

ON THE PULSE

The Jack Petchey Environmental Youth Survey

If you think you can, you can!



Introduction

The Jack Petchey Foundation (JPF) is a leading youth funder in London and Essex. We have invested in opportunities for over 800,000 young people aged 11-25 since 1999 and we recognise the achievements of over 12,000 young people each year. As the Foundation's environmental work and funding opportunities grow, we wanted to ask young people what they thought about the world around them and how they can be empowered to make a change.

JPF's Youth Consultation Panel (YCP) is a group of dynamic young people who meet regularly and are committed to highlighting and amplifying young people's voices and experiences, to ensure that young people are at the centre of all that the Foundation does. Fizza, who has been on the panel for just over a year, shared her thoughts with us on why young people need to be centrally involved in conversations about the environment...

“Recently, JPF and the YCP put together a survey to ask young people about their feelings towards the environment – what our concerns are, what our schools and youth groups can do in order to protect it, and how we want to be involved in making decisions about it. Through this survey, JPF was able to hear the direct views of a large group of young people, and therefore better understand what the Foundation can do to help.

The survey highlighted that, although **young people certainly want to be involved with environmental decision making**, we don't feel we are in a position to do so. However, it is crucial that we are able to be involved as not only do we have a huge range of ideas, but we have the drive and motivation to take action now.

Young people are the future, and by ensuring we are heard, we do our bit not only for ourselves in the present day, but for all future generations, with young people and their power at the helm of positive change.”

Fizza Zaidi, aged 18, JPF Youth Consultation Panel





Over three weeks, **3,896 young people** from London and Essex responded to our survey, using their voice to tell us their concerns, opinions, experiences and how they think schools and young people can be empowered to build a greener future.

One of the key aims of the Jack Petchey Foundation is to **empower young people** to use their voices, believe in themselves and shape their futures. To help in this, we will be sharing the survey results widely and will use them to shape our own work.

Sir Jack Petchey has always believed in the importance of listening to young people and empowering them to believe that they can make a change...

**“If you think you can, you can!
That is the legacy I want to leave,
that is the little mark I hope to
make on future generations who
will be responsible for leading
and developing our country,
our world.”**

Sir Jack Petchey, CBE



Our World: Young People and the Environment

It is perhaps not surprising that the majority of young people who responded to the survey said they felt **worried about the environment (54%)**. But it is worth noting that 1 in 4 (**24%**) said they **felt hopeful about its future**.

On the whole, young people said that they felt well-informed about environmental issues, but 1 in 5 (**22%**) said that they wanted more education on the subject. Most young people access environmental information at their school, college or university (**63%**), followed by online news (**56%**). Social media was also identified as a key place young people access environmental information, with Instagram (**28%**) followed by TikTok (**26%**) being among the top sources for young people.

When asked what their main environmental and climate change concerns were, young people told us...





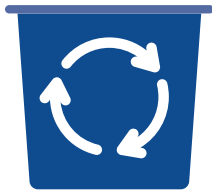
Young people are focused on being a part of positive change, with **1 in 4** already involved with groups making a positive impact on the world around them.

“It’s our future so I think it’s fair if **we choose how OUR future is going to look** and what we need to do to tackle our world’s problems.” **Anonymous**

We asked young people if their knowledge of environmental issues had altered their behaviour, and if so how?

82%

of young people said they recycle more than they used to.



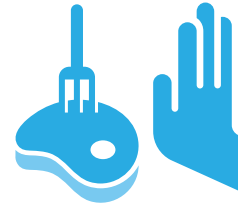
35%

said they pick up litter more.



41%

said they eat less meat.



70%

actively encourage friends and family to take care of the environment.



And many said they would like to do more...



1 in 5

are interested in pursuing an environmental career, and **1 in 3** would like to know more about the options.

Over half

of young people would like to take part in environmental protests. Less than **10%** currently do so.

54%

would like to volunteer in a community garden or green space.



