

PREP Survey Results, November 2022

This document summarizes the results of PREP: Psychological Response to Environmental Problems, an IRB-approved study conducted on undergraduate students at Boston University. The Excel file entitled “PREP_raw_data.xlsx,” also listed on this website (www.bu.edu/rccp), includes all of the data downloaded from the survey platform Qualtrics, which was used to create this report. This summary document was created by Anna Facciola, Principal Investigator and student researcher, and she can be reached at facciola@bu.edu.

Total participants: 125

Out of the following list, select the top 5 environmental problems that most worry you.

In order of most to least selected:

1. Climate change
2. Pollution
3. Public health issues
4. Deforestation
5. Sea-level rise
6. Water insecurity
7. Biodiversity loss
8. Natural resource depletion
9. Waste disposal
10. Overpopulation
11. Overharvesting/overfishing
12. Polar ice cap loss
13. Ocean acidification
14. Ozone layer depletion
15. Soil degradation

Answer the following on the scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “never” and 5 being “very often.”

1. How often do you hear about environmental problems on the news, social media, when talking with friends, coworkers, in classes, or through other means?
 - a. Mean: 4.15
 - b. SD: 0.77
2. Outside of required classwork, how often do you seek out information about environmental problems on your own?
 - a. Mean: 3.56
 - b. SD: 0.88

When you hear about, read about, and/or think about environmental problems, what is the extent to which you experience the following emotions? Rate your response on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all," and 5 being "intensely."

In order of most to least intense:

1. Frustrated
2. Angry
3. Scared
4. Sad
5. Pessimistic
6. Helpless
7. Hopeless
8. Guilty
9. Resigned
10. Alone
11. Isolated

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements about climate change on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

In order from most agreed-with to least agreed-with:

1. I turn off lights.
2. I recycle.
3. I try to reduce my behaviors that contribute to climate change.
4. I wish I behaved more sustainably.
5. I feel guilty if I waste energy.
6. I seek out information about climate change in the media.
7. I have noticed a change in a place that is important to me due to climate change.
8. I believe I can do something to help address the problem of climate change.
9. I know someone who has been directly affected by climate change.
10. I have been directly affected by climate change.
11. Thinking about climate change makes it difficult for me to concentrate.
12. I think, "why can't I handle climate change better?"
13. Thinking about climate change makes it difficult for me to sleep.
14. I find myself crying because of climate change.
15. My concerns about climate change make it hard for me to have fun with my family or friends.
16. I think, "why do I react to climate change this way?"
17. My concerns about climate change undermine my ability to work to my potential.
18. I go away by myself and think about why I feel this way about climate change.
19. My concerns about climate change interfere with my ability to get work or school assignments done.

20. I have nightmares about climate change.
21. My friends say I think about climate change too much.
22. I write down my thoughts about climate change and analyze them.
23. I feel uncomfortable when someone brings up climate change in conversation.

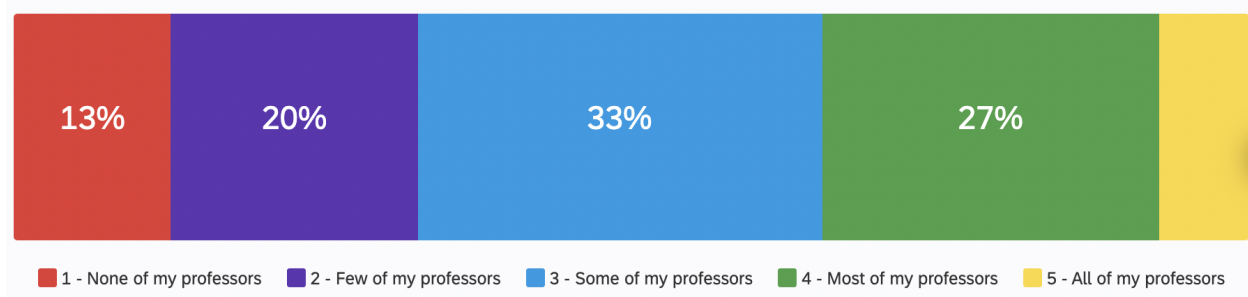
Participants who are E&E students (major or minor in E&E department): 49

