	<p>European Future</p> <p><i>Project meeting in Frechen, October 2025</i></p> <p>EXPERT TEXT 1</p>
---	--

Young people are disengaging from sustainability

by *Globescan Inc.*

(<https://globescan.com/2025/04/24/from-anxiety-to-agency-report/>, last accessed 29/09/25)

Picture this: A teenager stares at their phone, paralyzed by headline after headline about the climate crisis, political dysfunction, and societal division. They want to act but feel overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the problem. This scene plays out millions of times daily, and it represents a critical challenge for brands: 80 percent of Gen Z globally report being personally affected by climate change, yet their engagement with sustainable solutions is declining. Looking to the future, many young people are asking, “What’s the point?”

Instead of feeling empowered to act, young people are becoming paralyzed by anxiety, overwhelmed by complexity, disillusioned by a lack of leadership, and increasingly disconnected from the very solutions they seek. This isn’t just anecdotal. It’s a pattern we’re seeing globally, and it challenges everything we thought we knew about young consumers and sustainability.


[...]

New research from GlobeScan and BBMG reveals a troubling paradox: Gen Z feels the most threatened by climate change and cares deeply about the planet, yet their engagement in sustainable living is on the decline.

Global research in 31 markets shows that despite being hailed as the most climate-conscious generation, Gen Z’s commitment to reducing their environmental impact is slipping (from 76% in 2020 to 68% in 2024). From 2020 to 2024, fewer young people said they wanted to reduce their footprint. Even the belief that consuming less is essential to protect future generations is fading, along with the guilt tied to harming the environment (slipping from 66% to 56% in just four years). And these sustainable behaviors are being replaced by a growing sense of futility. More young people believe that individual actions don’t make a difference (from 33% in 2020 to 42% in 2024). Overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis and unsure of how to help, they are disengaging – not because they don’t care, but because they feel powerless.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We are seeing what happens when deep concern meets burnout and when eco-anxiety prevents action. The will is there, but the way forward feels out of reach. Gen Z isn’t giving up – they are crying out for support, clarity, and hope. The opportunity for brands is urgent and clear: design solutions that go beyond awareness and guilt and create products, services, and experiences that restore a sense of agency that makes living sustainably feel possible, empowering, and joyful.

	<p>European Future</p> <p><i>Project meeting in Frechen, October 2025</i></p> <p>EXPERT TEXT 2</p>
---	--

How strong is environmental understanding among children and young people? - Strengthening environmental understanding among children and young people – necessary or not?

by *Schule & Familie*

(<https://www.schule-und-familie.de/familie/tipps-fuer-schule-und-erziehung/wie-stark-ist-das-umweltverstaendnis-bei-kindern.html?page=1>, translated, last accessed 29/09/25)

Environmental protection is a top priority for many people; it is indeed a very important issue, as humanity simply could not survive without nature. Accordingly, it is all the more important to provide future generations with an environment that guarantees their survival. However, this will only work if people treat nature with respect, refrain from unnecessary waste production, pay attention to sustainable products, campaign against deforestation, and refrain from throwing garbage such as plastic or cigarette butts onto meadows, into the forest, or even into the sea. The serious consequences that improper treatment of the environment can have are well known from numerous newspaper reports and news broadcasts. However, it is also important that children and young people develop an understanding of the issue so that they do not make the same mistakes that generations before them have made or are still making. The question arises as to whether environmental awareness among children and young people needs to be promoted more strongly, or whether this is already being done sufficiently. [...]

a. According to Greenpeace, there is a strong awareness among young people...

Greenpeace and Leuphana University Lüneburg jointly conducted a study in 2011 on the topic "Sustainability Barometer – What Moves Young People?" This study found that 68% of the 1,070 young people surveyed nationwide between the ages of 15 and 24 have a strong awareness of environmental issues and sustainability. Seventy percent are even actively involved in environmental protection and have extensive knowledge of ecological, social, and cultural development. However, they also denounce the fact that they have too few opportunities to meaningfully shape the future. [...]

b. ...and yet, on the other hand, not

As well informed as some young people are and as much as they care about the environment in certain areas, they are particularly careless when it comes to clothing. Many young people are well aware that, especially in the manufacturing countries of Asia and South America, chemicals used in textile production that are harmful to the environment and health are increasingly polluting the surrounding waters, but this does not prevent the majority of young people from continuing to buy such clothing. [...]



European Future

Project meeting in Frechen, October 2025

EXPERT TEXT 3

Speech by Greta Thunberg at the European Parliament

My name is Greta Thunberg. I'm 16 years old. I come from Sweden and I want you to panic. I want you to act as if your house was on fire. I have said those words before.

5 And a lot of people have explained why that is a bad idea.

A great number of politicians have told me that panic never leads to anything good. And I agree.

To panic unless you have to is a terrible idea.

10 But when your house is on fire and you want to keep your house from burning to the ground, then that does require some level of panic. [...]

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to 10,000 times faster than what is considered normal, with up to 15 200 species becoming extinct every single day.

Erosion of fertile topsoils, deforestation of our great forests, toxic air pollution, loss of insects and wildlife, the acidification of our oceans, these are 20 all disastrous trends being accelerated by a way of life that we can in our financially fortunate part of the world see as our right to simply carry on.

Our house is falling apart and our leaders need to start acting accordingly because at the moment 25 they are not. If our house was falling apart our leaders wouldn't go on like you do today. You would change almost every part of your behaviour as you do in an emergency. [...]

30 The EU elections are coming up soon. And many of us who will be affected the most by this

crisis, people like me, are not allowed to vote. Nor are we in a position to shape the decisions of business, politics, engineering, media, education or science. Because the time it takes for us to educate ourselves to do that simply does no longer exist. 35

And that is why millions of children are taking it to the streets, school striking for the climate to create attention for the climate crisis.

You need to listen to us – we who cannot vote. You need to vote for us, for your children and grandchildren. 40

What we are doing now can soon no longer be undone.

In this election you vote for the future living conditions of human kind. 45

And though the politics needed do not exist today, some alternatives are certainly less worse than others. And I have read in newspapers that some parties do not even want me standing here today because they so desperate do not want to talk about climate breakdown. [...]

To do your best is no longer good enough. We must all do the seemingly impossible. And it's OK if you refuse to listen to me. I am, after all, just a sixteen-year old schoolgirl from Sweden. But you cannot ignore the scientists or the science or millions of school-striking children who are school-striking for a right to a future. I beg you: Do not fail on this. 55

Greta Thunberg, European Parliament in Strasbourg, 2019

