



2020 MIT Undergraduate Sustainability Survey: Data Report

*MIT Undergraduate Association
Committee on Sustainability*

Compiled by 2021 IAP Survey Analysis Group

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Guidelines for Data Use

The purpose of this report is to provide data for sustainability stakeholders to use in relevant efforts. However, we ask that groups adhere to the following guidelines when planning to use data from the survey.

- Please email ua-sustainability-survey@mit.edu if you are planning on using the data, so that UA Sustainability can keep a running tally on when, where, and how this report was used.
- Please also correctly cite this report as your data source. An example of a possible citation: “2020 MIT Undergraduate Sustainability Survey: Data Report, UA Committee on Sustainability”
- Please credit any figures directly taken from the report with appropriate image credits



Executive Summary

Over the course of the Fall 2020 term, members of UA Sustainability worked to prepare this all-undergraduate sustainability survey, in collaboration with other groups on campus that included, but were not limited to, the MIT Office of Sustainability, Environmental Solutions Initiative, and the Student Sustainability Coalition. The survey was designed to get a clearer idea of which sustainability-related issues MIT undergraduates know and care about, so as to better inform the work of UA Sustain and other student sustainability groups going forward. Questions covered 6 main topics: campus community, campus sustainability, external relations, fossil fuel divestment and the Climate Action Plan, career choices, personal sustainability.

The survey was open for 2 weeks and received 934 responses (approx. 21.5% of undergraduates), which were cleaned and analyzed by UA Sustain members over IAP 2021. Of these, the largest response rate was from the Class of 2024 (freshmen) and the most common major was Course 6 (Computer Science).

Campus Community

This section was designed to understand how much respondents know and are involved in existing MIT Sustainability groups. The vast majority of respondents knew about Terrascope and MITOS, but only about half knew about ESI. With student-led groups, more than half of respondents knew about UA Sustain and MIT Divest. Relatively high knowledge of and participation in MIT Divest and Energy Club indicates that respondents are particularly active on the topic of energy. In general, respondent awareness of and participation in groups were directly correlated. Total membership of student-led groups was found to be higher than total membership of MIT-led groups.

Campus Sustainability

The purpose of this section was to measure respondent interest in different areas of Institutional sustainability, as well as the popularity of MIT sustainability policies. Most respondents said they have searched for information on MIT's fossil fuel investments and that they think it should be a priority. More than half of respondents also said waste minimization should be a priority, though just over a third had actually searched for information on the topic. Just under half of respondents also said MIT should prioritize energy usage and sustainability research. Popular topics for student research also included MIT's sustainability education opportunities and sustainability-related research.

External Relations, Divestment, and CAP



This section was designed to gauge what respondents want MIT's relationship with external stakeholders to be. Almost all respondents support MIT acting in external politics, but most were unsure about how successfully MIT has worked with the government and industry to accelerate climate action, which was a goal from the 2015 CAP. While respondents believe that MIT has significantly contributed to climate research and adequately provided sustainability educational opportunities, they were also uncertain about MIT effectively reducing its own energy-related carbon emissions. Approximately 4 out of every 5 respondents stated they care about MIT's relationship with fossil fuel companies and support divestment; about 10% said they were unsure about divestment and only 6% disagreed. Finally, while many respondents stated they had researched and formed strong opinions on fossil fuel divestment, less than half were invested in providing input on the Climate Action Plan.

Career Choices

Here, we aimed to understand how sustainability factors into respondents' career planning and education. While over half of respondents have attended a talk/event related to sustainability, only a quarter of respondents have taken a sustainability-related class. Most said sustainability was not a factor in their choice of major, but that it was a factor in their career planning.

Personal Sustainability

In this section, the survey measured how respondents practice sustainability in their day-to-day lives and what obstacles they encounter in doing so. Personal day-to-day actions (changing one's own behavior) were more popular than engaging in sustainability via careers or advocacy. While many respondents felt time, effort, finances were obstacles to their engaging in sustainability, the most prominently noted obstacle was a lack of knowledge. Nonetheless, 4 in 5 respondents said they practice sustainability daily, with half saying they aim to reduce energy use, water use, material consumption, and waste generation. Most respondents did not feel living on campus significantly affected their day-to-day sustainability.

Open-Ended Questions

The survey also included a section of two optional open-ended questions, which about one third of respondents chose to answer. Many people commented that they wanted more accessible sustainable alternatives and systems on campus. Respondents also frequently requested more transparency and data related to MIT's sustainability involvement and impact. Some respondents also commented on their desire for more information on options for sustainability involvement in careers, research, and education. Finally, respondents were most interested in learning more specifics about MIT's fossil fuel divestments, waste minimization efforts, and energy use.



Conclusions

Across the sections, there were a few main themes supported by our data. First, respondents care significantly about the energy aspect of sustainability. This was evidenced by significant participation in MIT Divest and Energy Club, day-to-day concern with reducing energy consumption, significant interest in MIT's relationship with fossil fuel companies, and strong support for fossil fuel divestment.

Another recurring theme is that respondents feel MIT does a good job on providing opportunities for sustainability education and furthering climate research. Respondents frequently seek out information on these topics, despite sustainability not playing a significant role in shaping the careers and class schedules of most. However, many respondents expressed a desire for these opportunities to be more accessible and publicized.

Finally, while respondents feel MIT has adequately engaged in sustainability from an education and research perspective, respondents felt strongly that MIT should further engage in sustainability and climate action as they relate to government and industry. Responses indicate that respondents are aware that sustainability and climate actions are institutional and systemic issues, and while they do care about their own careers and day-to-day decisions, they also care about what MIT can do to further climate action and sustainability from an institutional perspective, including in waste reduction strategies.

UA Sustainability hopes that these findings will help MIT administrators, offices, and student groups engage with students on the topic of sustainability. UA Sustain intends to carry out further analysis of this data over the Spring 2021 term, and welcomes any questions, feedback, or requests for collaboration, which can be directed to ua-sustainability-survey@mit.edu.



General Information

Purpose

The UA Committee on Sustainability aims to be a leading force in sustainability, spread environmental awareness, and inspire community action. In order to better understand undergraduate opinions on relevant sustainability topics, the Committee decided to create this survey. By allowing us to understand what students demand and want in institutional engagement with sustainability goals, the results can also inform the MIT Climate Action Plan (CAP) and other student sustainability organizations.

Methodology

The 2020 Undergrad Sustainability Survey was written during fall 2020 by members of UA Sustain, with input from MIT Institutional Research and other student-led sustainability organizations, including SSC member organization (MIT Divest¹, MIT Sustainable Energy Alliance², MIT Water Club³). Other offices that contributed feedback included MIT Office of Sustainability (MITOS), the Environmental Solution Initiative (ESI), and the Senior Advisor to the Office of the Vice President for Research. The survey questions were also loosely based on the 2016 UA Sustainability survey, with adjustments to reflect the changes of the last 4 years and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

UA Sustain offered students incentives to take the survey, inspired by previous MIT survey initiatives⁴ and based on what the Committee believed would effectively engage undergraduates. Participants were given the option to enter a raffle for 1 of 5 prizes. Furthermore, UA Sustain pledged \$1 of donation to a nonprofit of the participant's choice (6 options and an "other verified charity" box were available). The survey raised a total of \$729 for charity.

The survey was open for a period of two weeks, from November 29th to December 13th, 2020. Distribution was done through the undergrads@ email list, which contains all undergraduates at MIT. Distribution was also done informally through messaging to SSC member organizations to share with their members, on social media (via Instagram stories and other mediums), the ESI weekly newsletter, and MIT community group chats. Hosted on Qualtrics with the MIT enterprise license, the survey received a total of 934 responses, representing approx. 21.5% of the undergraduate student body (there are 4,361 undergraduates in the 2020-2021 academic year). Please note that not all questions had 934 responses, so the percentages listed in the analysis reflect the percent of respondents to question rather than total survey participants.

¹ <https://www.mit-divest.com/>

² <https://www.mitsea.org/>

³ <http://mitwater.org/>

⁴ UA Survey on COVID-19, SSC Survey on Reusable Utensils Fall 2020



After the survey closed, a data analysis working group was formed based on interested students in UA Sustainability. The working group spent time over IAP 2021 analyzing data and preparing this report, with some input and suggestions from MIT Institutional Research.

It is our hope that surveys like these are conducted periodically in the future to gauge the attitudes and thoughts of the broader undergraduate population with respect to sustainability.

Respondents

The survey garnered a total of 934 respondents. Out of these, 817 (87.5%) included an email, of which 24 listed an email not ending in @mit.edu (using Gmail, Yahoo, or other such emails). All responses except for 2 respondents who listed an .edu email for a different school, are included in the analysis, bringing our respondents total to 932. This decision is explained below.

Analysis found that including the 141 responses which did not list an MIT email affected the distribution of the results by less than 1% for each question. In addition, the survey was specifically advertised to MIT undergraduates and the prize eligibility was based on providing an email, so we have little reason to believe that many of these 141 non-MIT-email respondents are not MIT undergraduates. As such, the 141 responses lacking an email were also included in the analysis.

There is a potential for bias in terms of responses, as students who were already interested in sustainability may have been more likely to respond to the survey. We are aware of this bias and thus have limited our analysis to only the scope of survey respondents, and have avoided extrapolating results to the entire MIT student body. We are planning on doing additional analysis of bias in the future.