Participants who had taken any class(es) in E&E department: 56

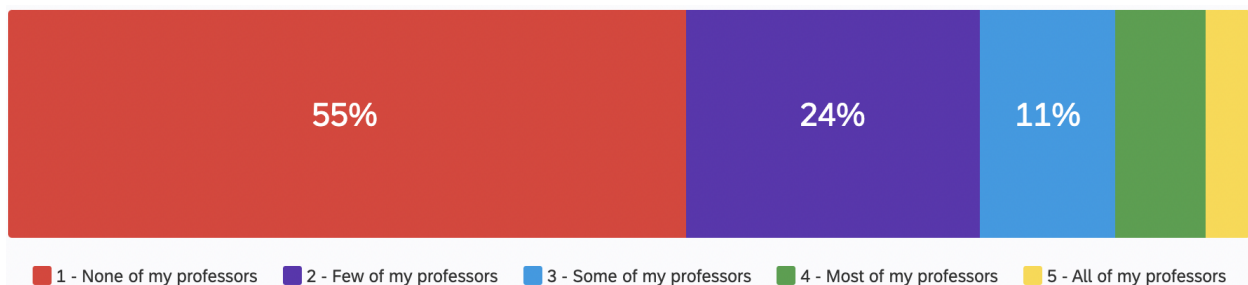
– Questions for only those who have taken any class(es) in the E&E department –

Rate your level of agreement with each following statement about your E&E (Earth & Environment) professors on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "none of my professors" and 5 being "all of my professors."

1. My professors in my E&E classes help me psychologically process the information that I receive about environmental problems.



2. My professors give content warnings before discussing sensitive material related to environmental problems.

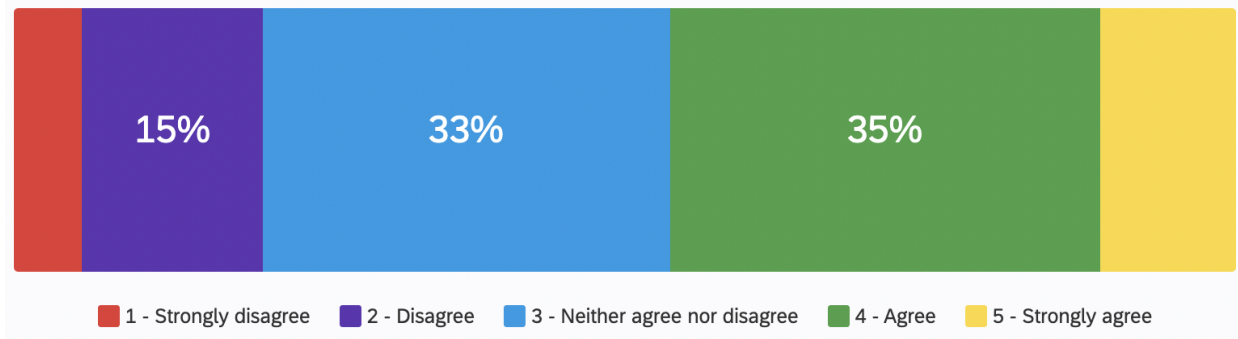


3. I have discussed the mental health impacts of studying the environment with an E&E professor.

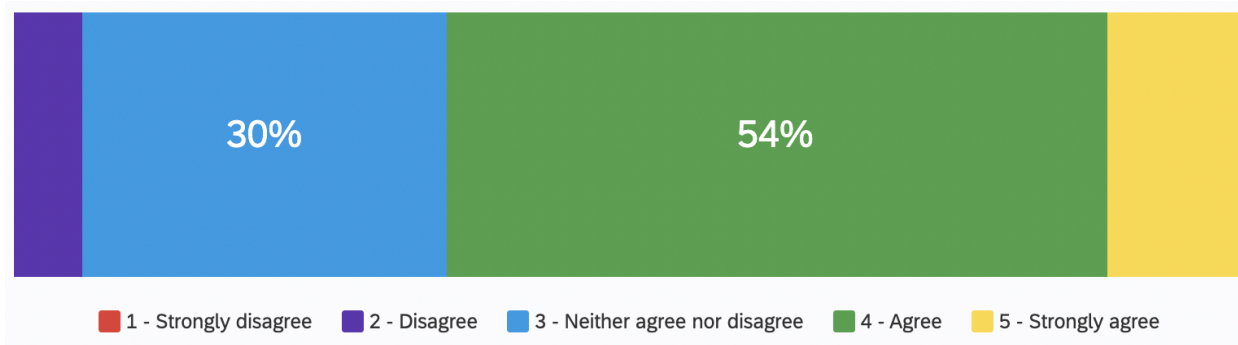


Rate your level of agreement with each following statement on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.”

