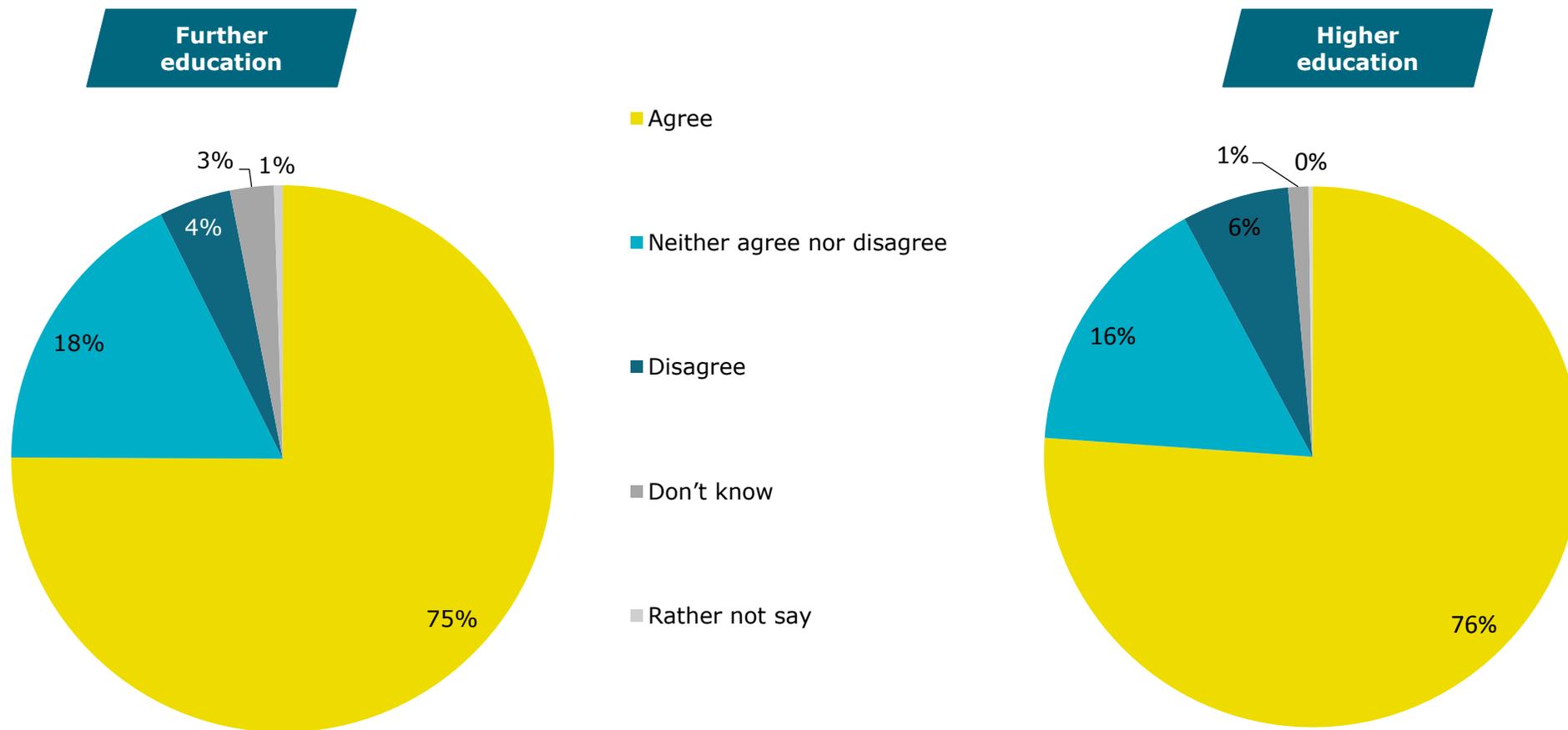


What are the students' perspectives on embedding SDGs and sustainable development?