Respondents By Class Year

Out of the 839 people who provided their class year, the highest number was of first years (33.0%), followed by juniors (23.6%), sophomores (22.3%) and seniors (19.2%). A small portion of the responses (1.9%) answered "other", which can include super-seniors and those who do not identify with a class year (more common due to Covid-19 and students choosing to take leaves of absence).

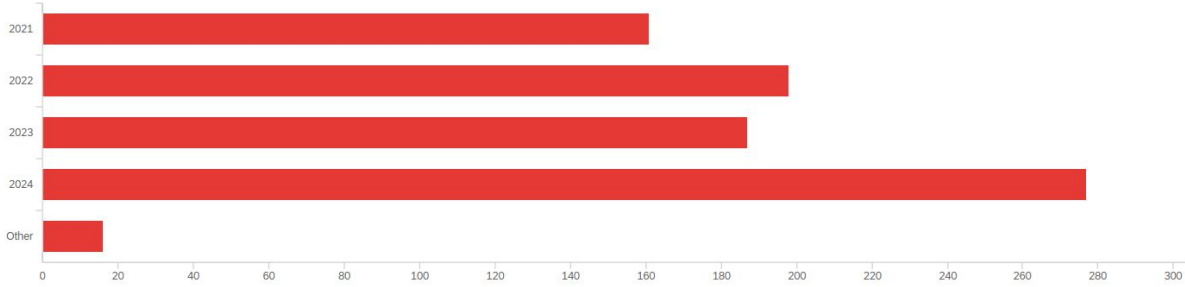


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondent Class Years

Respondents By Major

Out of the 780 people who provided their major, the largest proportion was Course 6, with 30.0% of respondents listing some form of the major (this includes 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-7, 6-9 and 6-14.). This was followed by Course 2 (10.7%), then undeclared students (8.8%) (who are mostly freshmen), and Course 18 (7.2%)

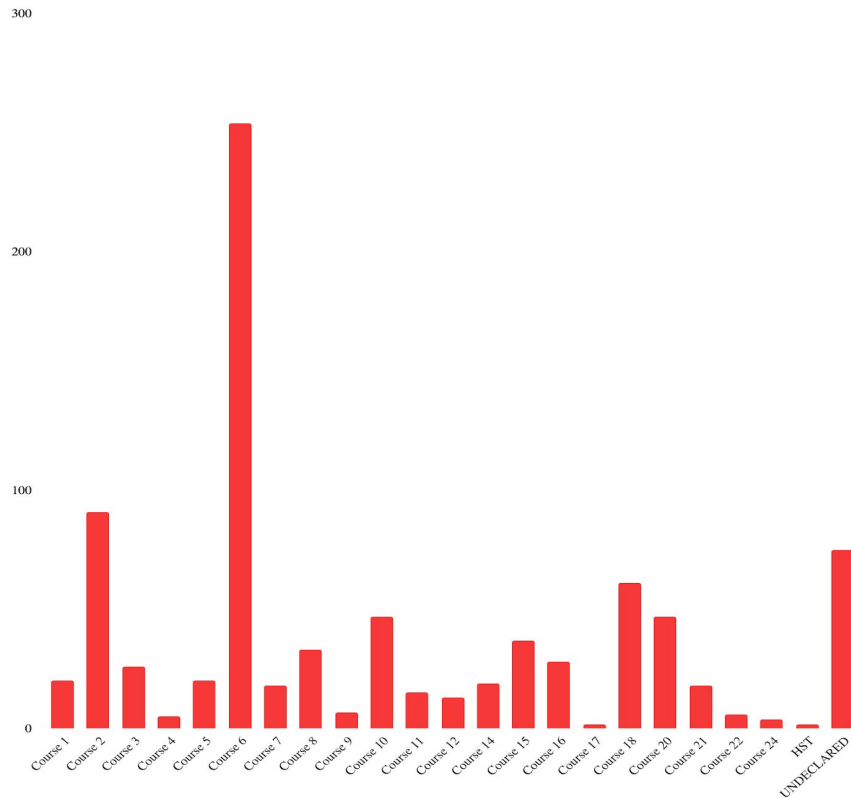


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondent Majors



Respondents By Minor

Out of the 265 people who responded to this question, the largest number was of course 6 with 9.5%. Other notably large minors included course 14 with 8.7%, Energy Studies with 8.3%, Global Languages (21G) with 7.9% and course 15 and Course 18 with 5.5% each. About 6.7% people minored in environment and sustainability.

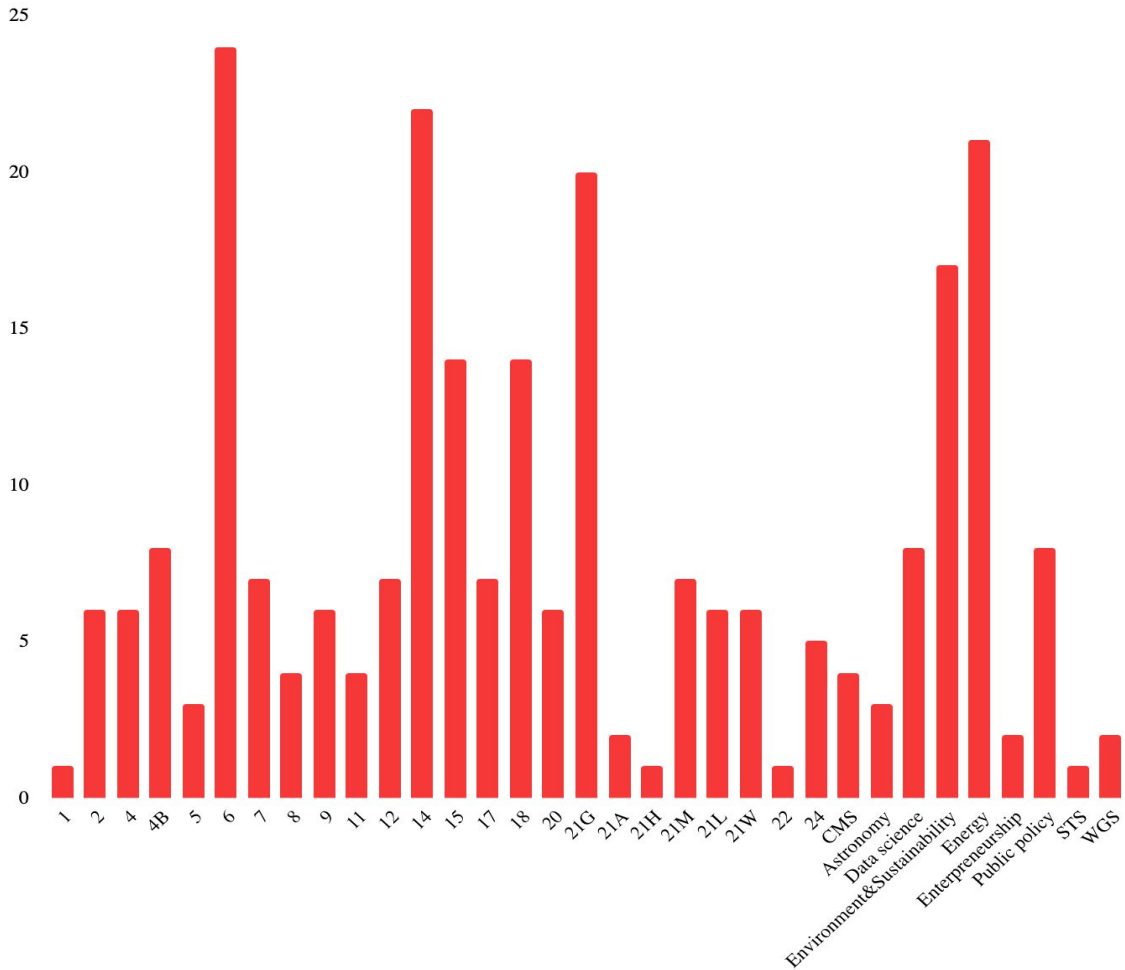


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondent Minors



Survey Questions

Campus Community

Purpose

The purpose of this section was to gauge undergraduates' knowledge of and involvement in existing groups within the MIT sustainability community.

Overview

Given lists of MIT-led and student-led sustainability groups, respondents were asked to identify which ones they knew and which ones they were a current or previous participant of.

Key Takeaways:

- Of the MIT-led groups, more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents knew of "Terrascope" and the "MIT Office of Sustainability". About half knew of "Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI)". Similarly, participation levels were highest in "Terrascope", followed by "Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI)" at about half of Terrascope's level. By contrast, the "MIT Office of Sustainability" had the fewest participants, even though it was one of the most well-known groups in this category.
- Of the student-led groups, more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents knew of "UA Sustainability" and "MIT Divest". Participation levels were highest in "UA Sustainability". "MIT Divest" and "Energy Club/Undergraduate Energy" had the second highest participation levels, which indicates MIT students choose to be particularly active in the topic of energy within sustainability.
- The amount of respondents participating in each student-led group roughly correlated with the amount of respondents who knew of that group (10%).
- Overall, respondents had a similar level of familiarity and participation between the most well-known MIT-led and student-led sustainability groups. However, there were more overall student-led groups identified, which means total membership in these groups is higher than that of MIT-led groups.