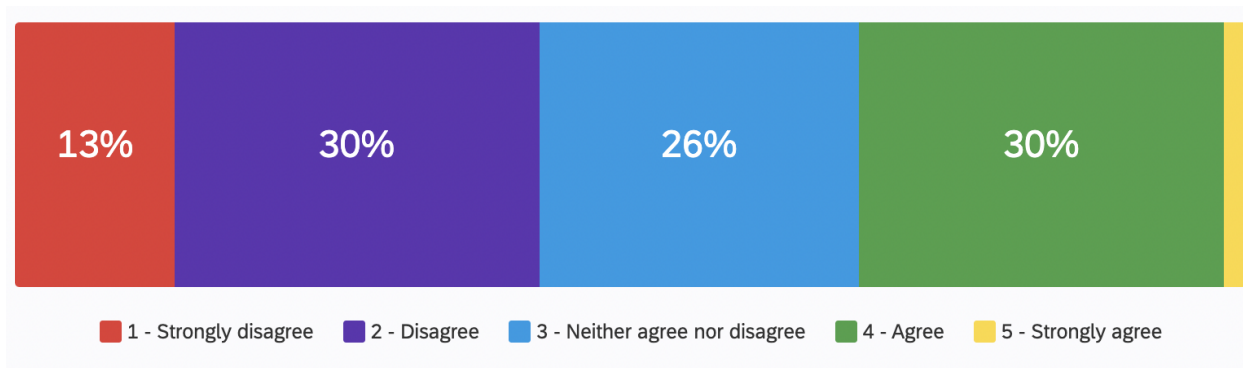
1. I possess the necessary tools and learning materials to psychologically process the information given to me in my E&E classes.



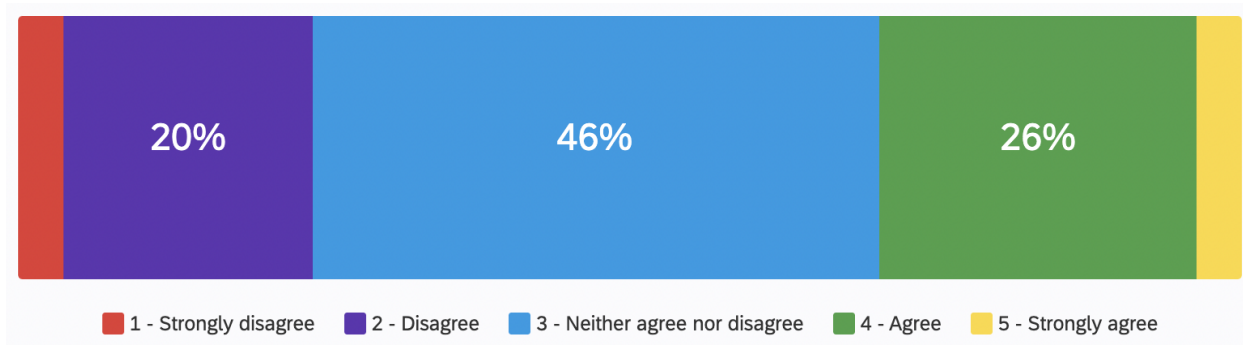
2. My peers in my E&E classes feel similar to me about my stresses over environmental problems.



3. I think I am more at risk for mental illness related to environmental problems than my peers who have never taken a class in the E&E department.



4. Studying/taking classes in E&E helps me with my mental struggles related to environmental problems.



– Back to all participants –

Answer the following.

1. Have you sought out support on campus for mental health struggles specifically related to environmental problems?

No: 95.15%

Maybe/I don't know: 2.91%

Yes: 1.94%

2. Does your campus provide support for mental health struggles related to environmental problems through behavioral healthcare such as therapy?

