



# Staff and Student Sustainability Survey

Summary Report

September 2019

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a large, detailed green leaf in the center, with a smaller, stylized green leaf to its left. Two light blue circles are positioned in the upper and lower left corners, partially overlapping the leaf graphics.

# Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the Staff and Student Sustainability Survey conducted in May 2019 at the University of Surrey.

A final sample of 448 members of staff and 781 students was achieved, with responses being collected online and through direct engagement.

The results show that the vast majority of respondents consider environmentally friendly behaviour on campus important. However, most of them think that their colleagues or peers do not care about the environment nor that they engage in pro-environmental behaviour.

Furthermore, 95% of respondents believe that sustainability should be a key consideration for universities, and over 80% think that good sustainability credentials would make a university a better place to work and study.

Finally, while most respondents do not have a clear picture of the University's sustainability performance, there is the general perception that Surrey needs to do more to make progress on sustainability.



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# 1. Introduction



In 2017, Surrey established a vision for sustainability across operational, curricular and research areas, and 2018 marked the start of a new effort to turn this into a coherent strategy.

Embedding sustainability into organisational culture was set as one of the major goals for the upcoming years. In order to achieve this, a better understanding of staff and students' behaviour on campus, their perceptions of Surrey's environmental performance and their concerns regarding global and local environmental issues was needed.

Therefore, all current staff and students at Surrey were invited to take the Sustainability Survey from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2019. Participants were also asked to provide suggestions on how the sustainability performance at Surrey could be improved.



The objectives of the survey were to:

- obtain information about staff and students':
  - social norms, attitudes and behaviours related to energy consumption and waste production;
  - concerns about environmental issues in general and with relation to the university;
  - perceptions of sustainability in the UK's higher education sector, and more specifically, sustainability performance at the University of Surrey;
- create a baseline that would help the Sustainability and Energy Team measure impact of communications and engagement campaigns;
- register actions related to sustainability that staff and students were already engaging in;
- identify highly motivated staff and students who would like to become sustainability champions.



## 2. Data Collection



As the purpose of the survey was to get the largest possible sample, an email invitation was sent out to all current staff at students. Furthermore, students were asked to fill in the survey on tablet computers on campus in order to boost response numbers and avoid self-selection bias. University staff were engaged using the same method, and paper copies of the survey were distributed to cleaning and portering staff.

A total of 448 members of staff (13.6% of staff population) and a total of 781 students (4.6% of student population) submitted complete surveys that were used for analysis.



## 3. The Staff Perspective



## 3.1 Demographic overview

The respondents' average age is 44 years<sup>1</sup>, and the average time working at Surrey is 7.5 years<sup>2</sup>.

Most of respondents are female, and the majority of responses comes from professional staff. Regarding academic staff, there is a good balance of responses from all three faculties.

Figure 1: Respondents by gender

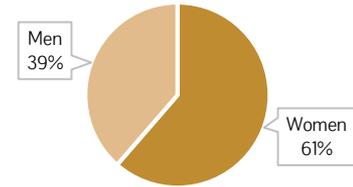


Figure 2: Respondents by occupation

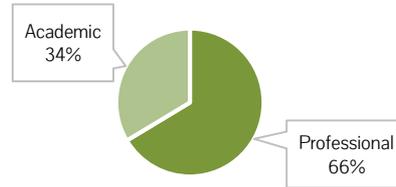
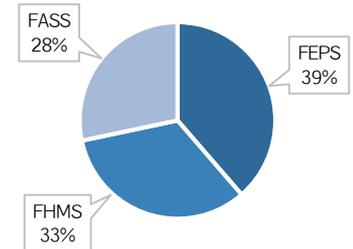


Figure 3: Academic staff by faculties



<sup>1</sup> based on 419 responses <sup>2</sup> 423 responses

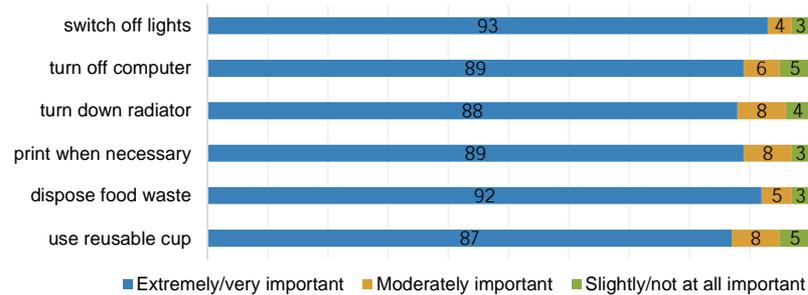
Figure 1: 420 responses (women response rate: 14.9% men: 10.5%)

Figure 2: 444 responses (professional staff response rate: 14.6% academic staff: 11%)

Figure 3: 148 responses (FHMS response rate: 11.9% FEPS: 11.3% FASS: 9.5%)

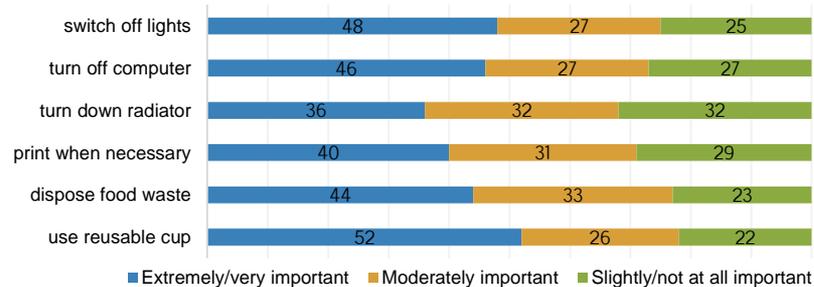
## 3.2 Attitudes and behaviours at the workplace (A)

Figure 4: To what extent do you believe it is important to...  
(Responses in percentage)



The vast majority of respondents believes that environmentally friendly behaviour at the workplace is extremely or very important.

Figure 5: To what extent do you believe other people in your department believe it is important to... (Responses in percentage)

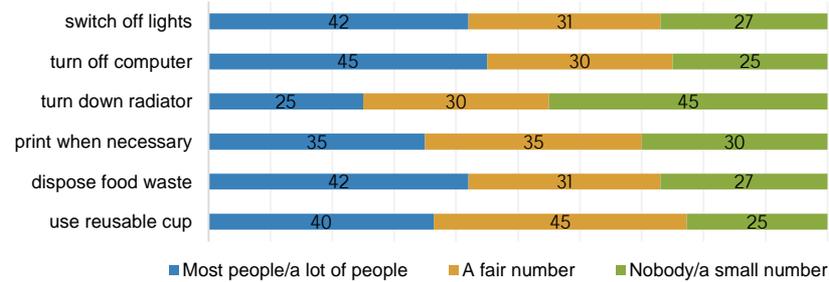


However, less than half of staff believe that other people in their school or department feel the same way.

