

THE
FUTURE
LEADERS
SURVEY
07/08





Forum for the Future – the sustainable development charity – works in partnership with leading organisations in business and the public sector. Our vision is of business and communities thriving in a future that is environmentally sustainable and socially just. We believe that a sustainable future can be achieved and that it is the only way business and communities will prosper.

www.forumforthefuture.org.uk



UCAS is the not-for-profit central organisation that manages applications for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges. UCAS has recently launched UKPASS, an application service for UK postgraduate courses (www.ukpass.ac.uk).

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Foreword

Anthony McClaran

UCAS is pleased to have worked once again with Forum for the Future to produce this significant and broad survey of university and college applicants, exploring their hopes and expectations for the future.

A clear message is that our future leaders are not driven solely by materialistic concerns – in fact the survey paints a picture of a generation facing their adult lives with equal measures of idealism and anxiety. For these young people, the challenge is to make real the sometimes abstract issue of sustainability. Nearly two-thirds of this year's survey sample want to see more about sustainable development in their course curriculum and 42% think that such knowledge will help them to get a job after leaving university or college.

Higher education institutions are responding well to issues of sustainability. However, the rising concern about such issues revealed in this report, particularly among mature applicants and those from overseas, will give food for thought to those keen to meet the needs of these crucial markets.

Applicants to higher education still dream of a better world and the part they can play in creating it. The choices they make in the coming years, and particularly the time they spend at university or college, will be critical in helping them to play that part. The world needs a generation of sustainability-literate young people and there is a growing expectation that the higher education sector will be able to deliver in this respect.



Anthony McClaran
Chief Executive, UCAS

Introduction

Peter Madden

When Forum for the Future and UCAS embarked on the second Future Leaders Survey, it was with a mixture of hope and trepidation. Today's university entrants truly have the hand of history on their shoulders: the first generation to face seemingly intractable global environmental problems right at the beginning of their careers, and the last with a chance to solve them.

As the results of this year's survey show, they feel this burden, and struggle to feel optimistic about the future – whether in saving the rainforests, achieving peace or ending famine.

But they haven't given up, and their expectations are very high. As future leaders they know we need action from leaders of today, in business, government, the media and beyond. They also see a much greater role for coercion – for example banning 4x4s in city centres and taxing aviation – than our current culture of voluntarism would suggest.

As you'd expect, fun is still pretty high on their agenda, and like students of any generation they want to see the world, socialise with their friends, and benefit from some of the good things in life. For the world's billion teenagers, reconciling this lifestyle with the reality of environmental limits is what sustainable development is all about, and is now the defining challenge for leadership both present and future.



Peter Madden
Chief Executive, Forum for the Future

The Future Leaders Survey 07/08

What do applicants to universities and colleges in the UK in 2007 think about the future? Where do they expect their happiness to come from? What do they think the world will be like when they are mid-career? What are the big challenges facing humanity, and who do they expect action from?

Following the success of the first Future Leaders Survey in 2006/07, we asked every applicant to higher education in the UK in 2007 to set out their views on these and a range of other questions. More than 25,000 of them responded. This report summarises what they told us.

The survey paints a picture of a generation that is intensely aware of the big challenges facing the planet and eager to see broader social and political change, but which is less willing to adapt individual personal behaviour. The survey results do, however, begin to highlight ways through this paradox. Respondents would like to see tougher action by government, business playing a positive role, and less of an obsession with material affluence. This report is important reading for those who want to understand how this generation will shape – and can be enabled to shape – a better future.

Inheriting the world

“This world cannot continue to function the way it is if we wish to live out the next hundred years. Not only do both government and the individual’s perspectives on the environment need to change, but also the way we relate to each other.”

Camilla van Klinken, 18, Netherlands

84%

think it likely, or very likely, that human civilisation will last another century

Hard times ahead

The good news is that **84%** of our future leaders think it likely, or very likely, that human civilisation will last another century. But things will be very different.

Imagine that it’s 2032 and we’re living in the world that our survey group has predicted for us. It’s not a comfortable place to be. The Amazon rainforest has disappeared, oil is prohibitively expensive and we are beset by ever more frequent natural disasters. The world is riven by wars old and new, the Israel-Palestine conflict continues and we’re reeling from the use of nuclear weapons. Inequality has increased, both within the UK and globally. And despite the worst effects of climate change, there is still no binding international CO2 emissions reduction treaty. A bleak picture, but this is seen as the most likely outcome according to half or more respondents in the 2007/08 survey.

They’re convinced, in the main, that lifestyles will have to change significantly if we are to survive, with only **17%** seeing us set to continue on a similar path and nearly a quarter believing we will have to change radically. A startling **86%** believe that material consumption needs to decrease.

Some expect a more religious world: more than a third expect formal religious practice to have increased. Nearly a quarter don’t expect to be living in the UK, and – despite its links with climate change – two-thirds expect air travel to still be available to the majority.

