

The Sustainability Shift

Climate concerns and student choices



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Introduction by Joe Persechino, Global Chief Operating Officer

At Yugo, we believe that student living is more than just accommodation – it's about creating environments that support growth, resilience, and future success. As a global provider of student housing, we're uniquely positioned to understand the evolving needs, pressures, and aspirations of students across borders.

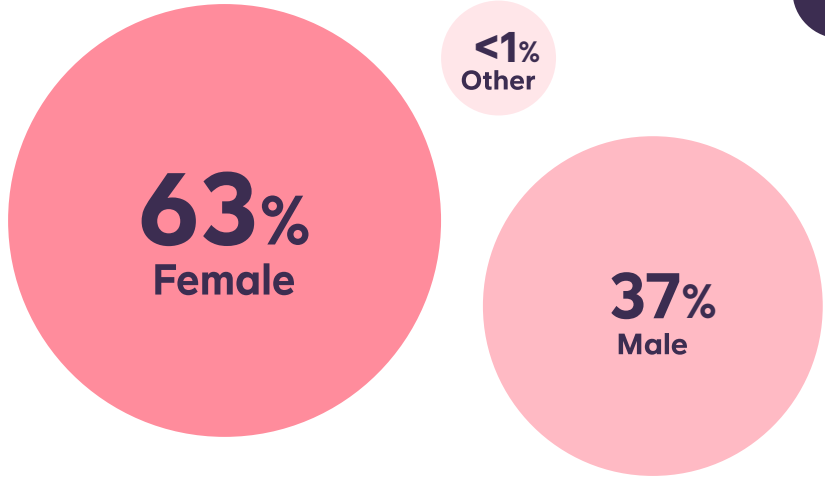
The Global Insights Programme is our annual survey-based research initiative. It compiles responses from thousands of students around the globe, each with their own unique circumstances, study pathways, and demographics.

This report reveals that climate change is **reshaping student priorities** in subtle but powerful ways. It influences **where and what they study**, it drives both **career pragmatism and activism**, and it affects **lifestyle choices** – from housing to transport, and even family planning.

This insight is invaluable not only for Yugo, but also for universities and the wider student sector, as we work together to ensure student voices are heard and meaningful actions are taken to meet their needs and expectations.

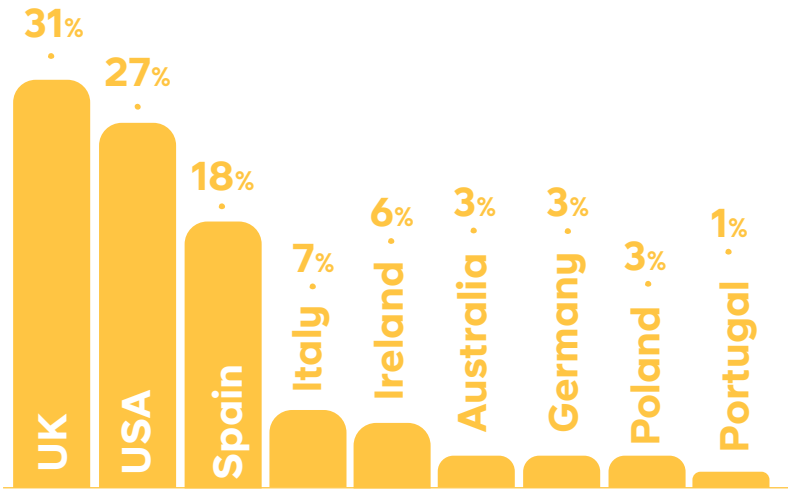


Yugo's Global Student Insights in numbers

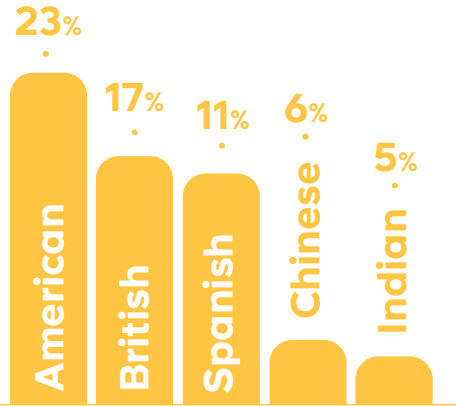


7,274 students surveyed

50+ survey questions



Students studying in 9 countries



148 nationalities represented

Is climate change impacting students' education choices?

