CC BY NC SA

INFRA4NEXTGEN

Data Summary

European Attitudes to Climate Change and the Environment

Wouter Poortinga
Cardiff University

Funded by
the European Union

Copyright © 2025 ESS ERIC

MAKE IT GREEN
DIGITAL
HEALTHY
STRONG
EQUAL

Abstract

Background
Addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, the triple planetary crisis, requires deep societal transformation, guided by public support for effective policy and behavioural change. The study adopts a conceptual model informed by both psychological theories (see Poortinga et al., 2018) and a comprehensive review of climate-related survey questions used in academic papers (Kenny et al., 2024), providing a structured lens through which to assess public attitudes.

Aim
This data summary focuses on young Europeans' attitudes toward climate change and environmental sustainability within the context of the European Commission's *Make it Green* theme of the *NextGenEU* framework.

Data
Drawing on data from major cross-national surveys, including the European Social Survey (ESS), European Values Study (EVS), and International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), this data summary explores climate beliefs, levels of concern, willingness to act, and support for climate policies.

Results
The data reveals that, although awareness of climate change is high among young Europeans, levels of concern, perceived responsibility, and support for climate policies vary by gender and in particular education. Young people with higher education consistently show stronger engagement, greater willingness to make financial sacrifices, and higher participation in climate activism. Overall, willingness to pay higher prices or taxes has declined over time.

The summary further highlights cross-national differences in attitudes across the European Union (EU) and associated states. Northern and Western European countries tend to show greater environmental concern and activism as compared to Southern and Eastern regions. While trust in science has remained relatively strong over time, belief in technological fixes to environmental problems without behavioural change is low. The analyses provide an initial evidence base for policymakers, researchers, and civil society actors aiming to strengthen support for climate action across Europe.

Contents

1 Background **1**
2 Conceptual model **2**
3 Data and Analysis strategy **4**
3.1 Data **4**
3.2 Analysis strategy **6**
4 Results **7**
4.1 Knowledge and awareness **7**
4.2 Climate change beliefs **13**
4.3 Perceived threat, worry and concern **18**
4.3.1 Climate worry **18**
4.3.2 Perceived threat **23**
4.3.3 Environmental scepticism **28**
4.4 Perceived responsibility, trust and efficacy beliefs **33**
4.4.1 Perceived personal responsibility **33**
4.4.2 Personal efficacy **38**
4.4.3 Collective efficacy **43**
4.4.4 Trust in science **48**
4.5 Climate change and the economy **58**
4.6 Policy support and action **68**
4.6.1 Willingness to pay to protect the environment **68**
4.6.2 Environmental activism **83**
5 Conclusion **93**
6 References **96**

1 Background

Humanity is placing unprecedented pressure on the planet, driving a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. With carbon emissions pushing global temperatures towards a 1.5°C rise by as soon as 2030, we are nearing critical thresholds that could devastate ecosystems. At the same time, half of all species could face extinction by the end of the century due to habitat destruction and biodiversity collapse. Meanwhile, plastic waste production, now at 350-400 million tons annually, further compounds the environmental strain. Tackling these crises requires a profound shift in both societal systems and individual behaviours, supported by strong policy interventions to catalyse meaningful change. Addressing these problems is particularly important for future generations, as they will bear the brunt of the consequences if we fail to act now.

The Make it Green theme of the NextGenEU initiative emphasises sustainability and environmental protection, aiming to reduce the EU's carbon footprint while promoting a transition to low-carbon energy production. Central to this plan is making travel and transport more sustainable, enhancing energy efficiency, protecting biodiversity, and fostering a circular economy. These goals are supported by a comprehensive suite of EU policies and strategies, including the 2030 Climate Target Plan, the European Green Deal, the EU Forest Strategy, the Circular Economy Action Plan, and the Farm to Fork Strategy. These initiatives collectively aim to drive systemic, long-term change towards a greener and more resilient future, ensuring that sustainability principles are integrated into economic growth, urban development, and everyday life.

The data summaries produced as part of the Infra4NextGen project provide comprehensive insights into existing data and services across the five NextGenEU and youth policy areas: 'Make it Green', 'Make it Digital', 'Make it Healthy', 'Make it Strong', and 'Make it Equal'. These summaries highlight findings from major international data infrastructures, including the European Social Survey (ESS), European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS), Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), European Values Survey (EVS), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), and Eurobarometer ensuring they are tailored to the needs of academics, policymakers, and the general public.

Given the project's focus on NextGenEU, the data summaries prioritise the perspectives and attitudes of young Europeans, defined here as those under the age of 35, either as standalone analyses or in comparison to older age groups. The Make it Green theme primarily focuses on attitudes toward climate change, environmental concern, and climate-related policies and actions (see Section 2 Conceptual Model). It uses data from the ESS, EVS, and ISSP, all of which have fielded dedicated modules on the environment and climate change. The data summary for this theme provides insights from existing data measuring Europeans' attitudes toward the environment and climate change, their level of concern, the actions they believe are necessary, and how these should be balanced with economic considerations.

2 Conceptual Model

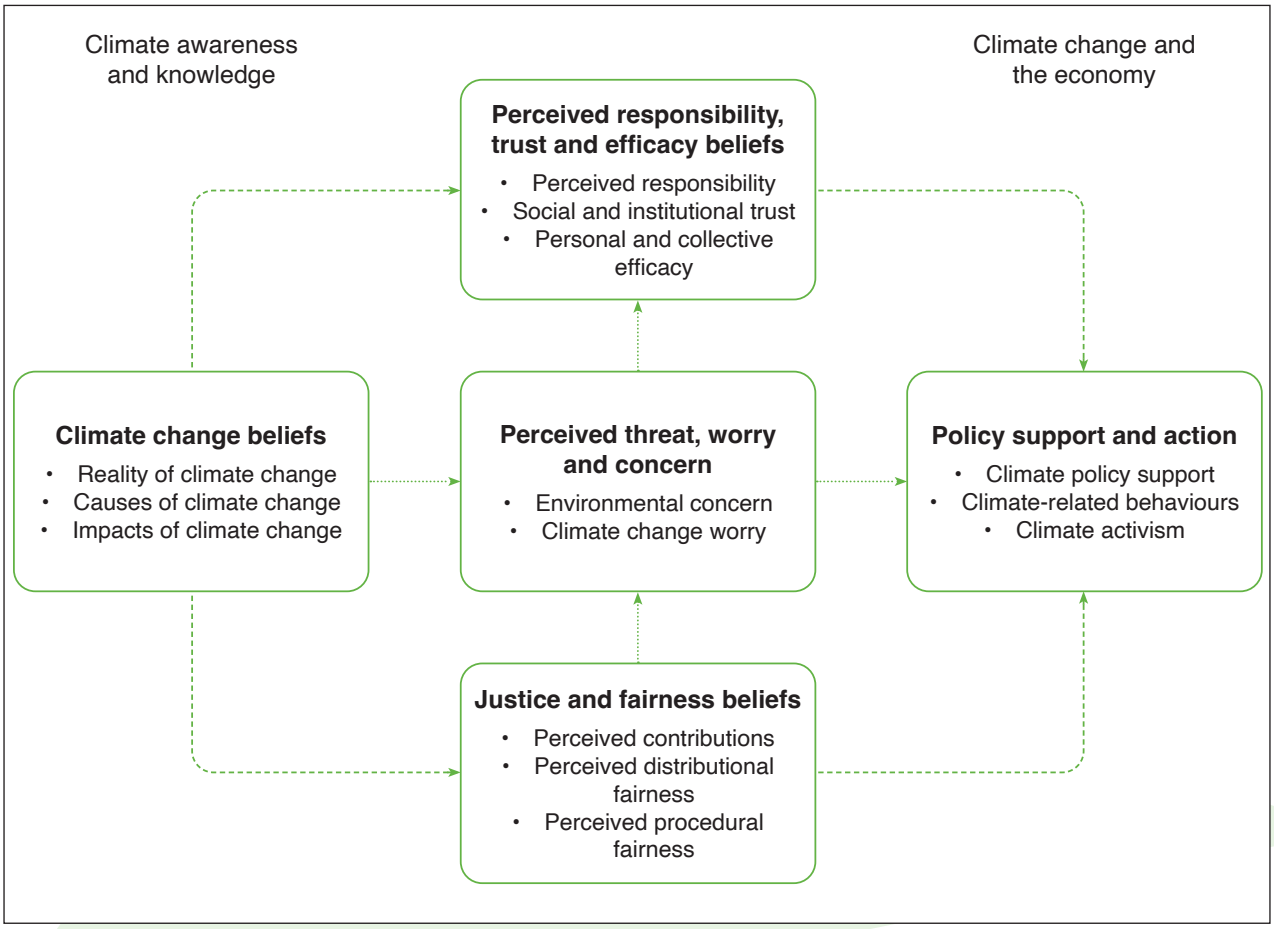
The conceptual model for the Make it Green theme is informed by the ESS module on Attitudes to climate change and energy (Poortinga et al., 2018) and John Kenny et al. (2024)'s review and classification of climate change questions in public opinion surveys (Kenny et al., 2024). These two sources were used as a framework to design the content of the Make it Green module for the CROss-National Online Survey 3 (CRONOS-3) panel survey and formed the basis for the data inventory for the theme.

The ESS Round 8 module drew upon the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model (Stern, 2000) and the Collective Action Model (Lubell, 2002), both of which focus on psychological mechanisms underpinning pro-environmental behaviour. The collective and moral nature of environmental issues in general (and climate change in particular) holds that personal norms, efficacy beliefs, and trust in institutions play a critical role in people's willingness to support environmental policy and engage in pro-environmental behaviours. The module covered the areas of (1) climate change beliefs, (2) climate change concerns, (3) personal norms, efficacy, and trust, and (4) climate policy and action.

Kenny et al (2024) took a bottom-up approach by reviewing questions asked in public surveys in a cross-national context. An analysis of over 270 publications identified a wide diversity of concepts relating to the themes of (1) Information, engagement and knowledge, (2) Climate change beliefs, (3) Threat, worry and concern, (4) Responsibility and action, (5) Trade-offs between climate change and the economy, (6) Support for climate policies, and (7) Evaluation of action on climate change.

As discussions surrounding climate change increasingly highlight the need for climate justice, particularly for those most affected by climate change and the energy transition, the framework for the Infra4NextGen project has been expanded to incorporate questions on distributional fairness of climate impacts and mitigation costs. Climate justice recognises that the impacts of climate change disproportionately affects marginalised populations, exacerbating existing social inequalities (Büchs et al., 2011). Emerging evidence suggests that perceived fairness in the distribution of costs and impacts plays a critical role in garnering public support for climate action (Carman, 2010; Clayton, 2018; Poortinga, Whitmarsh, et al., 2023). Furthermore, the cumulative impacts of climate change on future generations increasingly invoke the need for fairness for future generations. The expanded focus on the various strands of climate justice (for those most affected by the energy transition, for the global poor, and for future generations) ensures that the Make it Green module not only assesses current attitudes and beliefs but also emphasises the moral imperative for equitable climate solutions, making it relevant and vital for informing policies that benefit both present and future generations. The conceptual framework for the CRONOS-3 Make it Green module is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the CRONOS-3 Make it Green module



3 Data and Analysis strategy

3.1 Data

This data summary provides an overview of available data from three surveys (ESS, EVS, and ISSP) focusing on climate change and environmental issues. It presents descriptive results from surveys conducted from 2002 to 2011 and from 2016 to 2023 for the ESS, from 1990 to 2017 for the EVS, and from 1993 to 2020 for the Environment module and from 1996 to 2017 for the Role of Government module of the ISSP. This is broadly organised around the themes of (1) Knowledge and awareness, (2) Climate change beliefs, (3) Perceived threat, worry and concern, (4) Perceived responsibility, trust and efficacy beliefs, (5) Climate change and the economy, and (6) Policy support and action.

Justice and Fairness Beliefs are not represented in this data summary, as the ESS, EVS and ISSP did not include questions on this topic. The data summary will later be updated with results from the CRONOS 3 panel which will include, among others, questions related to this theme.

The European Social Survey (ESS) has collected cross-national data every two years since 2002, covering a wide range of social, political, and environmental topics. For this data summary, we include data from waves 1-5 (2002-11) and waves 8, 10 and 11 (2016/17, 2020-22 and 2023/24), ensuring a broad temporal perspective on environmental attitudes and climate-related concerns. The ESS follows strict methodological guidelines to ensure high data quality, including probability sampling and rigorous translation standards. All respondents were at least 15 years old. The ESS is used here to provide insights into climate change beliefs, climate change concern and perceived responsibility, as well as trust in science to solve environmental problems.

The 2002/03 wave included 21 countries from the EU27 and associated states (i.e., United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland, and Norway): Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia, plus United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway. In 2004/05, participation expanded to 23 countries. Newly included were Estonia, Iceland, and Slovak Republic. Italy did not participate this year. In 2006/07, most countries from the 2004/05 wave remained. Czechia, Greece, Luxembourg, and Iceland were absent, while Cyprus and Bulgaria participated for the first time. In 2008/09, the sample shifted again: Austria was absent, while Czechia and Greece rejoined, and Croatia, Latvia and Romania joined for the first time, expanding participation to 25 countries. In 2010/11, the sample included 24 countries. Participating countries were: Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, and United Kingdom.

In 2016/17, 21 countries from the EU27 and associated states participated in the ESS: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, and United Kingdom. In 2020-2022, participation expanded to 27 countries. Newly included countries were Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, and Slovak Republic. The 2023/24 survey

included 23 countries. Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, and Latvia did not participate.

The European Values Survey (EVS) is a large-scale, cross-national longitudinal survey that explores fundamental social, cultural, and political values across Europe. Conducted approximately every nine years since 1981, it provides long-term insights into how attitudes toward the environment and sustainability have evolved. For our analysis, we include data from the 1990, 1999, 2008, and 2017 waves, capturing shifts Europeans' willingness to pay to prevent environmental pollution over nearly three decades. The minimum age of respondents is 18 years in most countries, and samples are representative of the adult population.

In the 1990 wave of the EVS, the following countries from the EU27 and associated states participated: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovak Republic. In 1999, participation was largely consistent, with the exception of Norway who did not participate. In 2008, Norway rejoined and Switzerland joined for the first time. In 2017, the participating countries were: Austria, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, and United Kingdom.

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is a cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences. Established in 1984, the ISSP has since included members covering various cultures around the globe. For our summary, we include data from the Environment module (fielded in 1993, 2000, 2010 and 2020) and Role of Government module (fielded in 1996, 2006 and 2016). Sampling restrictions differ across countries and survey years, with the minimum respondent age typically between 15 and 18 years. The ISSP is a valuable data source for the Make it Green theme, offering comparative insights from a large number of questions on climate change awareness, environmental concern and scepticism, efficacy beliefs, trust in science, trade-offs between climate change and the economy, willingness to pay for environmental action, and environmental activism.

For the Environment module, 11 countries from the EU27 and associated states participated in 1993: Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, and United Kingdom. In 2000, participation expanded to 16 countries. Newly included countries were Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Portugal, and Sweden. Hungary and Italy did not participate in this wave. In 2010, most countries from 2000 remained. France, Iceland, Lithuania, and Slovak Republic participated for the first time. Ireland did not participate in this wave. In 2020, 15 countries from the EU27 and associated states participated: Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovak Republic.

For the Role of Government module, 12 countries from the EU27 and associated states participated in 1996: Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Sweden, and Slovenia. In 2006, participation expanded to 14 countries. Newly included countries were Denmark, Finland, and Slovak Republic. Italy did not participate in this wave. In 2016, 13 countries from the EU27 and associated states participated: Switzerland, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France,

Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Sweden, Slovenia, and Slovak Republic.

3.2 Analytical Strategy

This Make it Green data summary draws on multiple datasets, each offering unique insights into public attitudes to climate change and the environment. As it involves different data infrastructures, there is not a single, consistent sample for the different analyses, as is typically done in empirical research. Instead, the data summary applies standardised rules across all datasets to ensure comparability while maximizing the available data. Each analysis includes valid responses from individuals whose age, gender, and education level are known, with analyses restricted to participating countries within the current EU27 and associated states (i.e., United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland, and Norway). The number countries included varies by dataset and wave, meaning that both the baseline for comparative analyses and the number of countries in cross-country comparisons may differ.

Variables were selected based on how often they were fielded in the different surveys and their relevance to the conceptual model of the Make it Green theme. Variables were only considered if they were included in at least two waves and selected to provide a broad representation of the different themes from the framework. To provide a broad and accessible perspective on the available data, we combine group-based comparisons over time with cross-country comparisons based on age for the latest available wave of each survey. The analyses compare three age groups (up to 34 years, 35 to 54 years, and 55 years and over), as well as gender (male and female) and education level (low, medium, and high) within the youngest age group, i.e., up to 34 years. These are referred to as 'young Europeans'. Cross-country comparisons are conducted for two age groups (up to 34 years and 35 years and over), using the most recent wave in which the relevant question was asked.

All analyses were conducted using R statistical software (version 4.3.2) in combination with RStudio (version 2024.12.0+467), with a similar approach applied to all questions. Variables were recoded to reflect the percentage of positive responses, such as those who selected 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree' on five-point scales ranging from 1 ('Strongly agree') to 5 ('Strongly disagree') or those who chose 'Probably should be' or 'Definitely should be' on four-point scales ranging from 1 ('Definitely should be') to 4 ('Definitely should not be'). For longer, end-labelled scales, values above the midpoint were considered positive. For instance, responses on an 11-point scale from 0 ('Not at all') to 10 ('A great deal') were recoded to represent values from 6 to 10.

The data were weighted where possible. For the ESS, post-stratification and population weights were applied to adjust for non-response bias within countries and for differences in population sizes across countries. For the EVS, a general population weight was applied to correct for unequal selection probabilities and non-response. The ISSP waves were adjusted using post-stratification weights only. No official population weights were available for either the EVS or the ISSP datasets.

4 Results

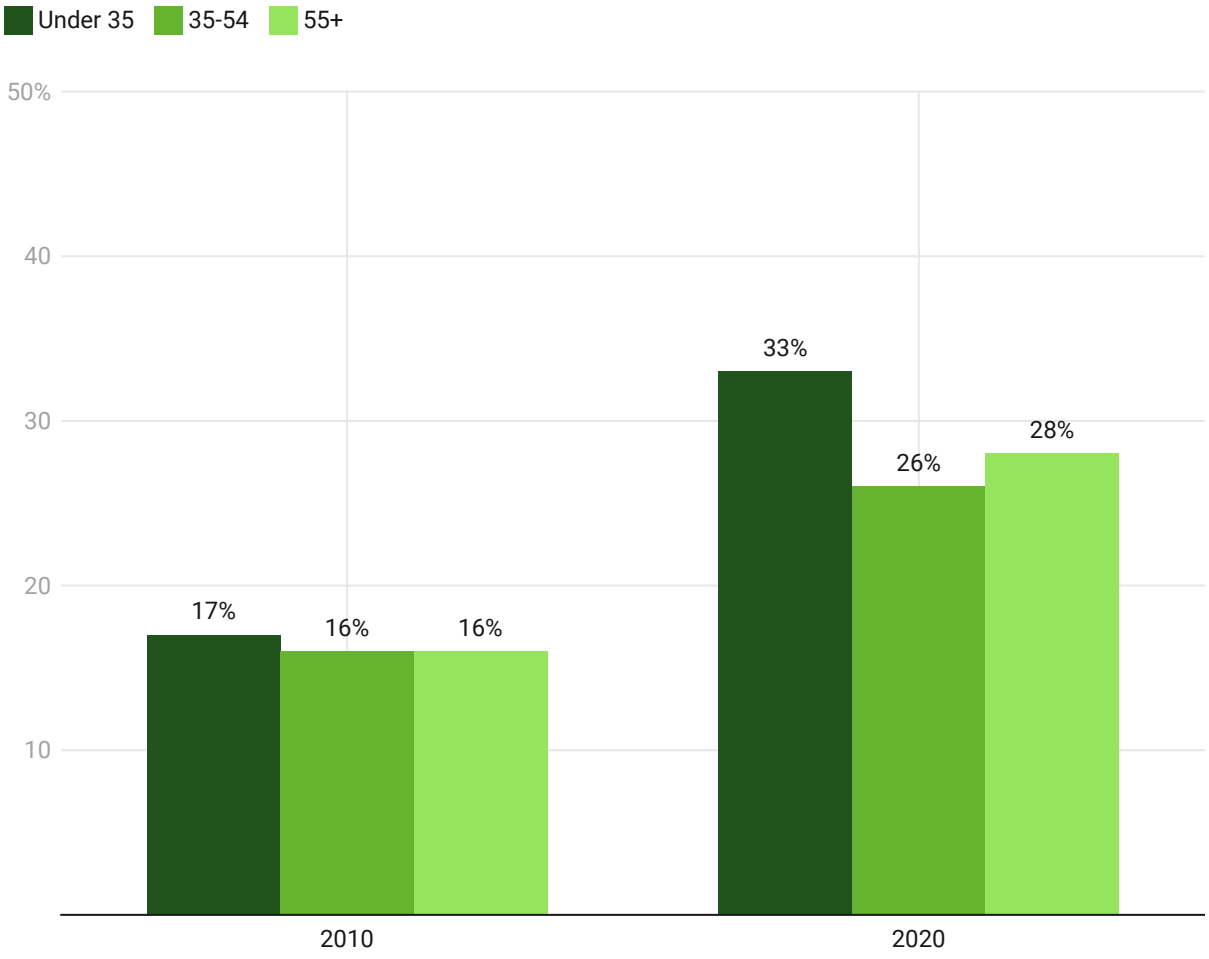
This section presents the key findings related to the Make it Green theme, structured according to the themes of Knowledge and awareness (section 4.1), Climate change beliefs (section 4.2), Perceived threat, worry and concern (section 4.3), Perceived responsibility, trust and efficacy beliefs (section 4.4), Climate change and the economy (section 4.5), and Policy support and action (section 4.6). Special attention is given to differences across age groups, gender and education differences among young Europeans, age differences across countries, as well as changes over time.

4.1 Knowledge and awareness

Public awareness of climate change and environmental degradation is an essential precursor to policy action. The extent to which individuals recognise climate change as an urgent issue influences their willingness to support mitigation policies and adjust their own behaviour. Figures 2 to 6 analyse how climate change is perceived as a priority issue.

Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of Europeans who consider climate change to be one of the most pressing national issues, according to age. The data shows that younger individuals (those under 35) are slightly more likely to view climate change as a top issue in 2020, although the differences are small. The environment has become a more pressing issue from 2010 (16-17%) to 2020 (26-33%) across all age groups, although the overall levels remain low.

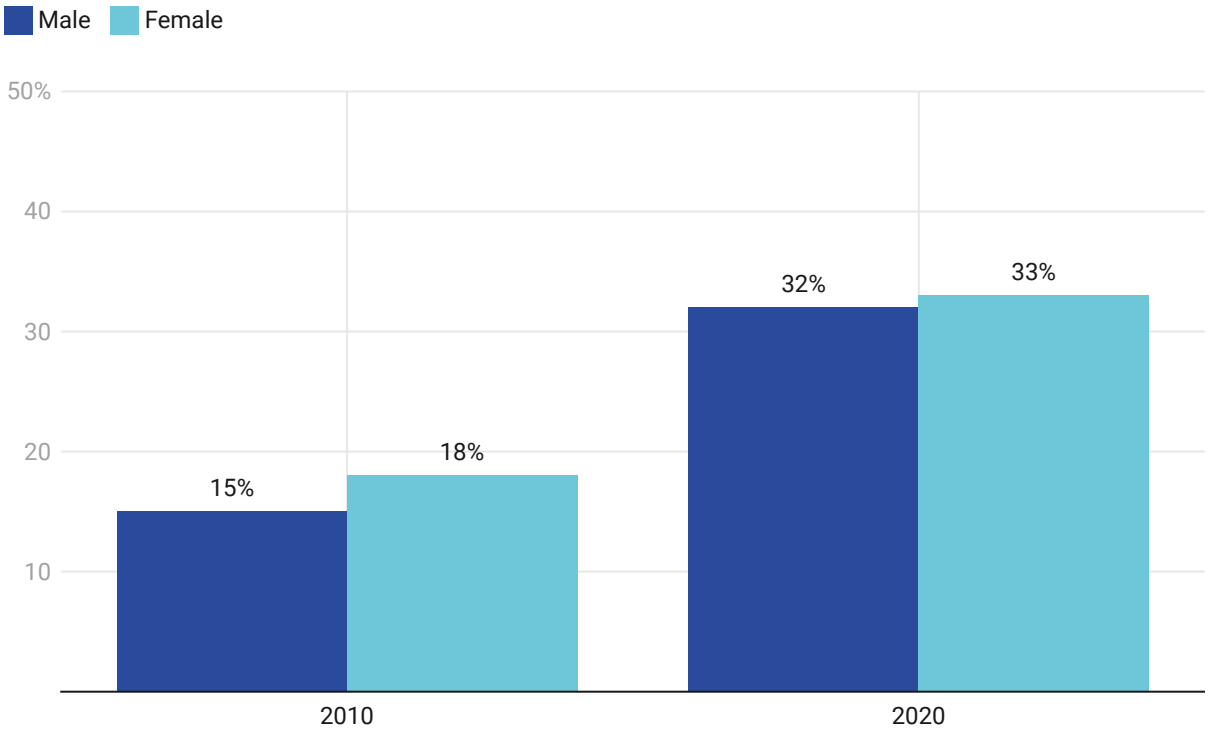
Figure 2. Percentage of Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue, by age group over time



ISSP - Percentage of Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue for [COUNTRY] today by age group in 2010 and 2020.

Figure 3 presents the perception of climate change as a top issue among young Europeans, disaggregated by gender. While the differences between young men and young women are relatively small, both groups regarded climate change as a significantly more important issue in 2020 than in 2010.

Figure 3. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue, by gender over time

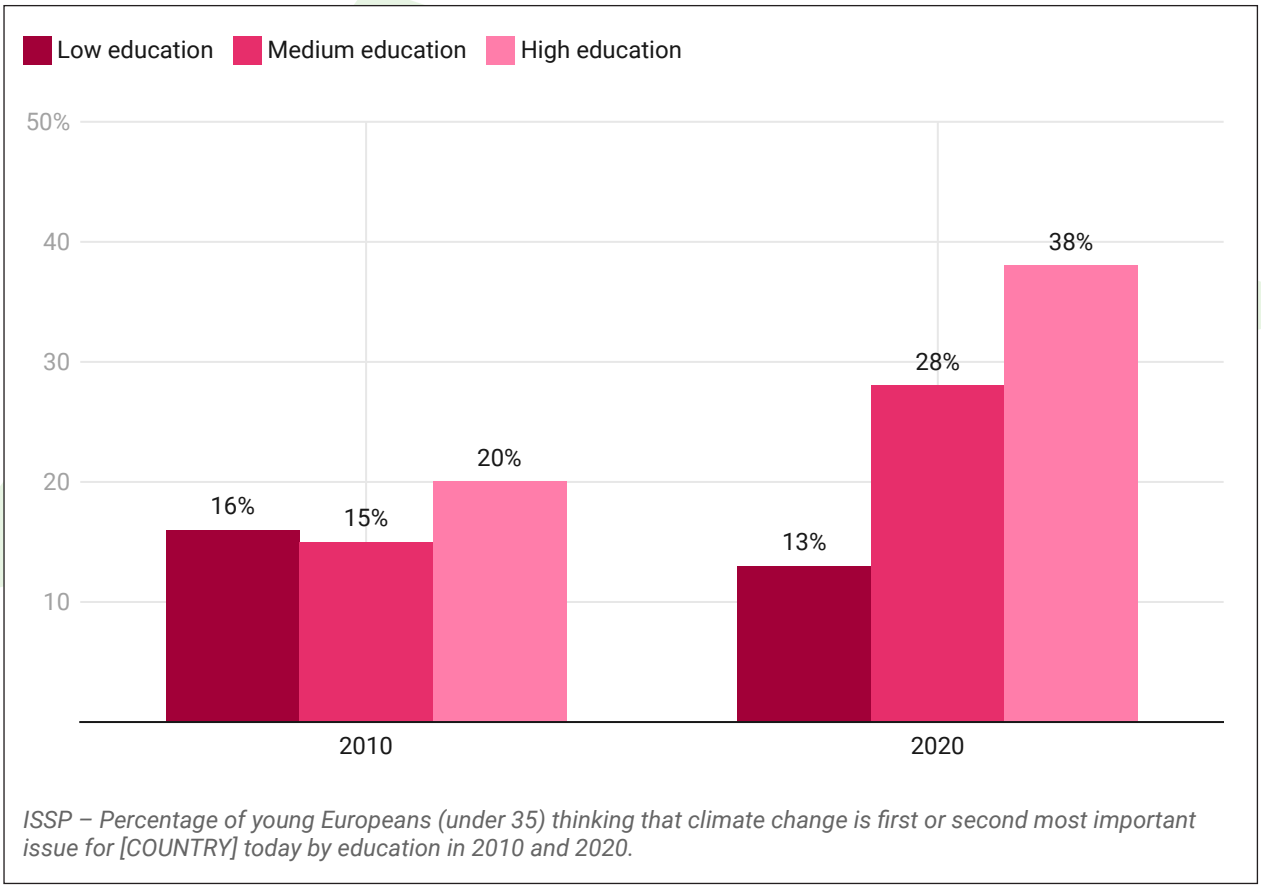


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (aged under 35) thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue for [COUNTRY] today by gender in 2010 and 2020.

Figure 4 illustrates the perception of climate change as a top issue among young Europeans, broken down by education level. Young individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to consider climate change an important issue compared to those with medium or lower levels of education.

In 2010, the differences were relatively small (ranging from 15% to 20%), but in 2020 the gap had widened significantly: 38% of young Europeans with higher education identified climate change as a top issue, compared to 28% of those with medium education and only 13% of those with lower education. Notably, while climate change increased as a top issue for those with medium and high levels of education (from 15% and 20% in 2010 to 28% and 38% in 2020, respectively), it decreased for those with lower education, from 16% in 2010 to 13% in 2020.

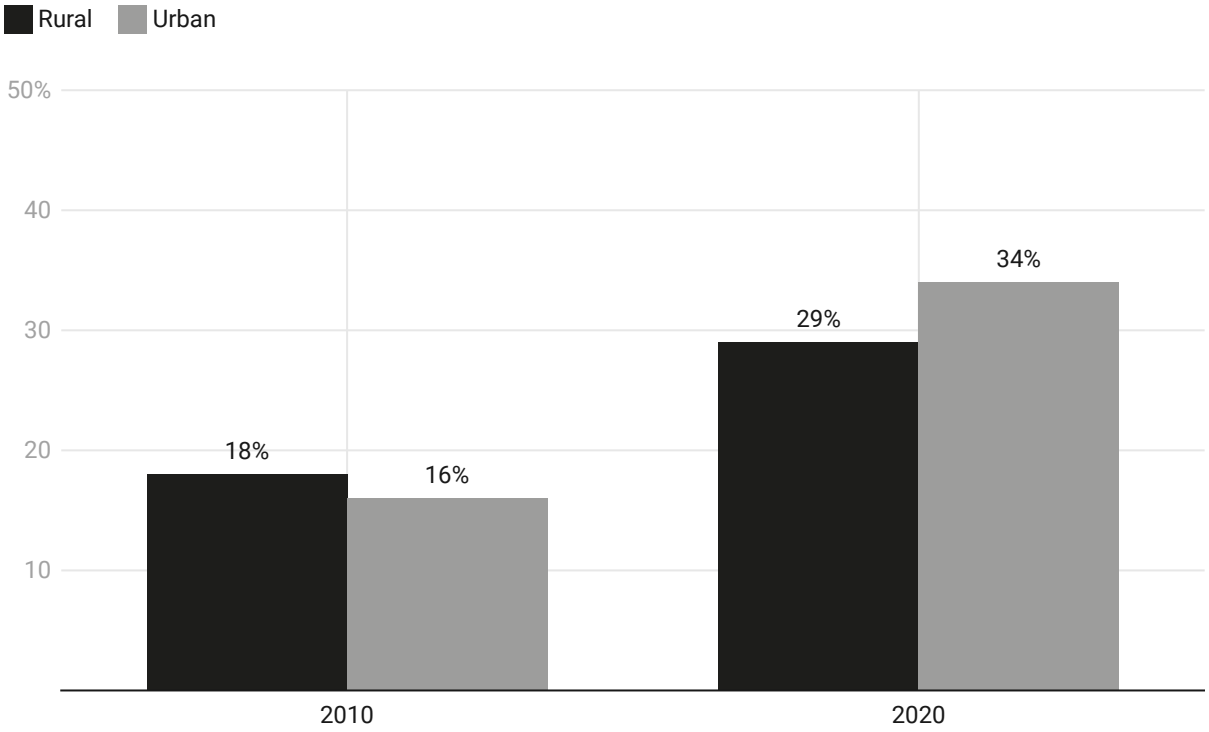
Figure 4. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue, by education level over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue for [COUNTRY] today by education in 2010 and 2020.

Figure 5 shows the perception of climate change as a top issue among young Europeans living in urban and rural areas. In 2020 young Europeans living in urban areas were slightly more likely to consider climate change an important issue (34%) as compared to those living in rural areas (29%).

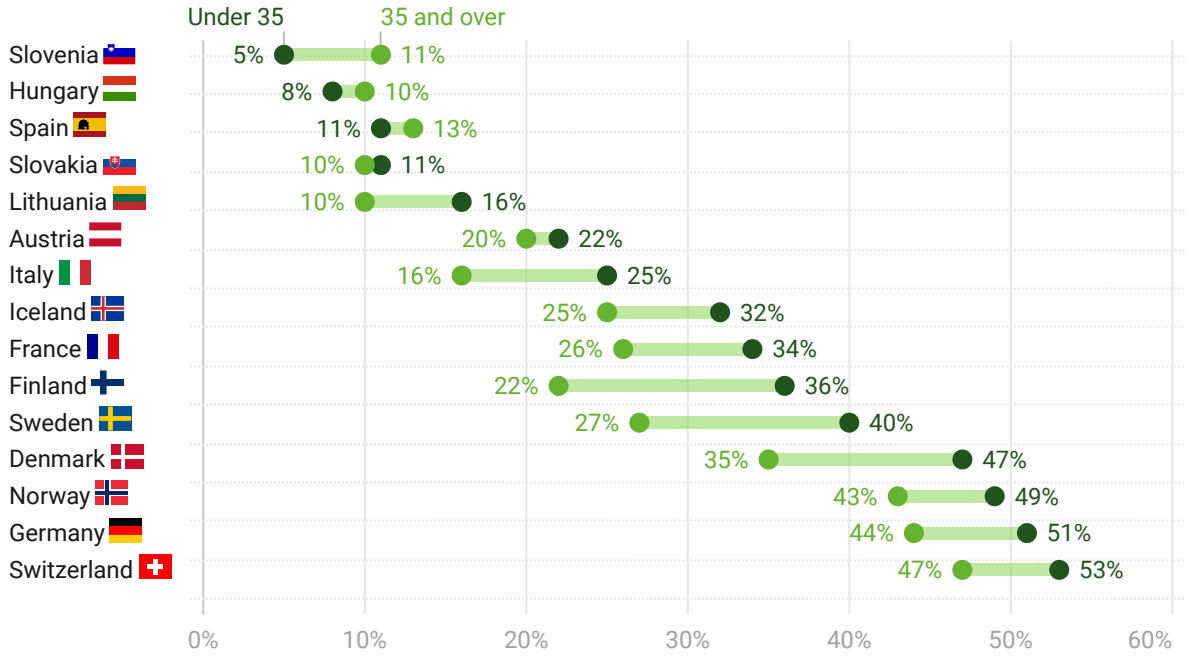
Figure 5. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue, by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue for [COUNTRY] today in urban and rural areas in 2010 and 2020.

Figure 6 provides a cross-national comparison of the perception that climate change is a top issue in 2020, segmented by age. The results highlight large differences across European countries, with Northern and Western European countries more likely to see climate change as a top issue, while Southern and Eastern European countries appear to give it less priority. There are also large differences between younger (under 35) and older (35 and over) Europeans. Younger Europeans, especially those in Northern and Western European countries, are more likely to think that climate change is an important issue facing their country. The age differences in Southern and Eastern European countries tend to be smaller.