78%

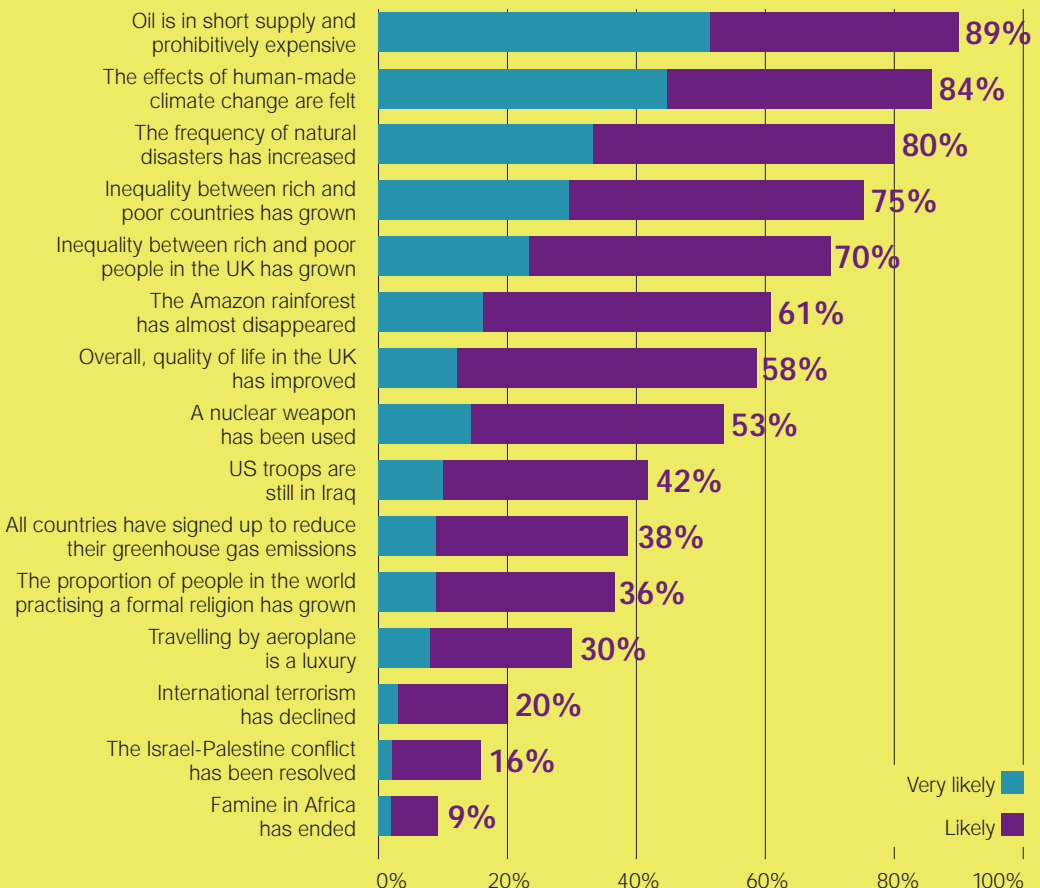
believe that lifestyles need to change radically across the board, or in many areas, for human civilisation to survive the next 100 years

Getting better all the time?

The future predicted by this year's respondents is slightly less dismal than that foreseen in 2006/07. This year **85%** of respondents believe that climate change will be affecting their lives, down from **91%** in 2006/07. They're also a bit less gloomy about the inequality between rich and poor nations, with **75%** of 2007/08 respondents predicting it will increase, compared to **80%** in 2006/07. Increasing inequality is also anticipated to occur in the UK. However, **58%** of respondents still think that overall, quality of life in the UK will have increased by 2032, compared with **50%** in last year's survey.

What will the world be like in 2032?

% saying the following statements are "likely" or "very likely" to be true in 2032



Current leaders still not meeting the challenge

Brown and Cameron neck-and-neck

Politicians are often heard to complain about the lack of engagement by young people. Our respondents feel that the current leaders are not setting a strong example. We asked them about Gordon Brown and David Cameron's credentials on climate change. The results make sobering reading for both leaders, for while Brown edges it, the totals hardly amount to ringing endorsements. Only **23%** agree or strongly agree that he is genuinely committed to tackling climate change, compared to **22%** for Cameron. And despite the apparent focus on these issues in the past year, more than **30%** of men and **45%** of women simply don't know if either leader is genuinely committed to tackling climate change.

23%

agree or strongly agree that Gordon Brown is genuinely committed to tackling climate change

Government shaping up

Who do our future leaders think is responsible for creating change, and how are they measuring up? Most expectation falls on the government, but only **16%** of respondents think it is doing a lot to address social and environmental problems. This is, however, an increase on last year. Businesses and individuals are lagging even further behind, with just **6%** saying the former are doing a lot and **10%** saying the latter – despite the fact that the debate about sustainability has moved on significantly in both these groups in the past year. The education system is perceived to have improved its performance, but only marginally – with **14%** saying it is doing a lot.

