



greener SWINDON

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
REPORT**



Introduction

The aim of this report is to highlight the views and concerns of children and young people (CYP) within Swindon around climate change and impacts within our town.

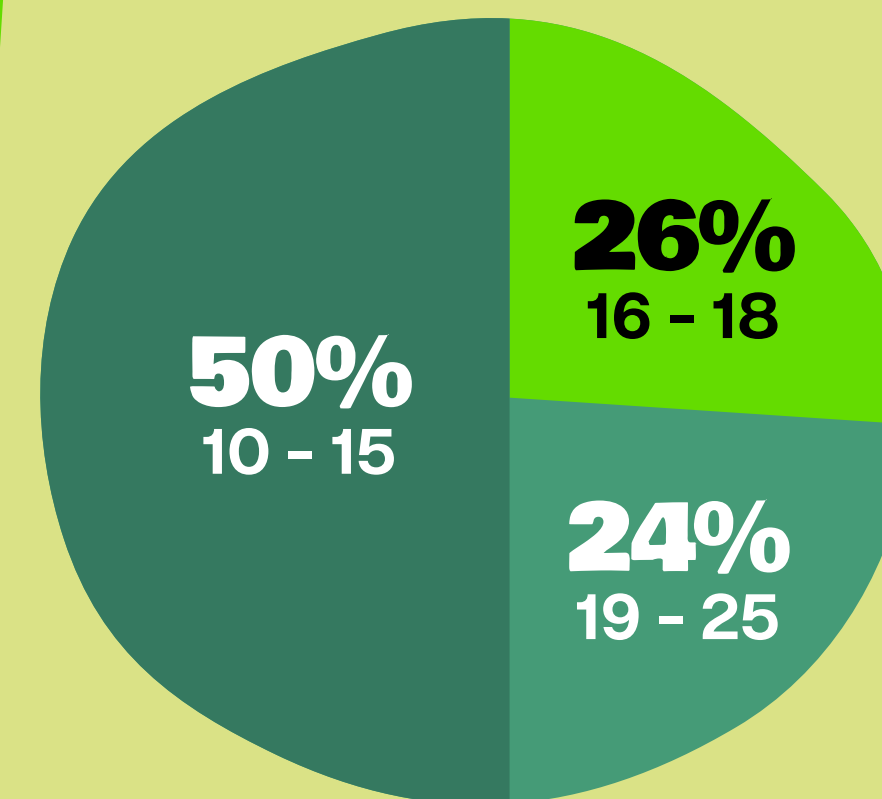
This report was created by CYP at Swindon's Young Changemakers - a diverse group of young people aged 12-25 committed to driving lasting change in their communities. We came together with a wider group of CYP through focus groups, youth-led research, and partnering with WAY, STEP and SMASH who have established trusted relationships with local children and young people.

We believe that CYP, like us, can lead the way in talking about what climate change means to us, what we need from Swindon, and how we can imagine and achieve a Greener Swindon.