Question #1: “Which of the following groups on campus have you heard of? (MIT-led)”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select multiple groups in each column.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

“Know” (2107 total selections):

1. Terrascope (731 selections)
2. MIT Office of Sustainability (624 selections)
3. Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) (348 selections)
4. Sloan Sustainability Initiative (146 selections)
5. MIT Action Sustainability Corps (134 selections)
6. ESI Rapid Response Group (124 selections)

“Current/previous participant” (234 total selections):

1. Terrascope (75 selections)
2. Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) (46 selections)
3. ESI Rapid Response Group (36 selections)
4. MIT Action Sustainability Corps (33 selections)
5. Sloan Sustainability Initiative (23 selections)
6. MIT Office of Sustainability (21 selections)

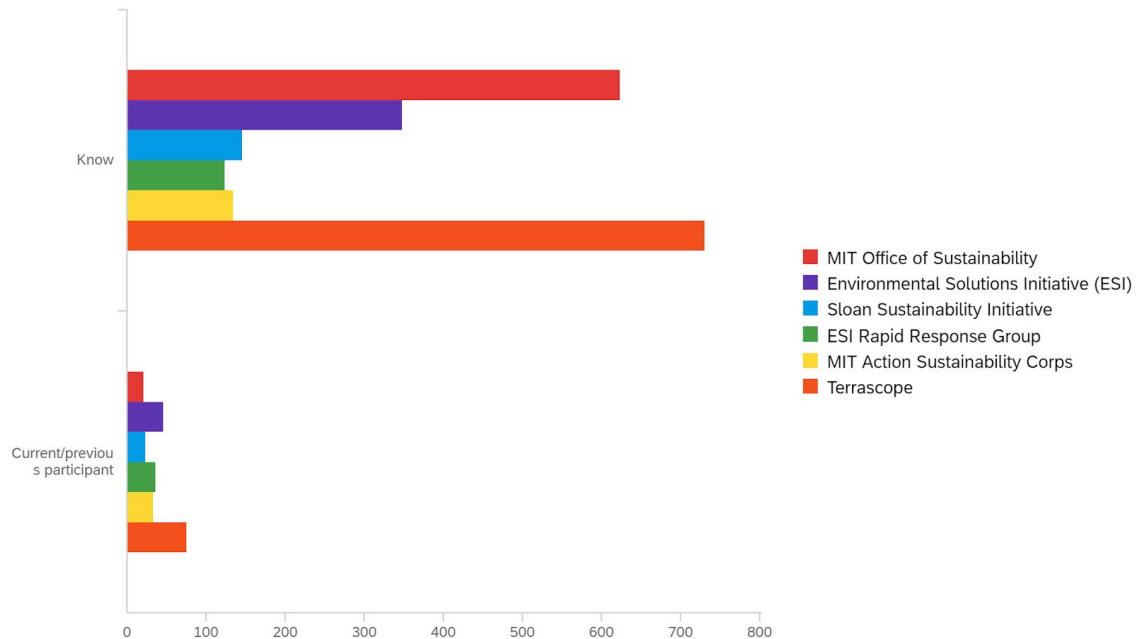


Figure 4: Engagement Level responses for “Which of the following groups on campus have you heard of? (MIT-led)”



Question #2: “Which of the following groups on campus have you heard of? (student-led)”

Options and Responses: Respondents could multiple groups in each column.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

Know (3655 total selections):

1. UA Committee on Sustainability (660 selections)
2. MIT Divest (568 selections)
3. Energy Club/Undergraduate Energy (493 selections)
4. PlanEAT (426 selections)
5. Waste Watchers (402 selections)
6. Water Club (328 selections)
7. MIT Sustainability Summit (256 selections)
8. Sustainable Energy Alliance (245 selections)
9. MIT Waste Alliance (157 selections)
10. Food and Agriculture Club (120 selections)

Current/previous participant (369 total selections):

1. UA Committee on Sustainability (81 selections)
2. MIT Divest (53 selections)
3. Energy Club/Undergraduate Energy (53 selections)
4. Waste Watchers (44 selections)
5. PlanEAT (35 selections)
6. Sustainable Energy Alliance (25 selections)
7. MIT Waste Alliance (21 selections)
8. Food and Agriculture Club (20 selections)
9. Water Club (19 selections)
10. MIT Sustainability Summit (18 selections)



Campus Sustainability

Purpose

The purpose of this section was to see student interest in relevant areas of Institutional sustainability, and preferences for current and future MIT sustainability policies.

Overview

In this section, students were given seven common sustainability topic areas, and were asked to identify ones they had searched for information about specifically with regards to MIT, and ones they believe should be prioritized for Institute-wide sustainability goals going forwards.

Key Takeaways

- More than half of respondents who answered the first question said they searched for information about “fossil fuel investments/divestment”, “sustainability education opportunities”, or “sustainability research” with regards to MIT. A fair amount of respondents who selected one or more responses selected “energy usage” (40.1% or 245 respondents), “waste production and minimization efforts” (38.6% or 236 respondents), or “sustainability career resources” (39.3% or 240 respondents).
- More than half of respondents believed that MIT should prioritize “waste production and minimization efforts” and “fossil fuel investments/divestment”. Collectively, respondents also thought “energy usage” and “sustainability research” should be high on the priority list.
- Respondents both searched for and prioritized “fossil fuel investments/divestment” the most. “Energy usage,” “waste production and minimization efforts,” and “sustainability research” were popular choices for both questions. While “sustainability education opportunities” was one of the topics searched for most by respondents, not many believed it should be prioritized by MIT as an Institution relative to the other topics areas.



Question #3: “Which of the following topics have you searched for information about, with regards to MIT?”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. There were 611 responses for this question, and a total of 1793 selections.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Sustainability education opportunities (i.e: classes, events) (53.5% or 327 respondents)
2. Sustainability research (52.4% or 320 respondents)
3. Fossil fuel investments/divestment (50.1% or 306 respondents)
4. Energy usage (40.1% or 245 respondents)
5. Sustainability career resources (i.e: professional development) (39.3% or 240 respondents)
6. Waste production and minimization efforts (38.6% or 236 respondents)
7. Water usage (17.0% or 104 respondents)
8. Other campus sustainability related topic(s) (2.5% or 15 respondents): campus gardening, pilot projects, and grad school programs in sustainability

Question #4: “Select three from the following list that you think should be prioritized for MIT’s institute-wide sustainability goals.”

Options and Responses: Respondents were required to select exactly 3 options. There were 802 responses for this question, and a total of 2418 selections.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Waste production and minimization efforts (63.2% or 507 respondents)
2. Fossil fuel investments/divestment (63.1% or 506 respondents)
3. Sustainability research (55.1% or 442 respondents)
4. Energy usage (53.9% or 432 respondents)
5. Sustainability education opportunities (i.e: classes, events) (25.7% or 206 respondents)
6. Sustainability career resources (i.e: professional development) (21.4% or 172 respondents)
7. Water usage (17.0% or 136 respondents)
8. Other campus sustainability related topic(s) (2.1% or 17 respondents)
 - a. eating sustainably, sustainability advocacy, outreach programs, equitable global development, community engagement, influence world policy, safe fracking technologies



SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY DATA REPORT

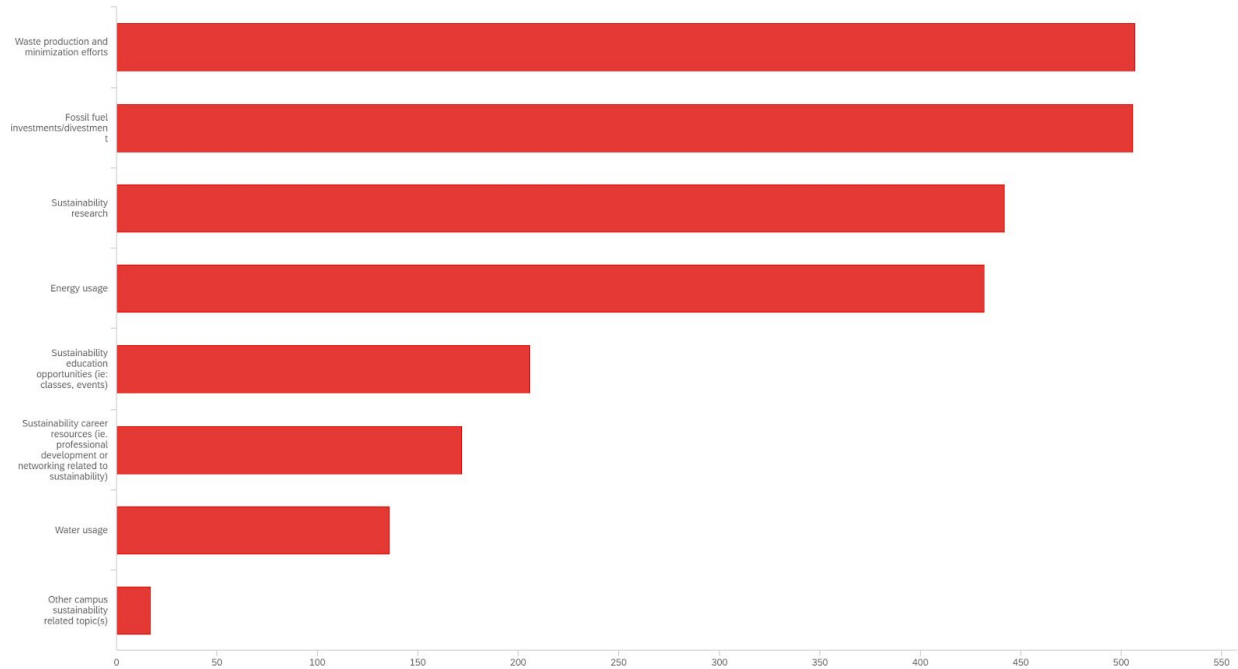


Figure 5: All responses to the statement "Select three from the following list that you think should be prioritized for MIT's institute-wide sustainability goals."