Laura Cristea
Sustainability Project Officer (Scotland)
National Union of Students

Expectations for teaching and learning for sustainability

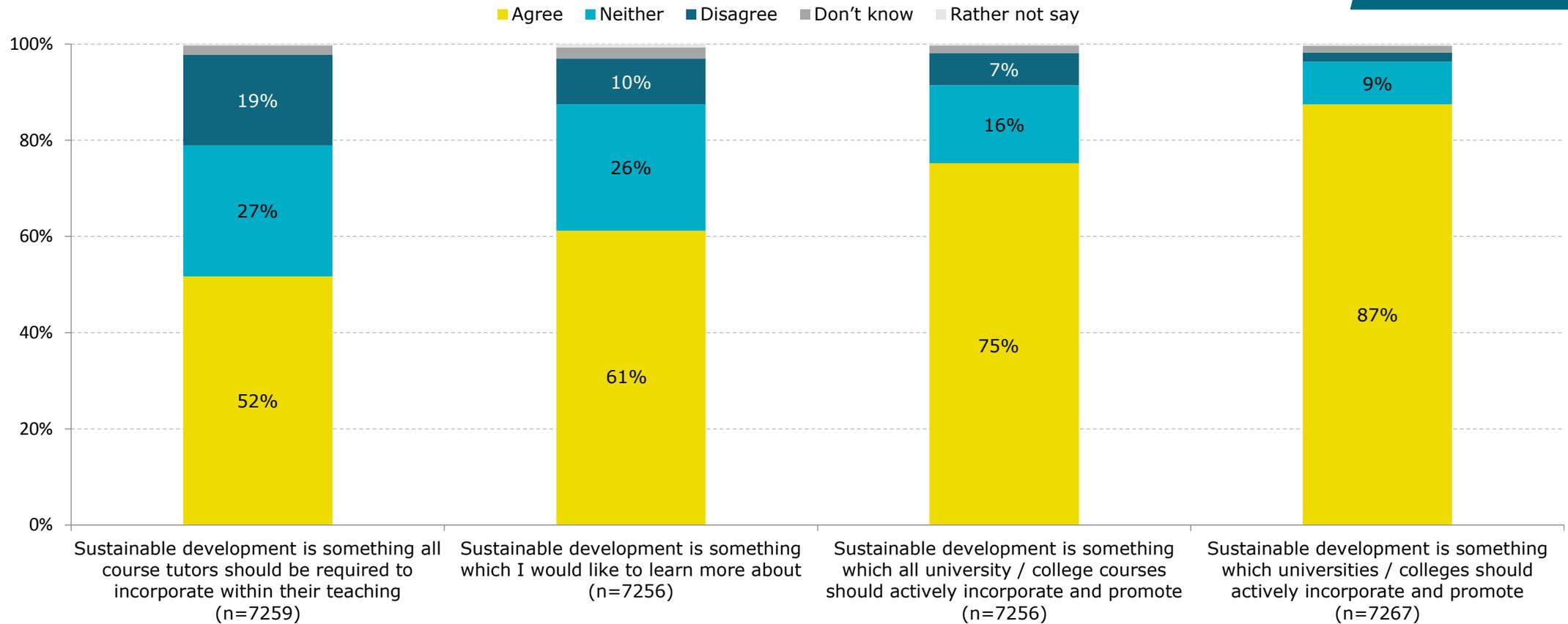
Do students expect universities / colleges to develop students' sustainability skills as part of courses?



Overall, respondents in FE and HE agree that universities and colleges should be obliged to develop students' social and environmental skills as part of the courses they offer. In both FE and HE, three quarters agree (e.g. 75% FE respondents (n=774) and 76% HE respondents (n=5521)).

Do students expect universities / colleges to take action on sustainability?

Higher education



Differences by respondent characteristics

- International respondents from outside of the EU are more likely to agree with all statements than UK respondents and international respondents from within the EU. EU international respondents are also more likely to agree with all statements than UK respondents.
- For example, international respondents from outside the EU are more likely to agree that sustainable development is something universities and colleges should actively incorporate and promote (e.g. 87% (n=4888) UK respondents agree compared with 92% (n=726) non-EU international respondents).
- UK respondents are less likely to agree that sustainable development is something they would like to learn more about compared with international respondents both from within and beyond the EU (e.g. 58% (n=3237) UK respondents agree compared with 70% (n=506) EU respondents and 79% (n=620) non-EU respondents).
- 3rd year respondents are more likely to agree that they would like to learn more about sustainable development than 1st year respondents (at a 95% confidence level) with 63% (n=811) agreeing compared with 59% (n=1553) 1st years.