Figure 6. Percentage of Europeans who think that climate change is first or second most important issue, by country and age group



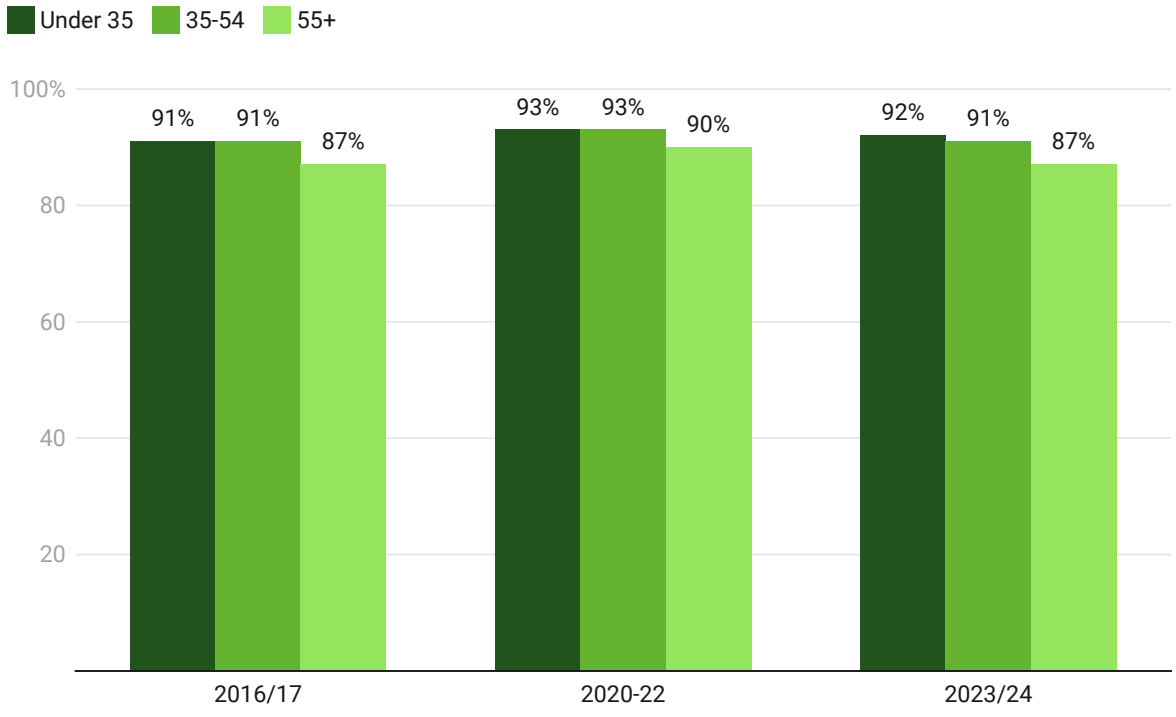
ISSP – Percentage of Europeans thinking that climate change is first or second most important issue by country and age group (2020)

4.2 Climate change beliefs

Beliefs about the causes of climate change form a foundational component of public engagement and support for climate action. Climate change beliefs refer to propositional cognitions about the nature of climate change, encompassing people's views on its reality, causes, and impacts. These beliefs represent individuals' mental representations of climate change and what they accept as true, as well as their evaluative judgments about its consequences. Figures 7 to 11 explore patterns in climate change beliefs and how they have evolved from 2016 to 2022.

Figure 7 presents the percentage of Europeans who believe that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity by age group from 2016/17 to 2023/24. The results show that an overwhelming majority of around 87-93% think climate change is at least partly caused human activity, with only small differences between the different age groups. The numbers have remained stable at those high levels from 2016/17 to 2023/24, with the older Europeans (aged 55 and over) showing slightly lower levels than the other age groups.

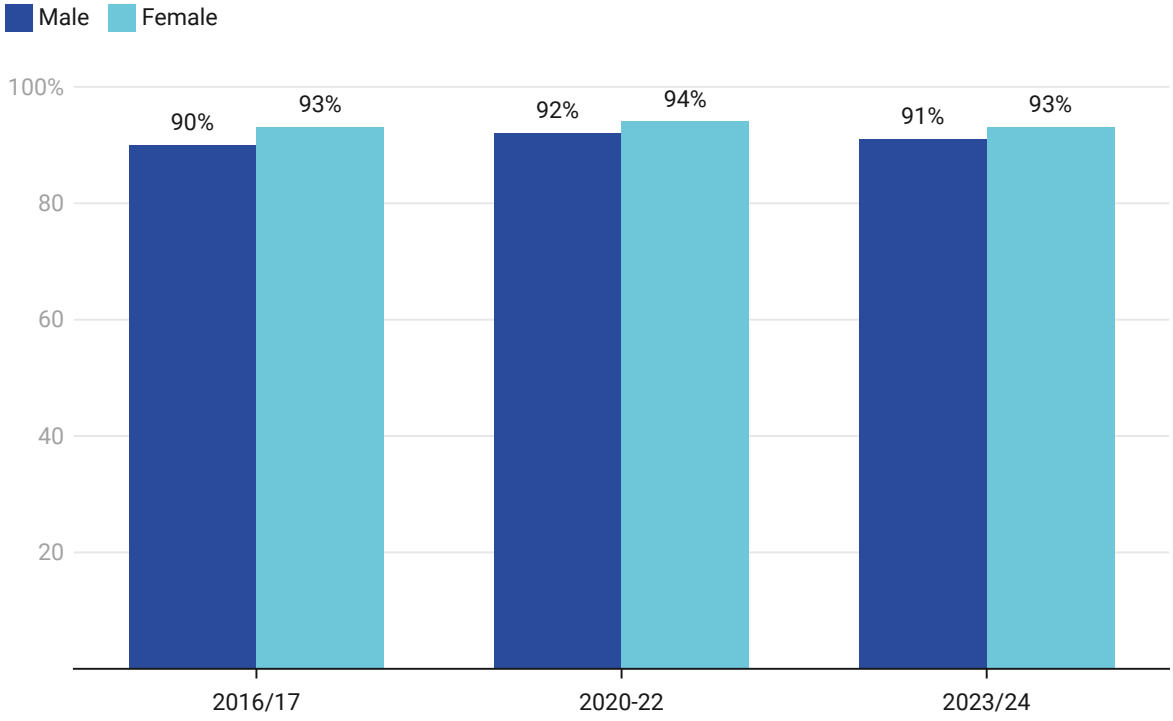
Figure 7. Percentage of Europeans thinking that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, by age group over time



ESS – Percentage of Europeans who think that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity by age group over time

Figure 8 illustrates gender differences among young Europeans in the belief that climate change is at least partially caused by human activity. The results show that both young men and young women acknowledge human responsibility for climate change, with only minor differences. Young male Europeans are only slightly less inclined to agree that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity. These gender differences have remained stable between 2016/17 and 2023/24.

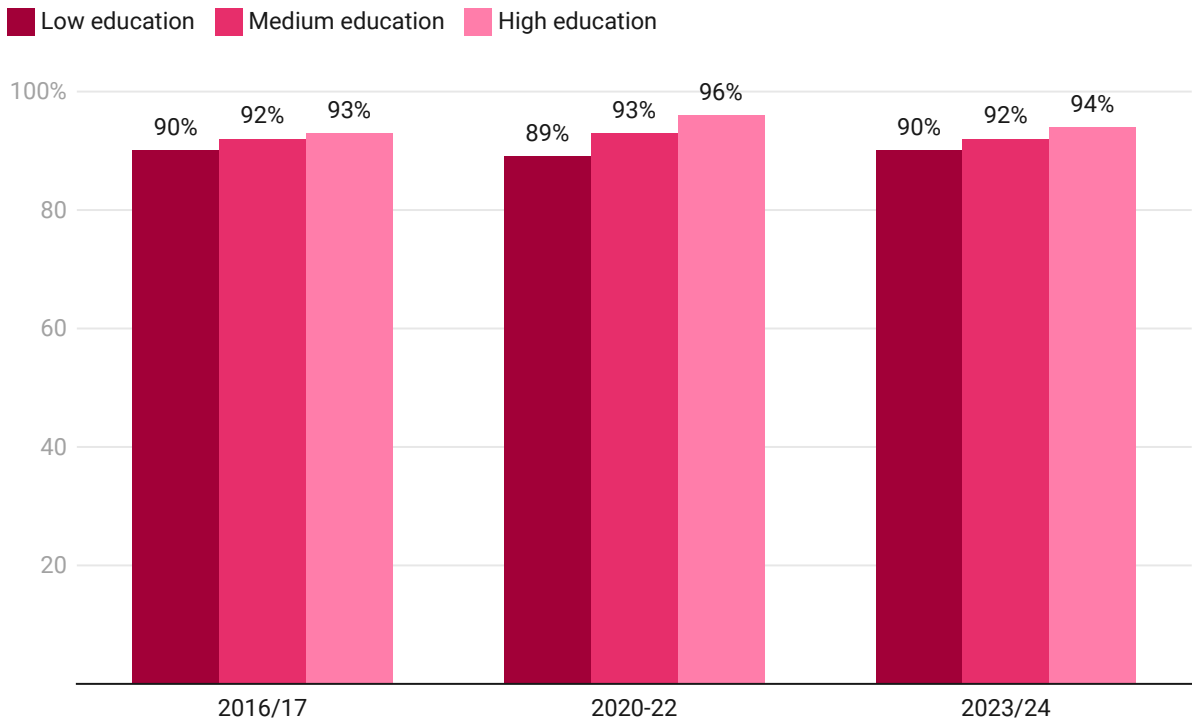
Figure 8. Percentage of young Europeans who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, by gender over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity by gender over time

Figure 9 presents the relationship between education level and belief in human-caused climate change among young Europeans. Those with higher education (93-96%) are slightly more likely to believe that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, compared to those with medium (92-93%) or lower levels of education (89-90%) across the three waves of data collection, from 2016/17, 2020/22 and 2023/24. However, the differences across the different education groups are relatively small.

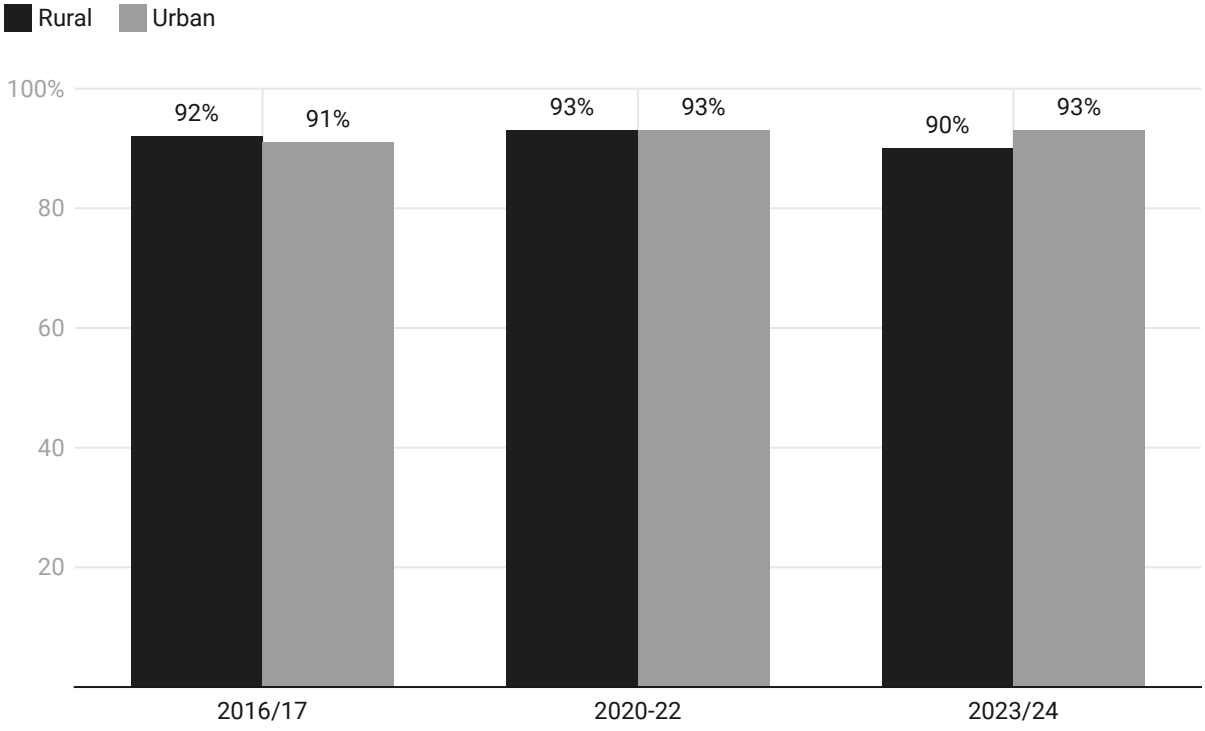
Figure 9. Percentage of young Europeans who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, by education level over time



Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity by education over time.

Figure 10 shows the belief in human-caused climate change among young Europeans living in urban and rural areas. The differences between those living in urban and rural areas are negligible.

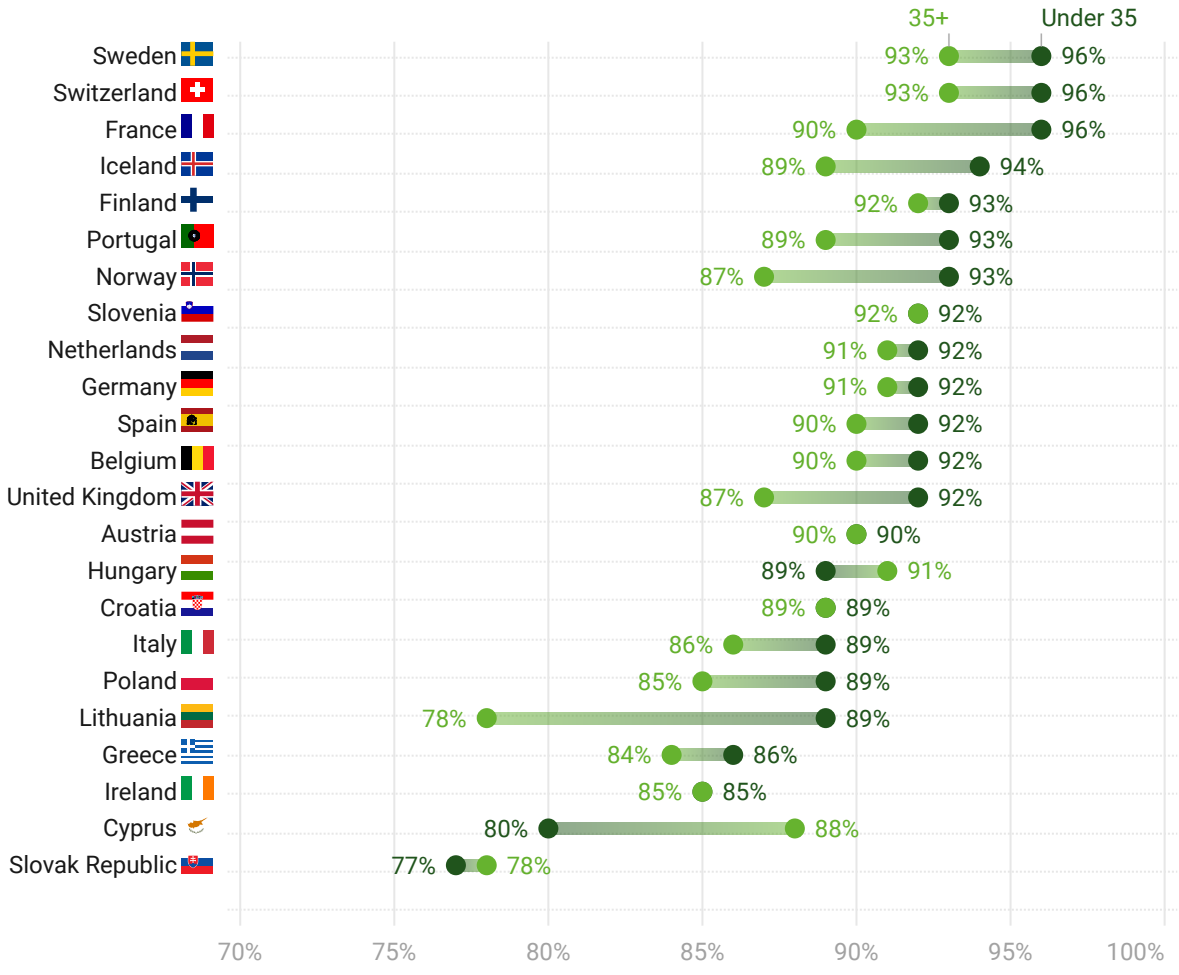
Figure 10. Percentage of young Europeans who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, by place of living over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 11 provides a cross-national comparison of the belief that climate change is at least partly caused human activity in 2023/24, segmented by age. It shows that an overwhelming majority of Europeans believe in human-caused climate change, with slightly lower levels in a number of Eastern (e.g., Slovak Republic, Lithuania) and Southern (e.g., Cyprus, Greece) European nations. There are minor age differences, with younger Europeans being slightly more likely than older Europeans to think that climate change is at least partly caused by human activity.

Figure 11. Percentage of Europeans who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity, by country and age group



ESS – Percentage of Europeans who think climate change is at least partly caused by human activity by age and country (2023/24)

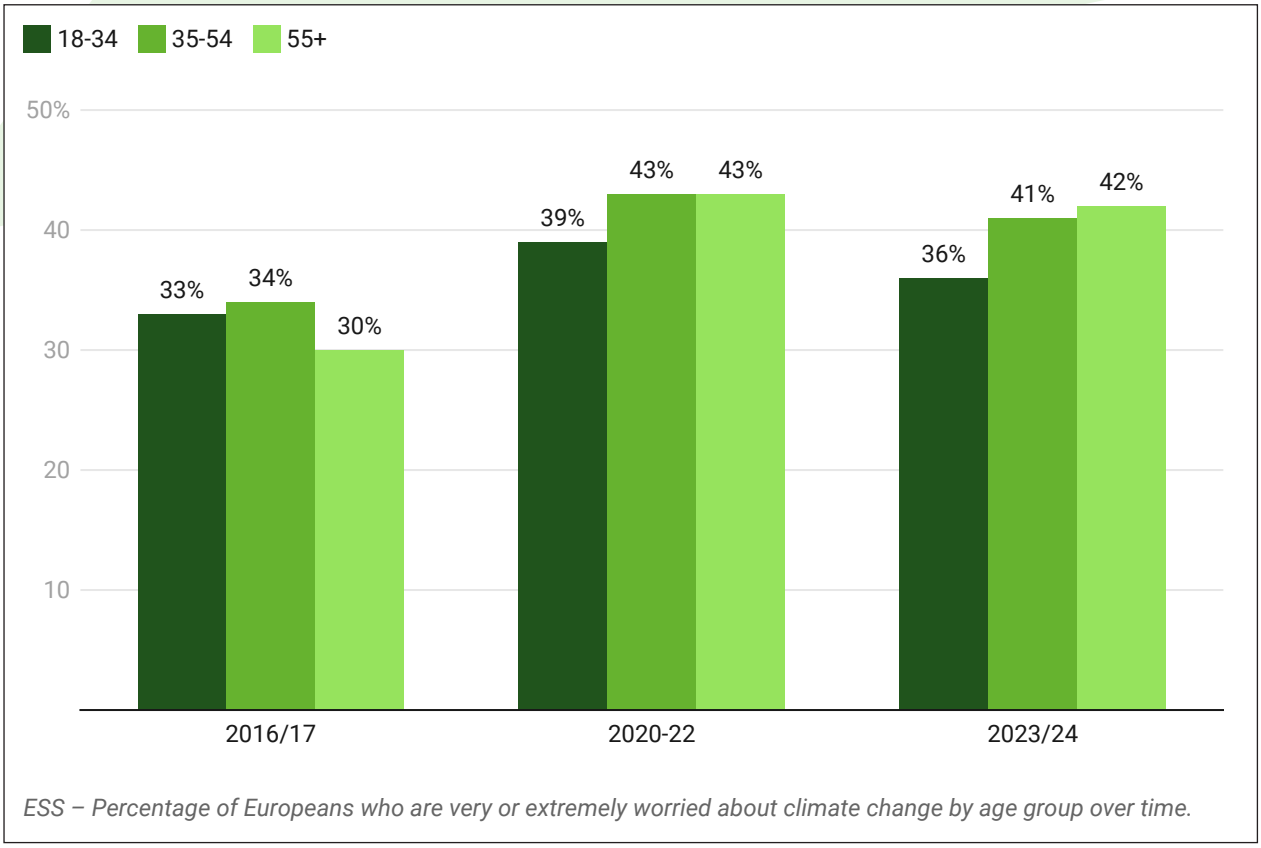
4.3 Perceived threat, worry and concern

Perceived threat levels, concern, and worry about climate change are critical factors influencing public support for climate policies and individual action. While awareness of climate change has increased over time, this may not necessarily translate into higher levels of concern. The levels of concern also vary by the specific type of question asked. Figures 12 to 26 examine patterns in climate concern, perceived threat and environmental scepticism, and how they have evolved over time.

4.3.1 Climate worry

Figure 12 shows the percentage of Europeans who are very or extremely worried about climate change over time, segmented by age. The results indicate that climate worry has increased from 2016/17 to 2020-22 and 2023/24. Whereas in 2016/17 about a third (30-34%) of respondents were very or extremely worried about climate change, in 2020-22 (39-43%) and 2023/24 (36-42%) that had increased to about two out of five. The differences between age groups are small across the different waves. However, in contrast to findings from other studies (Poortinga, Demski, et al., 2023), younger Europeans (<35) reported lower levels of climate worry than older age groups (35-54 and 55+) in both 2020-22 and 2023/24.

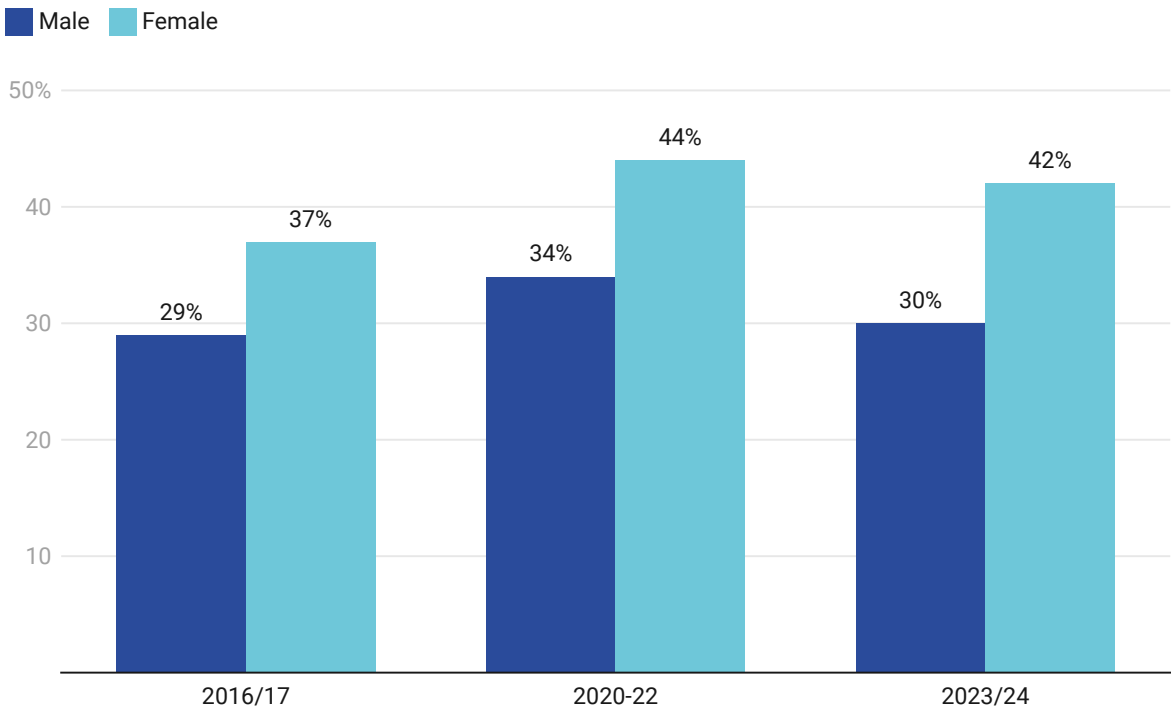
Figure 12. Percentage of Europeans very or extremely worried about climate change, by age group over time



ESS – Percentage of Europeans who are very or extremely worried about climate change by age group over time.

Figure 13 presents the levels of climate worry among young Europeans, disaggregated by gender. The results indicate that young women are generally more worried about climate change than young men. These gender differences appear to be more pronounced in 2020-22 and 2023/24 as compared to 2016/17, the gap increasing by about 2% in each wave. This trend should be monitored to see whether indeed the gap between men's and women's levels of climate worry is increasing.

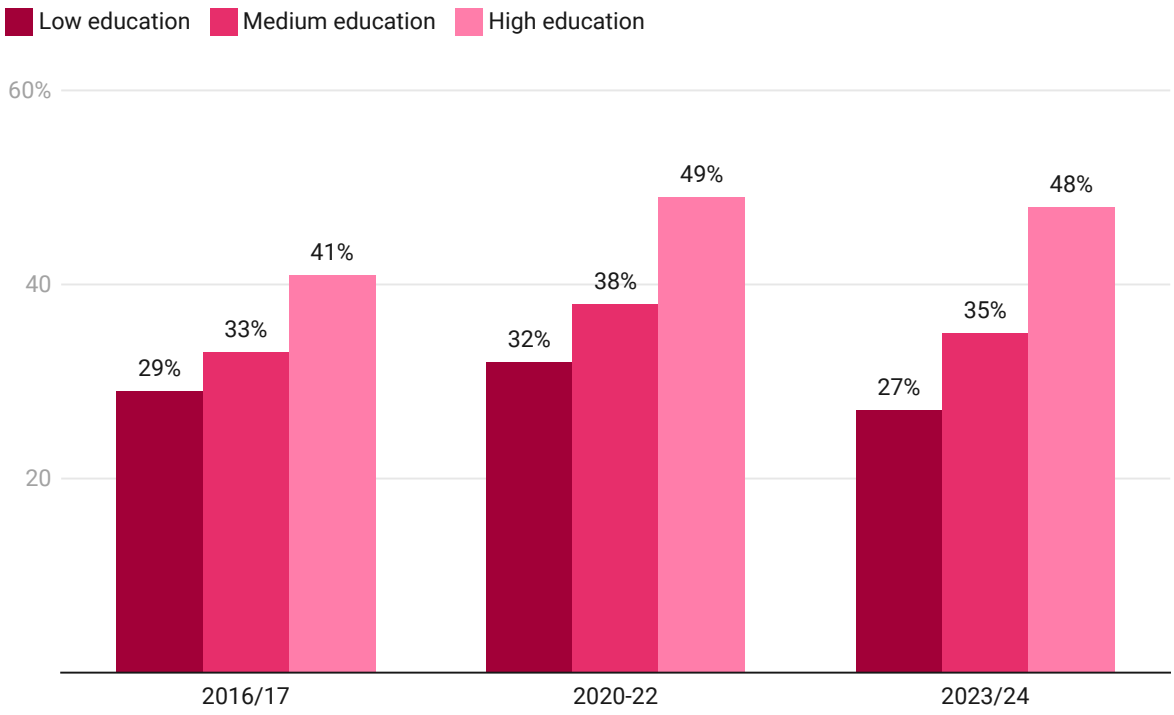
Figure 13. Percentage of young Europeans very or extremely concerned about climate change, by gender over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who are very or extremely concerned about climate change by gender over time.

Figure 14 presents levels of climate worry among young Europeans by education level, demonstrating that higher levels of formal education are associated with greater worry about climate change. The figure reveals a clear educational gradient in climate worry, which has widened over time. Between 2016/17 and 2023/24, differences in climate worry among young Europeans based on education became more pronounced, with the gap particularly evident in 2020-22 and 2023/24 as compared to 2016/17.

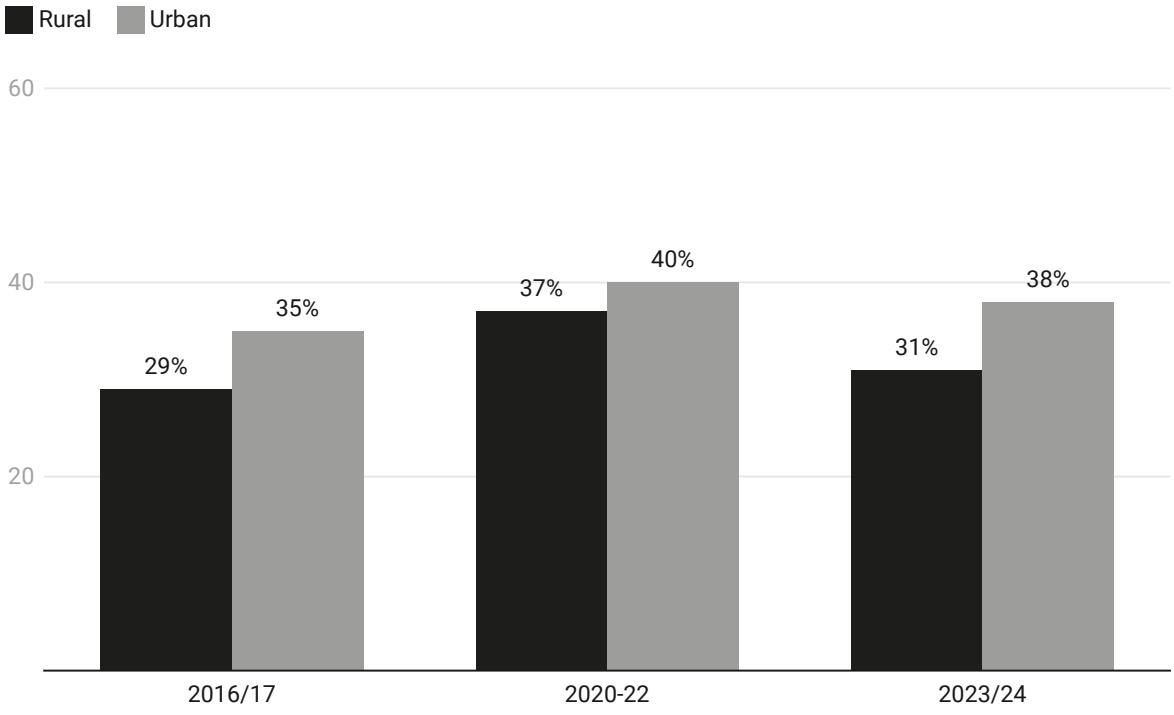
Figure 14. Percentage of young Europeans very or extremely concerned about climate change, by education level over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who are very or extremely concerned about climate change, by education level over time.

Figure 15 presents levels of climate worry among young Europeans living in urban and rural areas, showing that those living in urban areas are somewhat more likely to be very or extremely worried about climate change than those living in rural areas. Whereas the gap is relatively small in 2020-22 (around 2%), it is more pronounced in both 2016/17 (around 6%) and 2023/24 (around 7%).

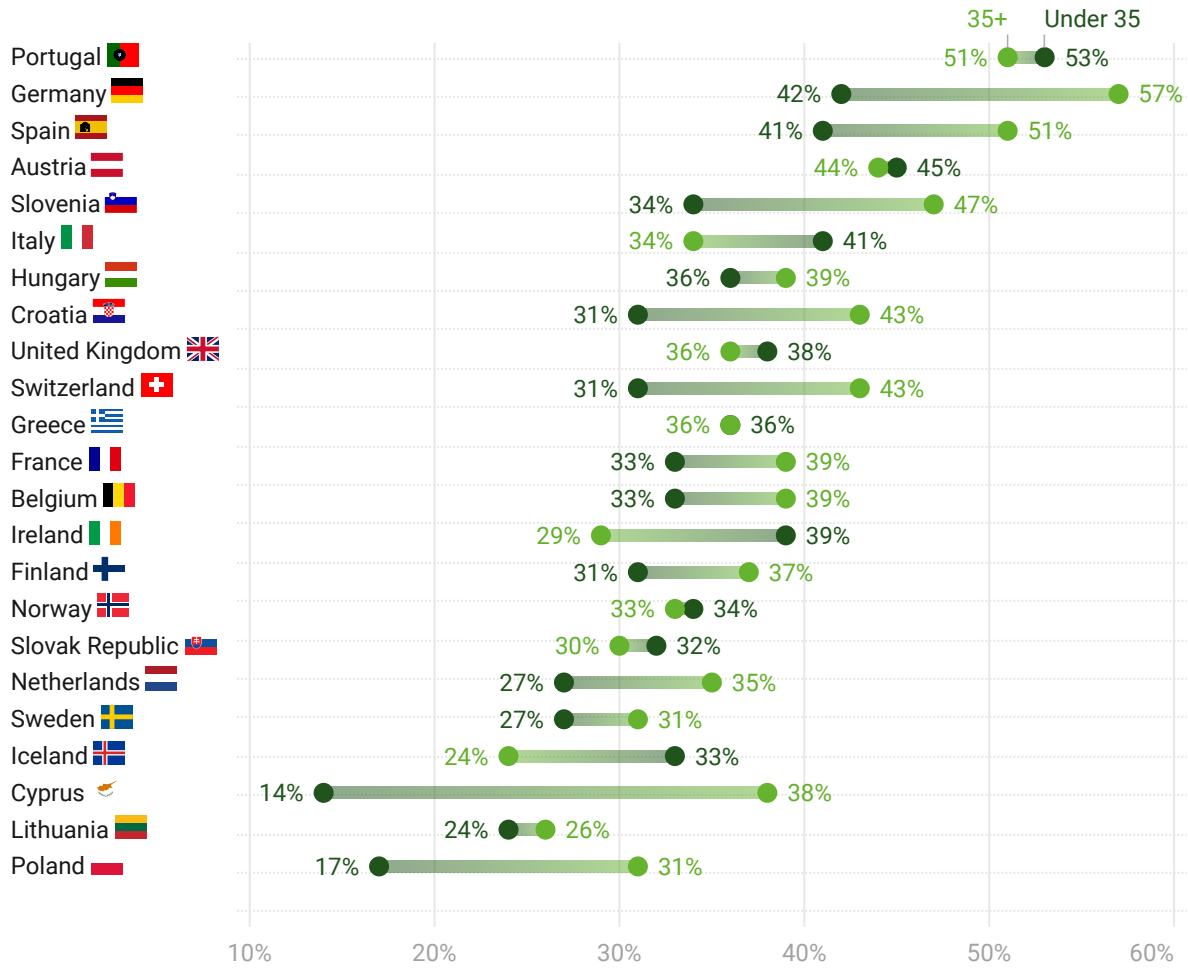
Figure 15. Percentage of young Europeans very or extremely concerned about climate change, by place of living over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans (under 35) who are very or extremely concerned about climate change in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 16 presents a country-level comparison for 2023/24, highlighting differences in climate change worry between younger (under 35) and older (35 and over) Europeans. The results indicate that worry about climate change is highest in Portugal, Spain, and Germany, while it is lowest in Poland, Lithuania, and Cyprus. Notably, in contrast to typical patterns observed in previous research (Poortinga, Demski, et al., 2023), older age groups express greater worry about climate change than younger age groups in most countries. This finding suggests a deviation from the usual trend, where younger individuals are often expected to exhibit higher levels of climate worry.

Figure 16. Percentage of Europeans who are very or extremely worried about climate change, by country and age group

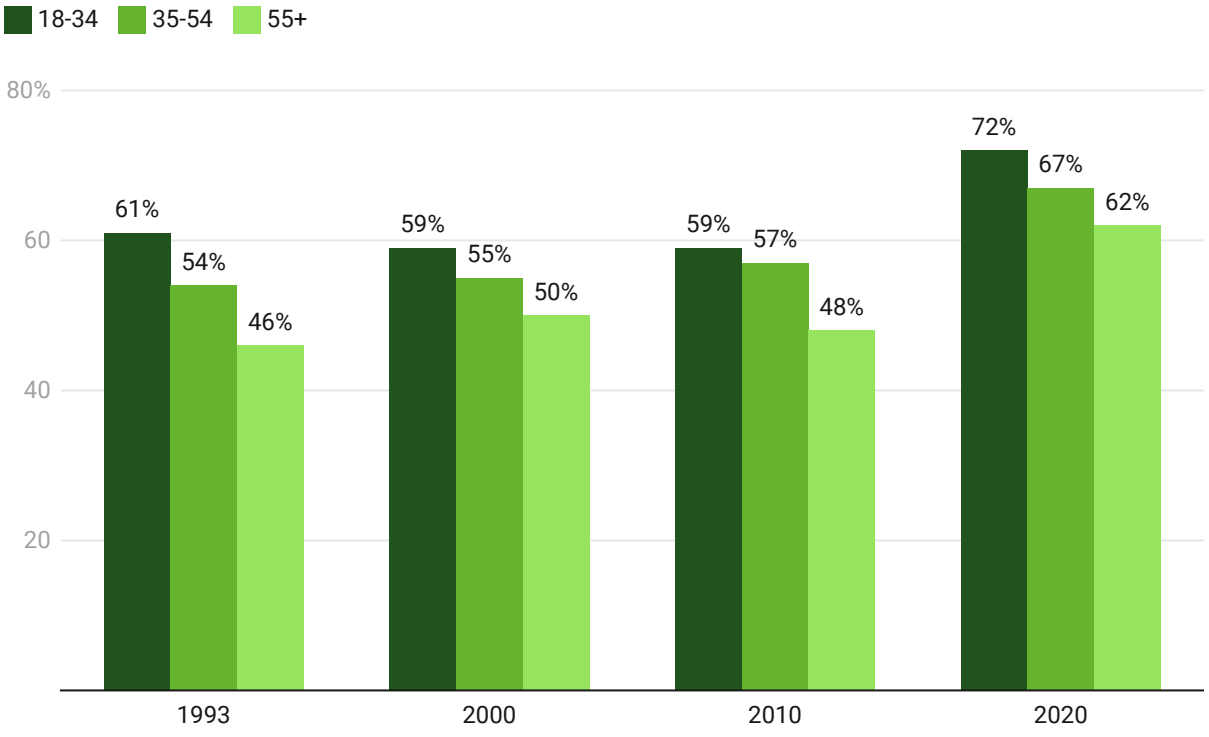


ESS – Percentage of Europeans who are very or extremely worried about climate change, by country and age group (2023/24)

4.3.2 Perceived threat

The extent to which Europeans perceive climate change as a direct and dangerous threat also varies. Figure 17 presents the percentage of Europeans who believe that a rise in global temperatures due to climate change is very or extremely dangerous, analysed by age group over time. The results indicate that younger Europeans have consistently perceived a higher level of threat compared to older groups. This generational gap has remained relatively stable from 1993 to 2020. The percentage who viewed a rise in global temperatures as very or extremely dangerous hovered around 59-61% for those under 35, 54-57% for the 35-54 age group, and 46-50% for those aged 55 and over. These figures increased significantly in 2020 to 72%, 67%, and 62%, showing a broad increase in perceived climate-related threat across all age groups

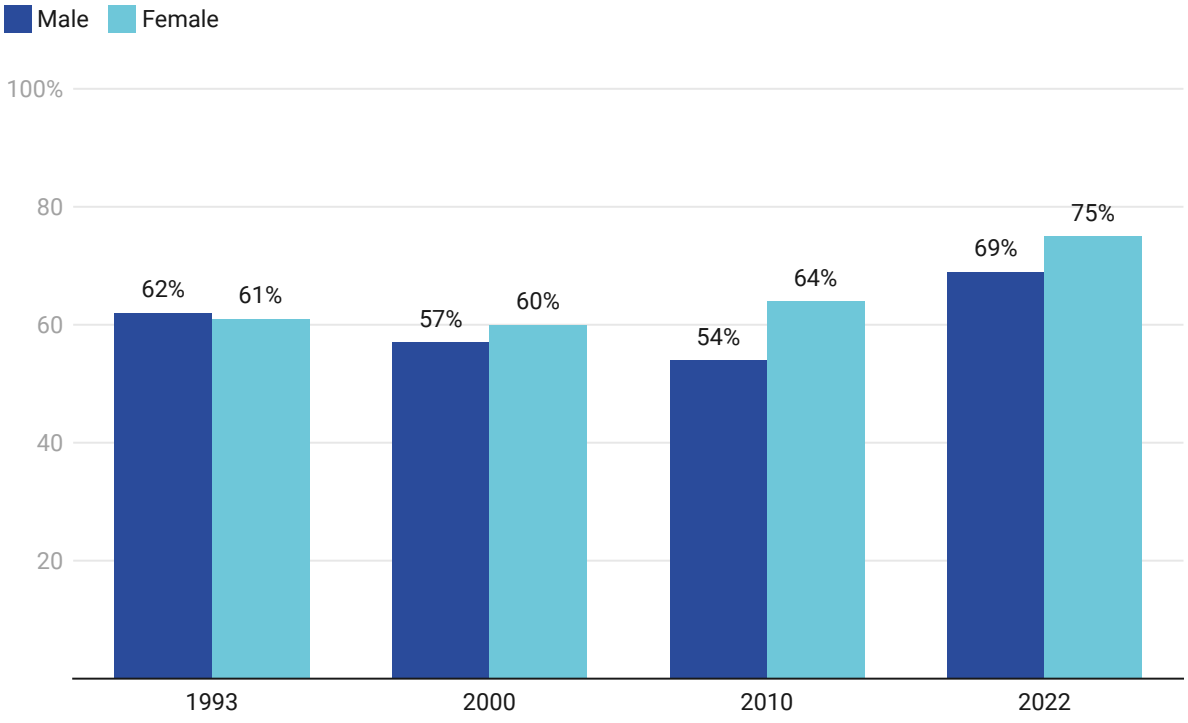
Figure 17. Percentage of Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans who think a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by age group over time.

