



YOUNG LONDONERS' PRIORITIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Report on the Key Issues and Priorities for
Young Londoners Undertaken for the London
Sustainable Development Commission

SEPTEMBER 2019

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members of the GLA's Peer Outreach team
and their valuable contribution to this project.

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DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

The London Sustainable Development
Commission (LSDC) was established in 2002
to provide independent advice to the Mayor of
London on ways to make London a sustainable,
world-class city. The Commission is an
independent body, challenging policymakers to
promote a better quality of life for all Londoners,
both now and in the future, whilst also
considering London's wider global impacts. The
Commission is made up of individual experts
from the economic, social, environmental and
London governance sectors. Commissioners
give their time voluntarily, promoting sustainable
development, embedding sustainability into
London-wide strategies, and helping make
sustainability a meaningful and understandable
concept for all Londoners.

**ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY
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BITE THE BALLOT

Bite the Ballot (BTB) is an international
social enterprise that specialises in civic
and community engagement. Our charity
has grown from an idea in a classroom
to coordinating world-record breaking
campaigns, changing laws and rebranding
politics among young and socially-excluded
communities. Since establishing in 2010 BTB
has always been strictly party neutral - we
do not champion any individual politicians
or parties. We simply want to invite citizens
to join a national conversation, debating the
issues that matter most to them and play
an active role in the solutions. As more and
more people become socially conscious, our
methodology acts as a catalyst for them to
become positive changemakers. We only
believe in one type of engagement - purpose
driven and meaningful.

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FOREWORD

The London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC) has been assessing London's progress in becoming a more sustainable city since 2005 through its periodic publication of 'Quality of Life' indicator reports. These reports have revealed the need to improve the capital's economic, social and environmental performance for Londoners and visitors to London. At the same time the LSDC has been aware of the need to better understand the issues affecting different parts of London's society. We were particularly keen to look at the inter-generational impact of decisions made previously and now on the younger generation (16-24 year olds). The following quote provided by a female participant in this research project sums up our rationale:

"We're getting the hit because this country has an ageing population, and it seems that the older generation are the ones that are making most of the policies, even though they are going to be the ones that are least affected for the least time".

The report, commissioned by us, and independently researched and written by Royal Holloway University of London and Bite the Ballot, is targeted at London decision-makers such as the Mayor and London's borough councils, but is also highly relevant for national government, public sector organisations and business. We sought to understand the issues and views of young Londoners, and through this unique research we are calling upon London's policy makers to consider how best to address the findings of this report so that the situation can be improved.

Furthermore, we explore how young Londoners' concerns align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and invite policy makers to consider what this means for London's commitment to sustainable development that meets the needs of future generations as well as those of the present.

This report does not assess the performance of the GLA's or others' work on youth engagement or sustainability. Instead, it is a contribution to ongoing discussions at a time when a wide range of actors have a crucial role to play in shaping policy debates on a range of social, economic and environmental challenges.

Over the coming months, the LSDC will be assessing the implications of the findings and initial high-level recommendations. We will then collaborate with others to identify any further recommendations to ensure inter-generational fairness and seek to make London a better place in doing so.

Paul Toyne

LSDC Commissioner

Chair of the SDGs and Quality of Life Subgroup of the London

September 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**WE BELIEVE
YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT
IS ESSENTIAL
TO THE HEALTH
OF OUR
DEMOCRACY**

1. LISTENING TO YOUNG VOICES: OUR AIMS

This report aims to better understand what issues are important to young people in London and how these might be better heard in policy-making processes. It is targeted at policy-makers in London and beyond, and focuses on opportunities to enhance the quality of life of young Londoners but clearly has great significance for national government and business too.

This report also aims to understand how young Londoners' concerns align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ This contributes to a wider piece of work to map London's 'Quality of Life' indicators to the SDGs, situating London's sustainability performance in a global framework, whilst identifying opportunities to further enhance the lives of Londoners.

According to the report authors, no study of such a large, representative group of young people's views on sustainability-related issues has previously been undertaken in such depth and breadth in any single city.

We believe youth engagement is essential to the health of our democracy, and the participants in our interviews and focus groups confirmed they feel it is vital to better incorporate their views into decision making. Plan International² state young people (16-24 year olds) are:

- Critical thinkers, able to question contradictions and biases in the status quo
- Change-makers, mobilising others to act
- Innovators, bringing fresh perspectives and solutions
- Communicators, spreading key messages to their peers and beyond
- Leaders, driving change in their communities

This report does not assess the performance of the GLA's or others' work on youth engagement or sustainability. Instead, it is a contribution to ongoing discussions at a crucial time of change when a range of non-state actors (including businesses, civil society groups and others) have a key role to play in influencing the policy debates on the climate and ecological emergencies, Brexit, and other issues.

¹ The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a universal agenda for "transforming our world". They commit to tackling 17 key environmental, economic and social issues. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

² Plan International, 2015. The Success of The SDGs Depends On Youth Engagement: <https://plan-international.org/blog/2015/08/five-reasons-success-sdgs-depends-youth-engagement#>

2. METHODOLOGY

We engaged with a large group of 16-24 year-old Londoners through:

- Interviews with 30 participants - a diverse group selected by the GLA Peer Outreach team. (Sample size too small to be considered a representative group.)
- Round-table focus groups, debating issues raised during the interviews and creatively visualising their ideas, at an evening event with 100 attendees selected by the GLA Peer Outreach team. (Sample size too small to be considered representative.)
- An online survey with 2,002 participants (a representative cross-section of Londoners, conducted by polling company Survation).

The unparalleled size of this relatively narrow age group in one geographical location – and the fielding of nuanced questions relevant to young people's everyday lives – allowed the project team to explore the views of young Londoners as defined by age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

We analysed what this data tells us about:

- What young Londoners' priorities are.
- How these issues map to the SDGs.
- How their concerns fit into the wider social context

We developed recommendations for policy-makers in London and beyond based on this evidence, as well as plans for further work.

The flow chart on the next page highlights our process.

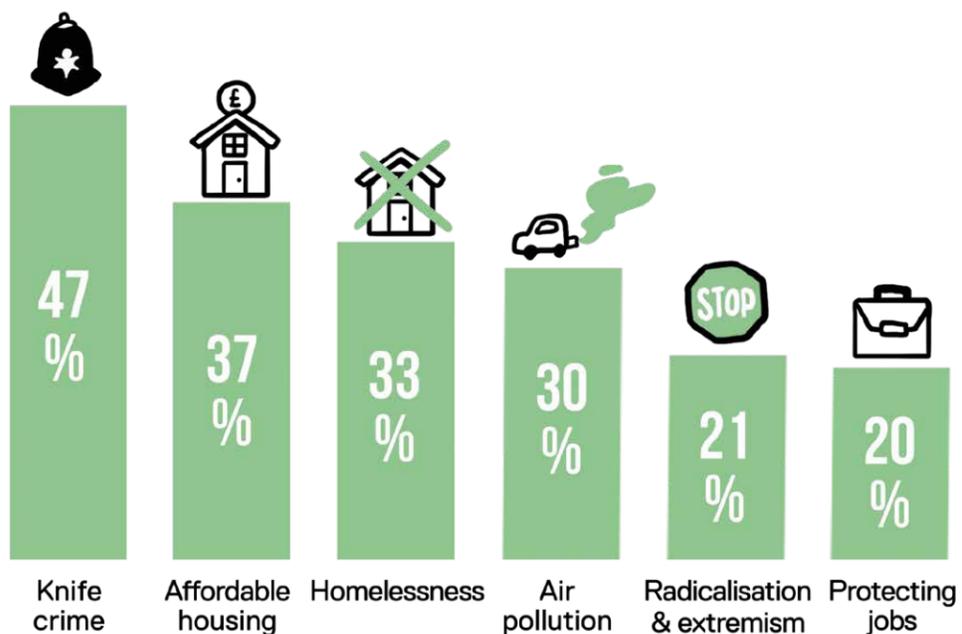


3. RESEARCH FINDINGS: WHAT YOUNG LONDONERS TOLD US

The charts below and on the following page show survey participants' priorities for key decision makers to take action on, as well as more detailed feedback on key social, economic and environmental issues that young people feel are of concern to them in London.

16-24 YEAR OLD LONDONERS' TOP 6 PRIORITIES FOR THE GLA

Survey respondents were asked to rank which 3 issues they thought the GLA should prioritise. This graph shows the issues that appeared in the most (%) young Londoners' top 3.

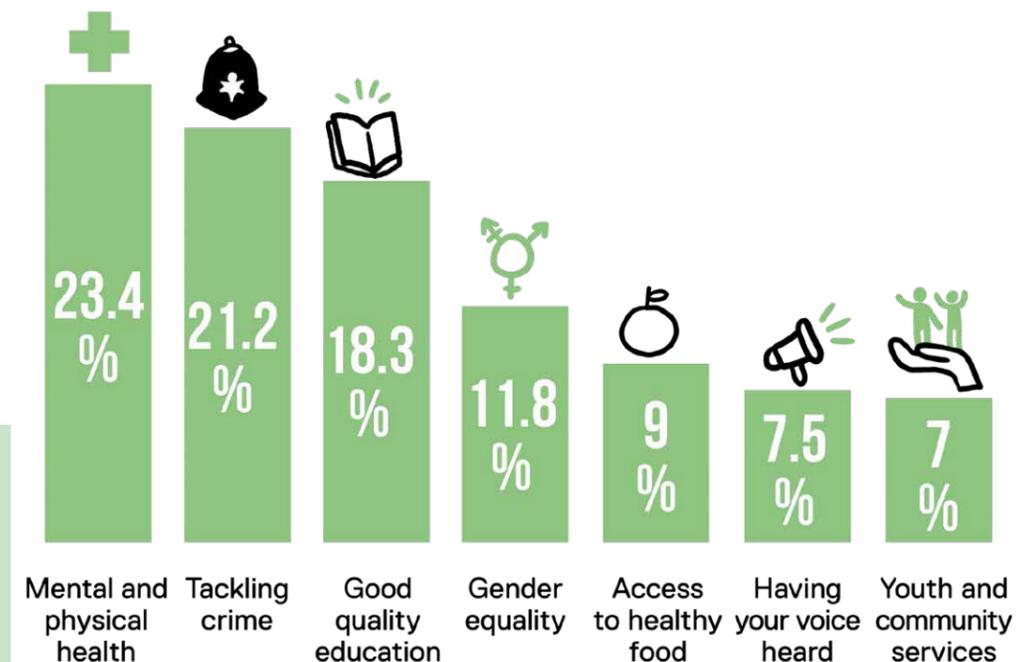


//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

3.1 SOCIAL ISSUES

Issues relating to health and personal safety were at the very top of young Londoners' list of concerns, particularly mental health provision and the threat or experience of knife crime.

MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL ISSUE



"It's hard to get a [mental health] appointment. A few of my friends suffer bad..."
 "I know that the youth offending team tackles mental health, but if you're not offending you can't go there."
 Quote from focus group participant

//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.
 //Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

Mental health

Most of the interviewees and focus group participants had friends who had suffered from mental health problems or experienced problems themselves. But the general feeling was that provision was patchy at best, and that schools did little to prepare them for dealing with mental health problems. Interviewees spoke of how economic pressures and cuts to youth support services were exacerbating young people's mental health problems in London. There was also a feeling that mental health treatment was reactive rather than preventative.

Crime

Young Londoners in the focus groups did not always feel they were safe, but this depended upon "where you live", your class, gender and ethnicity. Many reasons were given for the rise in knife crime – one young woman explained that it was "a multifaceted problem" that needed "to be looked at from all angles", including the issue of paternal role models, child poverty, education and "male pride". Policing was also an issue – focus group participants cited cuts to frontline officers, as well as a lack of trust-building and community policing. From the research many young men saw "the police as more of a threat than a force to help".

Education

Education was viewed as an important issue by almost all interview and focus group participants, and was, for many of them, a central part of their everyday lives. However, they felt that the curriculum did not prepare them for life (especially the management of finances), teach them enough about the environment, how democracy works, or explore what it means to be a good and active citizen. Research by the National Union of Students also found that 70% of students would like to learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals.

“Political education is something that is just ridiculously lacking... As someone who’s currently working in the political system, you can see how much people from 18 to 24 are basically left out of the entire policy process.”

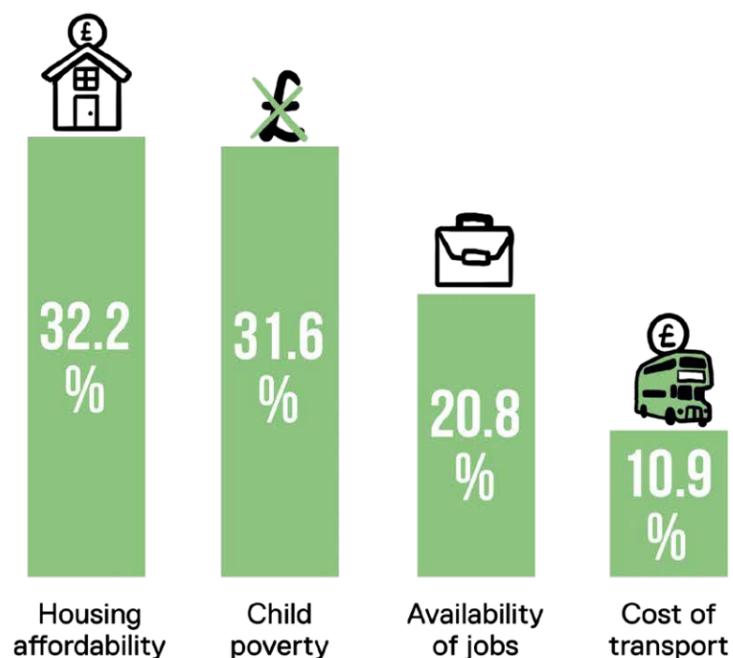
Quote from focus group participant

Civic engagement

52% of survey respondents paid attention to politics, inclusive of 40% who paid a lot of attention. A large proportion had also participated in some form of non-electoral civic activity in the last 12 months, such as volunteering or signing a petition. However, many focus group participants expressed frustration that young people’s voices on issues affecting them are not heard by the older generation who set policy. When asked to name their top three sources of news, 50% said TV, 42% said social media and 34% cited friends and family.

3.2 ECONOMIC ISSUES

MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ISSUE



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as “don’t know” responses are not included.

Poverty and inequality

For young Londoners, poverty and inequality were overarching issues that drove many concerns regarding their futures, impacting all the other areas addressed – from mental health, to knife crime, to community cohesion. All young Londoners who participated in the interviews identified a lack of money as a “major problem”, citing factors including high living costs and a lack of access to well-paid work. A general view was established that the wealth gap between “rich and poor” needed to be reduced in British society – but particularly in London.

“We have lots of homeless people and I think I’m seeing them younger and younger on the streets.”
“If you’re a young person who hasn’t got any education and are just trying to get by and work a normal job, London has priced you out.”

Quote from focus group participant

Many were of the view that government austerity had worsened inequalities in London, feeling that public spending cuts had disproportionately affected the capital’s more deprived neighbourhoods. The closure of youth centres was prominent in discussions.

Focus group participants emphasised the knock-on effects of poverty for issues such as crime: “who really robs houses for fun?... how many 14-year olds would be selling drugs if their family had money?”.

Housing

The majority revealed dreams of home ownership, but felt this was increasingly unattainable due to the chronic undersupply of genuinely affordable housing, along with the lack of access to well-paid, secure jobs.

The cost, quality and unreliability of the private renting sector was another key issue. Overcrowding was also raised, with one participant stating that he lived with three other adults in a one-bedroom council flat.

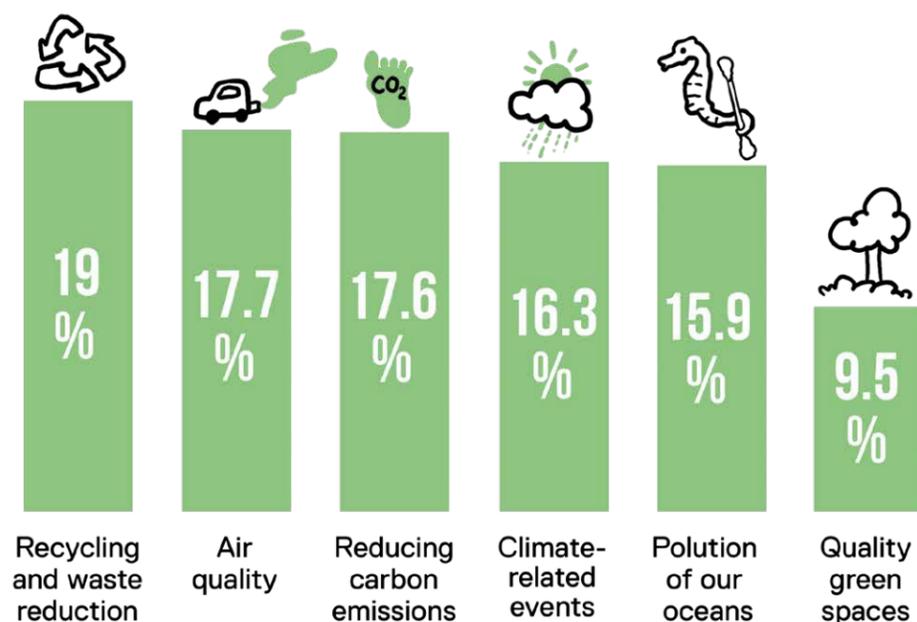
Most of the focus group participants either knew someone who had experienced housing problems or had experienced problems themselves, highlighting that young people and families were being made homeless and “left to rot” in hostels. One young woman reflected: “When I was in secondary school – I think about Year 10, Year 11 – me and my family did become homeless and it was crazy because I didn’t look like I was in such a situation... I did my GCSEs when I was homeless.”

Jobs

One interviewee stated that “[un]employment is at the root of all other problems...it’s really hard for young people to get jobs”. A number of interviewees spoke of their displeasure over the fact that young people under the age of 16 were not statutorily entitled to minimum pay.

