

**A report commissioned by The
National Lottery**

Chapter Three:

**Young People and Environmental
Issues**

January 2008



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Foreword

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, young people have been a key target for Lottery funding. Over the last year alone, more than £309 million has been invested in projects around the UK, which benefit people under the age of 25 in a whole variety of ways.

The Future Foundation was commissioned to write this report because we know that Lottery funding can make a big difference to young people, and we feel it is important to keep up with how they are thinking and behaving. This chapter is the final in a series that explore young people's lives today. The first chapter examined the contribution that young people are making to society, the second looked at young people's creativity. This final chapter explores their views about the environment.

Also included in the report are several examples of innovative Lottery-funded projects which we hope will inspire people to continue to apply for Lottery funding, to bring their own ideas to life.

Carole Souter, Chair of the England Lottery Forum.

1. Introduction

“The environment” is one of the major issues of our time. In this chapter we explore what it means to young people: how they feel about it, what actions they are taking now, and what they might be prepared to do in the future.

In the first section we compare young people’s levels of concern to other age groups and explore how they have changed over time. We also investigate the broader social context of environmentalism in young people’s lives; the specific effects that this concern has upon their attitude to others and also upon personal issues like guilt and embarrassment.

The second section looks into the future. Rather than simply extrapolate rising concern, we ask which legislative measures young people would be prepared to support if global warming continues to get worse. Based on these results we identify a group of “hardcore greens” who are active, vocal environmentalists and who are prepared to support some relatively controversial measures.

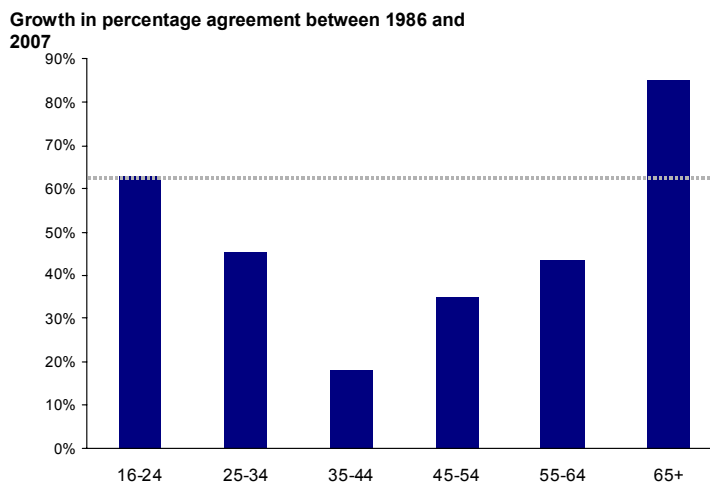
2. Trends in Environmentalism

2.1. Comparing attitudes in 2007 with those in 1980

Nowadays, many more people express concern for the environment than in the '80s. In fact, looking at Chart 1, it is, perhaps, surprising that the increase is not greater¹. We should note, however, that the level of support among 16-24 year olds has actually increased by over 60% of the level in 1986. So, although "baby boomer" environmentalism has grown the most in absolute terms, 16-24 year olds actually show a higher rate of growth – they have only been outpaced by those 65+, although this older generation start from a particularly low base.

Chart 1: Concern about the environment by age group

Change in proportion who are concerned "about what they can do to protect the environment and natural resources" between 1980 and 2007



Source: nVision Research/Taylor Nelson Sofres
Base: 1000 adults aged 16+, UK

A similar variation by age can be observed in attitudes towards penalising corporations who damage the environment. As Chart 2 shows, the rise has been highest among young people and "baby boomers" but has not been as strong among 25-44 year olds. This suggests that there is probably not a simple relationship between age and interest in environmental issues and that different motivations resonate with different lifestyles.

¹ This may be explained by standards of "what they can do to protect..." changing over a generation. However, this question does use very strong language which should therefore be understood similarly in the '80s as now.