External Relations, Divestment, and CAP

Purpose

In this section we look into the ideal relationship that MIT students envision occurring between the university and external stakeholders. The questions here help frame the discussion for how involved MIT should be in climate action politics, and how well it has been perceived to act thus far. Many of the questions were adapted from the goals of the 2015 Climate Action Plan, allowing us to assess the perceived progress MIT has made.⁵

Overview

Respondents were asked if MIT should be involved in climate action in the Greater Boston area. We also looked at how effectively respondents believe MIT addressed issues from the 2015 Climate Action Plan, such taking action on climate change, and measured interest for involvement in shaping the next CAP. Next, we looked into how MIT students feel about the school's relationship with fossil fuel companies and divestment.

Key Takeaways

- We see an overwhelming number of respondents support MIT action in regards to external politics (97.4% of 769 respondents).
- We find that while respondents believe that MIT has been effective in providing students with educational opportunities and contributing to climate research, they are unsure as to how successfully the institution has reduced its carbon emissions and worked with the government to accelerate action.
- While some respondents had taken the time to research the background of MIT's external relations and had strong opinions on divestment, not as many were personally invested in providing input in the next CAP.
- A large number of respondents also stated that they care about MIT's relationship with fossil fuel companies (83.9% of 771 respondents), and support divestment (82.2% of 771 respondents).

⁵ [Adapted from 2015 MIT Climate Action Plan focus areas](#)



Question #5: “Should MIT be involved in climate action in the Greater Boston Area/Massachusetts?”

Options and Responses: Respondents were required to select one out of two options. There were 769 responses for this question.

Involved (97.4% or 749 respondents)
Not Involved (2.6% or 20 respondents)

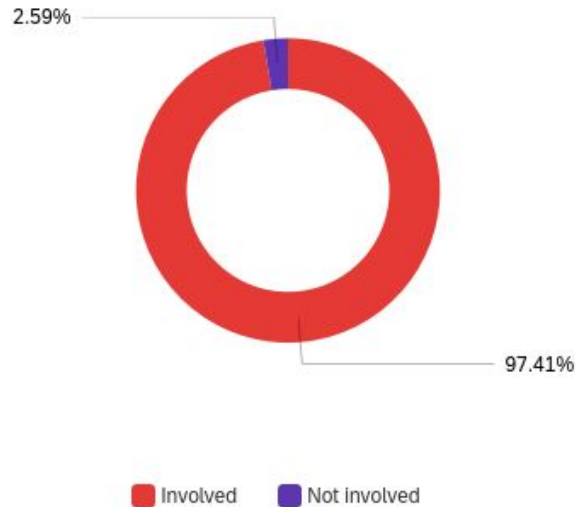


Figure 6: All responses to “Should MIT be involved in climate action in the Greater Boston Area/Massachusetts?”

Question #6⁶: This question consisted of 7 parts, all with 5 options: “Strongly Disagree”, “Somewhat Disagree”, “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, “Somewhat Agree”, and “Strongly Agree”. Students could pick 1 option for each part.

“MIT, as an institution, is effectively....”

6a: “...taking action on climate change”; N = 761

6b: “...contributing to climate research”; N = 766

6c: “...reducing its energy-related carbon emissions”; N = 760

6d: “...providing students with educational opportunities in climate, energy, and the environment”; N = 764

6e: “...sharing climate knowledge with the broader external community”; N = 758

6f: “...using the campus as a test bed for sustainability”; N = 762

6g: “...partnering with industry and government to accelerate action on the climate challenge”; N = 758

⁶ [Adapted from 2015 MIT Climate Action Plan focus areas](#)

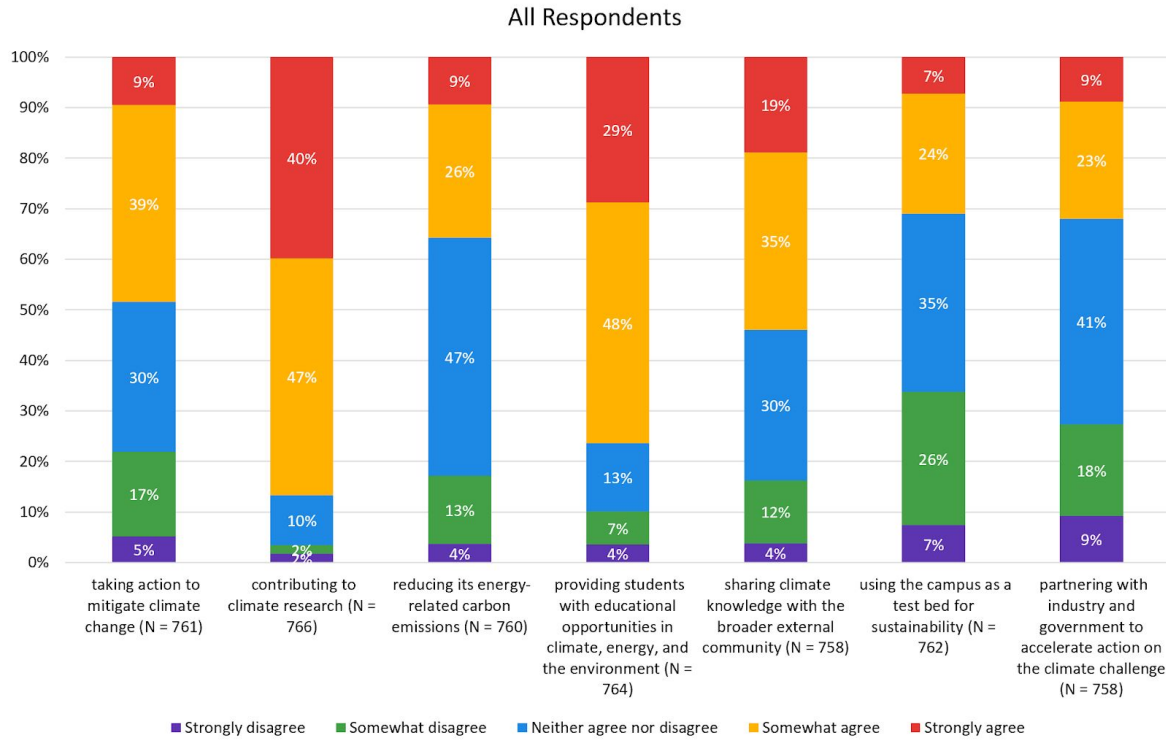


Figure 7: All responses to the question 6 series, “MIT, as an institution, is effectively...?”

Question #7: “Would you be interested in providing input on the design of the next Climate Action Plan?”

Options and Responses: Respondents were required to select one option: yes or no. There were 766 responses for this question.

Yes (35.9% or 275 respondents)

No (64.1% or 491 respondents)

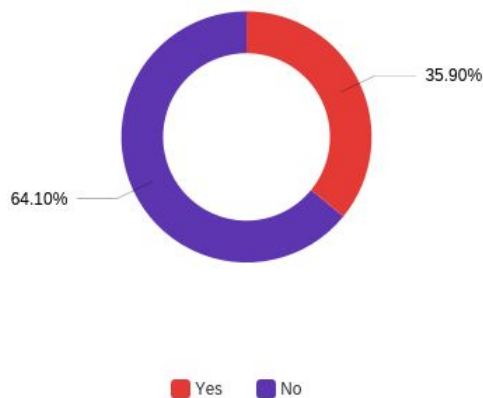


Figure 8: All responses to the question, “Would you be interested in providing input on the design of the next Climate Action Plan?”