Q: Taking a definition of sustainable development as: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". To what extent, if at all, would you say that you personally agree with the following statements?

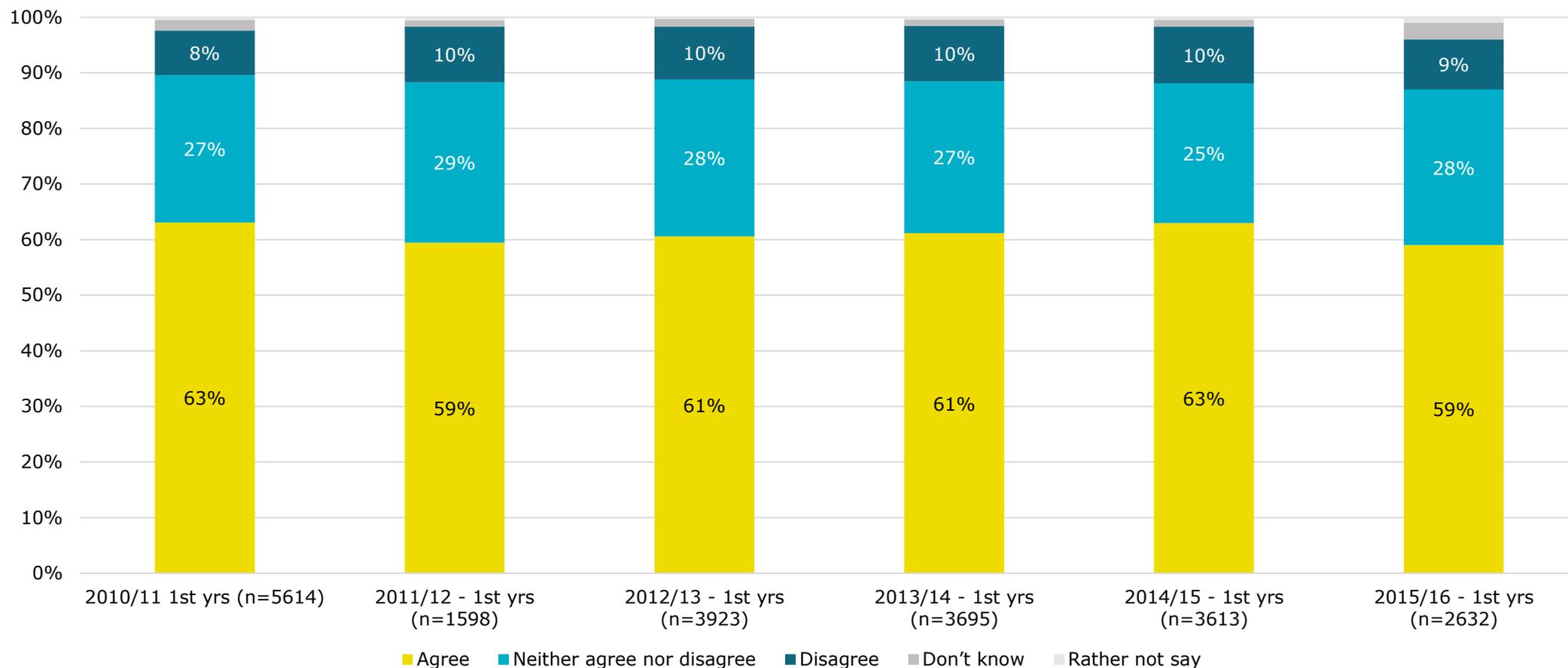
Weighted base: In brackets. Balance: No response

Do students want to learn more about sustainability?

As mentioned previously, in 2015/16 just under two thirds agree that sustainable development is something they would like to learn more about (61%, n=4439).

The chart below focuses specifically on 1st year student responses and shows a relatively consistent demand for learning about sustainable development throughout the six years of research. However, there are small but significant variations in agreement that sustainable development is something that 1st year respondents want to learn more about, as identified for each research year below in the chart.

1st year respondents
Higher education



Q: Taking a definition of sustainable development as: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". To what extent, if at all, would you say that you personally agree with the following statements?

Weighted base: In brackets. Balance: No response

* n.b. Significant to 95% confidence level. All other differences are significant at 99% confidence level.

Why do students want to learn more about sustainable development?