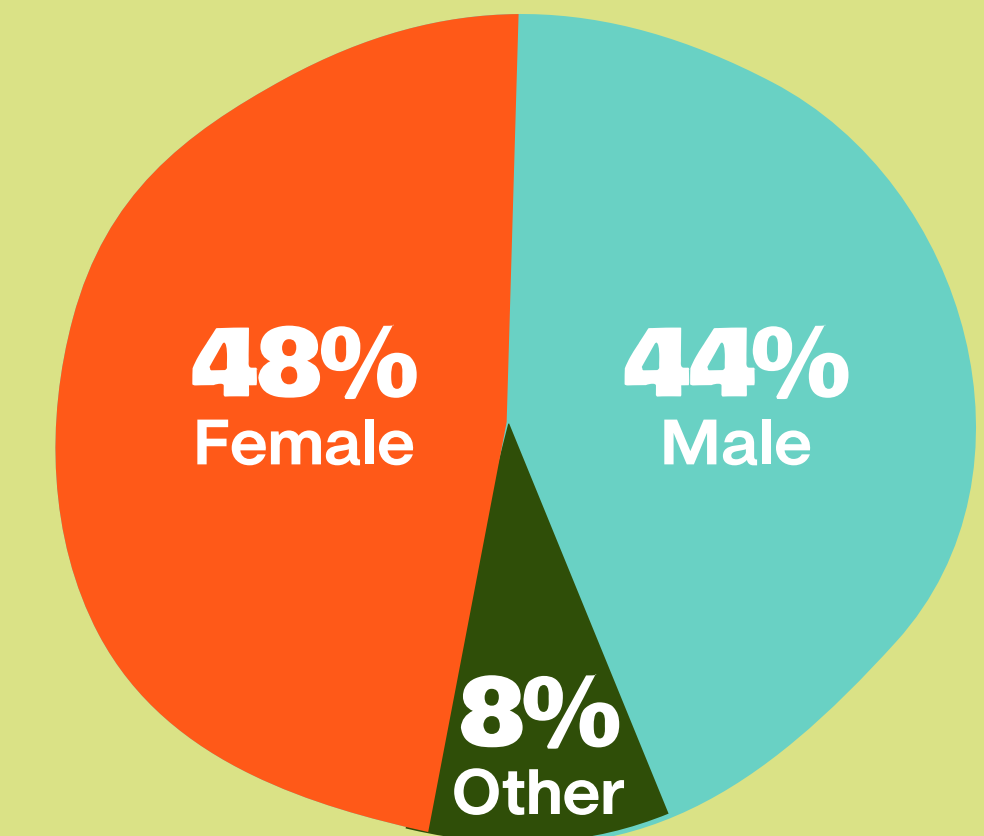
**THIS IS OUR REPORT. OUR VOICES.
OUR CONCERNS. OUR IDEAS.**

Who took part?

88 children and young people



AGE



GENDER

22% ETHNIC MINORITY

17% LGBTQ+

32% SEND/NEURODIVERSE

What does climate change mean to us?

Children and young people's (CYP) views on climate change are mixed. Some don't understand it, others connect it to daily life in Swindon, for some they are worried about what it means for their future.

★ **Some don't understand climate change or see it as irrelevant.**

"I don't understand the question; I don't understand climate change... means nothing to me."

"Don't know, why would it affect me?"

★ **Some CYP link it directly to life in Swindon.**

"Hotter summers, I melt like a puddle."

"When buses don't come and it rains harder, I feel like that's climate change affecting me right now."

★ **Some feel it's a distant, global issue.**

"I hear about wildfires on the news and it feels far away, but then when Mum's garden goes brown and cracking in the summer, it makes me think it's here."

★ **Poverty makes climate action feel out of reach.**

"I don't think it matters to me much, we've got bigger problems like food and bills. Being green or a vegan costs too much money, I didn't even have dinner last night."

★ **Climate change feels uncertain, worrying, or even unfair.**

"It means the future is uncertain. I want to have kids one day, but what kind of planet will they live on?"

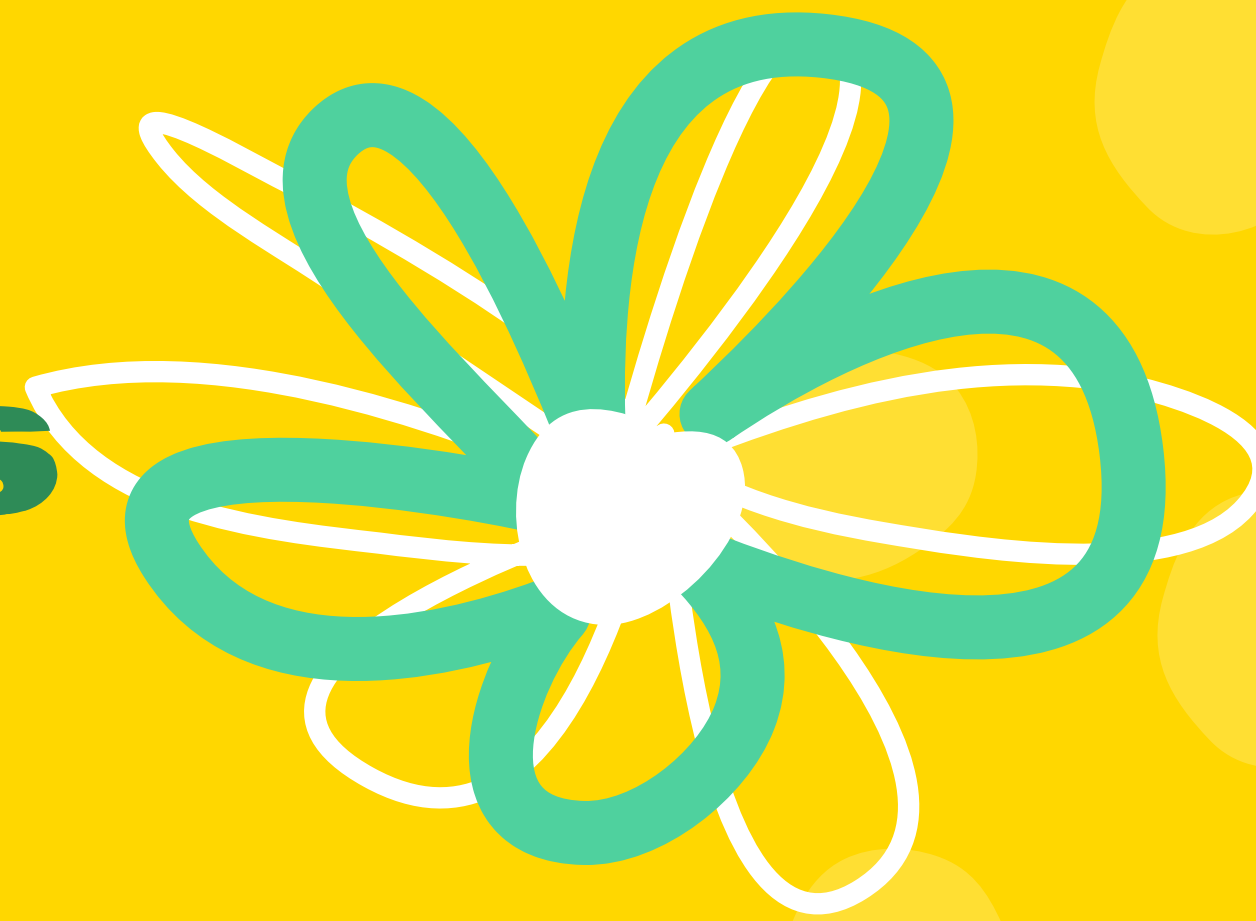
"I think it's about rich countries making the mess and poorer one's suffering. That's wrong in every way."

