

**AUBSU**

**What are the attitudes, behaviours and  
opinions of students at Arts University  
Bournemouth?**

**2020 Survey Results**

**IT'S NOT EASY  
BEING GREEN**

## Background & Objectives

AUBSU is a growing Students' Union, working to pioneer sustainable practise and encourage all students to be environmentally and ethically aware. As part of this strategic aim, we conducted this survey to gain a better understanding of student attitudes towards sustainability and inform our future environmental campaigns.

This survey was built on the framework of a survey conducted over March – April 2016 by AUBSU with the hope that we can map changes in attitude and opinion over time.

### It focuses on 3 key areas:

- Student attitudes towards sustainability
- Current student behaviours and their influences
- Student opinions of AUB and AUBSU in regard to sustainability

### Through this survey, we hoped to answer these questions:

What are the current AUB student attitudes towards the environment?

What are the current AUB student environmentally conscious behaviours?

What is the AUB student awareness of current environmental initiatives run by AUB and AUBSU?

How can we make our initiatives more relevant and appealing to students?

What environmental areas would students like AUBSU to focus on in the future?

## Representational Sample

Data was collected via an online quantitative survey, run by AUBSU and collected over January and February 2020. The survey was promoted through online communications (social media, email, e-newsletter).

A prize draw incentive was put in place to engage a wider audience.

### Sample

A representative sample of 140 students across most courses was obtained.

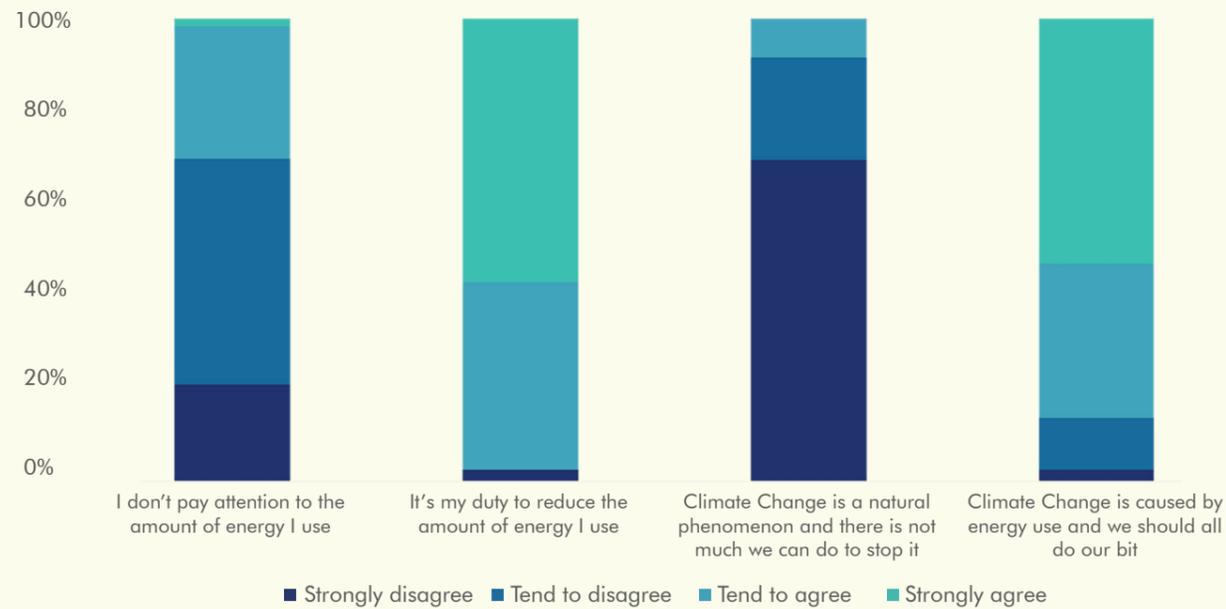
The sample covers all year groups: Foundation (4.9%), Level 4 (31.5%), Level 5 (23.8%), Level 6 (32.2%) and Postgraduate (4.9%). 4 members of staff also completed the survey (2.8%).

Of our sample, 21.1% lived in AUB or private halls of residence, 56.3% lived in shared accommodation, 11.8% lived with their family and 11.8% lived on their own.

The majority of participants were aged 18-24 (93%).

