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as part of LSE GROUPS 2025.**

LSE GROUPS takes place during the final fortnight of the LSE Spring Term. Undergraduate students are placed in small groups; these are cross-year, interdisciplinary, and group members do not know one another in advance. Each group must then devise its own research question and carry out every stage of a small-scale research project, in less than two weeks.

LSE GROUPS is part of the LSE commitment to students learning through enquiry and developing the skills needed for knowledge creation.

The overall theme of LSE GROUPS 2025 was *Visions for the Future*

This paper was submitted on the final Thursday afternoon of the project. Students then presented their work at a conference, on the closing Friday.

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London School of Economics and Political Science

Fading Green Trust: To what extent does a political candidate's stance on sustainability influence the voting preferences of university students in London?

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Group 3

Abstract

Amid growing environmental awareness, it is often assumed that young voters prioritise sustainability in their political decisions (Sloam, Pickard and Henn, 2022). However, little empirical research has tested whether university students translate their environmental concern into votes, particularly when faced with trade-offs such as candidate credibility or competing policy issues. Drawing on a mixed methods approach, comprising a controlled survey experiment (n=106) and two focus groups, we evaluated the role of environmental policies in influencing the voting behaviour and political distrust of university students in London. Our findings demonstrated a clear gap between students' stated environmental values and their actual voting decisions. Even though the consciousness of sustainability seemed to be widespread among the students, they prioritised more immediate issues such as education, healthcare or job security in their votes. Distrust in politicians, scepticism about policy feasibility and concerns over symbolic environmentalism further undermined the students' green support. The findings of this research indicate the need for an increased robustness in establishing sustainability policies to better reflect the beliefs of students.

Keywords: political distrust, sustainability, symbolic environmentalism, voting behaviour, youth

1. Introduction

With the worsening of environmental change, the acceleration of biodiversity loss and the intensification of climate events, the youth have been perceived as the protagonists of change. However, the concreteness of this ecological consciousness through voting has been overlooked in academia.

So far, extensive literature has shown the factors, such as degree of exposure to scientific knowledge (Goldman et al., 2015), that lead to green voting — defined in this paper as voting for a *green candidate*, or those who include environmental initiatives in their political platforms. There is, however, limited experimental evidence that isolates the impact of

sustainability pledges on the voting intentions of students, especially against concerns such as credibility or feasibility.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first one addresses the current aforementioned literature, identifying a research gap. Next, the paper outlines a mixed-method approach of survey and focus groups used in this study. It is followed by an analysis of the data through the lenses of green voting and political distrust. Finally, drawing from the results, this paper highlights the importance of ensuring political transparency and integrity to reflect youths' environmental concerns.

2. Literature Review & Research Gap

Much of the existing literature on pro-environmental voting focuses on the motivations and reasoning behind individuals' decisions to support 'green' candidates. One widely recognised framework is Stern's Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory (1999), which explains how personal values and environmental beliefs shape an individual's moral norms and sense of obligation to act on environmental issues. These internalised norms are identified as key drivers of pro-environmental behaviour. While this literature provides a foundation for understanding environmentally motivated political engagement, this paper focuses more narrowly on quantifying the extent to which students support 'green' candidates, particularly when considering competing political priorities.

Clayton's Environmental Identity Theory (2003) offers a complementary perspective focusing on how a person's sense of connection to nature shapes their behaviour, and, by extension, their political choices. Defining environmental identity as the degree to which individuals view environmental concern as part of who they are, Clayton proposes that students with stronger environmental identities are more likely to vote for sustainability-focused candidates in order to remain consistent with their values. This identity can be shaped by educational experiences, such as taking environmental courses (Goldman et al., 2015), as well as personal exposure to climate-related events (Hoffmann et al., 2022; Damsbo-Svendsen, 2024). Gender may also play a role, with research suggesting that female students often report stronger pro-environmental attitudes than their male counterparts (Zelezny et al., 2000). Together, these frameworks help contextualise our focus on how students navigate sustainability within broader voting decisions.

However, support for sustainability proposals among students is not solely shaped by identity and values but is also heavily influenced by levels of political trust and perceptions of candidate credibility (Fairbrother, 2017). Another crucial concept guiding our theoretical framework is mistrust in the broader mechanisms of governance, which shape how voters, especially youth, engage with sustainability platforms.