3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

MOST IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.
 //Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

From the research, there is not a standout environmental issue which is prioritised by young Londoners as a whole. The only environmental issue which failed to reach a double-figure percentage was quality green spaces. This might reflect the fact that many young Londoners are very appreciative of the parks they do have (confirmed in the interviews and focus groups) and so do not view this as a key area for improvement.

Gender differences also emerged, with women placing more emphasis on global issues such as climate change, and men focusing on local issues like air quality and waste.

(It should be noted that the work was undertaken before the school climate strikes and major Extinction Rebellion events took place).

"[The environment] is a very ignored issue, because in London now there are more serious issues that we focus on which are life-dependent... like housing, or poverty, or crimes, but also the environment is a big part, because it is constantly adding and decreasing to either our emotional state or our health and the way we function as a society."

Quote from focus group participant

4. MAPPING YOUNG VOICES AGAINST THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This report took the LSDC's Quality of Life (QoL) indicators as its starting point – a set of measures used since 2005 to evaluate the sustainability of the city. The QoL indicators are grouped into social, economic and environmental factors, and the report's findings were structured using that tri-polar approach. However, in order to better understand the nuance of the views of young Londoners, they have been analysed and grouped into five clusters of themes. Those five clusters are shown below.

5 KEY CLUSTERS OF ISSUES:

1 POVERTY & INEQUALITY

- Affordable homes
- Better employment opportunities
- Affordable transport

1 NO POVERTY, 5 GENDER EQUALITY, 8 DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH, 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES, 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

Poverty & lack of opportunity lead to crime

2 HEALTH & PERSONAL SAFETY

- Mental health provision
- Knife crime & safety on public transport

3 GOOD HEALTH & WELLBEING, 16 PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

3 EDUCATION FOR LIFE

- Education about life skills & how democracy works

We feel that the curriculum doesn't prepare us for life

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

4 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Improving air quality
- Increase use of renewable energy
- Improved recycling/less plastic

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY, 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES, 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION, 13 CLIMATE ACTION

5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY COHESION

- Lack of participation in decision making
- Lack of engagement with policy makers
- Radicalization & extremism

16 PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

There is also a wider project to map the QoL indicators against the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This aims to measure London's performance against a global framework and situate the city in an international vision for a better future. (See 'Further work for the LSDC' (below) for details.)

The UN's World Youth Report argues that "Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda are the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground". The chart below shows which SDGs are represented in the five clusters of issues arising from the research undertaken; those which are not a primary focus of young Londoners' concerns are greyed out. However, the priority Goals presented in this chart do not tell the whole story, and only give a very high-level picture of the issues at play. The reality, as articulated in SDG 17 ('Partnerships for the Goals'), is that all the themes are highly nuanced, inextricably interconnected, and cut across a wide range of policy areas, levels of government and industrial sectors.



5. CONCLUSIONS

This research found young Londoners were passionate and articulate in their concerns about a range of sustainability issues. They highlighted the complex interconnections between these issues, particularly commenting that poverty, inequality and education underpin many of these challenges.

However, it became clear from the interviews and focus groups that a lack of knowledge can create a major barrier to deeper engagement in these issues – especially for young people from less privileged backgrounds. Although young Londoners told us in the survey they participate in many diverse forms of civic and political action, the focus groups revealed that at least some young Londoners feel there is little engagement between young people and political officials, which is in line with wider social trends in the UK and Europe.³

The key challenge is therefore how best to channel this civic and political engagement into existing governance structures and policy making.

6. WORK ALREADY UNDERWAY

Participants in this research clearly stated they believe the issues raised should be top priorities for policy makers at all levels, including within boroughs, across London, and nationally.

Clearly, these are not problems that the GLA and boroughs can resolve on their own, and the Mayor does not have powers over many of the issues raised (education, mental health, etc). These challenges require a much greater commitment from central government and others (e.g. to reduce inequality), greater resources (e.g. for local services), as well as renewed commitment to collaborative and innovative approaches to incorporating youth voices into policy-making processes.

However, the GLA is already taking significant steps to address these issues, in terms of the overarching theme of better engaging young people in decision-making, and addressing the SDGs. The report does not provide a detailed list of all existing youth engagement activities across London as these are too numerous, but a few initiatives currently underway are highlighted below.

³ Sloam, J., 2013. *Voice and Equality: Young People and Political Participation in the European Union*. West European Politics.

For example, the Mayor has created opportunities for young people to participate in debates on London's issues through the London Youth Assembly, Partnership for London's (PYL) Youth Board, and the GLA's Young Londoners Participation Network of multi-agency frontline youth workers. The Team London Young Ambassadors programme helps young people take social action in their communities on issues they care about, such as the environment or knife crime. GLA teams conduct regular research on policy areas relevant to their particular areas (e.g. the research by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) cited in this report, identifying demographic trends among victims of crime⁴). The GLA's Education and Youth Team routinely engage young people on a range of policy issues, including the high-profile #LondonNeedsYouAlive social media campaign, the Young Londoners Participation Network, and events such as the annual Youth Summit.

In terms of employment, the Mayor has set up the Workforce Integration Network to improve pathways for underrepresented groups to access decent jobs, boosting not only individuals' sense of community belonging, but overall social cohesion. This will initially focus on supporting young black men aged 16 to 24 into living wage employment in the construction and digital sectors, and will engage other sectors and groups over time.

On skills, the Mayor's Digital Talent programme is a £7m scheme to make sure young Londoners have the digital skills employers want, and the Mayor's Construction Academy aims to help more Londoners train in the skills they need to access vacancies on the capital's housing construction sites. The devolved Adult Education Budget will support adults aged 19+, tackling inequalities and supporting groups excluded from job market. The Mayor's London Curriculum also has numerous resources on social, economic and environmental issues - including one for secondary schools on citizenship (launching in autumn 2019), which was a key request from participants in this survey.

London's boroughs also have their own extensive youth engagement programmes. Many boroughs across London also have youth mayors to better understand and highlight issues important to young people e.g. Croydon and Newham.

The SDGs have become a unifying global language for how nations, regions and organisations can take decisive action to improve our social, economic and environmental conditions by 2030. The LSDC are now taking steps to develop an SDG strategy for London – see 'Further work for the LSDC' below for details. The government also published the Voluntary National Review of the UK's performance on



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⁴ MOPAC, 2018: *Justice Matters* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/justice_matters_knife_crime_-_23_march_2018_-_presentation.pdf

the SDGs in July 2019 – though it was criticised by the Parliamentary International Development Committee for lacking a coordinated strategy, not embedding SDGs throughout government, and failing to engage with stakeholders. The UN's 'Roadmap for localizing the SDGs' advocates the role of local government in implementing the Goals, and the UK government has been urged by the Local Government Association to support local authorities to create partnerships to deliver the SDGs.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

This report does not seek to make detailed recommendations on each individual policy area raised throughout this report (crime, health, etc.), as the wide range of issues addressed goes beyond the scope of the LSDC's role. Instead, the SDGs are used as a lens to frame the whole range of themes addressed, in the following set of recommendations for policy makers.

1. Strengthen engagement with young people as a specific stakeholder group when consulting on strategy and policy.

- Although 52% of survey participants said they paid attention to politics, many young interviewees and focus groups participants in this research believed that there was not enough information about opportunities to engage in decision-making. In addition to the youth engagement work noted above, existing mayoral strategies have also consulted young people during their development. However, the LSDC recommend that the Mayor could go further, by requiring all key mayoral strategies to incorporate a specific youth engagement component. The Talk London online discussion platform could provide a forum to do so.
- Likewise, national government and local authorities could consider ways to formally include youth voices in decision-making, empowering them to participate in dialogue by making public consultations more visible and accessible. This could be through targeted campaigns or social media – there is a need to develop innovative communications strategies, and as shown in the report, 42% of young people get their news from social media.
- Further to the above, all levels of national and local government should explore effective ways to show young people that their voices are valued – hence inspiring further engagement – by promoting existing good practice that highlights to young people where policy-makers have listened to and acted on their concerns. For example, this could be done via the campaign techniques proposed above.

2. Embed the voice of youth in the development of the SDGs in London.

- SDG 17 ('Partnerships for the Goals') highlights that the Goals are interconnected and cut across a wide range of policy areas, levels of government and industrial sectors. The UN's World Youth Report argues that "Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda are the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground". Therefore, when London organisations develop their approach to adopting the SDGs, this process should actively incorporate young people's voices. This includes not only the work of the LSDC, who will pay particular attention to young people's views when engaging stakeholders and the public on the SDGs. It also applies to the boroughs, businesses and other actors.
- The government has been advised to develop an integrated national SDG strategy by many organisations, including the Parliamentary International Development Committee. It has also been urged by the Local Government Association to support local authorities to create partnerships to implement the SDGs. When the government does develop its SDG strategy, it is recommended that this should include engaging with the views of young people, and incorporate their specific and pressing concerns into the UK's approach.

3. Education for sustainable development.

- Focus group and interview participants told us that they believed the national curriculum did not provide them with enough information on social, economic or environmental (i.e. sustainable development) issues – specifically they wanted to learn more about civic engagement and democratic participation; life skills, especially managing personal finances; and environmental issues. Research by the National Union of Students also found that 70% of students would like to learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals.
- It is therefore recommended that the sustainable development issues above are integrated more strongly into teaching at all levels of education, and that a range of actors – education institutions, educators, policy makers, local and national government, pupil and student groups, and education sector networks – collaborate to identify opportunities do so.

8. FURTHER WORK FOR THE LSDC

The GLA and other London organisations already deliver a wide range of policies and initiatives across the breadth of issues raised by the young Londoners. This research has now added a significant body of evidence on the concerns of young Londoners, and is unique in the sheer number of participants (2,002) engaged in a specific geographical area in a specific age-range. It has provided insights to help that work be delivered more effectively and support further integration between different policy areas.

In order for this work to have real impact, further work will now be done to continue the conversation with young Londoners, ensuring this research was not a one-off. To this end, the LSDC are delivering the following during 2019-20:

- An event was held during London Climate Action Week in July 2019, inviting young people to take part in a Question Time style debate with a panel of policy makers and young leaders. The issues raised were captured and will build on the existing engagement undertaken during this report.
- This research will feed into a wider project underway to map London's Quality of Life indicators against the SDGs, situating London's sustainability performance in a global framework and context whilst identifying opportunities to further enhance the lives of Londoners. This entails adapting the UN's Global Goals to create a locally relevant set of indicators for London (e.g. global targets on poverty thresholds are not suitable for London), and identifying what indicator data is available. The GLA and LSDC have already undertaken an extensive mapping exercise to understand where we have data and where we need to gather more.
- We will engage with stakeholders during autumn and winter 2019, to agree which are the most relevant SDGs to prioritise for London, and develop collaborative approaches to implementing them.
- Young people will be a key stakeholder group during that engagement exercise, which will also include roundtable discussions with the GLA and local authorities; small and large businesses; public bodies such as the police, Transport for London, the NHS; housing groups; and other groups with significant impacts, particular duties, or data.

- We hope this engagement will form the beginning of a new network of London SDG champions, convened by the LSDC.
- The SDG mapping project, incorporating the voices of young Londoners on sustainability, will report back in 2020.

In this way, this current research forms part of an ongoing programme to further develop practices that will help policy makers to better engage young people in our democracy and help to deliver a sustainable London fit for future generations.



*Debate hosted by the LSDC during London Climate Action Week
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1

INTRODUCTION

This report provides unique insights into the concerns and priorities of young people (16-24 year olds⁵) living in a global city, with reference to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To the knowledge of the report's authors, no such in-depth and broad-reaching analysis of young people's views and engagement has ever been undertaken in a single city. The project enabled the research team to produce a nuanced account of the issues young Londoners care about, and how they express their views through civic and political activism.

In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, the challenges young Londoners face in their everyday lives have increased dramatically: from stagnant wages, to increased costs of housing, to university tuition fees, to the withdrawal of youth services. At the same time, young people have increasingly come to recognise that they are facing a second, environmental, crisis. The 2018-2019 school strikes about climate change illustrate that young people care passionately about environmental degradation, and its impact on their future. (Though it should be noted that they only took place after the research and interviews, which were held between November 2018 and January 2019.)

OUR AIMS

This report aims to better understand what issues are important to young people in London and how these might be better heard in policy-making processes. It is targeted at policy-makers in London and beyond, and focuses on opportunities to enhance the quality of life of young Londoners but clearly has great significance for national government and business too.

This report also aims to understand how young Londoners' concerns align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This contributes to a wider piece of work to map London's 'Quality of Life' indicators to the SDGs, situating London's sustainability performance in a global framework, whilst identifying opportunities to further enhance the lives of Londoners.

We developed recommendations for policy-makers in London and beyond based on this evidence, as well as plans for further work. This report does not assess the performance of the GLA's or others' work on youth engagement or sustainability but is a contribution to ongoing discussion.

⁵ The United Nations defines young people as those aged between 15 and 24. However, the representative survey was only feasible with 16-24 year olds due to ethical and practical issues with surveying children (under 16).

As stated by Plan International⁶, youth engagement is essential because young people are:

- **Critical thinkers:** Part of being young involves making sense of personal experiences and asking questions about the world around you. Young people have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases.
- **Change-makers:** Young people also have the power to act and mobilise others. Youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media.
- **Innovators:** In addition to bringing fresh perspectives, young people often have direct knowledge of and insights into issues that are not accessible to adults. Young people best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions. For example, in Uganda, Plan International worked with student councils to monitor education services at their schools using mobile phone reporting.
- **Communicators:** Outside the international development sector, too few people are aware that via the SDGs, world leaders have come to a historic, far-reaching agreement to eradicate poverty by 2030. Young people can be partners in communicating the agenda to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions. For instance, based on their own experience living through Typhoon Haiyan, participants in Plan International's "Youth Reporters Project" in the Philippines created a video message with advice and encouragement to children who survived the earthquake in Nepal.
- **Leaders:** When young people are empowered with the knowledge of their rights and supported to develop leadership skills, they can drive change in their communities and countries. Youth-led organisations and networks in particular should be supported and strengthened, because they contribute to the development of civic and leadership skills among young people, especially marginalised youth.

**YOUTH
ACTIVISM IS ON
THE RISE THE
WORLD OVER,
BOLSTERED
BY BROADER
CONNECTIVITY
AND ACCESS
TO SOCIAL
MEDIA**



The SDGs are a universal agenda for “transforming our world.” To achieve this transformation, governments must rethink the approaches of the Millennium Development Goals (the predecessor to the SDGs), which left young people out of the process. Governments that recognise the value of collaborating with young people as partners and establish clear and explicit pathways for their meaningful participation from the outset will be much better positioned to achieve the 17 SDGs and related targets. As implementation and monitoring progress towards the SDGs are not legally binding, their success will, to a great degree, rely on citizens holding their leaders and governments to account and reminding them of their commitments.

The SDGs include commitments to tackling 17 key environmental, economic and social issues. All of the goals are in some way relevant to the everyday lives of young Londoners. However, many of these goals are very broad, and by their very nature they are all interconnected. Poverty, for example, is often the driving force behind several other socio-economic issues such as crime, homelessness and inequality – as reinforced by this research.

⁶ Plan International, 2015. The Success of The SDGs Depends On Youth Engagement: <https://plan-international.org/blog/2015/08/five-reasons-success-sdgs-depends-youth-engagement#>



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Previous studies have sought to measure countries' and cities' progress towards the SDGs.⁷ Indeed, London has for some time been evaluating progress towards a similar set of indicators, as captured in the LSDC's Quality of Life reports.⁸ These have measured London's performance against a range of social, economic and environmental indicators since 2005.

But a grass-roots study of the way such issues are perceived by younger generations of Londoners, many of whom have just reached voting age, has been missing from the picture.

The next iteration of the Quality of Life Indicators report will map progress against the SDGs. In developing that work, LSDC are keen that the voices of young people are heard. This research is the start of that work.

SDGs 11 and 16 and Articles 12 and 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasise the fact that youth participation in political decision-making must be at the heart of the drive towards sustainable futures. The UN's World Youth Report argues that "Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda [SDGs] is the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground". Yet, in most cities and countries across the world, there has previously been limited research on the priority issues for young people (broken down into the matters that affect their everyday lives) or how they relate to the goal of sustainable cities.

This report meets these challenges head on and provides recommendations for how the energy of young Londoners can be better harnessed by policy-makers to make the city more sustainable, for today and future generations.

⁷ Holden, E., Linnerud, K., Banister, D., Schwanitz, V. J., & Wierling, A., 2017. *The imperatives of sustainable development: needs, justice, limits*. Routledge.

⁸ London Sustainable Development Commission, 2017. *London's Quality of Life Indicators Report, 2017*. <https://data.london.gov.uk/londons-quality-of-life-indicators-report/>

2

METHODOLOGY

2.1. OVERVIEW

From the outset of the project, the concept of the 'youth voice' was prioritised. In line with the youth-led approach employed by Royal Holloway University of London and Bite the Ballot in other projects,⁹ the report was co-produced at each stage of the process with the help of young Londoners. Although the ultimate focus was on sustainable development, the research began by investigating what issues young people feel strongly about, before mapping these onto the SDGs.

An inclusive, multi-agency approach was employed to conduct the research and engage with young people in the capital. The work was directed by the consultation teams at Royal Holloway and Bite the Ballot, commissioned and supported by the London Sustainable Development Commission, and co-created with young Londoners themselves. The GLA Peer Outreach Team provided invaluable insights into the everyday lives of young people in the capital and facilitated access to broad networks of young citizens and youth groups.

To capture the diversity of experiences, opinions and civic engagement of young Londoners, deep discussions were held with the Peer Outreach Team to define the parameters of the project.

PEER OUTREACH TEAM

The GLA's Peer Outreach Team (young people aged 15 to 25 years) and the Lynk Up Crew (Mayoral young advisors aged 7-15 years) deliver a range of projects and activities in partnership with GLA policy teams (e.g. the Health and Culture teams) and public sector bodies including the London Fire Brigade and the Metropolitan Police. The aim is to ensure policy and programme activity is better aligned with the concerns and perspectives of children and young people whilst providing personal skills development opportunities for the young people involved.

The Peer Outreach Team and the Lynk Up Crew were set up in 2006. They work on ten to fifteen projects at a time engaging approximately 3,000 young people each year.