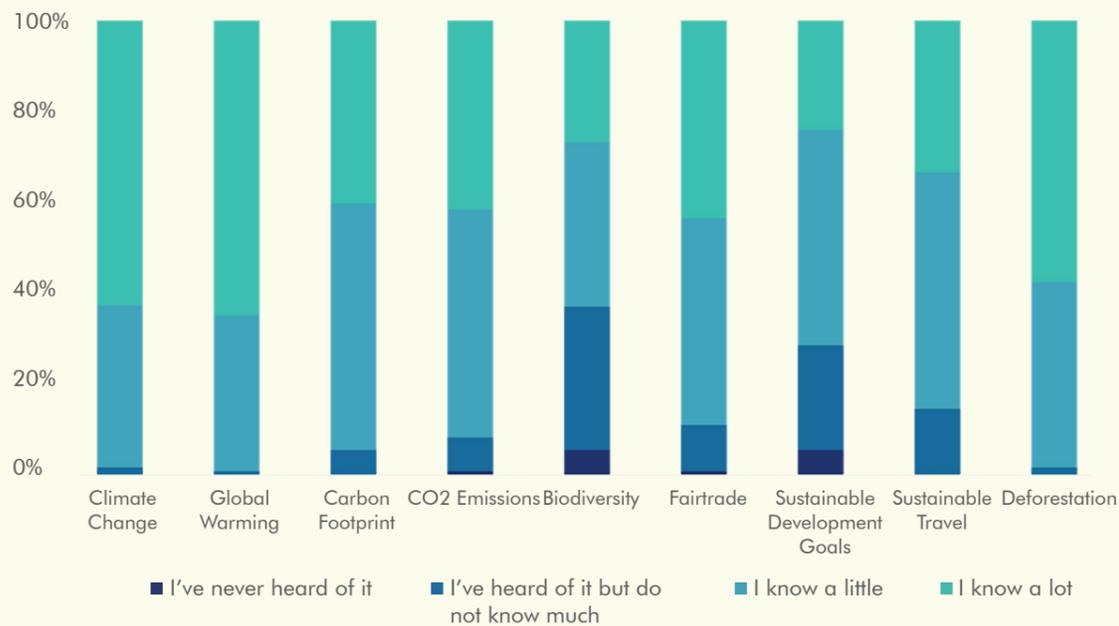
Note that all questions were optional and so may not reflect the opinions of the full sample of participants.

## Q5. To what extent do you agree with the following:



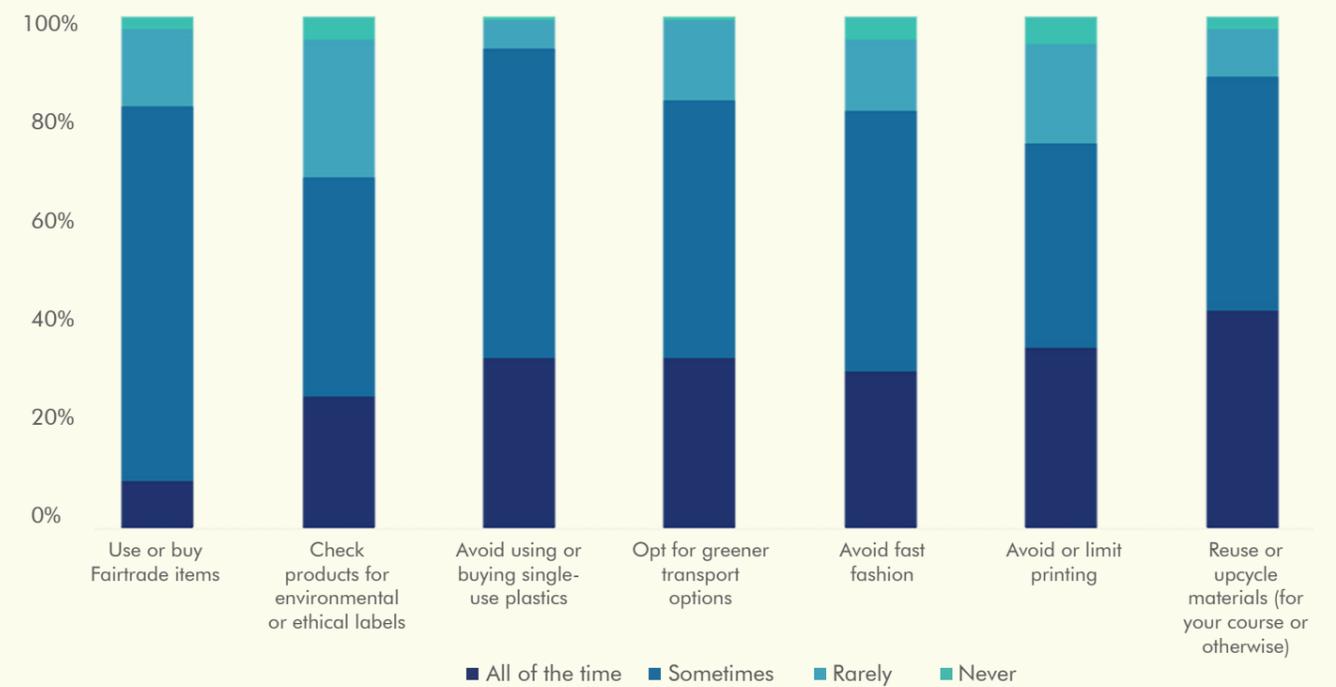
The majority of students are conscious of their energy use and share the opinion that it is their responsibility to reduce the amount of energy that they use. The majority also believe that climate change is our collective responsibility and that they should do their bit to reduce climate change.

## Q6. What do you understand about the following terms:



Students are most confident about Climate Change, Global Warming and Deforestation but are not so knowledgeable about Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals.

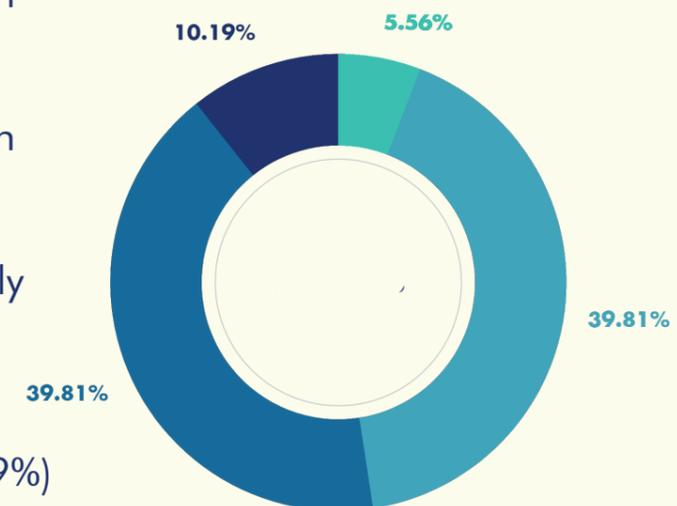
## Q8. How often do you...