Figure 18 shows the percentage of young Europeans who believe that a rise in global temperatures due to climate change is very or extremely dangerous, broken down by gender. While differences between young men and women are generally small, young women tend to perceive a slightly higher level of threat. This gender gap has widened somewhat over time. In 1993, 62% of young men and 61% of young women held this view. By 2020, these figures had shifted to 69% and 75%, respectively.

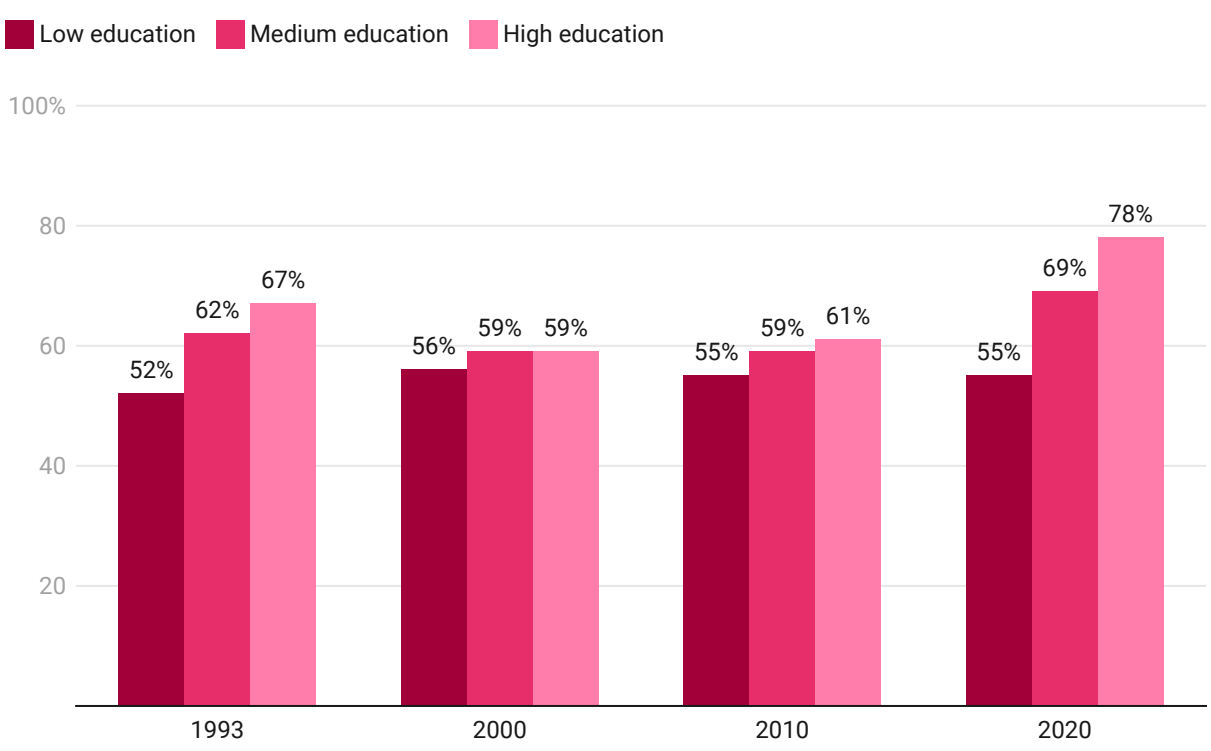
Figure 18. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans who think a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by gender over time.

Figure 19 presents the percentage of young Europeans who believe that a rise in global temperatures due to climate change is very or extremely dangerous, stratified by education level. The results show that young individuals with tertiary education are significantly more likely to perceive climate change as a severe threat. Educational differences in perceived threat were particularly pronounced in 1993 and 2020, while smaller differences were observed in 2000 and 2010. This is primarily driven by individuals with higher education, who reported lower levels of perceived threat in 2000 and 2010 before returning to higher levels in 2020.

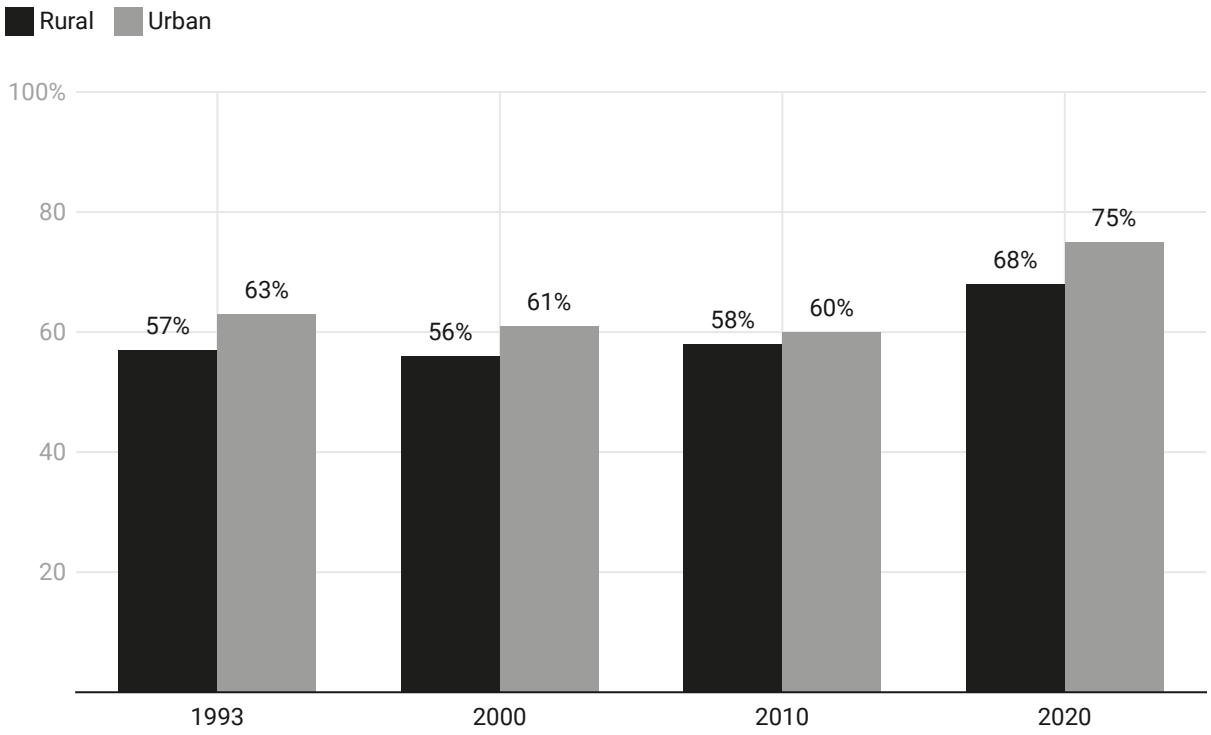
Figure 19. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by education over time.

Figure 20 presents the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who believe that a rise in global temperatures due to climate change is very or extremely dangerous. It shows that young Europeans living in urban areas are slightly more likely to perceive climate change as a severe threat than those living in rural areas. The difference has remained fairly stable over time.

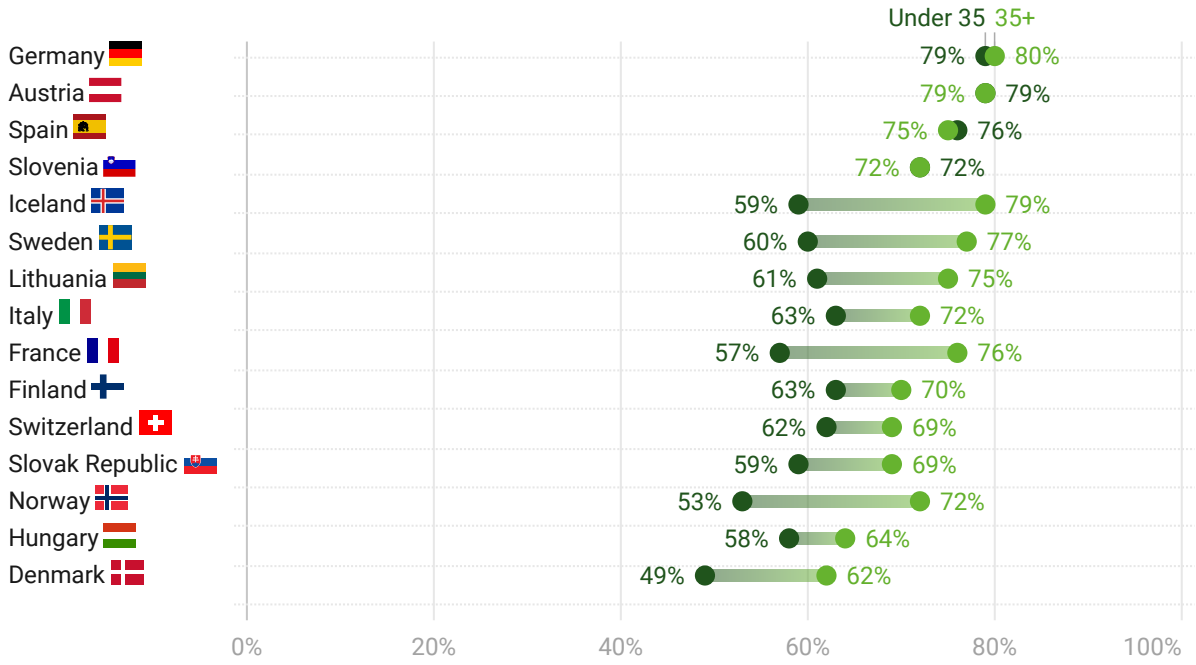
Figure 20. Percentage of young Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 21 provides a country-level analysis for 2020, comparing how different European populations assess the threat of rising global temperatures caused by climate change. The results highlight substantial variation across countries, with some nations showing near-universal agreement that climate change is very or extremely dangerous (i.e., Germany, Austria, Spain and Slovenia), while in the other countries it is mainly younger age groups who perceive a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous.

Figure 21. Percentage of Europeans thinking that a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by country and age group

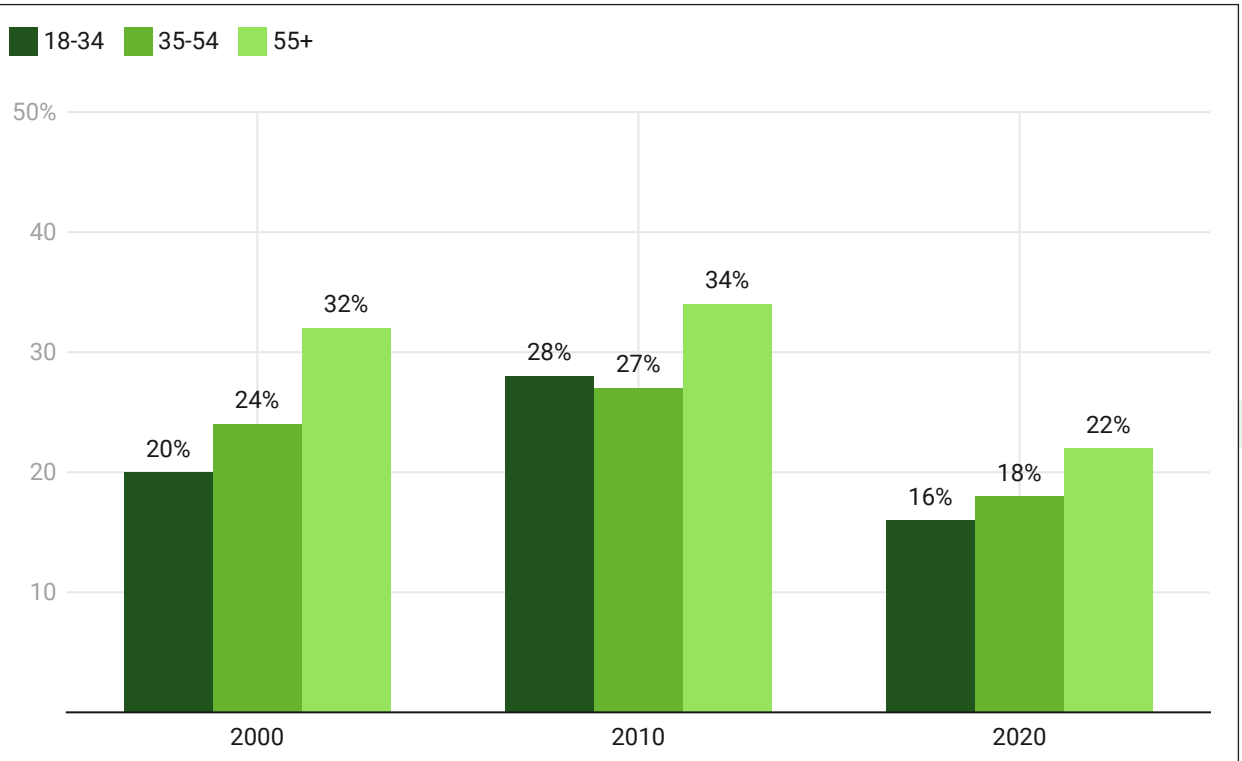


ISSP – Percentage of Europeans who think a rise in the world's temperature caused by climate change is very or extremely dangerous, by country and age groups (2020)

4.3.3 Environmental scepticism

Figure 22 presents the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', broken down by age over time. The data shows that scepticism toward environmental threats has declined over the past two decades from already low levels. While older individuals were slightly more likely to agree that claims about environmental threats are exaggerated in earlier years, the gap between age groups has narrowed over time. However, some scepticism persists, with about one in five agreeing with the statement.

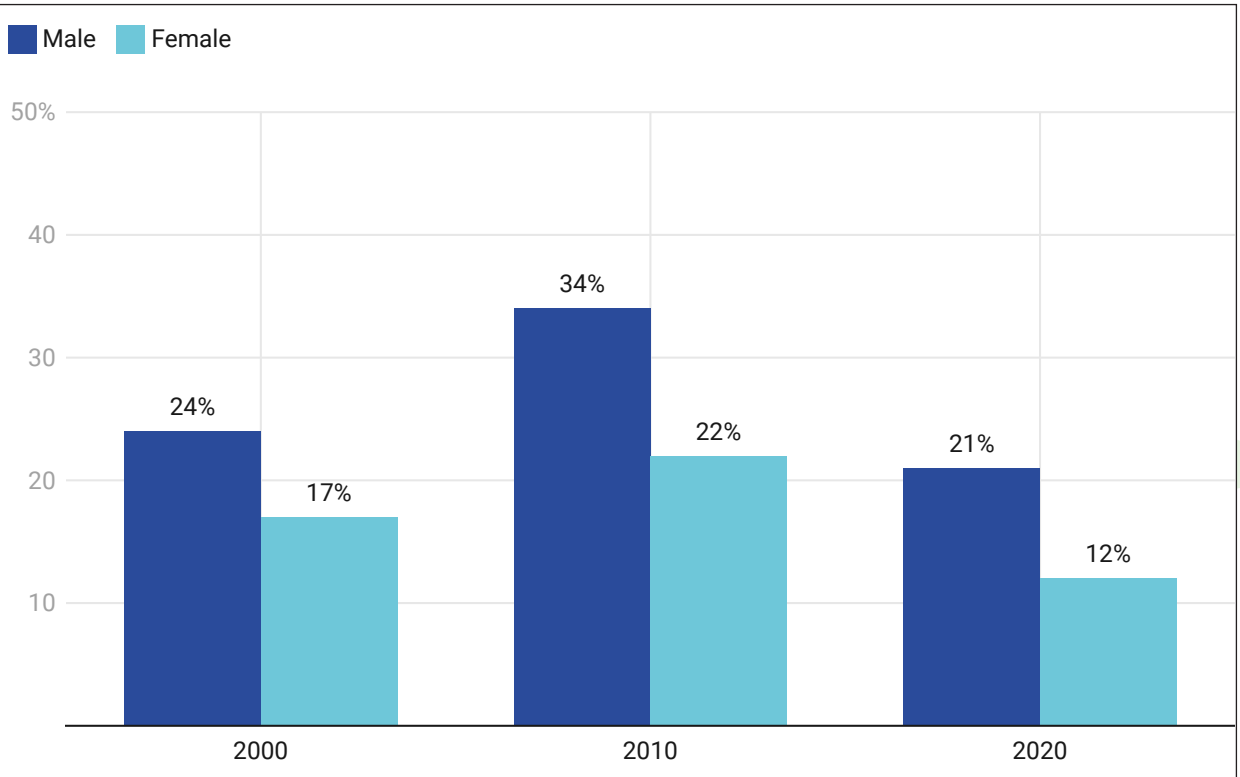
Figure 22. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that "Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated" by age over time.

Figure 23 presents the percentage of young Europeans who agree with the statement, 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', broken down by gender. Across the three survey waves conducted in 2000, 2010, and 2020, young men have consistently been more likely than young women to express this view, with a gap of approximately 6 to 9 percentage points. This gender gap in environmental scepticism among young Europeans has remained relatively stable over time, with young women consistently showing lower levels of scepticism.

Figure 23. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by gender over time

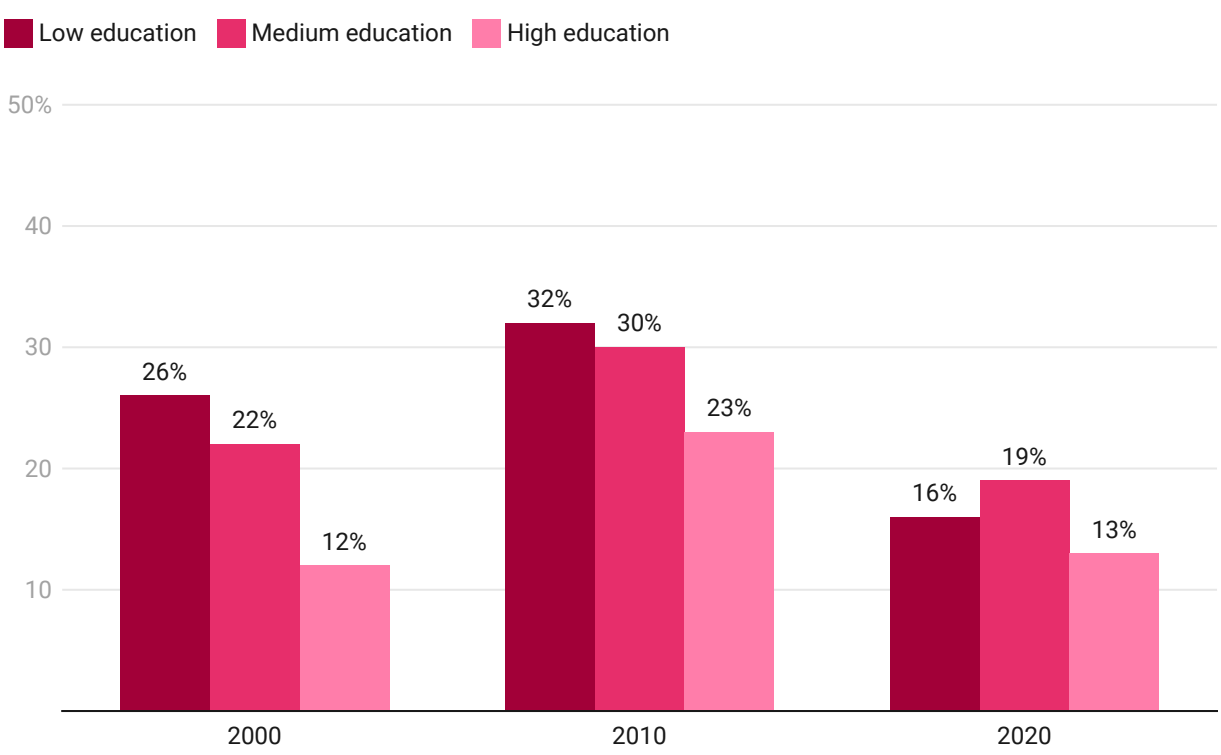


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated' by gender over time.

Figure 24 explores differences in environmental scepticism among young Europeans by education level. Overall, young Europeans with higher levels of education are less likely to believe that claims about environmental threats are exaggerated.

A notable decrease in environmental scepticism occurred among those with lower levels of education between 2010 and 2020. As a result, the education gap in scepticism among young Europeans has narrowed significantly by 2020.

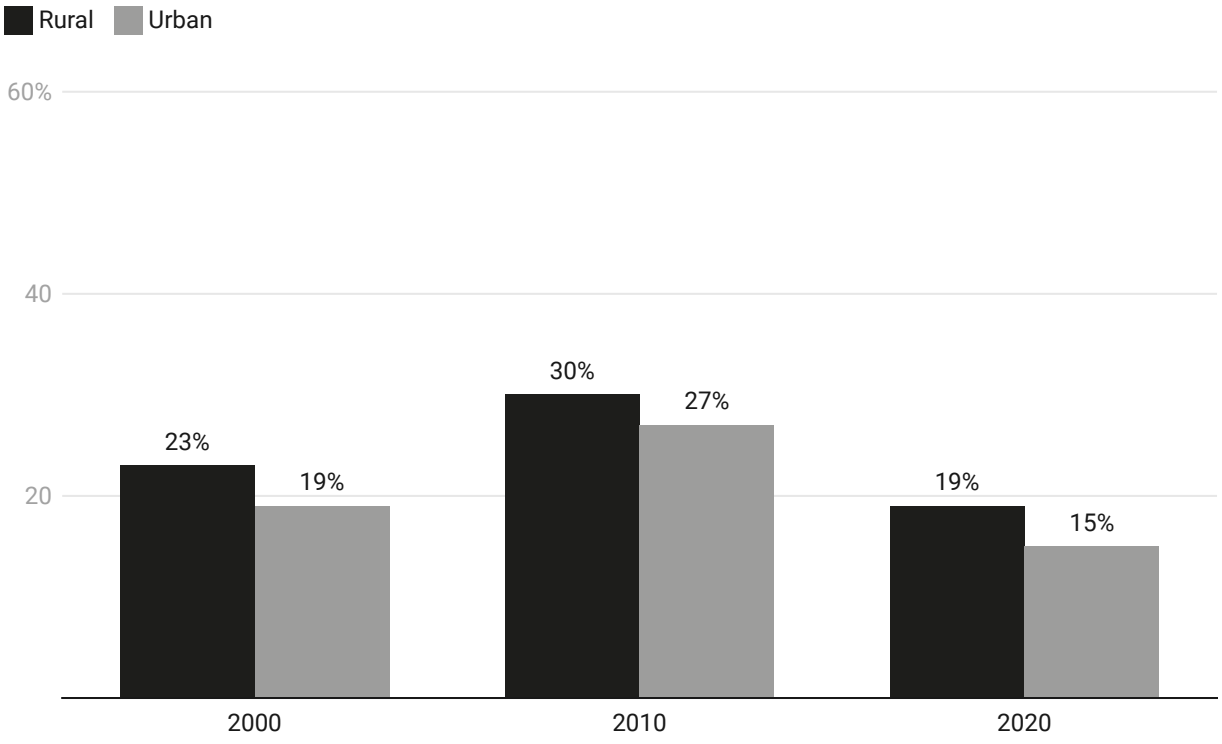
Figure 24. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by education over time.

Figure 25 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who agree with the statement that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated'. The results indicate that young people living in rural areas are slightly more likely to agree with this statement as compared to those living in urban areas, although the differences are relatively small.

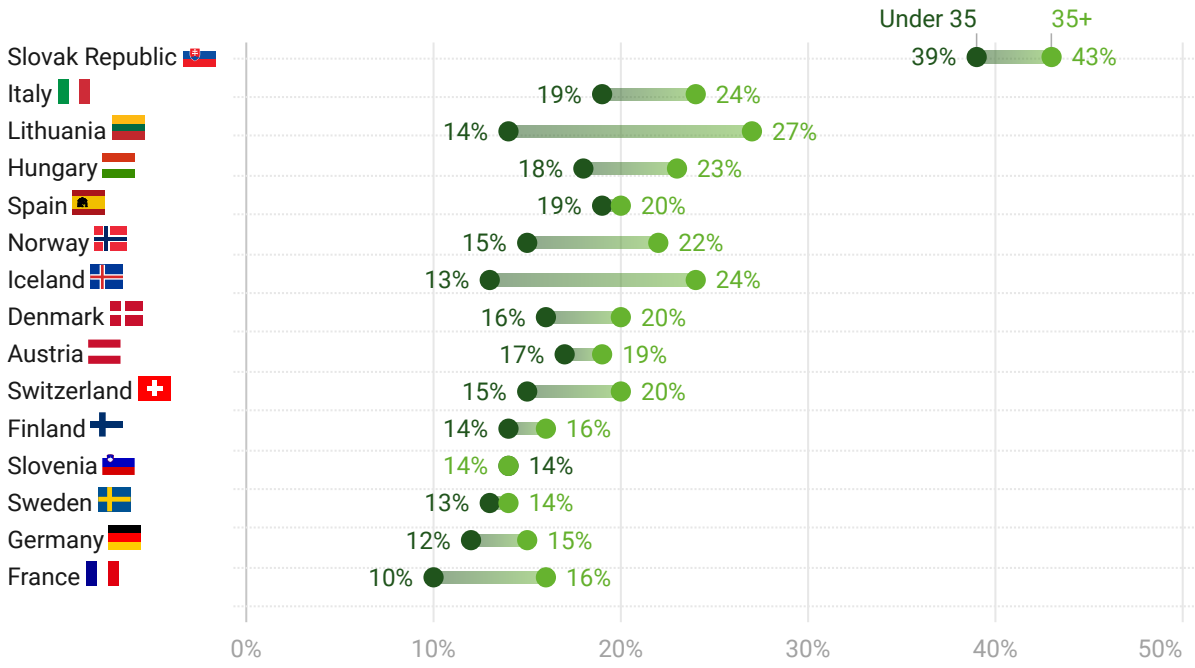
Figure 25. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 26 presents a cross-national comparison of scepticism towards environmental threats, based on data from 2020. The results reveal significant variation between countries, with some nations exhibiting notably higher levels of scepticism than others. Slovak Republic stands out with particularly high levels of environmental scepticism. While age differences in environmental scepticism are generally small, they are more pronounced in certain countries, including Slovak Republic, Iceland, and Lithuania, which have higher levels of environmental scepticism among older age groups.

Figure 26. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by country and age group



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated', by country and age group (2020).

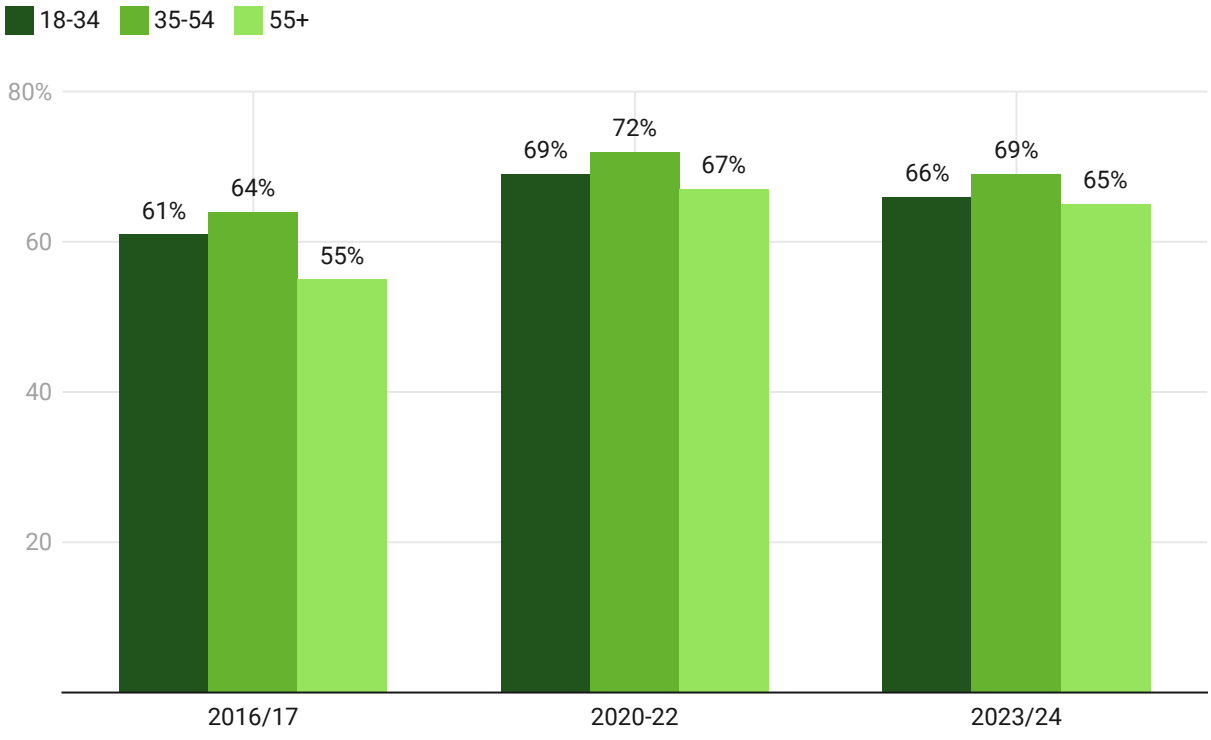
4.4 Perceived responsibility, trust and efficacy beliefs

4.4.1 Perceived personal responsibility

While awareness and concern about climate change are important, they do not necessarily translate into action. Individuals must also feel a sense of responsibility and believe that their actions can make a meaningful difference. Figures 27 to 51 explore these key attitudes and how they shape climate-related behaviours.

Figure 27 shows the percentage of Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to reduce climate change (scores of 6 and higher on a scale from 0 to 10), broken down by age over time. There is a small increase in feelings of personal responsibility from 2016/17 to 2023/24 of around five to ten percentage points. Overall, individuals aged 55 and over report lower levels of personal responsibility compared to the other two age groups, but this group saw the greatest increase over the period.

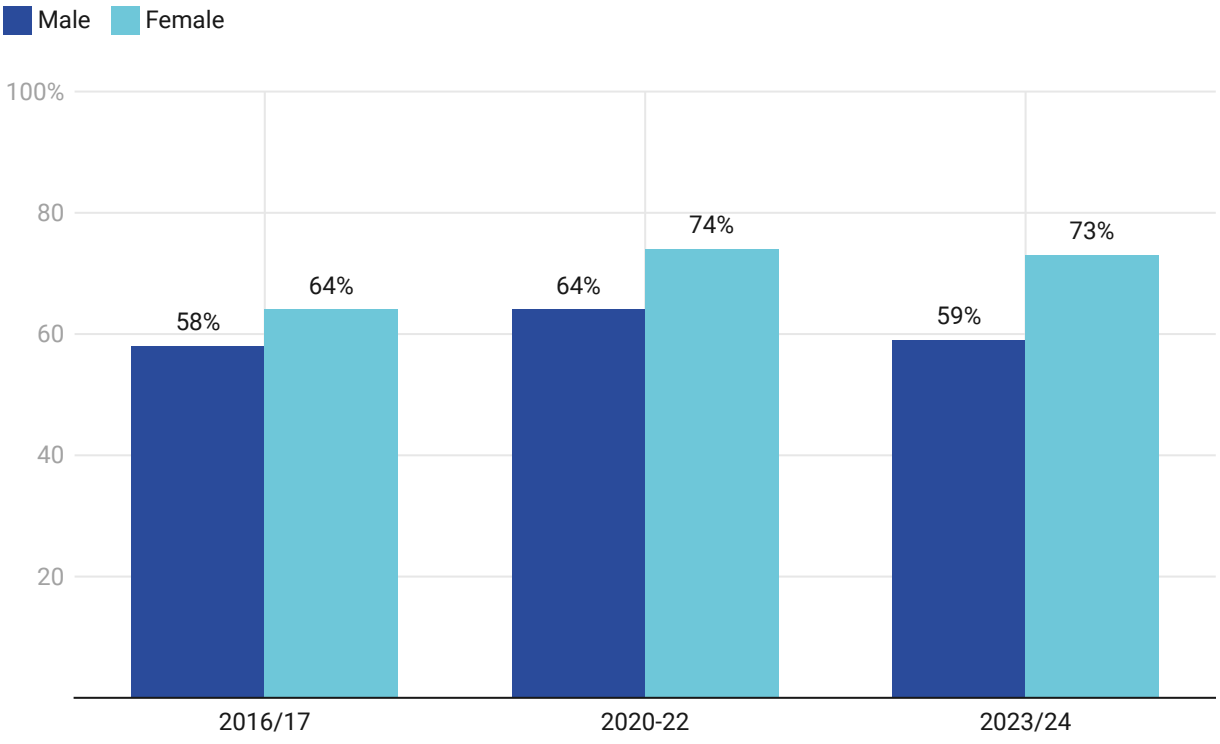
Figure 27. Percentage of Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by age group over time



ESS – Percentage of Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by age over time.

Figure 28 shows perceived personal responsibility among young Europeans broken down by gender. Overall, young women are more likely than young men to feel responsible for reducing climate change. The gender gap in perceived responsibility appears to have widened between 2016/17 and 2023/24.

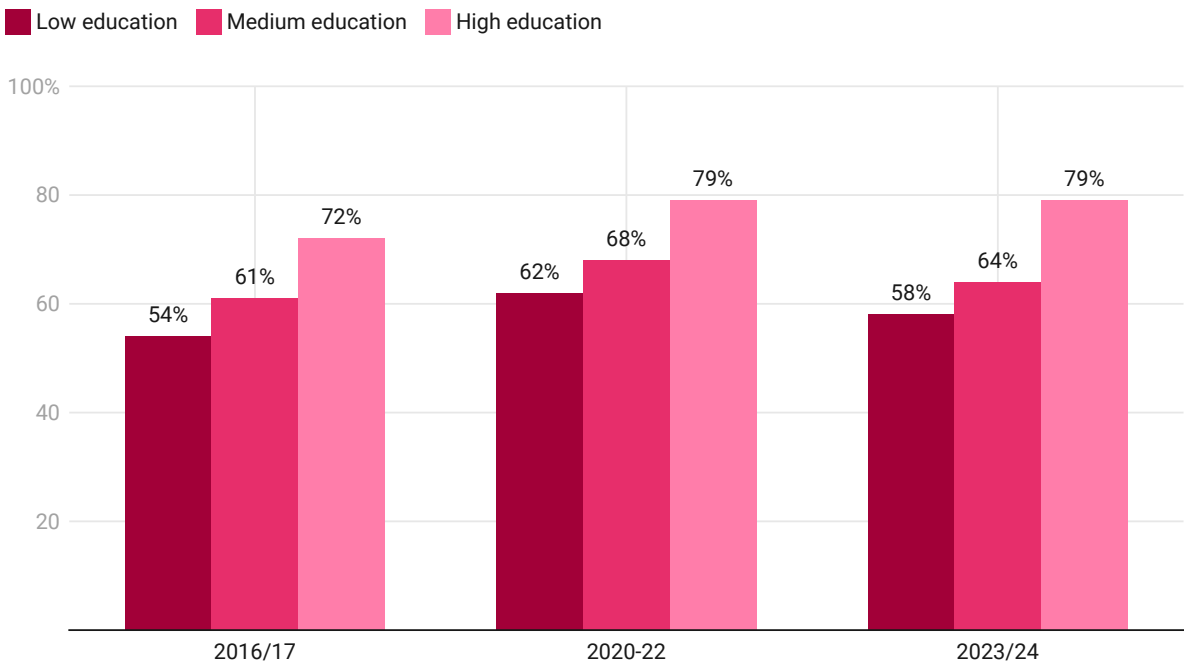
Figure 28. Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by gender over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by gender over time.