Greenlight Recycling, Scotland

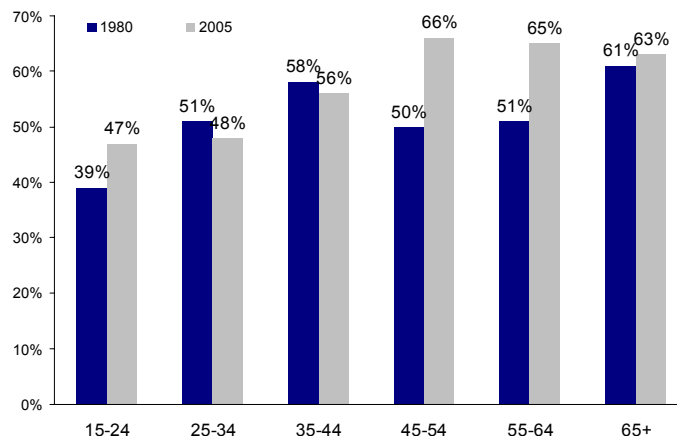
Greenlight Recycling's 'Inverclyde Environmental Training Project' increases the employability, skills, confidence and self-esteem of young people who are not in education, employment or training and long-term unemployed people who have little or no formal qualifications or transferable skills.

The project provides guidance and counselling, personal development, planned training in IT and certificated plant and equipment training, as well as basic work experience for those who access the project.

Total funding: £400,291 Big Lottery Fund

Chart 2: Attitudes to companies that pollute the environment – change between 1980 and 2005

“I would be willing to boycott those manufacturers whose products contribute to pollution”



Source: nVision Research/Taylor Nelson Sofres
Base: 1000 adults aged 16+, UK

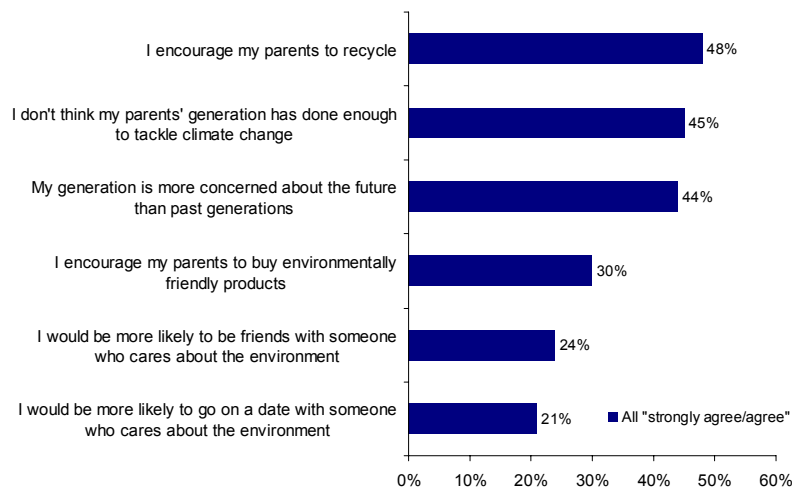
2.2. Social expectations and guilt

Social expectations are related to environmentalism in at least two important ways. First of all, they shape young people's expectations and judgements of others. We can see in Chart 3 that 48% of young people claim to "encourage [their] parents to recycle", and 30% encourage them "to buy environmentally friendly products". In terms of judging others, 45% agree that "my parents' generation has not done enough to combat climate change" and they are even happy to let it affect their choice of friends or partner: nearly a quarter (24%)

“would be more likely to be friends with someone who cares about the environment” and just over a fifth (21%) say they “would be more likely to go on a date with someone who cares about the environment”.

Chart 3: Environmentalism and attitudes towards others.

“Statements: agree and strongly agree”

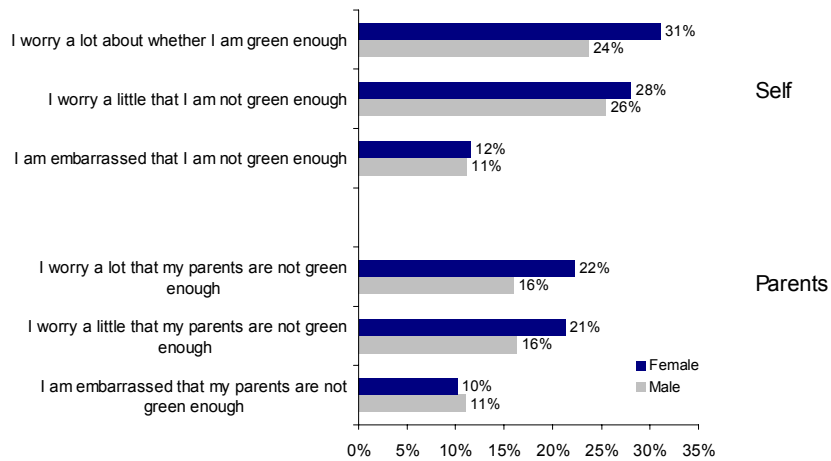


Source: NLPFU/Future Foundation
Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