⁹ Sloam, J., 2018. #Votebecause: Youth mobilisation for the referendum on British membership of the European Union. *New Media & Society*, 20(11), 4017-4034.

A 'mixed methods' approach was taken, comprising three strands:

1. Interviews with 30 participants - a diverse group selected by the GLA Peer Outreach team. (Sample size too small to be considered a representative group.)
2. Round-table focus groups, debating issues raised during the interviews and creatively visualising their ideas, at an evening event with 100 attendees selected by the GLA Peer Outreach team. (Sample size too small to be considered representative.)
3. An online survey with 2,002 participants (a representative cross-section of Londoners, conducted by polling company Survation).

The process is summarised in the infographic on the following page.

2.2. IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The GLA Peer Outreach Worker team selected and interviewed a diverse group of 30 young people. Interviewees were mainly women, and many came from BAME and low-income backgrounds – groups that have often been underrepresented in public surveys.

The interviews enabled the research to capture the ways that space and local context define young people's everyday lives, which is not possible through online survey.¹⁰ The one-to-one environment encouraged open discussions on the issues raised by the interviewees.

The interviews were also important in ensuring that the researchers asked the right questions. The young people themselves were empowered to shape which issues were addressed, based on the priorities and narratives they felt most relevant to their daily lives - rather than basing the priorities on the assumptions of the (adult) researchers. As well as empowering the youth voice, this approach made the research more robust.¹¹



¹⁰ Weller, S., 2006. Situating (young) teenagers in geographies of children and youth. *Children's geographies*, 4(01), 97-108

¹¹ O'Toole, T., Marsh, D., & Jones, S., 2003. Political literacy cuts both ways: The politics of non-participation among young people. *The political quarterly*, 74(3), 349-360

2.3. 'DE-CAFÉ' FOCUS GROUPS

The interview findings formed the basis for a 'De-Café' ('democracy café') event, attended by over 100 young Londoners on the evening of 13th November 2018. A diverse group of participants was invited by the GLA Peer Outreach team. Women, BAME people, and people from under-privileged backgrounds were well-represented. The De-Café discussions are a style of deliberative focus group pioneered by Bite the Ballot, where a young (trusted) facilitator moves around tables encouraging other young people to discuss particular topics in an informal way. Tools are used to stimulate discussion, such as building Lego models, which enabled participants to creatively visualise their ideas. Ten young GLA Peer Outreach Workers were trained as facilitators, leading focus groups covering the main issues that sprang from the interviews: crime, education, jobs, housing, mental health, poverty and the environment. The discussions were recorded and transcribed.



The DeCafe focus group event. Image: Bite the Ballot

The deliberative effect of the focus groups was important: young people were encouraged to engage through creative processes (such as Lego building) and by bouncing ideas off their peers. Through this process of deliberation, they began to express strong views on issues such as environmental protection that may appear to be less important in traditional surveys. These deliberative reflections on key issues are captured and illustrated in the artwork below.



Visualisation of issues raised during the DeCafe event (1 of 2). Image: Bite the Ballot

3

RESEARCH FINDINGS: WHAT YOUNG LONDONERS TOLD US

This section presents the combined findings of the online survey, the face-to-face interviews, and the 'De-Café' focus groups described above. They are arranged by theme:

1. Social;
2. Economic; and
3. Environmental issues.

This structure reflects the three strands of London's Quality of Life indicators. The key themes raised by participants in this research are mapped to the Sustainable Development Goals in Section 4 of this report.

However, it is important to note that these issues are interconnected and layered - as indeed are the SDGs. Indeed, this was highlighted by the young Londoners themselves - one of whom for example emphasised the close relationship between social deprivation and crime: "gang problems, youth crime... stem from employability"; "being socially deprived will lead you to deal drugs because you have to get food in".

In the interviews and focus groups, two underlying problems (relating to all other areas) emerged:

1. Austerity and poverty: driving other issues such as crime and poor mental health
2. Transition to adulthood (for those turning 18): lack of support for obtaining housing, benefits and mental healthcare; and new costs, such as prescription charges, travel and university tuition fees

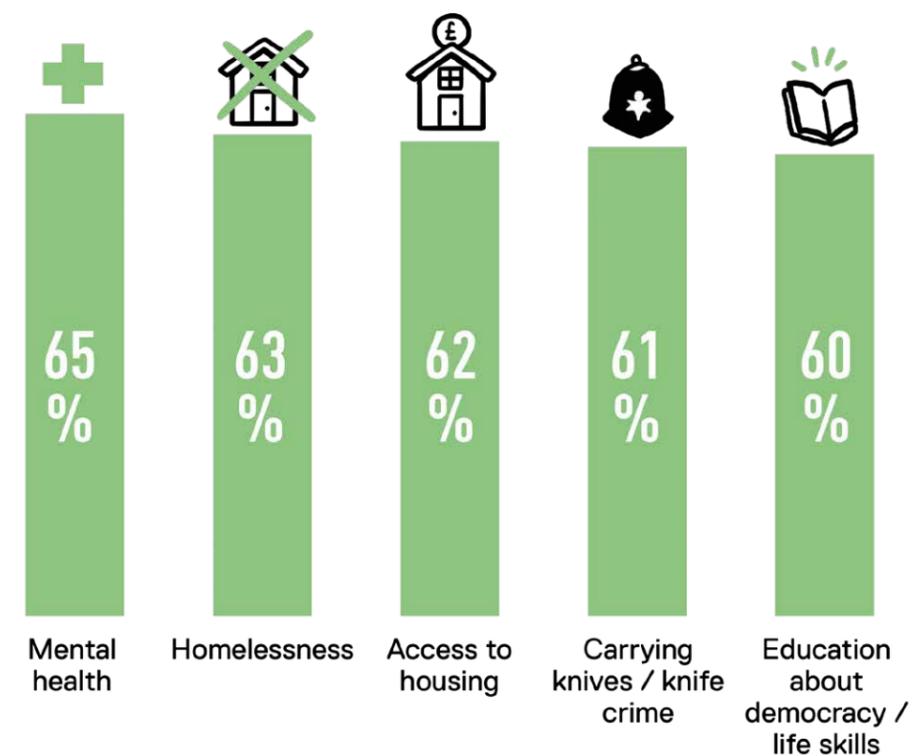


Discussion during the DeCafe event. Image: Bite the Ballot

3.1. PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The graph below shows the issues young Londoners want the UK government to prioritise.

TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



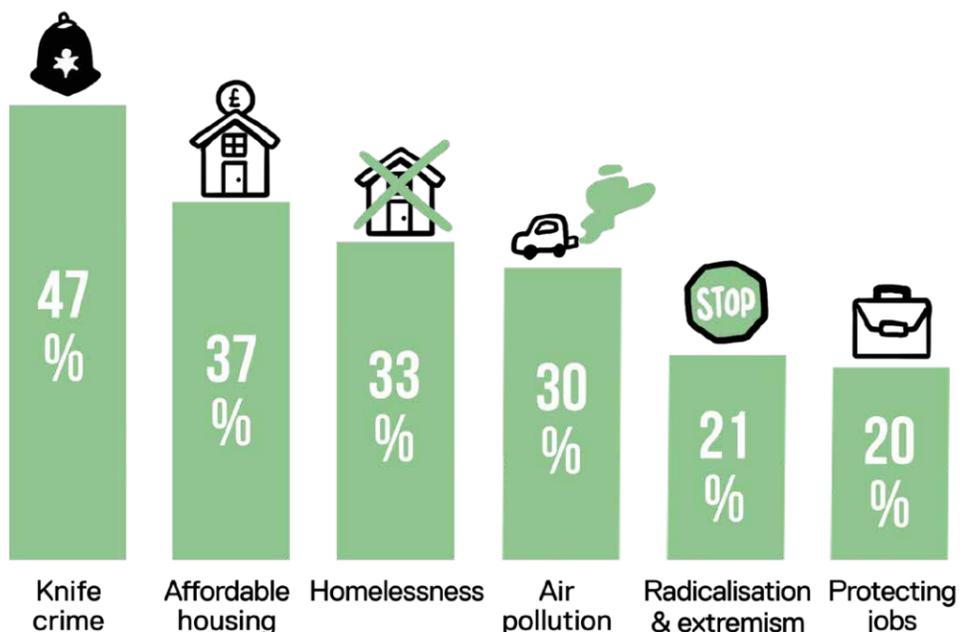
Survey participants were asked their priorities for national government to act on, and were asked to score the importance of a range of issues from 0-10 (not important to extremely important). The five issues that scored between 7-10 out of 10 by the most (%) participants are shown here.

//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

Below are the six issues young Londoners most want the GLA to act on.

16-24 YEAR OLD LONDONERS' TOP 6 PRIORITIES FOR THE GLA

Survey respondents were asked to rank which 3 issues they thought the GLA should prioritise. This graph shows the issues that appeared in the most (%) young Londoners' top 3.

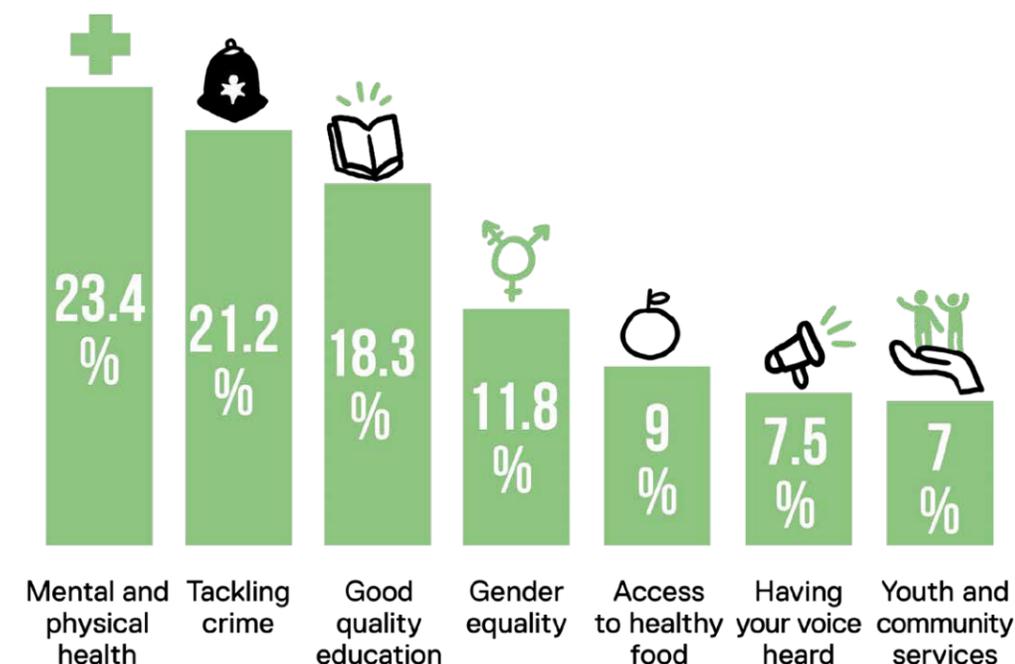


//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

3.2. SOCIAL ISSUES

In the survey, young Londoners were asked: "Thinking of the following [7] social issues, which do you think is the most important". Their responses are shown in the graph on the following page:

MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL ISSUE



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

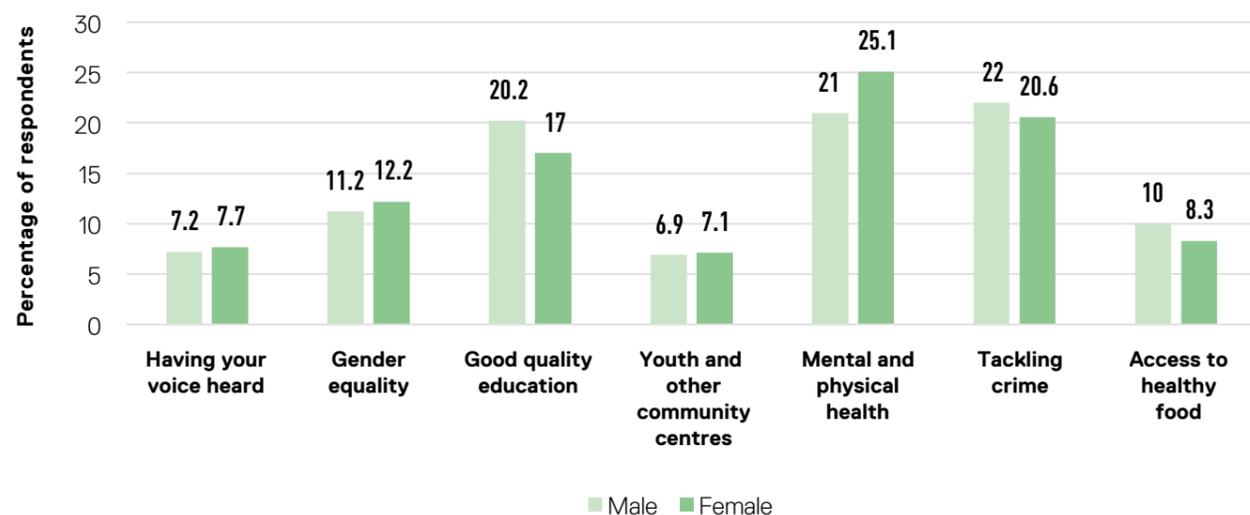
The most commonly reported social concern is mental and physical health (23.4%), closely followed by tackling crime (21.2%). The provision of good quality education – including lessons on basic life skills and the workings of the British democratic system – also ranks highly (18.3%). The two lowest-ranked social concerns are having one's voice heard by the local council/Mayor of London/national government (7.5%) and youth clubs/community centres (7.0%). However, although 'having your voice heard' was not a top priority when ranked alongside others in the multiple choice survey, it emerged as a significant theme through the in-depth discussions held during the focus groups and interviews.

Concern regarding mental and physical health was significantly higher amongst full-time students (25.3%) and much higher amongst young Londoners not in employment, education or training (30.9%). Potentially, poor health and inadequate support may be the reason the latter group are not in employment, education or training in the first place.

Those not in employment, education and training were also more likely than the average young Londoner (24.5%) to emphasise the need to tackle crime. Support for good quality education and teaching about life skills was understandably higher within the youngest group (16 to 18 years old, 20.4%). In this context, it is notable that 17% of 22 to 24 year olds chose education, despite most of this group not being in education themselves. 11.7% of those in part-time education and 25.9% of self-employed young Londoners (well above the average), cited access to healthy food as their main social concern. More research is required to investigate the reasons behind this last figure.

The graph below shows the figures for most important social issue, broken down by gender. The results show that there are negligible differences across a range of social concerns, including having one's voice heard by political actors/institutions and youth clubs/community centres. Interestingly, young male Londoners return a similar figure to their female counterparts when it comes to prioritising gender equality (11.2% and 12.2% respectively). The most prominent gender differences are found over mental/physical health and the provision of high-quality, life skills-based education. While young female Londoners were more likely to prioritise mental and physical health as their main social concern (25.1% by 21.0%), young male Londoners were more likely to prioritise good quality education (20.2% by 17.0%).

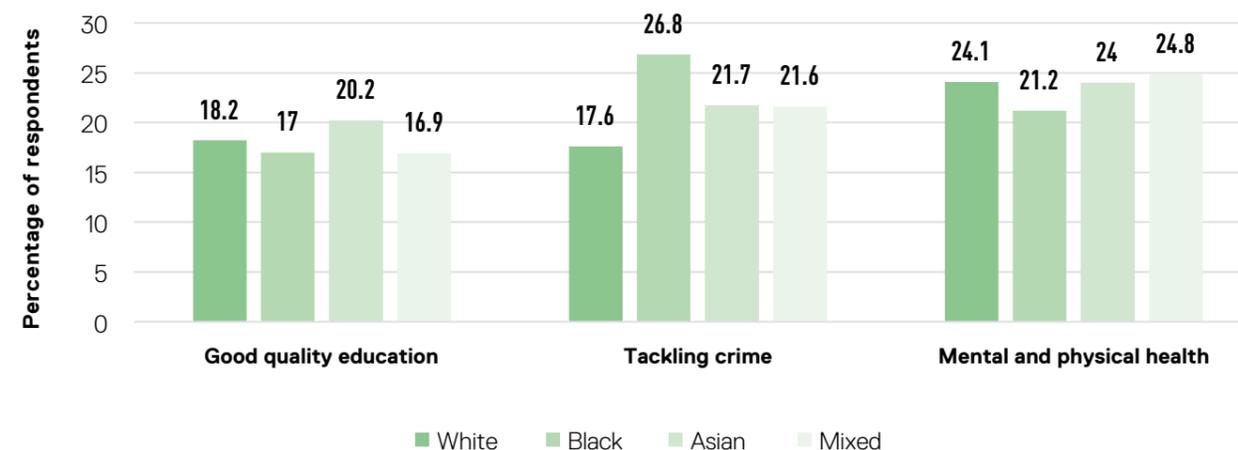
Most important social issue (by gender)



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.
 //Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

The graph below shows the top three highest-reported social issues among young Londoners (mental/physical health, tackling crime and the provision of good quality education) and breaks down the figures based on four ethno-racial backgrounds: white, black, Asian and mixed.

Prioritisation of crime, health and education (by ethno-racial group)



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.
 //Note: numbers do not add up to 100%, as only the top 3 issues out of 7 are shown.

The analysis shows that young black Londoners are more likely to report tackling crime as their main social priority in comparison to their white, Asian and mixed-race counterparts. While 26.8% of young black Londoners reported tackling crime as their main social concern, the corresponding figure for young white Londoners was only 17.6%. With regard to mental and physical health, there were fewer differences. Young black Londoners are (marginally) the least likely to report this as their main social issue of concern (21.2%). As to the provision of good quality education which better incorporates lessons on life skills and the functioning of British democracy, young Asian Londoners were more likely to prioritise this particular issue (20.2%).

The following sections explore the top issues in more depth.

3.2.1 HEALTH AND PERSONAL SAFETY

Issues relating to health and personal safety were at the very top of young Londoners' list of concerns, with particular regard to mental health provision and the threat or experience of knife crime.