This is especially relevant in the UK, where recent years have seen rising public distrust not only in policy outcomes but in governance mechanisms themselves, such as electoral systems

(Quilter-Pinner et al., 2021). Tam and Chan (2023) found that low generalised trust - the broad expectation that institutions will act reliably - can widen the gap between environmental concern and action. This may explain why, although youth have been at the forefront of climate action, this has not always translated into political support for environmental candidates or policies (Sloam, Henn and Huebner, 2023). Sustainability-focused proposals are frequently met with scepticism, especially when perceived as vague, driven by political convenience, or rooted in symbolic politics — seen as attempts to win votes rather than drive substantive change (Fairbrother, 2017). This leads many young voters to withhold electoral support from candidates who promote them, as distrust becomes a key filter through which sustainability pledges are evaluated, not just on their environmental merit but on their perceived credibility and feasibility.

Although much research has explored why people may support green candidates, fewer studies have focused on how young people, specifically, weigh sustainability against other political concerns, especially in light of the scepticism that often surrounds green pledges (Fairbrother, 2017). Much of the literature also assumes a direct link between pro-environmental values and green voting, often assessing the strength of this connection only through trade-off analyses. While some research has begun to examine the role of political distrust in shaping voting decisions (e.g., Fairbrother, 2017; Tam and Chan, 2023), the specific relevance of this for young voters remains insufficiently examined. Additionally, literature on political credibility tends to focus on traditional forms of corruption, meaning the scepticism tied specifically to environmental claims has received comparatively less attention. This study directly addresses that gap by investigating how a group of London-based university students respond to green policy agendas in a hypothetical scenario.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview of Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach thoroughly analyses voting patterns and underlying thought processes that drive voting behaviour. The survey helps generalise the significance of environmental advocacy while focus groups clarify the motivation behind those preferences. Thus, the interplay of a quantitative and qualitative approach provides a more nuanced and comprehensive explanation of our research question, “To what extent does a political candidate’s stance on sustainability influence the voting preferences of university students in London?”

3.2 Survey Design

Our online survey (see Appendix A) investigates whether proposing climate-related policy interventions increases the voting rates for a candidate and whether electorates speculate on the feasibility of the proposed policies. 106 university students in London responded to the survey (see Appendix B for detailed power and effect size calculations).

Respondents were gathered via convenience sampling due to time constraints and asked to vote in a hypothetical context. Phrases associated with environmental sustainability were strategically not introduced initially, and participants were also unable to amend their responses to previous sections to avoid acquiescence bias.

Notably, participants indicated their preference between identical manifestos of two hypothetical candidates on a numerical scale, which accounted for midpoint bias. The manifestos only differ in the sense that one candidate places greater emphasis on environmental policies than the other (see Appendix C). Subsequently, the participants who voted for the candidate proposing more environmental policies were asked to re-indicate their preferences after highlighting cost implications. This helps address the prominent research gap regarding the role of credibility in influencing youth's voting preferences.

3.3 Focus Group Design

Two focus groups, with six and five survey respondents respectively, were conducted online for respondents' convenience, all of whom were university students in London (see Appendix D for full script). Each session had three 15-minute sections, during which participants engaged in guided discussions on specific themes.

The first section discussed voting values and priorities, where students listed what mattered most when looking for a candidate and then evaluated the relative importance of sustainability in this context. The second section explored participants' perceptions of the credibility of green proposals and candidates' motivations. In the final section, the first focus group considered how students consume political information, and the second focus group assessed their political engagement, following a brief change in our script to have more productive discussions.

Data collected from the focus groups underwent a thematic analysis in which participants' statements were clustered into different themes that were then translated into our key findings.

3.4 Limitations

Given the limited time for data collection, the responses are a sufficiently representative dataset of students in London for our purposes, although we would need a larger sample if the true effect size is smaller than assumed. Due to mandatory candidate selection and inability to 'abstain', the survey introduces a simplification bias, a methodological constraint that limits the experimental condition's ability to fully reflect real electoral behaviour. Consequently, our findings should be interpreted as voter preferences conditional on participation rather than absolute voting probabilities.

Moreover, hosting the focus group virtually meant there was a limit to how naturally participants could respond to and expand on each other's points; to mitigate this, we asked participants to keep their cameras on. Furthermore, those voluntarily participating in the focus group may be highly engaged in politics, which could overstate our understanding of how

environmental policies truly influence the votes of university students. Finally, there is a risk of social desirability bias, where participants may feel pressure to give answers that appear more socially acceptable to their peers.