Figure 29 illustrates perceived personal responsibility for climate change among young Europeans, broken down by education level. The data shows that young individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to feel personally responsible for mitigating climate change. This pattern has remained consistent over time, with a small overall increase among all age groups from 2016/17 to 2023/24.

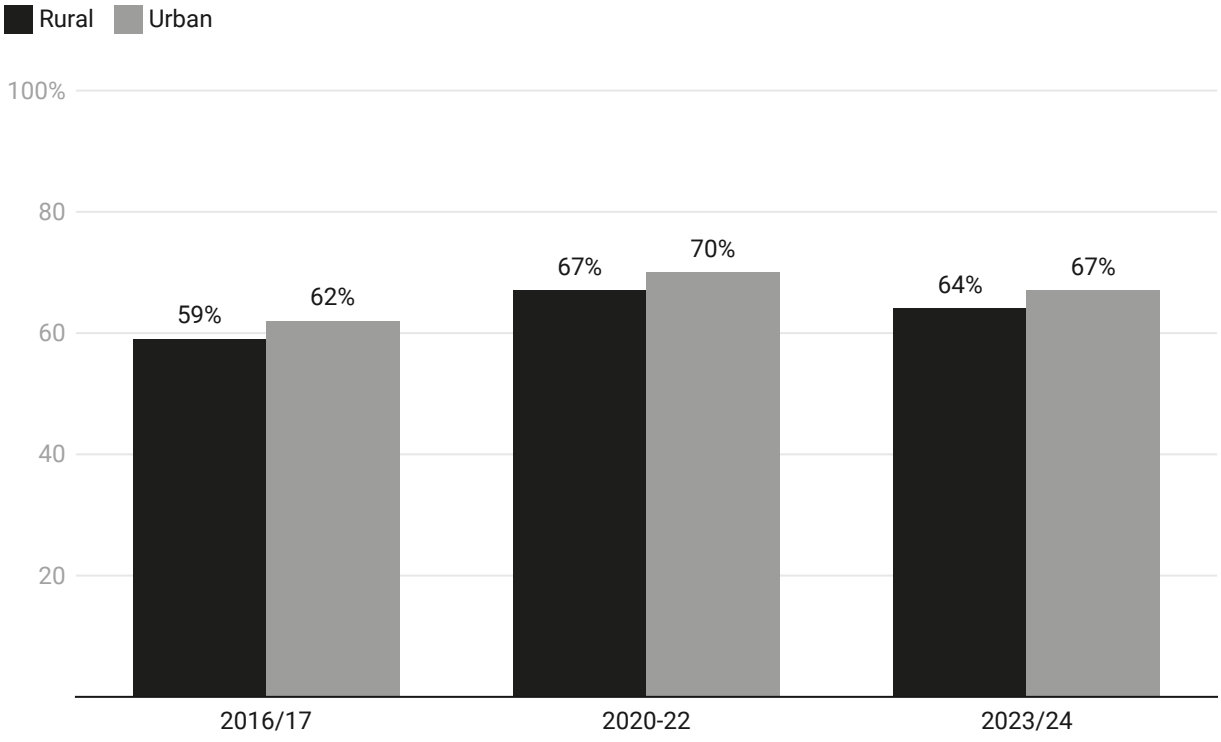
Figure 29. Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by education over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by education over time.

Figure 30 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who feel some level of responsibility to reduce climate change. Those living in urban areas report slightly higher levels of perceived responsibility than those living in rural areas, although the differences of around 3% are small.

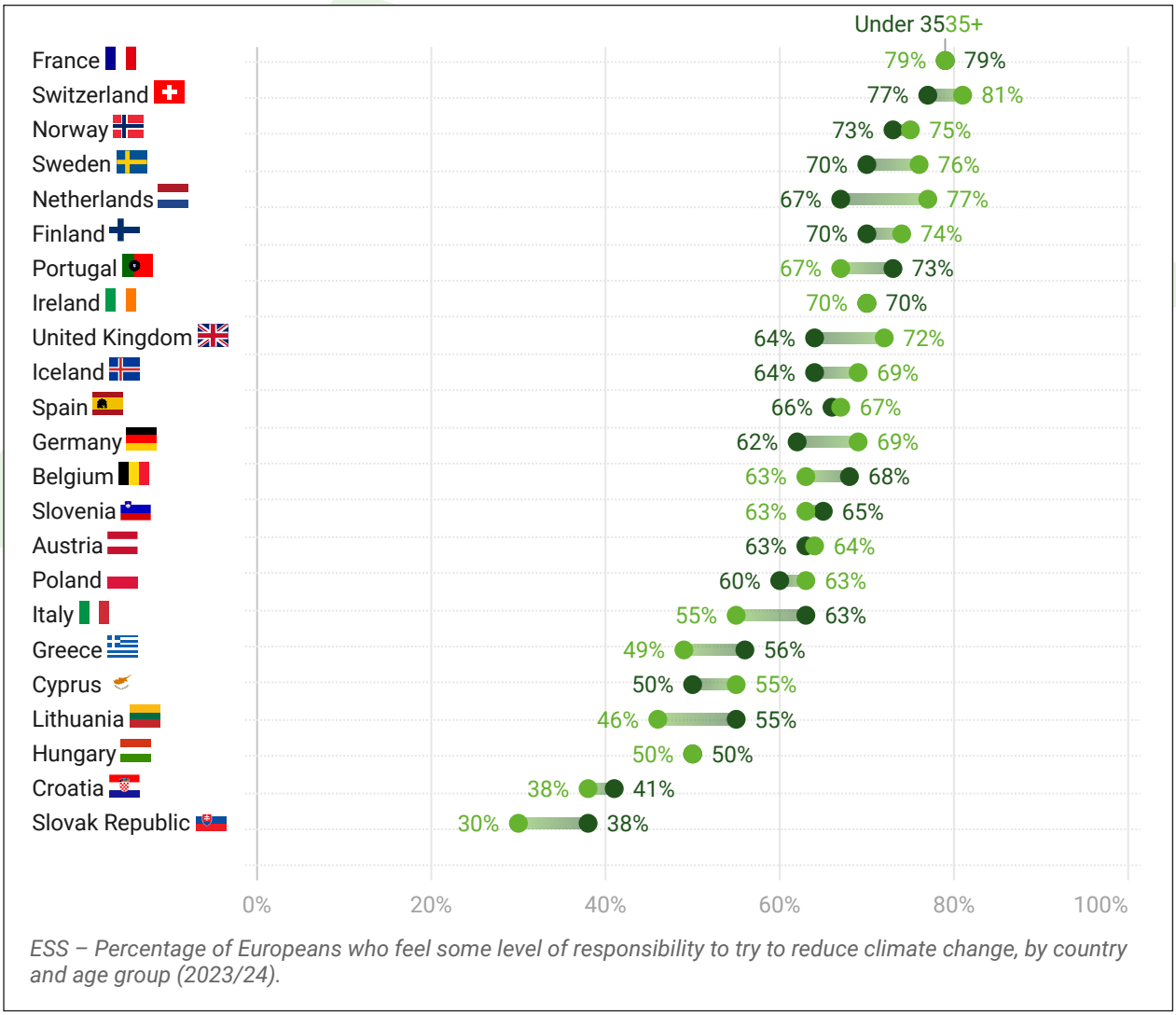
Figure 30. Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by place of living over time



ESS – Percentage of young Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 31 presents a country-level comparison for 2023/24, revealing significant national differences in the extent to which people feel personally responsible for climate action. Highest levels of personal responsibility are reported in Northern and Western European countries, such as France, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, and the lowest in Eastern and Central European countries, such as Slovak Republic, Croatia, Netherlands, and Lithuania. While age differences in environmental scepticism are generally small, they are more pronounced in certain countries, including Slovak Republic, Hungary and Lithuania, which have lower levels of perceived personal responsibility among older age groups. The reverse pattern appears in countries with higher overall levels of perceived personal responsibility, such as Sweden and Finland, although the differences are generally small.

Figure 31. Percentage of Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by country and age group

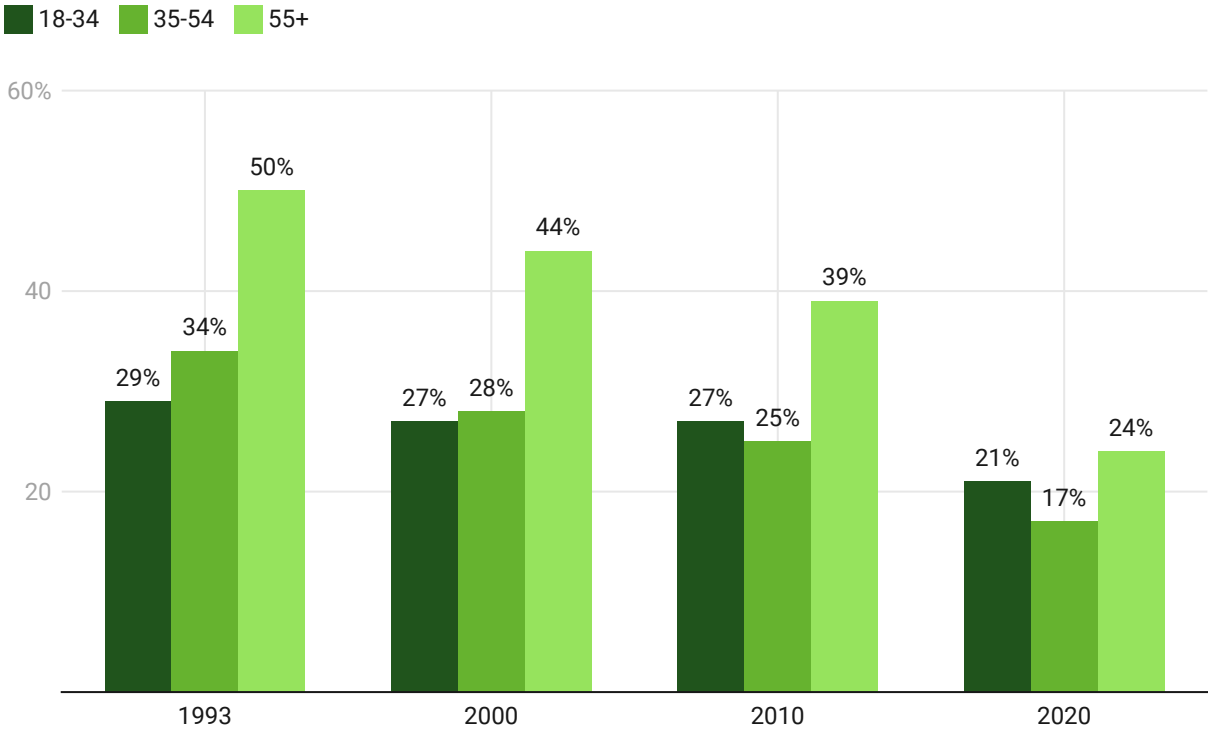


ESS – Percentage of Europeans who feel some level of responsibility to try to reduce climate change, by country and age group (2023/24).

4.4.2 Personal efficacy

Figure 32 depicts the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement, 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', segmented by age over time. It shows a notable generational divide, with individuals aged 55 and older being more likely than the other two age groups to perceive environmental action as challenging, particularly in 1993, 2000, and 2010. Over time, however, there has been a gradual decline in the percentage of people who feel powerless, especially among those aged 55 and over. The age differences were the smallest in 2020 when all three age groups expressed low levels of agreement with the statement (17-24%).

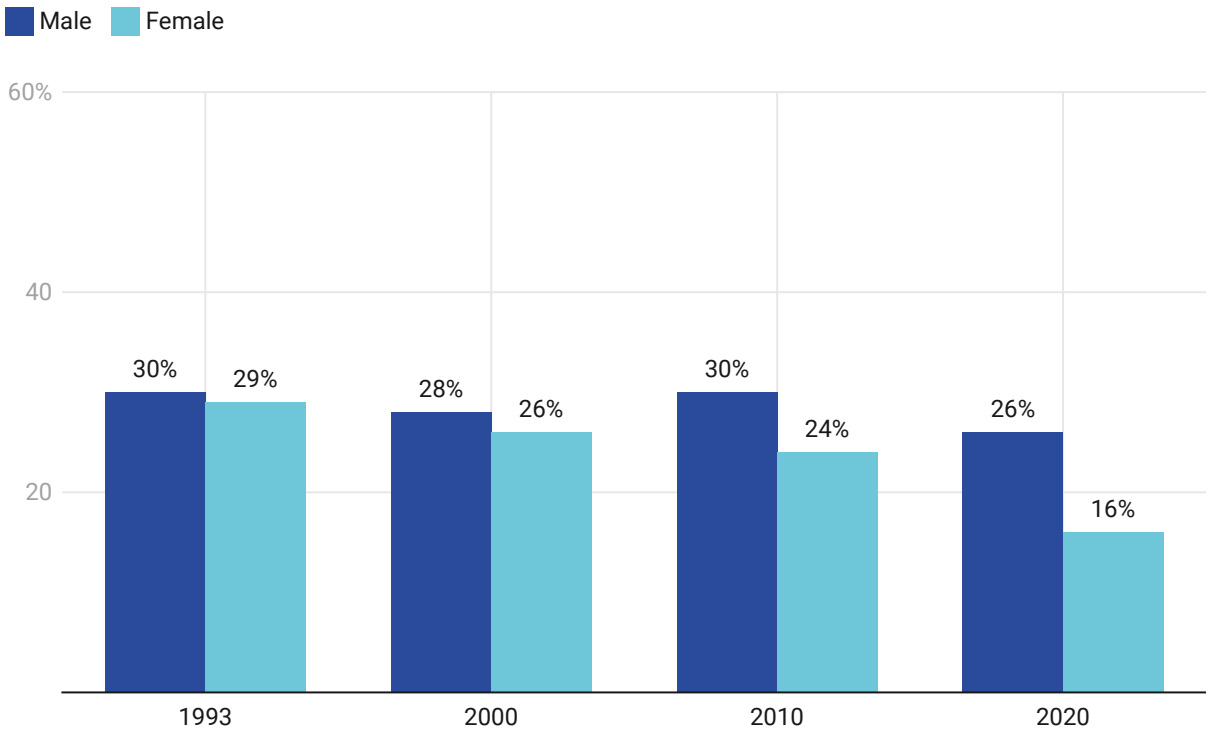
Figure 32. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by age over time.

Figure 33 illustrates gender differences in perceived individual efficacy among young Europeans. The data show only small differences between young men and young women, especially in the earlier years. While differences were negligible in 1993 and 2000, by 2010 and 2020, young men were more likely than young women to express this sentiment, suggesting an emerging gender gap in recent years.

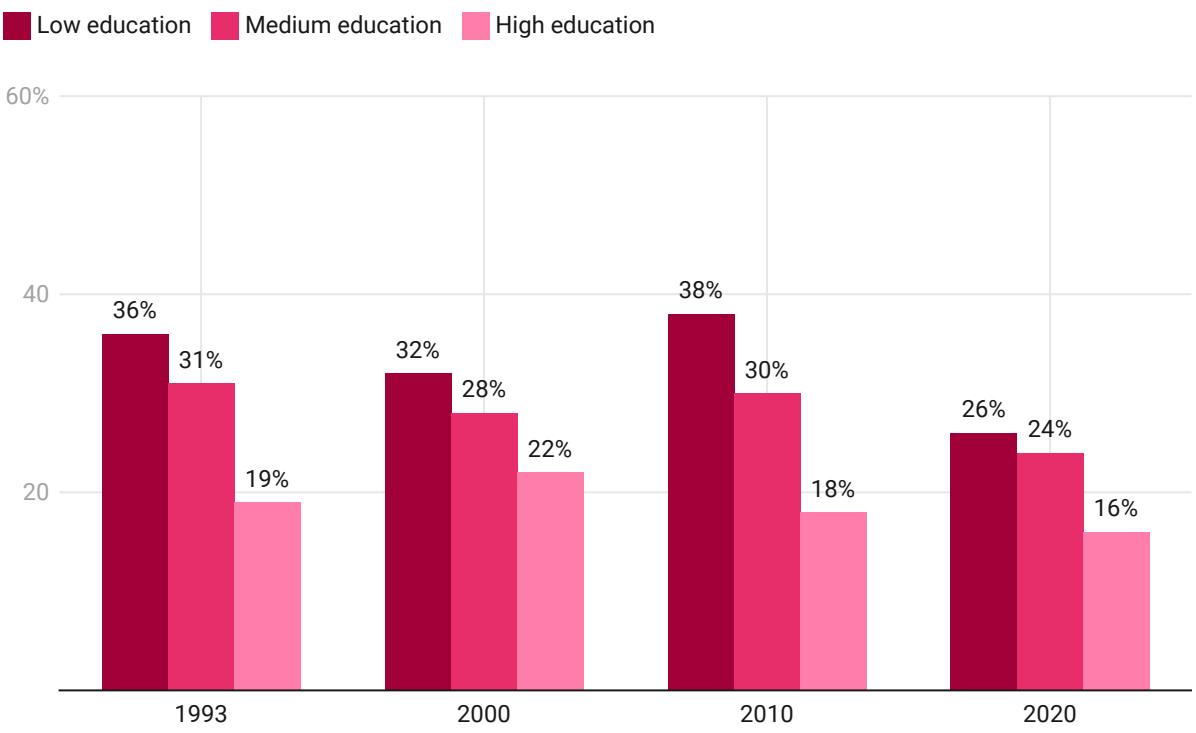
Figure 33. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by gender over time.

Figure 34 explores educational differences in perceived individual efficacy among young Europeans. It shows that young Europeans with higher education are less likely to agree with the statement, 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', compared to those with medium or lower education levels. This pattern has remained over time, although the differences between the education groups have narrowed somewhat. By 2020, all three groups reported relatively low levels of agreement with the statement, ranging from 16% to 26%.

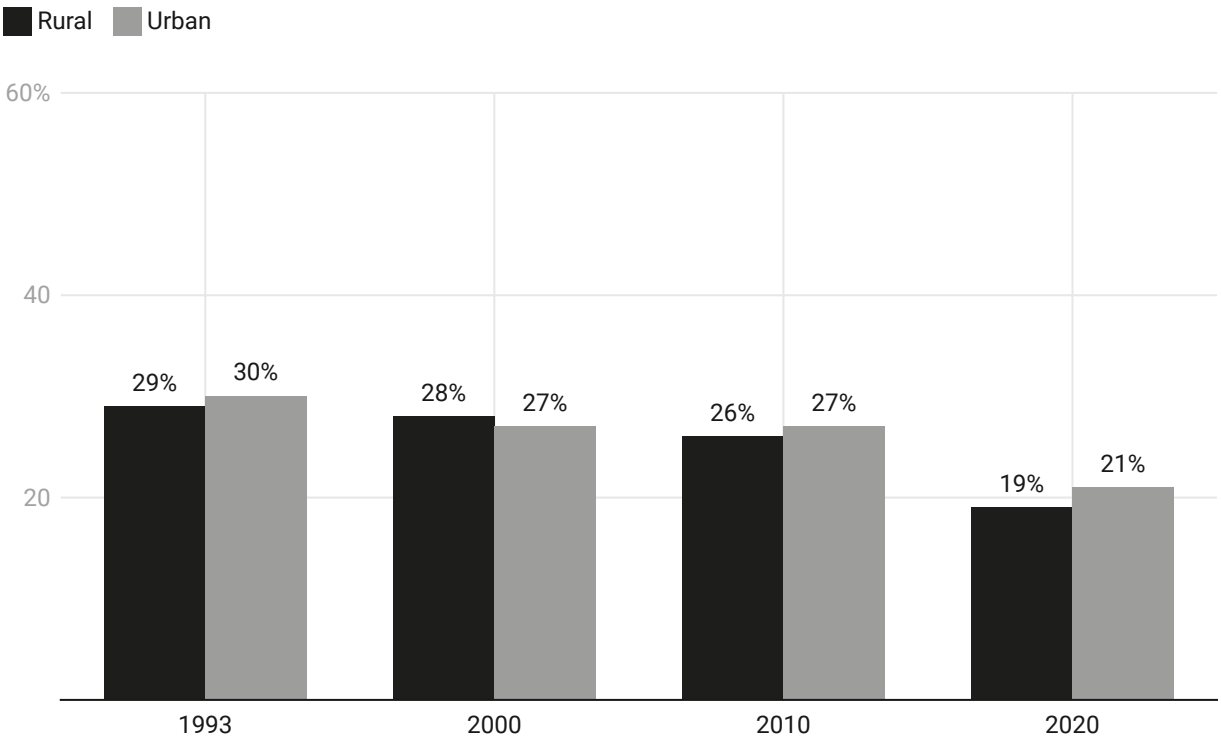
Figure 34. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans who agree that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by education over time.

Figure 35 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment'. It shows that the differences between the two groups are negligible.

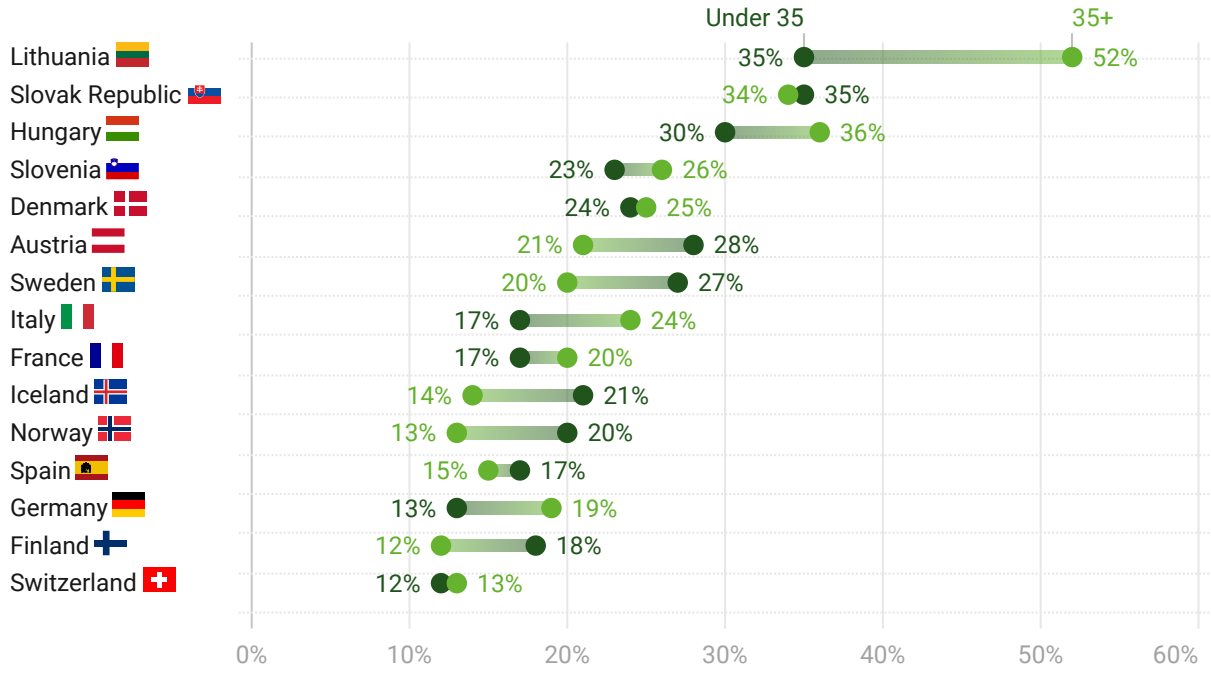
Figure 35. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 36 presents a cross-national comparison of perceived individual efficacy in 2020, revealing considerable variation across European countries. In several Northern and Western European countries, individuals are less likely to agree with the statement, 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', although levels of agreement remain low in most countries. Slightly higher levels of agreement were observed in Lithuania, Slovak Republic, and Hungary. Across Europe, individuals aged 35 and over are generally more likely to feel powerless in the face of environmental challenges as compared to those under 35, a difference that is particularly pronounced in Lithuania, where 52% of those aged 35 and over agreed with the statement, compared to 35% of younger respondents.

Figure 36. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by country and age group



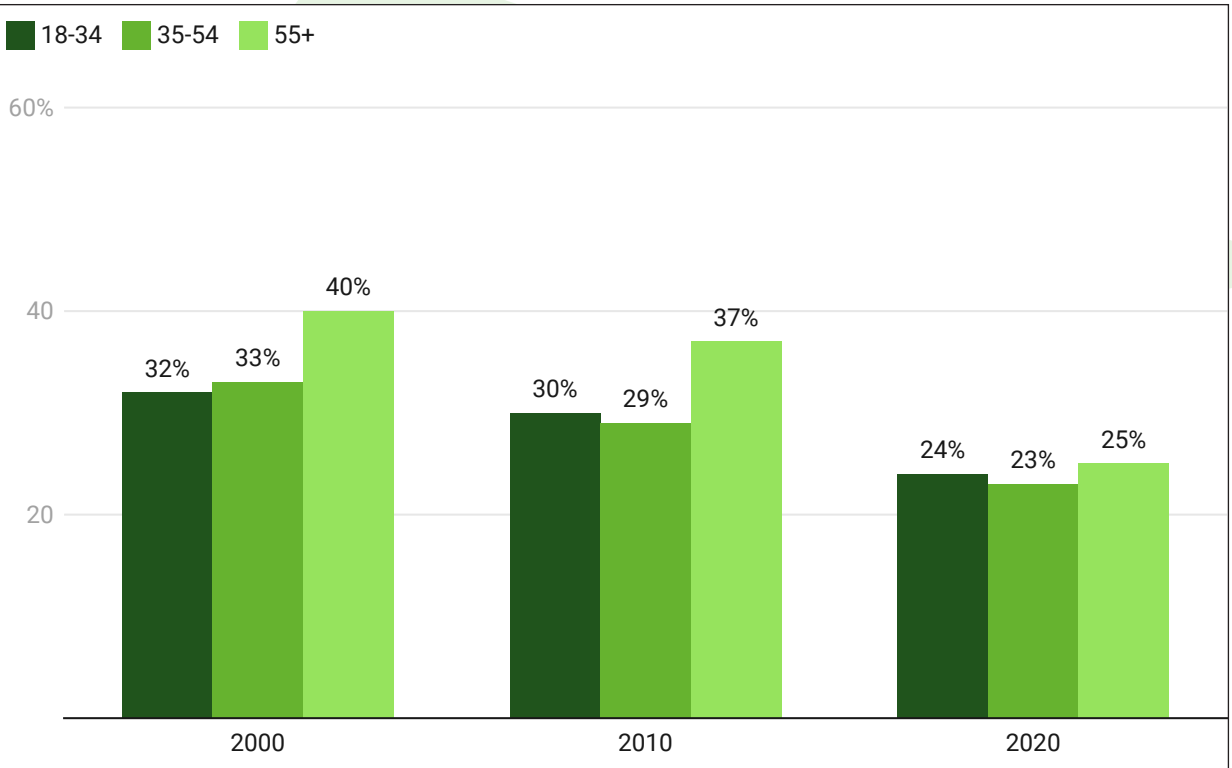
ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment', by country and age group (2020).

4.4.3 Collective efficacy

While the previous figures focused on individual efficacy, Figure 37 to Figure 41 examine whether people believe that collective efforts are necessary for meaningful environmental action. This section addresses the idea that 'there is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same'.

Figure 37 tracks agreement with this statement by age over time. The figure shows that individuals aged 55 and over are more likely to believe that their actions are not worthwhile unless others participate as well. This age difference has diminished since, with the biggest decrease in agreement with the statement among individuals aged 55 and over. The age differences were the smallest in 2020 when all three age groups expressed low levels of agreement with the statement (23-25%)

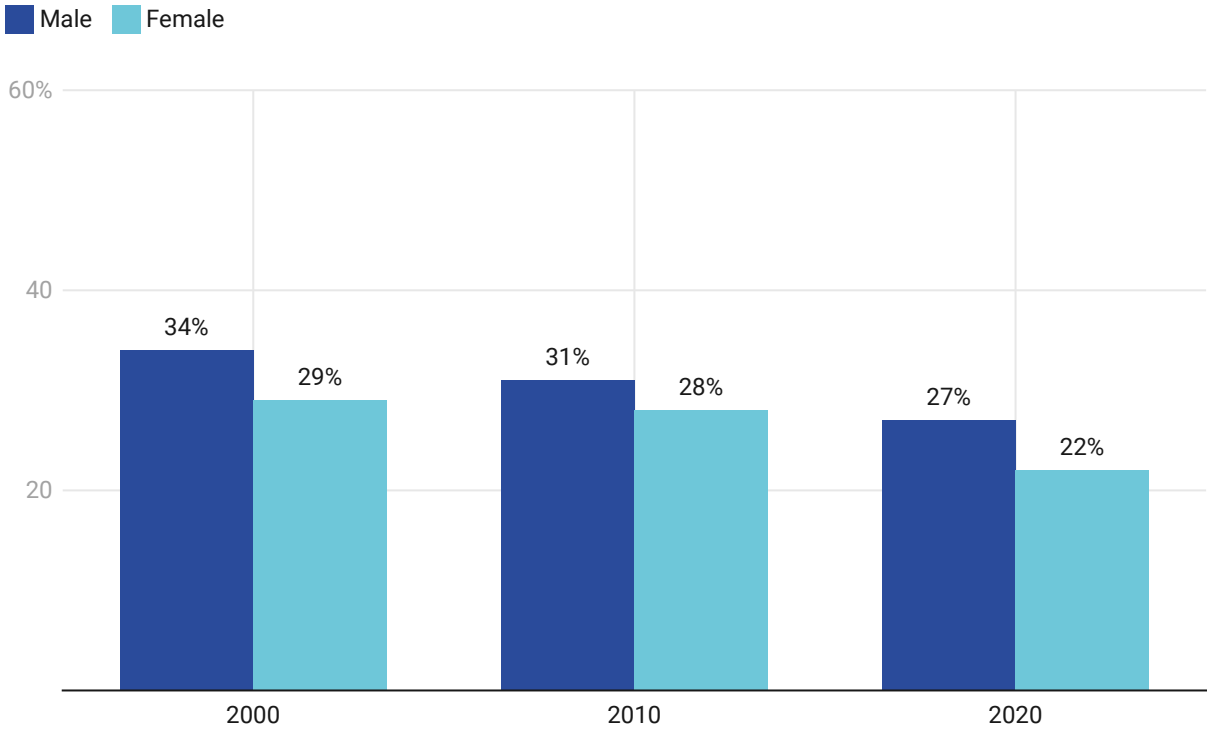
Figure 37. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by age over time.

Figure 38 examines how this belief varies by gender among young Europeans. The differences between young men and young women are modest. In 2020, 27% of young men agreed with this statement as compared to 22% among young women, a gap consistent with findings from previous years.

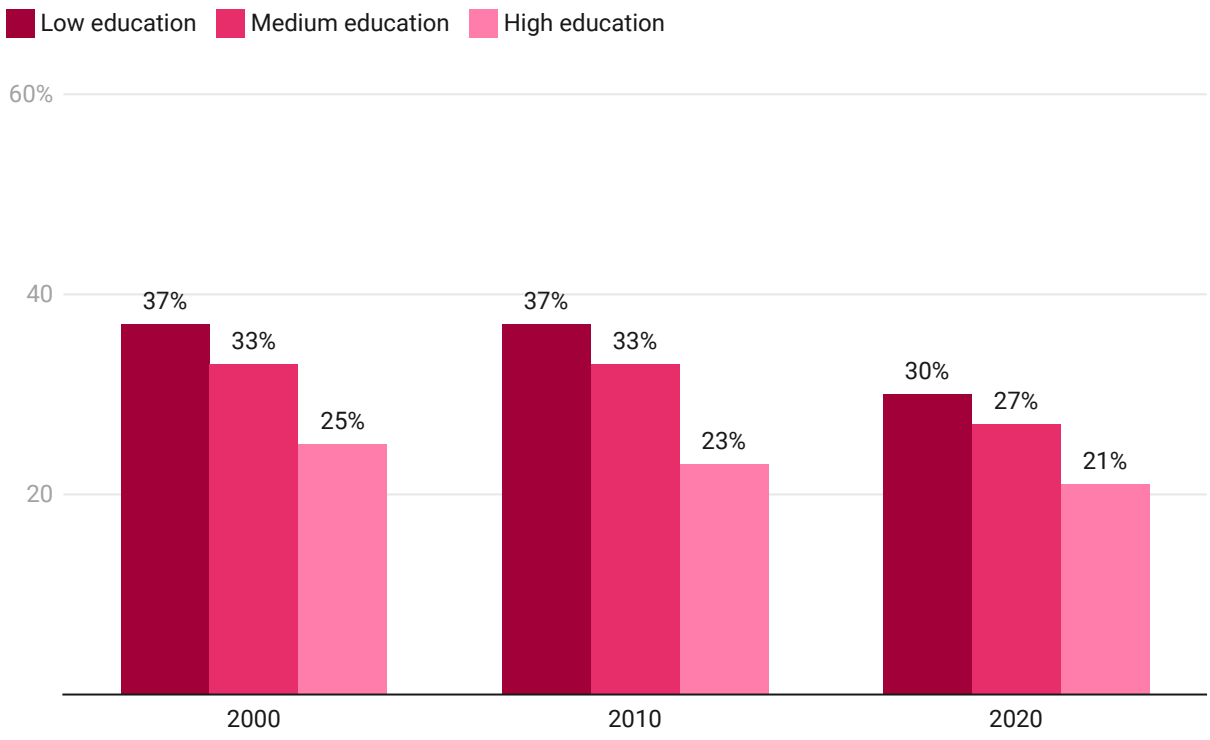
Figure 38. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by gender over time.

Figure 39 examines the relationship between education level and agreement with the statement, 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', among young Europeans. The data indicate that young individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to agree with the statement. This pattern has remained consistent across the three survey waves, although the educational gap has narrowed slightly over time in part due to a larger decline in agreement with the statement by young Europeans with lower levels of education.

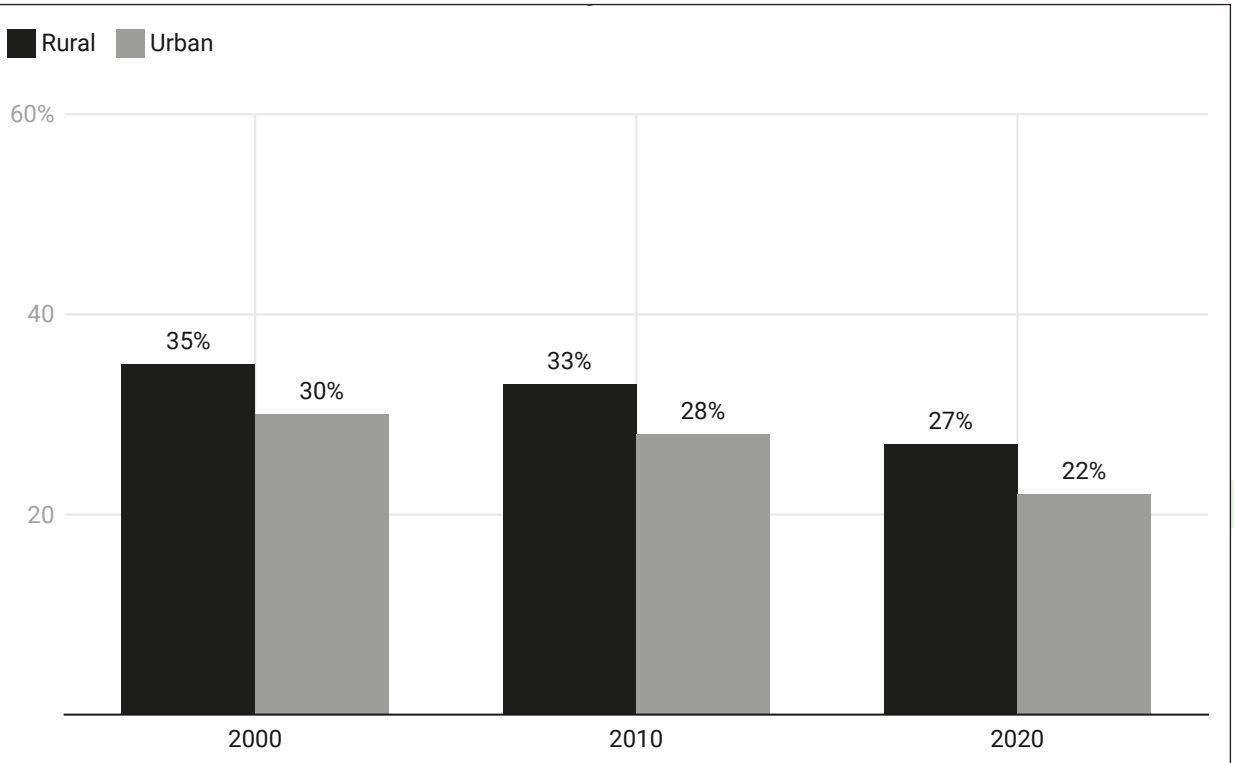
Figure 39. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by education over time.