Survey respondents were asked to score a range of health and personal safety issues from 0-10 in ascending order of how importantly they should be addressed by the GLA and national government. The issues below were given a score of 7-10 by the following percentage of young Londoners:

- Providing more support for young people to deal with mental health issues: 65%
- Encouraging discussions about the dangers of carrying knives/ knife crime (e.g. in schools, youth centres, through mentoring schemes): 61%
- Improving safety on public transport and late night services: 59%

Mental health

With regard to public services, the majority of the interviewees had concerns over the provision of healthcare, particularly for mental health. The participants had deep insights into this subject – many of them knew people who had suffered with mental health problems or had experienced them themselves. But the general feeling was that provision is patchy at best, and that schools did little to prepare them for dealing with mental health problems.

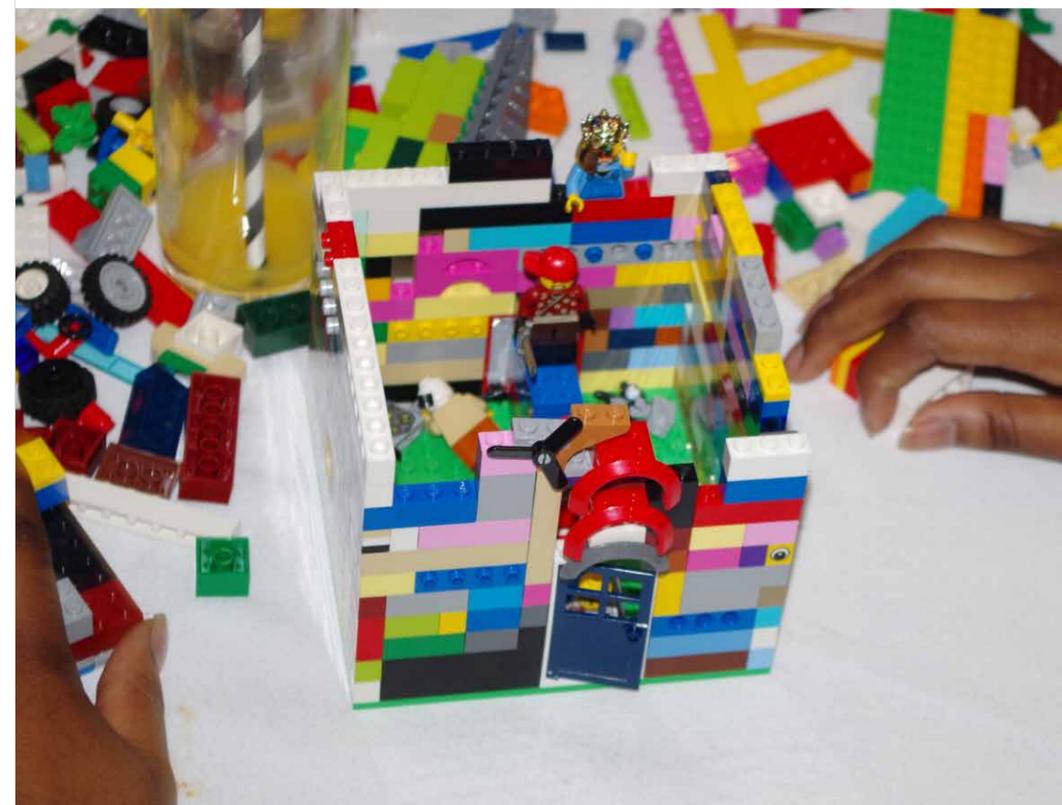
Some of the interviewees spoke of how economic pressures and cuts to youth support services were exacerbating young people's mental health problems in London. There was a general consensus that more public resources are required. Indeed, some of the interviewees had personally experienced difficulties in having access to a professional counsellor.

With regard to the current situation, one participant (female) described her Lego representation "of someone in a box whilst there's everyone talking around them... it's meant to represent the lack of support for mental health young people can access".

"It's hard to get an appointment. A few of my friends suffer bad..."

"I know that the youth offending team tackles mental health, but if you're not offending you can't go there."

Quote from focus group participant

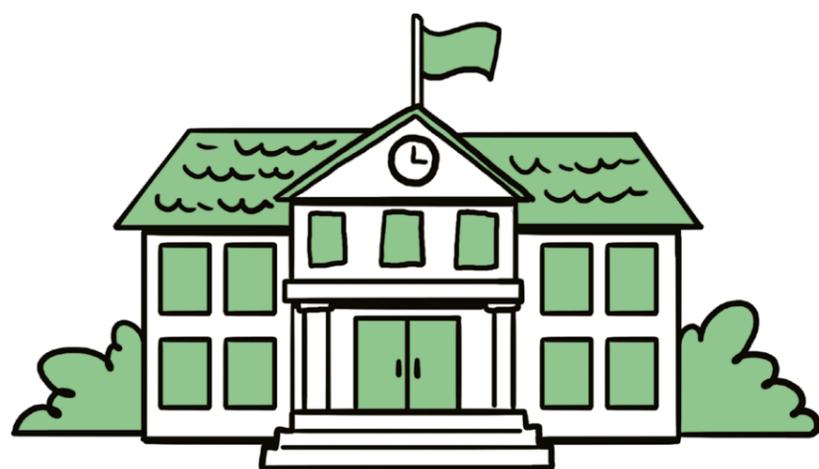


Lego model representing lack of mental health support. Image: Bite the Ballot

The point was made by a number of participants that mental health services were not easily available for young people – "It's hard to get an appointment. A few of my friends suffer bad..." (female). There was also a feeling that mental health treatment was reactive rather than preventative: "I know that the youth offending team tackles mental health, but if you're not offending you can't go there" (male). This is very problematic given the well-known complex relationship between mental health and crime (particularly amongst young men). For most young people, poor mental health was considered to be a common feature of everyday life, and they were conscious of this in their own day-to-day experiences: "I know, for example, my trigger points in the sense that if I get extremely stressed I start the morning not looking on Twitter or social media or Instagram" (female). Social media did, indeed, appear to be associated with stress for young Londoners – especially young women.

One way of dealing with mental health problems was to talk about the issues – and the groups generally believed that women were better at doing this than men. According to one young man: “I think it’s about normalizing mental health, so being able to have a conversation... and not being afraid... in terms of schools, criminal justice and social systems”.

SCHOOLS ARE KEY TO STARTING THE DISCUSSION



ON MENTAL HEALTH

School was identified by many young Londoners as the key place where these discussions should start. It was clear that the readiness of schools to discuss mental health was very patchy. In general, the young Londoners thought that much more could be done to improve teaching about mental health in Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) classes. One young male declared: “I don’t feel like school promotes anything about mental health”. On the other hand, one young woman shared how her secondary school in Stratford had given her and her fellow-pupils “so much help. We got lavender droplets to put on our pillows because we needed to sleep better during GCSEs... [as well as] yoga classes in the dance room”. Several young Londoners emphasised the pressure and stress they were under during the exam periods: “There are a lot of people who are constantly stressed with revision and stuff like that” (male).

Focus group participant, discussing his Lego model:

“A representation of a young child being brought up in London, who is not acknowledged, who is invisible, and leading to a narrow path that ends up six feet underground, which is causing knife crime and gun crime because they’re not acknowledged and given opportunities.”

Crime

Crime (particularly knife crime) was identified as a major priority in both the interviews and the survey, and this was also the case for the focus groups. With regard to the top 3 priorities for the GLA and London decision makers, knife crime ranked top – 47% identified this as one of their top issues (22% as their number one issue). (Note: the percentage of respondents rating an issue between 7-10 for importance does not necessarily equate to the percentage who placed an issue in their ‘top 3’ issues above.) The majority of interviewees stated that they felt less safe due to the rise in knife crime in the capital.

Young Londoners felt that knife crime was a ‘multifaceted problem’ that ‘needed to be looked at from all angles’, including community policing, social services (young people in care), child poverty, mental health, education and schools, youth centres and mentoring.

Female respondents identified “male pride” as an influential factor in rising crime, arguing that many young males involved in crime were obsessed with making “quick money” to gain social status among peers. Some felt that much of London’s crime problem is borne out of “desperation”, with many people feeling unable to provide a certain lifestyle for themselves and/or their family through legitimate means. A number of interviewees believed that a lack of positive male role models in the household and broader “family breakdown” were associated with rising criminality in London. Some also felt that government cuts to frontline police numbers were to a degree responsible for the rise in crime in the capital.

Young Londoners in the focus groups did not always feel they were safe, but this depended upon “where you live”, your class, gender and ethnicity.

Much of the time talking about crime involved the discussion of policing. Young Londoners had widely varying views on the police and how they operated, which tended to reflect their gender, ethnicity and social status.

One young woman believed that “for a girl it’s completely different than for a boy. Like when I’m around police, I’m not someone they look out for”. Another young woman said: “Personally, I have never had a problem with the police... Every time I have needed help or whatever, they have always been there, and helped me.”

Many young men saw “the police as more of a threat than a force to help”. With regard to ethnicity, another young Londoner (male) made the following point: “I’m not saying that all of them are bad, because not all of them are bad, but being young and black – I’m not going to lie – there is a growing hatred.” Part of this hostility was put down to the way the police operated – the targeting of certain ‘types’ in stop-and-search over what were seen as small issues, but not dealing with major problems: “They will send two or three vans on just a group of boys that are smoking a bit of weed in the park... but when it comes to night time and there is youths from other areas coming... 20 men deep, where are you?” (male).

SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE CRIME:



**Community
policing & need
to build trust**



**Better
opportunities
& direction**



**More youth
centres**

Community policing and the need to build trust was a strong theme. One male complained: “there is not one police officer that you recognise or can go to”. Another young man argued that “if a bond was built with the police and young people, that’s just a starting point. I feel like there is no bond, there is no proper community policeman.”

Discussing the causes of crime, a common response was that young people (especially those without much money) had few places to go and this led to trouble. One young Londoner (male) explained how he thought this worked: “I think the deeper problem within this is the fact that there is no youth provisions or youth centres. Like my borough,

Waltham Forrest, there is not one single youth centre where young people can go to, and they congregate in McDonalds... [which] causes altercations and arguments... It’s a cycle, basically, a vicious cycle.” Another young man told his group how positive youth centres could be: “where I used to live, like in Brent, there were loads and loads of youth centres so everyone would go up and we would chill... we had the police in to come and talk to us and it cleared the atmosphere... [after talking about youth centre closures] I feel that if they brought them back they would definitely do some good”.

Youth centres were also seen as good places for mentoring to take place: “There are supervisors or people there who might have been through stuff like that and they can influence you... what groups should be doing and shouldn’t be doing and keep themselves away from danger... making sure that they stay on the right path” (male).

Two focus group participants shared some keen insights about how media perceptions of young people (particularly young men) can perpetuate problems through negative stereotypes: “people are told that they are something – that this group of people are like this – it sort of reinforces that, like what else can we do?... And that sort of creates a certain cycle that is obviously counter-productive to what we want” (young male).

Finally, the issues of poverty and lack of access to opportunities were frequently linked to crime by participants. One young male implored: “these people that commit the crimes - provide them with an alternative, give them something else to do... tell them what they should be doing instead of telling them, this is what they are doing”.

“Political education is something that is just ridiculously lacking... As someone who’s currently working in the political system, you can see how much people from 18 to 24 are basically left out of the entire policy process.”

Quote from focus group participant

3.2.2 EDUCATION

Education was viewed as an important issue by almost all interview and focus group participants, and was for many of them a central part of their everyday lives. Many had some interesting ideas about how it could be improved for the next generation.

However, a large proportion had experienced problems with England’s national curriculum. In particular, they felt that the curriculum did not prepare them for life - especially teaching them the management of finances, how democracy works, or explore what it means to be a good and active citizen.

The survey revealed that 60% of young Londoners believed education about life skills and how democracy works was a '7-10 out of 10' priority for governments. The strong support for a 'curriculum for life' (enhanced citizenship education)¹² was surprising given the other major challenges facing young Londoners, but was also found to be the case in the 2018 British Youth Council 'Make Your Mark' ballot, where over 950,000 young people voted on what the UK Youth Parliament should campaign for.

In the context of London, it is hoped that many of these issues might be addressed and measured through the implementation of the London Curriculum¹³, which provides teaching resources on a range of issues for pupils at key stages 2 and 3.

Some of the interviewees expressed their frustrations over the fact that they are widely expected to participate in political processes but have not been taught about the basic functions and workings of democratic participation. Many thought that existing education on citizenship or PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) was often ineffective, as "it would just basically be time to cover up basic topics and catch up with work." (male).

They placed much emphasis on learning about democratic politics: "I think that one of the main things we miss in the curriculum, especially from a young age, is talking about politics. I think that that's not something you're introduced to until you're about 16 to 18, and that's only if you pick it as an A-level" (female); "political education is something that is just ridiculously lacking... As someone who's currently working in the political system, you can see how much people from 18 to 24 are basically left out of the entire policy process" (female).

Several focus group participants also reflected that in order to raise community awareness of how to address environmental challenges, there should be more opportunities to learn about issues including pollution, consumerism, waste, food growing and climate change, both in schools and through the media. One participant commented, "I think that there should be more maybe campaigns or more – we should learn about this stuff [...] More positive education. More – there should be a separate voice for it in the media even, there should be more acknowledgement of the issue" (female).

"I think that one of the main things we miss in the curriculum, especially from a young age, is talking about politics. I think that that's not something you're introduced to until you're about 16 to 18, and that's only if you pick it as an A-level."

Quote from focus group participant

YOUNG PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM DOESN'T:



- prepare them for life
- teach them about democracy
- teach them what it means to be a good citizen

With regard to other life experiences, finances and managing money were common themes. One participant stressed that this "was really important... I don't know how to control my money... Things like investments and property, even taxes." (female). Other young Londoners spoke out that it would be useful to learn more about careers. Learning about mental health was also raised as something that could be addressed in lessons (see above), as well as learning about issues of diversity e.g. regarding LGBTQ young people, or young people with disabilities.

For young people who did not excel at academic subjects, they often felt cast aside and pigeon-holed as 'failures': "if you're not good at English or maths but you're good at art and technology, you're seen as being stupid" (female); "if you're not good at doing [written] exams but you're really good at doing oral examinations, or things like that, then you're being penalised." (female); "a kid's not stupid just because he can't pass an exam" (male). It was suggested that there should also be a greater role for performing arts (music and drama) on the curriculum.

Another set of suggestions for rejuvenating education related to teaching about character and values. One man made the link to knife crime: "We're not teaching young men the rights and wrongs of this world - we're just teaching them how to pass a test. Finally, several participants in the focus groups emphasised the social inequalities in education, and the need to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to college and university. Two of the focus group participants independently identified the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) as a setback: "Back in the day – I think my brother's time – they used to get £30 for college... those types of initiative can be good" (female). Others mentioned the impact the cost of university tuition fees had had on young people's aspirations. Further suggestions included more free training for adults over the age of 18, to improve their skills and job prospects.

¹² British Youth Council, 2013: *A Curriculum for Life* <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Youth-Select-Committee-A-Curriculum-for-Life-Report.pdf>

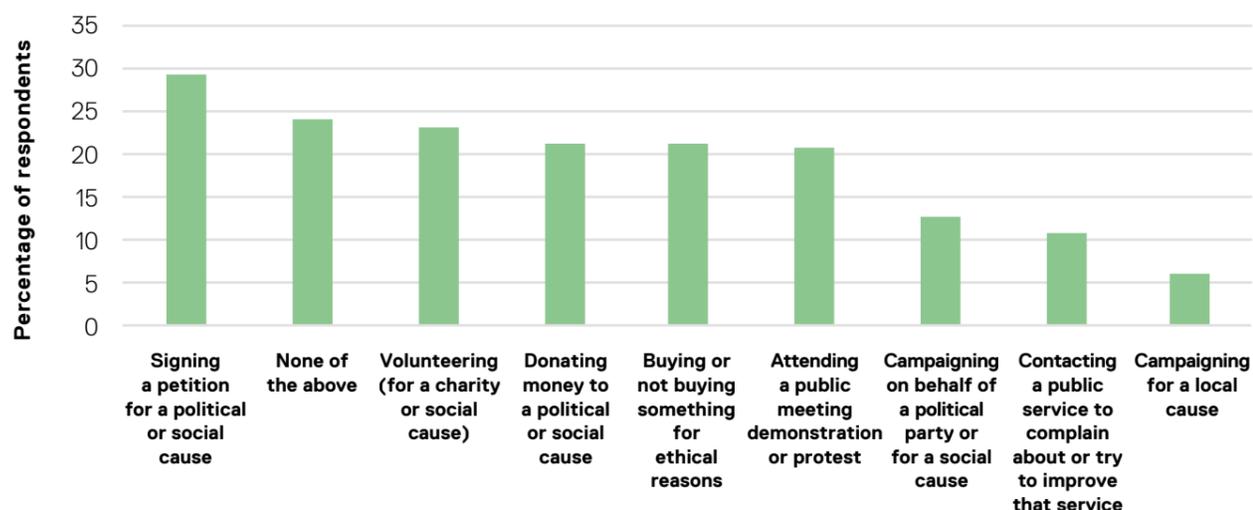
¹³ Mayor of London – GLA. London Curriculum – Primary Programme. <https://www.london.gov.uk/decisions/dd2025-london-curriculum-primary-programme>

3.2.3 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND 'BEING HEARD'

Participants in the focus groups, interviews and survey reported high levels of engagement in civic life. 52% of survey respondents said they paid attention to politics, inclusive of 40% who said they paid a lot of attention. When asked to name their top three sources of news, 50% said TV, 42% said social media and 34% cited friends and family. A large majority of survey respondents claimed that they had voted in the 2017 General Election (75% of eligible young people), in the 2016 EU referendum (74%), and in the 2016 London Mayoral contest (65%). This stated level of participation in the mayoral election is very high compared to 'second-order' elections in other cities, regions and countries.

A large proportion had also participated in some form of non-electoral civic activity in the last 12 months, such as volunteering or signing a petition. This is shown in the graph below:

Young Londoners participating in civic activities



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

Focus group participant, discussing her Lego model:

“I’ve got an old white man that is basically in power and within London what they’ve done is created beautiful structures, buildings, to make the city look beautiful but yet it’s not working.”