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

Climate change isn't just about science and the global impact; it's about everyday life, and for some it doesn't feel relevant or explained properly.

Our Worries and Concerns

Children and young people are worried about what their future looks like, for the environment and extreme weather, for their lives and for the financial impact.



★ Worries about wildlife and nature.

“I’m scared animals will disappear, like polar bears, penguins and arctic foxes. But also, bees – they matter here in our country.”

“It’s terrible our planet is slowly dying”

✦ Fears about disasters and extreme weather.

“Scared of natural disasters like flooding.”

“I don’t want more floods like we’ve seen – it kills people and wrecks houses.”

★ Concerns about costs and survival.

“If food gets more expensive, we’ll really struggle – it’s already bad.”

“My Mum says bills are going up. If climate change makes it worse, it scares me.”

✦ Impact on mental health.

“Heat makes my anxiety worse – it’s harder to manage.”

“Mentally! – we’re doomed as a society.”

“We are going to die if this world gets hotter”

★ A sense of unfairness.

“We’ll be the ones paying the price, not the old people in power.”



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

Our worries are split between the environment, the financial, and our health. For many, climate change feels less urgent than immediate challenges like food, bills, and housing – but some carry deep climate anxiety.

What we do about climate change and the barriers we face

Children and Young people described the small steps they take - but cost and confusion are major barriers.

★ Some make greener choices.

"I cycle to college instead of driving...it saves me money."

"I avoid fast fashion, but it's difficult because cheap clothes are tempting."

★ Most changes are about saving money, not the planet.

"We turn lights off at home because of bills - that probably helps the planet a bit."

"We don't waste food...we can't afford to."

"My family can't afford eco stuff from the shop, we just buy the cheapest."

★ Recycling is common but confusing.

"Sometimes I don't recycle. It's too complicated, too many rules."

"I try to recycle and pick up litter".

★ Some feel powerless.

"I don't do much. It doesn't feel like it makes a difference."

★ Lack of space or resources.

"We'd love to compost but don't have space."

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

While some children and young people are taking positive steps, most are driven by cost savings. Poverty, lack of space, and confusion about what makes a difference stop us from doing more.



Where we get our info

Information about climate change is everywhere - but knowing what to trust is hard.

✱ **Social media dominates, but it's hard to know what's real.**

"Mostly TikTok but I don't know if it's true."

"I watch YouTube videos; some are really good, but others are fake."

"All I use is TikTok to get my information."

✱ **Schools give some info, but not enough.**

"School science lessons, but they don't go deep enough."

✱ **We follow trusted campaigners or people we know.**

"I follow Greta Thunberg on Instagram, she makes me feel like I can do something."

"My older brother talks about it, he studies geography."

✱ **News feels confusing and boring.**

"News is confusing and boring - everyone says different things."

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

Children young people are learning about climate change mostly online, but we don't always trust what we see. We feel schools don't go far enough, and many of us want clearer, practical, youth-friendly information.

What the council should do

Young people had practical, straightforward ideas for what Swindon Borough Council should prioritise. What we heard:

* Improve transport.