Secondly, social expectations can be reflected inward towards young people’s image of themselves and can lead to feelings of worries, guilt or embarrassment. “Green angst” also appears to be a new trend among teens, some of who are worried about whether they are green enough. As Chart 4 shows, these appear to be felt most keenly by girls and apply most strongly to their behaviour rather than their parents: 31% of girls “worry that they are not green enough”. We expect this to become more pronounced over the next five years as environmentalism moves to the mainstream and, thus, is considered by more people to be part of their identity.

Chart 4: Environmentalism and guilt

“Do you feel guilty about not doing enough to reduce your impact on the environment?”



Source: NLPFU/Future Foundation
Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

These two charts suggest that environmentalism is as much a social and emotional phenomenon as it is a rational attempt to reduce impact on the environment. This should shape the strategies of those who seek to change young people’s behaviour and also suggests that those with these strong feelings may be best placed to begin to affect these changes.

Highland Youth Environment Heritage Programme

The Highland Youth Environment Heritage Programme is for young people aged 16-25 and aims to develop practical skills, improve confidence and self-esteem, install a sense of achievement and make a positive contribution to the local community and Scotland's heritage.

Young people work in placements alongside the volunteer team, or on a project of their own. Examples of work carried out are: footpath creation, vegetation clearance and management, renovation of dry stonewalls and wildlife garden maintenance.

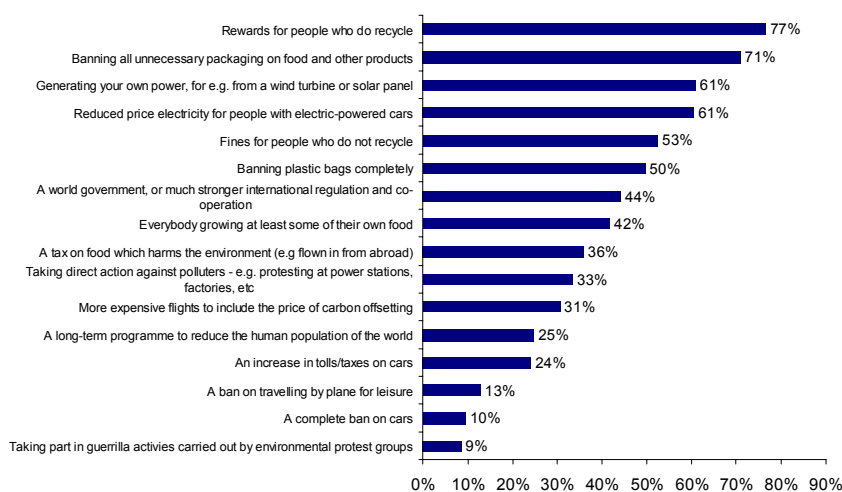
Total funding: £38,800 Heritage Lottery Fund

3. Future of environmentalism

It is clear that young people express concern for the environment in many different ways and that their level of concern can rise or fall in the future. It is therefore inappropriate to simply identify a general measure of “environmental concern”: rather, we should explore the different feelings people have and the sorts of conclusions they come to about the future. We looked at feelings in the previous section; here we look at the sort of policies that people may support in the future. As we can see in Chart 5, some of their choices are relatively controversial.

Chart 5: Support for various environmental policies

“If global warming continues to get worse, which of the following solutions would you be prepared to support in future?”



Source: NLPU/Future Foundation
Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

The three most popular policies do not involve consumers having to *go without*. More than three quarters want rewards for people who recycle, 71% think that all unnecessary packaging on food and other products should be banned, while 61% are interested in generating their own power. Rewards for recycling are not coercive; unnecessary packaging is, by definition, unnecessary; and generating your own power just changes the source of electricity rather than changing the uses to which it is put.

As we move down the list, however, young people show a more authoritarian side – 53% would “fine those who do not recycle” and 50% would ban plastic bags completely – and also, perhaps, a more utopian one – 44% would support “a world government, or much stronger international regulation and cooperation”.