No: 20.39%

Maybe/I don't know: 70.87%

Yes: 8.74%

3. Do you see a therapist off BU campus with whom you have discussed environmental problems?

No: 87.38%

Maybe/I don't know: 3.88%

Yes: 8.74%

4. Have you heard of “climate stress therapy”?

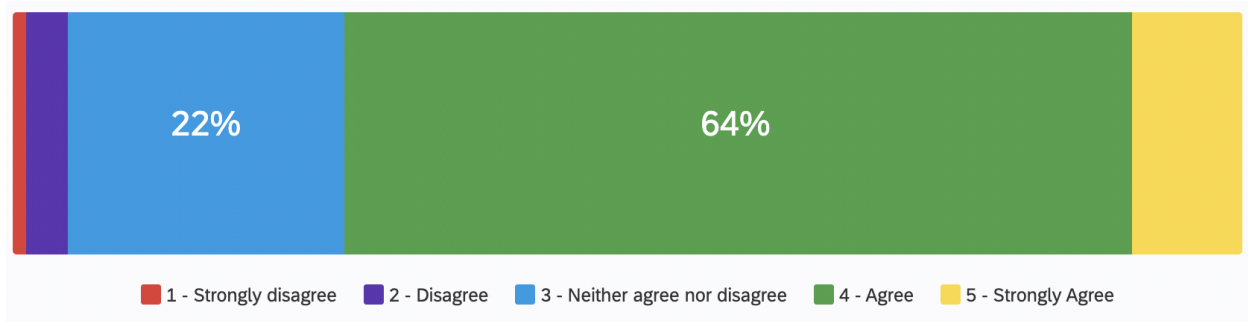
No: 83.50%

Maybe/I don't know: 5.83%

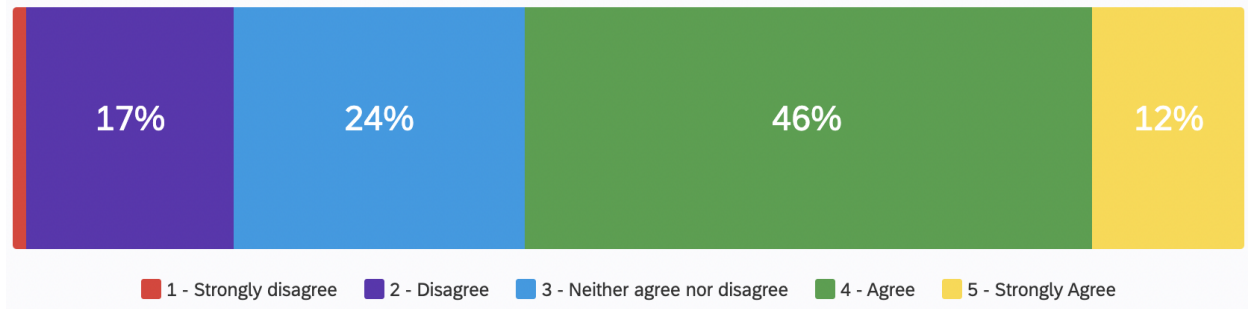
Yes: 10.68%

Rate your level of agreement with each following statement on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "strongly disagree," and 5 being "strongly agree."

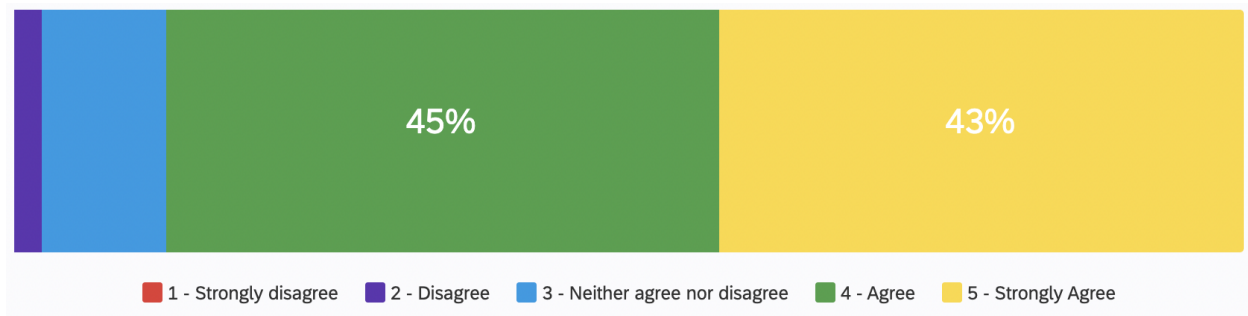
1. I take action against environmental problems.