4. Results & Discussion

This section will firstly address the impact of sustainability proposals on voting behaviour and secondly the credibility of sustainable climate policies. Each of those sections will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4.1 Impact of Sustainability Proposals over Voting Behaviour

4.1.1 Quantitative Findings

4.1.1. Quantitative Findings

To estimate the probability that an individual votes for a sustainability-oriented mayoral candidate, we use a *probit regression model*. The dependent variable Y_i is binary and equals 1 if individual i voted for a sustainability-focused candidate, and 0 otherwise.

The model is specified as:

$$P(Y_i = 1 \mid X_i, C_i) = \Phi(X_i'\beta + C_i'\gamma) \quad (1)$$

where:

- $\Phi(\cdot)$ is the cumulative distribution function of the standard normal distribution,
- X_i is a vector of sustainability promises embedded in proposals,
- C_i is a vector of control variables (e.g., other sectors of promises which voters might prefer, nationality, level of study, experience of voting, engagement of voting, etc),
- β and γ are vectors of coefficients to be estimated.

The model is estimated via *maximum likelihood estimation*.

Using the survey as a primary source, our outcome variable is a binary indicator of whether an individual voted for a sustainability-oriented candidate in the hypothetical London mayoral election. Our key independent variable is sustainability proposals. We also controlled for other issues voters might prioritise alongside a set of demographic and socioeconomic controls, including nationality, level of study, experience of voting, political engagement, etc. (see Appendix E for the full list of variables).

We employed a probit regression model to examine the relationship between sustainability proposals from the candidate and vote choice. Our results show that the Pseudo $R^2 = 0.4301$, meaning 43% of the variation in the voting can be explained by factors in the model, such as sustainability proposals, nationality, etc. This indicates a reasonably good fit between the

variables in the probit model, suggesting that it successfully reflected the main trends in the data.

Table 1: Average Marginal Effect

	(1)
sustainability	0.183 (1.91)
transport	-0.0630 (-0.33)
aesthetic	-0.263 (-1.71)
accessbile_cam	0.0558 (0.26)
career_oppor	-0.408* (-4.19)
housing	-0.157 (-1.37)
other_r	0 (.)
female	-0.202** (-2.88)
eu	0.0788 (0.59)
non_uk_eu	-0.102 (-0.96)
graduate	0.241* (2.17)
experience	-0.0872 (-0.99)
engagement	-0.0137 (-0.68)
influence	0.0313 (1.74)
sus_deter	-0.0622 (-0.82)

We noticed the likelihood of supporting the sustainability candidate varied significantly across demographic and issue priority groups. Furthermore, we observed a trend where voters valuing sustainability were more supportive towards the green candidate, though the effect narrowly misses conventional significance. Moreover, a strong negative correlation existed between prioritising career opportunities and supporting the candidate with sustainability proposals (40.8 pp reduction, $p < 0.0001$), suggesting that job concerns for students may outweigh environmental considerations for a substantial portion of the electorate.