Respondents were also asked to reflect on why they wanted to learn more about sustainable development. The first 500 responses from both HE and FE respondents were coded and show that the most common reason respondents reported was that they believe having an understanding of sustainability will be important for their future, beyond education. In most cases, respondents expressed a general concern about the future of the planet, whereas some directly related it to their future careers. FE respondents reported a desire to better understand the issues around sustainable development, and HE respondents indicated that it is an important concept to be aware of and understand.

Further education

Higher education

It's useful / important for future	103	124
To understand issues better	93	51
So I can take action in this area/make a difference	92	67
It's important to know about	68	82
So I'm aware of my own / others impact on environment	60	37
I don't know what it means	35	42
It's useful / interesting in general	26	54
Nothing/no answer/don't know	20	25

"I think, customers are interested in dealing with company's that consider sustainable development. Employers will therefore be interest in hiring employees who are aware and committed to the cause."

Man FE respondent, EU

"It is crucial for our future. What use is it learning an academic subject if everything we learn is going to be irrelevant because we push the world's resources to the limit?"

Woman HE respondent, UK, 1st year undergraduate

"Because I want to be able to ensure that I can put my ideas forward without causing any consequences for the next generation so i would like to know how sustainable my ideas are."

Man HE respondent, UK, 1st year undergraduate

"It makes me a better person and also more employable in the future."

Man HE respondent, UK, 1st year undergraduate

"It is beneficial to know for future employment. and it is vital to understand within our current global situation."

Woman HE respondent, UK, 3rd year undergraduate

"Because I've never actually learnt anything about it and I would like it to be implemented into my course."

Woman FE respondent, UK

"In the future industry will have to become even more sustainable so will be a demand for engineers trained/taught more in sustainability."

Man FE respondent, UK

"I think it's important for everyone to know as much as possible in order to create results and help the environment."

Man HE respondent, UK, 2nd year undergraduate

What actions would students like to see their place of study take for sustainable development?

Respondents were also asked to consider more broadly what actions they would like to see their university or college take to improve its performance on sustainable development. The first 500 responses from FE and HE responses were coded and revealed that on the whole, respondents indicate uncertainty over specific actions they want to see their institutions take. In some cases this was attributed to a lack of knowledge on what is currently going on, asking for further communications in this area. Respondents in HE and FE in particular reported being keen to see sustainability incorporated further into both courses and wider life at college or university. HE respondents were clear that they wanted to see more activities and interventions which encourage people to take action. Respondents also highlighted a desire for institutions to reconsider how resources (including funding) were allocated, with a number of respondents in HE calling for divestment of funding from the fossil fuel industry.

	Further education	Higher education
Not sure / Don't know	198	208
More awareness / information generally on sustainability and what the college / university is doing	66	52
Incorporate it into the course/student life	102	57
More activities and interventions which encourage people to be more environmentally friendly / take action	69	106
Changes to how resources (including funding) are used and prioritised	17	29

"If they're going to spend millions on new buildings those buildings could at least be energy efficient for starters."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"I do not know what their current performance is. Not a topic that has been communicated to me."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"Better and more comprehensive recycling facilities, less packaging and disposable waste used in food outlets on campus, stop using fossil fuels for the university's energy."
Woman HE respondent, UK, Postgraduate

"Maybe have a business tutor come in every other week for an hour to discuss this topic."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"Our university had several social enterprises. Bring those back!"
Man HE respondent, UK, 3rd year undergraduate

"The university is active, but louder communication as to how individuals can contribute or provide their own suggestions is needed."
Woman HE respondent, UK, Undergraduate 2nd year

"Visibly endorse actions that improve sustainability, teachers can be role models in changing behaviour, for example, by cycling or walking to college."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"Make the teaching of sustainable development compulsory and make sure students think about it in their daily lives - i.e. compulsory recycling and composting in halls, busses available from all halls to avoid cars and taxis, car share schemes, etc."
Woman HE respondent, UK, 2nd year undergraduate

"Just a training day once a term to advance our skills and knowledge in this area."
Woman HE respondent, UK, Undergraduate 2nd year

What impact has learning about sustainability issues had?

