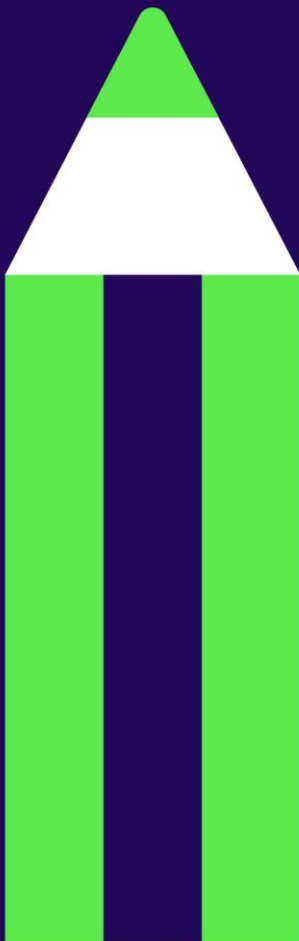
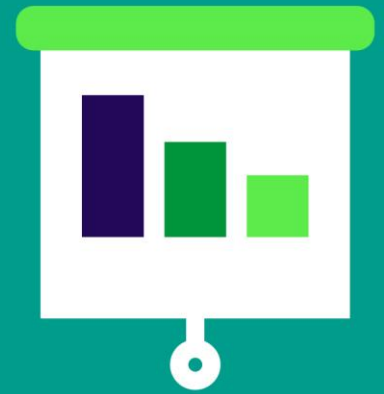


# The Climate Connection

---



# Youth Voice on Climate Action

**South Africa**

#TheClimateConnection  
[www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection)

# The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action is a call for action from young people globally, directly addressing the leaders attending COP26 – the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, in Glasgow, November 2021.

It is the result of a large-scale research exercise between the British Council and not for profit social enterprise Catalyst in Communities, who used a mixed methodology approach to garner the views, experiences and aspirations of 8,000 young people across 23 countries.

Aiming to be as representative as possible in terms of gender, background, location and socio-economic status, the research team worked through global COVID-19 restrictions to amplify the unheard voice of the climate debate: today's young people. Research for the report was carried out between January and March 2021.

The Global Youth Letter on Climate Action, and accompanying 8,000 Rising campaign, is part of the British Council's [The Climate Connection](#) programme, a global platform for dialogue, cooperation and action, connecting millions of people through shared solutions to the climate crisis.

**Read the Global Youth Letter on Climate Action, the research report and join in the 8,000 Rising campaign here:**

[www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection/get-involved/global-youth-letter)

## South Africa's young people and climate action

The following letter and accompanying data represent the views and perspectives of young people in South Africa.

It is a collective statement of all those who participated in the Global Youth Letter on Climate Action research in South Africa and can be used as a starting point for leaders and policy makers to understand how to address young people's concerns in relation to climate change, and how they can use this untapped potential in to bring about climate action.

We hope the following letter inspires both young people and decision makers across South Africa and beyond to work together to find sustainable solutions to climate action.



# Dear COP26 leaders,

We, the young people of South Africa, are here to share our aims and aspirations for the future of our country, and our planet.

As the southernmost country of the great continent of Africa, we are blessed with natural beauty and cultural diversity. We are home to ten per cent of the world's plant species and seven per cent of its reptile, bird and mammal species. Which is why it's so important for us to safeguard this for future generations.

Those who contributed to this collective statement represent the unheard voice in the climate conversation. Nearly two-thirds of us are female, and two per cent choose not to be defined on the gender spectrum. We come from urban, peri-urban and rural areas, and we have different levels of education and employment.

And, from all corners of South Africa, we are here to collectively call for climate action!

## How climate change affects us

From the Great Escarpment to our winding coastline, we are feeling the effects of climate change in our daily lives. In fact, 94 per cent of us believe that climate change is one of the biggest threats facing our country.

The three main effects of climate change we see are:

1. coastal erosion
2. increased drought
3. dry seasons (frequent/severe).

We also feel strongly about other big challenges facing our society, including social development issues, poverty and low incomes, and we believe there is a need to focus on work and economic growth.

By participating in this research, we've become more familiar with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and better informed about COP26.

For us, the three most important Sustainable Development Goals are:

1. SDG 6: Clean Water
2. SDG 4: Quality Education
3. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

We are also devastated about the impact air pollution from vehicles and fires for heating and cooking is having on our lives and eco-systems, so we are here to show you how we can work together to find solutions.

## Our commitment to climate action

With climate change impacting everybody's lives, we are aware that policy makers and civil society organisations can't deal with the problem alone. Yet, while more than 83 per cent of us feel



believe we have the skills to fulfil to address climate change, more than 77 per cent of us have never participated in a climate change awareness session.

Leaders need to draw upon our agency, passion and readiness, so together we can develop sustainable climate solutions.

## What we demand from our leaders

Leaders and policy makers, we need your help to remove hurdles to participation, which include:

- little or no tutoring at educational institutes
- limited or no youth engagement opportunities offered by the government
- limited or no community-level initiatives to engage youth in climate action.

Young people in South Africa are more than committed to lead action on climate change in our communities, but we can't do it alone, and neither can you. But you do have the power to 'mainstream' youth climate action and to engage us in meaningful ways.

Through education and collaboration, together we can encourage cleaner consumption and greener living. Young people in South Africa can become a symbol of hope for others around the world, but only if you include us in plans and actions to address the major environmental challenges facing our country, and our planet.

Give us the chance to be represented on the biggest stage, and we won't let you down!

## Our voices

*'Elevating the voices of young people to protect the future of our planet is key. We are the last generation that can end climate change. We can and we will.'* **Female, unemployed voice**

*'Climate change is one of the biggest threats facing the world; we need to act on it now.'* **Rural voice**

*'We have to take this issue seriously and do things that reduce this problem efficiently.'* **Rural, female voice**

*'Focus attention to important issues such as clean water and the planting of trees, as well as educational programmes to bring about awareness of climate change issues.'* **Female voice**

*'The youth need to inform people of the importance of keeping the environment clean and not polluting.'* **Unemployed voice**

*'There are so many misconceptions about youth nowadays. We are capable of doing so much more and what we want is climate action.'* **Female voice**

## Our parting message

For us to achieve and promote the urgent need for climate action in our country, a single step can be a huge start. By overcoming our doubts, and starting to act, we can turn micro-steps into macro-steps, to help reduce the alarming effects of climate change. Being an agent of change is critical.