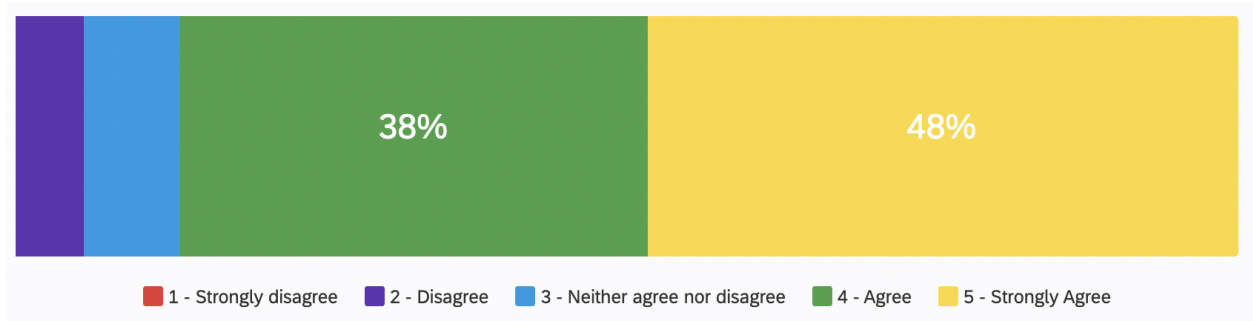
2. Taking action against environmental problems helps me combat my stress and worries.



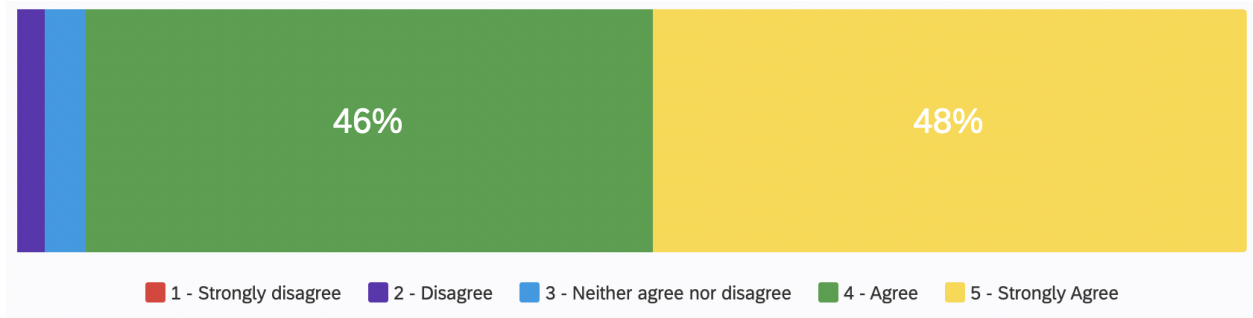
3. I feel connected to nature.



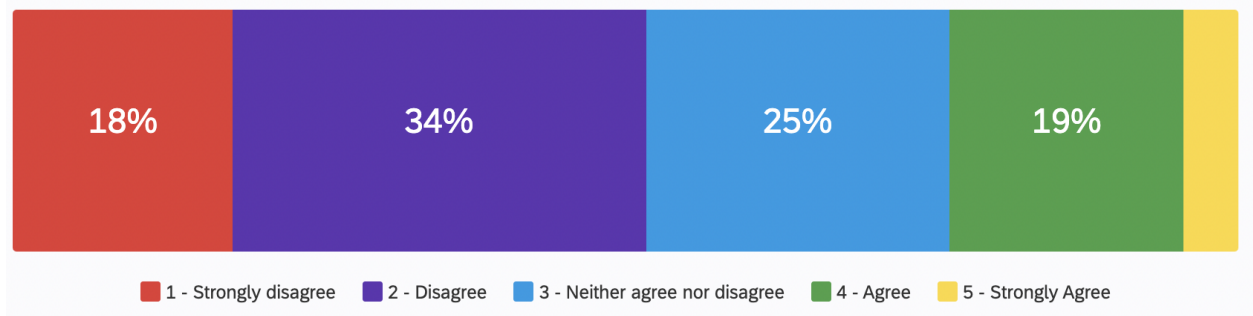
4. Experiencing nature helps me combat my stress and worries.