Survey respondents placed ‘having your voice heard’ relatively low down their priorities when asked to rate their importance alongside more materially pressing concerns such as housing and crime.

However, during the focus group discussions, many participants expressed frustration that young people’s voices on a wide range of issues affecting them are not heard by the older generation who set policy. “Alright, so at the top there’s a bunch of old people... This kind of represents that a lot of decisions for young people are made at the top and young people don’t really have a platform to make these decisions” (male).

In addition to feeling their opinions were not being heard by decision makers, there was a perception that this was partly caused by there being limited representation of young people among policy makers and others with influence. This problem was seen to be compounded by a lack of understanding of how political processes work, and therefore an inability to engage in decision-making. One focus group participant stated “Legislation has been put forward at ridiculous rates that basically affect us. It doesn’t affect the 60 year old white men voting, it basically affects us but you can ask someone who’s around 18-24 [...] who’s in the cabinet? [...] Can you tell me how a law goes through? Can you tell me what an MP is able to do? [...] There’s no understanding of it”, reinforcing the point above about the demand for civic and political education. The same participant continued to say “[It] is absolutely ridiculous to see the fact that the people that these laws are supposed to be made for aren’t involved in any of the process, either the start of it to the end of it. Young people really are not part of it” (female).

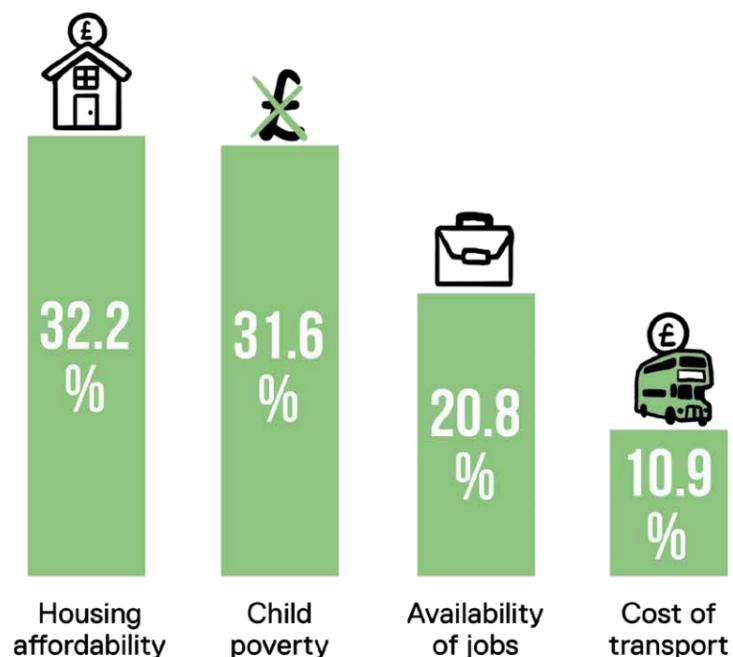
For some, this extended to wider questions over intersectional democratic representation. One focus group participant, referring to her Lego model which symbolised her overall perception of senior decision-makers, commented “I’ve got an old white man that is basically in power and within London what they’ve done is created beautiful structures, buildings, to make the city look beautiful but yet it’s not working” (female).

3.3. ECONOMIC ISSUES

3.3.1 OVERVIEW

Young Londoners were asked: "Thinking of the following [4] economic issues, which do you think is the most important". The graph below shows their responses:

MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ISSUE



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

Housing affordability was particularly important to the older age group. 35.9% of 22 to 24 years olds prioritised this issue – but placed less emphasis on child poverty (27%) than the average young Londoner. Child poverty was most strongly prioritised by self-employed young people (33.1%) and young people not in employment, education and training (34.7%). Young people in part-time employment (24.1%), part-time education (26.8%) and not in employment, education and training (37%) were (unsurprisingly) much more likely than the average young Londoner to stress the availability of jobs. On the other hand, young Londoners already in full-time employment prioritised transports costs (14.8%) more than their peers.

The interviews with young people support many of the findings uncovered by the survey analysis. Issues surrounding housing affordability, poverty, availability of jobs and transport costs were all raised during the interviews.

Survey respondents scored the following issues '7-10' (on a scale of 0 to 10) as priorities for governments:

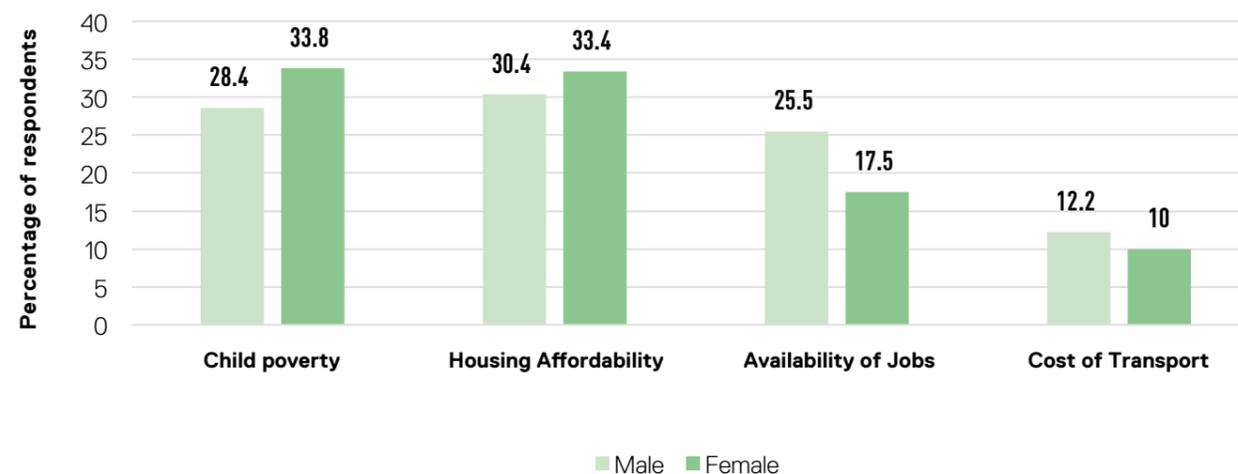
- Strengthening action to reduce homelessness: 63%
- Improving access to housing for young people: 62%
- Increasing transport affordability to young people, students, apprentices and disabled people: 62%
- Ensuring that young Londoners have access to high-quality apprenticeships, mentoring, and employment: 59%

Young Londoners placed the following issues amongst their top 3 priorities for the GLA:

- Building more genuinely affordable homes: 37%
- A real push to tackle homelessness: 33%
- Protecting jobs and growth from economic uncertainty: 20%
- Making commuting more affordable: 19%
- Giving renters a better deal: 16%

Note that the percentage of respondents scoring an issue 7-10 out of 10 does not necessarily equate to the percentage of respondents placing that issue in their 'top 3'.)

Most important economic issue (by gender)

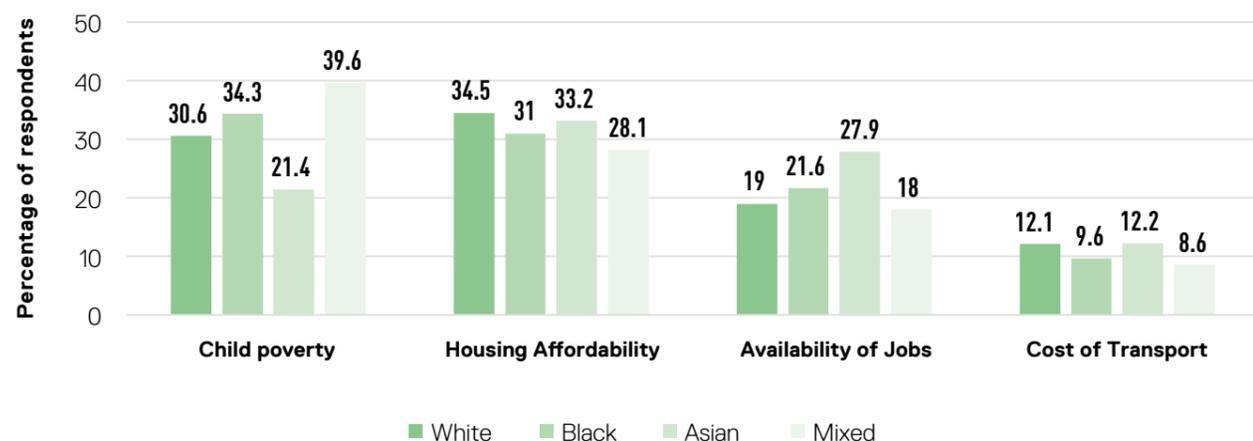


//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

The graph on the previous page presents the figures for main economic concerns, broken down between young male and female Londoners. Whilst young male Londoners are much more likely to prioritise availability of jobs and marginally more likely to emphasise the cost of transport, young female Londoners are more likely to prioritise child poverty and housing affordability. The largest gap was found over the issues of jobs. 1 in 4 young men (25.5%) reported this as their main economic concern, compared to 17.5% young women – a difference of 8 percentage points. The second-widest gap was over the issue of child poverty. While 28.6% of young male Londoners selected this as their main economic concern, the corresponding figure for young female Londoners was 33.8%.

Most Important Economic Issue (Ethno-Racial Group)



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

The graph above presents the figures for main economic concerns among young Londoners, broken down by ethno-racial group (white, black, Asian and mixed). The analysis shows that there are noticeable differences between the ethnic groups across all four areas of economic concern. Young mixed-race and black Londoners are more likely to prioritise child poverty as an economic concern – with young Asian Londoners being far less likely to. While nearly 4 in 10 young mixed-race Londoners (39.6%) selected child poverty as their main economic

concern, the corresponding figure for young Asian Londoners was only 21.4% - a gap of almost 20 points. Young white and Asian Londoners were more likely to prioritise housing affordability (34.5% and 33.2%) in comparison to their black and mixed-race counterparts (31.0% and 28.1% respectively).

Young Asian Londoners were, by some distance, the most likely to prioritise availability of jobs as an economic concern (27.9%), while mixed-race Londoners were the least likely to do so (18.0%). Transport costs were fairly consistent across the four groups.

3.3.2 POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

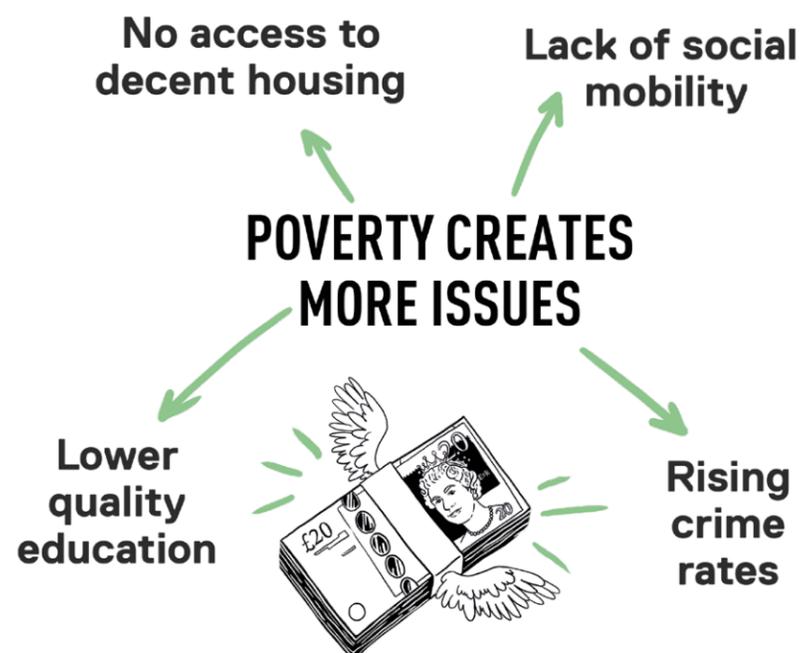
As revealed in the interviews, poverty was an issue that pervaded all the other subject areas, but the young participants in the focus groups also addressed it as a topic in its own right. For young Londoners, poverty and inequality drove many concerns regarding their futures. Although poverty impacts all of the other areas addressed – from mental health, to knife crime, to community cohesion – housing, employment, and public transport issues were seen as key to improving the current state of affairs. These issues all limit the opportunities open to young people.

All young Londoners who participated in the interviews identified a lack of money as a "major problem", citing factors including high living costs and a lack of access to well-paid work. One interviewee stated that "[un]employment is at the root of all other problems...it's really hard for young people to get jobs". Some interviewees rejected the view that much of the poverty in London was down to laziness and a lack of personal responsibility, pointing out that many families living in poverty included working parents.

A general view was established that the wealth gap between "rich and poor" needed to be reduced in British society – but particularly in London. Some were of the opinion that inequality in the capital was perpetuated by the "old boys' network", arguing that success in London is more about "who you know, not what you can do." A number of interviewees spoke of their displeasure over the fact that young people under the age of 16 were not statutorily entitled to minimum pay.

"In situations like these it's very easy to see how, just because of the circumstances of the way you're born, it is very easy for you to fall into a sort of cycle where you can't really escape from it, because you are dealing with one problem by making a new problem".
[If you come from a lower income household], "you can't make the most of the opportunities that London has for you... to develop as a person, to make sure that you get involved."

Quote from focus group participant



Many were also of the view that government austerity had worsened inequalities in London, feeling that public spending cuts had disproportionately affected the capital's more deprived neighbourhoods.

With respect to the situation in the UK, they raised the question of intergenerational fairness: "We're getting the hit because this country is an ageing population, and it seems that demographic [i.e. older generations] are the ones that are making the most policies, even though they are going to be the ones that are the least affected for the least time" (female).

The young participants also emphasised the impact of poverty on opportunities and social mobility in the capital: "in situations like these it's very easy to see how, just because of the circumstances of the way you're born, it is very easy for you to fall into a sort of cycle where you can't really escape from it, because you are dealing with one problem by making a new problem". So, if you come from a lower income household "you can't make the most of the opportunities that London has for you... to develop as a person, to make sure that you get involved" (male).

Child poverty was a crucial area where these issues should be addressed. One young woman highlighted the fact "there are people who won't be able to fund children going to school, for example, school uniforms, school books, schoolbags, all of this stuff, and this is hindering them going into education, getting a good job... it is all a knock-on effect".

Young Londoners also stressed how central poverty was to all the other problems and challenges (discussed above) during their transition into adulthood. They discussed the fact that youth centres were being closed down, and that young people and families were being made homeless and 'left to rot' in hostels.

The closure of youth centres was prominent in discussions, as participants shared their experiences: "I got saved from a lot of rubbish by my [youth centre] basketball coach [who] literally supported the whole team through a lot of things" (female); "me and a friend of mine started a network for young women, because there wasn't any youth clubs and we literally funded it ourselves until we were both broke and could not keep doing it."

Again, the focus group participants emphasised the knock-on effects of poverty for issues such as crime: "who really robs houses for fun?... how many 14-year olds would be selling drugs if their family had money?... how many youngsters in areas such as Peckham, Camberwell and Brixton would be doing some of the things that they do if their families had money". There was a general consensus that greater access to economic opportunities and more extensive social support networks could help to reduce youth crime in the capital.

"We have lots of homeless people and I think I'm seeing them younger and younger on the streets".

"If you're a young person who hasn't got any education and are just trying to get by and work a normal job, London has priced you out."

Quote from focus group participant

3.3.3 HOUSING

With regard to home ownership, the majority revealed dreams of home ownership, but felt this was increasingly unattainable due to the chronic undersupply of genuinely affordable housing, along with the difficulty of accessing well-paid, secure employment opportunities. Despite making "sacrifices", the young Londoners interviewed were simply unable to get on the London property ladder. Overcrowding was also an issue raised by some interviewees, with one stating that he lived with three other adults in a one-bedroom council flat.

Reflecting the findings of the survey analysis, housing was generally viewed as the most pressing issue by young Londoners who participated in the focus groups – especially the quality and cost of housing. As a consequence, a large number of focus group participants chose this topic for their Lego construction. One young woman depicted a 'property ladder', explaining "you want to be able to stay in London to get a good career but to be able to get on the property ladder you have to move outside London... it's sort of a Catch 22". Another explained that the theme of his Lego model is "housing because I believe there's an up-rise in poverty in London and I think the government need to find a solution to get more homeless people into houses" (male). Young Londoners were deeply concerned by this problem: "We have lots of homeless people and I think I'm seeing them younger and younger on the streets".

Most of the participants either knew someone who had experienced housing problems or had experienced problems themselves. One young woman reflected: "When I was in secondary school – I think about Year 10, Year 11 – me and my family did become homeless and it was crazy because I didn't look like I was in such a situation... I did my GCSEs when I was homeless."

There were key transition points where young people believed that it was hard to get housing. One, of course, was when you reached the age when you wanted to leave home, which was particularly the case for those from poorer backgrounds. A participant added that "if you're a young person who hasn't got any education and are just trying to get by and work a normal job, London has priced you out". The cost and lack of social housing was regularly mentioned as a key feature of the London housing situation: "They've got to lower the prices for social housing and for council housing... they need to make it fairer and equal across the board... you can all be in the council or social housing but one person's paying 50% more" (male).



Several focus group participants pointed to challenges of young people from disadvantaged or troubled backgrounds: "I think particularly young people in care, involved with and around criminal justice areas... there isn't enough independent housing for them" (male). In other words, housing was a key issue in bridging the gap between childhood and in getting young people back on their feet. Others complained that as a young person or a single person you "go to the bottom of the [council house] waiting list" (female).

Another issue raised by the young Londoners was the cost, quality and unreliability of the private renting sector, and how it thwarts young people's efforts to move on in the world: "I think that something like that can also have a domino effect, especially if it's a young person who's about 17 or 18. They could have aspirations to go to college or university, but if they're private renting they're going to have to get a job to pay. And, because they might not have the right level of education, the kind of job they get will restrict them... there definitely needs to be a cap on private rent" (male). Young people felt passionately about this issue: "landlords in my opinion are the scum of the earth" (male); "You can pay a ridiculous amount for a s***hole" (female).

"It's a simple solution. Involve the young people who live there in the decisions... don't just allow it to be tokenistic."