Figure 4: based on an average of 413 responses  
Figure 5: average of 406 responses  
In both cases, there was a lower than average response rate for the radiator questions, as many respondents chose the "not applicable" option in the survey.

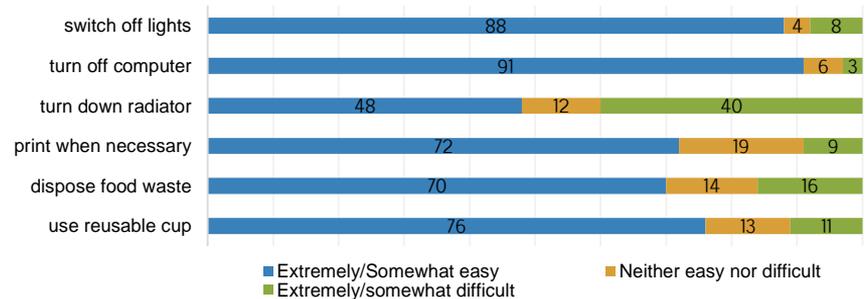
## 3.2 Attitudes and behaviours at the workplace (B)

Figure 6: To what extent do you believe other people in your department... (Responses in percentage)



Less than half of the respondents believe that others behave in an environmentally friendly way, particularly when it comes to heating and printing.

Figure 7: To what extent do you believe it is difficult or easy for you to... (Responses in percentage)



The majority of staff believe that it is extremely or somewhat easy to behave in an environmentally friendly way, except when it comes to heating.

Figure 6: based on an average of 396 responses  
 Figure 7: average of 406 responses  
 In both cases, there was a lower than average response rate for the radiator questions, as many respondents chose the "not applicable" option in the questionnaire.

## 3.3 Energy and waste at the workplace (A)

Over 80% of respondents feel responsible for saving energy and reducing waste at the workplace.

Similarly, over 90% say that they try to save energy and reduce waste at work.

Figure 8: At my workplace, I feel responsible for...  
(Responses in percentage)

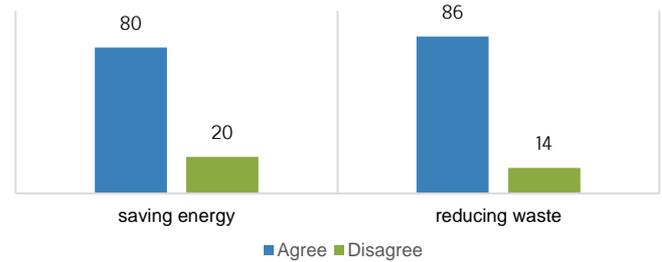


Figure 9: At my workplace, I try to...  
(Responses in percentage)

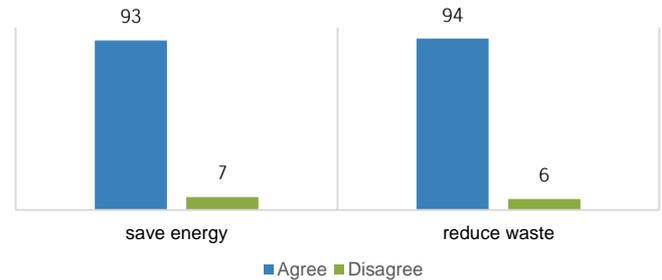


Figure 8: based on 338 and 391 responses  
Figure 9: 404 and 389 responses

## 3.3 Energy and waste at the workplace (B)

Almost 90% of respondents feel guilty when wasting energy or producing waste at the workplace.

Over half of the staff responding say that they have no control over the energy they are using at the workplace, and almost a third does not feel in control over the waste they are producing.

Figure 10: At my workplace, I feel guilty when I...  
(Responses in percentage)

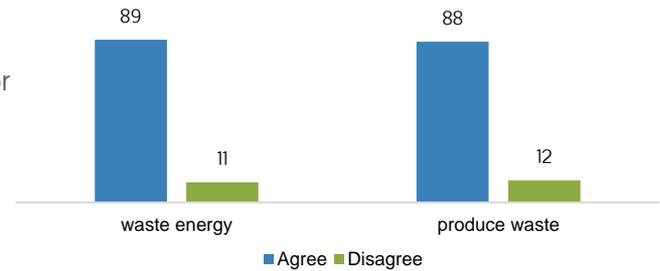


Figure 11: At my workplace, I feel in control over...  
(Responses in percentage)

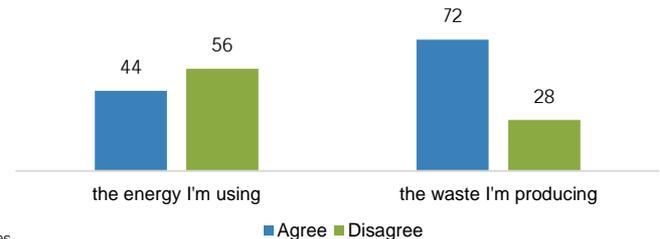


Figure 10: based on 354 and 369 responses  
Figure 11: 379 and 407 responses

## 3.4 Energy and waste at home (A)

To better understand attitudes and behaviours at the workplace, the survey also asked questions about energy and waste at home.

The vast majority of respondents feel responsible for saving energy and reducing waste at home.

Similarly, almost all respondents say that they are trying to save energy and reduce waste at home.

Figure 12: based on 412 and 410 responses

Figure 13: 404 and 408 responses

Figure 12: At home, I feel responsible for...  
(Responses in percentage)

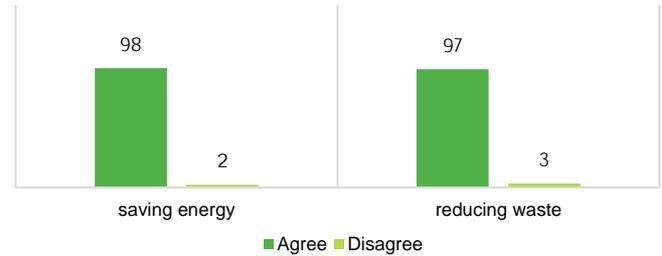
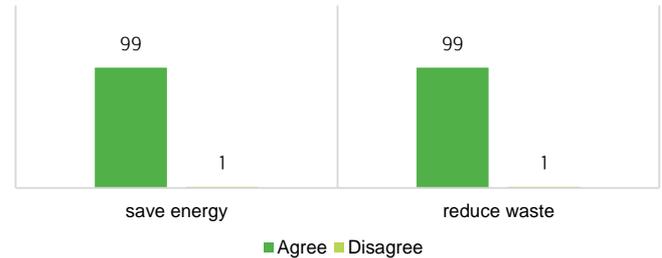


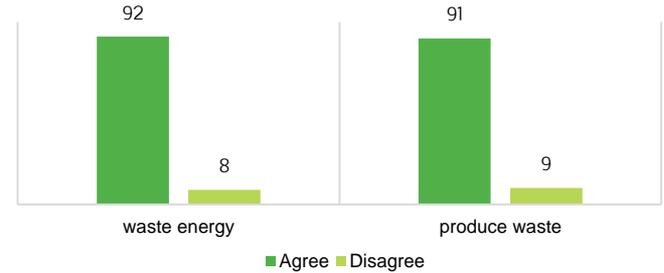
Figure 13: At home, I try to...  
(Responses in percentage)



## 3.4 Energy and waste at home (B)

Over 90% of respondents feel guilty when wasting energy or producing waste at home.