Generally students have said that they tend to make environmentally conscious decisions, with most (over 60%) answering 'sometimes' or 'all the time' for behaviours associated with ethical purchasing, reducing waste and their carbon footprint.

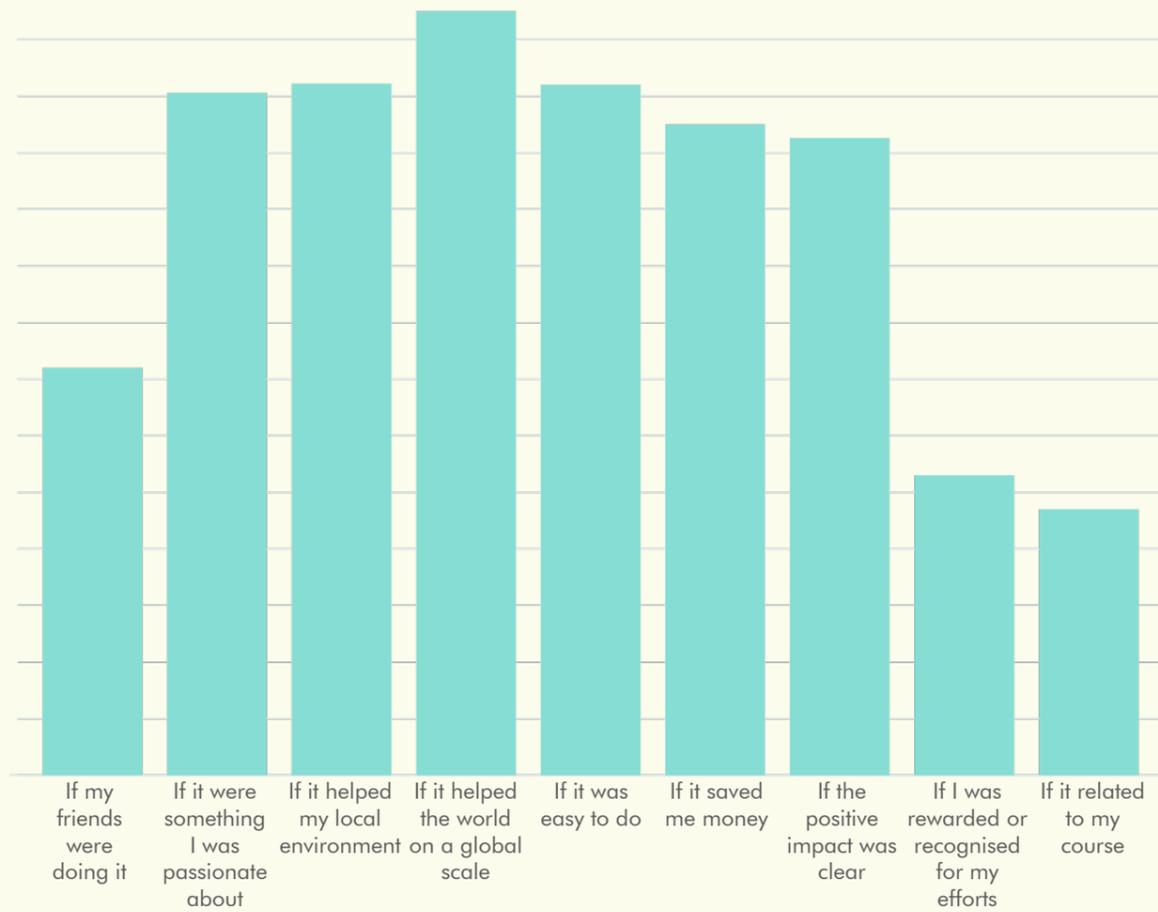
## Q7. Which of these statements best describes your current lifestyle?

- I am environmentally friendly in everything that I do (5.56%)
- I am environmentally friendly in most things that I do (39.81%)
- I do quite a few environmentally friendly things (39.81%)
- I do one or two things that are environmentally friendly (10.19%)
- I don't really do anything that is environmentally friendly (0%)



