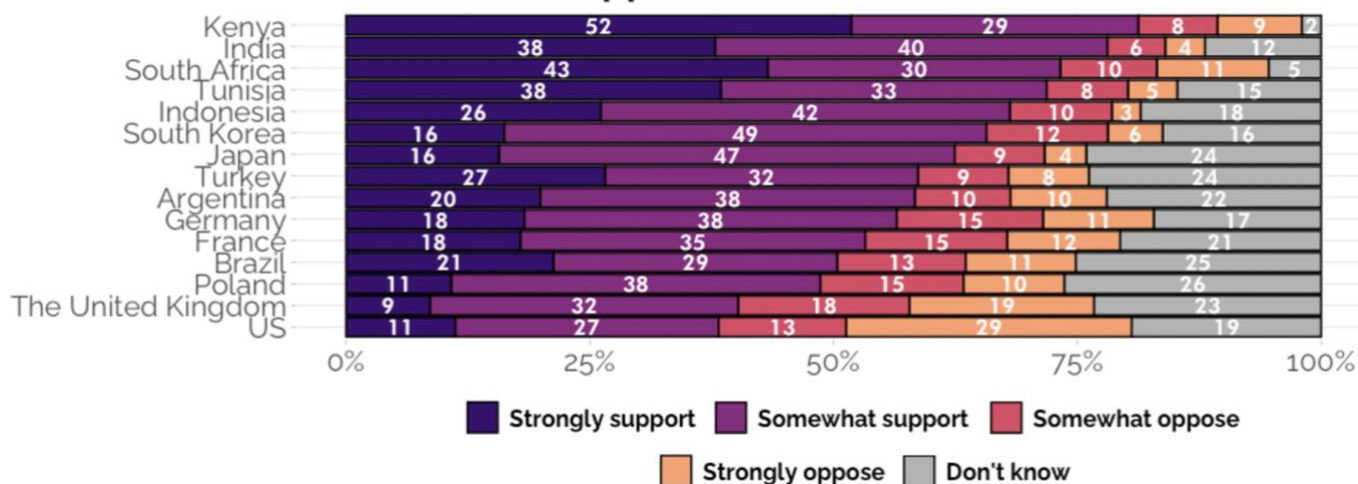


### Support for a World Parliament



## Young people more optimistic about the world than older generations – Unicef

Despite mental health and climate concerns, youth believe they can improve the world, survey for World Children’s Day finds

**Peter Beaumont**

Thu 18 Nov 2021 06.00 GMT

Young people are often seen as having a bleak worldview, plugged uncritically into social media and anxious about the climate crisis, among other pressing issues.

But [a global study commissioned by the UN’s children’s agency, Unicef](#), appears to turn that received wisdom on its head. It paints a picture of children believing that the world is improving with each generation, even while they [report anxiety](#) and impatience for [change on global heating](#).

The landmark intergenerational study, conducted for Unicef by Gallup for World Children’s Day, surveyed two age groups in 21 countries – aged 15-24 and 40-plus – sampled from different socioeconomic groups, to compare attitudes.

The results suggest the younger generation are more positive and globally minded than their elders, sceptical of what they read on social media (only 17% of young people said they trusted social media platforms “a lot” for information) and more invested in science and the possibility of global cooperation and international institutions.

The young people surveyed were also more likely to believe childhood had improved, voting healthcare, education and physical safety as being better for them than it had been for their parents’ generation.



Young Ugandans march through Wakiso in a climate protest. The survey found young people to be more globally minded and optimistic than their elders. Photograph: Isaac Kasamani/AFP/Getty

“Born into a more digital, interconnected and diverse reality, young people see a world that is largely a better place for children than the one their parents grew up in – a safer and more abundant world that offers children better education, opportunities and hope for the future,” the report concludes.

“At the same time, young people are not complacent. They report greater struggles with mental health conditions. Amid a sea of mis- and disinformation, they report low levels of trust in the information sources they use most.”

Unicef’s executive director, Henrietta Fore, said: “There is no shortage of reasons for pessimism in the world today: climate change, the pandemic, poverty and inequality, rising distrust and growing nationalism. But here is a reason for optimism: children and young people refuse to see the world through the bleak lens of adults.”

Compared with older generations, she said: “The world’s young people remain hopeful, much more globally minded, and determined to make the world a better place. Today’s young people have concerns for the future but see themselves as part of the solution.”

Overall, the data suggests young people are products of globalisation – 39% identified most with being part of the world, rather than their own nation or region, compared with 22% of the 40-plus group. With each additional year of age, people were on average about 1% less likely to identify as a global citizen.