Figure 14: At home, I feel guilty when I...  
(Responses in percentage)



The vast majority of staff responding feel in control over their energy use and waste at home.

Figure 15: At home, I feel in control over...  
(Responses in percentage)

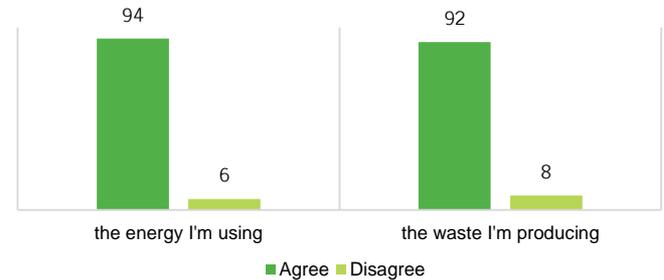
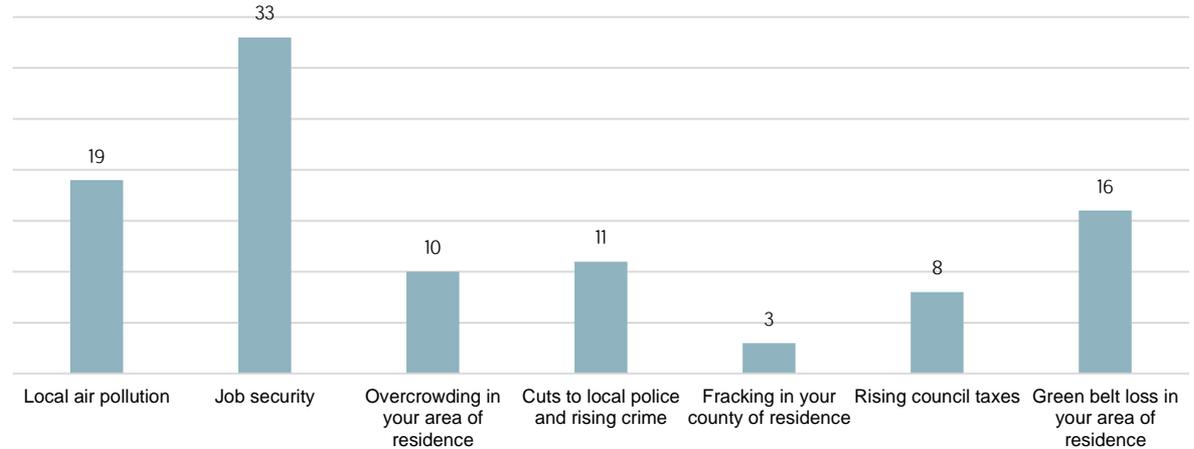


Figure 14: based on 411 and 413 responses  
Figure 15: 418 and 393 responses

## 3.5 Local problems and global issues (A)

Figure 16: Which of the following do you consider the single most serious problem affecting you?  
(Responses in percentage)



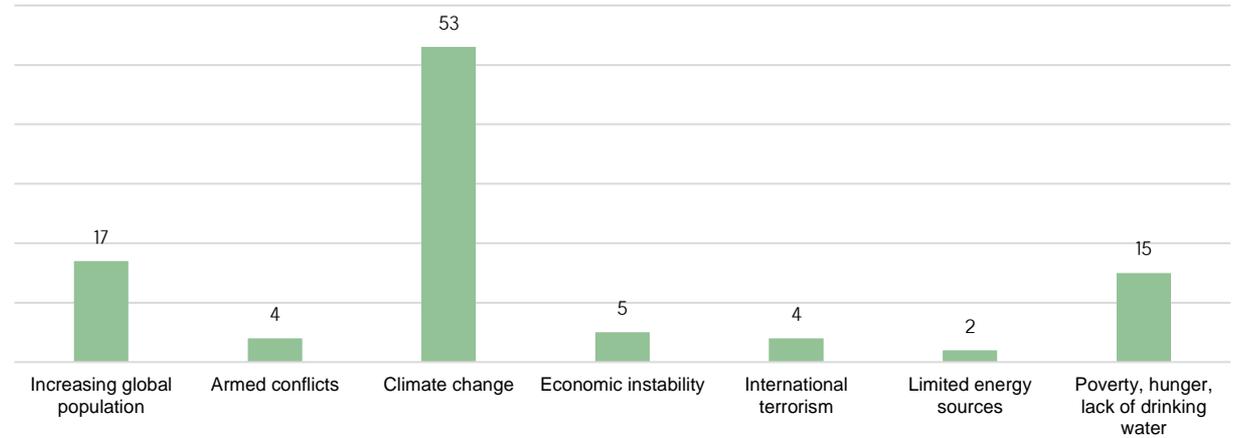
A third of respondents regards job security as the single most serious problem affecting them. Almost 20% of staff responding are concerned most about local air pollution, and over 15% about green belt loss in their area of residence.

Figure 16: based on 417 responses



## 3.5 Local problems and global issues (B)

Figure 17: Which of the following do you consider the single most serious problem facing the world?  
(Responses in percentage)



Over half of the respondents think that climate change is the single most serious problem facing the world. Increasing global population is regarded as the most serious problem by 17% of respondents, and poverty, hunger, and lack of drinking water by 15%.

Figure 17: based on 425 responses

## 3.6 Sustainability at Universities in the UK (A)



The vast majority of respondents think that sustainability should be a key consideration for all universities in the UK

Figure 18: I believe that sustainability should be a key consideration for all universities in the UK.