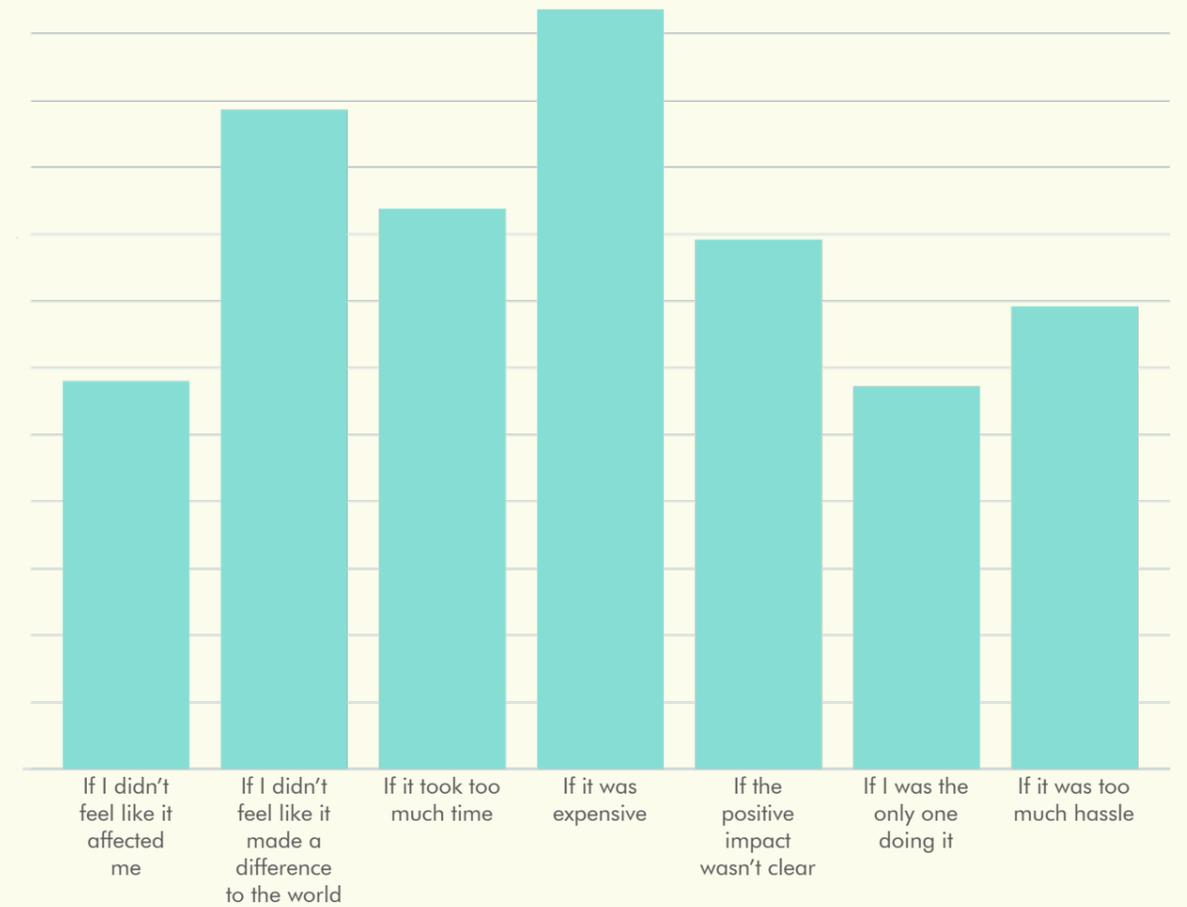
## Q9. What would most encourage you to carry out environmental behaviours?

Students were given a list of possible motivations and barriers and asked to rank these from most to least likely to encourage them and most and least likely to discourage them from carrying out environmental behaviours.



Factors included peer influence, perceived impact on local and global environment, ease, expense, personal passions, rewards and the relation that the behaviour had to their course.

## Q10. What would most discourage you to carry out environmental behaviours?



A positive impact on the world was the most motivating factor in conscious behaviours. There wasn't a big difference in a lot of the motivations but reward/recognition was ranked lowest along with relation to their course.

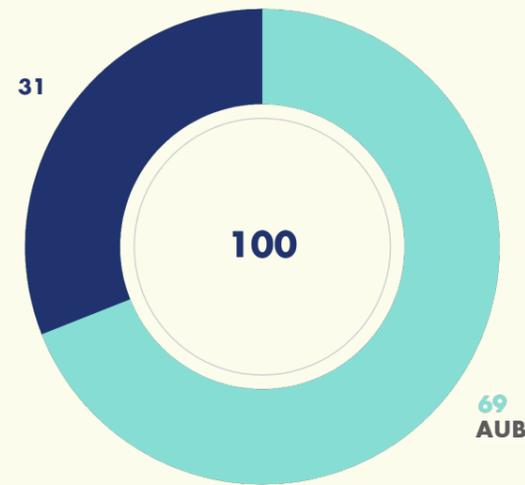
Expense or a perceived lack of impact would most discourage students from a behaviour.

## Q11. Where do you believe AUB sits on the scale of universities, with regard to sustainable behaviours?

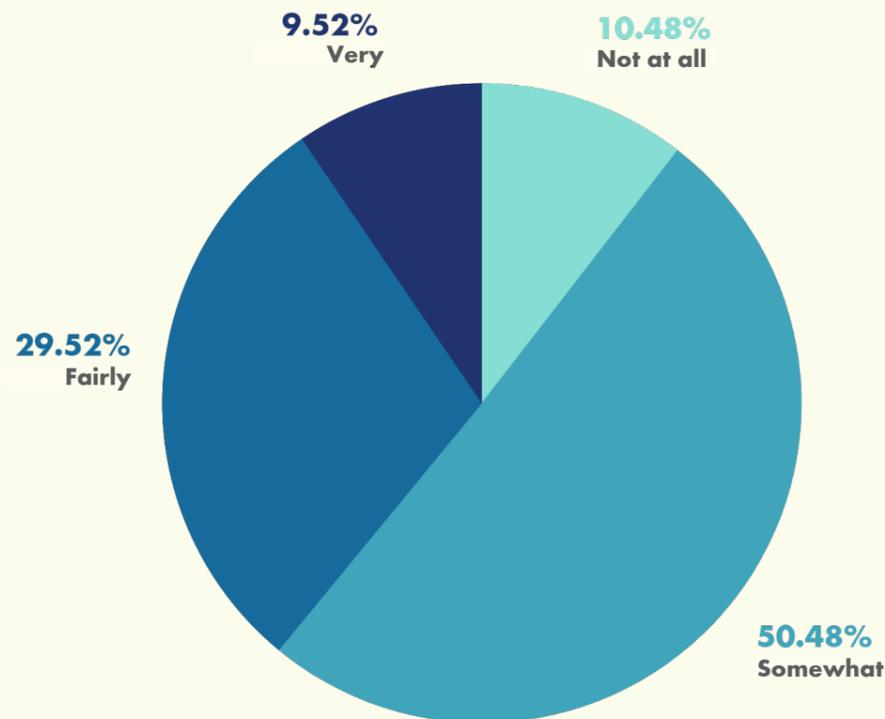
On a sliding scale, AUB averaged 69/100 from rankings by students.