Respondents were also asked to reflect on how learning about sustainability issues has impacted them personally, in terms of their day to day lifestyle, but also considering their values and aims for future careers. The first 500 responses were coded and revealed that for both FE and HE respondents, learning about sustainability issues has encouraged them to think about things or do things differently. Respondents also noted that learning about these issues has helped improve their knowledge and understanding, which has the potential to improve their career opportunities in the future. Others reflected that the impact was more overarching, improving their general life skills. A number of respondents didn't feel that learning had impacted them at all, however others identified that most of their learning on the issues covered by the survey had come through general life experience rather than through formal education.

Further education

Higher education

Think about things/do things differently now	118	117
Helped develop my career/improve my knowledge/understanding	116	71
Improved me/life skills generally	104	108
None/No impact	94	112
Not sure/Don't know	32	41

"It has caused me to be more aware when hearing the news and it has made me want to help improve things in the future and make things as fair as possible."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"I have joined the eco committee in school which helped me learn new things and make new friends."
Man FE respondent, UK

"Forces me to think before I do anything. It also had me change a few things I was doing that had negative effects."
Woman HE respondent, non-EU, Postgraduate

"Awareness of climate change and the level to which humans contribute to pollution levels has caused me to be more environmentally friendly, I recycle more and turn off things that use energy when they are not in use."
Man FE respondent, UK

"I began to understand that I as an individual can make a difference locally and globally."
Man HE respondent, EU, Postgraduate

"Changed how I view the world and its people and what direction I want to take my career in although money will still be a main deciding factor."
Man HE respondent, UK, Undergraduate 2nd year

"It has made me more open minded, also given me more information about topics I didn't already know."
Woman FE respondent, UK

"I actually learnt more by doing my own research and experiences about a lot of the issues listed previously, that's why I think schools and universities need to improve on the way they are teaching these issues. They were not very embedded in everyday learning but rather as one-offs. Otherwise this learning helped me thinking about these issues and wanting to know more about it and why should I care for them. I think as a result what was a value for me might become my career."
Defines in another way HE respondent, EU, 1st year undergraduate

"No real effect. The issues are not covered well. It is seen as a 'free class' where you can switch off and not engage. It is like the issues themselves are unimportant."
Man HE respondent, UK, Undergraduate 1st year

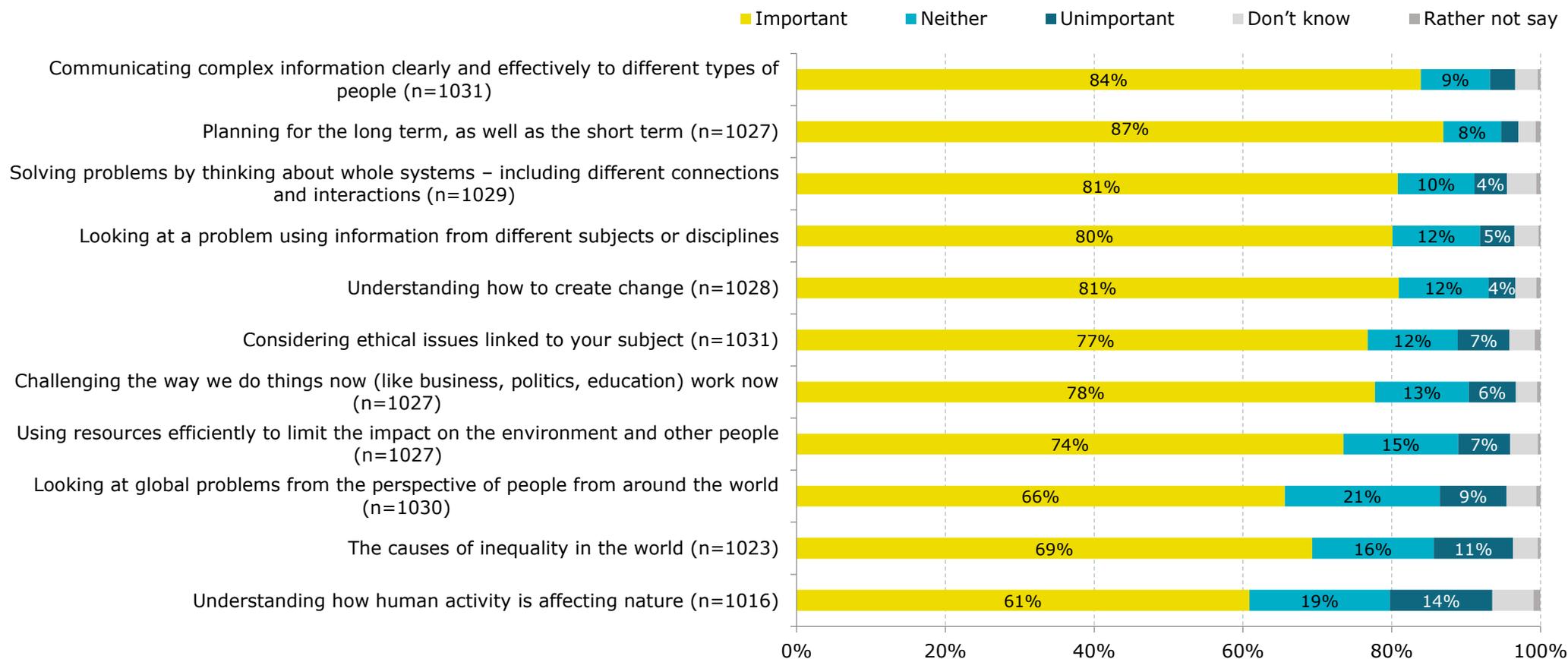
Q: What impact, if any, has learning about any of the issues in the previous question had on you personally?