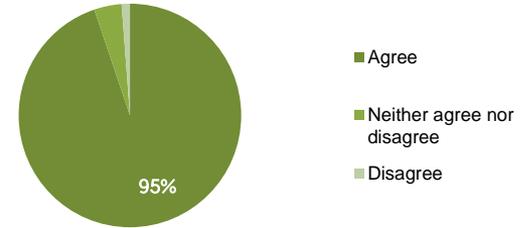
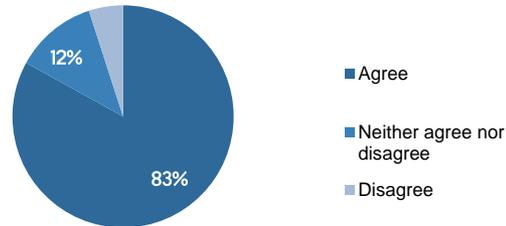


Figure 19: I believe good sustainability credentials at a University are important to make them an attractive place to work.

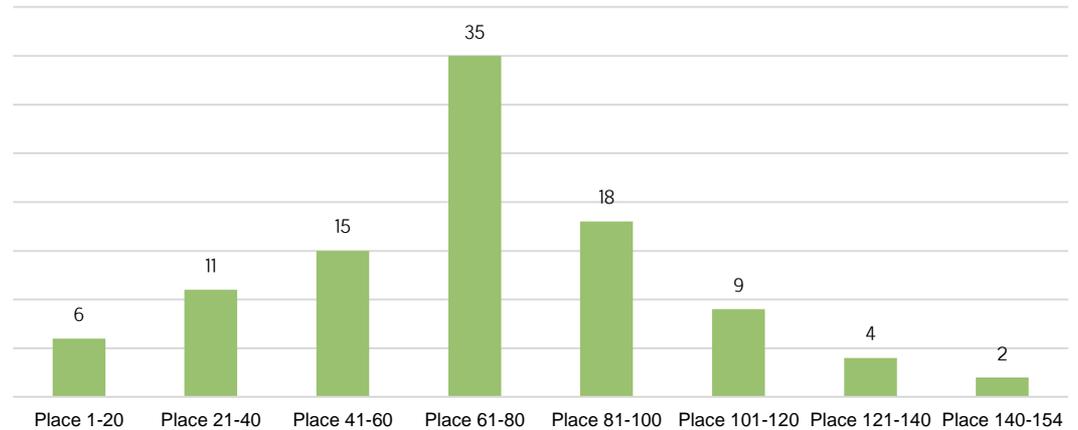


Similarly, over 80% agree that good sustainability credentials are an important factor to make a University an attractive place to work.

Figure 18: based on 428 responses  
Figure 19: 428 responses

## 3.6 Sustainability at Universities in the UK (B)

Figure 20: Out of 154 Universities in the UK, I believe that in terms of sustainability, the University of Surrey ranks... (Responses in percentage)



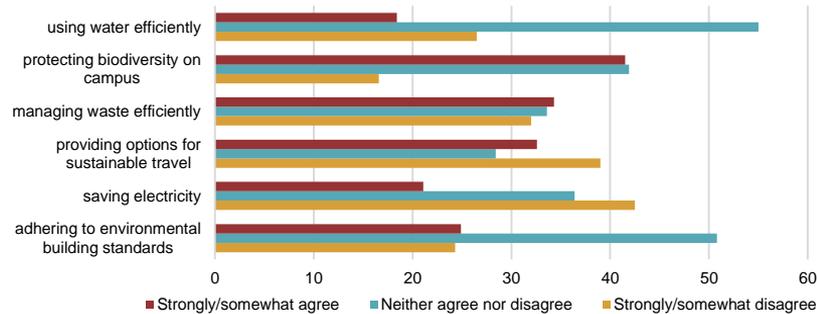
Over a third of respondents think that, compared to all other Universities in the UK, the University of Surrey ranks between place 61 and 80 in terms of sustainability performance. 18% of respondents put Surrey between place 81 and 100, and 15% believe that Surrey ranks between place 41 and 60.

Figure 20: based on 412 responses

## 3.7 Sustainability at the University of Surrey (A)

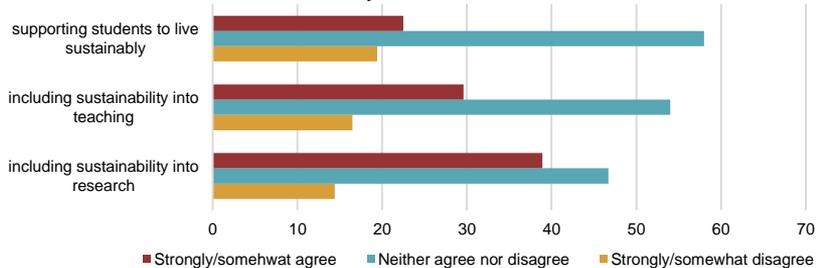


Figure 21: Operations - I believe that the University of Surrey is...  
(Responses in percentage)



Respondents have mixed perceptions about Surrey's sustainability performance in operations. While over 40% of respondents believe that Surrey is protecting biodiversity on campus, about the same percentage thinks that Surrey is not providing options for sustainable travel nor saving electricity.

Figure 22: Teaching & Research - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



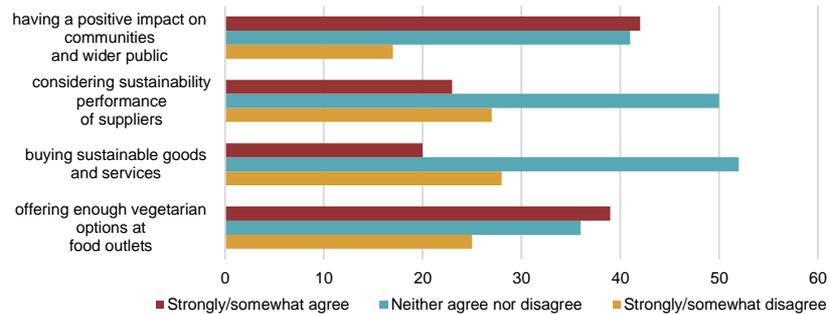
Regarding sustainability in teaching and research, the majority of respondents are neutral. Only 20% think that Surrey is supporting students to live sustainably, but almost 40% believe that Surrey includes sustainability into research.

Figure 21: based on an average of 428 responses  
Figure 22: average of 422 responses

## 3.7 Sustainability at the University of Surrey (B)

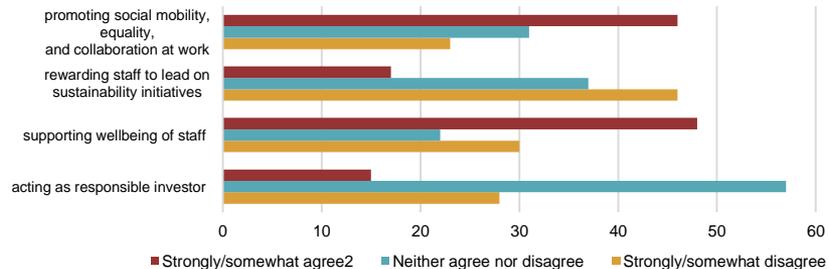


Figure 23: Community & Partnerships - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



While most respondents are neutral, over 40% think that Surrey has a positive impact on communities. However, almost 30% believe that Surrey does not consider sustainability performance of suppliers, and is not buying sustainable goods.