Our Education: Schools and the Environment

Young people told us that school, college or university is where they most engage with information, discussion and action around environmental issues **(63%)**. This ranks higher than all other information sources.

It is clear that educational establishments play a huge role in connecting young people with the environment around them. But when asked what opportunities and resources their school/college currently offer to promote environmentalism, there was quite a divide in responses...



Less than half of young people said their schools have lessons on the environment, while **58%** said they didn't or weren't sure.

38% said their schools have dedicated assemblies on environmental issues.



46% said their schools use recyclable canteen containers.

61% said their schools have adequate recycling facilities on campus.



Only 10% of students go on school trips into nature areas.



“Students are **educated** about environmental issues in the world in form times, PSHE lessons and in assemblies. There is also a **green committee** where students can join and share our ideas for positively impacting the environment in our school and our ideas will be acted on.”

Ariel, Bexley

“Our school **doesn't** exactly take much notice of environmental issues.”

Prajina, Bexley



“I feel like the school tries to seem environmentally friendly at face value, but not enough is actually happening in terms of **educating us on climate issues**.”

Robyn, Hounslow

The **variety** of young people's responses to these questions reflects the differing experiences of environmental engagement at a school level. It serves as a reminder that young people's school or college experiences in general differ greatly.

Young people also highlight the excellent **motivation** of many schools to engage their students in positive environmental action and a desire from many young people for schools to provide additional environmental **opportunities**.



We asked young people about their experiences in school and how their schools could better engage with environmental issues and the environment around them.

They told us they would like to be:

1. Informed on environmental issues

Almost two thirds of respondents want more environmental education in the curriculum.



i When asked how their school could improve its engagement with environmental issues, **41%** of students wanted more dedicated lessons on the environment and **27%** wanted more assemblies on the topic in schools.

i Many young people said that they would like to learn more about careers in the environmental sector (**39%**), with only **1 in 5** saying that they have been informed about such options.

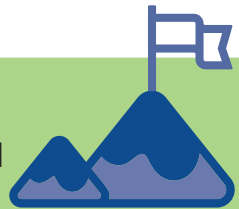


2. Motivated to make a difference

Pa Many young people said that they'd like to see their schools enable and inspire them to take individual action to improve the environment. Several respondents suggested doing this by raising awareness within the school of positive action and recognising young people doing good for the environment. **Almost 40%** of young people would like their school to more actively encourage them to take part in environmental campaigns and protests.

“[Schools] should educate us on how we can benefit the environment and push us to do it.” Otis, Enfield

1 in 3 young people would like more ideas for individual actions they can take.



“Educate people about ecological issues, and make sure it’s relevant, modern education that addresses the current issues.” Taylor, Basildon

More schools in London and Essex
don't have adequate green space
than do, according to students.



3. Engaged with nature

Young people's desire for more environmental education is not just restricted to the classroom. The most significant way young people want their schools to empower them is to enable them to engage directly with nature.

55% of young people want more school trips to engage with nature.

Almost 40% want their school/college to have a nature or green area that students can maintain.

Only **1 in 10** students report having been on a school trip to engage with nature. **43%** of young people in London and Essex said that they didn't have adequate green space at school compared to **31%** who felt they did. It is possible that the recent lockdowns have highlighted the importance of nature to young people, while also preventing school trips to more rural, natural spaces.



4. Inspired by schools leading by example



When asked how schools and colleges could improve how they engage students in environmental issues, **44%** of young people had ideas about improving school infrastructure specifically.

2 in 5 young people would like their school canteen to use reusable or recyclable containers.



2 in 5 would like more recycling bins around campus.