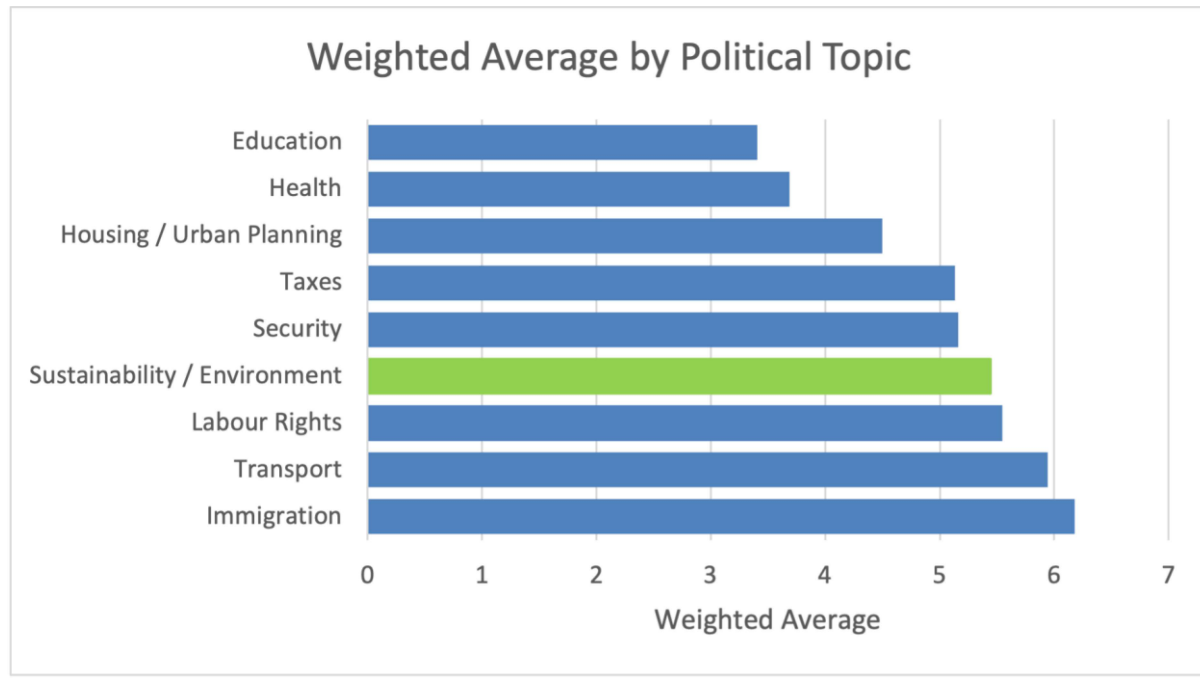


Figure 1: The Relative Importance of Political Issues to Voters

To evaluate the perceived importance of various political agendas among university students, we asked participants to rank a set of nine policy areas based on their personal preference. The results were then aggregated using a weighted average formula. We assigned each rank a numerical value, whereby 1 corresponds to the highest priority and 9 to the lowest. Subsequently, we aggregated the results using a weighted average formula.

$$\text{weighted average} = \frac{\sum (\text{rank value} \times \text{frequency of that rank})}{\text{total number of respondents}}$$

Based on our formula, the agenda that was most frequently chosen as a top priority had the lowest weighted average score, which indicates a higher overall ranking. Conversely, a high weighted average corresponds with a low priority ranking from the participants.

We observed that Sustainability/ Environment ranked sixth, with a moderately weighted average score of just over 5. Thus, the results indicated that although the importance of environmentally sustainable policies is recognised, most university students in London do not perceive it as an immediate priority when compared to areas such as education, healthcare and

public safety. We believe the rankings highlight a potential gap between environmental awareness and the extent to which it influences green voting among youth. This is further explored in our qualitative focus group discussions, which offer insight into students' reasoning and trust in political delivery on environmental issues.

4.1.2 Qualitative Findings

Most participants in our focus group study in LSE, an academic environment where sustainability is widely discussed and promoted. From the participants' responses, it was evident that all the participants had a certain level of awareness of sustainability as seen through their unprompted use of environmental terminology and familiarity with global policy examples. This aligns with Goldman et al.'s (2015) claim that exposure to environmental education can shape individuals' attitudes towards sustainability. However, our findings indicated that environmental awareness and concern alone do not necessarily translate into the students prioritising sustainability when making voting decisions.

Interestingly, our survey data revealed that 69.9% of students stated that sustainability could be a deciding factor in their vote, even though in focus group discussions, many expressed a hesitation about prioritising environmental issues when asked to weigh sustainability against other issues. Most argued that while sustainability is important, it is outweighed by more immediate concerns such as healthcare, education or human rights. Participant C summarised this trade-off by stating, "I would vote for policies that affect [me] now, not vague climate promises." Similarly, Participant E reflected: "Five years ago, I would say sustainability is very, very important. I still believe that, but with the current scenarios, I feel that the focus should be shifted to solving these problems first [e.g., humanitarian]."

These findings challenge a straightforward application of Clayton's Environmental Identity Theory (2003), which posits that those are more likely to engage in pro-environmental political behaviour. Although the participants' expression of environmental concern, combined with their likely exposure to sustainability discourse, points to some degree of environmental identity, their responses demonstrated that the relationship between identity and voting behaviour is more complex than Clayton initially proposed. This suggests a more nuanced reality in which voting decisions are shaped not only by values but also by broader concerns, including the relative significance of other competing priorities and the perceived credibility of candidates' sustainability pledges.