AUB currently holds the Platinum EcoCampus award (the highest possible) and would have therefore expect to rank higher.

This result tells us that AUB should better communicate its award and positive green initiatives to students.



## Q14. In your opinion, how environmentally aware is your course?



## Q15. How could it improve?

In qualitative feedback, the points most suggested were on the following themes:

- Less paper/printing
- Recycled or reused course materials
- Sharing of course materials (across courses)
- A more sustainable focus for projects
- Holding courses to account for their efforts (or lack of)
- Better storage of materials to lessen the need for replacements
- Better recycling options
- Clearer information and signage

“Have somewhere to put scrap materials that buyer is done with but others can use or any scraps from other departments are open for other course use.”

“All courses should be held accountable for studio waste and insisting that students develop ways of recycling waste materials.”

“There are barely any recycling bins in the studios and the ones that do exist are misused and have non recyclables in them. Some signs need to be made to attach to the bins showing what can be recycled.”

“Talk more about the environmental impacts of certain materials. Use less paper during lectures.”

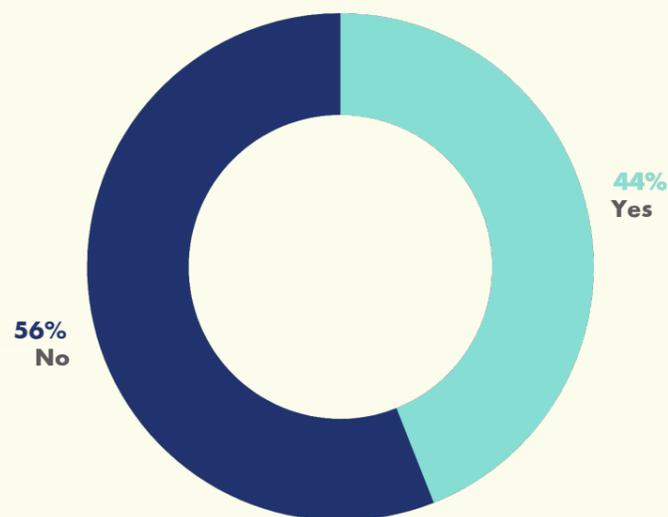
“Although we are encourage to design environmentally such as using circular design concepts I don’t think enough emphasis is put on using recycled materials, the amount of printing etc.”

“If we have to buy things like little bits of costume for our pieces, and everyone always goes straight to Primark because it’s cheap. If we had a budget from the uni for things like this (and if we had encouragement from the tutors to use that budget in a sustainable way), people might be able to look at more sustainable options.”

## Q12. Do you think AUB supports and promotes Fairtrade enough?

The majority of students do not think that AUB supports or promotes Fairtrade enough.

As AUB is working towards a Fairtrade award and has made key steps in its support of Fairtrade, it is likely that these steps are not visible to students.



## Q13. How would you suggest the University improves its promotion of FairTrade products?

**In qualitative feedback, students suggested clearer communication and an increased range of Fairtrade products on sale. A sample of the feedback:**

“Whilst there are places in The Shop with dedicated shelves for FT and certain products are also FT, AUB’s efforts need to be more visible.”

“Make it really clear WHY we do it, more market days with fair trade goods explaining why it’s all important.”