Figure 40 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who agree that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same'. Young people living in rural areas were slightly more likely to agree with the statement than those in urban areas. Although the levels of agreement with this statement have decreased from 2000 to 2020, the gap between young Europeans in rural and urban areas has remained constant, at about five percent.

Figure 40. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by place of living over time

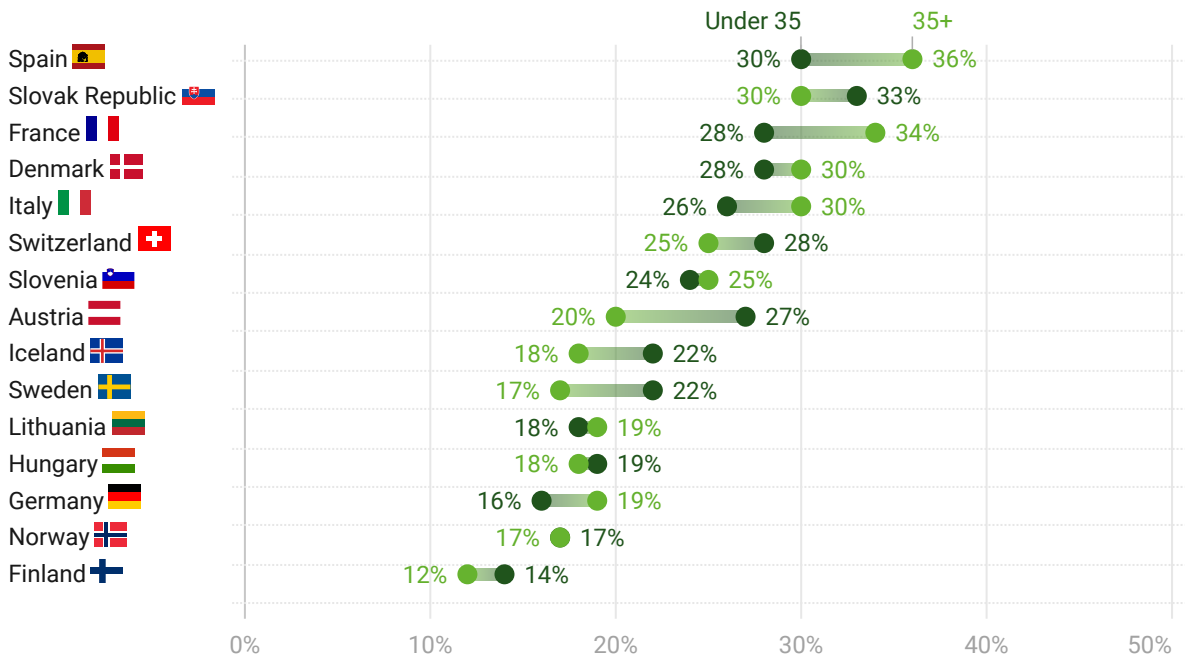


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', in urban and rural areas over time

Figure 41 provides a country-level comparison for the 2020 data according to two age groups. It shows that agreement with the statement 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same' varies across different European countries. In some countries, including Finland, Norway, Germany, Hungary and Lithuania, people are less likely to believe that their actions are not worthwhile unless others participate as well.

In other countries, such as Spain, Slovak Republic, France and Denmark, there is higher agreement with the statement that individual actions are meaningless unless others participate. Age differences in the different countries are generally small, although larger differences are found in Slovak Republic, Sweden and in particular Austria, where individuals under 35 are more likely to agree with the statement.

Figure 41. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by country and age group

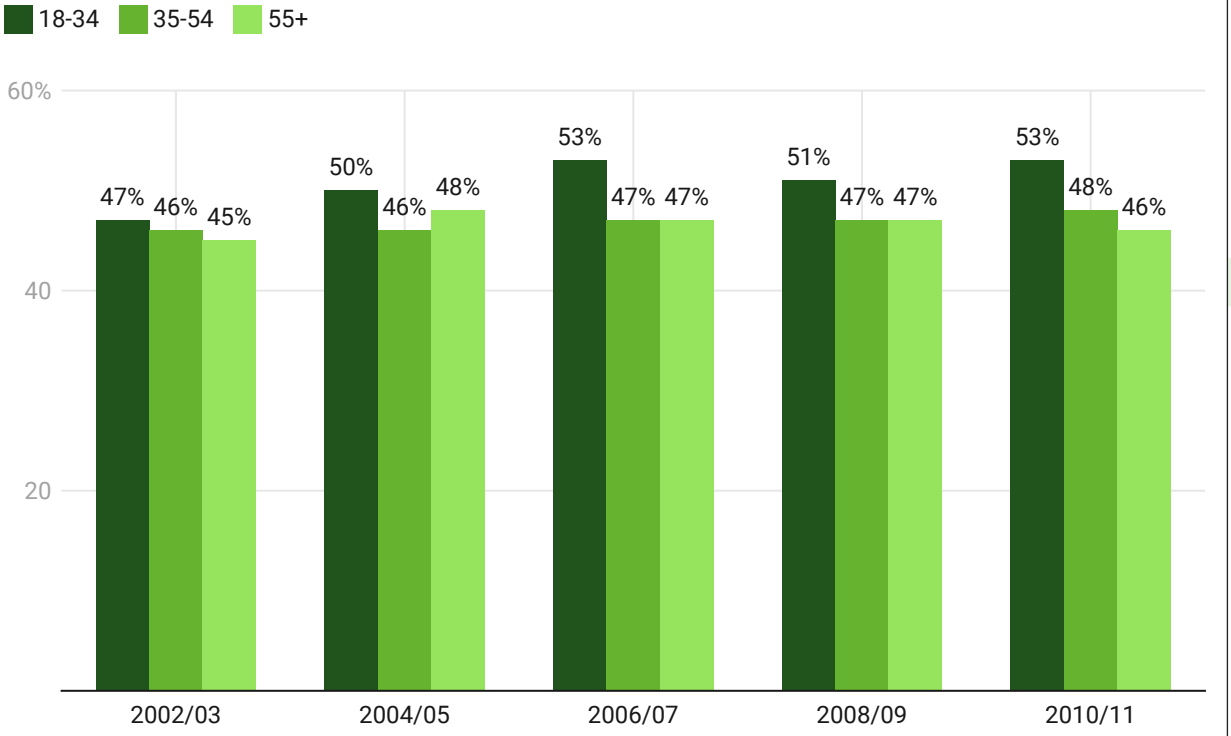


ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same', by country and age group (2020).

4.4.4 Trust in science

While many people acknowledge the seriousness of climate change, opinions differ on the role of science and technology in addressing environmental problems. Some believe that scientific innovation can provide solutions with minimal need for behavioural or societal change, while others argue that environmental crises require more fundamental shifts in consumption patterns and governance. Figure 42 shows the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement, 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', segmented by age. The results suggest that trust in science remained stable between 2002/03 and 2010/11, with only small differences across the age groups. Individuals under the age of 35 express slightly higher levels of trust in science compared to older age groups.

Figure 42. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by age group over time

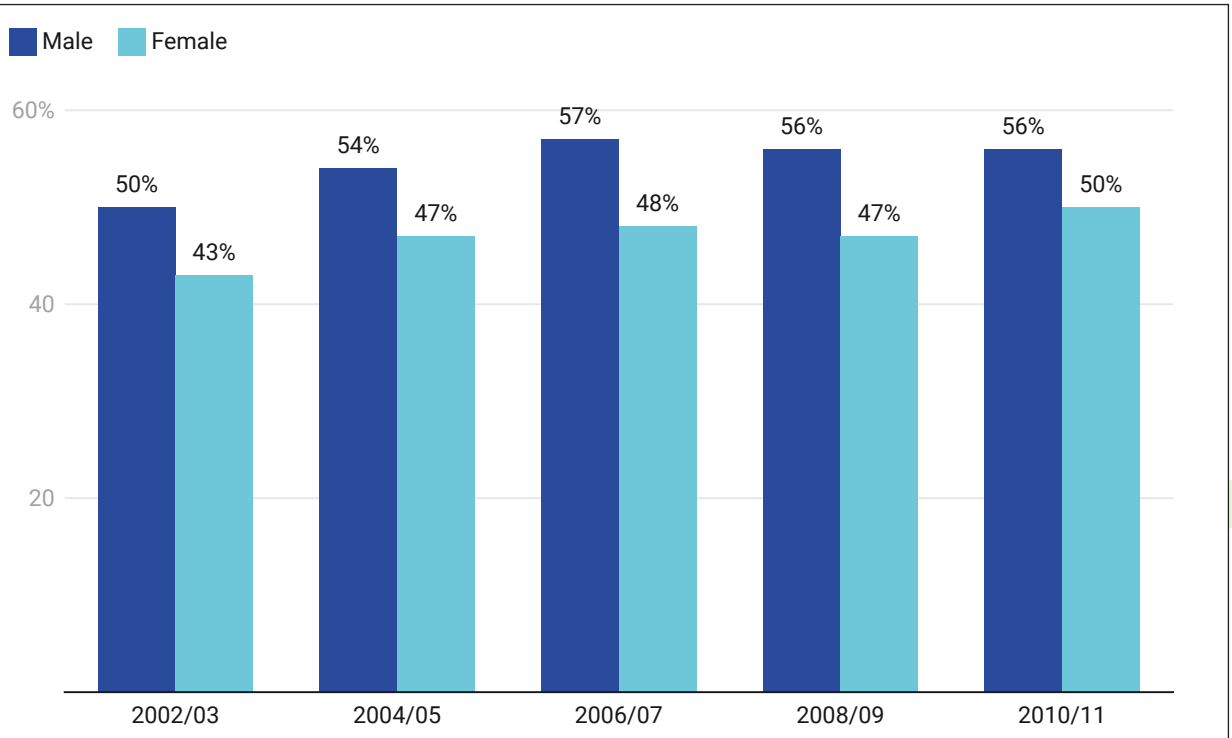


ESS – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by age group over time.

Figure 43 examines differences in trust in science among young Europeans by gender. The figure suggests that young men are slightly more likely than young women to express confidence that science can effectively address environmental issues.

This pattern has been observed across multiple survey waves. Agreement with the statement 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems' remained stable for both young men and young women from 2002/03 to 2010/11.

Figure 43. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by gender over time

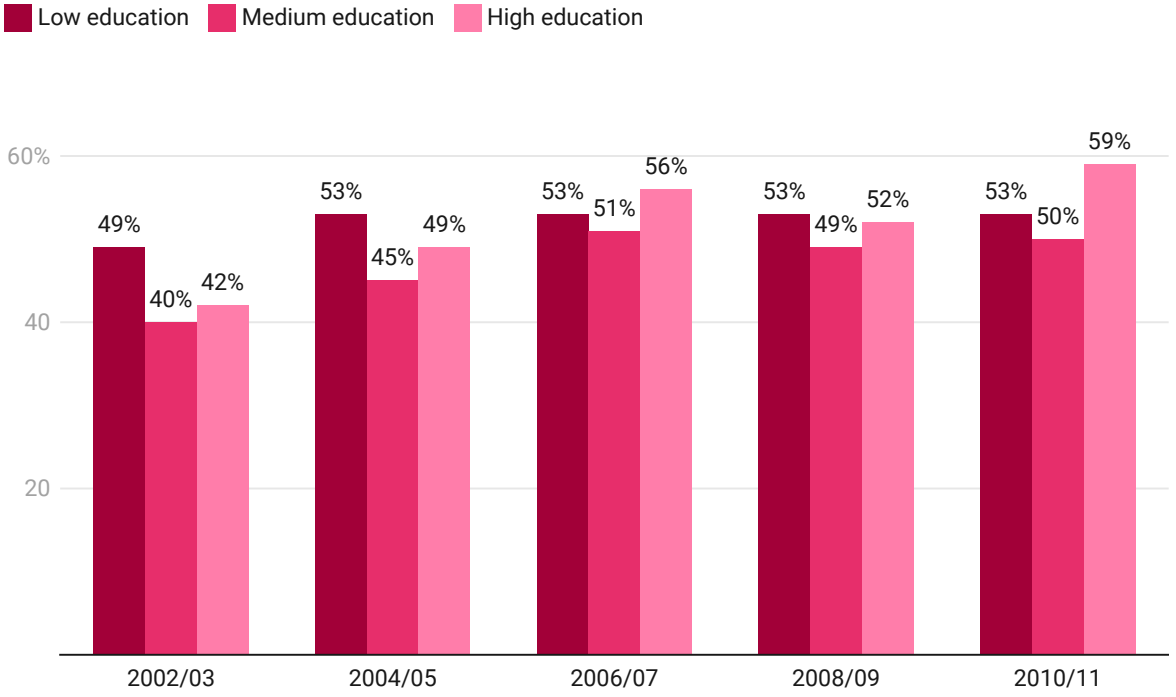


ESS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by gender over time.

Figure 44 presents trust in science among young Europeans by education level, highlighting changes across different waves of the ESS. In 2002/03 and 2004/05, young individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to express confidence that science can effectively address environmental issues than their peers with medium or higher education. In 2006/07 and 2008/09, differences across the three groups were small (ranging from 51-56% and 49-53%, respectively).

In 2010/11, the pattern had reversed: individuals with higher education were slightly more likely to agree that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems' than those with medium or lower education. The data show that while trust in science has increased among young Europeans with medium and higher education from 2002 to 2010, it remained relatively stable at around 49-53% for those with lower education.

Figure 44. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by education over time

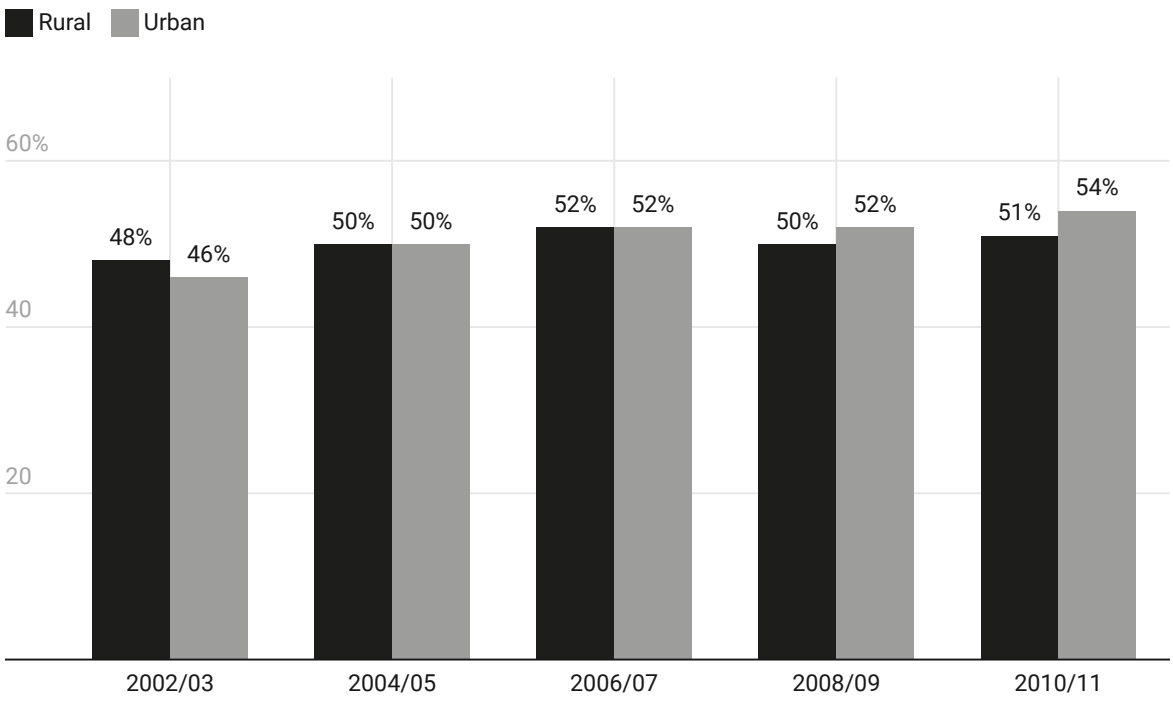


ESS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by education over time.

Figure 45 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems'.

It shows that the differences between the two groups are negligible, however a shift can be observed, with higher levels of young Europeans displaying more trust in science in 2010 than in 2002.

Figure 45. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by place of living over time

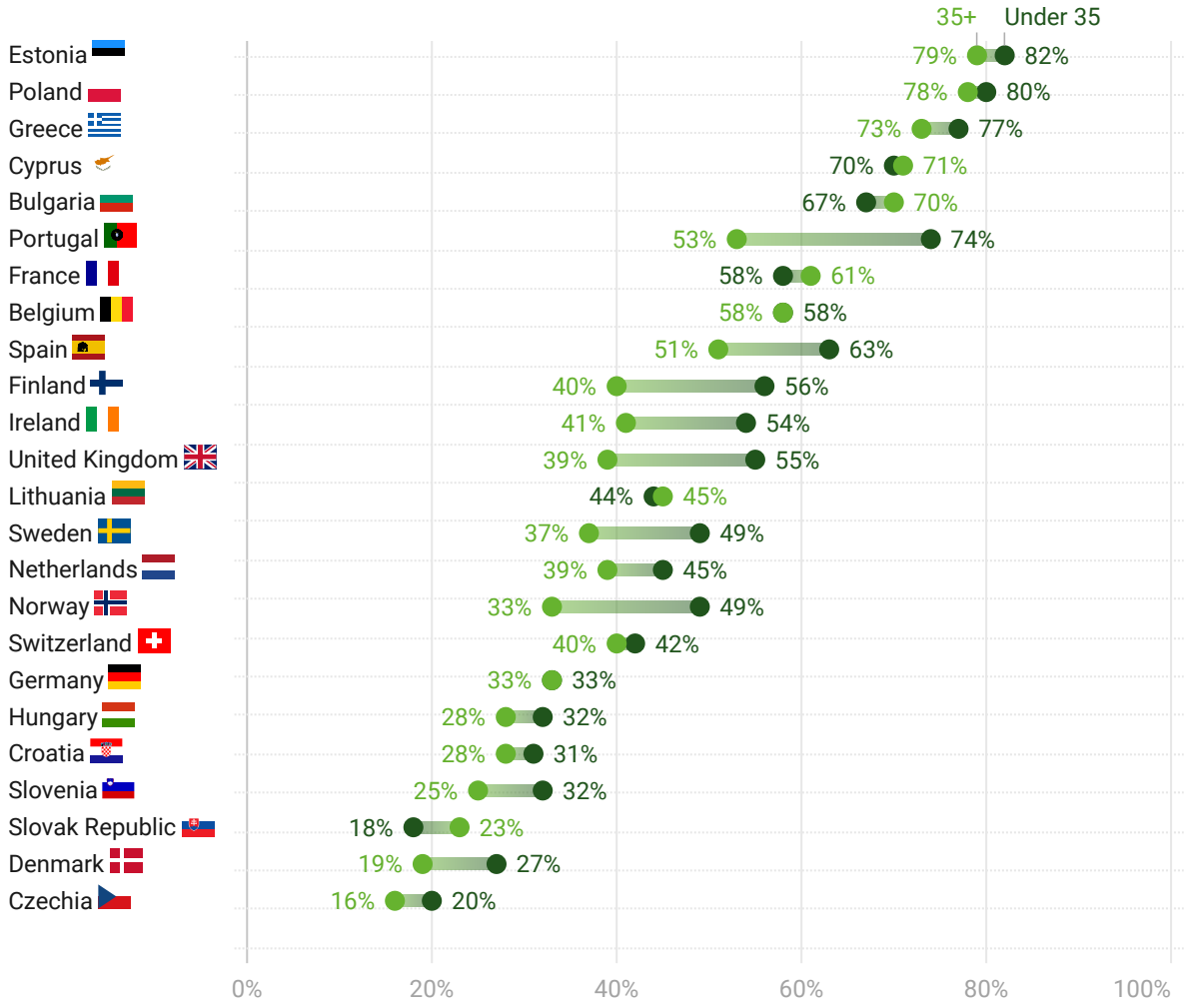


ESS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 46 provides a cross-country comparison of trust in science for 2010/11. The figure shows substantial national differences in attitudes toward scientific solutions to climate change. Some European countries, such as Estonia, Poland, Greece and Cyprus, exhibit higher levels of trust in science. In contrast, others, such as Czechia, Denmark, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia, display lower trust in scientific solutions to environmental problems.

There does not appear to be a clear pattern for different European regions. In general, individuals under 35 are more likely to agree with the statement that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems' than those aged 35 and over. The difference is particularly large in Portugal (74% versus 53%) and to some extent in Finland (56% versus 40%). Ireland (54% versus 41%), United Kingdom (55% versus 39%) and Norway (49% versus 33%).

Figure 46. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by country and age group

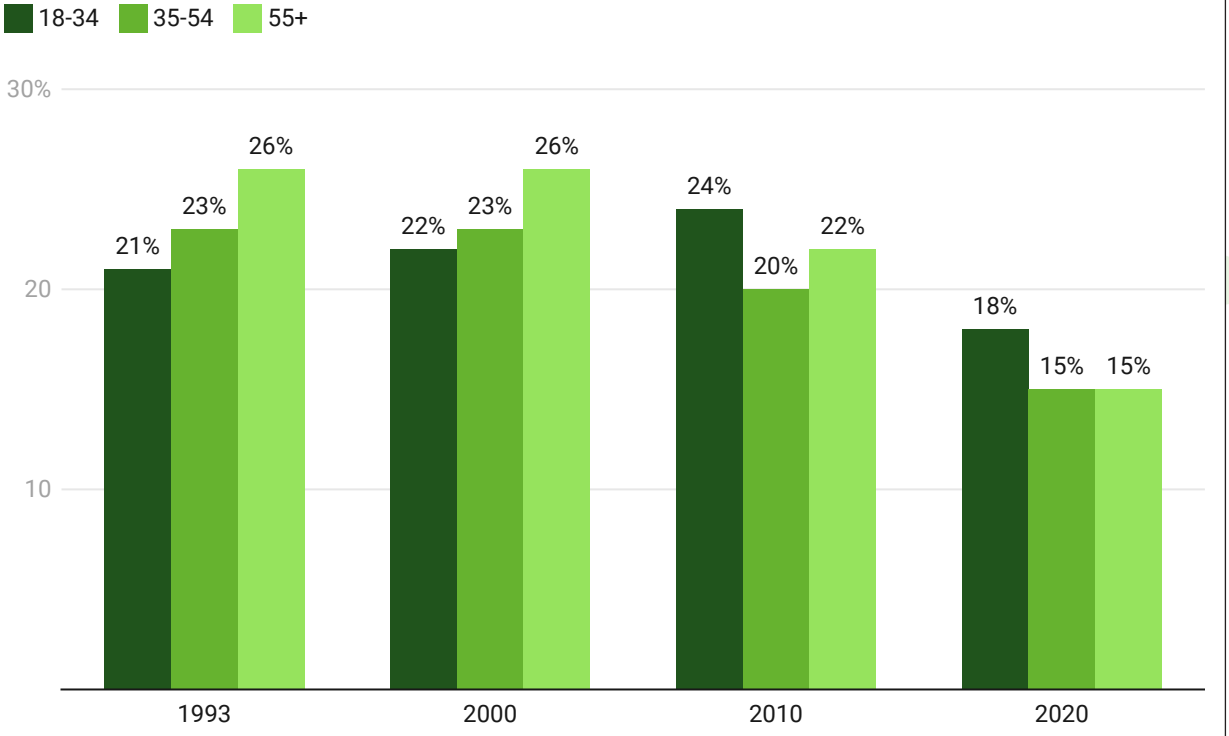


ESS – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems', by country and age group (2010/11).

While Figures 42 to Figure 46 focused on general trust in science to help solve our environmental problems, the next set of figures examines a related but more specific belief – whether modern science alone will be sufficient to solve climate change without requiring major lifestyle or societal changes.

Figure 47 presents the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement, 'Modern science will solve environmental problems with little change to our way of life', analysed by age group over time. The data show that agreement levels are generally low across all age groups and appear to have declined from 21-26% in 1993 to 15-18% in 2020. While in 1993 and 2000, individuals aged 55 and over were slightly more likely to agree with the statement, this pattern reversed in 2010 and 2020. Overall, however, age differences are small.

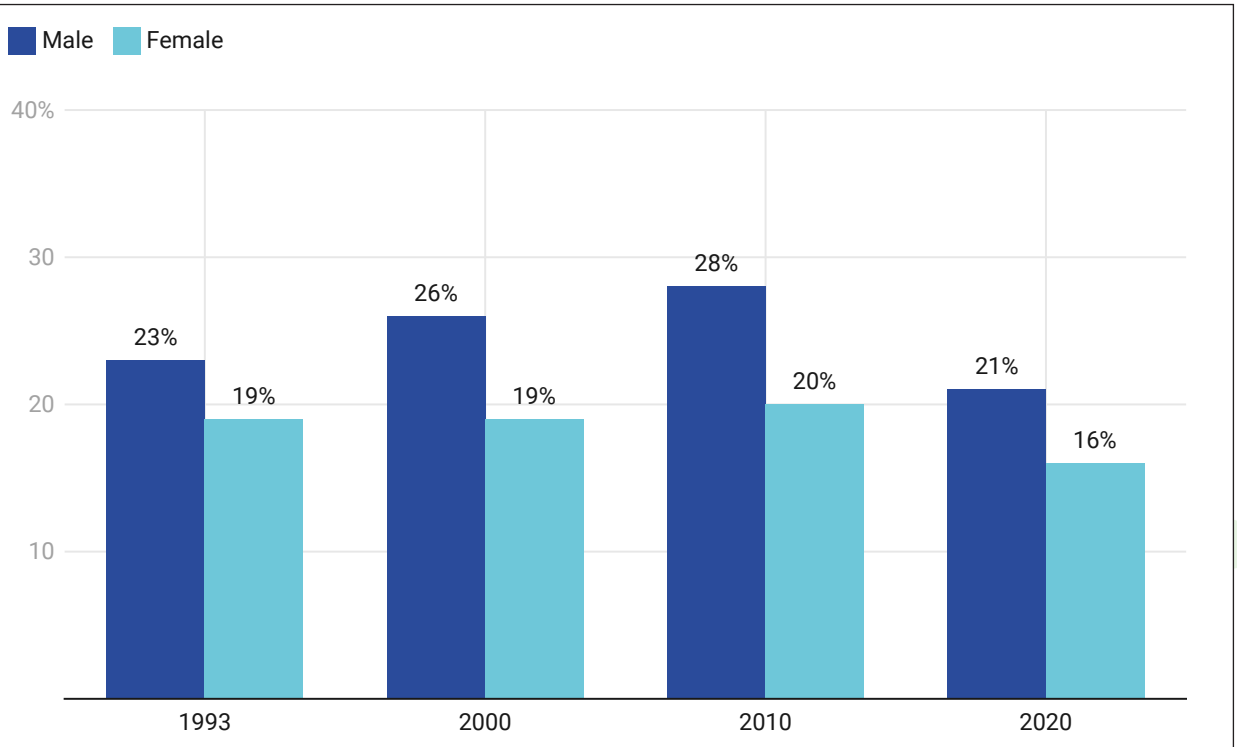
Figure 47. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by age group over time.

Figure 48 presents levels of agreement among young Europeans with this statement, stratified by gender over time. The figure shows that young men are more likely than young women to believe that science will solve environmental problems without requiring lifestyle changes. This pattern has remained relatively stable across the different waves from 2003 to 2020.

Figure 48. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by gender over time

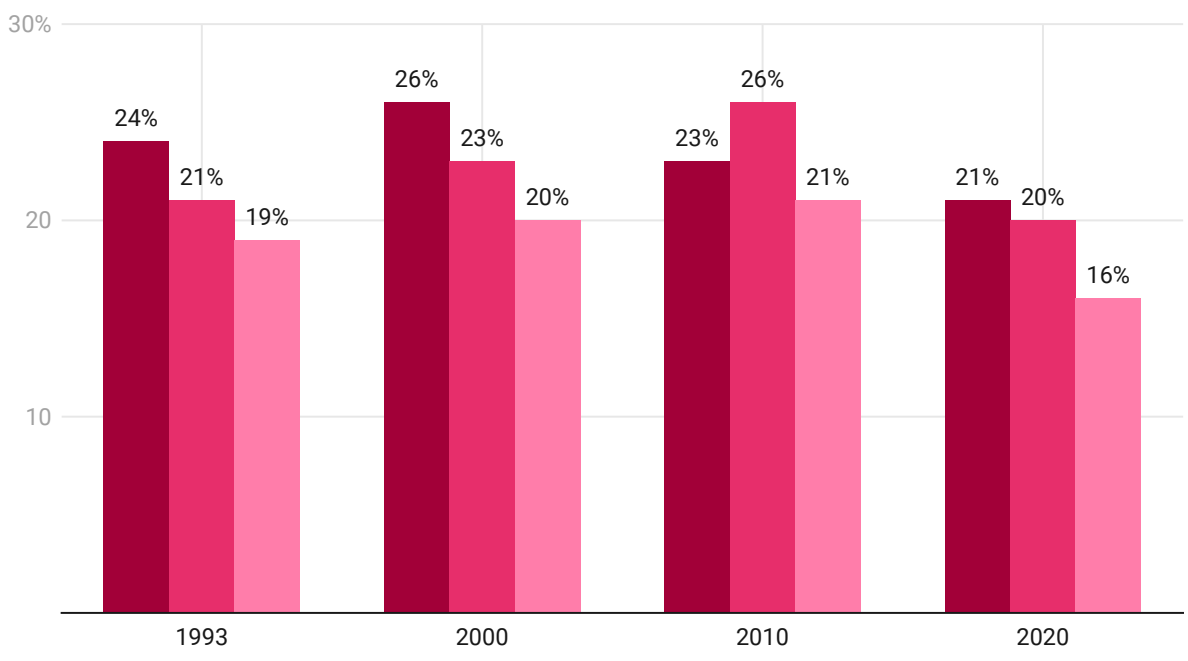


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by gender over time.

Figure 49 presents the results for young Europeans according to their education level. The results suggest that individuals with higher education are slightly less likely to agree with the statement, 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life'. However, the differences between education groups are generally small.

The lowest levels of agreement were observed in 2020 across all education groups, with only minor differences between them (16-21%). This data points to the fact that younger more educated Europeans are aware that in order to tackle the environmental problems we are faced with today, there needs to be a change in lifestyle, as modern science cannot solve these problems alone.

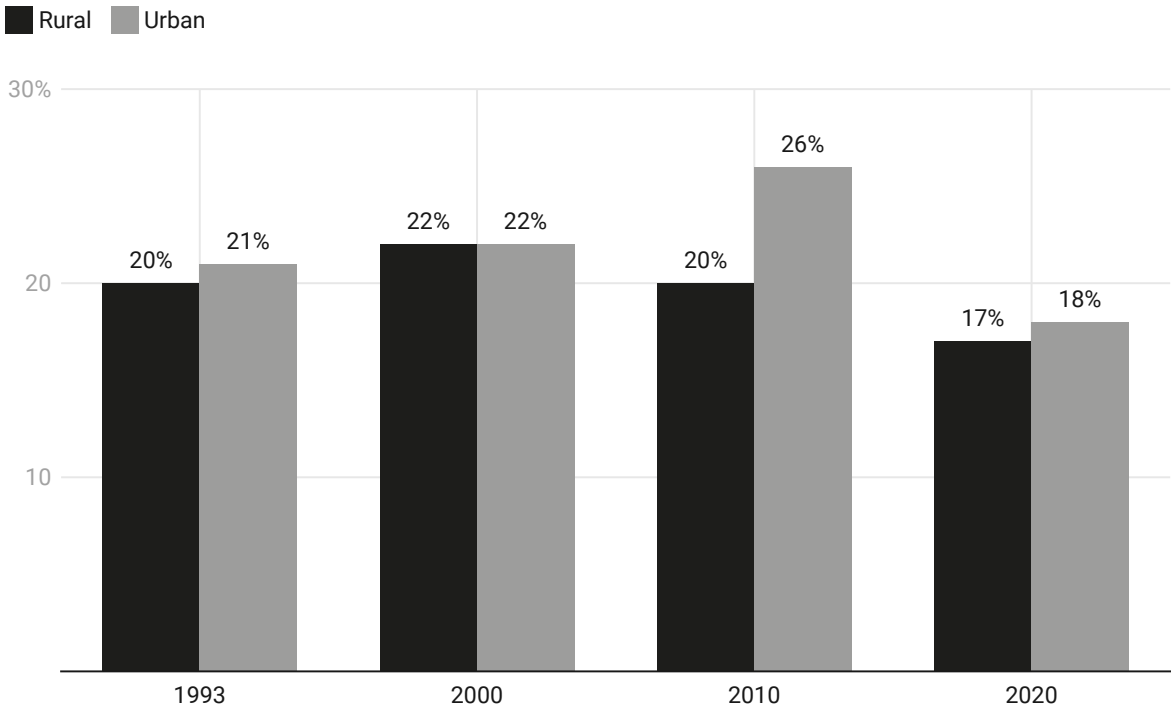
Figure 49. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by education over time.

Figure 50 shows that there were negligible differences in agreement with the statement 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life' between young Europeans living in urban and rural areas. Although a 6% difference was observed in 2020, differences in other years were minimal.

Figure 50. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by place of living over time

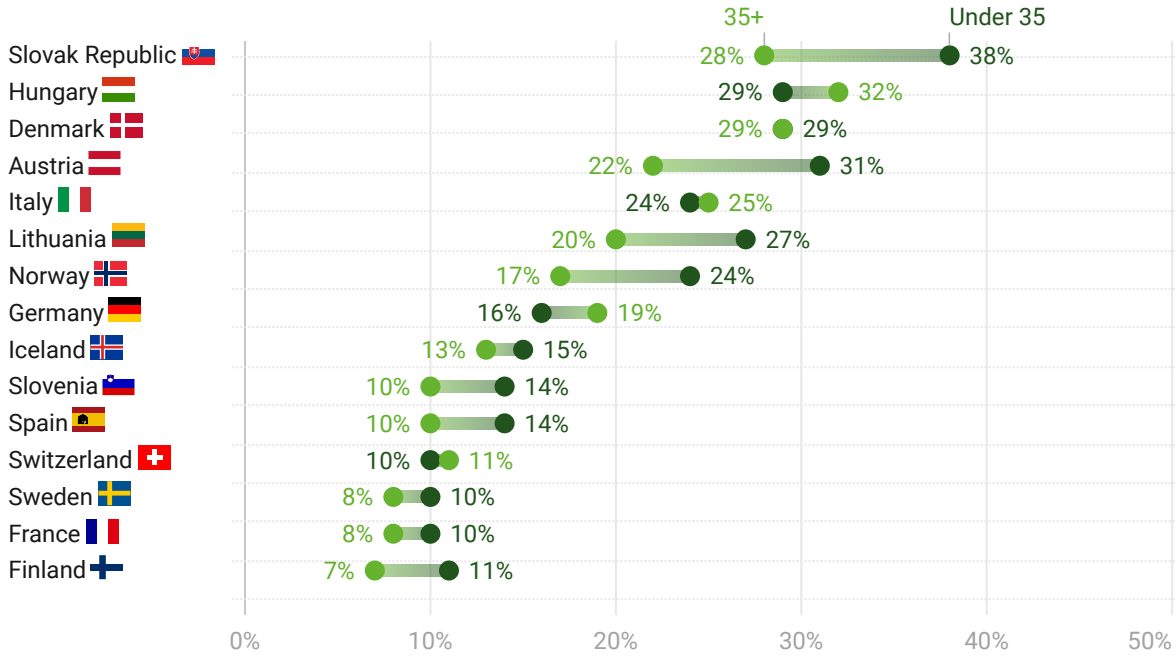


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 51 provides a cross-country comparison for 2020, illustrating significant differences across Europe in levels of agreement that modern science will solve the environmental problems with little change to our way of life. Countries such as Slovak Republic, Hungary and Denmark show relatively high levels of agreement, while these are much lower in Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia.

Individuals under 35 are generally more likely to agree with the statement than those aged 35 and over, with particularly large age-related differences observed in Slovak Republic, Austria, and to a slightly lesser extent in Lithuania and Norway.