16%

think the government is doing a lot to create change

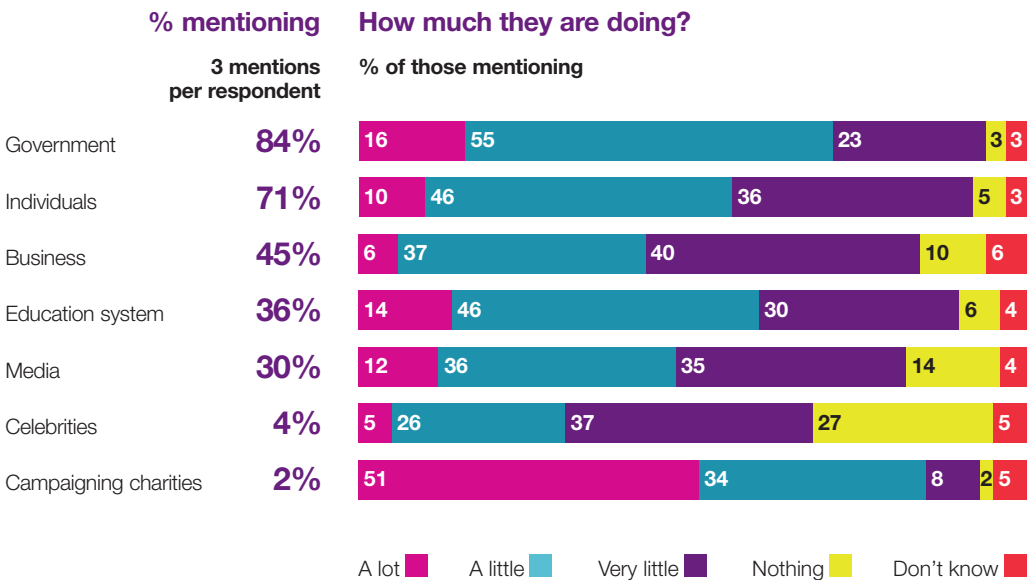
Business: a force for good but could do more

There's a strong sense that business, in particular, could do more. Interestingly, **75%** of respondents consider business to be either wholly good or, on balance, a force for good in the world.

“I believe that the key to ensuring that humanity survives over the next 100 years, is for individuals across the whole social and economic spectrum – starting from the very top of the government and business and ending with the average citizen – to truly realise and sympathise with the apparent serious dangers we create every day.”

Nestoras Liassides, 18, Warwick University

Whose responsibility is it to create change most urgently?



Future leaders: ready for change

“There is no trade-off between economic growth and responding to climate change. Either we do something about it, or all our growth will go to waste when climate change begins to wreak havoc with markets, international relations and the world in general...”

Matt Bardley, 18, Cardiff University

86%

support the idea that material consumption must reduce

Materialism on the way out?

The most materially affluent generation that has ever lived seems to be growing more aware of the environmental cost. As well as **86%** supporting the idea that material consumption must reduce, more than two-thirds claim they would be happy without a car if public transport were good enough. The most popular environmentally friendly actions that respondents have either taken, or are planning to take, are walking and cycling instead of driving (**65%** have and **14%** plan to) and buying local food, which **51%** have already done.

32%

agree that the environment will be an important issue when deciding how many children to have

Money can't buy everything

More than half of respondents think that economic growth should not be the government's top priority, perhaps suggesting that Cameron's interest in measures of progress other than gross domestic product is getting through. Although they may not have joined environmental charities or attended demonstrations, nearly a third of respondents think of themselves as environmentalists. A similar proportion are ready to factor in the environment when they decide how many children to have – and an even higher proportion hold this view among non-UK respondents, particularly in Africa and the Far East.

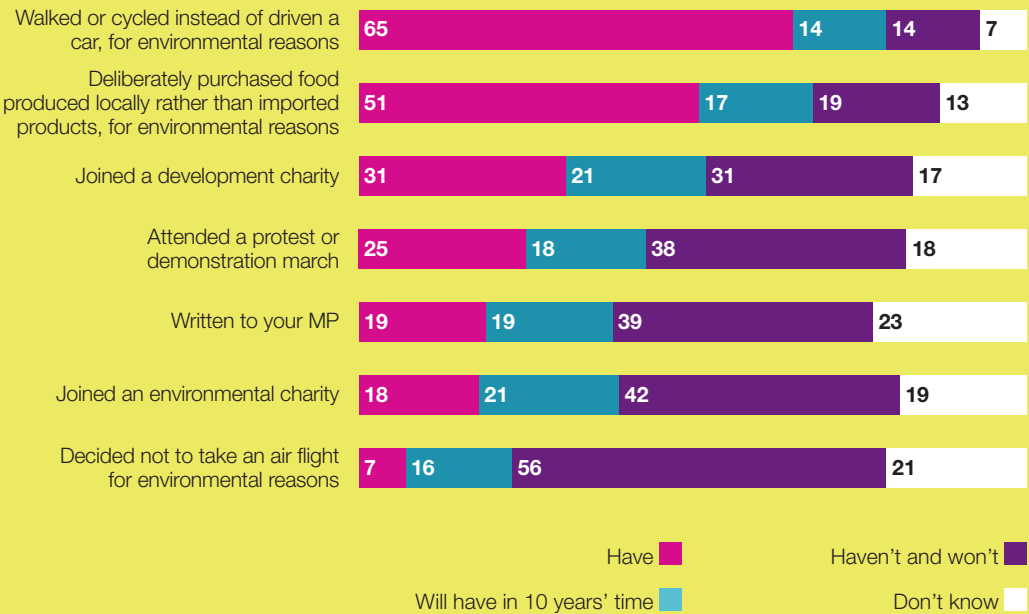
To fly or not to fly?

Respondents mirror the paradox in society as a whole, where both flying and feeling guilty about it are on the rise. We asked about taxing air travel. A quarter of respondents say they'd benefit personally and 40% think society would benefit as a whole. But they don't think this will diminish the availability of flying, which will still be accessible by most in 2032.

It also doesn't seem to dim travel ambitions, with 82% wanting to visit exotic places before they disappear. However there is no 'slow travel' boom on the horizon – only 16% expect to avoid taking a flight for environmental reasons in the next ten years, though that's a significant increase on last year, when only 10% had similar plans.