For all three choices, influence peaks in Italy, Portugal and Australia – regions where the impacts of climate change are already being felt through changing weather patterns.

But how are climate concerns shaping student choices?



29%

said sustainability credentials impacted their choice of university
Many students may desire to fund and align themselves with organisations that reflect their climate-positive values.



26%

said sustainability concerns have impacted their career aspirations
Students have a strong sense of personal responsibility, and a desire to future-proof personal development for a climate-challenged world.



21%

said sustainability concerns impacted their choice of course
There's a strong interest in climate-related issues, and a desire to prepare for a future shaped by climate change.

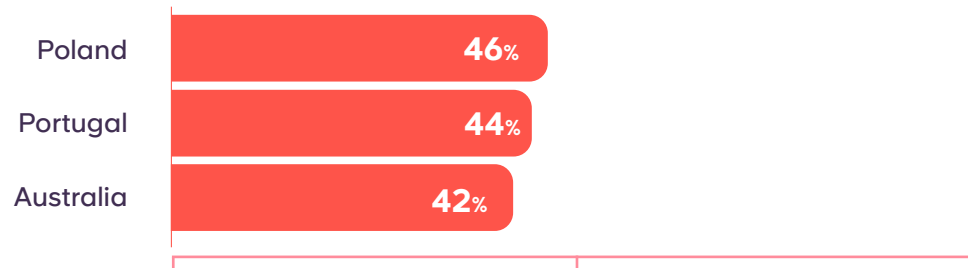
What kinds of sustainability efforts are important when choosing a university?

Students emphasise a preference for universities with tangible sustainability outcomes over symbolic pledges and promises.

- **Green spaces** are the most valued feature (65%)
- **“Actions, rather than words”** are also identified as very important (46%)
- **Eco-friendly facilities** are preferred in Ireland (72%) and Portugal (62%)
- **Renewable energy** is preferred in Germany (51%)

Some 29% of students are even willing to compromise on a university’s academic ranking if it has more impressive sustainability credentials.

This view is led by:



International students: A future-focused demographic

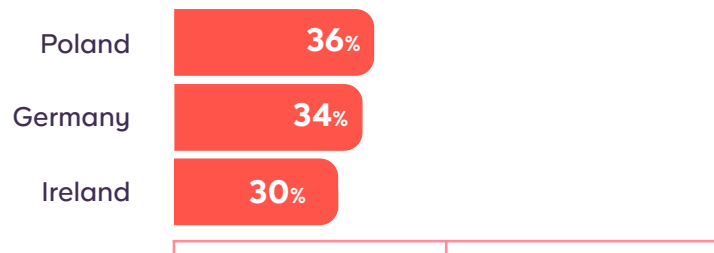
International students are more influenced by universities’ sustainability credentials than their domestic peers (36% vs. 24%). They’re also more willing to compromise on academic ranking for sustainability (36% vs. 25%).

How is climate change impacting students' course and career choices?

One in five students (21%) see climate change as an influential factor in their choice of course. Among these, 7% are driven to pursue courses directly linked to climate change and sustainability.

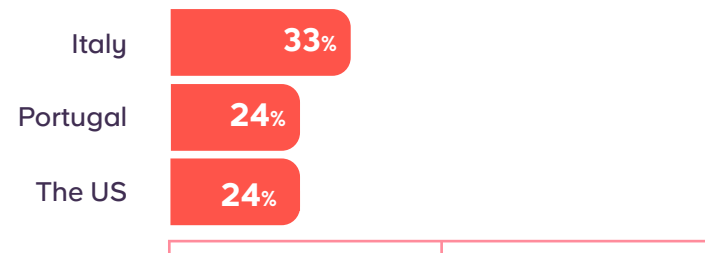
The lure of the climate-positive job market

The financial appeal of climate-related fields is strong, with a quarter (25%) of students saying they've selected climate-related courses they believe will lead to a more lucrative career. This figure rises highest in:



Budding activists

Elsewhere, students are more motivated by activism, stating they chose a course that would better equip them to fight climate change. These are the top countries where students held this view:

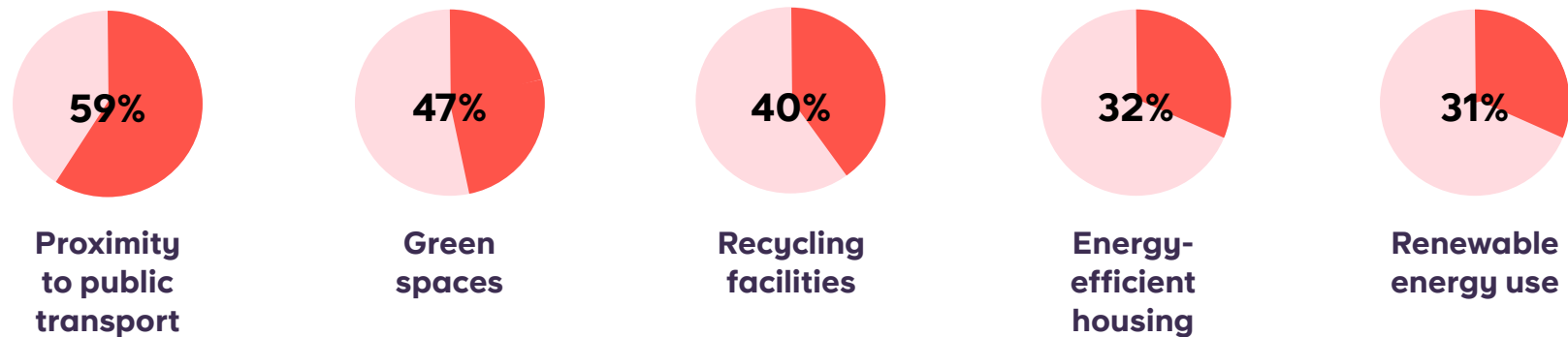


The subconscious influence of climate anxiety

However, 43% of students are unable to express how climate change has impacted their course choice. This suggests climate concerns operate as unconscious or secondary anxieties.

What sustainability features impact students' accommodation choices?

Students' top 5 most prioritised accommodation sustainability features are:



Students clearly value practical measures that allow them to take responsibility for their personal environmental impact – like making low carbon transport choices and disposing of waste responsibly.

Green spaces: A global haven

Students' love for green space is not just reserved for on campus and on the site of their accommodation. Nearly three quarters (72%) say general proximity to green spaces is an important consideration when choosing where to live.

What sacrifices are students willing to make for sustainability?



Sustainability premiums

- Globally, over half of students (53%) said they wouldn't pay extra for sustainability initiatives, with the UK leading at 60%.
- The most common threshold amongst those who would be willing to pay additional fees is "Up to £250 per year" (23%).



Family planning

- A third (32%) of respondents would reconsider having children due to climate concerns. This is varied with:

Age

- Respondents closest to entering traditional family-starting years, aged 22-25 (36%) and 26-35 (36%), are most likely to consider not having children.
- Younger respondents (18-21) also show notable concern (31%), reflecting early exposure to climate anxieties.

Gender

- Female respondents (38%) are nearly twice as likely as males (21%) to reconsider having children due to climate fears.
- Male respondents (78%) are far more resistant to altering their family plans based on environmental concerns.

Yugo's conclusion

Our findings reveal that climate change is not just an environmental issue for students – it's becoming a structural force in education, career planning, and personal life decisions.

Students want practical, everyday sustainability solutions embedded in their living and learning environments, but they also want organisations to “walk the talk” with visible actions and outcomes, even at the expense of prestige.

In fact, sustainability reputation is fast becoming a competitive differentiator for both education and accommodation providers.

As hubs for connection between domestic and international students, PBSA providers like Yugo have a responsibility to enable and amplify the climate-positive attitudes and actions that are already beginning to flourish amongst student communities.

At Yugo, this is being addressed via our YugoEco pillar, which provides vital opportunities for students to build eco-friendly habits that fit their lifestyles, and make on and off-campus life

greener – one small step at a time. This includes Carbon Literacy Project training, which allows our residents to both take action and differentiate themselves as climate-positive leaders.

In a world where climate action defines the future, students are demanding more than promises – they're shaping the standard, and Yugo is proud to help them lead the way.



Thank you.

For further insight please visit yugo.com