Figure 51. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by country and age group



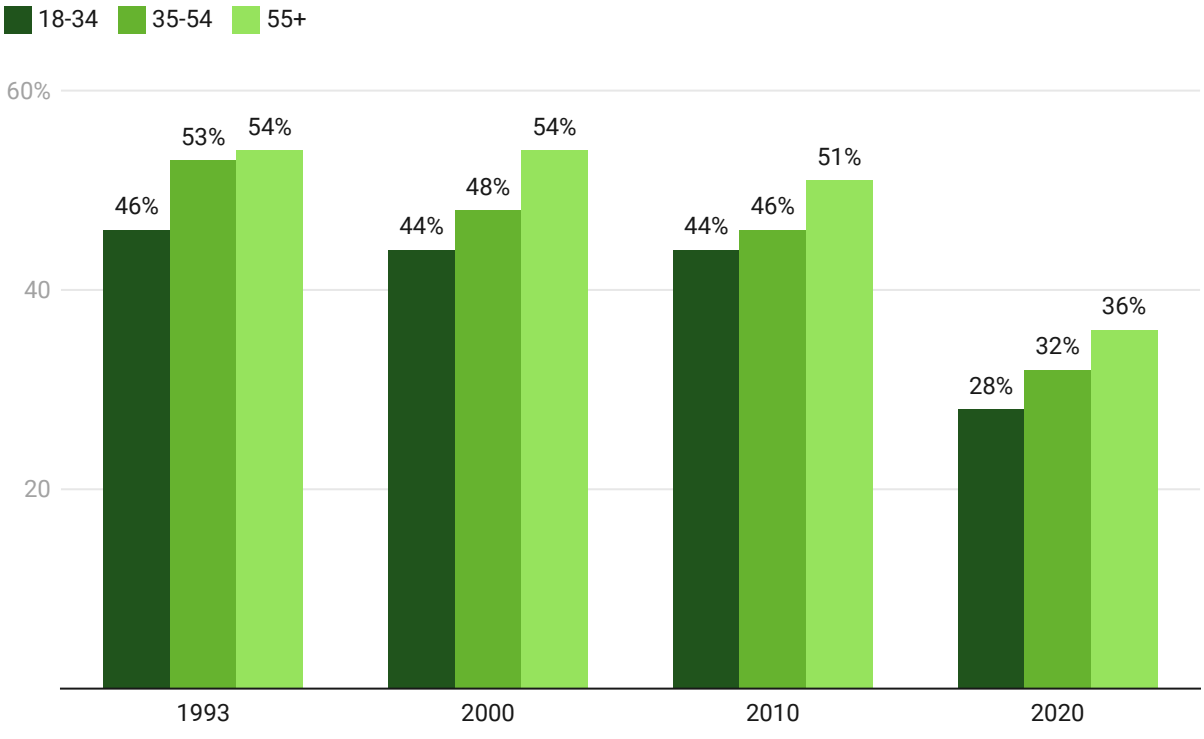
ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Modern science will solve our environmental problems with little change to our way of life', by country and age group (2020).

4.5 Climate change and the economy

The relationship between economic growth and environmental sustainability is a subject of ongoing debate. While some argue that economic prosperity is needed to fund climate solutions, others contend that economic growth contributes to environmental degradation, advocating instead for a transition towards degrowth in order to use less of the world's resources (Kallis et al., 2018). Figures 52 to 61 examine these perceptions across different demographic groups and countries as evidenced by data from various waves of ISSP, highlighting how views on the trade-off between the economy and environment relationship have evolved over time.

Figure 52 presents the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement, 'In order to protect the environment, our country needs economic growth', broken down by age group over time. The figure shows a decline in the belief that economic growth is essential for environmental protection, particularly in the last wave of data collected in 2020. However, a substantial proportion of the population still considers economic growth necessary for environmental protection, with agreement levels ranging from 28% to 36% in 2020. In general, older age groups, especially those aged 55 and over, show higher levels of agreement that economic growth is necessary in order to protect the environment, with age differences remaining relatively stable over time.

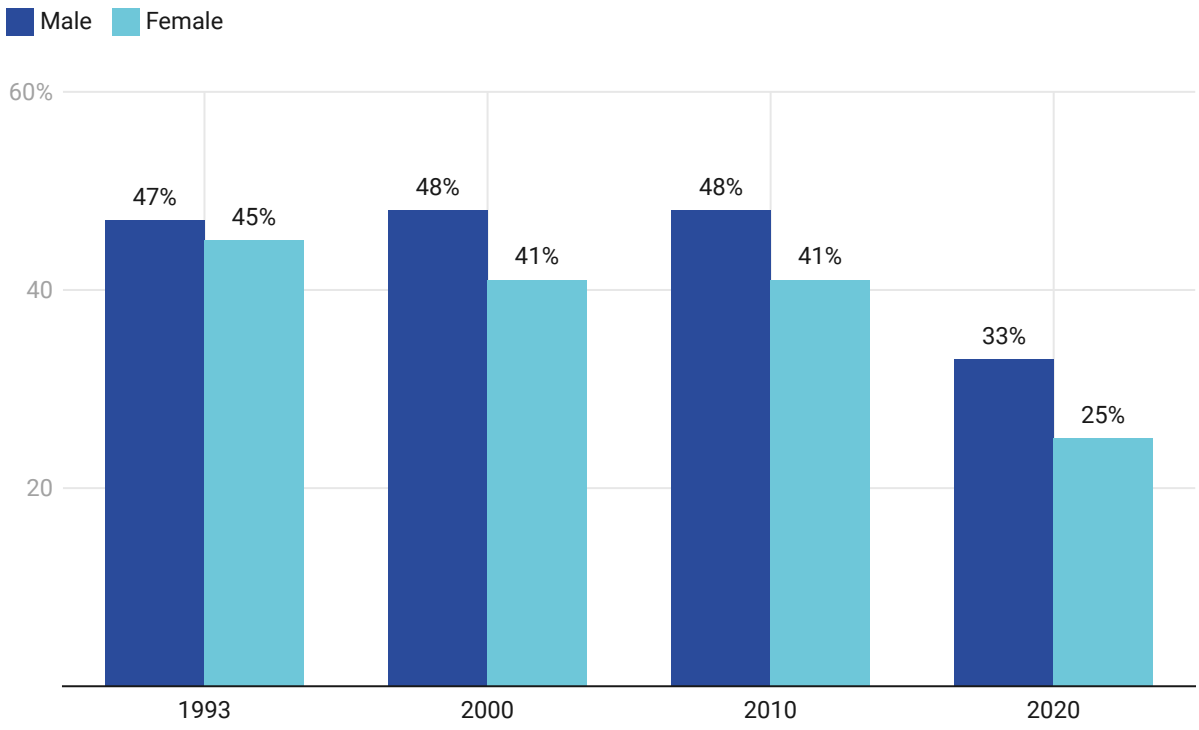
Figure 52. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by age group over time.

Figure 53 shows gender differences for young Europeans in the belief that economic growth is necessary for protecting the environment. The data indicate that young men are slightly more likely than young women to hold this belief. While agreement levels have declined in the most recent round for both young European men and women, the gap has remained stable over time (at around 7-8 percent), with 25% of women and 33% of men expressing agreement that economic growth is needed for protecting the environment in 2020.

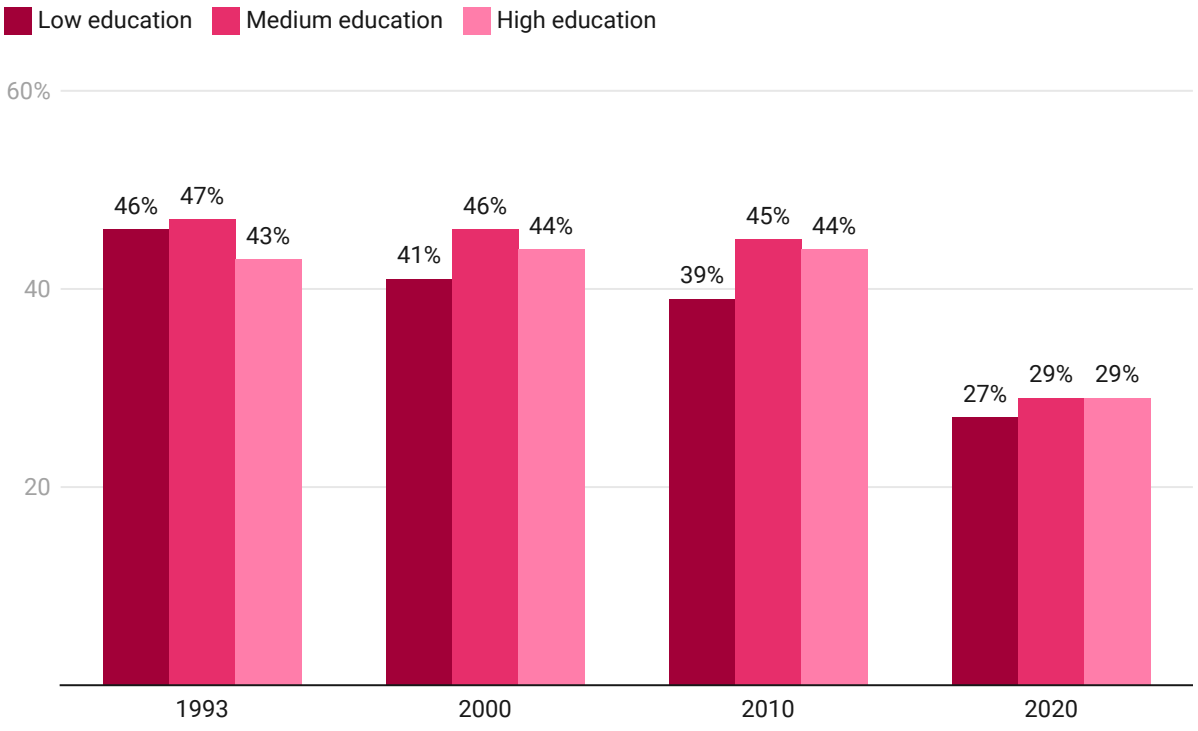
Figure 53. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by gender over time.

Figure 54 illustrates education-based differences in the belief that economic growth is necessary for protecting the environment among young Europeans. The data suggest a decrease in agreement with this statement in the data from 2020, and some variation across the years, but the differences observed between the different levels of education have consistently been small.

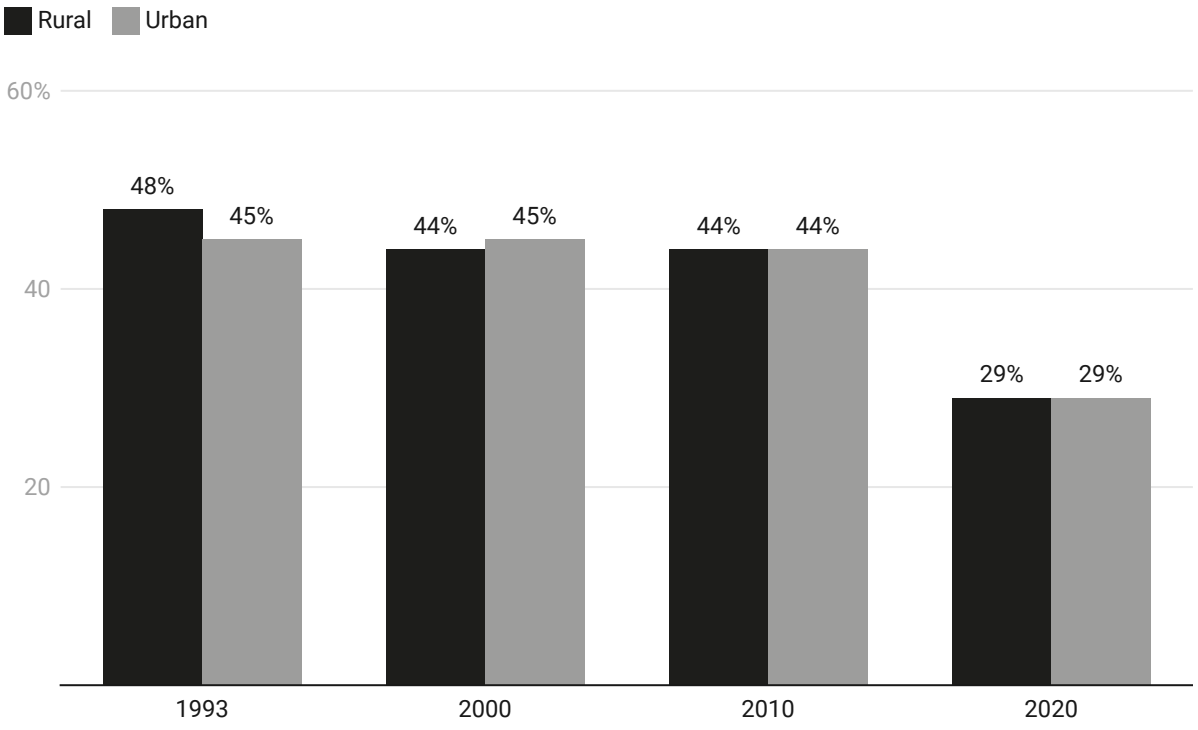
Figure 54. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by education over time.

Figure 55 shows the difference between young Europeans living in urban and rural areas in their agreement with the belief that economic growth is necessary for protecting the environment. The figure indicates that the differences between the two groups are negligible.

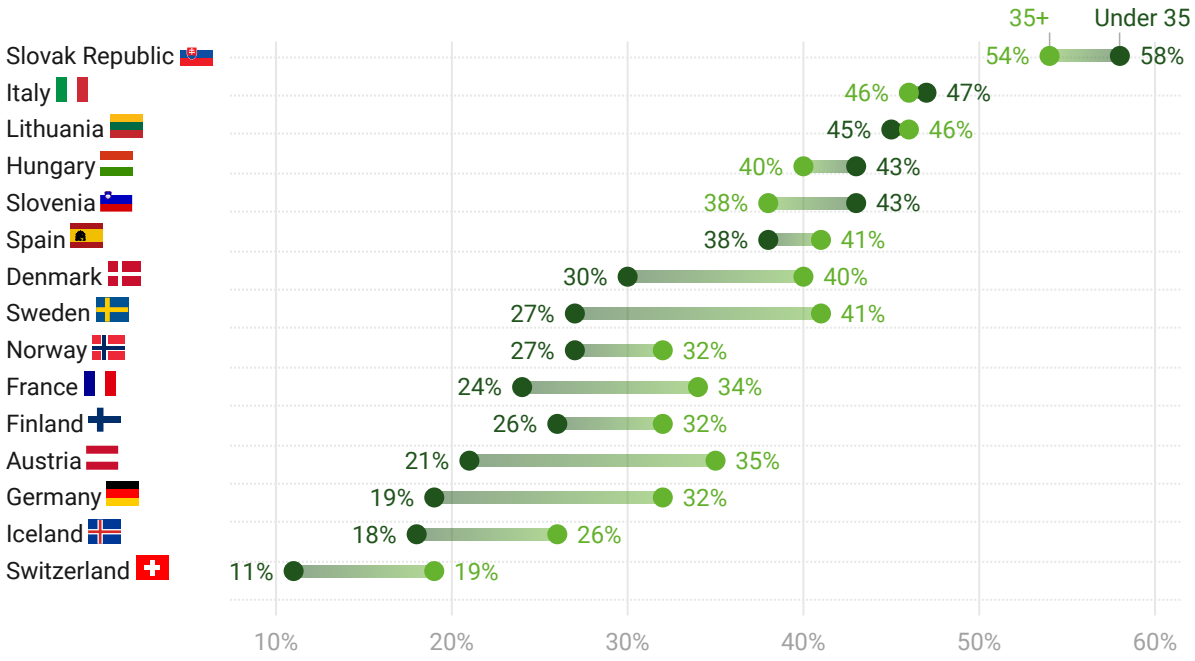
Figure 55. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth', by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTRY] needs economic growth' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 56 presents a country-level comparison for 2020, highlighting substantial variation across European nations. In some countries in Northern and Western Europe, such as Switzerland, Iceland, Germany, Austria and Finland, the belief that economic growth is necessary for environmental protection is relatively low. In contrast, other countries report higher levels of agreement with this statement, with Slovak Republic standing out as having particularly high levels of agreement. In countries where this belief is less prevalent, individuals aged 35 and over are more likely to agree with the statement as compared to those under 35. Conversely, in countries where belief in the necessity of economic growth for environmental protection is higher, the reverse pattern is observed, although the differences there are generally smaller.

Figure 56. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTY] needs economic growth', by country and age group



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'In order to protect the environment [COUNTY] needs economic growth', by country and age group (2020).

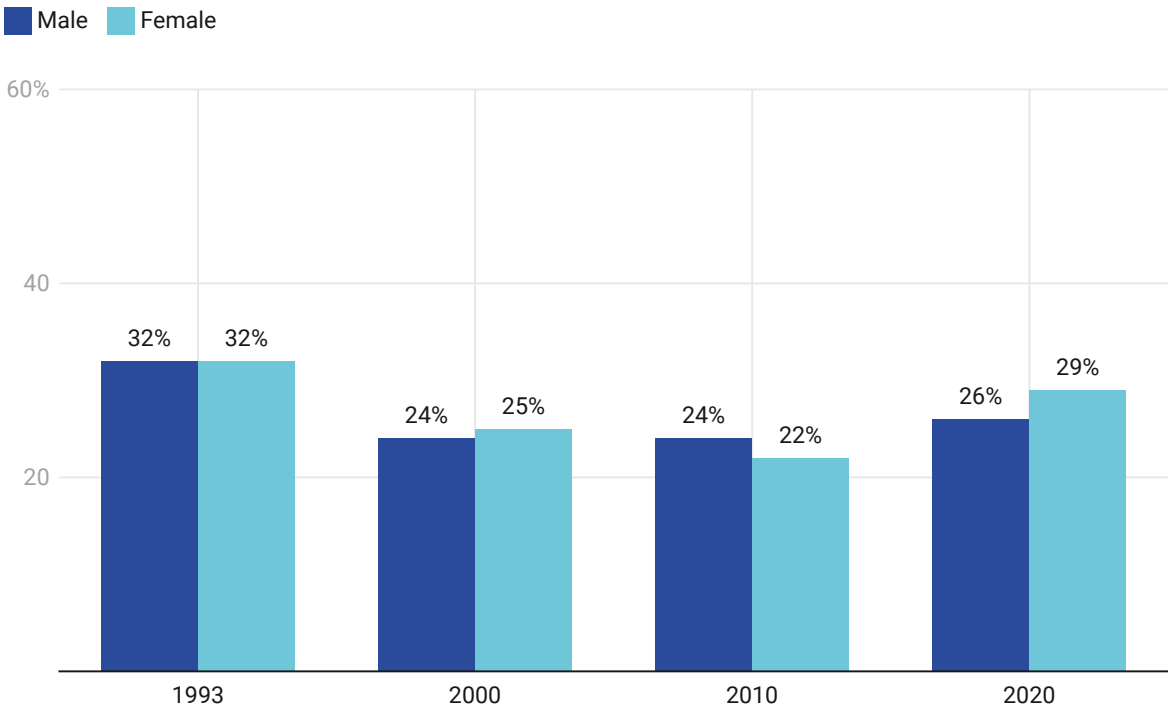
While some people see economic growth as a tool for environmental progress, others view it as a fundamental driver of environmental degradation. Figure 57 presents trends in the latter belief by age group over time. The results indicate a relatively low level of agreement with the statement, in particular in 2000, 2010 and 2020 (25-30%, 23-28% and 27-29%, respectively). Older age groups are slightly more likely to agree that economic growth always harms the environment, but age differences are generally small and levels of agreement have remained relatively stable over time.

Figure 57. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by age group over time

ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by age group over time.

Figure 58 examines gender differences among young Europeans in the belief that economic growth always harms the environment. The figure shows that these differences are minimal, ranging from 0 to 3%.

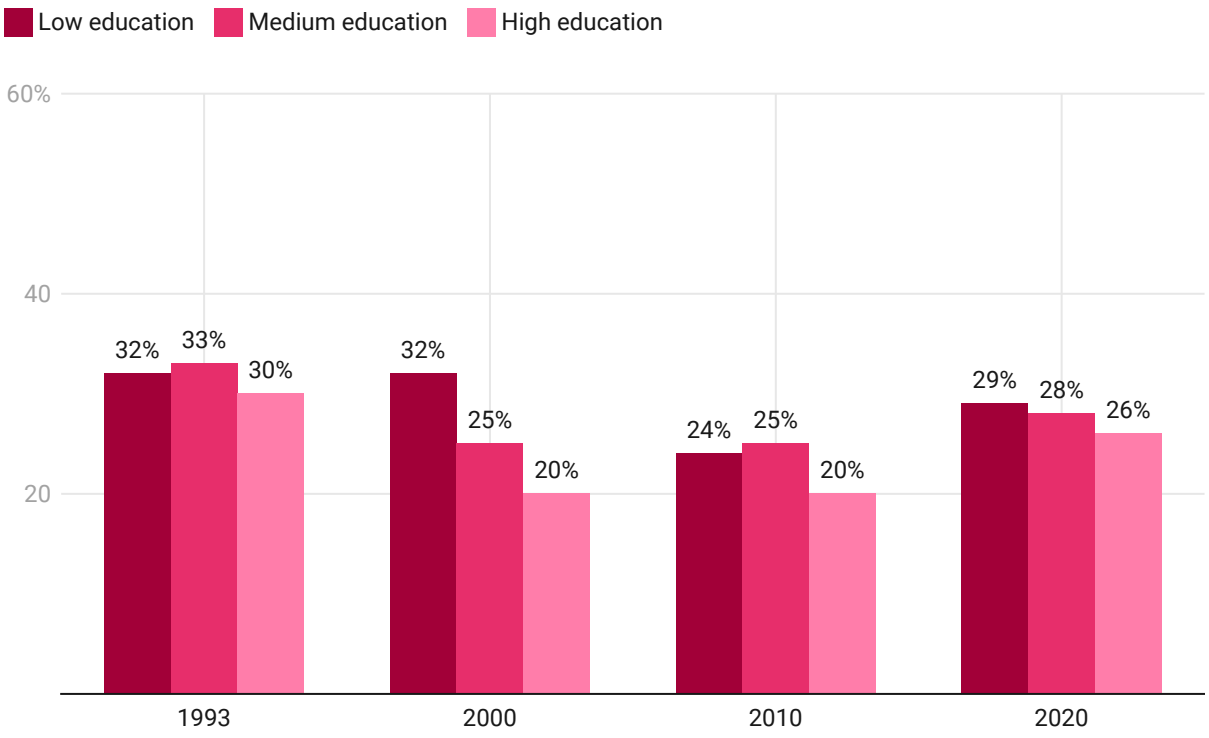
Figure 58. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by gender over time.

Figure 59 presents differences in this belief among young Europeans by education level, showing that those with higher levels of education are less likely to perceive economic growth as harmful to the environment, although these differences have diminished over time.

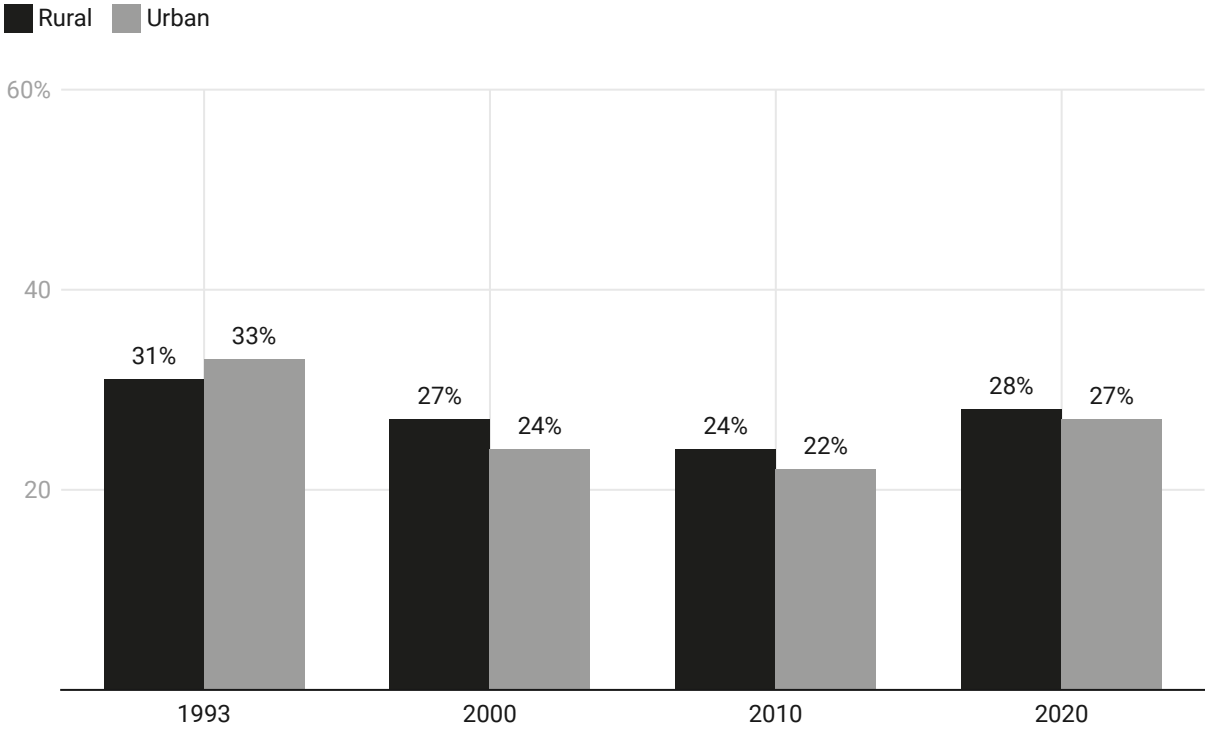
Figure 59. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by education over time.

Figure 60 presents the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment'. It shows that the differences between the two groups are very small.

Figure 60. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by place of living over time

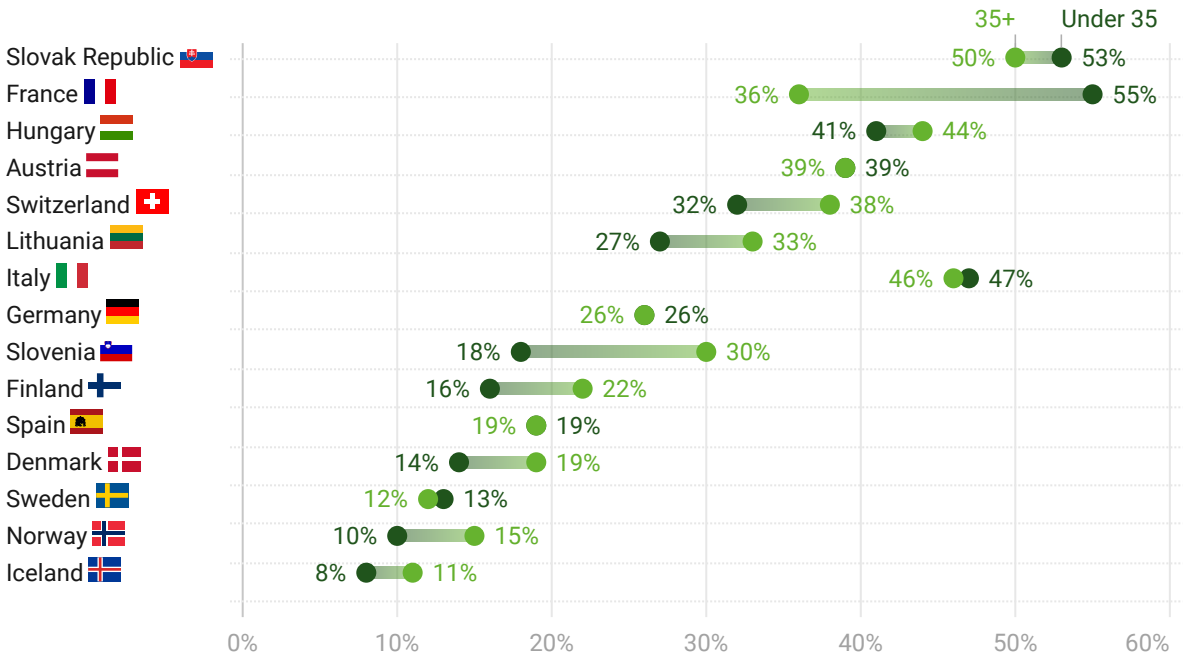


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 61 provides a cross-national comparison for 2020, illustrating how the belief that economic growth always harms the environment varies across Europe by different age groups. The results show that this belief is relatively common in Slovak Republic, France, and Hungary. In contrast, it is less common in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and Finland.

In most countries, individuals aged 35 and over are more likely to agree with this belief than those under 35, although in some countries this pattern is reversed. The difference between younger and older Europeans is particularly pronounced in France (55% and 36%, respectively).

Figure 61. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by country and age group



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'Economic growth always harms the environment', by country and age group (2020).

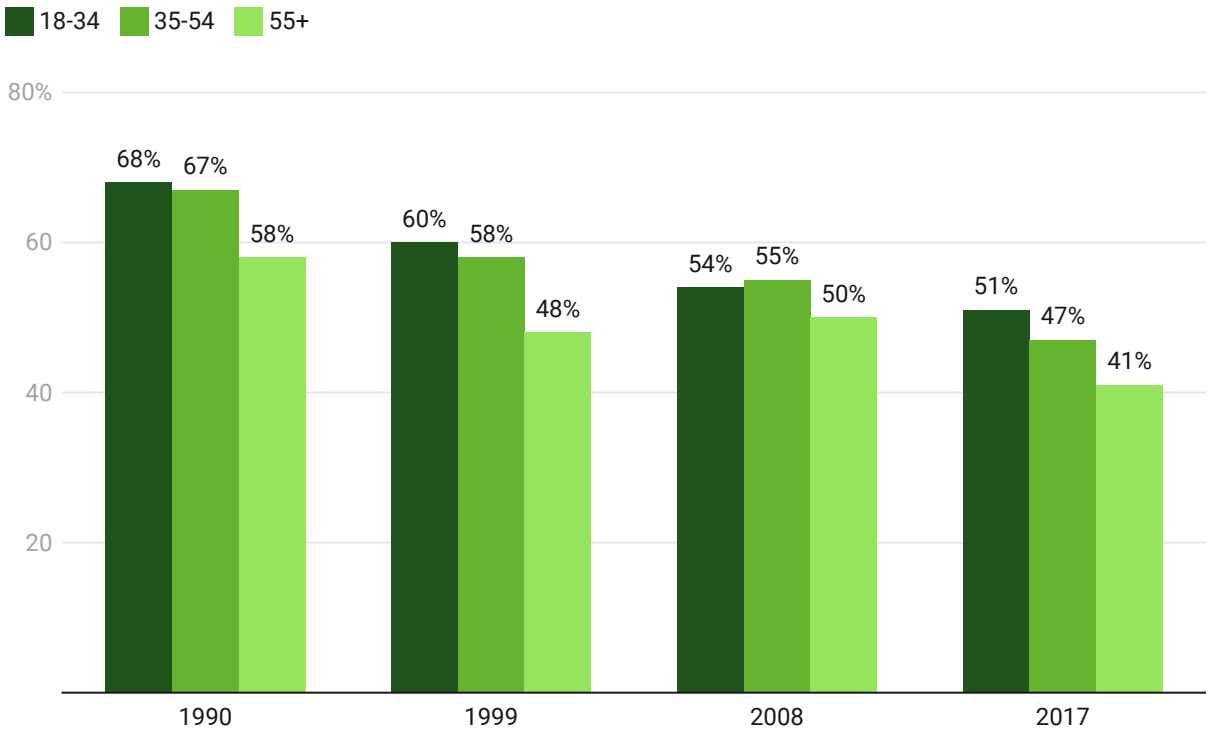
4.6 Policy support and action

This section explores how attitudes toward financial contributions to environmental protection and levels of environmental activism differ across age groups, gender, education levels, and countries, as well as how these perspectives have evolved over time. Figures 62 to 86 examine these patterns and their development over the years.

4.6.1 Willingness to pay to protect the environment

Figure 62 presents the percentage of Europeans who agree with the statement 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', broken down by age over time. The results indicate an overall steady decrease in willingness to contribute financially to prevent environmental pollution. While older individuals remain less inclined to give part of their income, the gap between age groups has remained relatively stable over time.

Figure 62. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by age group over time

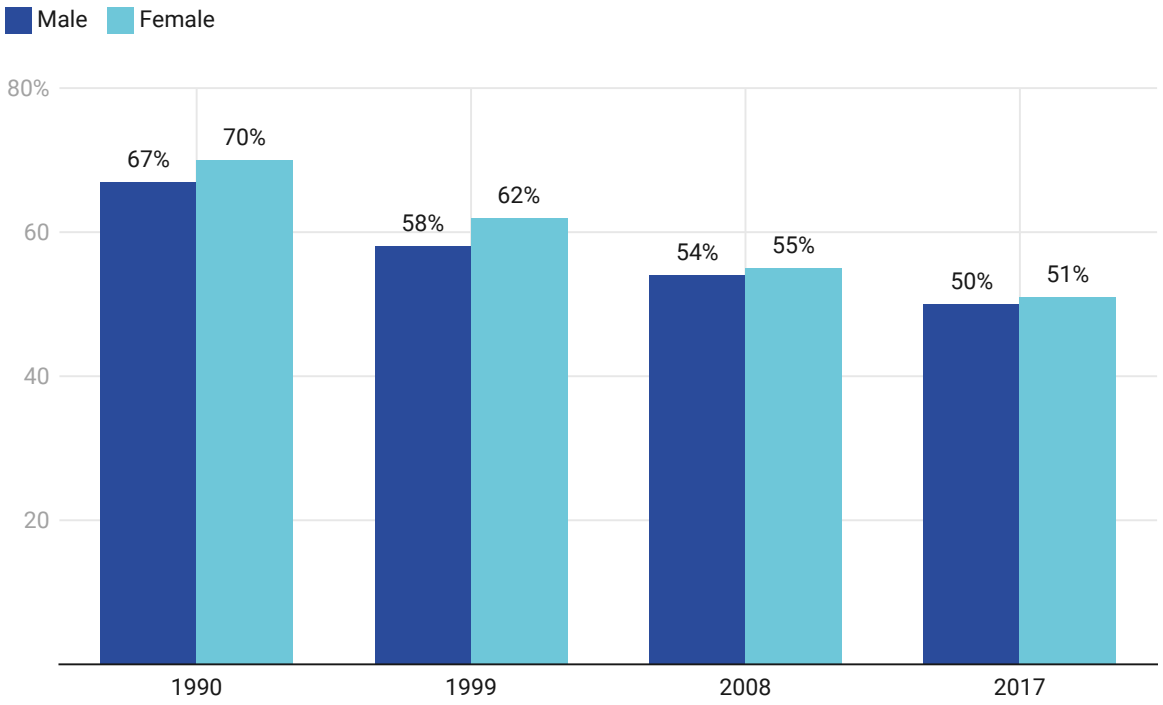


EVS – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by age group over time.

Figure 63 presents gender differences among young Europeans in their willingness to give part of their income to prevent environmental pollution over time. The figure shows that the differences are small.

Willingness to give part of their income has decreased somewhat for both young men and young women over time in Europe.

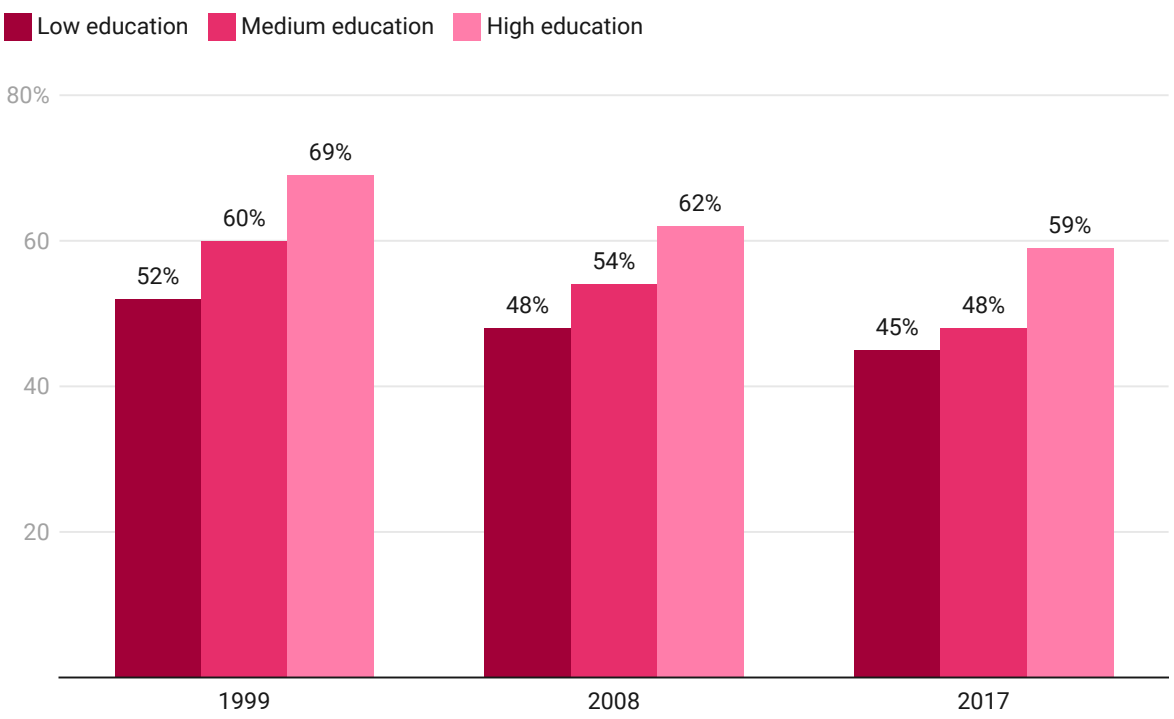
Figure 63. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by gender over time



EVS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by gender over time.

Figure 64 shows the willingness of young Europeans to give part of their income to prevent environmental pollution, broken down by education level. The data reveals a clear positive gradient across the three education groups, with young individuals with higher education being more willing to contribute financially to the prevention of the environmental pollution.