Past and future personal behaviour

% of future leaders saying they "have or expect in ten years' time to have..."



Young leaders know what's best for you

“What will bring us through are policies that not only encourage but enforce an inter-reliability between business and the environment, thereby ensuring that the environment will be protected as it will be in-line with companies’ goals.”

Charissa Ng, 21, University of Westminster

Choice editing

With time very tight to make the necessary changes to create a sustainable world, our respondents seem ready for more ‘choice editing’, even where the personal benefits are not so compelling. Though they’re not keen on laws to limit the number of children they can have or raise the legal age for drinking alcohol to 21, **66%** think it would be good for all of us if 4x4s were banned from city centres.

66%

think it would be good for all of us if 4x4s were banned from city centres

Carbon rations

Future leaders are reasonably keen on imposed limits on carbon use. A surprising **41%** think personal carbon quotas would be good for them personally, and nearly half (**49%**) think these would benefit society as a whole. These views seem to fit reasonably well with the emphasis respondents place on government action to deliver change.

41%

think personal carbon quotas would be good for them personally

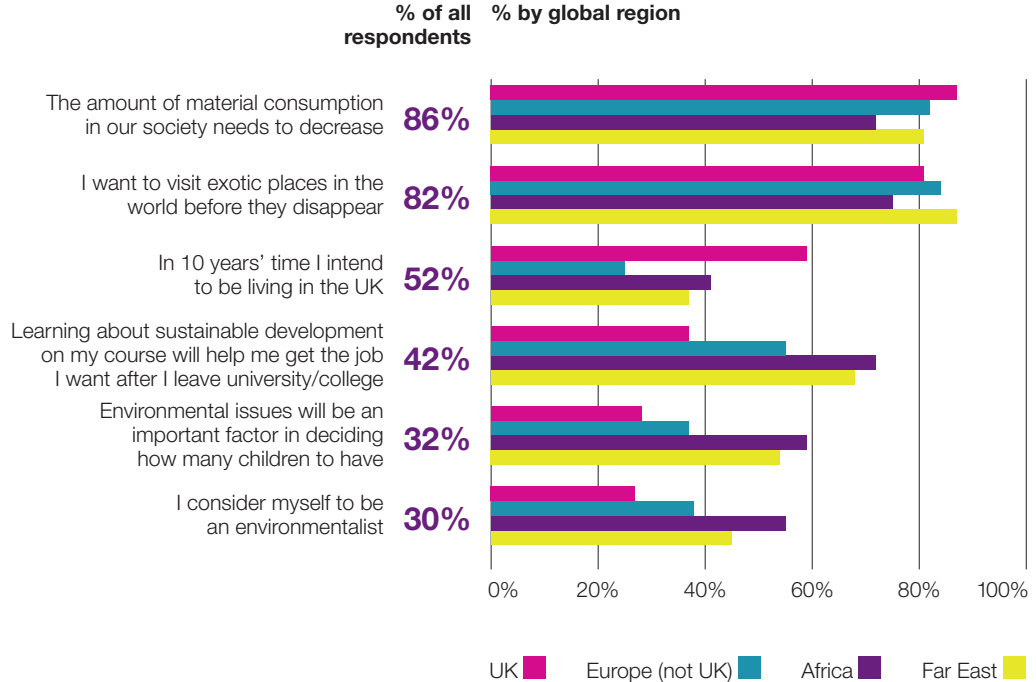
The UK versus the rest of the world

African, European and Far Eastern students form significant sub-groups in the survey. Overall, these groups are more positive about the world in 2032. They claim to be more ethically minded in their choice of places to study and work, keener to find a job that contributes to society, and more likely to give to charity. UK students are less likely to factor in the environment when considering how many children to have, less likely to see themselves as environmentalists, and more sceptical that others will respect them for this.

41% of African and 37% of Far Eastern respondents see themselves fulfilling their ambitions not in their home country, but in the UK.

Ethics vs aspirations

% of respondents who “agree” and “strongly agree” with the following statements



University choice: reputation still king

10%

of under-19s rated nightlife as very important when choosing a university or college

No revolution yet

When it comes to choosing a university or college, social and environmental performance are still not a high priority for our respondents, with a range of factors from reputation to location being more important drivers. The starkest comparison is with nightlife: **10%** of respondents under 19 rated this as very important compared to only **3%** making the same claim for performance on environmental issues. It's hardly surprising that students want to have a good time, but sobering to learn that nearly a third of students still gave environmental factors no significance at all in their choice.

Global development issues fare similarly, though they're more significant to older respondents. **3%** of under-19s and **10%** of over-30s rated institutions' seriousness of intent on development issues as very important in their choice of where to apply.

Reputation matters

Reputation is still king, especially for younger respondents. Two-thirds of under-19s claim league tables were important or very important in their choice of course, compared to half of over-30s. For overseas students this is even more important: **76%** of African and **84%** of Far Eastern students identified it as of high significance. The same is true of the overall performance of universities and colleges, and the reputation of both the course and the institution, with younger students and those from overseas giving these a higher significance in their choice.