Quote from focus group participant

On the subject of 'gentrification', participants recognised that this could be a double-edged sword. They saw the benefits and opportunities that developing their areas could bring, such as jobs and making the place look better. However, there were also challenges regarding the feeling of being taken over and pushed to the side by much wealthier incoming residents. For one young man better youth engagement was the answer: "It's a simple solution. Involve the young people who live there in the decisions... don't just allow it to be tokenistic."

Young Londoners presented various ideas for solving what they saw as a housing crisis: including, "better schemes for social tenants to be able to purchase their properties" (male); and, "community-led self-build projects" for affordable homes using recycled materials, such as those led by the Rural Urban Synthesis Society in Lewisham (female).

3.4. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The research found that, although environmental concerns were not at the top of young Londoners' lists of priorities (when compared to other more urgent challenges), they nevertheless cared deeply about some of the issues involved. This came through especially clearly when young Londoners had the time to deliberate on environmental issues in the focus groups.

In particular, the issue of knowledge and teaching about environmental sustainability in schools emerged as a major theme.

Survey respondents were asked to score a range of environmental issues from 0-10 in ascending order of how importantly they should be addressed by the GLA and national government. The issues below were given a score of 7-10 by the following percentage of young Londoners:

- Improving air quality in London streets: 59%
- Encouraging the use and generation of renewable energy (e.g. solar) to reduce carbon emissions: 54%
- Supporting initiatives to reduce single use plastic use and making recycling easier: 53%

The one environmental issue that received strong backing, when young people were asked about their top 3 priorities for the GLA, was 'tackling air pollution in London'. This was the case for almost a third (30%) of young Londoners.

(Note: the percentage of respondents rating an issue between 7-10 for importance does not necessarily equate to the percentage who placed an issue in their 'top 3' issues.)

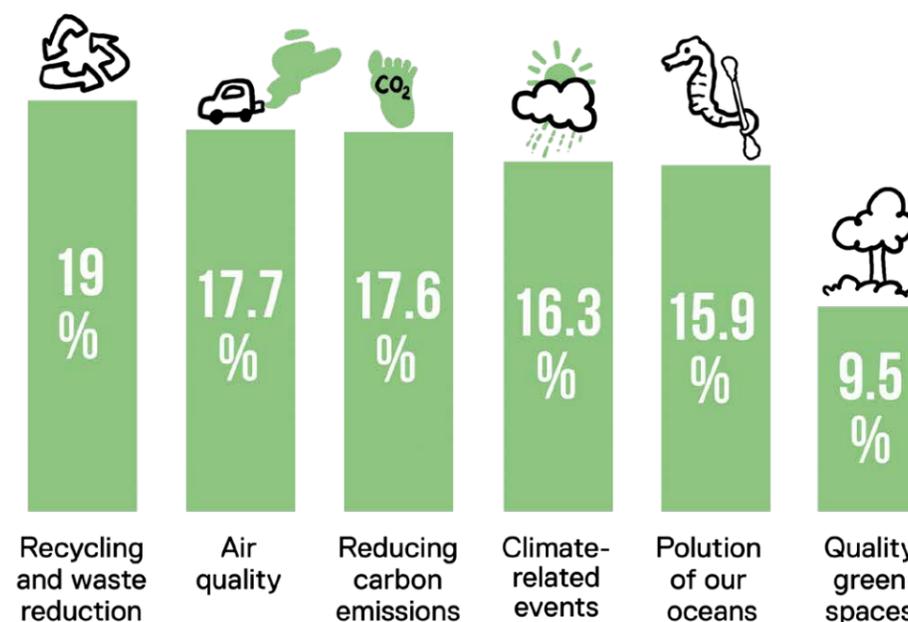
Young Londoners were asked: "Thinking of the following [6] environmental issues, which do you think is the most important environmental issue".

Their responses are shown in the graph on the next page:

"[The environment] is a very ignored issue, because in London now there are more serious issues that we focus on which are life-dependent... like housing, or poverty, or crimes, but also the environment is a big part, because it is constantly adding and decreasing to either our emotional state or our health and the way we function as a society."

Quote from focus group participant

MOST IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

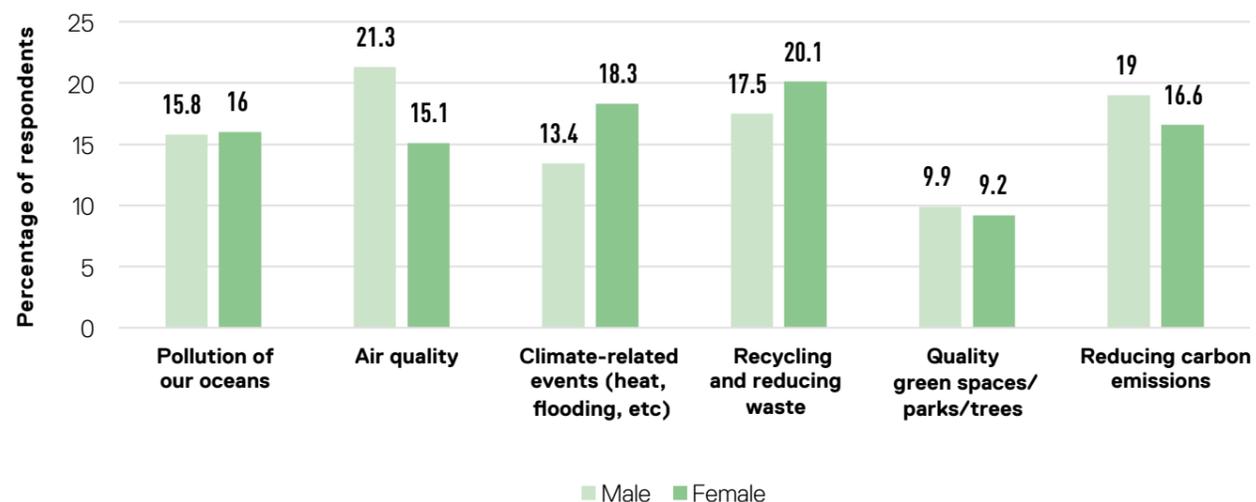
//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

There is not a standout environmental issue which is prioritised by young Londoners as a whole. Recycling/reducing waste is the most prioritised environmental issue out of those offered (19.0%). This finding was echoed in the focus groups, where there was a tendency for participants to bundle several environmental issues together, either implying they were keenly aware of the interconnections between a range of issues, or that 'environmental issues' are seen as a whole, rather than as several separate challenges. The only environmental issue which failed to reach a double-figure percentage was quality green spaces/parks/trees (9.5%). The latter finding might reflect the fact that many young Londoners are appreciative of the parks they do have (confirmed in the interviews and focus groups) and so do not view this as a key area for improvement.

There were some significant differences according to occupational status. Reducing carbon emissions was a greater priority (22%) for young people in part-time employment or full-time education, as was climate change (21%) for those in part-time education, and pollution of the oceans for those young Londoners not in training or employment (21%).

The graph below presents gender differences based on what was viewed to be the most important environmental issue (we found no significant differences based on ethnicity or age within the cohort regarding these environmental issues). Interestingly, young male Londoners are more likely to view air quality as the most important environmental issue in comparison to their female peers (21.3% by 15.1%). However, young female Londoners are more likely to view climate-related events (such as heat and flooding) as the most important environmental issue in relation to their male counterparts (18.3% by 13.4%). This could reflect the fact that young women are more active in international climate change organisations than young men, who may focus more on local issues.¹⁴ There is little to differentiate between young male and female Londoners when it comes to other environmental issues such as pollution of the oceans and availability of green spaces.

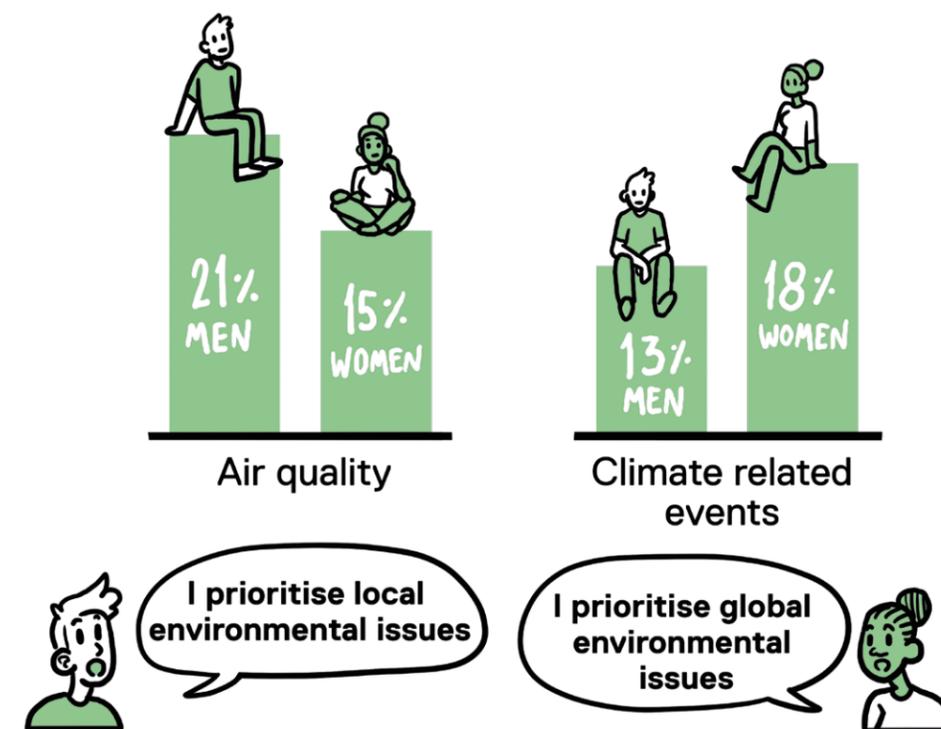
Most important environmental issue (by gender)



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

//Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as "don't know" responses are not included.

¹⁴ Sloam, J., & Henn, M., 2018. *Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain*. Palgrave.



//Source: survey of 2,002 respondents aged 16-24. Commissioned by LSDC and conducted by Survation.

A number of focus group participants also made the point that they had a tough time convincing other young people to respect the environment. Yet environmental concerns were paramount for a significant minority - almost all of them young women. One female focus group participant built her Lego model to depict the problem of 'plastic' - a 'green world' with 'everything on top plastic': "the issue is that we have too much of it and we should try to reduce it. Not just by recycling... but to try and stop using plastic". Another female participant's Lego model portrayed "a person and their little boat and they're trying to get away from all the trash and pollution that we've created... that's a little bug floating away... he's trying to get to the greener space where everything's very clean and the environment is looked after."



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Young Londoners also felt that they lacked knowledge about environmental challenges – here, several participants stressed the need to educate people about these issues. Nevertheless, the deliberative effect of the focus groups – getting the participants to think about environmental issues – was powerful. Rather than coming with pre-set views on environmental issues, the focus groups acted like lively brainstorming sessions. In such a session, the issues listed included trees, cigarettes on the floor, polar ice caps, recycling,

global warming, plastic bags. Young Londoners placed a high value on parks and nature, and although not a top priority in the survey, spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of green spaces during the focus groups – “a space with your community that really de-stresses you” (female participant) – but also thought that this was something London was already very good at (“I feel, like in terms of green space, London is doing very well” – male participant).

The young Londoners in the focus groups expressed differences regarding attitudes depending on their gender, but social class and geographic location also appeared to be important. Several participants talked about the lack of recycling facilities and loads of rubbish on the streets in what they described as “s*** neighbourhoods”: “there are certain places in my community where you have junkies who just leave their needles, leave everything, and there needs to be safer ways for local authorities to clear that within a quick amount of time” (female participant). One young woman talked about how money affected access to nature – the fact that there is a charge to sit down in the chairs in Hyde Park was viewed to be fundamentally unfair on those who are poor or have a disability/health problem.

The focus groups also delivered some suggestions about how the current situation could be improved. With regard to rubbish, one participant mentioned the recycling of plastic bottles (for a small refund) in Norway. Another mentioned the fact that: “there is not a single bin in my street” suggesting “making sure there are bins”. On the subject of pollution and climate change, many young Londoners had issues about the cost of public transport for over 16s. Several participants advocated the use of bikes and ensuring that each new building has sufficient bike racks. Two members of the focus groups raised the idea of boycotting companies with insufficient environmental standards and pressurizing government and the GLA into not investing in those companies.

Finally, one young woman expressed her support for “Starting new local schemes for growing your own produce within the community... [which can] reduce the amount of waste we produce.” This proposal in favour of agricultural self-sufficiency received strong approval from other participants in her group.

YOUNG LONDONERS PLACED A HIGH VALUE ON PARKS AND NATURE

4

MAPPING YOUNG VOICES TO THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This report takes the LSDC's Quality of Life (QoL) Indicators as its starting point – a set of measures used since 2005 to evaluate the sustainability of the city. The QoL Indicators are grouped into social, economic and environment factors, and the report's findings are structured using that tri-polar approach.

However, in order to better understand the nuance of the views of young Londoners, they have been analysed and grouped into five clusters of themes, which are:

1. Poverty and Inequality
2. Health and Personal Safety
3. Education for Life
4. Environmental Protection
5. Civic Engagement and Community Cohesion

These five clusters are shown in the chart on the following page.



5 KEY CLUSTERS OF ISSUES:

1 POVERTY & INEQUALITY

- Affordable homes
- Better employment opportunities
- Affordable transport



1 NO POVERTY

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

2 HEALTH & PERSONAL SAFETY

- Mental health provision
- Knife crime & safety on public transport

Poverty & lack of opportunity lead to crime




3 GOOD HEALTH & WELLBEING

16 PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

3 EDUCATION FOR LIFE

- Education about life skills & how democracy works

We feel that the curriculum doesn't prepare us for life




4 QUALITY EDUCATION

4 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Improving air quality
- Increase use of renewable energy
- Improved recycling/less plastic



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

5 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY COHESION

- Lack of participation in decision making
- Lack of engagement with policy makers
- Radicalization & extremism



16 PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Young people and the SDGs

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an international framework to drive improvements in a range of social, economic and environmental issues. The SDGs have become a global focal point for governments, organisations – and cities – to develop plans and measure performance on sustainability.

The UN's World Youth Report argues that "Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda are the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground".

The diagram below maps the five clusters of young Londoners' issues identified through this research to the SDGs. Those SDGs which are not a primary focus of young Londoners' concerns are greyed out. However, the priority Goals presented in this chart do not tell the whole story, and only give a very high-level picture of the issues at play. The reality, as articulated in SDG 17 ('Partnerships for the Goals'), is that all the themes are highly nuanced, inextricably interconnected, and cut across a wide range of policy areas, levels of government and industrial sectors.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



This is part of a wider project currently underway to map London's longstanding 'Quality of Life' indicators to the SDGs (see 'Further work for the LSDC' (section 9, below) for details). This aims to situate the issues affecting Londoners in a global context, measure London's performance against a global framework, and situate the city in an international vision for a better future.

5

PUTTING THE RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO CONTEXT

5.1. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKDROP

The interviews and focus groups showed it is important not to divorce the issues raised by young Londoners from their social context. Young people in the UK have faced a myriad of economic and social challenges since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis: chronic undersupply of affordable housing and high rents; rising transportation fares; (notwithstanding some TfL fare freezes during this period); increased tuition fees in higher education; the proliferation of zero-hour contracts in the burgeoning “gig economy” and the growth of in-work poverty. The challenge of accessing well-paid, secure employment opportunities, compounded by increased costs of living, make for a challenging socio-economic climate for much of the country’s younger population. These problems are especially relevant in London. The cost of renting, even for flat-sharing arrangements, has reached unsustainable levels for many young Londoners.¹⁵ There is a particular need to pay greater attention to the ‘cliff edge’ that exists for 16 to 18 year olds – the costs of housing, public transport, higher education, and so on – to scaffold young people’s transition into adulthood.¹⁶

However, the challenges young people face in finding good-quality jobs in London does not necessarily imply there are none available. 13% of London employers have vacancies they are unable to recruit into, particularly in skilled trades roles (e.g. chefs and electricians).¹⁷

Instead, a complex range of factors including discrimination and lack of skills and social mobility, prevent young people - particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds - accessing opportunities that do exist. As one young interviewee in this research put it, “You can’t make the most of the opportunities that London has for you.” This perspective is supported by the GLA’s evidence base for London’s Local Industrial Strategy.¹⁸

Too many Londoners are currently unable to take advantage of the opportunities created by the London economy, impacting on both their standard of living and their ability to participate fully in society. The barriers to opportunity emerge right at the start of life and become entrenched as young people move into adulthood.

¹⁵ Evening Standard, 16 August 2016, Renting in London, <https://www.homesandproperty.co.uk/property-news/renting/renting-in-london-moving-flat-now-costs-2k-with-letting-agent-fees-but-there-are-cheaper-ways-a103426.html>

¹⁶ Connie Flanagan, 2017. *Teenage Citizens*. Harvard University Press.

¹⁷ Department for Education, 2018. Employer skills survey 2017: England LEP summary data tables.

¹⁸ GLA Economics, 2019. Developing the evidence base for London’s Local Industrial Strategy - Interim report.

School leavers' transition into the world of work was cited as a challenge by London employers, who stated in a survey that 44% of 16 year-olds and 35% of 17-18 year-olds were poorly prepared for work.¹⁹ Furthermore, the UK parliament has identified that young people are not well informed when it comes to decisions about careers and future study.²⁰ This particularly affects young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.²¹

Those findings echo the concerns expressed by the young Londoners participating in this research (Section 3.2.2, above) that they have not been provided with the life and employment skills necessary to thrive.