Some young people are also prepared to support extremely radical measures to help the environment. These include, “increase car tax” (24%), “ban flying on

planes for leisure" (13%), and "completely ban cars" (10%). Some of them would even go as far as acting against those who they feel are damaging the environment: 33% would support "taking direct action against polluters" and 9% would support "taking part in guerrilla activities carried out by environmental protest groups".

Crime Concern, Nationwide

For young people who are at risk of anti-social behaviour or offending Crime Concern channels their energy more positively into their local environment and community spaces. Over the next five years, its Community Space Challenge scheme will be taking disaffected young people and getting them to make practical improvements to their neighbourhoods, giving them a sense of pride in their environment. The activities include development of community and sensory gardens, graffiti removal, allotment developments, litter clean-ups, park improvements, art installations and wasteland regeneration. The scheme also offers young people the chance to gain qualifications for environmental work, which can be used instead of standard qualifications like GCSEs.

Total funding: £8.3 million Big Lottery Fund

Centre For Alternative Technology, Wales

The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) helps inspire young people to live more sustainably and to look at practical solutions to environmental problems e.g. renewable energy, environmentally friendly buildings, energy efficiency, water-saving sanitation systems and organic growing. At the Centre, the Wales Institute for Sustainable Education or WISE, runs accredited training courses for young people where they can learn about renewable energy technologies that effectively tackle climate change.

Total funding: £544,000 Big Lottery Fund

3.1. Hardcore greens

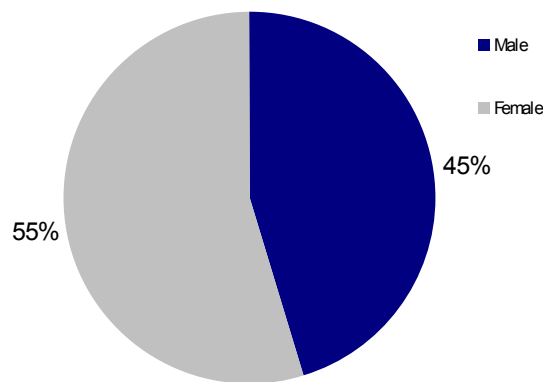
Clearly, the level of support for different measures varies a great deal – from 9% of respondents to 77%. This means that there is a group of less-enthusiastic environmentalists, who support few measures and a group of "hardcore greens" who support a large number. This second group are of particular interest. First, they may represent the early adopter wave of environmentalism and hold attitudes now that will be thought of as mainstream in the future. Second, even if this does not take place, and attitudes actually polarise, then we can assume that these young people are likely to be vocal supporters and will, therefore, have an effect on those around them and possibly upon the views of the country as a whole.

In order to identify these “hardcore greens”, we counted how many of these measures each respondent claimed they would support. This gave us an indicator of each individual’s “environmental radicalism”. We then split the sample into five groups, each made up of approximately 20%. This defined “hardcore greens”, the top 20% of young environmentalists, as being those who support ten or more of the measures outlined above in Chart 5.

As can be seen in Chart 6, “hardcore greens” are slightly more likely to be female than male, and environmental rejectors are more likely to be male than female.

Chart 6: Who are “hardcore greens”?

Profile of Hardcore greens by gender



Source: nVision/ Future Foundation
 Base: 140 (2000), 197 (2005) 16-24

This profile complements the findings from a number of questions that indicate greater enthusiasm for environmental issues among girls. In terms of support for specific measures, there is great agreement between “hardcore greens” and the rest of the population in favour of rewards for recycling. As we would expect, though, variation in attitude increases dramatically as measures become less popular. In the most extreme situation, “hardcore greens” are three times as likely to support guerrilla activity as the average and nearly 15 times more likely than the least radical group.