Please write your answer in the box below, thinking about how learning affected your day to day lifestyle as well as bigger changes such as your values and your aims for your future career.

How important are sustainability skills to future employers?

Further education

Respondents were asked to consider how important sustainability related skills and knowledge are to their future employers. The most important skills are perceived as being the ability to communicate complex information clearly and effectively to different types of people (84% FE respondents (n=865)) and the ability to plan for the long term, as well as the short term (87% (n=893) FE respondents). FE respondents are least likely to rate having an understanding of how human activity is affecting nature as being important for future employers (61% FE respondents (n=619) rate this as important).



Differences by respondent characteristics

- FE women respondents are significantly more likely to see understanding the causes of inequality in the world as important to their future employers than FE respondents who are men (76% (n=336) compared with 64% (n=356)).
- Similarly, FE women respondents are more likely to see considering ethical issues associated with their subject as important to their future employers than FE respondents who are men (84% (n=395) compared with 71% (n=380)).
- Finally, FE women respondents are more likely to see understanding how to create change as important to their future employers than FE respondents who are men (88% (n=402) compared with 80% (n=409)).

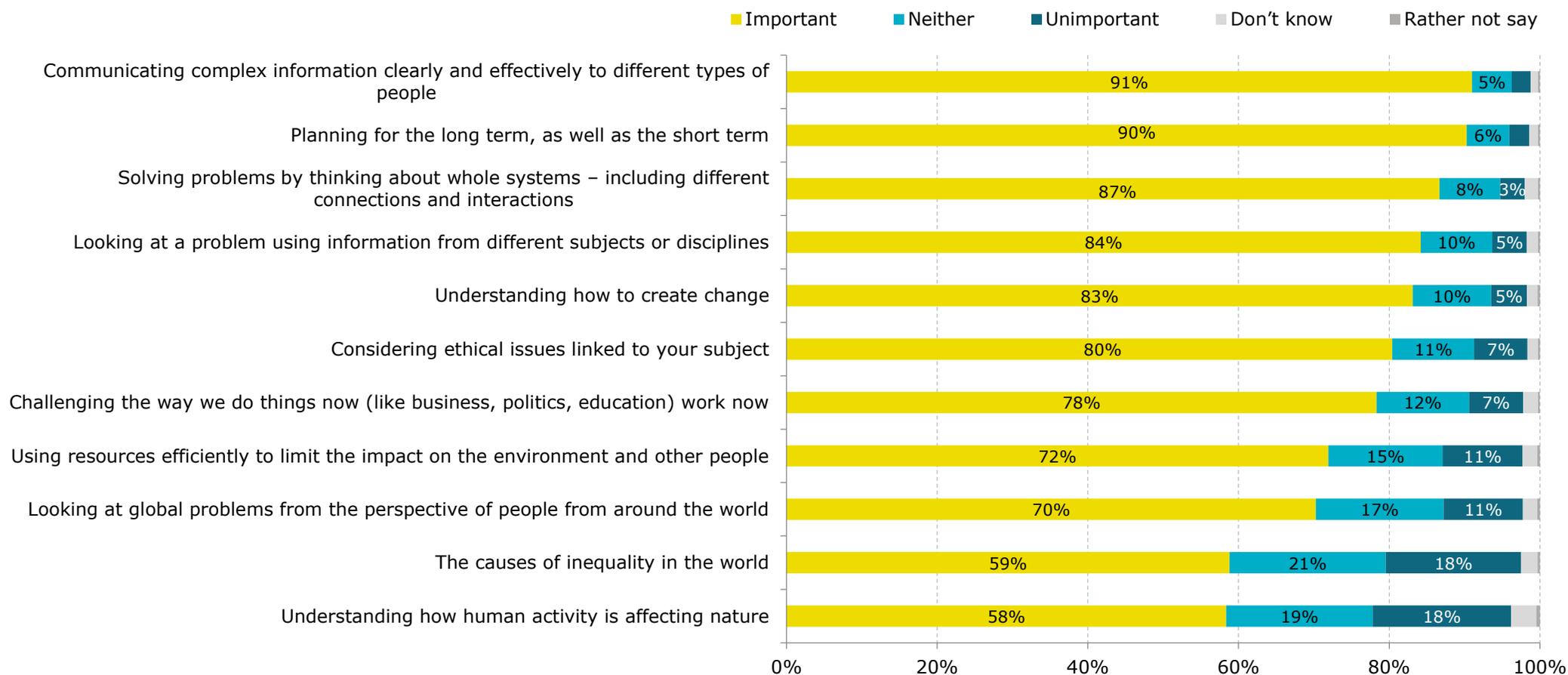
Q: How important do you think the following skills and knowledge are to your future employers?