The survey – conducted during the pandemic – also found young people were generally more trusting of national governments, scientists and international news media as sources of accurate information. Yet they were aware of the problems the world faced:

- The majority of young people saw serious risks for children online, such as seeing violent or sexually explicit content (78%) or being bullied (79%).
- While 64% of those in low- and middle-income countries believed children would be better off economically than their parents, young people in high-income countries had little faith in economic progress. There, fewer than a third of young respondents believed children today would grow up to be better off economically than their parents.
- More than a third of young people reported often feeling nervous or anxious, and nearly one in five said they often felt depressed or had little interest in doing things.
- On average, 59% of young people said children today faced more pressure to succeed than their parents did.



Generational conflict over climate crisis is a myth, UK study finds

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Joe Daly, senior partner at Gallup, said: “We cannot know what is on the minds of young people if we do not ask them. Unicef’s survey reinforces the importance of hearing from the next generation and understanding their perspectives.”

The survey found some areas of multi-generational alignment – [notably around climate](#), the importance of education, global collaboration and children’s agency. By contrast, optimism, global mindedness and recognition of historical progress reflected some of the deepest divides.

Fore said: “While this research paints a nuanced view of the generational divide, a clear picture emerges: children and young people embody the spirit of the 21st century far more readily than their parents.”

## **Generational conflict over climate crisis is a myth, UK study finds**

***Research disproves perception young people want to save planet while older people do not care***

**Amelia Hill**

*Wed 15 Sep 2021 06.01 BST*

A fake generational war over the [climate crisis](#) has distorted public thinking and political strategy, when in fact older generations are just as worried about the issue as younger people, according to new research.

The idea that young people are ecowarriors, battling against selfish older generations is a common trope in representations of the environment movement. It has been stoked by instances including Time magazine naming [Greta Thunberg](#) their person of the year in 2019, for being a “standard bearer in a generational battle”.



Nearly all global farm subsidies harm people and planet – UN

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The stereotypes were further strengthened when generation Z, US singer Billie Eilish said: “Hopefully the adults and the old people start listening to us [about the climate crisis]. Old people are gonna die and don’t really care if we die, but we don’t wanna die yet.”

But a [new UK study](#), Who Cares About Climate Change: Attitudes Across The Generations, has found that the generational divide over climate action is a myth, with almost no difference in views between generations on the importance of climate action, and all saying they are willing to make big sacrifices to achieve this. In fact, the research found that older people are actually more likely than the young to feel that acting in environmentally conscious ways will make a difference, with twice as many baby boomers having boycotted a company in the last 12 months for environmental reasons than gen Z.

Prof Bobby Duffy, author of Generations: Does When You’re Born Shape Who You Are? said the fake conflict between generations over the climate crisis is “dangerous and destructive”. It had, he said, “crept into so many discussions about climate concern that it’s become an accepted truth that the young are at war with older generations who are not only utterly unfussed about the future of the planet, but are culpable for the current crisis.

“Parents and grandparents care deeply about the legacy they’re leaving for their children and grandchildren – not just their house or jewellery, but the state of the planet. If we want a greener future, we need to act together, uniting the generations, rather than trying to drive an imagined wedge between them,” he added.

The weighted study of 2,050 UK adults by the Policy Institute at King’s College London and New Scientist magazine, found that about seven in 10 people from all generations surveyed said the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and other environmental issues were big enough problems that they justified significant changes to people’s lifestyles.

But it was younger generations, rather than older ones, who were most fatalistic about the impact that they could personally have in tackling the climate crisis.

About one-third of gen Z (those aged under 24) and millennials (those aged 25 to 40) said there was no point changing their behaviour because “it won’t make a difference anyway”. This compared with 22% of gen X (those aged 41 to 56) and 19% of baby boomers (those aged 57 to 75)



Most plans for new coal plants scrapped since Paris agreement

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There was an even bigger gap between generations when it came to the rejection of this idea: 61% of baby boomers disagreed with the statement that there was no point altering their behaviour, compared with 41% of millennials.

Richard Webb, executive editor of New Scientist, said: “There’s been a lot of talk about the attitude of different generations towards the pressing issues of the day but the findings of this survey provide food for thought for policymakers ahead of the crucial Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow in November.

“Far from being an obsession of a young, activist few, support for measures that put our lives on a more sustainable footing as we look to building back from the Covid-19 pandemic command broad support across generations,” he added. “They could be a route to increased engagement among groups increasingly disillusioned with politics.”