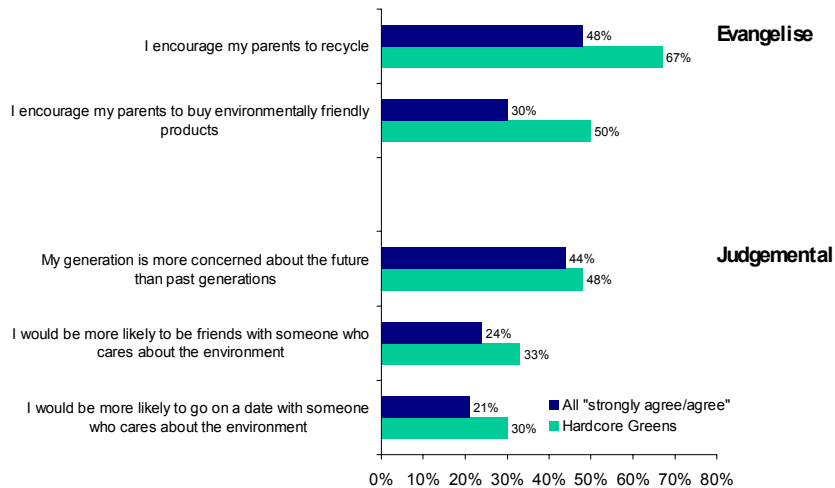
3.2. Hardcore greens and social expectation

Our new research shows that “hardcore greens” are only slightly more judgemental about the environment than other young people, see Chart 7 (overleaf). Instead, they claim to direct their energies into encouraging others to change their behaviour: 67% “encourage [their] parents to recycle” compared to

an average of 48%; and 50% “encourage [their] parents to buy environmentally friendly products” compared to an average of 30%.

Chart 7: Environmentalism and guilt

“Statements: agree and strongly agree”



Source: NLFU/ Future Foundation
 Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

This suggests that “hardcore green” young people may actually be able to act as significant “agents of change” in the wider world and particularly within their immediate family.

Trees of our Future, Northern Ireland

The Trees of our Future project engages with young people all across Northern Ireland, teaching them about the conservation of native tree species. It provides people with the knowledge and skills needed to care for their own woodland heritage. The conservation activities organised by Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (CVNI) includes tree and wildflower planting, urban park creation and the Green Machine - a lorry which drives around Northern Ireland as a learning resource, delivering packages on environmental education tailored specifically to young people.

The project runs courses throughout the year and also includes training for teachers and youth workers on growing trees from seed, woodland management, fundraising, and health and safety issues.

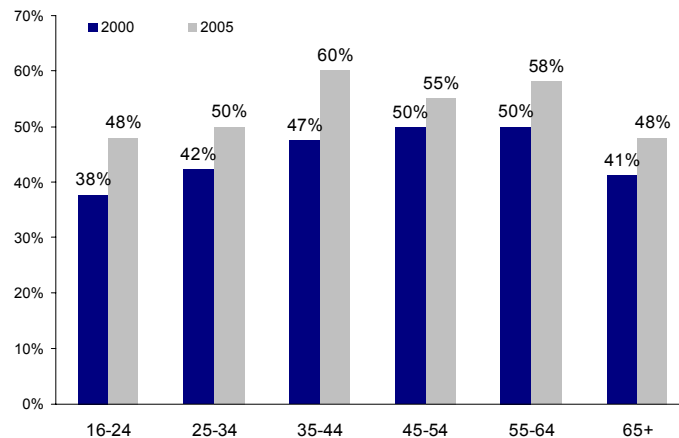
Total funding: £109,500 Heritage Lottery Fund

3.3. Green-consumerism

As Chart 8 shows, in the five years between 2000 and 2005 the proportion of people prepared to pay more for green products rose across all age levels. It is difficult to tell whether this reflects a simple rise in the level of environmental concern or if people have become more savvy consumers, aware of the politics of the shopping basket. Whatever the cause, though, green consumerism is on the rise.

Chart 8: Consumers that are prepared to pay extra for environmentally friendly groceries

Proportion who “would be willing to pay as much as 10% more for grocery items if I could be sure that they would not harm the environment”