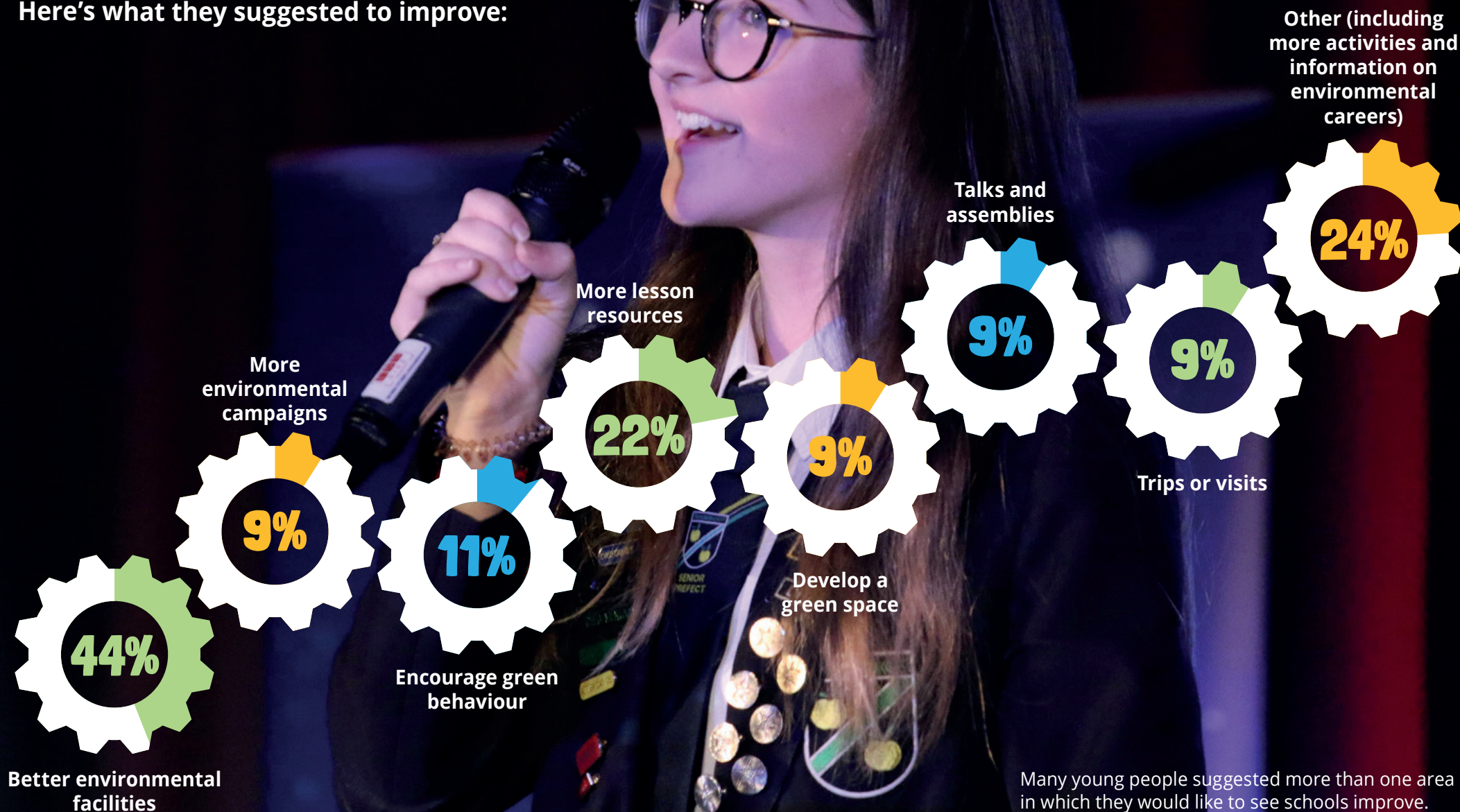
1 in 3 would like an environmentally-focused student council or student body.

1 in 3 would like school uniforms to be made out of recycled materials and **1 in 5** would like second hand uniforms to be encouraged.



We gave young people an opportunity to suggest what they think **their school or college should focus** on to positively impact the environment.

Here's what they suggested to improve:



Many young people suggested more than one area in which they would like to see schools improve.

Over half of young people
want to prioritise more school
trips to engage with nature.



Our Future: Empowering Young People

Despite the vast variety of experiences and opportunities young people currently have to take part in environmental projects, one key message from almost 4,000 young voices was that **they want to be included in the conversation** around environmental issues and to be part of **building the solution**.