"Make buses cheap and reliable – I'd use them then."

* More green spaces – Fun, Indoor and safe

"I want to go to more green places I can play".

"I want to hang out in indoor green spaces, especially when it's too hot or raining".

"We need more parks in my area that I don't have to get a bus to get to."

* Support greener schools and homes.

"Solar panels on schools would be smart."

"Help people insulate homes so bills go down."

* Tackle waste and fly-tipping.

"Find people who are fly-tipping, make them pay fines to clean it up. There's four fridges at the end of our street – it ruins where we live and is dangerous."

* Protect green land.

"Stop building on green land."

* Listen to young people.

"Listen to us. We've lots of ideas but no one asks."

"We want to be part of making the change."

* Support with the cost of being greener

"Make it easier and cheaper to switch to greener energy"

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

We want to see the change and not just be told about it – better buses, greener schools, cleaner streets and more green spaces. We want to be included in the decisions and to help make it happen.



Green spaces and wellbeing

Green spaces matter for children and young people's health and happiness – but only if they feel safe and welcoming.

What we heard:

★ Positive impact on mental health.

"It helps my anxiety and depression – I feel calm."

"When I'm stressed, sitting under a tree feels like a reset chill."

✦ Social connection and exercise.

"Walking my dog makes me happy."

"When I go outside with friends, I feel more connected and calmer."

★ Safety worries hold some of us back.

"Sometimes I don't feel safe, so it makes me anxious."

"Stay at home with my games or go out and risk knife attacks and drug dealers."

✦ Physical health benefits.

"Fresh air helps my asthma."



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

Most children and young people link green spaces to feeling calmer, healthier, and more connected – but if spaces feel unsafe or dirty, we avoid them. Feeling safe and included are just as important as the plants and green space itself.

Greener Swindon: spaces that need love

Young people identified
specific places that feel
lifeless, unsafe, or in need
of greening.

What we heard:

✦ Town centre feels concrete and dead.

“Town centre – it’s just concrete and feels dead, it’s disgusting and scary.”

“The whole town needs to be greener if possible. No one wants to go there.”

✦ Schools should be greener and more educational.

“Schools should have more gardens – kids would learn to grow food.”

✦ Estates and local areas need more trees and colour.

“In my estate we’ve got tiny patches of grass but no trees.”

“Walcot and Park North needs more colour, flowers, not just grass.”

✦ Accessibility matters.

“Disabled people need accessible green areas, not just fields with no paths.”

✦ Creative greening ideas.

“Even bus stops could have plants.”

“We want to see indoor green spaces so that I can hang out in bad weather, if it’s too hot or too rainy.”

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US:

We want Swindon’s centre, schools, and estates to look and feel greener. We want to be proud of Swindon, better spaces for our mental health, and places we would enjoy going.



Summary



WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE MEANS TO US

Some young people don't understand climate change, while others link it to hotter summers, flooding, and everyday struggles in Swindon.

Recommendation: Make education and awareness on climate change local, practical, and relevant to our daily lives.



WHAT WE DO AND BARRIERS WE FACE

Some of us cycle, avoid fast fashion, or reduce waste, but most actions are about saving money. Recycling feels confusing, eco-options cost too much, and many feel their actions don't matter.

Recommendation: Make sustainable living cheaper, easier, and more accessible for everyone.



WHAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD DO

We want practical change - reliable and cheap buses, greener schools and homes, action on waste, and protection of green land. Most importantly, we want to be part of decisions.

Recommendation: Deliver visible improvements and involve young people directly in climate planning.



SPACES THAT NEED LOVE

We want the town centre, estates, and schools to feel greener and more alive. Ideas include more trees, flowers, gardens in schools, accessible paths, indoor green spaces, and even plants at bus stops.

Recommendation: Transform public spaces across Swindon into greener, more inclusive places that young people are proud of.



OUR WORRIES AND CONCERNS

We worry about wildlife loss, extreme weather, rising food and energy costs, and the impact on our mental health. Many feel it's unfair that young people will face the biggest consequences.

Recommendation: Tackle climate impacts alongside cost-of-living pressures and support young people's wellbeing.



WHERE WE GET OUR INFO

Most of us hear about climate change on social media, but we don't always trust it. Schools and news provide some information, but it often feels shallow or confusing.

Recommendation: Provide clear, engaging, and trustworthy climate information in schools and online.



GREEN SPACES AND WELLBEING

Green spaces support our mental health, social lives, and physical wellbeing, but unsafe or dirty places stop us using them. Feeling safe and welcome is as important as green space itself.

Recommendation: Invest in safe, clean, and inclusive green spaces designed with children and young people in mind.





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