Weighted base: HE c.7200 / FE c. 1025 Balance: No response

How important are sustainability skills to future employers?

Higher education

HE respondents were also asked to consider how important sustainability related skills and knowledge are to their future employers. The most important skills are perceived as being the ability to communicate complex information clearly and effectively to different types of people (91% HE respondents (n=6603) and the ability to plan for the long term, as well as the short term (90% HE respondents (n=6550)). As with FE respondents, those in HE are also least likely to rate having an understanding of how human activity is affecting nature as being important for future employers (58% HE respondents (n=4169)).



Differences by respondent characteristics

- International HE respondents from beyond the EU are more likely to think understanding how human activity is affecting nature will be important to their future employers than EU and UK respondents (70% (n=539) compared with 56% (n=402) and 57% (n=3164) respectively).
- Women HE respondents are more likely than men to think planning for the long term as well as the short term will be important to their future employers (92% (n=3784) compared with 88% (n=2641)).
- 3rd year HE respondents are more likely than 1st year respondents to identify communicating complex information clearly and effectively to different groups of people as important to future employers (93% (n=1210) compared with 89% (n=2358)).

Q: How important do you think the following skills and knowledge are to your future employers?

Weighted base: HE c.7200 / FE c. 1025 Balance: No response



3% of people attend university
but they take up **80%** of the
leadership positions.

Chuck Hopkins, UNESCO Chair



Knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes

Global citizenship
perspectives

Ability to
bring
about
change

Communication
skills & relationship
building

Interdisciplinarity

Plan for the long term
as well as the short
term

Critical thinking

Understand
sustainability
context of your
discipline

Motivation

Systems
thinking

Connection to
nature

Sustainability
values, attitudes
and behaviours

NUS partners with Hard Rain Project to deliver new WHOLE EARTH? exhibiton

Whole Earth exhibition (in partnership with Mark Edwards)

Photographic way of highlighting SDGs



NUS is proud to lead a global showcase of the groundbreaking photography exhibitions Hard Rain and WHOLE EARTH?

[Hard Rain Project](#) (HRP), NUS and EAUC will launch the new exhibition, WHOLE EARTH?, simultaneously at 100 universities in North and South America, Africa, Asia, Australasia and Europe in 2015, reaching over a million students in that year.

WHOLE EARTH? comprises a new outdoor exhibition and programme of events that will include public exhibitions at botanic gardens, museums and in slum communities in the majority world. It presents an integrated approach to 21st-century human development and is designed to give students a voice in the debate about *their* future.