Challenges around skills are exacerbated by a drop in funding to adult further education, comparatively few apprenticeship openings in London, employers not doing enough to help their staff develop through on-the-job training,²² and unequal access to opportunity whereby the least skilled workers are the least likely to benefit from any workplace training offered.²³

In terms of the quantity and quality of jobs, since the 2008 financial crisis, although there has been a significant increase in the number of jobs available, there has also been an increase in the proportion which are insecure, part-time, temporary, or on zero-hours contracts.²⁴ Meanwhile, real-terms full-time gross weekly earnings for employees in London in 2018 were 6% below 2008 levels. This pay squeeze has been especially marked for those entering work for the first time.²⁵

Inequality also persists across the labour market, with women, BAME people, and people with disabilities all experiencing below-average employment rates and receiving lower pay.²⁶

In addition to these severe economic pressures, many of London's young people have personally suffered from the 'streamlining' of social and community services. Many felt that the economic disruption caused by the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent cuts to government expenditure have inevitably given rise to social problems. This is supported by research which has found that cuts to public expenditure in recent times have disproportionately affected Britain's younger people.²⁷ These cuts have contributed to the closure of youth clubs and community centres – including those which provided important outreach work and support for young Londoners living in deprived communities. Cuts to public expenditure and the withdrawal of state funding for youth services have also been cited as factors when examining the rise of knife crime in deprived communities.²⁸

¹⁹ Department for Education, 2017. Employer perspectives survey 2016: England data tables.

²⁰ Sub-committee on Education, Skills and the Economy, 2016. Careers advice, information and guidance inquiry.

²¹ GLA Economics, 2018. Skills strategy for Londoners: Evidence base.

²² GLA Economics, 2018. Skills Evidence Base.

²³ Office for National Statistics, 2017. Annual Population Survey.

²⁴ Office for National Statistics, 2017. Annual Population Survey.

²⁵ Resolution Foundation, 2018. London Stalling: Half a century of living standards in London.

²⁶ Office for National Statistics, 2017. Annual Population Survey.

²⁷ Article written by David Kingman (Senior Researcher, Intergenerational Foundation) on a London School of Economics study which shows the disproportionately negative impact of austerity on younger sections of the UK population: <http://www.if.org.uk/2015/02/06/austerity-has-hit-younger-generation-harder-study-finds/>

²⁸ Davies, B., 2019. What Future for Youth Policies? What Future for the Youth Service?. In *Austerity, Youth Policy and the Deconstruction of the Youth Service in England* (pp. 353-369). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Young Londoners in the interviews and focus groups fleshed out an association between lack of access to economic opportunities and rising crime, along with concerns over the negative effect of the withdrawal of youth support services. Indeed, some young people spoke of a potential inter-relationship between a harsh economic climate, mental health issues and rising crime. But the "breakdown" of the family unit and lack of strong role models at home were also cited as possible factors.

It is important to note large differences amongst young Londoners with regard to tackling crime, which is far more likely to be seen as a social policy priority by young black Londoners. This is understandable, given that a high proportion of the victims of knife crime in the capital are BAME men under 25.²⁹ Perhaps as a result of their overriding crime-related concerns, young black Londoners were the least likely to report mental or physical health as their main social concern. This also aligns with MOPAC's Youth Voice Survey in 2018.³⁰ However, it is a well-known fact there is a complex relationship between mental health and crime. Worries about knife crime also vary by borough - from 14% in Barnet to 46% in Hackney - according to a Public Attitude Survey by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.³¹



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²⁹ MOPAC, 2018: *Justice Matters* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/justice_matters_knife_crime_-_23_march_2018_-_presentation.pdf

³⁰ MOPAC, 2018: *Youth Voice Survey* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/youth_voice_survey_report_2018_final.pdf

³¹ MOPAC: *Public Attitude Survey* <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/weapon-enabled-crime-dashboard>

A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF YOUNG LONDONERS PLACED GOOD QUALITY EDUCATION OVER BOTH TACKLING CRIME AND MENTAL OR PHYSICAL HEALTH AS THEIR MAIN SOCIAL PRIORITY

A significant proportion of young Londoners placed good quality education over both tackling crime and mental or physical health as their main social priority. This was particularly the case for London's young Asian people. This also aligns with the recommendations of a 2018 report by Thrive LDN and the Mental Health Foundation³², which proposed boosting schools' curricular and extra-curricular mental health provision. This work could build on the existing Schools Mental Health Toolkit, developed by the Healthy London Partnership and the GLA.

There is a healthy desire for a well-rounded and high-quality educational experience which factors in more lessons about practical life skills (managing finances, building credit, enhancing personal employability) and the workings of the British democratic political system. These are seen as essential to young people's development as 'civic participants' in their own society, and something that should be enhanced within local and London-wide contexts.

The research also found that while young Londoners may be, understandably, more preoccupied with immediate concerns of a more "social" and "economic" nature, there is an encouraging degree of environmental consciousness and a clear appetite to learn more about how they can personally play their part in helping London become a more environmentally-friendly city.

Young Londoners are interested in making a personal contribution towards making a greener city and creating a more environmentally sustainable society – this 'environmental consciousness' appears to be stronger among young women than young men. And, several young Londoners pointed out that environmental issues did not feature much in their own personal experience of the school system – even though this would have been greatly appreciated.

Participants also made connections between environmental issues and other issues. For example, a number of the young Londoners who participated in the interviews and focus groups expressed the feeling that a cleaner, more environmentally friendly London would lead to more positive mental and physical health outcomes.

As well as having a direct impact on the health and quality of life of Londoners – including its young people – the environment plays a critical role in the functioning of the capital's economy. The maintenance of "natural capital" is fundamental to ensuring London's continued economic development.

³² Thrive LDN & Mental Health Foundation, 2018: *Londoners Said* <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/londoners-said>

LONDON'S ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE WILL BE THE KEY DRIVER OF GROWTH IN A WORLD THAT IS TRANSITIONING TO A NET ZERO CARBON CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Climate change remains a significant risk to the well-being of Londoners. Although London's CO₂ emissions have fallen by 32% since 1990³³, global emissions continue to rise rapidly, and this presents a risk to both London's environment and quality of life. The Mayor's London Environment Strategy, published in May 2018, brings together London's response to these challenges.

Air quality in London has improved in recent years. London is now compliant for eight out of nine regulated pollutants and ranked 15th out of 36 of the world's biggest cities. However, poor air quality continues to create significant economic costs – estimated to be equivalent to 140,000 life years lost, or £3.7 billion.³⁴ The continued growth in population and business activities, as well as the competition for land use, also means that the need for public infrastructure for waste and recycling, water, and energy supply in the capital are likely to increase in the future.

London's environmental performance will be the key driver of growth in a world that is transitioning to a net zero carbon circular economy. Neglect of the environment will undermine prospects for growth. A polluted, congested, unattractive city where people are excluded from opportunities to prosper will be a slow growing, unequal city starved of innovation, creativity and finance. By contrast, the opportunities for showing leadership on the global transition could unleash substantial sums of finance. Managing the transition to net zero carbon will induce thriving business and attract more talented people to live and work in London. The Mayor of London has declared a 'climate emergency' and thus recognises the need to rapidly become a zero-carbon city.

5.2. THE CLIMATE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

The question of youth voice (and the lack of it in public policy in the UK) underpinned the research undertaken for this project. Here, the voices of young Londoners are contextualised within broader trends in youth political engagement.

In the aftermath of the financial crisis, we have witnessed a rise in nationalist sentiment, parties and candidates across Europe and the United States, described by as a 'cultural backlash' against socially liberal or 'cosmopolitan' values,³⁵ and have also been associated with the denial that climate change is taking place. However, recent research by the authors highlights the rise of 'young cosmopolitans' in the UK, and argues that young Londoners' attitudes broadly align with this social group.³⁶

³³ Greater London Authority, 2016 *London Energy and Greenhouse Gas Inventory (LEGGI)* <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/leggi>

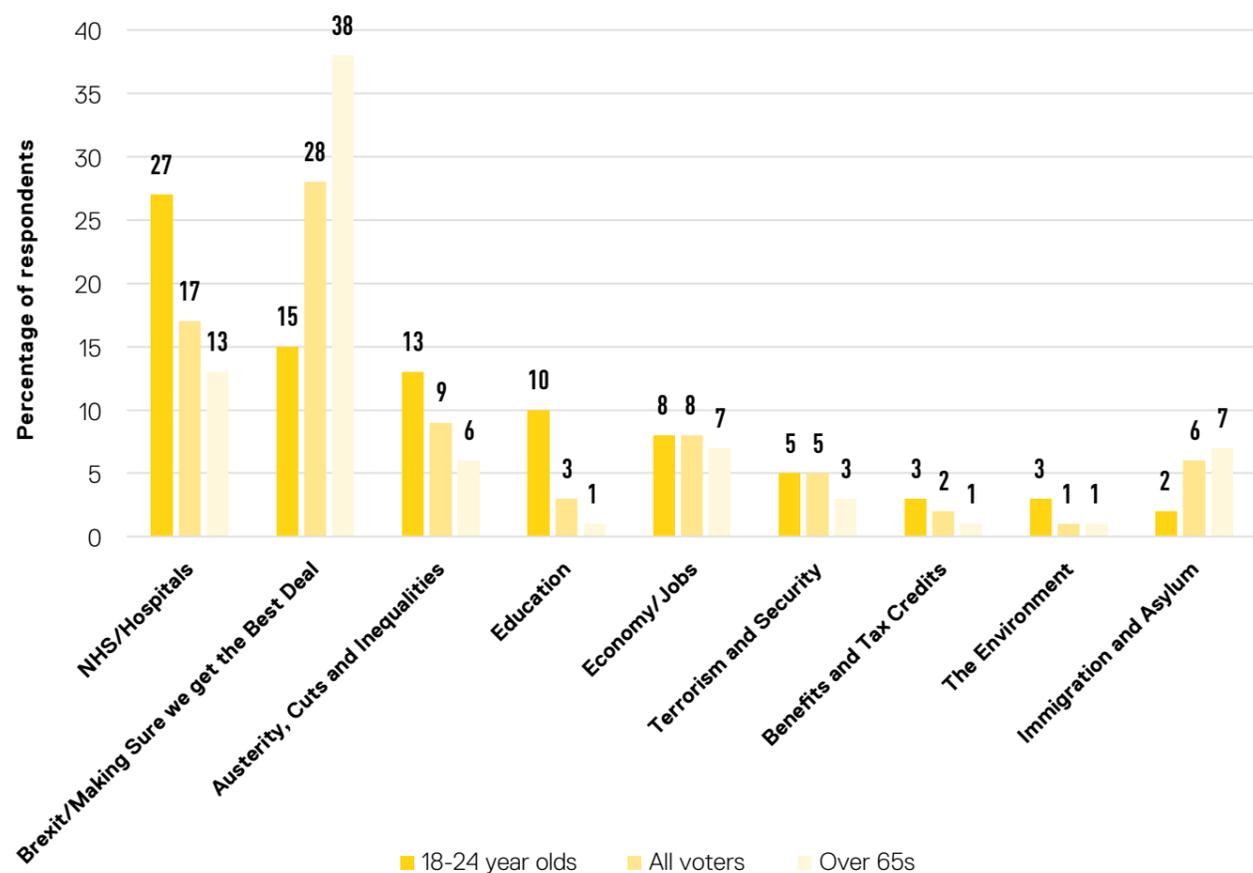
³⁴ Greater London Authority, 2016. *London's Environment*, <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/chapter5-draft-eeb-2016.pdf>

³⁵ Norris, P., & Inglehart, R., 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁶ Ehsan, R., & Sloam, J., 2018. Resources, Values, Identity: Young Cosmopolitans and the Referendum on British Membership of the European Union. *Parliamentary Affairs*.

However, whilst young cosmopolitans are supportive of environmental protection and addressing inequality – two central pillars of the UN’s sustainability agenda – they will often not rank these themes as their top issues in national studies of the public’s priorities (albeit younger demographics are more likely to prioritise the environment than older generations). This is highlighted in the graph below showing the public’s policy priorities during the 2017 general election, broken down by age:

Most important political issue during 2017 general election campaign



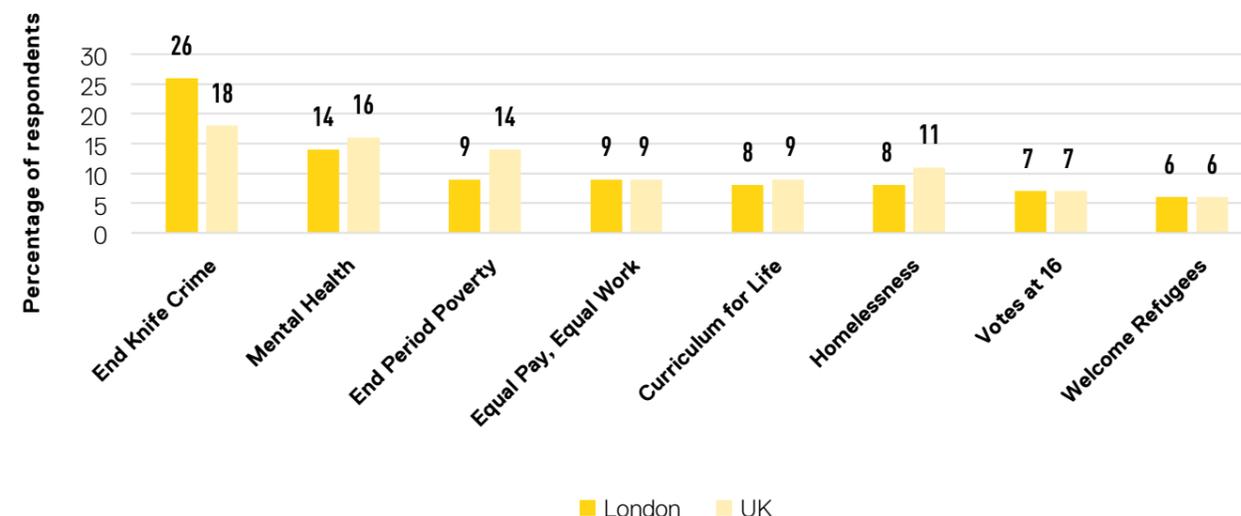
//Source: Sloam and Henn, 2018.³⁷

³⁷ Sloam, J., & Henn, M., 2018. *Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain*. Palgrave.

The evidence supports two explanations. First, it may suggest that young people have borne the brunt of the financial crisis – from the large increase in university tuition fees and the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, to the dramatic withdrawal of youth services at the local level. So, issues related to day-to-day economic subsistence often trump those related to long-term sustainability. Second, it may be linked with the way that the environment and other sustainability-related issues are measured. As this study has shown, when you break these issues down into grass-roots topics, young Londoners care passionately: as was found in discussions over subjects ranging from mental health, to air pollution, to poverty and inequality. This project also found that the discussion of these issues in the focus groups had a deliberative effect, creating greater engagement in sustainability issues amongst the project participants.

The British Youth Council (BYC) undertakes an annual survey of young people’s political preferences. Although the age group, 11 to 18 year olds, is younger than the young people in this study, the sample is not representative (more engaged young people would be more likely to participate) and the issues are pre-selected (and do not include any environmental issues), the poll of over one million young people (175,000 young Londoners) is significant.³⁸ In the BYC poll, the top issues for young people both in London and the UK was knife crime (though this was much more of a priority for young Londoners), followed by mental health, and with similar scores for equal pay for equal work, ending period poverty, and a curriculum for life and homelessness.

**British Youth Council “Make your mark” poll, 2018
11-18 year olds’ priority issues**



//Source: British Youth Council, 2018.³⁸

³⁸ British Youth Council, 2018. *Make Your Mark 2018*. <http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/makeyourmark/>

**THE 2019
SCHOOLS
STRIKES
AGAINST
CLIMATE
CHANGE
DEMONSTRATE
THAT MANY
YOUNG PEOPLE
CARE ABOUT
SUSTAIN-
ABILITY**

The relationship between education and engagement is very strong. The more someone knows about the issues and the way democracy works, the more likely they are to become engaged.³⁹ This is particularly the case for environmental issues, whose impact may not be immediately obvious in contrast to more familiar subjects such as housing or employment. With regard to sustainable development and the UN SDGs, levels of awareness and knowledge are very low.

In a recent study, only 4% of UK citizens said that they knew the SDGs well, compared to 5% in the United States, 11% in Germany, and 21% in France.⁴⁰ A Eurobarometer survey found that 73% of UK citizens had not heard of the Goals, compared to an average of 51% amongst the 15 'old' (pre-2004) member-states of the European Union.⁴¹ A National Union of Students survey found that – even amongst a highly-educated sample – 61% of respondents hadn't heard of the SDGs prior to participating in the research.⁴² Clearly this lack of knowledge is a major barrier regarding youth engagement. But there is an appetite to learn. The same NUS study reported that 70% of students would like to learn more about the SDGs and 57% would like to be more involved in action that helps to achieve the UN Goals.

There is a need for further detailed study of young people, sustainability and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. There is also a need for young people (and citizens of all ages) to be better informed about sustainability issues. In the course of this research, young Londoners stressed the role of education, and their desire to know more about sustainability, as well as their willingness to engage with policy-makers on these subjects (supported by the British Youth Council's finding on the importance of a 'curriculum for life'⁴³ – enhanced citizenship education).

The 2019 schools strikes against climate change demonstrate that many young people care about sustainability. But they also largely stemmed from a feeling among young people that there is a lack of opportunity for them to engage with policy-makers.⁴⁴ In this context, the Mayor of London can play a central role in opening up pathways to democratic engagement. Recommendations about how this might be achieved are made at the end of this report.

**YOUNG
LONDONERS
ARE ALREADY
VERY
ENGAGED, BUT
CONNECTIONS
TO POLICY-
MAKERS ARE
RELATIVELY
WEAK**

Civic engagement between communities and policy-makers is a much understudied – though integral – dimension of sustainable development. The principal of localisation is fundamental, empowering communities to shape local policy and decision-making, thus enabling democratic and effective solutions tailored to their specific circumstances.⁴⁵ SDG 11 emphasises the importance of participation and inclusion in urban planning and management.

The survey found that 40% of young Londoners paid a lot of attention to politics, and a large majority claimed they had voted in recent elections. A large proportion of survey respondents had also participated in some form of non-electoral civic activity – e.g. 29% had signed a petition and 23% had volunteered for a charity or social cause.

In this respect, young Londoners are already very engaged, but connections to policy-makers are relatively weak. Many young interviewees and focus groups participants believed that there was not enough education or information about opportunities to engage. Although this was not their priority when forced to rank alongside other pressing issues such as housing in the multiple choice survey, issues around education and civic engagement opportunities emerged more clearly through the conversations held in the interviews and focus groups.