57%

rate their institution as quite good or very good on social and environmental issues

Promoting responsibility

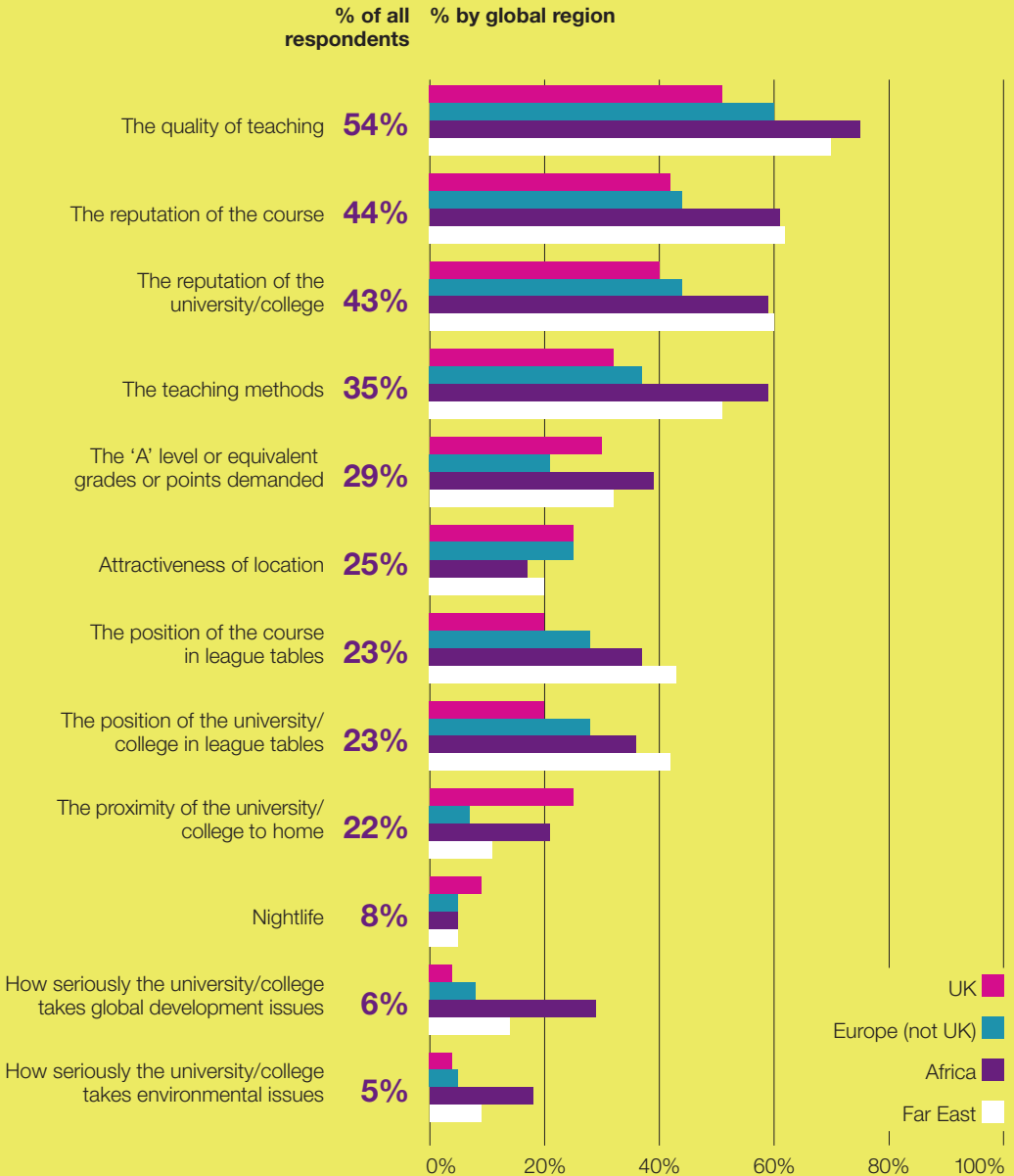
Are higher education institutions telling applicants enough about their sustainability work? A solid third of all respondents reckoned they had received no information from their chosen institution on its environmental and social policies or performance. A substantial **42%** would like to receive more information than they currently do.

**Put yourself in the shoes of the adults of tomorrow...
it's the only way to see how to successfully educate them.**

Pardeep Chohan, 19, Mander Portman Woodward College, Birmingham

How important were the following when choosing which university or college to apply to?

% saying the following are “very important” in choosing a university or college to apply to



A career, yes, but a life too...

A proper job

As with their choice of place to study, respondents are still strongly focused on conventional concerns – career development, job security and salary – when it comes to choosing a place to work.

But they also want a life, with work-life balance emerging as the second most important factor when choosing an employer for more than half of respondents.

Putting something back

Contributing to society gets more important as a career goal the older you are: for the under-19s **27%** think this is very important; for those between 25 and 30, **49%** and for the over-30s the figure is **52%**. Women are more likely to care than men, with **34%** of women seeing a job that contributes to society as very important, compared to only **29%** of men.

Employers off the ethical hook

The way a future employer manages its environmental or social impact is way down the list of respondents' concerns, with both issues only just making it into double figures. This is perhaps surprising given the efforts of a growing number of companies and public sector organisations to promote their good intentions and actions in these areas – and their conviction that it will attract better employees. It seems there's still some way to go before these efforts are recognised.