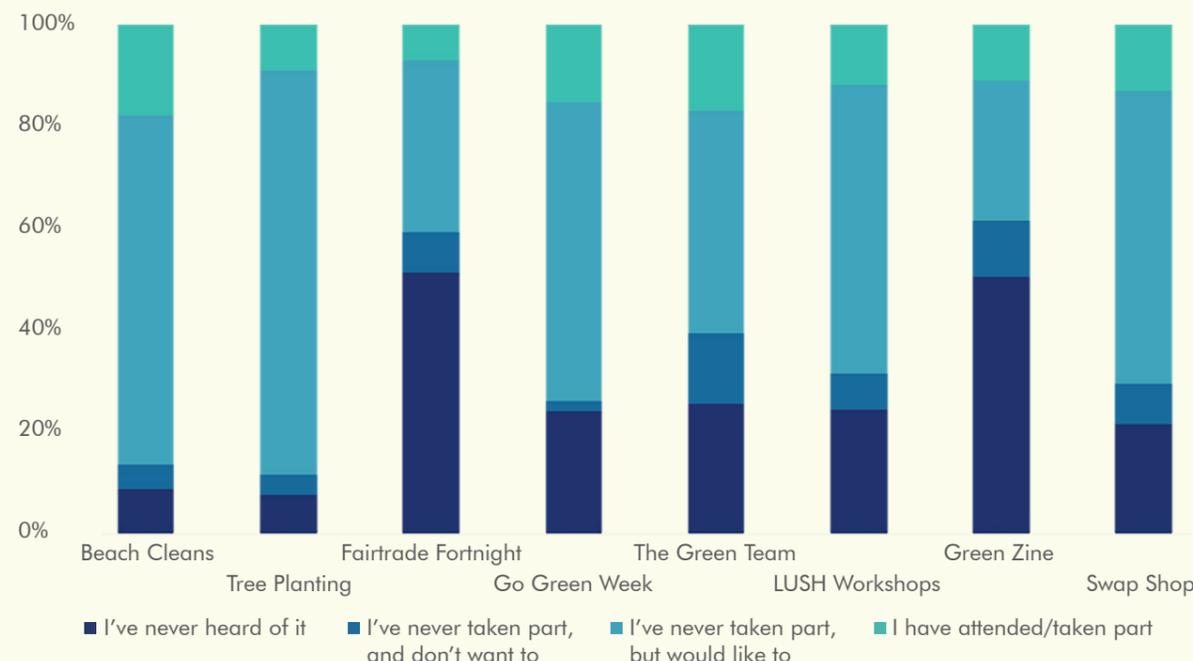
“I haven’t really heard any FairTrade stuff mentioned at all, if I didn’t know what it was or why it’s important I wouldn’t bother [buying FT products]. Education on it’s importance could be useful.”

“I don’t hear a lot about it at all, so anything that spreads the information, such as Instagram posts.”

“Making them more obvious, or the only option.”

“Clear labelling throughout the canteen and food outlets. Or maybe just pointing out what isn’t fairtrade to make you think about it more”

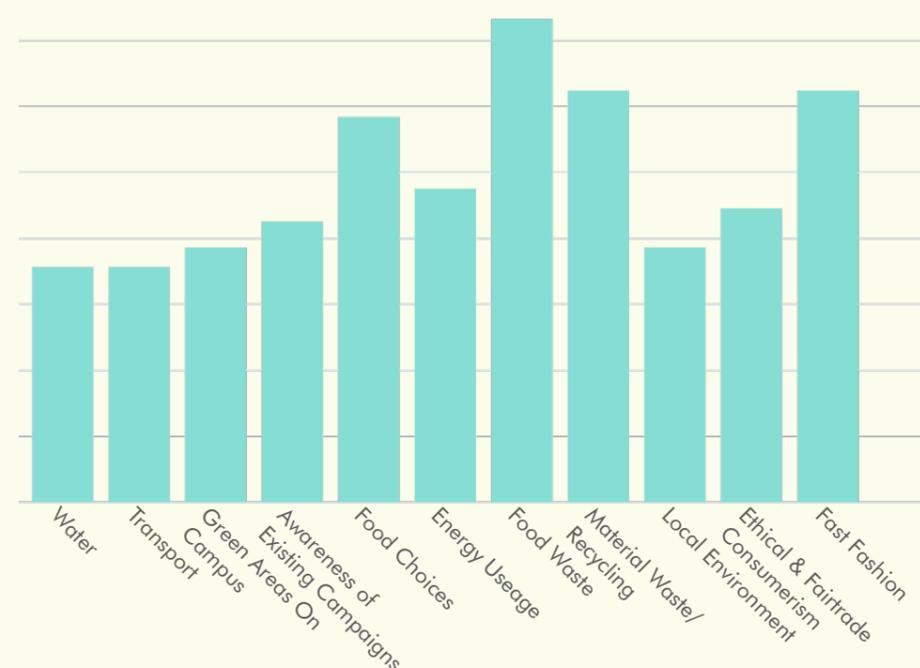
## Q16. How aware are you of our AUBSU initiatives?



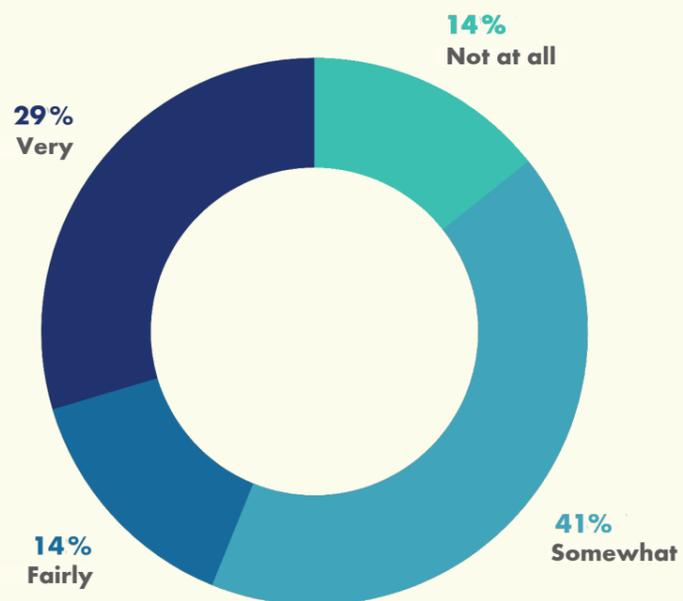
There is an obvious interest in most of AUBSU’s initiatives but only a small percentage of students have taken part. Better marketing could be employed to ensure all students have heard of our initiatives.