Figure 24: Leadership - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



Almost half of staff responding believe that Surrey supports wellbeing and promotes social mobility and equality. But 40% think that Surrey does not reward staff leading on sustainability initiatives.

Figure 23: based on an average of 428 responses  
Figure 24: average of 427 responses



## 3.8 Comments and suggestions

Over 100 respondents wrote a comment at the end of the survey. The comments were analysed and grouped into five topics:

Figure 25: Topics mentioned in the open comment section

Waste	Energy	Transport	Engagement	Other
37%	35%	12%	5%	11%

Almost 40% of comments were about waste and recycling. Respondents expressed confusion over the University's bin infrastructure and suggested to remove disposable plastics from catering outlets and shops on campus.

Over a third of respondents commented on energy, drawing attention to energy wastage, difficulties in controlling office temperatures and suggesting the installation of renewable energy systems on campus.

Over 10% of comments was on transport and the lack of sustainable transport options.

5% of respondents commented on the lack of information regarding sustainability issues shared by the university and suggested more engagement with staff.

Other topics mentioned included biodiversity, water use, and sustainable food options at catering outlets.

Figure 25: based on 113 comments



## 4. The Student Perspective

## 4.1 Demographic overview (A)

The respondents' average age is 23 years<sup>1</sup>, and the average time studying at Surrey is 2 years<sup>2</sup>.

Almost two thirds of the respondents are female.

Figure 26: Respondents by gender

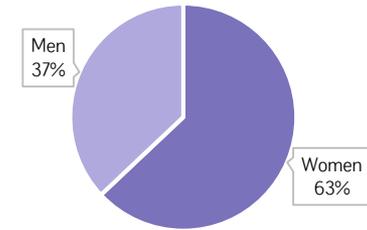
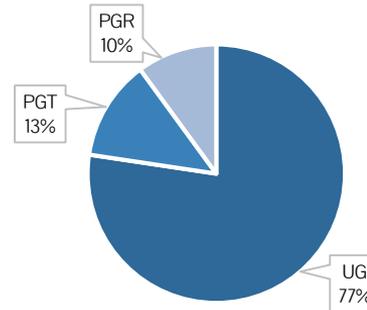


Figure 27: Respondents by degree level



The majority of responses comes from undergraduate students. However, the response rate from post-graduate researchers is the highest, with every ninth PGR completing the survey.

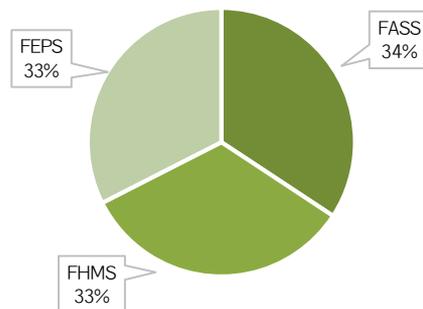
<sup>1</sup> based on 759 responses <sup>2</sup> 727 responses

Figure 26: 765 responses (women response rate: 5.3% men: 3.6%)

Figure 27: 772 responses (PGR response rate: 8.8% UG: 4.4% PGT: 3%)

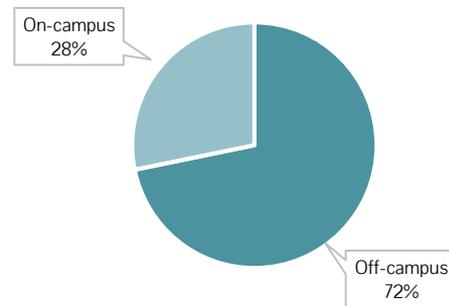
## 4.1 Demographic overview (B)

Figure 28: Respondents by faculty



There is a good balance of responses across all the three faculties.

Figure 29: Respondents by accommodation

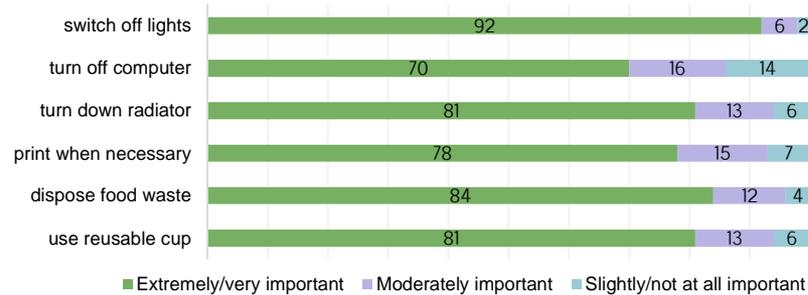


The majority of respondents live off-campus in privately rented accommodation.

Figure 28: based on 768 responses (FEPS response rate: 5.5% FHMS: 5% FASS: 3.2%)  
Figure 29: 766 responses (Off-campus response rate: 4.8% On-campus: 3.9%)

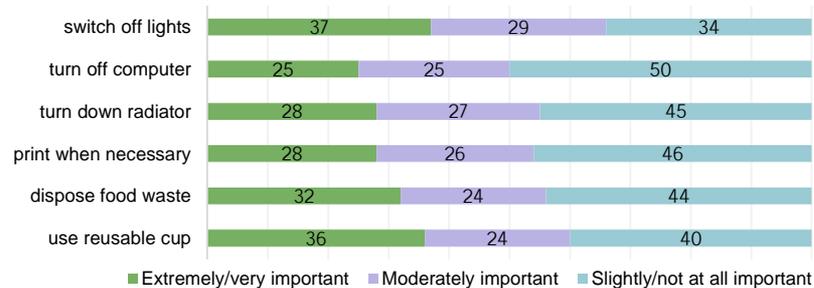
## 4.2 Attitudes and behaviours on campus (A)

Figure 30: To what extent do you believe it is important to...  
(Responses in percentage)



On average, over 80% of responding students believe that environmentally friendly behaviour is extremely or very important.