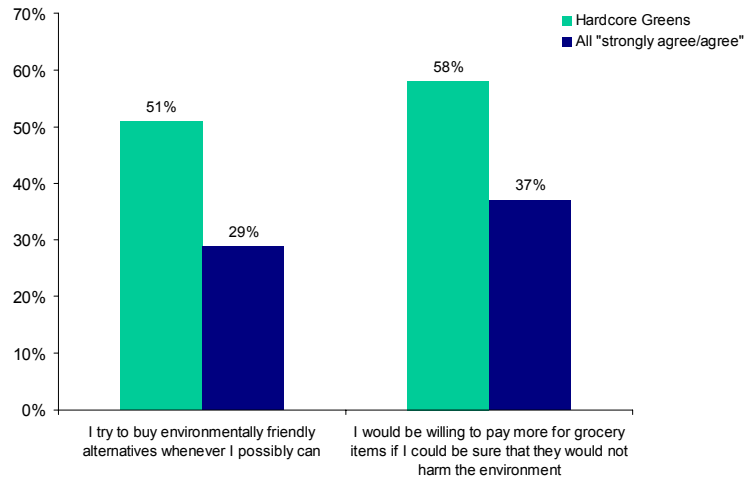


Source: nVision Research/Taylor Nelson Sofres
 Base: 1000 adults aged 16+, UK

Support for green consumerism is also the second most noticeable difference between “hardcore greens” and the average young person. In our new research 58% would be “prepared to pay more for grocery items if [they] could be sure that they would not harm the environment”, compared to an average of 37% and 51% “try to buy environmentally friendly alternatives whenever [they] possibly can” compared to an average 29%.

Chart 9: "Hardcore greens" and environmental consumerism

"Statements: agree and strongly agree"



Source: NLFU/ Future Foundation
 Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

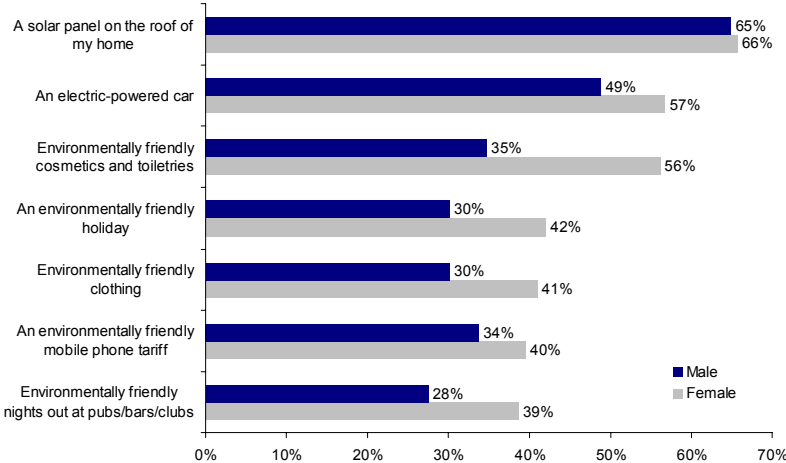
"Hardcore greens", therefore, should have a very important role in the future of environmentalism. They are at the forefront of changing consumption habits and are also the group most likely to pass these habits onto others.

3.4. Potential new markets for "green" products and services

As consumers have been drawn to green consumerism, there has been a considerable growth in the number of product and service categories in which they can expect "green" alternatives to be available. We asked young people which products and services they would be interested in buying, even if the cost was higher. This is an interesting question as it takes into account the relative importance that they place on each issue as well as their general level of concern.

Chart 10: The “green” alternatives that are of interest to young people

“Which of the following products and services would you be interested in buying, even if the cost was higher?”



Source: NLPFU/Future Foundation
Base: 1220 aged 16-19, 2007

As well as considering personal preferences, the responses seem to contain an implicit judgement of the potential benefit to the environment. Indeed, the highest response, the only one that is even across both genders, is for a solar panel – a product whose whole purpose is orientated towards environmental benefit. Cars, again, receive a lot of environmental comment, certainly more than nights out in pubs and bars. We should perhaps conclude that in the future, whole product categories will become naturally associated with positive or negative environmentalism – cars seem to be there already, cosmetics and holidays may be next.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Environmentalism has risen considerably in a generation

Awareness, interest, and preparedness to act have all increased. Today's young people are starting from a far higher base level of environmentalism to those in previous generations: as they age this will only grow. The energy of this group of youngsters is ready to be tapped now and will become more influential in the future.

4.2. Social expectations are powerful drivers toward environmentalism

As awareness has risen, environmental considerations have become more accepted as legitimate bases upon which to judge others. The most successful programs – of behaviour change or volunteering – will be those that leverage this very human dimension.

4.3. A group of "hardcore greens" are leading the change in attitudes

Environmentalism is not evenly distributed – while many people are aware and concerned, different groups of people would support different policies in the future. It remains to be seen whether the "hardcore greens" represent a vanguard of change among the whole population or whether there will always be such a distinct difference in opinions.