5. I wish I did more to take action against environmental problems.



6. My mental health hinders my ability to take action against environmental problems.



Free Response Questions

—- *What do you personally do to take action against environmental problems?* —-

Recycle, try to use less energy, walk more

I go to rallies and I am sustainable

Recycle, stay informed, take the environment into consideration when voting

I recycle and try not to waste energy/food

shop for more sustainable/reusable items instead of single use, thrift/avoid fast fashion, compost, turn off lights when I leave a room, use a reusable water bottle, use reusable utensils

Energy, transportation

I don't think I have much power, but I try to live sustainable and I educate others about environmental problems.

attending climate protests, informing others about personal actions they can take

Recycle, turning off lights, walking or using public transit, buying items secondhand

recycle, limit consumption, reduce energy

recycle and reuse things.

Pescatarianism

recycle, walk when possible, use reusable shopping bags, conserve water and electricity

Protesting, when time stay up to date on actions going on, politics

be more sustainable, eat less beef, buy local produce, recycle, thrift when i can

Talking about it with friends, doing school projects based on environmental issues, learning about environmental issues

Try to recycle and educate myself, advocate and vote for political candidates that support governmental actions to combat climate change

Anything I can on a personal level; compost, recycle, save water, reuse things, take public transportation

Buy second-hand at least 50% of the time, recycle, I don't own a car (and aim to never do so), prioritize walking/taking the train or bus over Ubering, turn off lights and unused appliances, never shop from Shein

Recycle, try not to be wasteful

Self sustainability and supporting eco-conscious organizations

Taking individual action and back initiatives which take broader initiative in combating climate problems

volunteering in the boston community, composting, research, talking with my community

Participate in research; participate in science communication; advocate within my circles for sustainable change; sustainable consumerism; voting; writing to my representatives

Personally I try to make as many zero-waste swaps and decisions in my lifestyle to reduce my personal waste. I also participate in environmentally related service and try to educate myself on current environmental problems as best I can.

I do everything I can reasonably do. I recycle, take short showers, turn off lights. I read about sustainable practices and plan to implement them when I am more able to, like having a biodiverse lawn/backyard when I own my own home.

I try to tell people of my own experiences in hope of them understanding that this is an issue that impacts those we care about.

volunteer

I try to be as waste/ plastic free as possible

Limit my waste production

Currently an intern with the U.S. Forest Service in Colorado researching water use in the face of climate change. Generally trying to inform my friends about environmental issues so they're more conscious of their habits.

advocacy, learning, zero-waste, walk everywhere in the city, recycling/energy use

i don't eat meat and eat limited dairy, i try to recycle

Pursuing a career in environment, caring for and appreciating nature by not polluting, eating in season, walking/taking public transportation, buying less and reusing more

managing personal waste, no/few SUPs, cutting energy use in my home, taking public transport/bike/train when I can, studying/devoting my career to climate change

I follow a plant based diet, drive and take airplanes minimally, reduce my waste and plastic use as much as possible, try to consume consciously (i.e. no fast fashion, buying second hand, making sure my items have sustainable end-of-life), do standard environmentally-conscious behavior in the home (i.e turning off electronics/lights/appliances when not actively in use, taking shorter showers, doing larger loads of laundry, etc).

Participate in cleanups, consciously turning off electrical outlets or unplugging things, studying it for school to make a career out of climate change prevention.

Reducing my carbon footprint, do not use Amazon unless absolutely necessary

On an individual level, I am a member of epsilon eta, our environmental fraternity on campus. I do service work through them and I've become much more involved in the environmental justice community. On a bigger level, my major allows me to become educated about environmental issues. Hopefully I will go on to influence policy action through my degree.

I try to apply everything I learn in my daily life. I also try to keep up to date with the information and share my knowledge with anyone who wants to hear. I also try to support people and organizations trying to solve the issue.

Being mindful about consumption and consuming less, vegetarian, take public transportation, recycle, thrift clothes

Pursue a degree in Earth and Environment

donating to front-line water protectors, attending a sustainability/anti-racist symposium and getting a degree in EE is "action" but not direct...

I assist in research in long term ecological variations and I try to lower my carbon footprint

Composting, taking public transit, thrifting, refilling my home products instead of purchasing new containers, taking part in community solar

Recycle, reduce my energy

The internships and co-curriculars I participate in take action against environmental problems

small sustainable actions, voting

educate myself, limit waste (purchase reusable items to the best of my ability)

I have become vegetarian and have encouraged my family to recycle and compost. I have attended a few protests regarding climate activism as well. I know these are small steps but these are some of the changes I have made since beginning to worry about climate change.