Figure 31: To what extent do you believe your fellow students believe it is important to...  
(Responses in percentage)

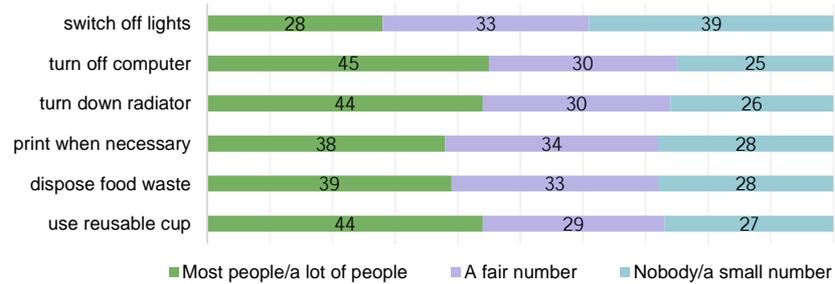


However, almost half of them think that their fellow students do not believe that pro-environmental behaviour is important.

Figure 30: based on an average of 746 responses  
Figure 31: average of 738 responses

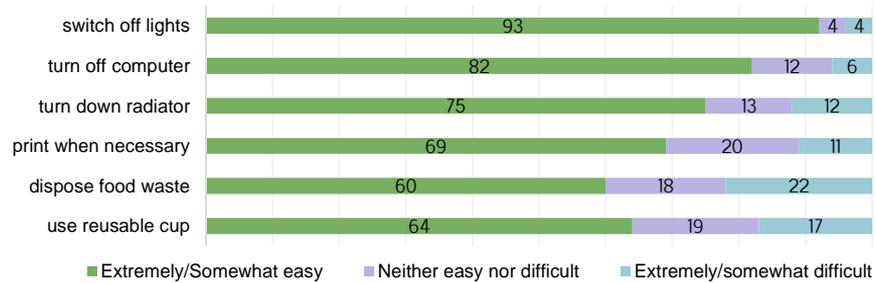
## 4.2 Attitudes and behaviours on campus (B)

Figure 32: To what extent do you believe your fellow students...  
(Responses in percentage)



Around 40% of respondents believe that their fellow students behave in an environmentally friendly way.

Figure 33: To what extent do you believe it is difficult or easy for you to...  
(Responses in percentage)



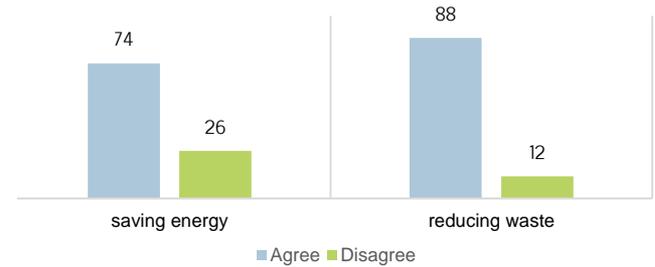
In general, pro-environmental behaviour is perceived to be easy, although this depends on the type of behaviour. While over 90% of respondents say it is easy to switch off lights, only 60% state that disposing food waste is easy.

Figure 32: based on an average of 735 responses  
Figure 33: average of 747 responses

## 4.3 Energy and waste on campus (A)

The majority of respondents feel responsible for saving energy and reducing waste on campus, with more feeling responsible for reducing waste than saving energy.

Figure 34: On campus, I feel responsible for...  
(Responses in percentage)



Similarly, over 90% of respondents say that they try to reduce waste, and over 80% said that they try to save energy.

Figure 35: On campus, I try to...  
(Responses in percentage)

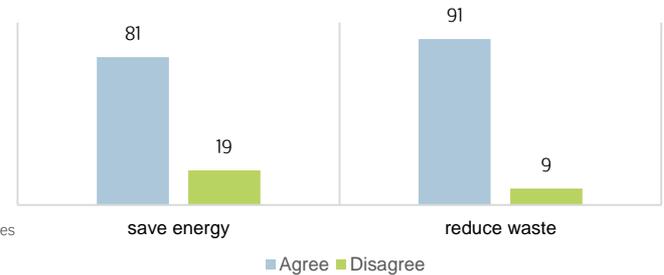


Figure 34: based on 744 and 655 responses  
Figure 35: 747 and 670 responses

## 4.3 Energy and waste on campus (B)

Over 80% of respondents feel guilty when producing waste, and over 70% when wasting energy.

While 70% of respondents feel in control over the waste they are producing, only a third feels able to control their energy use.

Figure 36: On campus, I feel guilty when I...  
(Responses in percentage)

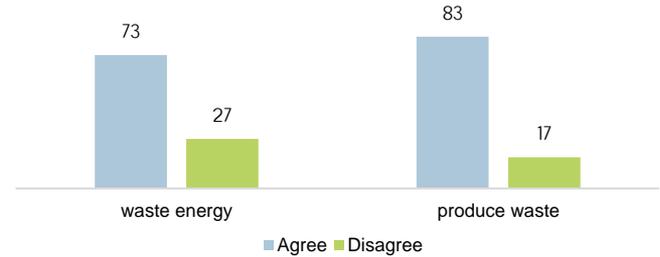


Figure 37: On campus, I feel in control over...  
(Responses in percentage)

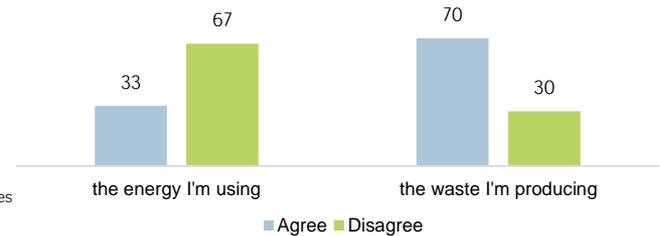
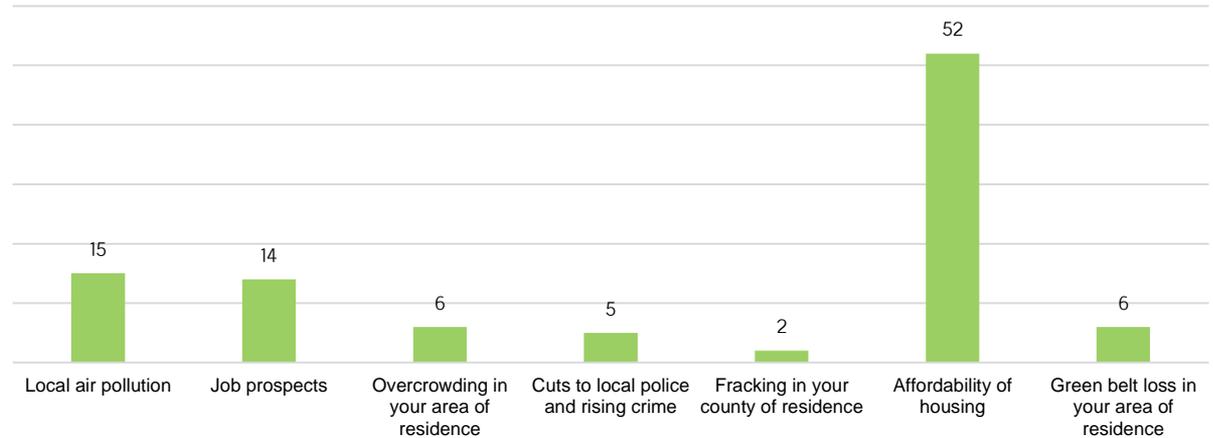