96% of respondents said that young people should be involved in decision making about the environment.

“Personally, I believe it is important that young people be involved in decisions on environmental issues as it is our future. As well as this, many young people show actual interest in the environment and would love to take part in decisions.” **Anonymous**



After the UN Climate Change Conference in November 2021...



Many young people feel excluded from or not informed about environmental decision-making. For example, this survey was released shortly after the **UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)**, the meeting between international leaders around the effects of climate change and future environmental policies, which dominated the news cycle at the time. And yet **1 in 5** young people said that they were not aware of what this conference was, or what it was about, suggesting that these key conversations about the environment are not reaching all our future leaders.

On a more local level, **only half** of young people said that they felt included in **decision-making** about the environment in their local area (such as their neighbourhood, town or city).

BUT HOW?

When asked how young people should be more involved in decision-making, the top suggestions were:

68%

Decision-makers should speak with young people more

62%

There should be more environmental education in the curriculum

50%

Young people's opinions should be highlighted more in the news

50%

More surveys and polls asking young people's opinions

“I would ask them to pay even more attention to the global crisis and give out more **opportunities** for younger generations to help with it in their **local community** or in their school.”

Neekaiya, Croydon

“I would say to keep in mind that one day it will get to the point where we are forced to do something about environmental issues so let's try and **look after our planet** before we get to that point.”

Izzy, Bexley

“Bring young people forward and genuinely **listen** and consider their suggestions, potentially working alongside them.” **Anonymous, Barnet**

“I know that whenever you hear 'climate change' or 'save the environment' it sounds childish, but you have to understand, really understand, that this is one of, if not the most important issue that the world has ever faced. I know it might not affect you as much but please think of the **younger generations** and of the animals who will get the worst.”

Naya, Enfield

“[Young people] have very **creative ideas** and when they research and are passionate about a certain thing, they will do as much as they can to help... For example Greta Thunberg, a young girl who has caught the attention of the world because of her passion to save the environment, has got many ideas and continues to inspire young people day by day. If we listen to every person who is willing to help, **we can solve these problems** and help the environment.” **Anonymous**



Finally, we asked young people what the **role of a funder** should be in empowering young people to positively impact the environment, and their future world. What can we, as funders, do?

Here's what they told us...

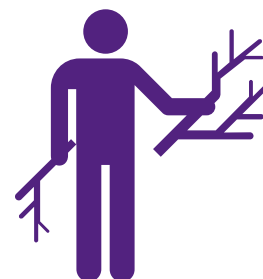


Recognise
young people
helping the
environment
more
47%

Invest in grants
for young people
to go on trips into
nature
44%



Give grants for
schools or youth
groups to invest
in environmental
projects
44%



Motivate
young people in
community
clean-ups
39%

Partner with
educational
organisations to
deliver workshops
in schools
33%



Create
volunteering
opportunities
32%

How we will use this report...

With the Jack Petchey Foundation's new Strategic Plan 2022-2024, we are looking to develop our funding and programmes engaging young people with the environment around them. To shape this work, **we want to be led by young people** and their voices, experiences and ideas.

We commit to taking forward young people's suggestions raised in this survey **to empower young people build a more sustainable future.** We also commit to amplifying young people's voices and helping to ensure that they are involved in decisions that affect their future.

To find out more about our work, and how you can get involved, please visit our website.

Spread the Word

We want to raise young people's voices and share their ideas with government, youth service providers and other decision makers so that they know what young people want to see from the future. To do this we need your help!



Visit our website

to download an email-template to send the results of this survey to your local MP, local mayor and leader of your council.



Sign up to our newsletter

to find out how we are acting on the results of the survey through our own work improving opportunities for young people.



Tell others about our survey.

Be part of the positive message, whether you filled in our survey or not. Download our graphics to share on your social media and tag us!



Discuss the findings of this survey in your school council or youth club and send us your ideas and suggestions for new programmes to address the issues highlighted in this report.

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