34%

of women see a job that contributes to society as very important to their happiness in the next 10 years

29%

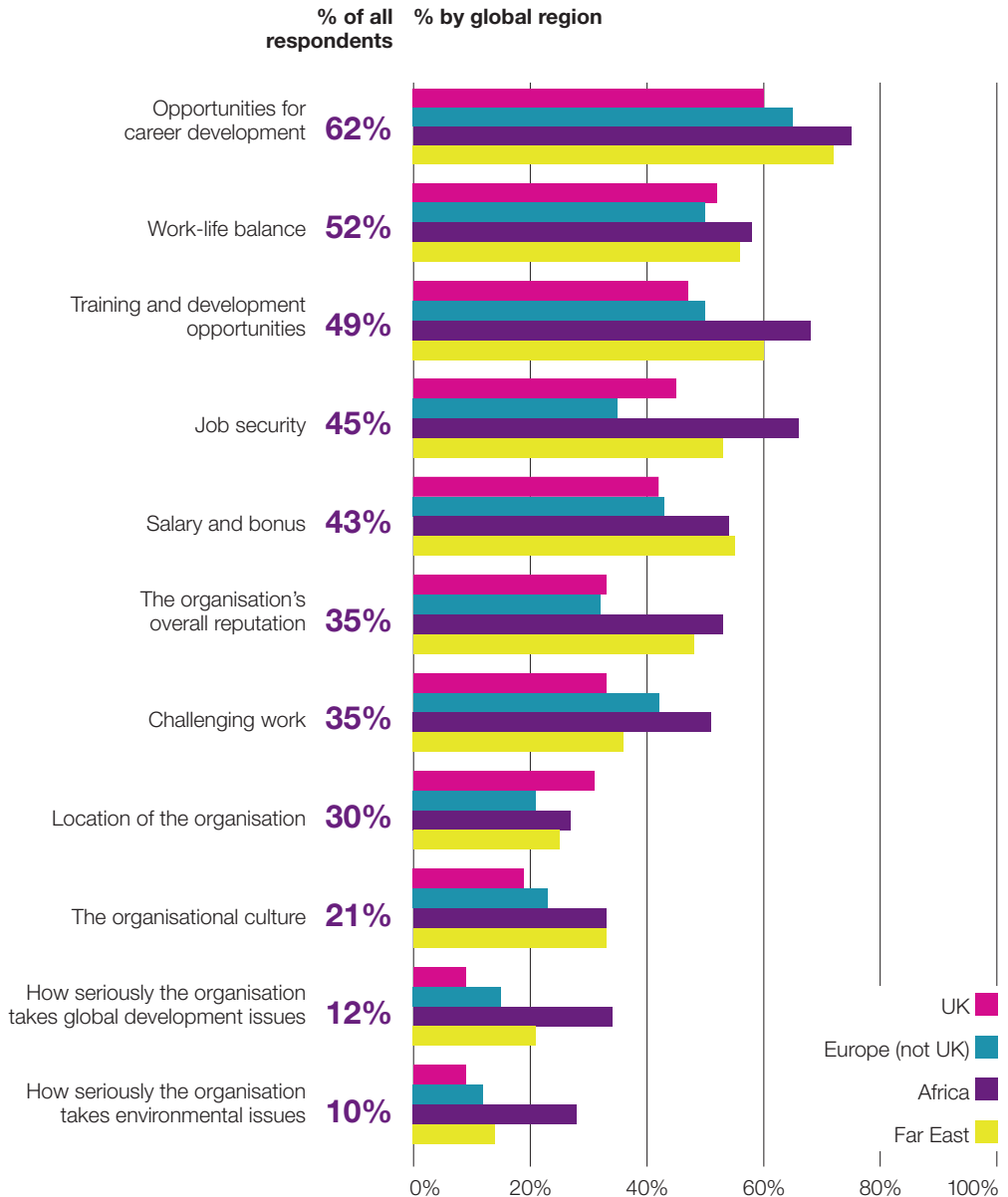
of men see a job that contributes to society as very important to their happiness in the next 10 years

6 The solutions of tomorrow are not stashed behind the walls of bureaucracy or political halls. They are in the minds of engineers, designers, innovators, researchers, environmentalists, geographers and other spirited individuals. 9

Stuart Barea, 18, Loughborough University

Deciding who to work for

% saying the following is “very important” in choosing an organisation to work for



Sensible about money, fearful of debt

“If I am lucky enough to earn enough money in my future career, I want to invest it in improving the world – educating others about how we can provide a sustainable future for our children.”

Heather Parker, 19, Cambridge University

12%

plan to invest their student loan in a high interest account and make it work a bit harder

Making the most of the student loan

Sleeping all day, endless partying, huge debts and regular bail-outs from mum and dad – maybe that’s the traditional view of life as a student, but it’s not what the survey reveals. Most respondents appear to have a measured approach to their finances: only a tiny **3%** intend to blow their student loan on having a good time. As you’d expect, **75%** intend to use it for day-to-day living. But a significant minority – **12%** – are far canner and plan to invest their loan in a high interest account and make it work a bit harder. Younger, male and Scottish respondents are the most likely to do this, and the figure reaches **18%** among those respondents who rate themselves as financially competent.