24% of young Londoners surveyed were not active in any form of civic engagement. This figure was much higher for young people not in employment, education and training (42%).

The inclusion of young people from deprived backgrounds in policy-making in London must, therefore, become a priority.

³⁹ Galston, W. A., 2001. Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual review of political science*, 4(1), 217-234.

⁴⁰ Hudson, D., & Van Heerde-Hudson, J., 2016. *The Changing State of Public Debate on Development*. UCL. https://www.oecd.org/dev/pgd/HudsonDevComNov2016_Final.pdf

⁴¹ European Commission, 2018. Special Eurobarometer 476. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/ebs-476-report-20180925_en.pdf

⁴² National Union of Students, 2019. *Sustainable Opinion: Sustainable Development Goals*. NUS. <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/resources/student-opinion-sdgs>

⁴³ British Youth Council, 2013: *A Curriculum for Life* <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Youth-Select-Committee-A-Curriculum-for-Life-Report.pdf>

⁴⁴ Speech by youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, cited the *The Guardian*, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/23/greta-thunberg-full-speech-to-mps-you-did-not-act-in-time>

⁴⁵ Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2016: *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level*

6

CONCLUSIONS

This report investigated the issues that are most relevant to young Londoners' everyday lives and explored their priorities for government and GLA action.

The top priorities were tackling knife crime, dealing with the cost of housing and homelessness, and reducing air pollution in London, as well as providing better mental health services and improving education (especially on democracy and life skills).

Even greater challenges must be faced in dealing with the underlying problems of poverty and lack of access to opportunities amongst younger generations, which have been exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent decade of austerity.

When given the opportunity to air their views, young people were passionate, articulate and insightful. The report has demonstrated that young people are interested in key issues related to sustainability and believe that many of them should be top priorities at all levels of government. And, we have witnessed the rise of 'young cosmopolitans' in the UK – young people who support cultural diversity and international co-operation and are conscious of key environmental challenges.⁴⁶ This is particularly true of young Londoners.

Although young Londoners told us in the survey they participate in many diverse forms of civic and political action, the focus groups revealed that at least some young Londoners feel there is limited engagement between young people and political officials. This is particularly the case regarding young people from less privileged backgrounds. Levels of youth contact elsewhere in Europe are far higher.⁴⁷

However, lack of knowledge can create a major barrier to a deeper engagement in these issues – especially for young people from less privileged backgrounds. In this regard, schools and universities have a central role to play in preparing young Londoners for civic life. And, going forward, citizenship education (including teaching about sustainability and sustainability-related issues) should be better supported in schools.

The key challenge is how best to channel this civic and political engagement into existing governance structures and policy making.

This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for London's leaders. Sustainable Development Goal 11 on 'sustainable cities' emphasises the importance of youth participation in decision-making. Recent evidence from the OECD shows that youth participation in development and implementation encourages a more long-term (sustainable) approach to public policy and good governance.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sloam, J. and M. Henn, 2019. *Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain*. Palgrave.

⁴⁷ Sloam, J., 2013. *Voice and Equality: Young People and Political Participation in the European Union*. West European Politics.

⁴⁸ OECD, 2018. *Youth Stocktaking Report*, <http://www.oecd.org/gov/youth-stocktaking-report.pdf>

7

WORK ALREADY UNDERWAY

Participants in this research clearly stated they believe the issues raised should be top priorities for policy makers at all levels, including within boroughs, across London, and nationally.

Clearly, these are not problems that the GLA and boroughs can resolve on their own, and the Mayor does not have powers over many of the issues raised (education, mental health, etc). These challenges require a much greater commitment from central government and others (e.g. to reduce inequality), greater resources (e.g. for local services), as well as renewed commitment to collaborative and innovative approaches to incorporating youth voices into policy-making processes.

However, the GLA is already taking significant steps to address these issues, in terms of the overarching theme of better engaging young people in decision-making, and addressing the SDGs. The report does not provide a detailed list of all existing youth engagement activities across London as these are too numerous, but a few initiatives currently underway are highlighted below.

For example, the Mayor has created opportunities for young people to participate in debates on London's issues through the London Youth Assembly, Partnership for London's (PYL) Youth Board, and the GLA's Young Londoners Participation Network of multi-agency frontline youth workers. The Team London Young Ambassadors programme helps young people take social action in their communities on issues they care about, such as the environment or knife crime. GLA teams conduct regular research on policy areas relevant to their particular areas (e.g. the research by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) cited earlier in this report, identifying demographic trends among victims of crime⁴⁹). The GLA's Education and Youth Team routinely engage young people on a range of policy issues, including the high-profile #LondonNeedsYouAlive social media campaign, the Young Londoners Participation Network, and events such as the annual Youth Summit.

⁴⁹ MOPAC, 2018: *Justice Matters* https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/justice_matters_knife_crime_-_23_march_2018_-_presentation.pdf



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**THE DEVOLVED
ADULT
EDUCATION
BUDGET WILL
SUPPORT
ADULTS AGED
19+, TACKLING
INEQUALITIES
AND
SUPPORTING
GROUPS
EXCLUDED
FROM JOB
MARKET**

In terms of employment, the Mayor has set up the Workforce Integration Network to improve pathways for underrepresented groups to access decent jobs, boosting not only individuals' sense of community belonging, but overall social cohesion. This will initially focus on supporting young black men aged 16 to 24 into living wage employment in the construction and digital sectors, and will engage other sectors and groups over time.

On skills, the Mayor's Digital Talent programme is a £7m scheme to make sure young Londoners have the digital skills employers want, and the Mayor's Construction Academy aims to help more Londoners train in the skills they need to access vacancies on the capital's housing construction sites. The devolved Adult Education Budget will support adults aged 19+, tackling inequalities and supporting groups excluded from job market. The Mayor's London Curriculum also has numerous resources on social, economic and environmental issues - including one for secondary schools on citizenship (launching in autumn 2019), which was a key request from participants in this survey.

London's boroughs also have their own extensive youth engagement programmes. Many boroughs across London also have youth mayors to better understand and highlight issues important to young people e.g. Croydon and Newham.

The SDGs have become a unifying global language for how nations, regions and organisations can take decisive action to improve our social, economic and environmental conditions by 2030. The LSDC are now taking steps to develop an SDG strategy for London – see 'Further work for the LSDC' below for details. The government also published the Voluntary National Review of the UK's performance on the SDGs in July 2019 – though it was criticised by the Parliamentary International Development Committee for lacking a coordinated strategy, not embedding SDGs throughout government, and failing to engage with stakeholders. The UN's 'Roadmap for localizing the SDGs' advocates the role of local government in implementing the Goals, and the UK government has been urged by the Local Government Association to support local authorities to create partnerships to deliver the SDGs.

8

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

This report does not seek to make detailed recommendations on each individual policy area raised throughout this report (crime, health, etc.), as the wide range of issues addressed goes beyond the scope of the LSDC's role. Instead, the SDGs are used as a lens to frame the whole range of themes addressed, in the following set of recommendations for policy makers.

1. STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AS A SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDER GROUP WHEN CONSULTING ON STRATEGY AND POLICY

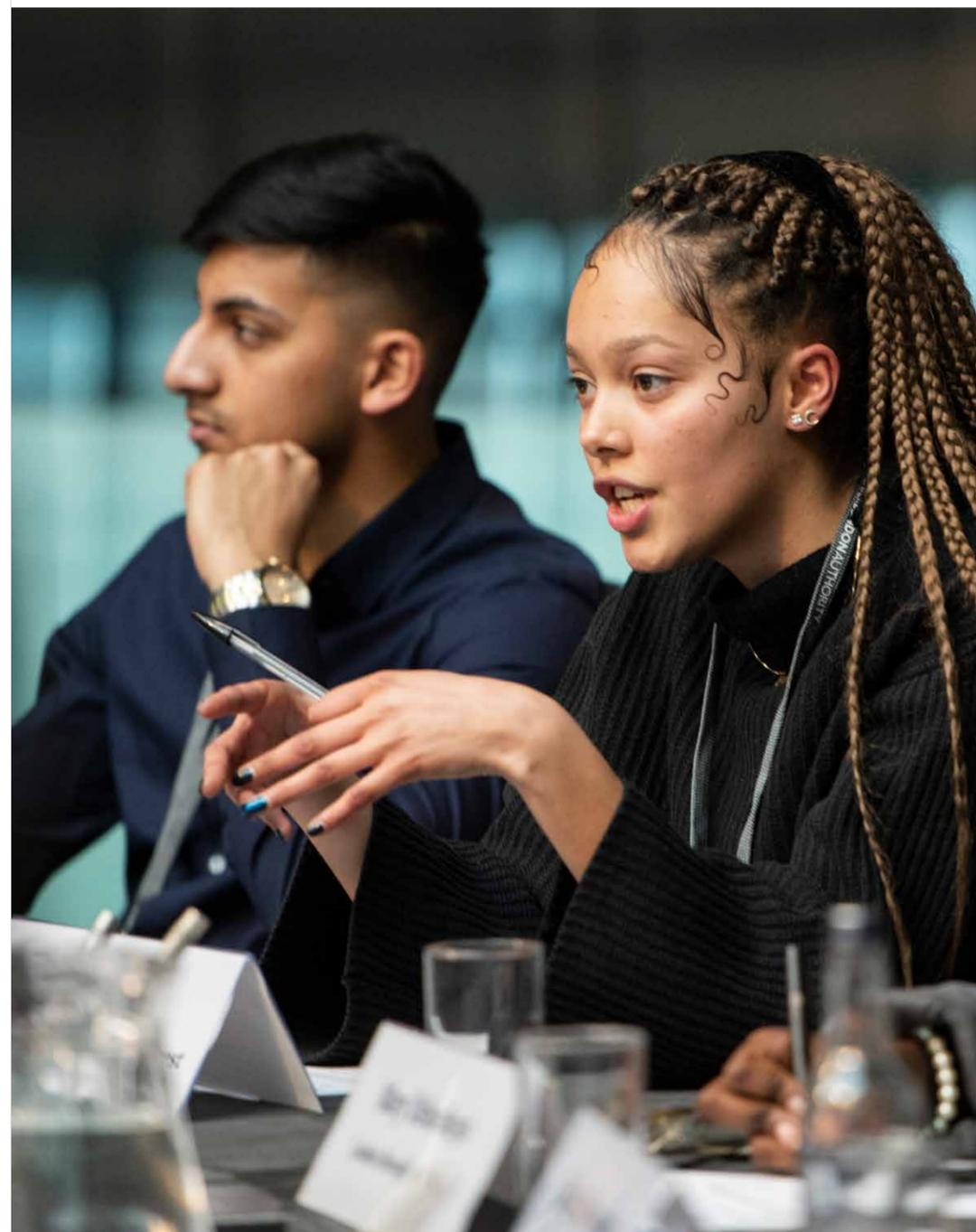
- Although 52% of survey participants said they paid attention to politics, many young interviewees and focus groups participants in this research believed that there was not enough information about opportunities to engage in decision-making. In addition to the youth engagement work noted above, existing mayoral strategies have also consulted young people during their development. However, the LSDC recommend that the Mayor could go further, by requiring all key mayoral strategies to incorporate a specific youth engagement component. The Talk London online discussion platform could provide a forum to do so.
- Likewise, national government and local authorities could consider ways to formally include youth voices in decision-making, empowering them to participate in dialogue by making public consultations more visible and accessible. This could be through targeted campaigns or social media – there is a need to develop innovative communications strategies, and as shown in the report, 42% of young people get their news from social media.
- Further to the above, all levels of national and local government should explore effective ways to show young people that their voices are valued – hence inspiring further engagement – by promoting existing good practice that highlights to young people where policy-makers have listened to and acted on their concerns. For example, this could be done via the campaign techniques proposed above.

2. EMBED THE VOICE OF YOUTH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SDGS IN LONDON

- SDG 17 ('Partnerships for the Goals') highlights that the Goals are interconnected and cut across a wide range of policy areas, levels of government and industrial sectors. The UN's World Youth Report argues that "Critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda are the role of young people in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes on the ground". Therefore when London organisations develop their approach to adopting the SDGs, this process should actively incorporate young people's voices. This includes not only the work of the LSDC, who will pay particular attention to young people's views when engaging stakeholders and the public on the SDGs. It also applies to the boroughs, businesses and other actors.
- The government has been advised to develop an integrated national SDG strategy by many organisations, including the Parliamentary International Development Committee. It has also been urged by the Local Government Association to support local authorities to create partnerships to implement the SDGs. When the government does develop its SDG strategy, it is recommended that this should include engaging with the views of young people, and incorporating their specific and pressing concerns into the UK's approach.

3. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Focus group and interview participants told us that they believed the national curriculum did not provide them with enough information on social, economic or environmental (i.e. sustainable development) issues – specifically they wanted to learn more about civic engagement and democratic participation; life skills, especially managing personal finances; and environmental issues. Research by the National Union of Students also found that 70% of students would like to learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals.
- It is therefore recommended that the sustainable development issues above are integrated more strongly into teaching at all levels of education, and that a range of actors – education institutions, educators, policy makers, local and national government, pupil and student groups, and education sector networks – collaborate to identify opportunities do so.



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9

FURTHER WORK FOR THE LSDC

The GLA and other London organisations already deliver a wide range of policies and initiatives across the breadth of issues raised by the young Londoners. This research has now added a significant body of evidence on the concerns of young Londoners, and is unique in the sheer number of participants (2,002) engaged in a specific geographical area in a specific age-range. It has provided insights to help that work be delivered more effectively and support further integration between different policy areas.

In order for this work to have real impact, further work will now be done to continue the conversation with young Londoners, ensuring this research was not a one-off. To this end, the LSDC are delivering the following during 2019-20:

- An event was held during London Climate Action Week in July 2019, inviting young people to take part in a Question Time style debate with a panel of policy makers and young leaders. The issues raised were captured and will build on the existing engagement undertaken during this report.
- This research will feed into a wider project underway to map London's Quality of Life indicators against the SDGs, situating London's sustainability performance in a global framework and context whilst identifying opportunities to further enhance the lives of Londoners. This entails adapting the UN's Global Goals to create a locally relevant set of indicators for London (e.g. global targets on poverty thresholds are not suitable for London), and identifying what indicator data is available. The GLA and LSDC have already undertaken an extensive mapping exercise to understand where we have data and where we need to gather more.
- We will engage with stakeholders during autumn and winter 2019, to agree which are the most relevant SDGs to prioritise for London, and develop collaborative approaches to implementing them.
- Young people will be a key stakeholder group during that engagement exercise, which will also include roundtable discussions with the GLA and local authorities; small and large businesses; public bodies such as the police, Transport for London, the NHS; housing groups; and other groups with significant impacts, particular duties, or data.
- We hope this engagement will form the beginning of a new network of London SDG champions, convened by the LSDC.
- The SDG mapping project, incorporating the voices of young Londoners on sustainability, will report back in 2020.

In this way, this current research forms part of an ongoing programme to further develop practices that will help policy makers to better engage young people in our democracy and help to deliver a sustainable London fit for future generations.

10

APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION

- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means “no attention at all” and 10 means “a lot of attention”, how much attention do you generally pay to politics?
- Did you vote in any to the following elections? The 2017 General Election.
- Did you vote in any to the following elections? The 2016 EU Referendum.
- Did you vote in any to the following elections? The 2016 Mayoral Election.
- Which, if any, of the following sources do you consider to be your main source of news? Please select up to 3.
- In the past 30 days, which of the following sources have you used to access the news? Please select all that apply.
- Have you been involved in any of the following activities that were unpaid in the last 12 months? Please select all that apply.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: National politicians.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: Your local council.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: The Greater London Authority.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: The Mayor of London.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: Londoners in general.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “do not trust at all, and 10 is “trust completely”, to what extent do you trust each the following?: Young people in general.
- Thinking of the following environmental issues, which do you think is the most important to you?

- Thinking of the following social issues, which do you think is the most important to you?
- Thinking of the following economic issues, which do you think is the most important to you?
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Improving access to quality community green spaces.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Supporting initiatives to reduce single use plastic use and making recycling easier
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Improving air quality in London streets.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following: Encouraging the use and generation of renewable energy (e.g. solar) to reduce carbon emissions.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Providing more support for young people to deal with mental health issues.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Providing better education about life skills and how democracy works.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Improving safety on public transport and late night services.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Increasing the number of youth centres.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments pr: Encouraging discussions about the dangers of carrying knives/knife crime (e.g. in schools, youth centres, through mentoring schemes).
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Improving access to housing for young people.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the fol: Ensuring that young Londoners have access to high-quality apprenticeships, mentoring, and employment.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following: Increasing transport affordability to young people, students, apprentices and disabled people.
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means not a priority at all and 10 means a top priority, to what extent should governments prioritise taking action on the following areas?: Strengthening action to reduce homelessness.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Restoring neighbourhood policing.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Making commuting more affordable.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Making cycling safer and easier.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Building more genuinely affordable homes.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Giving renters a better deal.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: A real push to tackle homelessness.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Protecting the green belt from development.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Strengthening relationships between Londoners from different backgrounds.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Tackling radicalisation and extremism.

- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Protecting jobs and growth from economic uncertainty.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Making London's arts and culture the best in the world.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Making London a truly 24 hour city.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Tackling air pollution in London.
- Which of the following policy areas do you think should be the main priorities for the Greater London authority? Please rank your top three: Tackling knife crime in London.
- Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job that Sadiq Khan is doing as Mayor of London?
- Which of the following, if any, do you trust most for information or advice over any concerns about violent crime?
- Note that your responses to all questions are completely confidential. Have you ever witnessed or been the victim of a crime?
- You said that you have witnessed or been the victim of a crime. There are a number of reasons why a person may or may not report a crime. Did you report this to the police?
- There are a number of reasons why a person may or may not report a crime. Imagine that you were the victim of or witnessed a crime. How likely or unlikely is it that you would report a crime to the police in this scenario?
- You said that you did not report a crime you witnessed or were a victim of to the police. What would be the main reason for this?
- Would any of the following methods of reporting made it more likely for you to have reported the crime to the police? Select all that apply
- You said you are unlikely to report a crime to the police. Would any of the following methods of reporting make it more likely for you to report a crime to the police? Select all that apply.