Figure 64. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by education over time

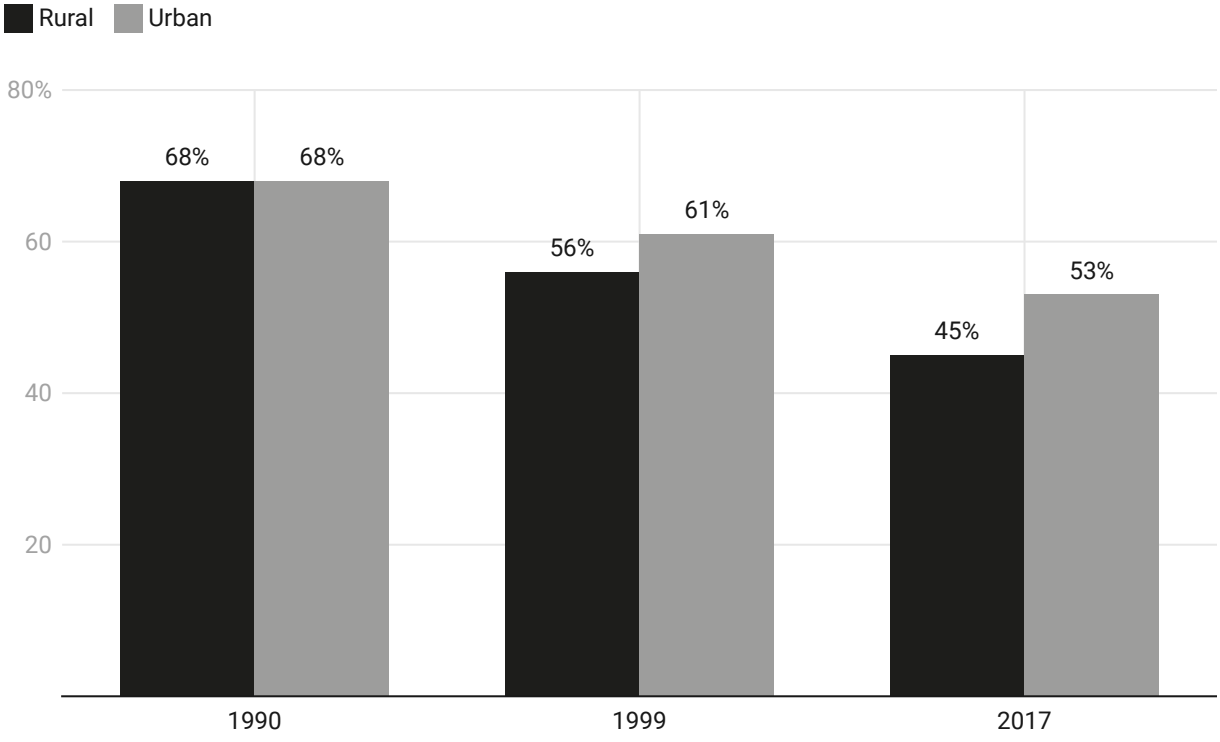


EVS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by education over time.

Figure 65 shows the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who are willing to give part of their income to prevent environmental pollution. While overall agreement with this statement has declined over time, the decrease has been more pronounced among young people living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.

This means that, in 2017, 45% of young Europeans living in rural areas agreed with the statement 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution' as compared to 53% of those living in urban areas.

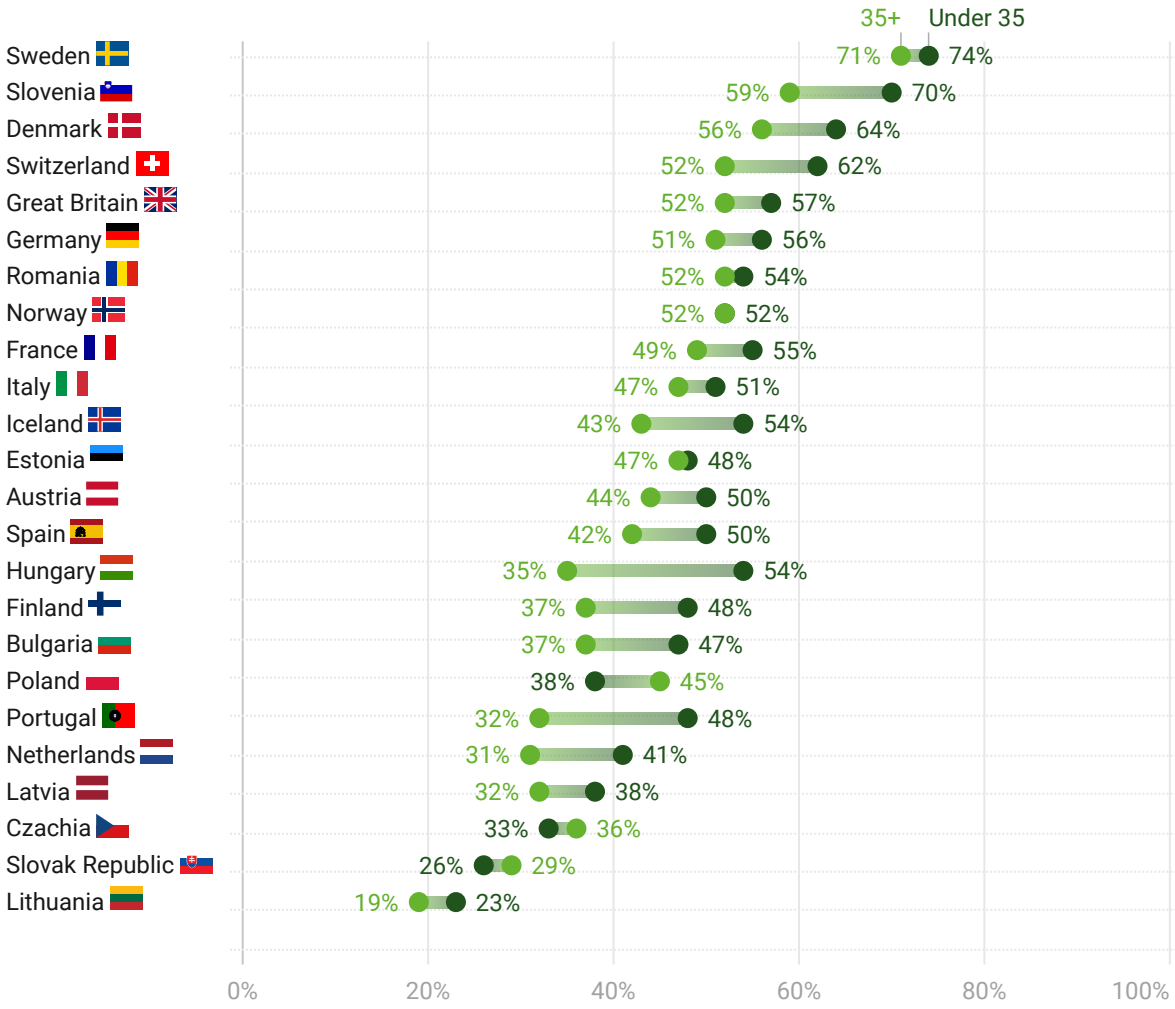
Figure 65. Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by place of living over time



EVS – Percentage of young Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution' in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 66 presents a country-level comparison by age for 2020, highlighting significant variation in respondents' willingness to contribute a portion of their income to prevent environmental pollution. In some countries, such as Sweden, Slovenia, Denmark, Switzerland, and Germany, willingness is relatively high. Conversely, in countries like Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Czechia, Latvia, and the Netherlands, willingness is lower. In most countries, individuals under 35 are more willing to give part of their income to prevent environmental pollution as compared to those aged 35 and over. However, in Poland, Czechia, and Slovak Republic, the reverse pattern is observed.

Figure 66. Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by country and age group



EVS – Percentage of Europeans agreeing that 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', by country and age group (2017).

Figure 67 shows the percentage of young Europeans who agree with the statement 'I am willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment', by age group. Unlike the previous question, which focused on income contributions to prevent pollution, this item measures willingness to absorb higher costs more broadly.

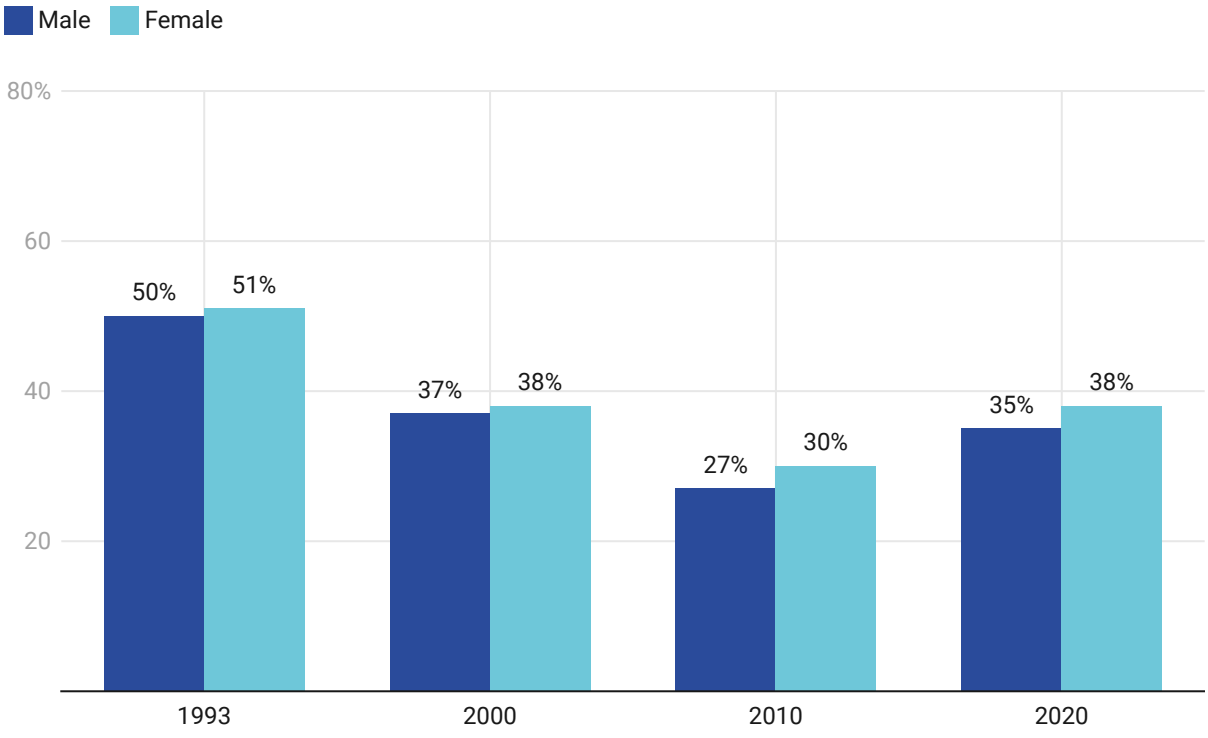
The results indicate a gradual decline in support, particularly among those under 35 and aged 35 to 54. Nonetheless, younger age groups remain more supportive overall. Age differences have narrowed, with agreement falling from 39–51% in 1993 to 35–37% in 2020, despite a slight uptick since 2010 (28–29%).

Figure 67. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by age group over time

ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by age group over time.

Figure 68 presents the percentage of young Europeans who are willing to pay much higher prices for environmental protection by gender over time. It shows that gender differences are minimal (1-3%). The results show a decline in willingness to pay higher prices among both young men and young women from 1993 to 2010, with a slight increase in 2020.

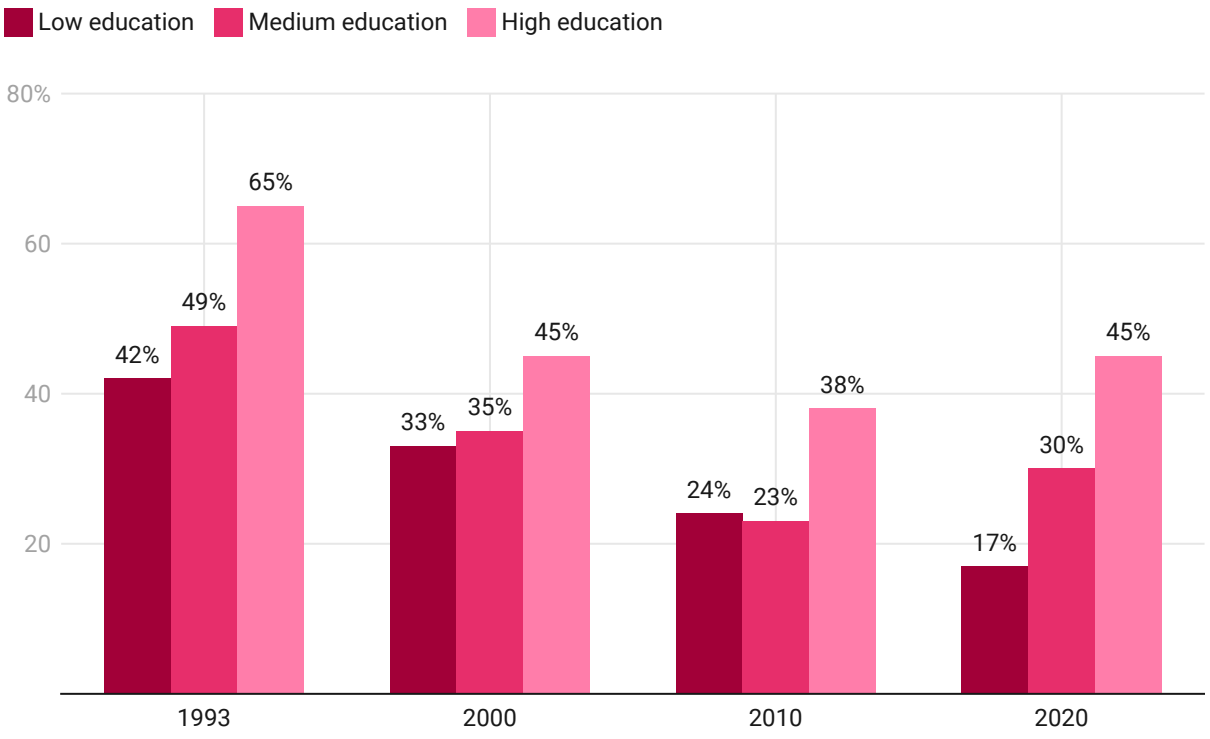
Figure 68. ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by gender over time.

Figure 69 presents the percentage of young Europeans willing to pay significantly higher prices for environmental protection, stratified by education. The figure shows a clear positive gradient, with more educated individuals being the most willing to pay across all waves. These differences have remained stable over time, although there has been a gradual decline in willingness to pay higher prices among all groups.

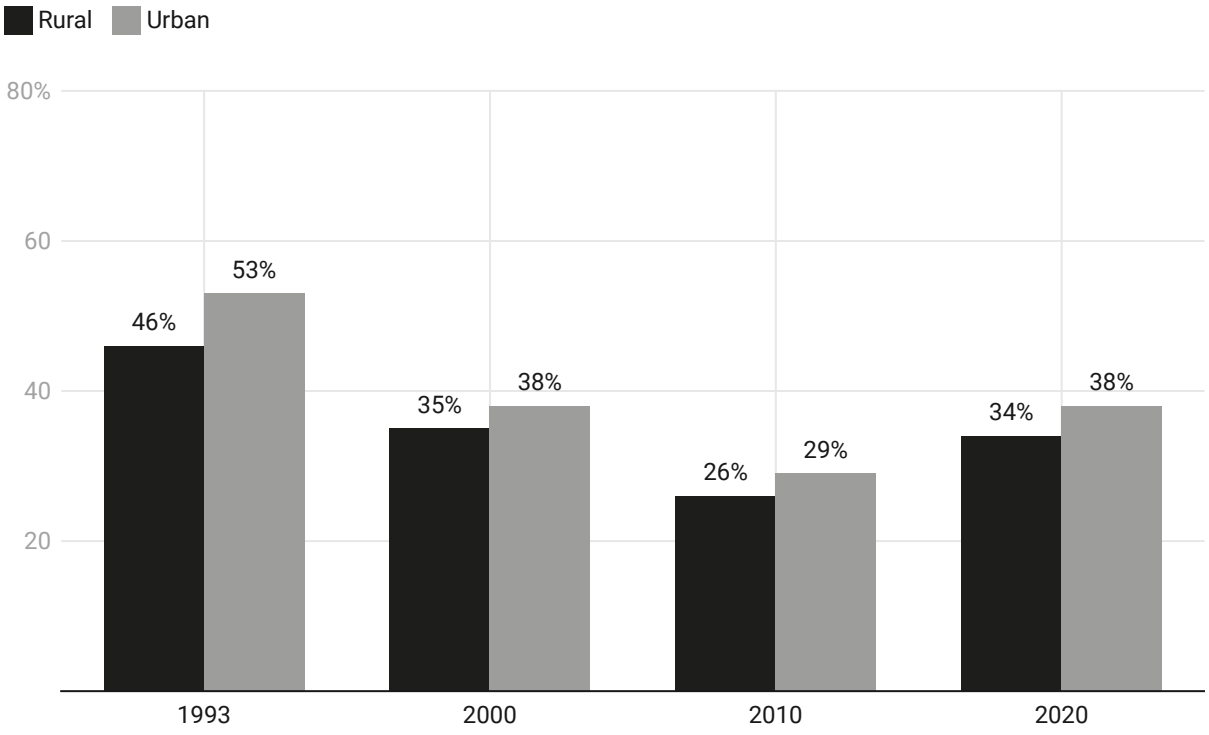
Figure 69. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by education over time.

Figure 70 presents the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who are willing to pay significantly higher prices for environmental protection. It shows that young people in urban areas are slightly more willing to pay higher prices than those in rural areas, although the differences are relatively small.

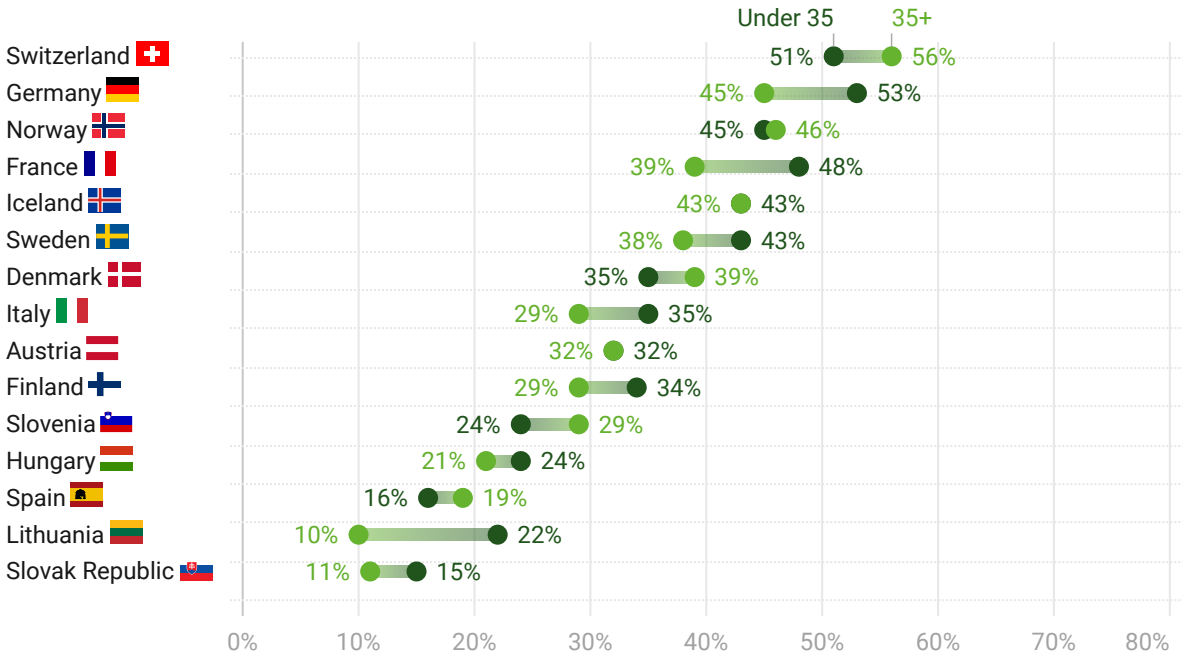
Figure 70. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 71 provides a country-level comparison for 2020, showing notable differences across Europe. In Northern and Western European countries, such as Switzerland, Germany, France, Norway and Sweden, willingness to pay much higher prices for environmental protection is relatively high. In contrast, willingness is much lower in Slovak Republic, Lithuania, Spain and Hungary. In most countries, individuals under 35 are more willing to pay much higher prices for environmental protection than those aged 35 and over. However, in Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Slovenia, and Spain, the reverse pattern is observed.

Figure 71. Percentage of Europeans willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by country and age group

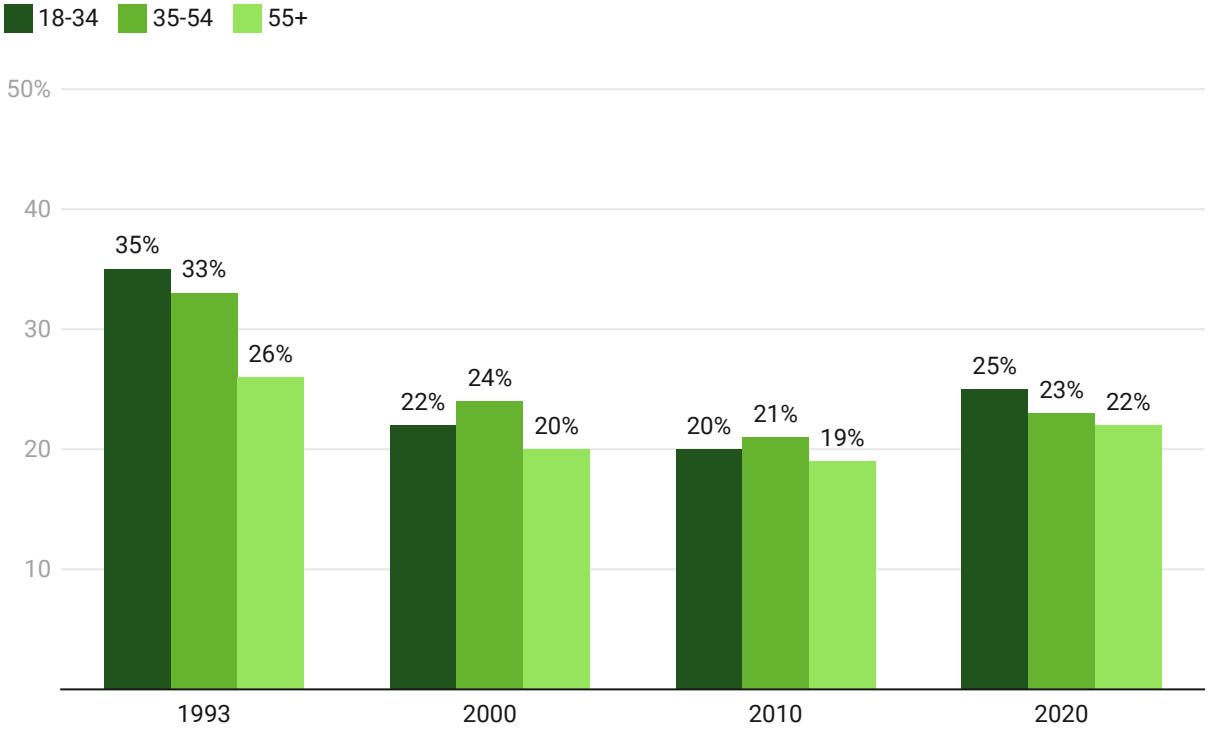


ISSP – Percentage of Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment, by country and age group (2020).

Figure 72 presents the percentage of Europeans who are willing to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection, segmented by age over time. This question is slightly different from the previous question, which asked whether they are willing to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment. The results show that willingness to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment is generally low and has declined over time.

Younger individuals, in particular those aged under 35, are more willing than older individuals to accept higher taxes for environmental protection, although age-related differences appear to have diminished over time from 26-35% in 1993 to 22-25% in 2020.

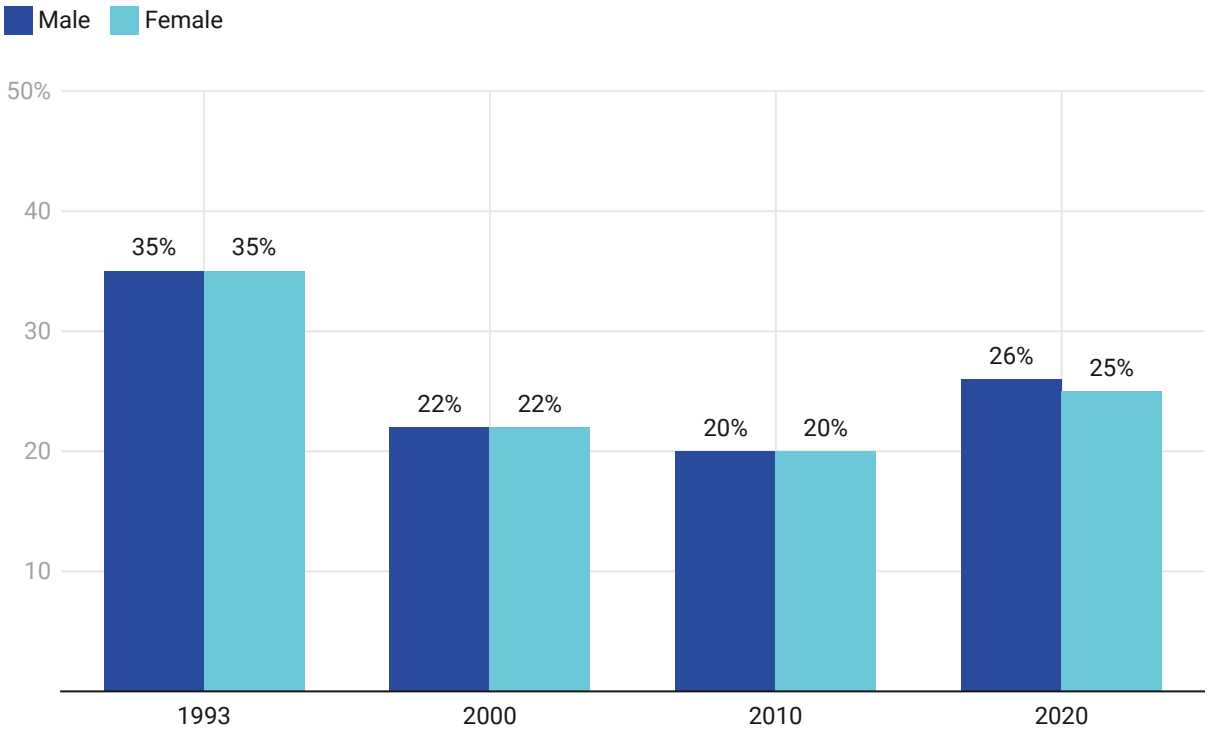
Figure 72. Percentage of Europeans willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by age group over time.

Figure 73 presents the percentage of young Europeans who are willing to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection, segmented by gender over time. It shows that the differences between young men and young women are negligible. There has been a small decline in willingness to pay higher taxes among both young men and young women over time.

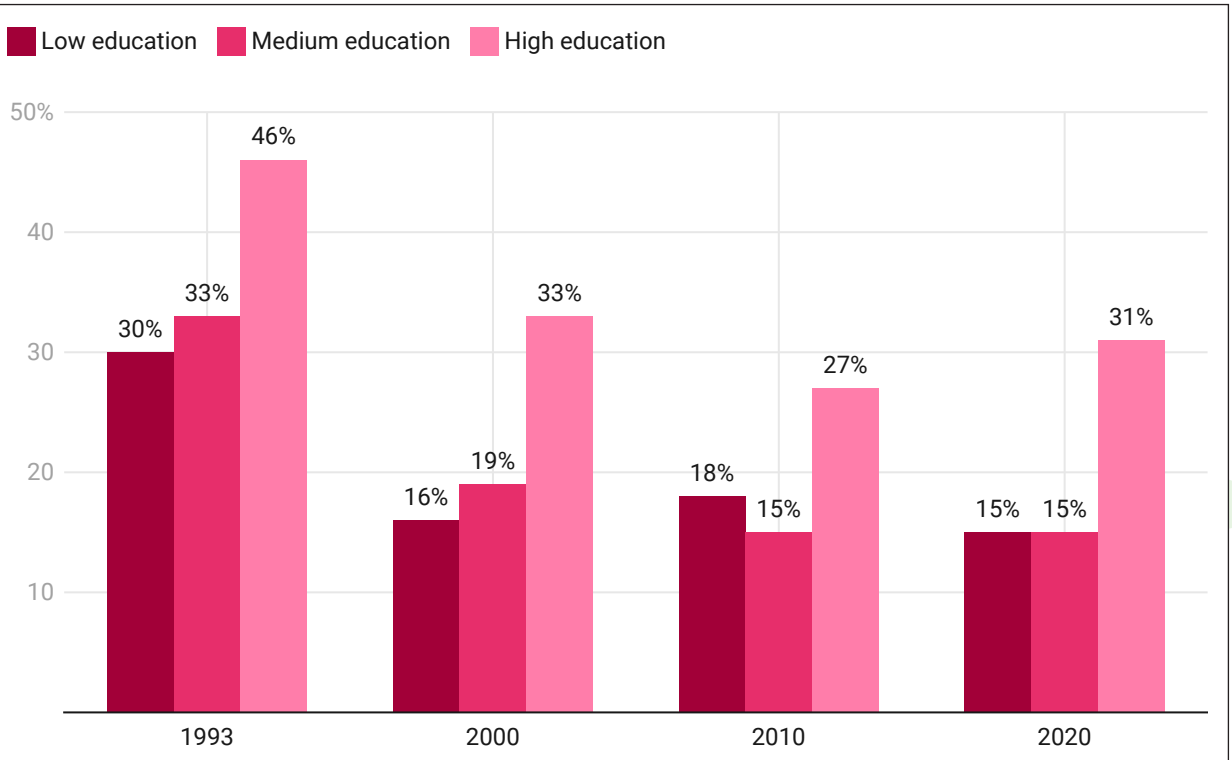
Figure 73. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by gender over time.

Figure 74 presents the percentage of young Europeans who are willing to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection, segmented by education over time. The results indicate that young individuals with higher education are much more willing to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection, with a clear positive gradient across the different education groups. Education-based differences among young Europeans have remained stable over time.

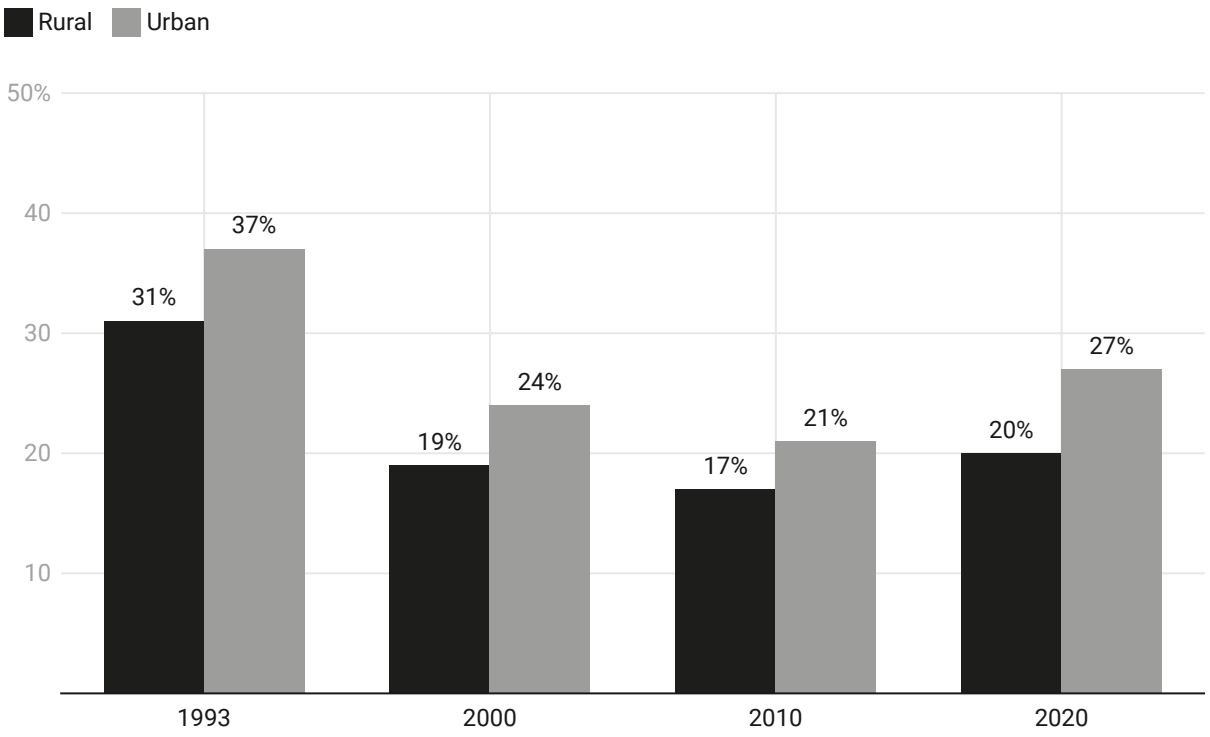
Figure 74. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by education over time.

Figure 75 presents the percentage of young Europeans living in urban and rural areas who are willing to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection. The figure shows that young people in urban areas are more willing to do so than those in rural areas, with a difference of around 4 to 7%. There has been about a 10-11% decline among both groups from 1993 to 2020

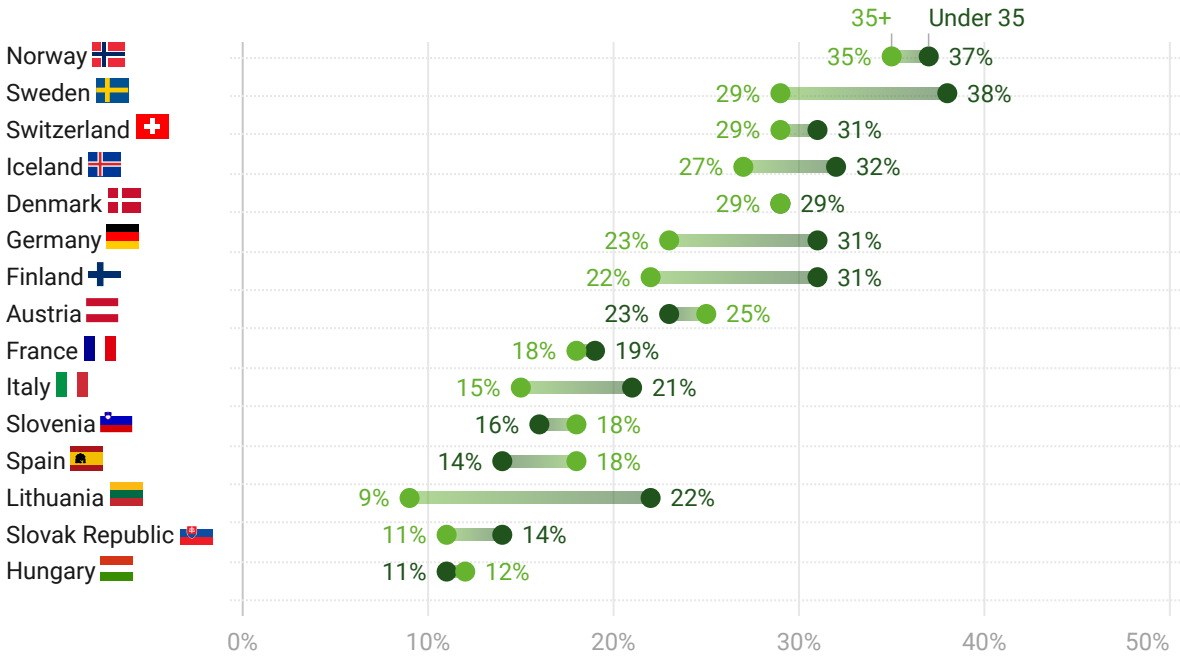
Figure 75. Percentage of young Europeans willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 76 provides a country-level comparison for 2020, showing that willingness to pay much higher taxes for environmental protection varies significantly across Europe. Greater willingness is observed in several Northern and Western European countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Iceland. In contrast, lower willingness is found in a larger number of countries, including Hungary, Slovak Republic, Lithuania, Spain, Slovenia, Italy, and France. In most countries, individuals under 35 are more willing to pay higher taxes for environmental protection compared to those aged 35 and over. However, in Austria, Slovenia, Spain, and Hungary the reverse pattern is observed.