4.2 Credibility of sustainable climate policies

4.2.1 Quantitative Findings

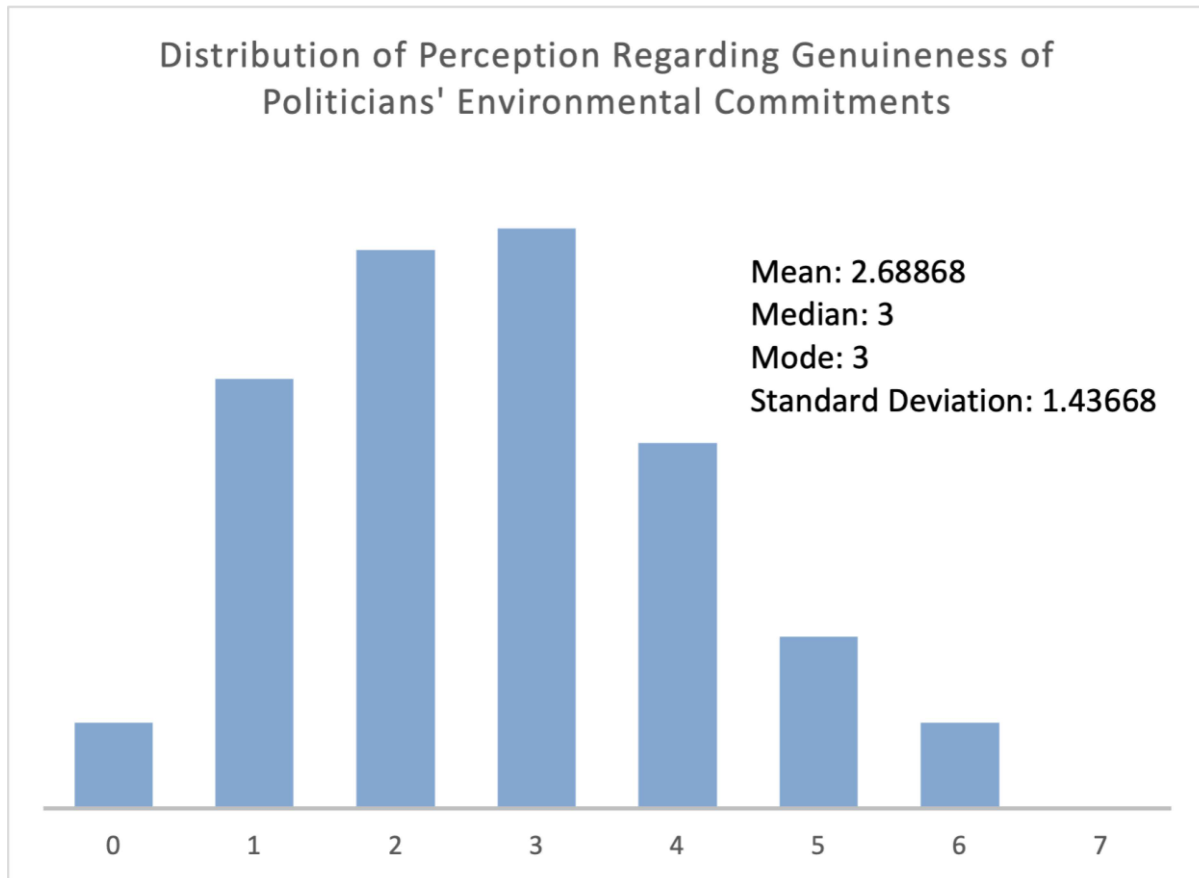


Figure 2: Voters' Perception of Politicians' Genuineness to Environmental Commitments

We asked participants to rate how likely they believed political candidates were to fulfil their environmental proposals to capture their overall perception of political genuineness in relation to environmental commitments. We observed that the distribution is skewed towards scepticism, as the majority of the participants' responses were concentrated between 2 and 4.

The mean score of 2.69 and the median of 3 suggest that, on average, participants are moderately distrustful of politicians' intentions of fulfilling their environmental proposals. Overall, these findings suggest that a significant portion of university students question the authenticity of political environmental agendas, which further explains the relatively low prioritisation of sustainability in earlier results.