Question #8: “Which of the following have you searched for information about?”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. There were 756 responses for this question, and 1027 total selections.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. None of the above (36.2% or 372 respondents)
2. MIT's divestment or engagement with fossil fuel companies and/or the potential impacts of both options (29.6% or 304 respondents)
3. MIT's research funding from external organizations as related to climate change (18.0% or 185 respondents)
4. MIT's engagement with general industry and government with respect to climate change and environment (16.1% or 166 respondents)

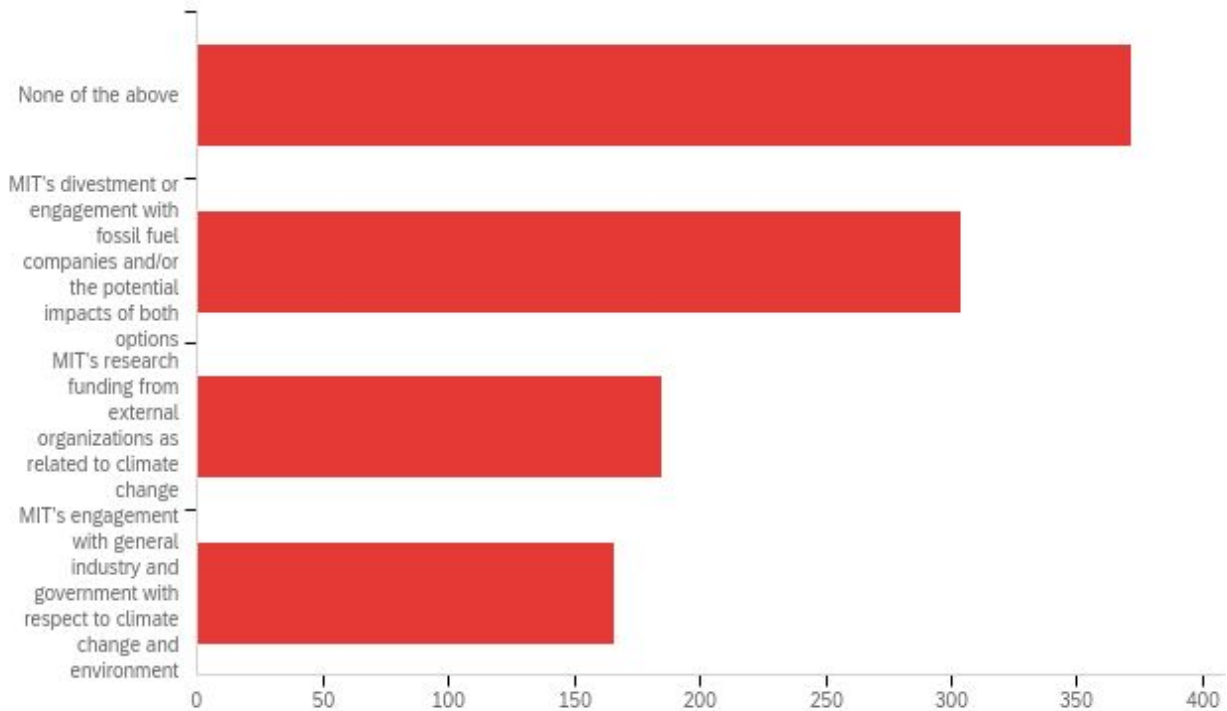


Figure 9: All responses to the question, “Which of the following have you searched for information about?”

Question #9: “I care about MIT's relationship with fossil fuel companies”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select one option from a set of 5 options. There were 771 responses for this question.

- Strongly disagree (2.2% or 17 respondents)
- Somewhat disagree (3.6% or 28 respondents)



Neither agree or disagree (10.2% or 79 respondents)
 Somewhat agree (41.0% or 316 respondents)
 Strongly agree (42.9% or 331 respondents)

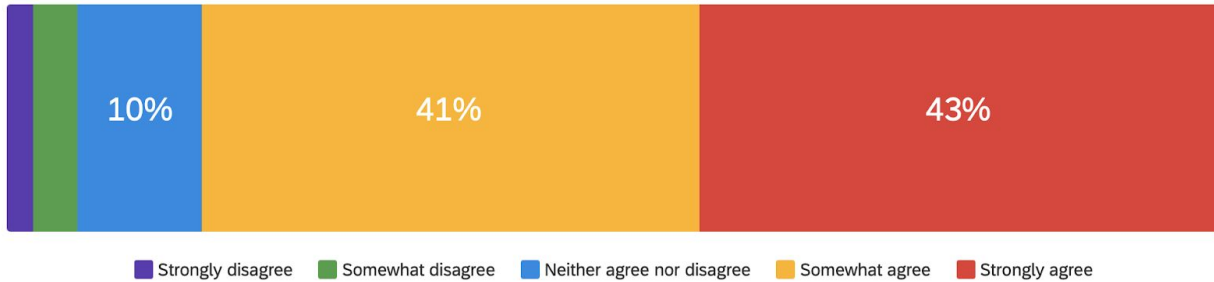


Figure 10: Responses to the statement, "I care about MIT's relationship with fossil fuel companies"

Question #10: "I believe MIT should commit to divestment from fossil fuels"

Options and Responses: Respondents could select one option from a set of 5 options. There were 771 responses for this question.

Strongly disagree (3.1% or 24 respondents)
 Somewhat disagree (3.4% or 26 respondents)
 Unsure (11.3% or 87 respondents)
 Somewhat agree (28.1% or 217 respondents)
 Strongly agree (54.1% or 418 respondents)

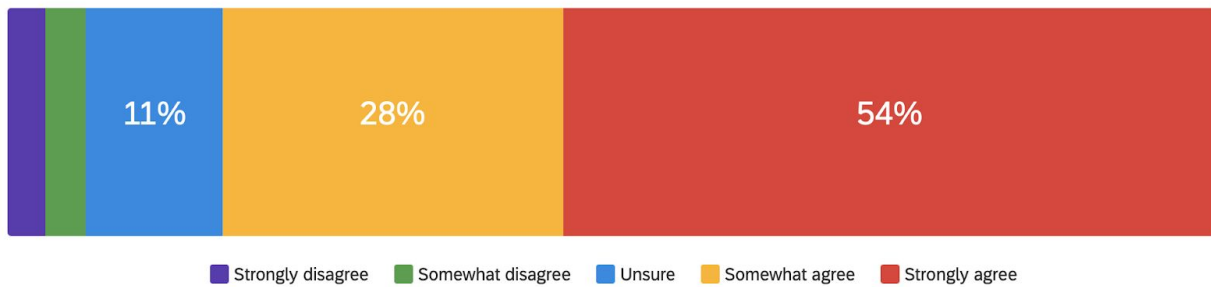


Figure 11: All responses to the statement, "I believe MIT should commit to divestment from fossil fuels"



Career Choices

Purpose

The career choices section of this survey was crafted in order to understand how undergraduates are engaging with sustainability career development opportunities and planning for careers while keeping sustainability in mind. The questions included assessment of respondents' engagement with sustainability events or classes, and elucidation of the impact this has on their career and major choices.

Overview

Within the career choices section of the survey, there are four questions. The first two are "yes" or "no" response questions, asking, "Have you ever attended a talk or event related to sustainability?" and "Have you ever taken a course related to sustainability?" The following two questions provide answer choices on a scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," and include the statements, "my choice of major was influenced by my desire to pursue/learn more about sustainability" and "sustainability is a factor in my career planning."

Key Takeaways

- The responses received in this section demonstrate that respondents who previously engaged with talks, events, and courses related to sustainability were more likely to include sustainability as a decision making factor when choosing majors or careers.
- The more time and effort respondents dedicated to learning about sustainability, the more likely they were to keep sustainability in mind during career planning.



Question #11: “Have you ever attended a talk or event related to sustainability?”

Options and Responses: Respondents were required to select one option: yes or no. There were 770 responses for this question.

Yes (52.2% or 402 people)
No (47.8% or 368 people)

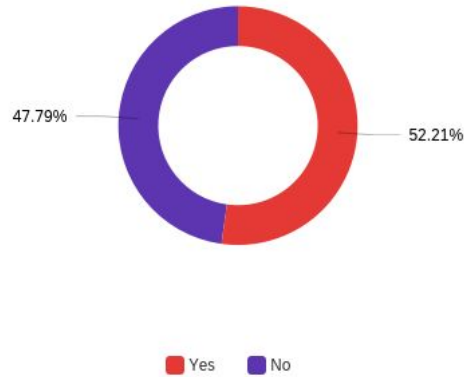


Figure 12: All responses to the question, “Have you ever attended a talk or event related to sustainability?”

Question #12: Have you ever taken a course related to sustainability?

Options and Responses: Respondents were required to select one option: yes or no. There were 770 responses for this question.

Yes (25.6% or 198 respondents)
No (74.4% or 574 respondents)

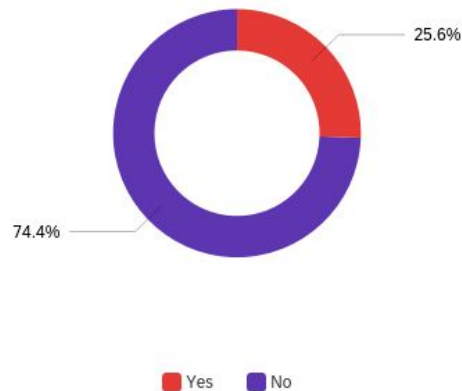


Figure 13: All responses to the question, “Have you ever taken a course related to sustainability?”



Question #13: “My choice of major was influenced by my desire to pursue/learn more about sustainability”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select one from a set of 5 options. There were 769 responses for this question.