WHOLE EARTH? responds to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals initiative (SDG). SDGs will shape government policies and UN programmes up to 2030; those policies will determine the future for hundreds, perhaps thousands of

St George's House consultation

The role of pre-16 formal and informal education in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals

(Thursday 30 November and Friday 01 December 2017)



ST GEORGE'S HOUSE

[Consultations](#) [Lectures](#) [Society of Leadership Fellows](#) [About Us](#) [Become an Associate](#)

Society of Leadership Fellows

Read more information about our Leadership Conversations >

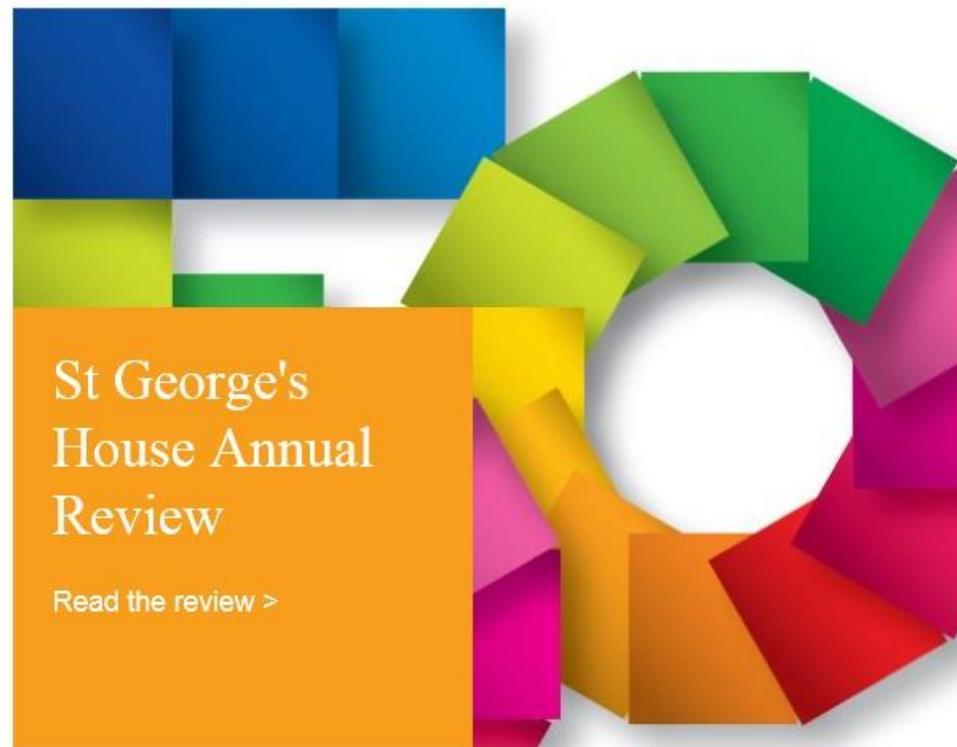


ST GEORGE'S HOUSE



St George's House Annual Review

Read the review >



Joint bid for EU funding in conjunction with WikiRATE



Browse ▾

Get Started ▾

Q Search

Join



WikiRate

A global collaboration to research corporate impacts.
Let's make companies better, together.

[Watch How WikiRate Works](#)

[About WikiRate](#)

[Learn More](#)

Research how
Companies perform

on important **Topics**



Apple Inc.

130

Metrics

2

Topics

Metric	Value
Scope 2 Emissions	2014 = 91,505 tonnes
CEO to Worker pay	2013 = 43 :1
Scope 1 Emissions	2014 = 30,393 tonnes

About

- [The Pilot](#)
- [The Criteria](#)

About



Changing education is the first step towards changing the whole of society.

That's why Responsible Futures is **putting sustainability at the heart of education** across our universities and colleges.

We've developed this **externally-assessed accreditation mark** to assist all institutions in helping students to gain the skills and experience they need to thrive as global citizens.

We actively support partnerships between students' unions and institutions through a structured framework of criteria to encourage action on embedding social responsibility and sustainability into formal and informal learning.

Sustainability isn't just doing the recycling properly. We need an education system which creates



www.nus.org.uk/sustainability
laura.cristea@nus-scotland.org.uk

Get in touch!