## Q17. What environmental issues would you like to see AUBSU address in future?

Food Waste, Material Waste/Recycling, Fast Fashion and Food Choices ranked highest.



## Q18. How has your time at AUB impacted your awareness of sustainability issues?



## Q19. Tell us about who or what has been most influential in engaging you in sustainability during your time at AUB?

**AUBSU and AUB events (including Go Green Week and AUB Human) were identified multiple times. Students also fed back that the influence of other conscious students impacted them.**

“Meeting people at uni that are passionate about being more eco friendly.”

“A project I did in foundation year on plastics in the ocean helped start my understanding and interest into sustainability.”

“Green Team, AUBSU, AUB Human and green initiative events.”

“Tutors on my course who talk about material usage. The facilities on campus such as waterdispensers with notes on about reusing bottles and being less wasteful etc. Also the swapshop and events run promoting green living, recycling etc are really fun to see.”

## Q20. Please share any other comments or ideas that you have about sustainability at AUB?

**In qualitative feedback, students gave a variety of additional comments. These can be grouped into these main themes:**

- Reducing plastic waste, especially in the canteen (cups, cutlery)
- More conscious food options (Fairtrade, vegan)
- Recycling points in studio spaces
- More green spaces on campus
- Less printing, paper promotions
- Materials swap shop or increased sharing and reusing
- Reduce food waste
- More green-focused events and campaigns
- Better communication about initiatives

### **A sample of the feedback:**

“Promotions/pushes on vegan food options. I’m not vegan, but try to choose the vegan option where possible, but it would be nice to see it being encouraged over the meat options.”

“More fun workshops in the courtyard and better communication to let us know that they’re on. Stop excessive printing.”

“AUB is doing really great efforts about energy and water use, there are loads of activities to help the local environment and there are quite a few green spaces. Maybe we could have a little garden with plants that help pollinators”

“AUB should be more forward thinking in sustainable energy alternatives and becoming more self sustaining”

“I loved to see that we got rid of all the plastic cups at the water stations.”

“I’d love to know if products/ingredients in the cafeteria are sourced locally/sustainability/ethically and it’d be amazing to have visiting guest speakers to the uni ... Overall sustainability at AUB is amazing and it’s one of the reasons I chose to study here.”

## 2016 Survey Comparison

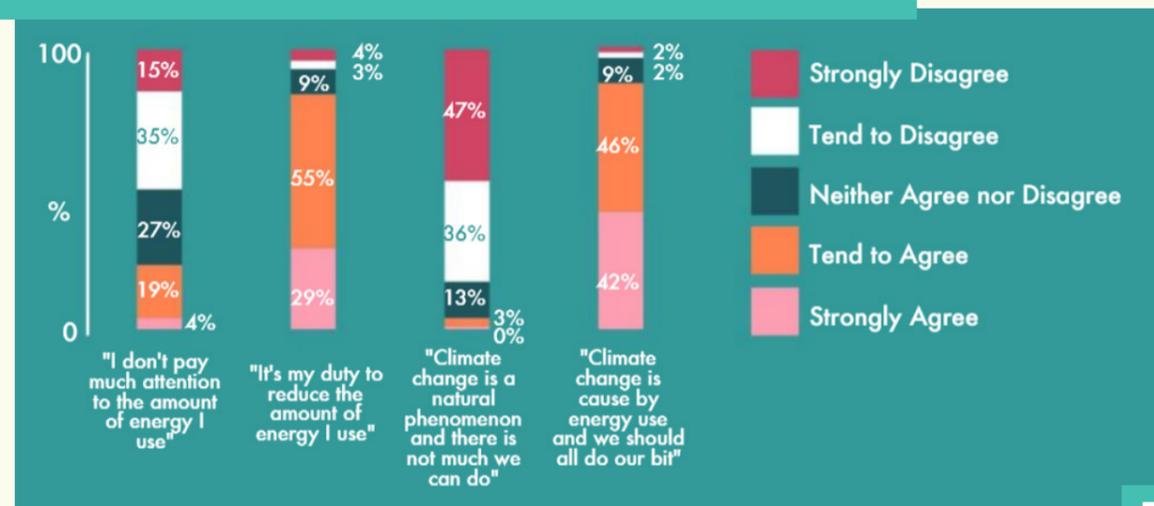
AUBSU released a survey in 2016 to better understand student attitudes and behaviours with regard to sustainability. The survey had 134 participants across all year groups.

The results from this survey was used to inform AUBSU's long-term strategy on engaging students with their environmental initiatives. The 2016 survey was used as model for this 2020 survey so that any changes in attitudes and behaviours could be mapped. Generally, the results for the 2016 survey and the 2020 survey are similar. Students mostly displayed the same awareness and conscious choices, with stats coming up very similar.