Figure 36: based on 682 and 736 responses  
Figure 37: 707 and 725 responses

## 4.4 Local problems and global issues (A)

Figure 38: Which of the following do you consider the single most serious problem affecting you?  
(Responses in percentage)



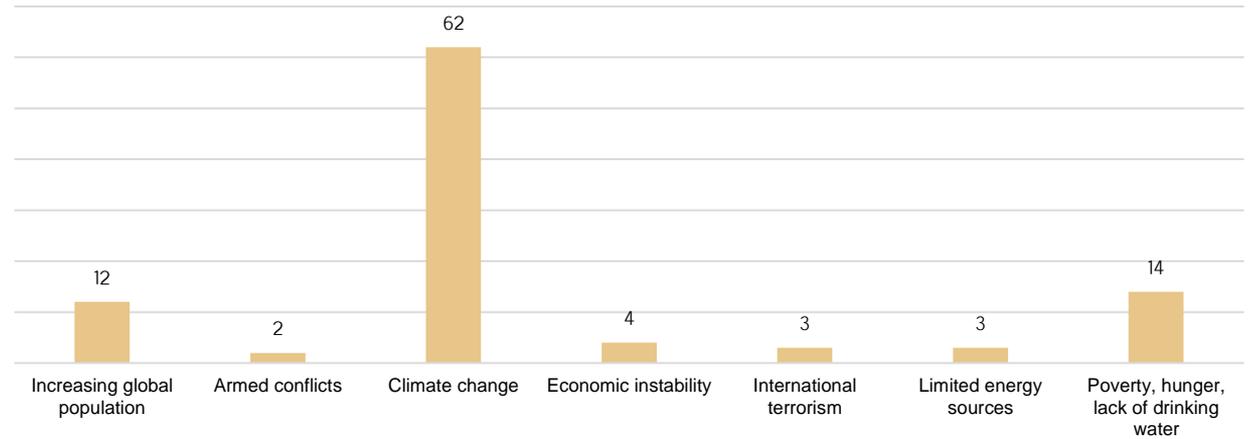
Over half of the students responding consider affordability of housing the single most serious problem affecting them. Local air pollution is regarded as a serious problem by 15% of respondents and job prospects by 14%.

Figure 38: based on 754 responses



## 4.4 Local problems and global issues (B)

Figure 39: Which of the following do you consider the single most serious problem facing the world?  
(Responses in percentage)



Over 60% of respondents think that climate change is the single most serious problem facing the world. Poverty, hunger, and lack of drinking water is regarded as the most serious problem by 14% of respondents, and increasing global population by 12%.

Figure 39: based on 758 responses

## 4.5 Sustainability at Universities in the UK (A)



Figure 40: I believe that sustainability should be a key consideration for all universities in the UK.

95% of respondents think that sustainability should be a key consideration for all universities in the UK.

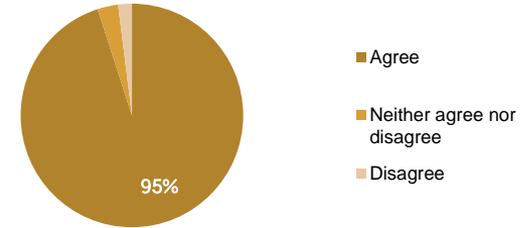
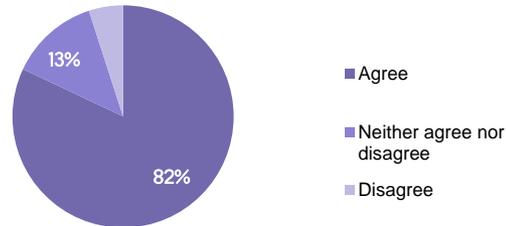


Figure 41: I believe good sustainability credentials at a University are important to make them an attractive place to study.

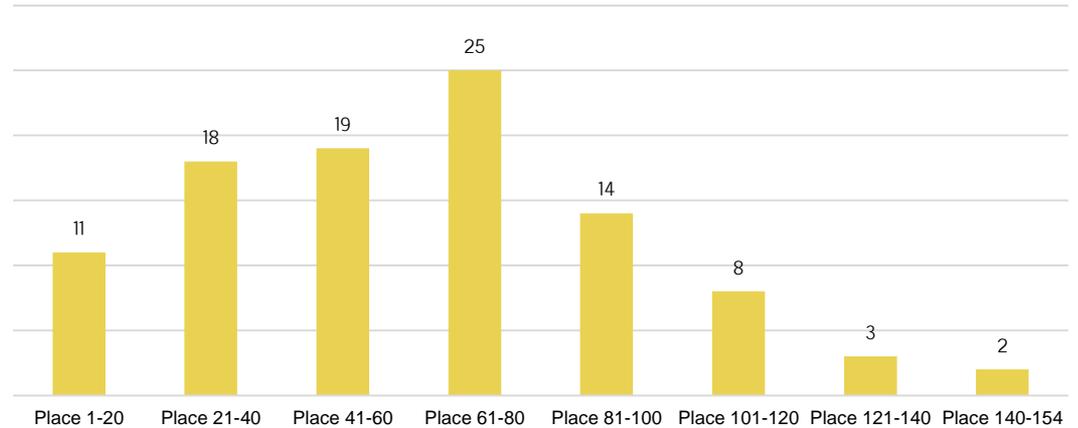


Similarly, over 80% of students responding agree that good sustainability credentials make a University a more attractive place to study.

Figure 40: based on 759 responses  
Figure 41: 759 responses

## 4.5 Sustainability at Universities in the UK (B)

Figure 42: Out of 154 Universities in the UK, I believe that in terms of sustainability, the University of Surrey ranks... (Responses in percentage)



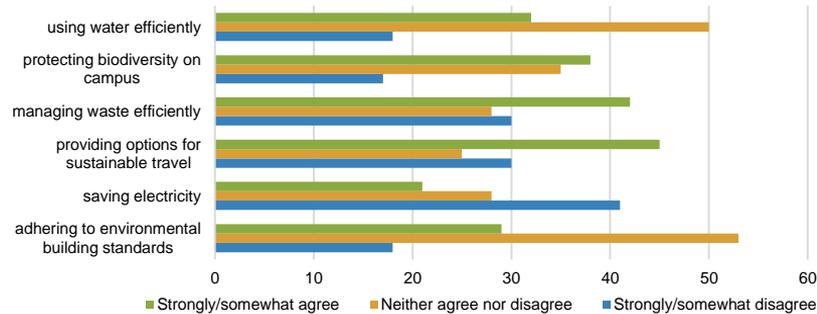
A quarter of respondents see the University of Surrey between place 61 and 80 compared to other UK universities in terms of sustainability performance. Around 20% put Surrey between place 41 and 60 and place 21 and 40. Approx. 15% believe that Surrey ranks between place 81 and 100.