81%

say they're very or quite good at managing money

Good with money

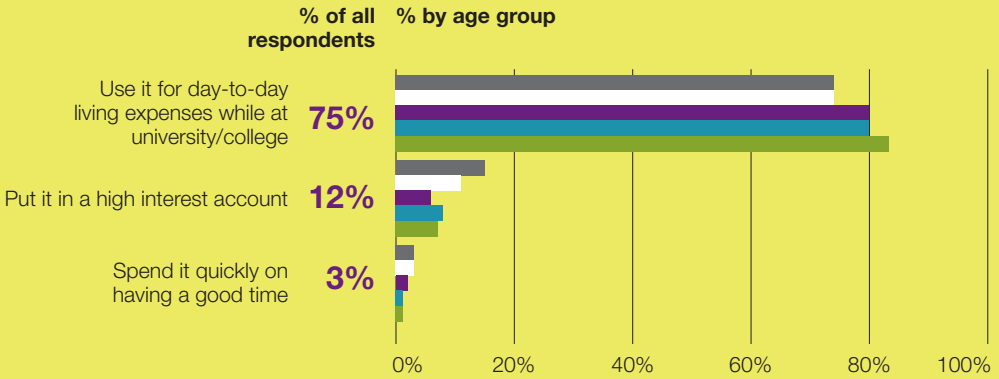
Financial competence does not appear to be in short supply: **19%** say they’re very good, **62%** quite good and only **17%** quite or very bad at managing money. Their plans for any spare cash seem to bear this out, with the most popular plan being to save it (**69%**). **40%** would use it to pay off debts, and spending it comes third at only **39%**. UK respondents are most likely to want to pay off debts. **44%** mention this compared to around **30%** of Europeans and Africans, and only **21%** of Far Eastern students. Maybe Brits are just more likely to have debts.

Older and wiser?

Only **18%** of the under-19s think of themselves as very good with money, compared to **27%** of over-30s. Despite this, younger respondents seem to have more financial nous. **15%** plan to put their loan in a high interest account compared to only **7%** of over 30s. More of them plan to save spare cash (**75%**) than their 30+ counterparts (**54%**). But more of them also plan to spend it (**44%** compared to **20%**) – perhaps suggesting they are as yet unwilling to face the reality that they can't do both.

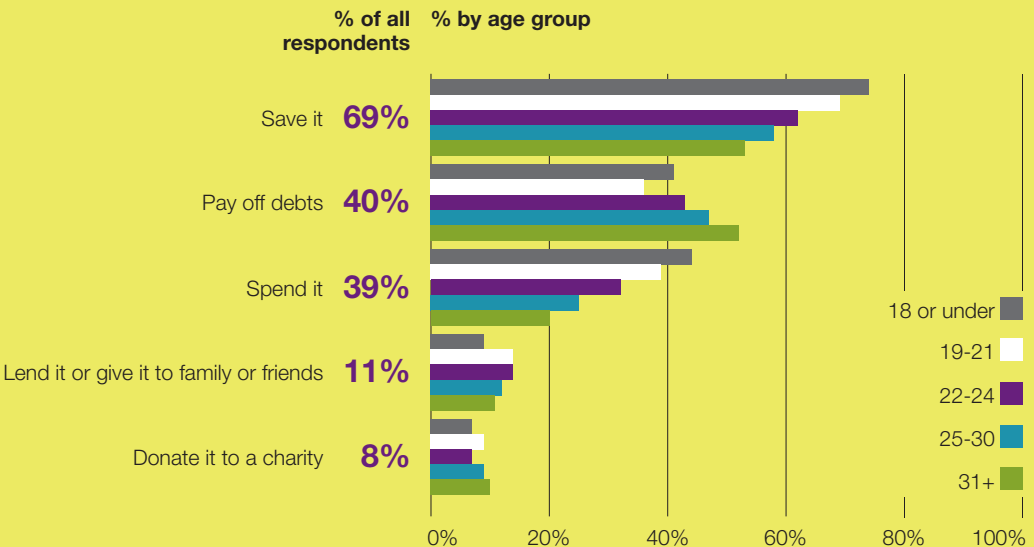
What will our future leaders do with their student loans?

% of those who have taken or intend to take out a student loan saying the following statement best describes their intentions



How would they spend spare cash?

Given spare cash respondents would be most likely to



Job + family + friends + house = happiness?

The conventional life

What will make our future leaders happy in the next ten years? Perhaps reassuringly some things never change. At the top of the list are an interesting job, spending time with family and friends and owning a home. A strong majority of respondents want a job that contributes to society, and **41%** say being in a long term relationship is very important. Just under a third also want some recognition – to be seen as successful.

82%

say having an interesting job is very important to their future happiness

The travel bug

Happiness for some is still about moving around. More than a quarter of our respondents think owning a car is going to be very important to their future happiness. Overseas travel is particularly important to Europeans: **40%** find this very important compared to **25%** in the UK and **24%** in Africa.

36%

of over-30s rate time spent in the natural environment as very important to their future happiness

Wilderness experience

Older respondents want to get out more: **36%** of respondents over 30 rate time spent in the natural environment as very important to their future happiness, compared to only **18%** of under-19s.

