



ASHOKA

Report produced by



FROM CONNECTION TO ACTION

What drives young people
to care for nature?

Global Youth
Survey

80+
countries

1,300+
respondents



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WHERE THIS EFFORT CAME FROM

A simple question:

How do young people's relationships with nature shape wellbeing and action?

A growing gap:

Disconnection from nature is rising, alongside climate and wellbeing crises

A catalytic moment:

Ashoka Fellows (NYC Climate Week 2024) called for better measures

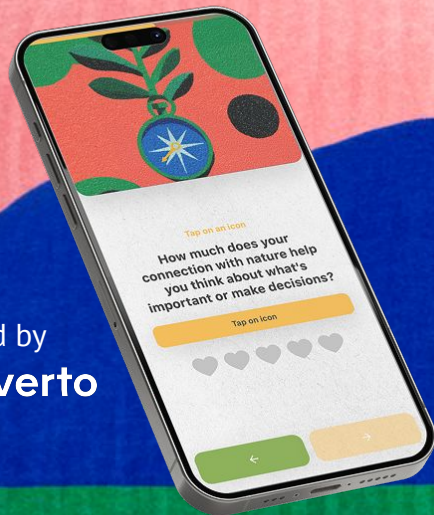
The response:

A global, youth-powered survey + data commons to measure **connection** → **agency** → **wellbeing**

CONCEIVED **SEPT 2024** → DESIGNED **EARLY 2025** → LAUNCHED **AUG 2025**

THE SURVEY

#YouAreNature



Powered by
 playverto

Global reach

3,000

players

1,300

Full responses

80

countries

400+

locations

Who participated?

Primarily ages 13-17.

What we measured:

- Competencies • Wellbeing
- Social context • Action



One of the first datasets linking:

CONNECTION > AGENCY > ACTION > WELLBEING

THE BIG REFRAME

This is not a motivation problem.
It's a design problem.

Young people are already connected,
but not fully enabled to act.



48.4%

Very
connected to
nature



26.6%

Connected to
nature

THE CORE FINDING

Action follows capability.

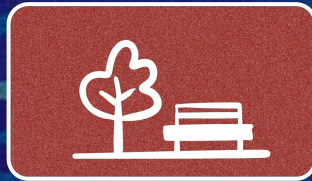
Ecological competencies:

CONFIDENCE . CURIOSITY . RESPONSIBILITY

are the **strongest driver of action, everywhere,**
and is consistent across all area types.



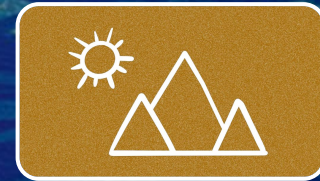
Urban



Rural



Highly built



Nature-rich

THE CONSTRAINT REALITY

They don't lack motivation, they lack time and freedom.

What stops you
from spending
more time in nature?