- Strongly disagree (26% or 198 respondents)
- Somewhat disagree (23% or 177 respondents)
- Neither agree or disagree (21% or 159 respondents)
- Somewhat agree (19% or 149 respondents)
- Strongly agree (11% or 86 respondents)

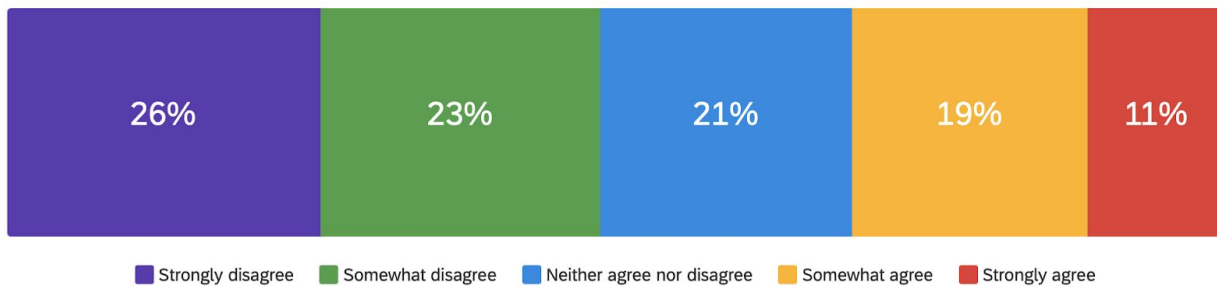


Figure 14: All responses to the statement, “My choice of major was influenced by my desire to pursue/learn more about sustainability.”

Question #14: Sustainability is a factor in my career planning.

Options and Responses: Respondents could select one from a set of 5 options. There were 769 responses for this question.

- Strongly disagree (12% or 91 respondents)
- Somewhat disagree (17% or 134 respondents)
- Neither agree or disagree (19% or 145 respondents)
- Somewhat agree (32% or 244 respondents)
- Strongly agree (20% or 155 respondents)

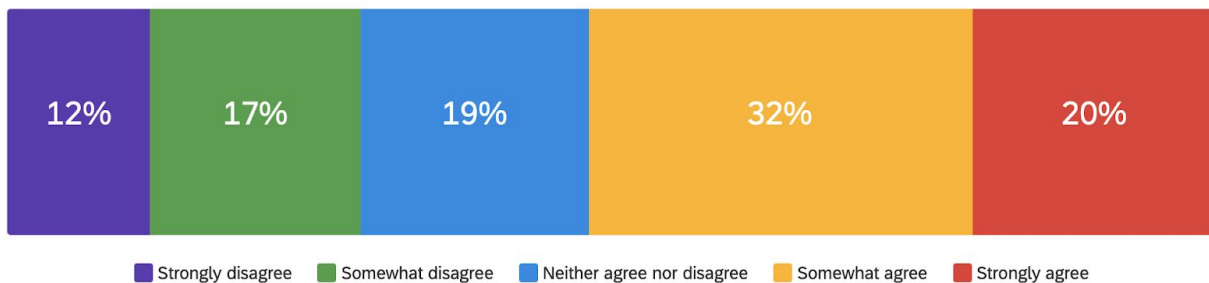


Figure 15: All responses to the statement, “Sustainability is a factor in my career planning.”



Personal Sustainability

Purpose: The purpose of this section was to understand how respondents practice and learn about sustainability in their day-to-day lives, as well as the obstacles they encounter in practicing sustainable habits.

Overview: There were 4 questions in this section, asking respondents how they preferred to engage in sustainability, their obstacles to practicing sustainability, where respondents got information on sustainability, and whether they practiced sustainability in their daily lives. If respondents answered that they did practice sustainability in their daily lives, they were asked what they prioritized in their sustainability practices and whether they were more or less sustainable on campus versus living elsewhere.

Key Takeaways:

- Respondents preferred to engage in personal sustainability as opposed to higher-commitment strategies such as careers or advocacy.
- Over half of respondents felt lack of knowledge on sustainability was a hindrance in practicing sustainability. However, time, effort, lack of resources, and financial reasons were all listed as obstacles by over a third of respondents.
- Respondents most frequently get their sustainability-related information from online resources, including the internet and social media.
- Nearly 4 in 5 respondents said they practice sustainability daily. Reducing waste, energy usage, material consumption, and water use are strategies used by over half of these respondents, yet only 1 in 3 attempts to lower their dietary carbon-footprint.
- Respondents generally did not feel that living on campus had a large effect on their sustainability, but of those who did, they felt being on campus improved their sustainability.



Question #15: “How would you most prefer to engage in sustainability?”

Options and Responses: Respondents were only allowed to select one answer. There were 763 responses for this question.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Personal (i.e: eating a plant-based diet) (39.2% or 299 respondents)
2. Advocacy (i.e: shaping MIT policy) (24.0% or 183 respondents)
3. Career (i.e: choosing a career that has direct or indirect implications for sustainability) (29.5% or 225 respondents)
4. Not applicable (6.4% or 49 respondents)
5. Other (0.9% or 7 respondents)

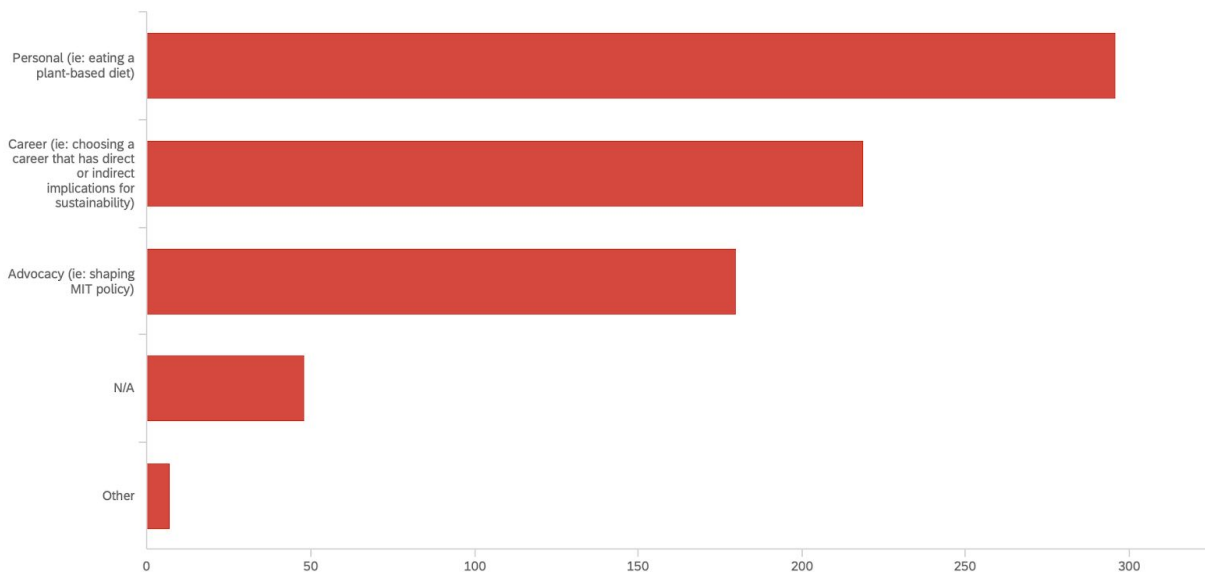


Figure 16: All responses to the question, “How would you most prefer to engage in sustainability?”

Question #16: “What obstacles to practicing sustainability have you encountered, if any?”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. There were 742 responses for this question.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Lack of knowledge (57% or 421 respondents)
2. Lack of resources (48% or 355 respondents)
3. Takes too much time (39% or 289 respondents)
4. Takes too much effort (47% or 347 respondents)
5. Do not care/does not affect me (6% or 43 respondents)



- 6. Financial reasons (41% or 301 respondents)
- 7. Other (2% or 14 respondents)

“Other” answers included feeling overwhelmed and institutional opaqueness.

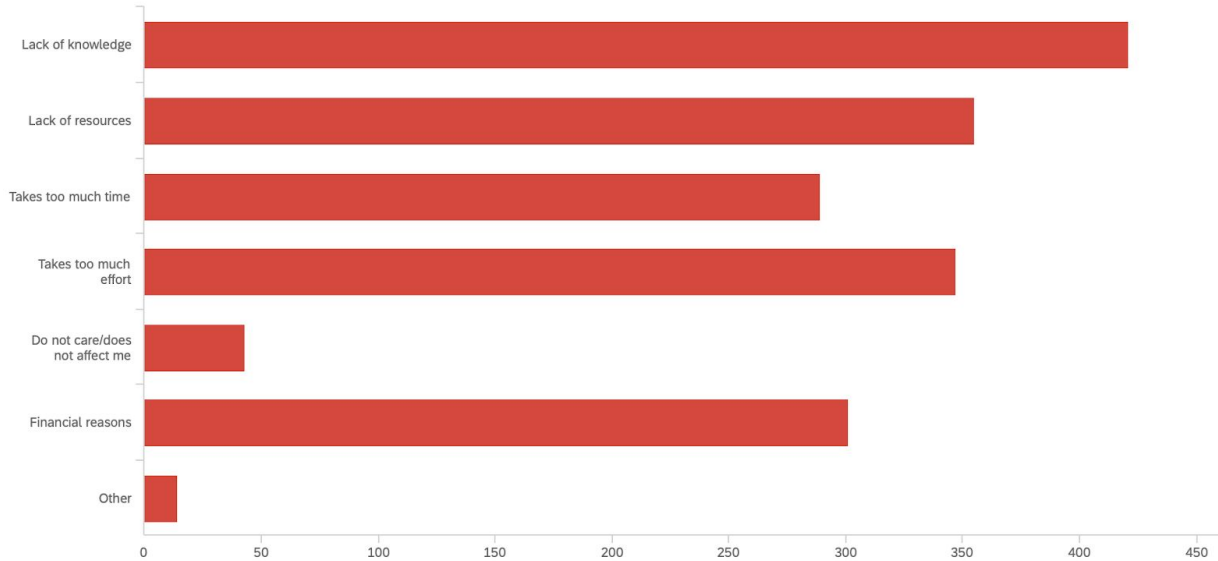


Figure 17: All responses to the question, “What obstacles to practicing sustainability have you encountered, if any?”