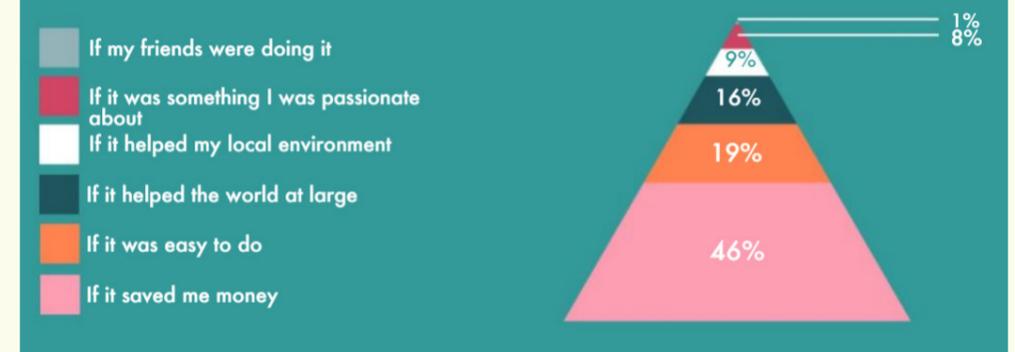
### To what extent, if at all, do you believe that the environmental initiatives on campus have impacted on your behaviour during your time at AUB?



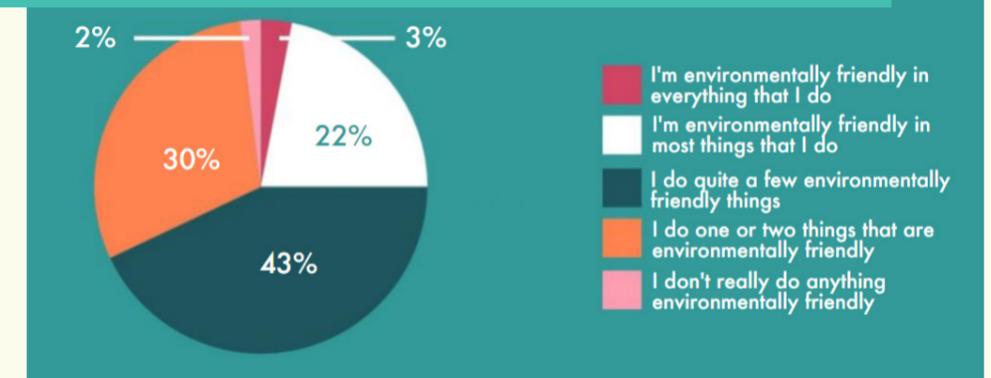
### What, if anything, do you understand about the following terms?



### Which of the following would most encourage you to carry out environmentally friendly behaviour?



### Which of these statements would you say best describes your current lifestyle?



Motivations for environmentally friendly behaviours have seemed to have change: in 2016, the main motivation was saving money (46%) compared to helping the local environment (9%) and helping the world at large (16%). In 2020, the positive impact on the local environment and wider world are some of the biggest motivators. This could reflect the increasing awareness of the importance of sustainable issues and its spotlight in current affairs, which has grown year on year since 2016.

Interestingly, in 2016, 52% of students thought that AUB was better than most other universities in regard to sustainable behaviour and only 12% believed it was amongst the top universities. This result is very similar to 2020's average score of 69 out of 100, despite AUB achieving the Gold and Platinum Eco-campus award since.

The full 2016 survey report can be viewed [here](#).

## Student Attitudes

A clear majority of students strongly agreed that climate change is not just a natural phenomenon that we cannot impact. Rather, they claimed a personal responsibility to do their bit for the environment and reduce their energy use. However, the response to their own energy use was not as strong and alludes to the challenges faced in living sustainably that we explore more in the Behaviours section of the survey.

Students believe that they have a good understanding of most green terms raised but would benefit from improved knowledge on biodiversity and the sustainable development goals.

## Student Behaviours

Students demonstrate environmentally conscious decision-making, with the majority of students opting for environmentally friendly behaviours. For every prompt given, most students chose 'sometimes', which demonstrates that effort is being made but there are still barriers in place that prevent students from always acting consciously. The areas with the most choices for 'rarely' and 'never' were checking for environmental/ethical labels on products and avoiding/limiting printing.

The motivations to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours were fairly equally matched, with no one clear motivation that stood out amongst the other motivations. However, the desire for a reward or recognition was ranked lowest along with a relation to AUB courses. This shows that students do not require a reward system for their efforts, whether that is within their course or otherwise. Rather, clear communication of the positive impact of sustainable changes that students could make would be more affect in their changing behaviours.

The biggest barriers that students identified were expense, time and effort, along with the perception that the action would not have much impact.

## AUB & AUBSU

Responses in this section tell us that students do not have a clear awareness of AUB and AUBSU sustainability initiatives. Their estimation of where AUB sits on comparison with other universities in regard to sustainability was significantly lower than the reality. Many students had not heard of the majority of AUBSU's green campaigns, which shows that AUBSU could be engaging with a lot more students than they are currently. Some of the responses were suggestions for changes that had already been made, such as the removal of plastic cups at water fountains, signage for Fairtrade stands and discounts on sustainable bottles. With better communication, we can ensure that students know what efforts AUB and AUBSU have made to be more sustainable and engage more students to make personal changes in their own behaviours.

We must note that this survey took place before key green campaigns (which take place over spring/summer), including Go Green Week, Fairtrade Fortnight and AUB Human. These events will be evaluated when complete to track engagement but it is possible that awareness of initiatives would increase after these campaigns.

## Proposals

### Recommended actions based on the results of the survey:

- Clearer communication about AUB's sustainable initiatives (including Fairtrade) and AUBSU's campaigns, and how they link to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
- Develop campaigns focused on biodiversity, food waste, waste/recycling and food options.
- Embed sustainability in courses and implement accountability.
- Explore more sustainable changes based on student feedback.