which country do you live?

- [Commonwealth countries drop down list]

What is your occupation? (Select all that apply).

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Other (please specify)

What is your current field of study or work? Select up to two.

- Science
- Engineering
- Arts
- Business
- Law
- Other (please specify)

Do you volunteer with any community groups or non-government organisations?

- No
- Yes

How familiar are you with the issue of climate change?

- Not familiar at all
- Slightly familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar
- Extremely familiar

How much do you think climate change is affecting livelihoods in your community?

- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little bit
- Not at all

How much do you think climate change will harm you personally?

- A great deal
- A moderate amount
- Only a little
- Not at all



How much do you think climate change will harm future generations of people?

- A great deal
- A moderate amount
- Only a little
- Not at all

How worried are you about climate change?

- Not very
- Somewhat
- Very
- Extremely

How important is the issue of climate change to you personally?

- Not too important
- Somewhat important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Assuming climate change is happening, do you think it is...

- Caused mostly by human activities
- Caused mostly by natural changes in the environment
- Neither of the above because climate change isn't happening

Who should be responsible for taking action on climate change in your country?

	Not responsible	A little bit responsible	Moderately responsible	Very responsible
Government				
Private companies				
Non-government organisations				
Individuals				
Academia				

Which of the following climate change impacts are issues for your community? (Select all that apply)

- Sea level rise
- Coastal or land erosion
- Flash floods
- Droughts
- Food insecurity



- Lack of fresh water supply
- Disease outbreaks
- Tropical cyclones
- Extreme temperatures
- Solid waste
- Pest outbreaks
- Other

How much do you think each of these activities in your country contribute to climate change?

	None at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
Use of fossil fuels					
Urbanisation					
Tourism					
Deforestation/land clearing					
Transportation					
Use of fertilizers					
Increasing consumption					

How have you been engaged in climate actions? (Select all that apply)

- Implemented climate related projects
- Attended climate related conferences
- Participated in youth consultation process on climate change
- Advocacy and lobbying for climate policies
- Other
- None

To what extent are the following actions a priority for addressing climate change in your country?

	None a priority	Low priority	Moderate priority	High priority	Very high priority



Switching to renewable energy sources					
Promoting eco-tourism					
Planting trees and conserving forests					
Implementing sustainable building practices					
Protecting coastal areas					
Fostering permaculture and smart agriculture					
Enabling a circular economy					

How would you contribute to climate change action in your community if you had the opportunity?

- [Open question text box]

Please add any other comments on causes and ways to address climate change in your country.

- [Open question text box]

Many countries around the world have set climate targets to limit their carbon emissions and help address climate change. How familiar are you with the climate targets for your country?

- Not familiar at all
- Slightly familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar
- Extremely familiar

Which climate targets documents have you consulted? (Select all that apply)

- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Paris Agreement
- Proposed or enacted climate change legislation in your country
- Government website
- Reports by international organisations (e.g., United Nations or World Bank)
- Other
- None

Do you think the climate targets set for your country are sufficient?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Might or might not
- Probably yes



- Definitely yes

How important do you think youth consultation is in developing carbon emissions targets for your country?

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

How important do you think youth consultation is in developing solutions to address climate change in your country?

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

How much do you think youth have been involved in developing carbon emissions targets for your country?

- Not at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

Which of these are barriers for youth who wish to help address climate change in your country?

- Lack of funding to implement projects
- No platform for youth to advocate for climate issues
- Lack of involvement in decision and policy making
- Lack of awareness of climate issues
- Lack of climate education
- Lack of guidance for implementing solutions
- Other

Would you like to share your ideas and experiences related to climate change as part of our storytelling project as described at the start of this survey?

- No
- Yes



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