Question #17: “Where do you get sustainability-related information from?”

Options and Responses (Select all that apply): Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. There were 759 responses for this question.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

- 1. Internet (85% or 644 respondents)
- 2. Social media (63% or 481 respondents)
- 3. News (58% or 442 respondents)
- 4. Family and/or peers (39% or 299 respondents)
- 5. MIT resources (28% or 212 respondents)
- 6. Books (22% or 166 respondents)
- 7. Radio/podcasts (21% or 163 respondents)
- 8. Conferences (11% or 85 respondents)
- 9. Other (2% or 14 respondents)

“Other” answers included published literature/research and posters.

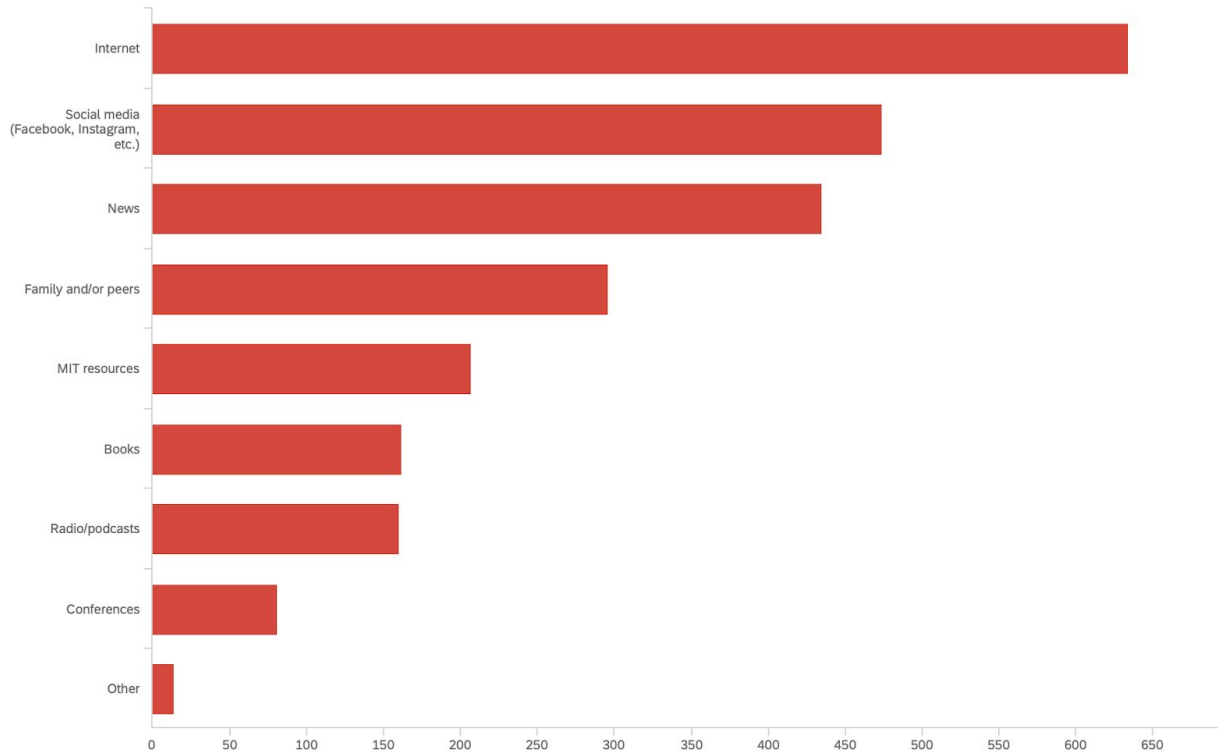


Figure 18: All responses to the question, "Where do you get sustainability-related information from?"

Question #18: "Do you practice personal sustainability in your day-to-day life?"

Options and Responses: Respondents could only pick 1 option. There were 761 responses for this question.

Yes (79.1% or 599 respondents)

No (20.9% or 162 respondents)

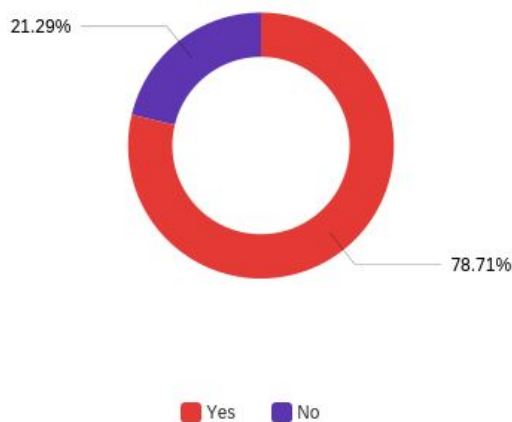


Figure 19: All responses to the question, "Do you practice personal sustainability in your day-to-day life?"



Question #19: “Select three from the following list that you prioritize in your daily sustainability practices.”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select up to three responses. There were 597 responses for this question.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Reducing waste generation (77% or 461 respondents)
2. Saving energy (68% or 408 respondents)
3. Reducing material consumption (66% or 393 respondents)
4. Minimizing water use (56% or 336 respondents)
5. Eating a low-carbon diet (36% or 214 respondents)

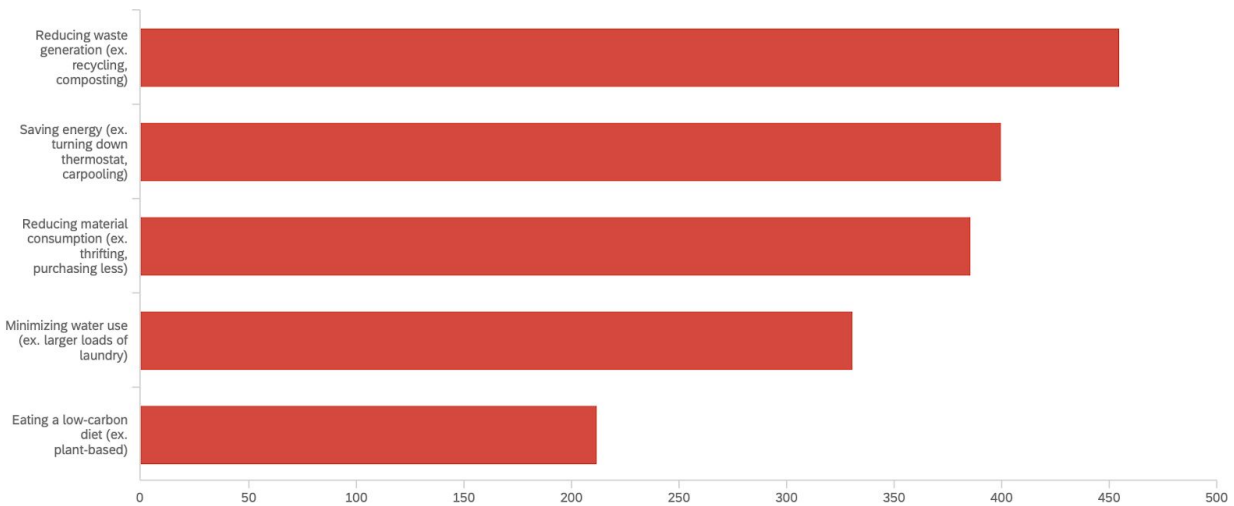


Figure 20: All responses to the question, “Select three from the following list that you prioritize in your daily sustainability practices.”

Question #20: “How have your daily sustainability practices changed? I am ____ sustainable at MIT than outside of MIT.”

Options and Responses: Respondents could pick 1 option.

- Much less (3.1%)
- Slightly less (15.5%)
- Similarly (28.3%)
- Slightly more (24.9%)
- Much more (9.7%)
- Not Applicable (18.6%)

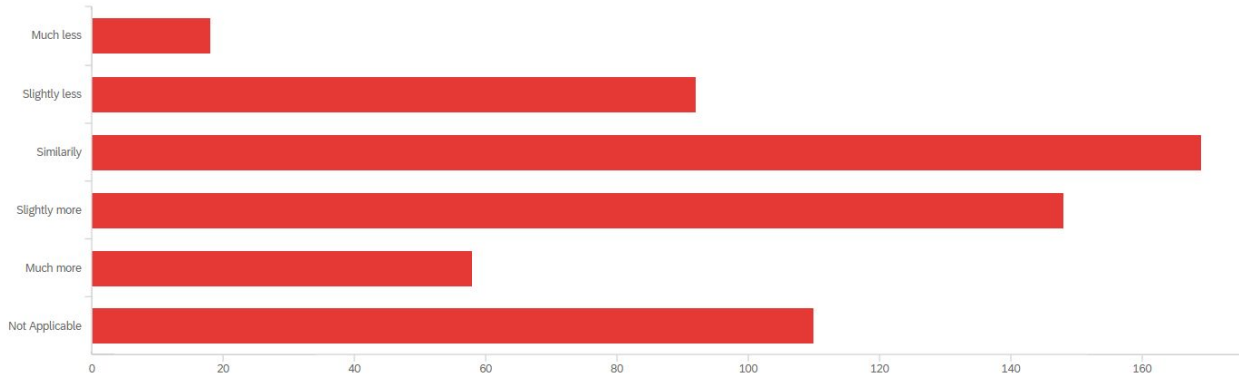


Figure 21: All responses to the question, "How have your daily sustainability practices changed? I am ___ sustainable at MIT than outside of MIT."