Top five barriers



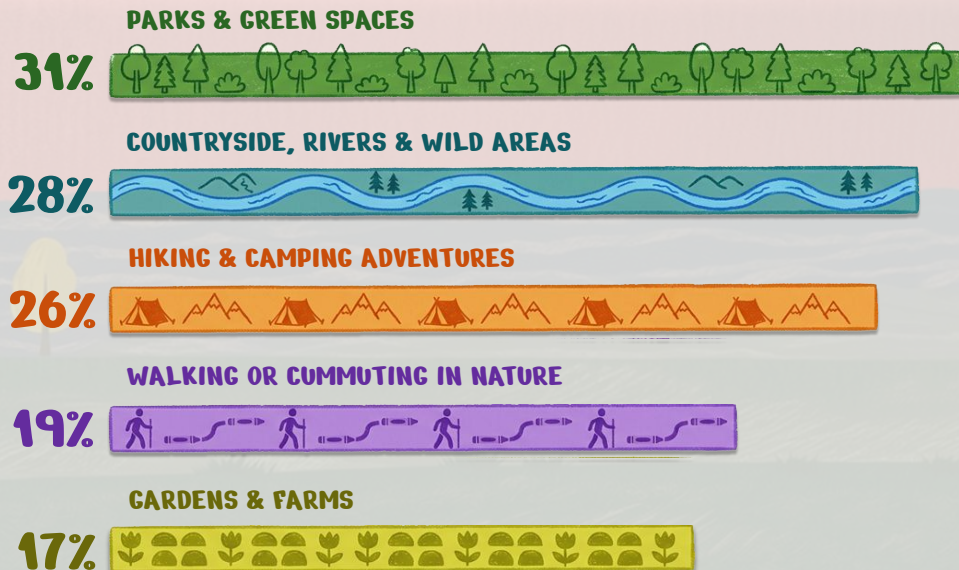
WHERE NATURE HAPPENS

Nature is everywhere, everyday - not remote.

Most connection happens in parks, nearby green spaces and daily environments.

Where do young people
feel connected to nature?

Top five



Local, accessible nature =
highest leverage point

THE WELLBEING LINK (WHO-5)

**Feeling capable matters more
than feeling good.**

Nature supports wellbeing, bringing
calm, confidence and hope.

The **WHO-5** is a widely used, validated measure of wellbeing that captures how often people feel positive emotions like energy, calm, and happiness. We used it to understand overall wellbeing levels and test how strongly wellbeing relates to young people's connection to nature and their actions.

 **Wellbeing helps, but
it isn't the main driver**



* Answered 'very' and
'often' combined

THE SOCIAL REALITY

Support isn't the lever we thought it was.

Perceived encouragement is inconsistent,
and a weak predictor of action.



**Support helps, but doesn't
substitute for agency.**



THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

Context changes intensity, not the core pattern; urban vs rural differences matter.

We observed that where there are competencies, there is action.



THE URBAN OPPORTUNITY

Cities with nearby nature are the **sweet spot**; this area has the strongest wellbeing to action link.

40%

Cities with parks had the largest share of youth, when asked how to describe the area where they live.



Design for access +
autonomy = biggest gains

THE SCHOOL OPPORTUNITY

School is often where nature connection disappears, and where it could rebound the fastest.

18% say
'too much
homework'

28% say 'not
enough free time'

46%

Combined say the top
2 barriers for taking
environmental action is
'not enough free time'
(28%) and 'too much
homework' (18%)



The constraint is
opportunity, not
motivation



WHAT ACTUALLY MOVES BEHAVIOUR

Action equals:

CAPABILITY

X

CURIOSITY

X

RESPONSIBILITY

Skills
Confidence
Agency

Time
Access
Safety

Freedom to act

21.3%

Say they take
some form of
climate action
daily



Systems over-invest in awareness,
yet under invest in these points

WHAT WE CAN (AND CAN'T) EXPLAIN

We can explain about half the story.

Model explains ~42–50% of action.

The rest is structural:

- Time
- Access
- Safety
- School context
- Life conditions



Environment determines
whether agency can be used



THE STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY

Build agency. Remove friction. Localize nature.



Invest in
competencies
(core lever)



Free up time +
support
independence



Design for
everyday nature
access



Create visible
pathways for
action



**YOUNG
PEOPLE
ARE
READY.
SOLUTIONS
EXIST.
SYSTEMS
NEED TO
CATCH UP.**



FROM INSIGHT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

What gets measured gets acted on.

Make connection to nature measurable, and systems will have to respond.

A regular, global effort like this can:

Spotlight what works

Where young people tell us where they are actually able to take meaningful action

Reveal what's broken

Time, access and independence constraints

Compare across places

Cities, schools and systems side by side

Hold systems accountable

Track progress on access, agency & wellbeing

 **Turn youth experience into decision making power**

SPECIAL THANKS

The initial group of Ashoka Fellows calling for a global assessment: Sharon Danks, Lais Fluery, Joaquin Leguia, Lenore Skenazy, Michael Sani, and Paula Daniels,

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THANK YOU

For a deep dive into the full dataset, click [here](#).

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