4.2.2 Qualitative Findings

A major theme of discussion was distrust, both of politicians in general and environmental claims specifically. Participants in both focus groups repeatedly raised concerns about "greenwashing," expressing doubt towards excessively ambitious and superficial projects. The survey data reinforces these sentiments. Across all student responses, the average trust level, on a scale from 0 to 7, in candidates' environmental promises was 2.69, while general trust in political promises was only slightly higher at 3.15. Participant F, for instance, described recycling policies in her home country as "performative," given the lack of proper infrastructure to process waste. These findings are reinforced by Sloam, Henn and Huebner's (2023) claim that although youth are often at the forefront of climate activism, this doesn't

automatically translate into political trust or participation, particularly when sustainability pledges are not seen as credible.

This disjunction between environmental identity and green voting also aligns with Tam and Chan's (2023) observation that low trust in institutions can widen the gap between concern and action. Beyond green agendas, participants showed scepticism towards the competence of politicians to deliver on their sustainability commitments. Whilst this led the majority to defend the inclusion of field experts in projects of this kind, one student also doubted whether politicians even fully understood sustainability in the absence of youth and marginalised communities. She argued that "Politicians don't understand the gravity of the situation enough to propose genuine solutions."

The generalised scepticism was reflected in how students emphasised structural qualities like transparency, accountability, and resilience when asked about their voting priorities. Fairbrother (2017) similarly notes that green pledges are often judged not just on substance, but on whether they seem strategic or performative. The context of rising political disillusionment in the UK, including distrust in electoral systems (Quilter-Pinner et al., 2021), further shapes how young people evaluate environmental platforms. As one participant put it, "You gotta take [politicians' claims] with a pinch of salt."

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between political sustainability-related messaging and young students' voting behaviour. Our research shows that while sustainability appears important to university students, there is no conventionally significant direct effect of these concerns on voting for the candidate who emphasised it. We also find that the main reason underlying this phenomenon was a lack of trust in politicians, as assumed by previous literature.

Our research provides empirical evidence on the gap between environmental values and electoral behaviour among university students, fostering a scrutiny of assumptions that young voters consistently reward political candidates with sustainability commitments. It promotes a more nuanced understanding of how political support for environmental policies interacts with policy sector prioritisation and the credibility of candidates.

An important caveat is that our survey and focus group consisted predominantly of female undergraduate LSE students, meaning that it might not be representative of the opinions of all survey respondents. Moreover, the geographical restriction to London limits the potential generalisation of research findings to the full range of perspectives found among UK students more generally.

This research is relevant to political candidates and campaign strategists, specifying that emphasising sustainability alone may not secure electoral support, particularly when credibility and prevalent socio-economic issues are at stake. Establishing trust through transparent and

feasible policy proposals might be a more constructive strategy for mobilising environmentally conscious youth.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Screenshots of survey used:

Use of Information

Your responses will be used for a student-led research project at the **London School of Economics and Political Science** (LSE). This project has been approved for educational purposes by the **LSE Eden Centre** and may be referenced in academic assignments or presentations.

Anonymity

Your responses are anonymous. No identifying information will be collected or used in any outputs from this study.

Ethical Approval

This study has received ethical approval from the **LSE Eden Centre**.

Contact

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw your participation, please contact:

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Jianggaowa Zhu [J.Zhu74@lse.ac.uk]

Shinichiro Hayashi [S.Hayashi@lse.ac.uk]

Consent

If you agree to take part in this study, please tick 'Yes' below to begin the survey.

I am currently studying in London

☐ Yes

I agree to participate in this survey

☐ Yes



What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-binary / third gender

☐ Prefer not to say

What is your level of study?

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Masters

☐ PhD

What is your nationality?

☐ UK

☐ EU

☐ Non-UK/EU

What are your common sources of information for political candidates?

☐ Social media

☐ Family and friends

☐ TV and other traditional media

☐ Search engine (Google, Bing, Yahoo!, etc)

☐ Newspapers and Articles

☐ Official Documents from Candidates/Political Parties

☐ Others

Have you voted in elections before?

- ☐ Yes, because I am interested in voting
- ☐ Yes, because it is mandatory in my country. If it was not mandatory, I would not be interested in voting
- ☐ No, I am not interested in voting even though I had the opportunity to vote
- ☐ No, because I did **not** have the opportunity to vote, but I would be interested in voting in the future
- ☐ No, because I did **not** have the opportunity to vote, and I would **not** be interested in voting in the future

On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 7 (very interested), how engaged would you consider yourself in politics?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Engagement



On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal), how much influence, if any, do you feel your vote has over decision-making in politics?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Influence



In this section, you will be asked to indicate your preference between two **hypothetical** candidates, Elliot and Alex, running for the Mayor of London.