Open-Ended

Purpose: The open-ended question section served to gauge specific interests in sustainability and how UA Sustain or other sustainability organizations could provide resources to address those topics.

Overview: There were two questions, both of which were optional. Each of the questions allowed respondents to fill in their thoughts for what resources or information they would like to see in response to the question.

Key Takeaways:

- Many comments mentioned a desire for greater accessibility of sustainable alternatives and systems on campus, most commonly in reference to reusables and recycling/composting
- Respondents have the most interest in learning specifics about MIT's fossil fuel investment/divestment (14.9%), waste production and minimization efforts (13.3%), and energy use (13.2%)
- Respondents request more transparency and data directly related to MIT's sustainability policies and involvement, and their impact
- There is a general desire for more information on personal involvement in sustainability, within careers, research, and undergraduate education



Question #21: “What resources, if any, would be helpful for you to practice sustainability at MIT or better inform yourself about MIT's sustainability policies? (ie: access to reusables, educational events)”

There were 262 responses for this question. The open-ended results are best interpreted with a word-cloud and a selected example chart as shown below:



Figure 22: Most common words in response to “What resources, if any, would be helpful for you to practice sustainability at MIT or better inform yourself about MIT's sustainability policies?”

More widely publicized access to resources; comprehensive programs for sustainability in dorms such as composting, food waste minimization, energy and water usage, etc.
Lots of wasteful resource use at MIT, and the lack of recycling and recycling education is comical
access to reusables, more access to reusable utensils/plating; better plant-based options in dining halls
Educational events, more advertisement about opportunities to get involved with advocacy about sustainability
Clear, direct information about MIT's sustainability policies at the beginning of year (especially during freshman orientation)
multidisciplinary classes, integration into mainstream curricula, less 24/7-active lights in dorms
access to reusables, educational events, research opportunities in planetary health/the intersection of environmental health and human health, funding/support for student projects in these areas as well, more on MIT divestment plans if any
more compost/recycling bins, more opportunities to participate in climate change urops/research/know



what's going on with MIT's climate research
Specific data and explanations on the importance of each specific act related to sustainability. A comprehensive report on how our recycling is done, and a lifecycle analysis proving it does lead to less waste and energy usage.
Lowering the barrier to participating in sustainable behavior
Individual efforts cannot solve climate change. We cannot stop climate change unless we can get corporations to change what they are doing. The best way MIT can support this goal is by DIVESTING from fossil fuels!

Figure 23: 11 example responses (selected to best represent the collective responses) to “What resources, if any, would be helpful for you to practice sustainability at MIT or better inform yourself about MIT’s sustainability policies?”

Question #22: “What more specific information, if any, would you like to know about the following, with regards to MIT: (Please select and write in the corresponding text boxes; select multiple if applicable)”

Options and Responses: Respondents could select as many options as they wanted. There were 242 responses for this question, with a total of 791 selections.

Options, ranked in order of most to least selections:

1. Fossil fuel investment.divestment (14.9% or 118 respondents)
2. Waste production and minimization efforts (13.3% or 105 respondents)
3. Energy usage (13.2% or 104 respondents)
4. MIT’s engagement with industry and government with respect to climate change and the environment (11.1% or 88 respondents)
5. Sustainability research (8.6% or 68 respondents)
6. Sustainability education opportunities (ie: classes, events) (8.1% or 64) responses)
7. Sustainability career resources (ie: professional development) (7.8% or 62 respondents)
8. Water usage (7.7% or 61 respondents)
9. MIT’s research funding from external organizations as related to climate change (7.1% or 56 respondents)
10. MIT Divest (6.3% or 50 respondents)
11. Other campus sustainability related topic (1.9% or 15 respondents)



The open-ended results are best interpreted with a bar-chart and selected example chart as shown below:

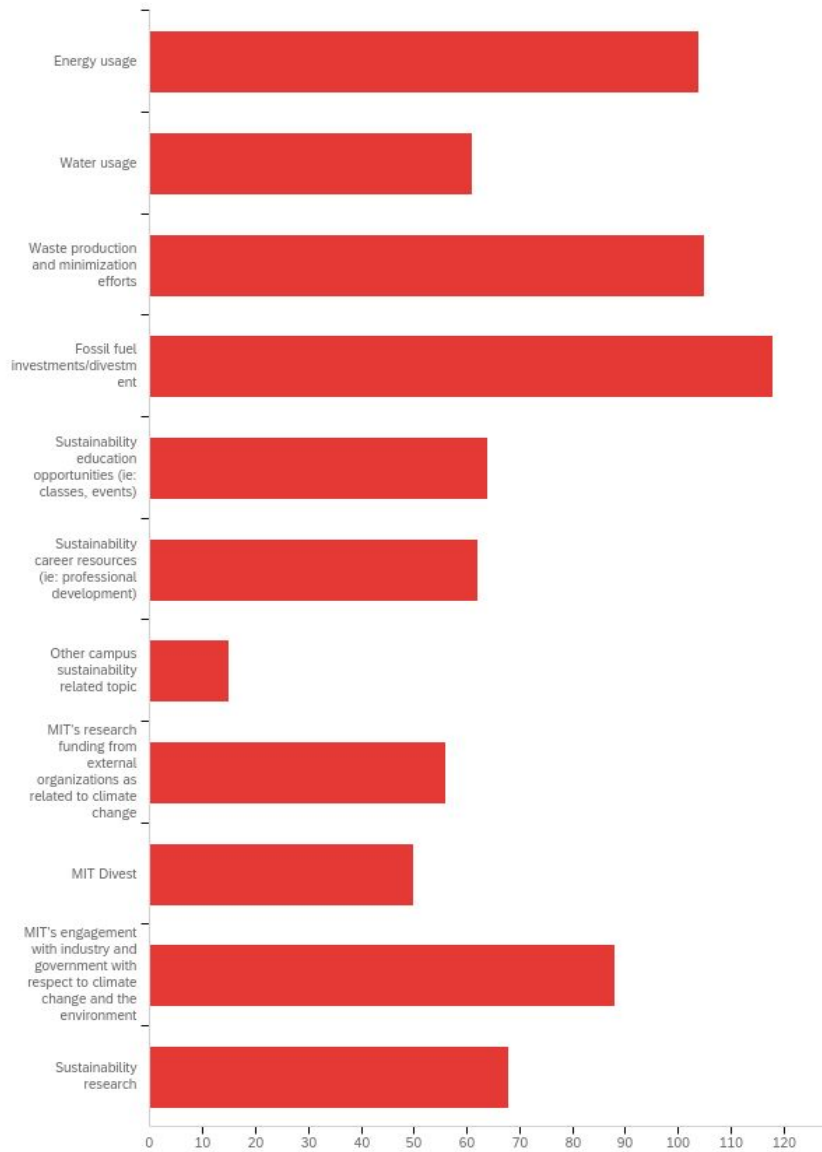


Figure 24: Number of responses per category to “What more specific information, if any, would you like to know about the following, with regards to MIT”

Energy usage	What is the average energy use of an MIT student? Where does MIT use the most energy? Is it possible to make energy use more salient?
Water usage	How exactly water is being used (beyond the buildings it is being used in) and what efforts they are taking to promote water reuse
Waste production and minimization efforts	where the compost bins go, why they take certain things and not others, how problematic



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	contamination is.
Fossil fuel investments/divestment	Does MIT have the power to change the actions of fossil fuel companies by shareholder engagement? Why is MIT investing in a dying industry that leads to lower returns? MIT divestment plans / acknowledgement of money received from fossil fuels and influence of these companies
Sustainability education opportunities (ie: classes, events)	Having more sustainability curriculum in my major. Are there low commitment opportunities to learn about sustainability?
Sustainability career resources (ie: professional development)	How I can impact sustainability even if my career isn't directly related to it conscious attention paid to what industries MIT students get funneled into, and how MIT creates that funnel, intentionally or otherwise.
Other campus sustainability related topic	Does MIT want to be competitive with other institutions in terms of campus sustainability? How can I help make sustainable living the norm in my community?
MIT's research funding from external organizations as related to climate change	How this research funding is being distributed, particularly to what aspects of climate action research is the \$ going
MIT Divest	What programs would be cut from MIT if we divested? How effective has it been, what results have come from it, etc. (direct action)
MIT's engagement with industry and government with respect to climate change and the environment	principles of engagement Why is MIT choosing not to divest while promoting other sustainability initiatives? This is highly hypocritical. Divestment is a crucial and obvious next step to take.
Sustainability research	A list of UROP opportunities and labs working on sustainability-related research What MIT is doing to create solutions to reduce human-induced climate change, without relying on fossil fuel companies to change (which is very difficult)

Figure 25: Example open-ended responses to information categories for "What more specific information, if any, would you like to know about the following, with regards to MIT"



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