The age of contentedness

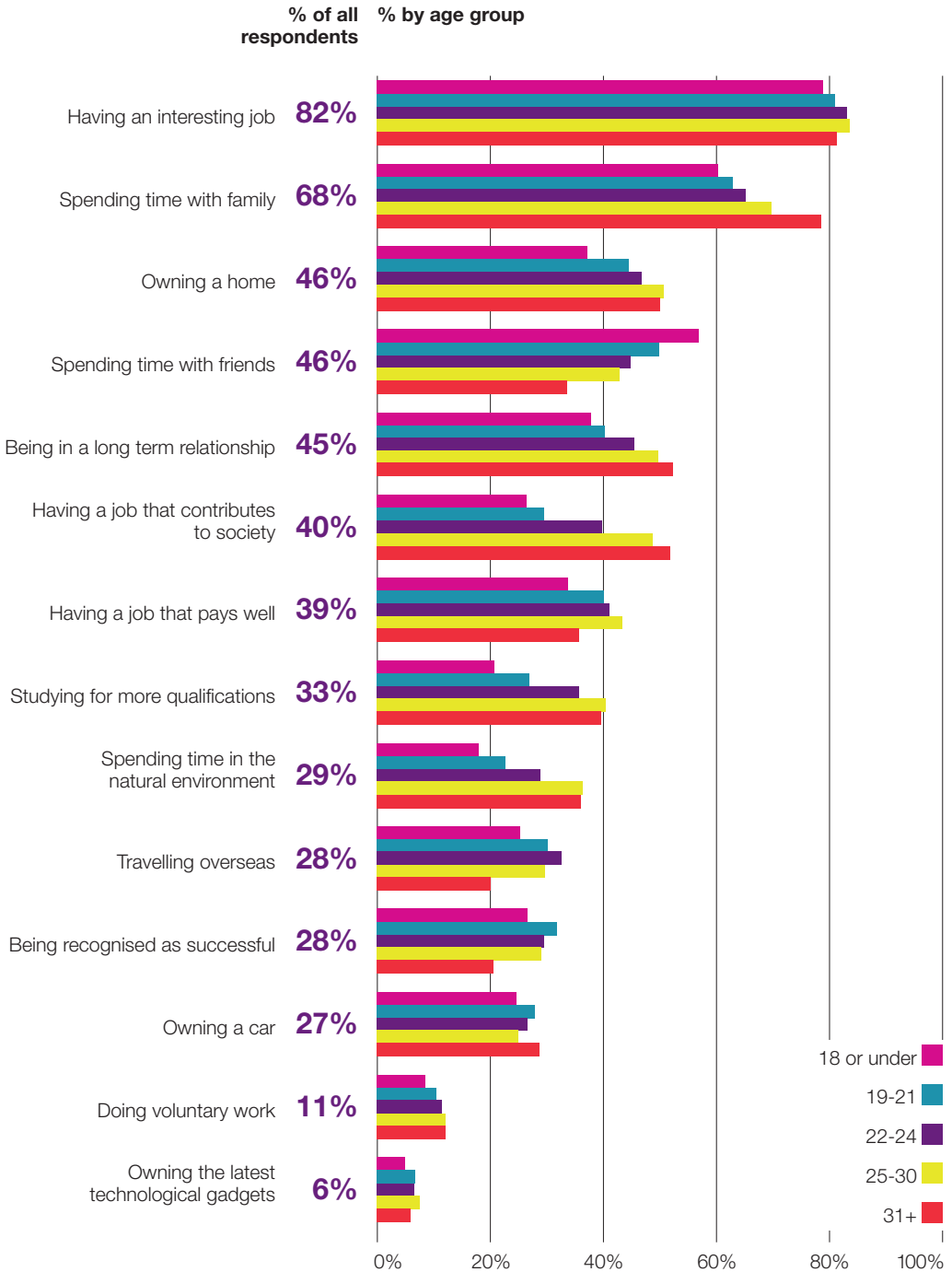
Our respondents ranged in age from 14 to 74, but the majority lay between 18 and their mid-30s. The age categories show some differences. For example, the older you get, the more you want to commune with nature and have a job that contributes to society. Work-life balance rises in importance, as does spending time with family (rather than friends). Older respondents are a lot less bothered about visiting exotic places before they disappear (perhaps they have already done so) and are more likely to want to grow their own food. And perhaps growing up is also about accepting capitalism, or not seeing a viable alternative: the over-30s are more likely to think economic growth is the most important issue for government.

“Nothing is more important than us saving this magnificent planet we live on.”

Luke Brown, 18,
Hull York Medical School

What will make our future leaders happy?

% saying this is “very important” to their happiness in the next 10 years



Methodology

We conducted our survey between 29 October and 27 November 2007. Invitations to participate were sent by email to all applicants to undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges who supplied an email address and had opted-in to receiving third party emails. A total of **360,139** applicants were contacted and **25,301** completed the questionnaire, a response rate of just over **7%**.

The sample broke down as follows:

Age	18 or under	19-21	22-24	25-30	31 and up
	12,592	7,857	1,869	1,278	1,705

Gender	Female	Male
	14,245	11,056

UK regions	East Midlands	Eastern England	London	North East England	North West England
	1,329	1,834	3,183	643	1,901
	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Other	South East England	South West England
	649	1,710	27	2,887	1,803
	Wales	West Midlands	Yorkshire & the Humber		
	824	1,673	1,423		

Global regions	UK	Europe (not UK)	Africa	Far East	Other
	19,886	3,047	549	1,382	437

The sample was weighted so that it had the same age and gender profile as the target group of all 2007 applicants to undergraduate courses. Data presented in this report can be taken as broadly representative of this group.

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Applicants to higher education in 2007 reveal their aspirations, expectations, hopes and fears in the 2007/08 Future Leaders Survey.

Inside this report, find out:

- about the world this generation of young adults expects in middle age: oil running out, the Amazon rainforest gone and frequent natural disasters
- how 86% of respondents think material consumption must decrease
- how the majority think government should not prioritise economic growth
- how future leaders rate today's leaders on the big challenges
- how three-quarters of respondents see business as a force for good in the world
- what higher education applicants are looking for in life – from their studies, their work, technology and the environment