You **do not need** to have the right to vote for the purpose of this survey.

Disclaimer: The names and profiles presented are **entirely fictional** and are not based on or inspired by any real-world individuals or political candidates. They are intended solely for research or illustrative purposes. Your responses will be used anonymously and will not influence any real-world elections.

[Elliot and Alex's manifestos presented. Order of presentation was randomised between participants to mitigate priming.]

Which candidate would you vote for?

☐ Elliot

☐ Alex

How much do you prefer the candidate you chose over the other on a scale from 0 (no preference) to 7 (strong preference)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Preference



[Elliot and Alex's posters re-presented for participant's reference.]

The options in the question below are randomised to mitigate response order bias:

What is the main reason you voted for your chosen candidate in the previous section?

☐ Because of their commitment to sustainability

☐ Because I want better career opportunities

☐ Because I want campus and city environment to be more accessible

☐ Because I want cheaper energy bills

☐ Because I want more affordable housing

☐ Because I want larger public transport networks

☐ Because of the aesthetic design of the poster

☐ Other reasons, please specify:

On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 7 (definitely), how **genuine** do you feel that your chosen candidate's promises are?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Likelihood



[Elliot and Alex's posters re-presented for participant's reference.]

Only the participants that voted for Elliot (who advocates for more environmental policies than Alex) will receive the following question:

Now, you expect that the environmental actions proposed by Elliot are costly and you are afraid that, in reality, Elliot will only fulfil 2 of the agendas proposed in his manifesto.

Would you change your vote?

☐ Yes, I will vote instead for Alex

☐ No, I will still vote for Elliot

*Those that would vote for Alex when asked whether they will change their vote in the previous question will be asked the following (those that would still vote for Elliot would instead be asked by how much they prefer "**Elliot** over **Alex**", using an identical wording):*

Now, how much do you prefer Alex over Elliot on a scale from 0 (no preference) to 7 (strong preference)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Preference



In general, how genuine do you think most political candidates are about fulfilling their environmental commitments, on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 7 (definitely)?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Likelihood

☐ 

Could sustainability be a deciding factor in your vote?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Are you associated with sustainability in any form in your career?
(e.g. education, professionally, societies, volunteering...)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

Would you like to participate in an in-person/virtual focus group, where you can engage in thought provoking discussions with fellow students? No preparation is necessary. All responses will be kept entirely anonymous and safely stored within LSE GROUPS.

If yes, please leave here your email / phone number. If not, please write "N/A".

If you would like further clarification regarding the focus group, please contact either:

Cecília Zamboti Pessoa [C.Z.Pessoa@lse.ac.uk]

Francesca Carol Mossa [F.C.Mossa@lse.ac.uk]

Dharma Couture [D.Couture@lse.ac.uk]

Appendix B

Calculating using the statistical software, *G*Power*, our sample assumes a Cohen's f^2 of 0.07565, which corresponds to a small-medium effect size (Cohen, 1988, pp. 477-478). This is reasonable considering that environmental policies are often not the sole determinant of votes.

Appendix C

The manifestos of two hypothetical candidates used in the survey. They are designed to be identical in all factors except that one candidate (Elliot) is proposing more environmental policies than the other (Alex). For example, regarding 'Public Transport Expansion', Elliot proposes to "Introduce 500 new *electric* buses" while Alex only proposes to "Introduce 500 new buses".

The image displays two side-by-side infographic panels comparing the 'Top 5 Manifesto Pledges' of two hypothetical candidates, Elliot and Alex, for Mayor. Both panels feature a stylized illustration of a man in a suit and tie. The left panel, titled 'ELLIOT FOR MAYOR!', has a light orange background and lists five pledges. The right panel, titled 'ALEX FOR MAYOR!', has a light blue background and lists five pledges. The pledges are numbered 1 through 5 and each has a corresponding title in a small orange box. The text for each pledge is in a light blue or orange font, matching the panel's background color.