Figure 42: based on 748 responses

## 4.6 Sustainability at the University of Surrey (A)

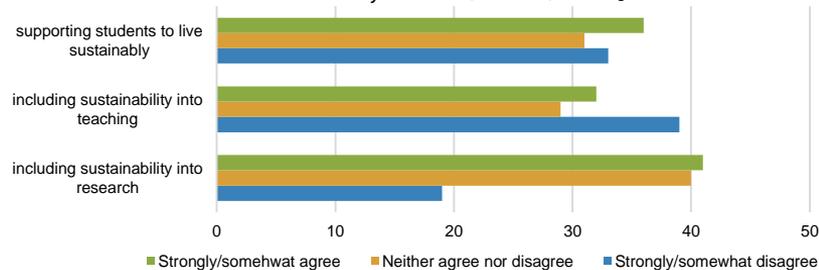


Figure 43: Operations - I believe that the University of Surrey is...  
(Responses in percentage)



Respondents hold very different opinions regarding Surrey's sustainability performance in operations. Almost half of the respondents believe that Surrey is providing options for sustainable travel. However, over 40% think that Surrey is not saving electricity.

Figure 44: Teaching & Research - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



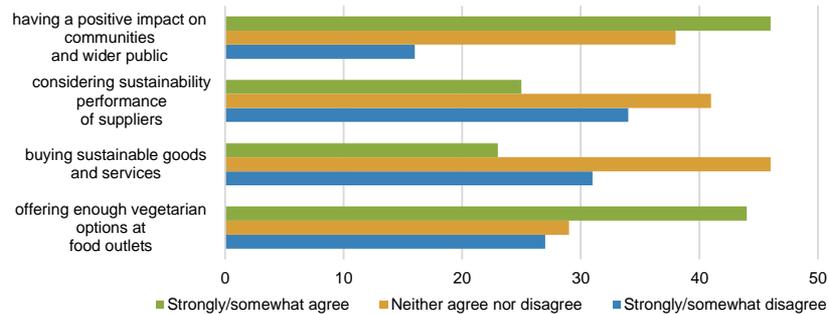
Regarding student engagement and sustainability in teaching, responses are relatively evenly distributed, with about 40% of respondents believing that Surrey is including sustainability into research.

Figure 43: based on an average of 723 responses  
Figure 44: average of 725 responses

## 4.6 Sustainability at the University of Surrey (B)

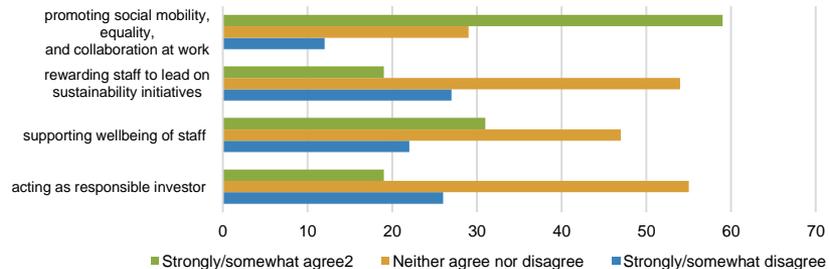


Figure 45: Community & Partnerships - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



Over 40% of respondents think that Surrey has a positive impact on communities and that there are enough vegetarian options at food outlets. Around a third believe that Surrey is not considering sustainability performance of suppliers nor buying sustainable goods.

Figure 46: Leadership - I believe that the University of Surrey is... (Responses in percentage)



Over half of respondents remain neutral on most of the questions regarding sustainability leadership. However, almost 60% think that Surrey is promoting social mobility and equality.

Figure 45: based on an average of 725 responses  
Figure 46: average of 725 responses

## 4.7 Comments and suggestions

Over 150 respondents wrote a comment at the end of the survey. The comments were analysed and grouped into five topics:

Figure 47: Topics mentioned in the open comment section

Waste	Energy	Engagement	Transport	Other
58%	20%	10%	6%	6%

Almost 60% of comments were about waste and recycling. Respondents were confused over the bin infrastructure, would like to see more food waste bins and the removal of disposable plastics from catering outlets and shops on campus.

A fifth of respondents commented on energy, particularly energy wastage from lights and equipment not being turned off over night.

A tenth of comments was on the lack of student engagement and information on the university's sustainability performance.

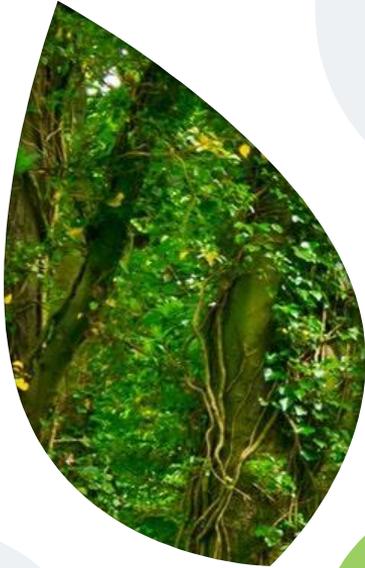
Over 5% of respondents commented on the lack of sustainable transport options, particularly pointing out problems with the current cycling infrastructure on, and between campuses.

Other topics mentioned included water use, food options at catering outlets, and responsible investment and divestment.

Figure 47: based on 154 comments



## 5. Conclusions



- Although responses from staff and students differ to some extent, both surveys show similar results. While the vast majority of respondents think that environmentally friendly behaviour is important, they do not believe that others feel the same way.
- The majority of respondents state that they try to reduce their energy consumption and waste production on campus, but they find it difficult to control their energy use, particularly when it comes to heating.
- While staff and students' concern over local issues vary, both groups perceive climate change as the single most serious concern facing the world.
- In the same line, 95% of staff and students agree that sustainability should be one of the key considerations of universities in the UK. Furthermore, over 80% of respondents say that good sustainability credentials make universities a more attractive place to work and study.
- Lastly, the survey shows that most respondents do not have a clear picture of the University's sustainability performance, and the comments and suggestions demonstrate that staff and student want more information on sustainability issues.

Any questions?

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