Figure 76. Percentage of Europeans willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment, by country and age group



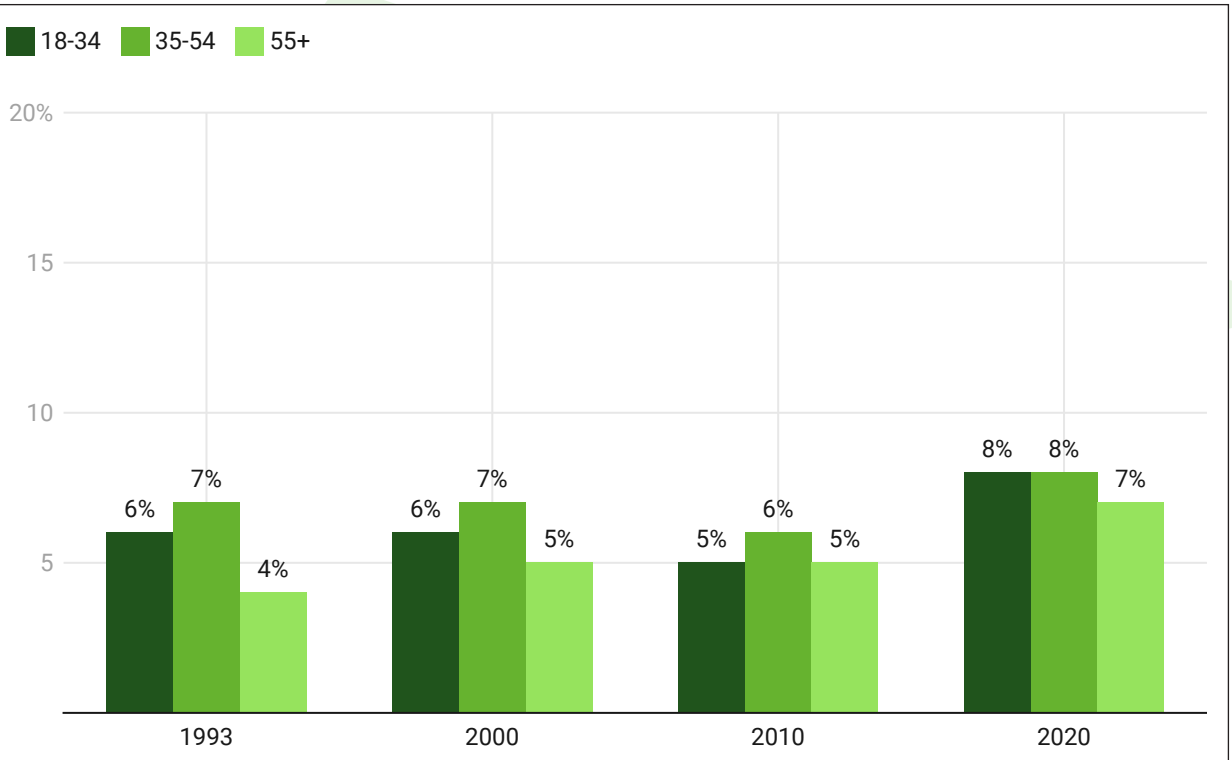
ISSP – Percentage of Europeans (fairly or very) willing to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment by country and age group (2020).

4.6.2 Environmental activism

Beyond supporting government policies and financial contributions, active participation in environmental activism provides another key indicator of public commitment to climate action. Participation in environmental organisations, protests, and petition-signing reflects individual willingness to advocate for stronger policies and systemic change. The following figures analyse trends in environmental activism, examining membership in environmental organisations, as well as involvement in protests, donations and petitions.

Figure 77 shows the percentage of Europeans who report being members of an environmental organization, segmented by age group over time. Membership remains consistently low (4-8%) and has shown little change from 1993 to 2020.

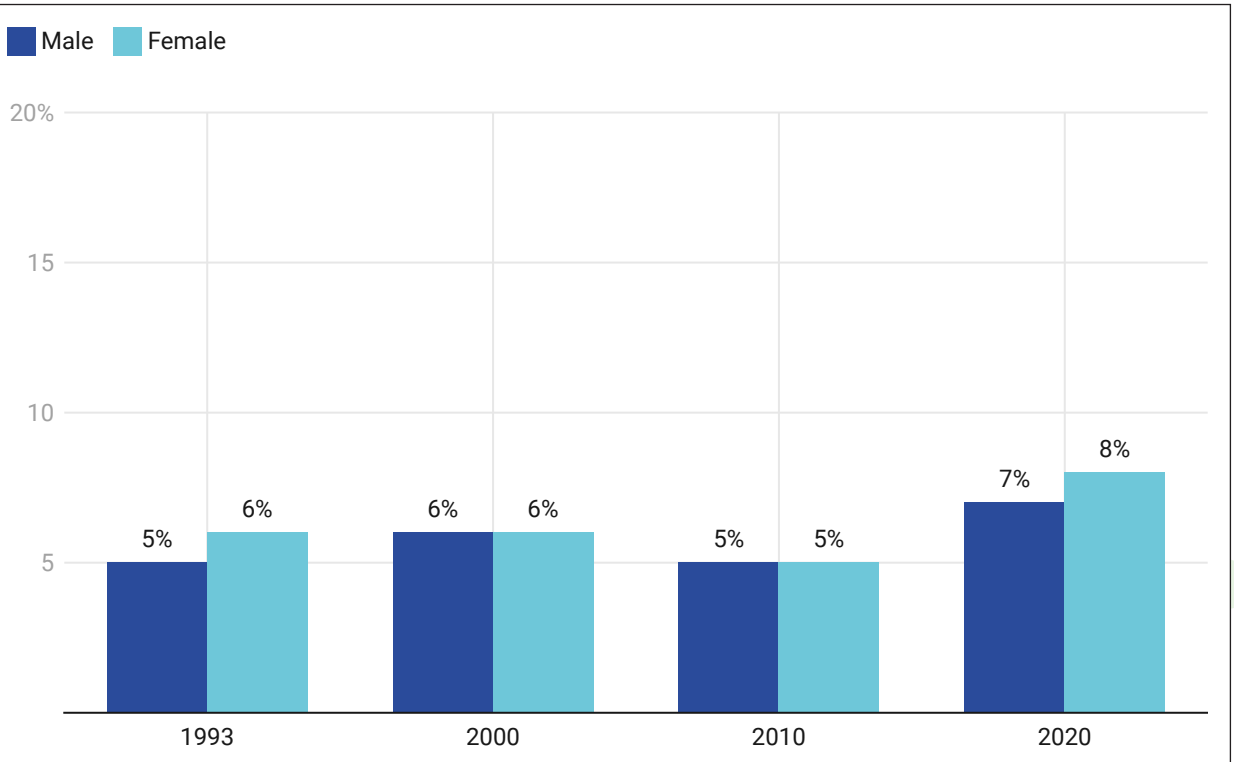
Figure 77. Percentage of Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by age group over time



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by age group over time.

Figure 78 examines gender differences among young Europeans in membership in environmental organisations. The figure shows that membership has been low for both young men and young women and has remained consistently low over the whole period from 1993 to 2020.

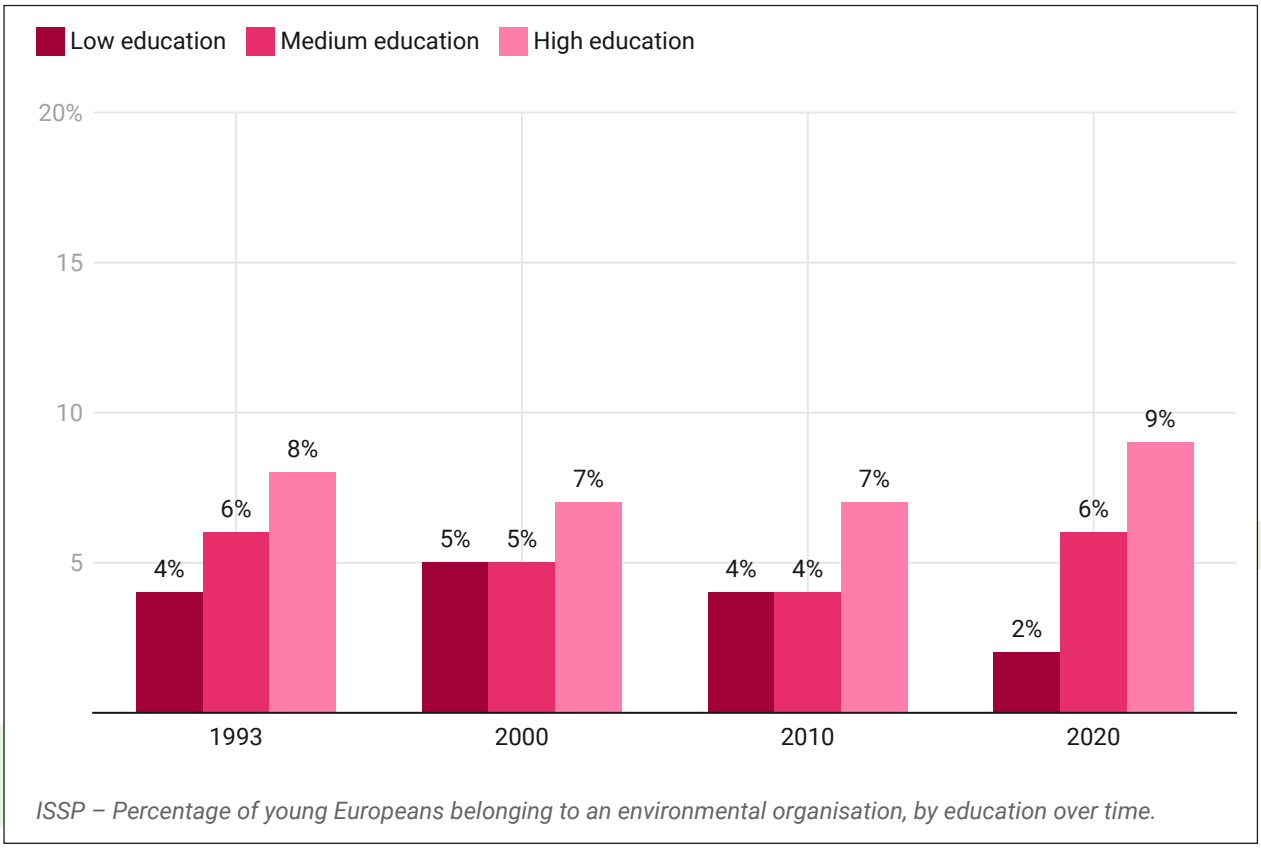
Figure 78. Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation by gender over time.

Figure 79 presents environmental organisation membership among young Europeans, stratified by education level. It shows a clear positive gradient across education levels, with young individuals with higher education being the most likely to belong to an environmental organisation. However, overall membership is low, even among those with higher education (7-9%).

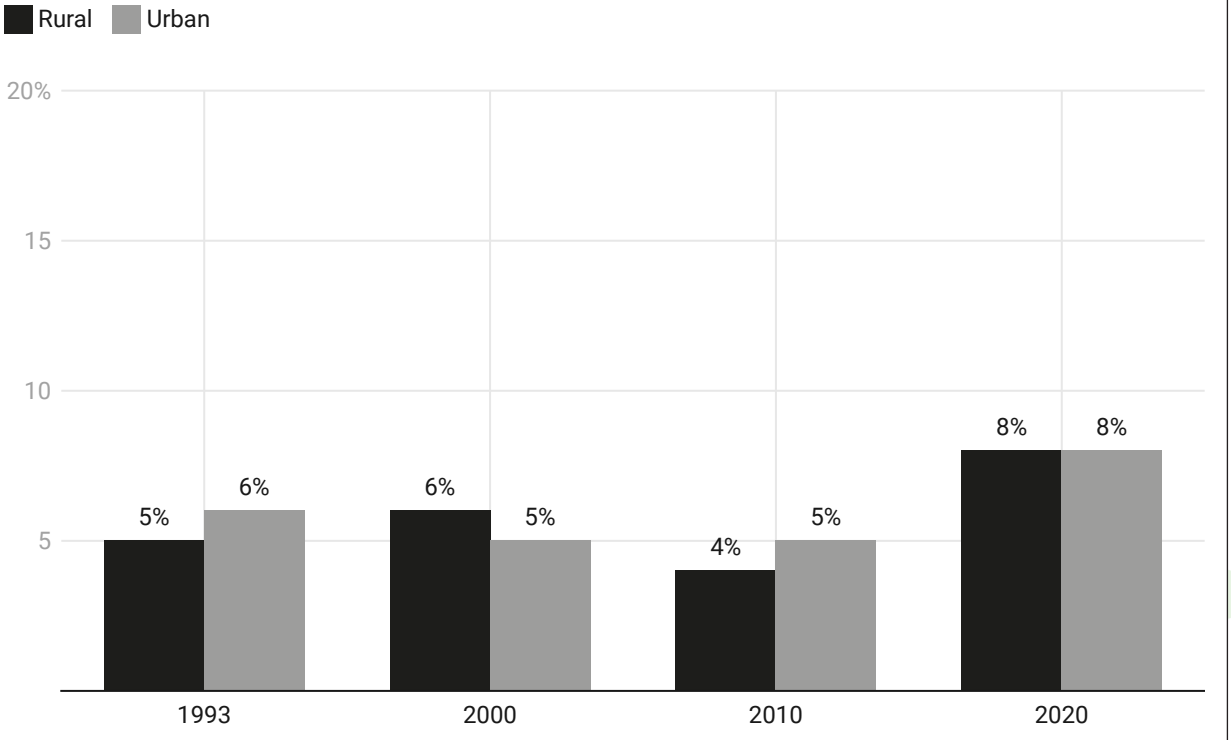
Figure 79. Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by education over time.

Figure 80 presents environmental organisation membership among young Europeans, living in urban and rural areas. It shows that the differences between the two groups are negligible.

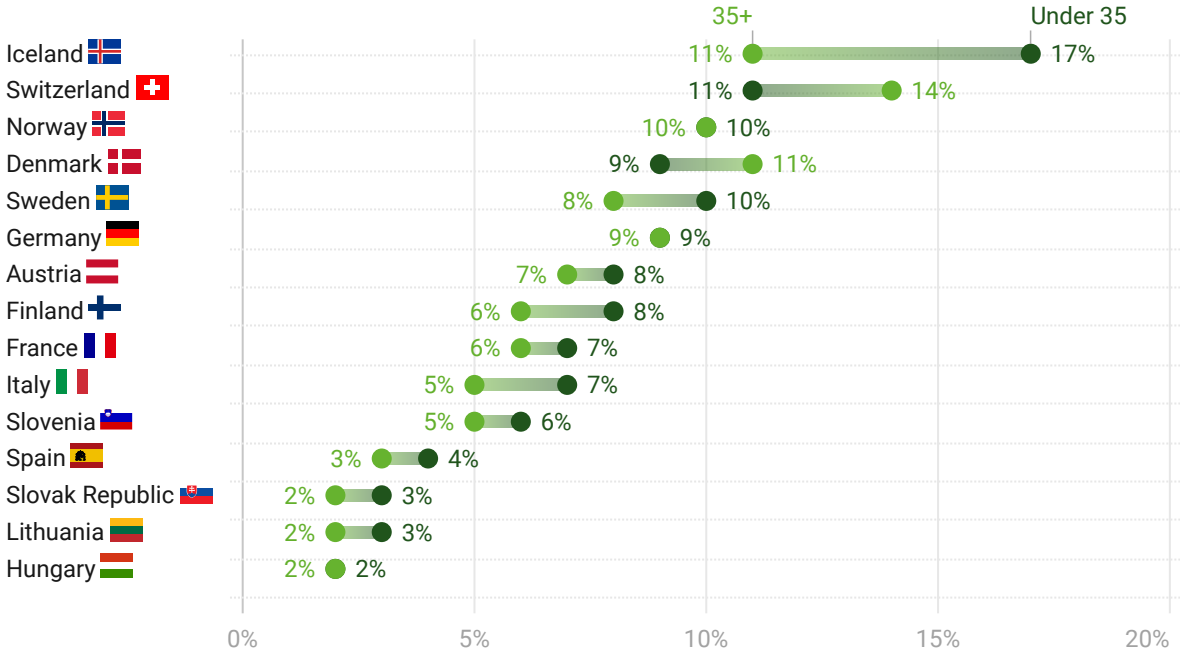
Figure 80. Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by place of living over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 81 provides a country-level comparison of membership in environmental organisations for 2020. The results reveal substantial national differences in public engagement with environmental groups. Membership is higher in Northern and Western European countries, such as Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, and Denmark. Membership is lower in Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, Lithuania and Slovak Republic.

Figure 81. Percentage of Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by country and age group



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans belonging to an environmental organisation, by country and age group (2020).

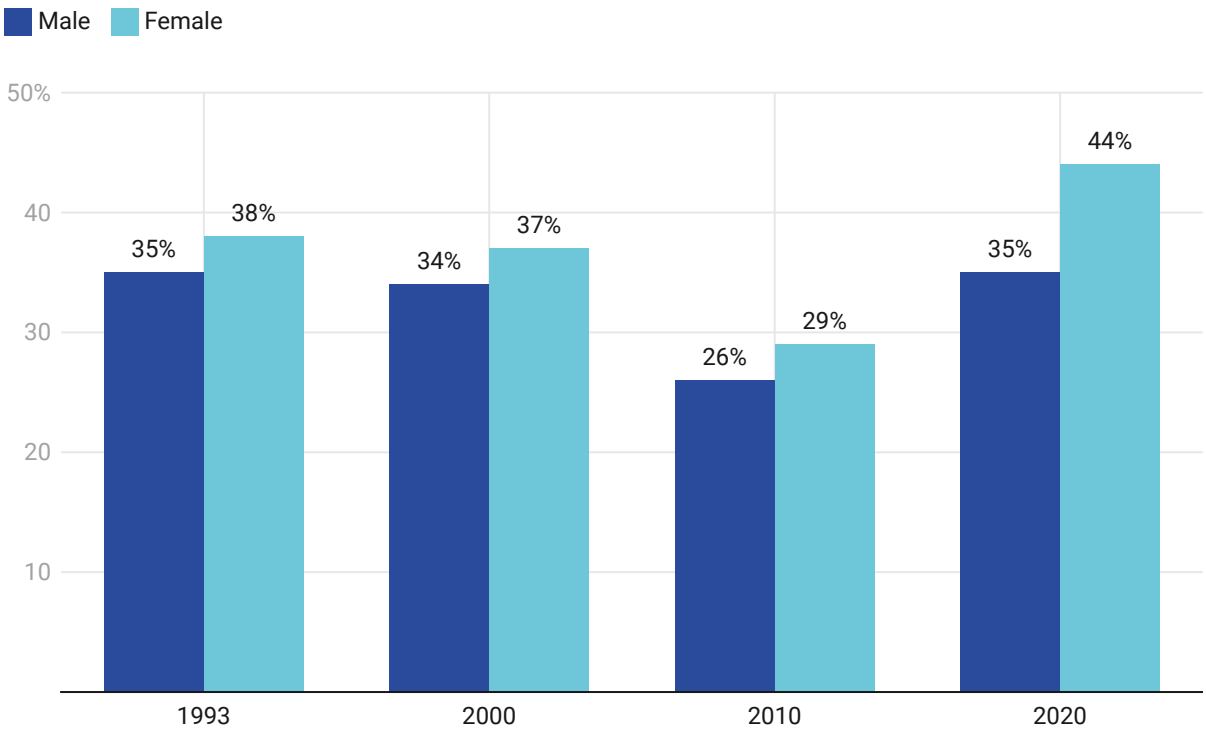
Figure 82 presents the percentage of Europeans who have engaged in climate activism, defined as signing a petition, donating to an environmental group, or participating in a protest, analysed by age group over time. The results show that younger individuals are generally more likely to participate in climate activism, with overall participation rates showing a slight upward trend. Participation in climate activism has increased more significantly among individuals aged 55 and over (rising from 20% in 1993 to 32% in 2020) as compared to those under 35 (from 36% in 1993 to 40% in 2020).

Figure 82. Percentage of Europeans who engaged in climate activism, by age group over time

ISSP – Percentage of Europeans who engaged in climate activism (signed petition, gave money to an environmental group or have taken part in a protest), by age group over time.

Figure 83 shows gender differences in climate activism among young Europeans over time. In 1993, 2000, and 2010, the participation rates of young men and women were similar. However, there is a notable 9% in 2020, with 35% of young men and 44% of young women participating in climate activism.

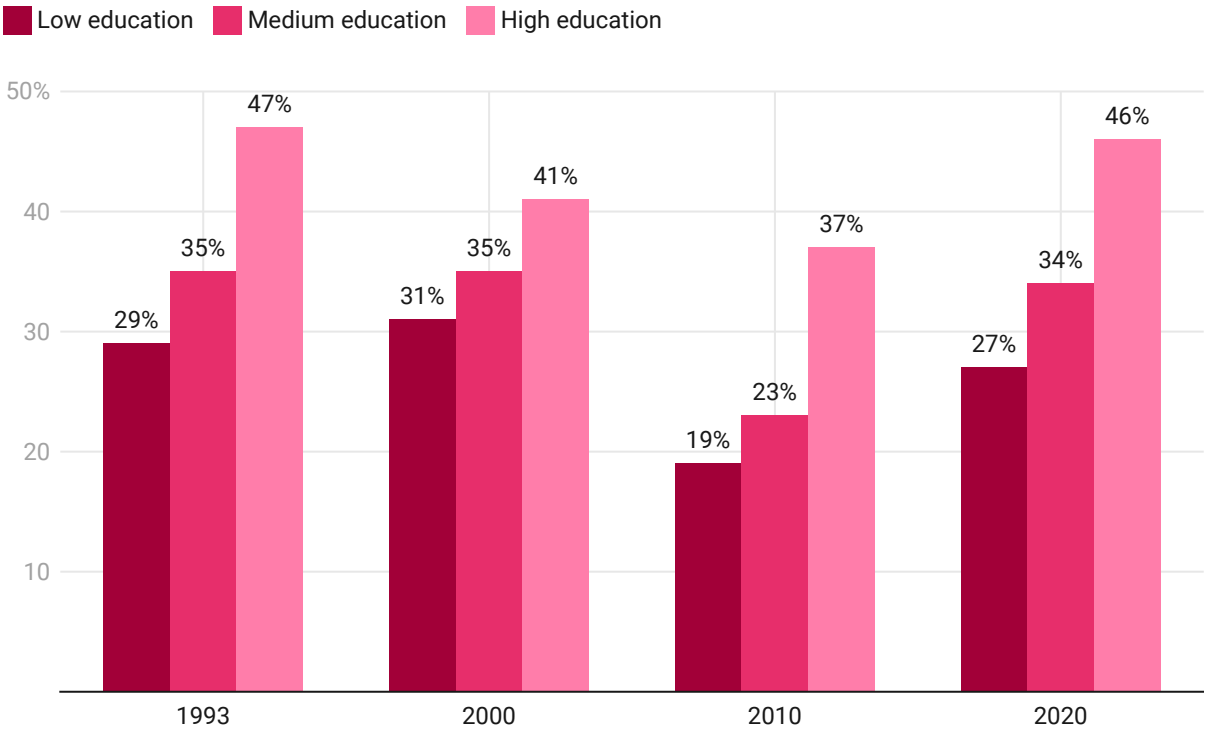
Figure 83. Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism, by gender over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism (signed petition, gave money to an environmental group or have taken part in a protest), by gender over time.

Figure 84 presents participation in climate activism among young Europeans, stratified by education level. There is a clear relationship between education and the likelihood of engaging in climate activism. Young individuals with higher education levels are significantly more likely to sign petitions, donate to environmental organisations, and participate in climate protests than those with medium or lower education. This relationship has remained stable from 1993 to 2020.

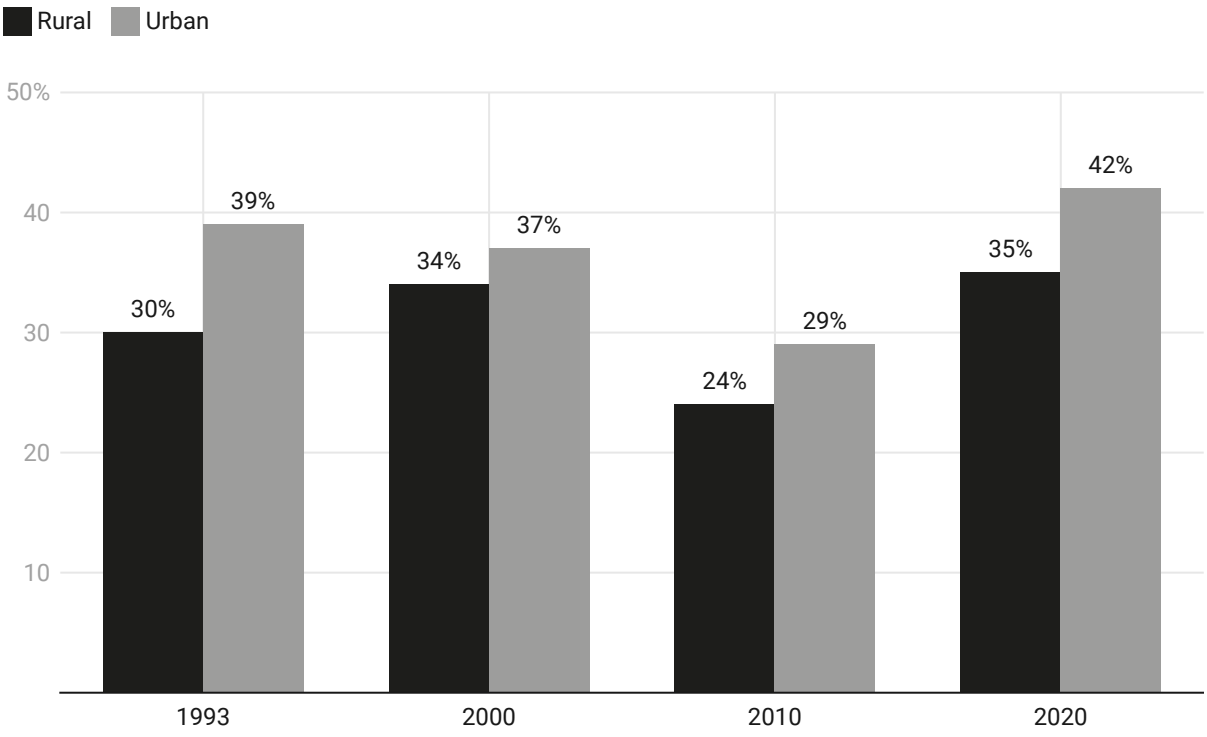
Figure 84. Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism, by education over time



ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism (signed petition, gave money to an environmental group or have taken part in a protest), by education over time.

Figure 85 presents participation in climate activism among young Europeans living in urban and rural areas. It shows that young Europeans living in urban areas are more likely to participate in climate activism than those living in rural areas. While there is some variation over time, the differences are consistent and relatively stable.

Figure 85. Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism, by place of living over time

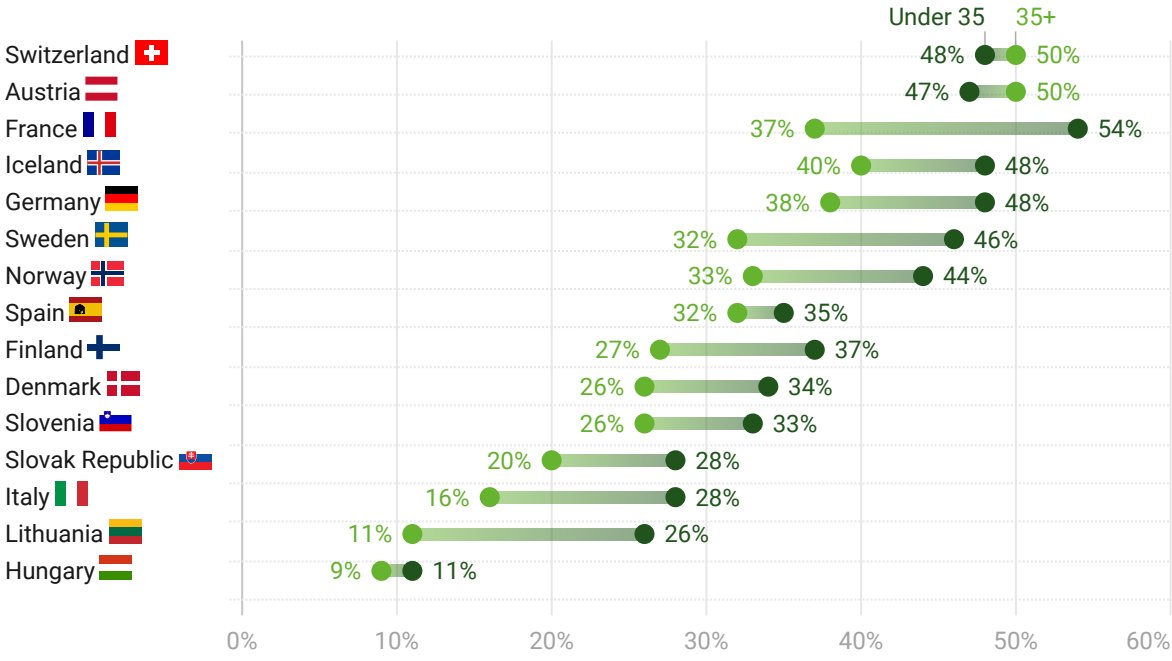


ISSP – Percentage of young Europeans who engaged in climate activism (signed petition, gave money to an environmental group or have taken part in a protest) in urban and rural areas over time.

Figure 86 presents a cross-national comparison of climate activism participation in 2020, revealing substantial differences across countries. Engagement in petitions, protests, and donations is most prevalent in Northern and Western European nations, such as Switzerland, Austria, France, Iceland, and Germany, where environmental movements are well-established and public awareness of climate issues is high. Conversely, participation tends to be lower in Southern and Eastern European countries, including Hungary, Lithuania, Italy, and Slovak Republic.

In nearly all countries, except Switzerland and Austria, climate activism is significantly higher among individuals under 35 as compared to those aged 35 and over, although this age gap is relatively small in Hungary, Switzerland and Austria.

Figure 86. Percentage of Europeans who engaged in climate activism, by country and age group



ISSP – Percentage of Europeans who engaged in climate activism (signed petition, gave money to an environmental group or have taken part in a protest), by country and age group (2020).

5 Conclusion

The data summary for the Make it Green theme provides an overview of how young Europeans engage with environmental issues in general and climate change in particular, drawing on data from the European Social Survey (ESS), the European Values Study (EVS), and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). It highlights how attitudes and perspectives vary by (i) age, (ii) gender, education level, and place of residence among young Europeans, and (iii) country over time.

The results show that awareness of and concern about climate change are high, although the levels depend on the specific question asked. For example, while a majority of Europeans believe that climate change is very or extremely dangerous, and a plurality expresses worry about it, relatively few consider it one of the most important issues facing their country. This suggests that, although climate change is recognised as a serious threat, it is often pushed aside by other pressing concerns in people's daily lives.

A core finding is that young Europeans, defined here as individuals under the age of 35, are generally more likely than older age groups to view climate change as dangerous and as a priority for their country. However, these differences are often modest, and in some countries older individuals express equal or even greater concern. Quite surprisingly, and in contrast to findings from other studies, the results reported here suggest that younger age groups may have become less worried about climate change than older groups in recent years. It is unclear why this pattern has emerged, and whether it reflects a broader shift in how younger people engage with climate change. Continued research is needed to monitor how this develops further.

Young Europeans also tend to express a stronger sense of agency in relation to the environment than older Europeans: those aged 35 and over are more likely to believe that it is too difficult to make a difference, or that individual action is pointless unless others do the same. Differences are also apparent in views on the environment-economy trade-off, with older age groups being more likely to believe that economic growth is needed to protect the environment. However, the most consistent age differences emerge in policy support and action: younger Europeans are consistently more willing than older Europeans to pay more for environmental protection, whether through higher prices, taxes, or as a part of their income, and are more likely to participate in climate activism.

Gender emerges as an important factor in shaping environmental engagement among young Europeans. Young women tend to express greater worry about climate change and are more likely to view it as very or extremely dangerous. They also report a stronger sense of personal responsibility and agency. Gender differences are further apparent in views on the environment-economy trade-off, with young men more likely than young women to believe that economic growth is needed to protect the environment. However, gender differences in policy support and action are less pronounced: while young women are generally more willing than young men to give part of their income or pay higher prices to protect the environment, these differences are small. Similarly, the gender gap in climate activism is modest. Overall, there are some suggestions that the gap in engagement with and concern about the environment and climate change between young men and women has not widened in recent years,

but further research is needed to determine whether this reflects a broader trend.

Education-based differences are highly consistent across many questions from the ESS, EVS and ISSP. Young Europeans with higher levels of education are more likely than those with lower levels of education to express worry about climate change, perceive it as a serious threat, and feel personally responsible for addressing it. They also report a stronger sense of agency, in that those with lower levels of education are more likely to feel powerless or to doubt the effectiveness of individual action. Furthermore, young people with higher levels of education express more trust in the ability of science to solve environmental problems as compared to those with lower levels of education. However, the most consistent education-based differences appear in relation to policy support and action. Young Europeans with higher levels of education are consistently more willing than their less-educated peers to accept higher costs to protect the environment and to engage in climate activism.

The analyses found some differences between young Europeans living in urban and rural areas, with those in urban areas more likely to express worry about climate change, perceive it as a serious threat, and feel personally responsible for addressing it. Young Europeans living in urban areas are also more willing to give part of their income, pay higher prices or taxes to protect the environment, and to engage in climate activism as compared to those living in rural areas. However, these differences are generally small. Many of the other differences between young Europeans living in urban and rural areas could be characterised as negligible.

Cross-national comparisons reveal significant regional variation across Europe in attitudes to the environment issues in general and climate change in particular, especially in relation to concern about climate change, perceived personal responsibility, and willingness to act. Countries, such such as Germany, Spain, Portugal and Slovenia, report higher levels of climate worry and are more likely to perceive climate change as a serious threat. By contrast, concern is lower in other countries, such as Cyprus, Lithuania, Hungary and Slovak Republic. In line with overall age-related trends, younger age groups in most countries are more likely than older age groups to see climate change as a serious threat and as a national priority. However, in a notable reversal of the typical pattern, older individuals express greater climate worry than younger cohorts in a plurality of countries in more recent years.

Perceptions of personal responsibility and efficacy also differ markedly across different European countries. Residents of countries in Northern and Western Europe, such as France, Norway, Switzerland and Finland, report a stronger sense of responsibility and agency to address climate change. In contrast, people in parts of Eastern and Southern Europe, such as Lithuania, Slovak Republic and Hungary, are more likely to feel that it is too difficult to do much about the environment. Trust in science to solve environmental problems also differs across Europe, although without clear regional patterning. In most countries, younger age groups have greater trust in science to solve environmental problems and think that it can do so with little change to our way of life. However, this trend also lacks consistent geographic patterning.

In terms of climate action, young age groups in Northern and Western Europe are more willing to pay higher prices or taxes and are significantly more active in environmental movements than older age groups. Climate activism, through protests, donations, or petitions, is particularly strong in Switzerland, Austria, France, and Germany. Conversely, willingness to act or contribute financially is lower in Slovak Republic, Hungary, and Lithuania. Nonetheless, even in these countries, younger people are typically more supportive of climate action than their older counterparts. A further important divide relates to perceptions of the relationship between the environment and the economy. The belief that economic growth is necessary to protect the environment is more widespread in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. While this belief is more commonly held among older age groups in most countries, in a few others, notably Slovak Republic, Italy, Hungary, and Slovenia, it is younger people who are more likely to endorse this view.

This data summary highlights that young Europeans recognise the urgency of climate change, but their willingness to act is shaped by factors such as gender, education, and national context. While trust in science remains high, there is a growing awareness that technological solutions alone may not be sufficient. Understanding and addressing these differences will be essential for building public support for effective climate action in the years ahead.

6 References

Büchs, M., Bardsley, N., & Duwe, S. (2011). Who bears the brunt? Distributional effects of climate change mitigation policies. *Critical Social Policy*, 31(2), 285–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018310396036

Carman, C. (2010). The Process is the Reality: Perceptions of Procedural Fairness and Participatory Democracy. *Political Studies*, 58(4), 731–751. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00840.x

Clayton, S. (2018). The Role of Perceived Justice, Political Ideology, and Individual or Collective Framing in Support for Environmental Policies. *Social Justice Research*, 31(3), 219–237. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-018-0303-z

Kallis, G., Kostakis, V., Lange, S., Muraca, B., Paulson, S., & Schmelzer, M. (2018). Research on degrowth. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 43(1), 291–316. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-102017-025941

Kenny, J., Geese ,Lucas, Jordan ,Andrew, & and Lorenzoni, I. (2024). A framework for classifying climate change questions used in public opinion surveys. *Environmental Politics*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2429264

Lubell, M. (2002). Environmental Activism as Collective Action. *Environment and Behavior*, 34(4), 431–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/00116502034004002

Poortinga, W., Demski, C., & Steentjes, K. (2023). Generational differences in climate-related beliefs, risk perceptions and emotions in the UK. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 4(1), 229. https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-023-00870-x

Poortinga, W., Fisher, S., Böhm, G., Steg, L., Whitmarsh, L., & Ogunbode, C. (2018). European Attitudes to Climate Change and Energy. *ESS Topline Results Series, Round 8*(9), 20.

Poortinga, W., Whitmarsh, L., Steentjes, K., Gray, E., Thompson, S., & Brisley, R. (2023). Factors and framing effects in support for net zero policies in the United Kingdom. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1287188

Stern, P. C. (2000). Toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 407–424. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00175

(3.1 Data)
Please note that the ESS uses 'GB' as the country code for the United Kingdom. The ESS collects data across the entire UK, i.e., England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. UK and GB are used in this report interchangeably.

Citation: Poortinga, W. *European Attitudes to Climate Change and the Environment* (2025), Make it Green Data Summary, Infra4NextGen Project.

Graphics and editorial by Dr Ruxandra Comănaru, Dr Eric Harrison, Kethia Nzola, Stefan Swift (City St George's, University of London); Dr Yuliya Kazakova (Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, NIDI KNAW); Dr David Consolazio (University of Milan); Navdeep Carahaa, and Andrea Sambrano (University of Warwick).

cessda

European
Social
Survey

European Values Study

GGP

MAKE IT GREEN
DIGITAL
HEALTHY
STRONG
EQUAL

INFRA4NEXTGEN

Funded by
the European Union

Copyright © 2025 ESS ERIC