Volunteering in local initiatives i.e. beach cleanups, awareness campaigning, etc.

Recycle, clean up trash, monitor/limit energy usage

Buy natural, low waste products, that I reuse or recycle.

I'm vegetarian, and I reduce my waste as much as possible

vote, reduce consumption, buy sustainable products

Teach friends and family how to recycle correctly, keep up with climate news, use reusable items often (could probably do that more though)

I try to buy sustainably, recycle, limit food waste, & turn off the lights

— *Is there anything you wish you felt like doing, but don't?* —

compost

no

Composting

I feel powerless against stopping it, I feel like the people in power and the wealthy are the biggest culprits so at an individual level I don't think anything I do will actually help.

Zero waste

compost - I do at home but it is harder in college

I wish I were more knowledgeable about environmental policy and more regularly read up on what's happening/what action opportunities (calling representatives, signing petitions, etc) are available.

Meal planning to waste less food, composting, using less single use plastic

sorting my trash thoroughly like how people in Asia do

only buy local/organic food (sometimes too expensive)

I wish I had more time to do more

thrifting more of my clothes, becoming vegetarian

Protesting, writing letters, more direct action

Being more sustainable in my every day life, like by cutting down the amount of plastic I use

Composting, sewing my own clothing

I wish I felt like I had more control over the issue. At the end of the day even if every normal person behaved normally, the big companies would still produce enough waste to continue harming the environment

I wish I would execute more on my urges to help out more, but I don't know how/don't have the resources or time.

more upfront activism.

I wish I could switch to more energy efficient appliances, lighting, etc., but I cannot because I live in an on campus apartment. I additionally wish I was more connected to my local community and talking about the environmental issues that affect them, rather than talking about environmental issues on a global scale. Doing so can make me feel a bit removed from the problems at hand.

I wish I didn't have to use a car to get around back home.

I want to do more about climate change. Everyday we hear that it is a major problem, but it becomes difficult to find resources where students can join and be a part of it.

wish there were more protests to take part in near me

I want to be as sustainable as possible in every way, but it's difficult

Switch to more sustainable energy sources

When I'm home I have a car and definitely drive too much. Granted I live in a rural area but I could still do better in this regard.

I'm not currently doing it but I'm going to law school for international environmental law & hope to work with NGOs and the UN to promote environmental protection worldwide & across national borders.

so, so much

I wish I could go plastic-free and eat seasonally/locally

I wish I was better at reducing waste. Mostly, a lot of the things I wish I was doing are things in which I feel structures are against me (for example, driving everywhere when I am not in Boston because there is no public transportation, taking airplanes instead of trains when outside of New England, buying food in a lot of packaging).

Starting research or climate activism earlier.

Going vegetarian

I wish that I didn't generate as much waste as I do. As someone who lives on campus, I move at the beginning and end of every summer, and I find myself throwing out a lot of things due to the moving process. I wish that BU had a better alternative for students to store items over the summer or even offer some kind of reasonably priced summer housing in the same apartment that I live in during the school year.

I want to be more vocal about environmental issues like posting information on social media.

I would like to compost ideally but it is hard in an urban environment with a small freezer (can't store many food scraps)

Participation in more impactful climate protests

I wish I could attend community organized protests and be involved in the implementation of sustainable infrastructures in my community

Not off the top of my head

Volunteer, field experience

I wish I was more strict with my parents about their environmentally harmful habits

Using less plastic and reusable hygiene products

I wish I did more in my personal life to combat climate change

By clothes more sustainably(either thrift or purchase from sustainable resource companies)

I wish I was more active in protests or just speaking out in general. I know there isn't much I can change about this but I wish my voice could reach a wider audience or just people who have vastly different opinions than me.

Sometimes it feels like individual actions don't make a difference, so I wish individual actions felt less futile.

vegan

Driving less

I wish I could buy less plastic, but alternatives are so expensive.

Composting

protest

I really wish I had the energy to join people in protesting big fossil fuel companies and politicians and holding them accountable

protesting & being significantly more sustainable than I am capable of at this point in my life