Candidate	Pledge Number	Pledge Title	Pledge Description
ELLIOT FOR MAYOR!	1.	PUBLIC TRANSPORT EXPANSION	Introduce 500 new <i>electric</i> buses and expand 200km of safe cycling routes to make travel around London cleaner, cheaper, and more sustainable for students.
	2.	CAMPUS & CITY ENVIRONMENT	Create 100 new green spaces near universities and install 5,000 recycling and compost bins citywide — helping make London campuses greener and more climate-friendly.
	3.	ENERGY AND UTILITIES	Retrofit 10,000 student flats with insulation and solar panels to reduce emissions and save students up to £300 a year on energy bills.
	4.	JOBS & GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES	Create 15,000 green internships and graduate roles across climate tech, sustainable finance, and environmental research by partnering with London universities and startups.
	5.	HOUSING	Build 5,000 affordable, energy-efficient student homes with green building standards to cut rent and bills while lowering emissions.
ALEX FOR MAYOR!	1.	PUBLIC TRANSPORT EXPANSION	Introduce 500 new buses and expand 200km of cycling routes to improve travel around London and make it easier and more affordable for students.
	2.	CAMPUS & CITY ENVIRONMENT	Create 100 new student-friendly public spaces and install 5,000 bins around universities to make London cleaner and more accessible for students.
	3.	ENERGY AND UTILITIES	Upgrade 10,000 student flats with better gas heating and modern infrastructure to reduce energy bills by up to £300 a year.
	4.	JOBS & GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES	Create 15,000 new internships and graduate roles by partnering with London's top employers and startups in fast-growing industries.
	5.	HOUSING	Build 5,000 affordable student homes with modern facilities to reduce housing pressure and lower costs.

Appendix D

Focus Group Structure

Detailing of Activities: (total 45 minutes)

- **Introduction: Welcome & Presentation of Research (5 minutes)**
 - Welcome participants, thank them for their time and participation, and introduce the moderator.
 - Brief explanation of the aims of the study (explain that we are a part of a research team in LSE Groups, interested in voting interests of students. Better to not mention the focus on sustainability so they are not biased.)
 - Explain the terms of their participation: all information is anonymous, but not confidential (we will publish this), but we cannot assure that other participants will not disclose information about the session. Their participation is voluntary and if at any moment they feel uncomfortable or wish to step out they are free to do so.
 - Explain that they were specifically selected because they are all university students in London, and that the study is not limited to UK students' opinion, but made use of a hypothetical vote in the survey to just give some context, but that in the end the focus group is open to people from different nationalities.
 - Give a brief explanation of the structure of the focus group: It will consist in three sections with different focuses. Each section is expected to take around 15 minutes, and we will provide you with questions for each. There is no single right answer to the questions. When asking the questions, we are hoping to understand how you perceive things and how you experience them.
 - The idea is that this is a conversation between participants, rather than an one-to-one interview, so you are more than encouraged to speak to your peers and discuss. There will be a moderator in this session to ask you the questions and ensure the flow of the conversation. The moderator might interrupt if they feel like the group is losing focus or if it is time to move on to another question.
 - Ask if participants have any questions before the focus group begins.
- **Section 1: Voting Values & Priorities (15 minutes)**

(The goal is to understand what is most important for participants when choosing a candidate to vote for and, particularly, what is the relative relevance of sustainability in this context.)

1. ***When choosing a candidate to vote for, what kind of proposals or issues matter the most to you, and why? (or if you were if you haven't voted yet)***
 - a. Issues could include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Sustainability / Environment
 - ii. Transport
 - iii. Housing / Urban Planning
 - iv. Health
 - v. Education
 - vi. Immigration
 - vii. Taxes

- viii. Labour Rights
- ix. Security

2. *How do you weigh sustainability against these other issues?*
3. *Could sustainability ever be the deciding factor for you when it comes to voting?*
4. *What would discourage you from voting for a sustainable candidate?*

- **Section 2: Climate Messaging & Trust (20 minutes)** (*greenwashing*)

(The goal is to understand the credibility of candidates when making green proposals.)

1. *What does a good green policy proposal look like to you?*
2. *Do you think that candidates are serious about sustainability policies?*
 - a. Are political climate commitments realistic, symbolic, or misleading?
 - b. Is it clear, vague?
3. *What do you think motivates candidates to include sustainability in their campaigns?*
4. *How much does it matter to you why a candidate supports climate action?*
 - a. Moral, economic, political reasons...
5. *How do you decide whether a candidate is serious about sustainability?*
6. *What makes / would make you them? What would make it feel genuine?*

- **Section 3: Political engagement (information and voting) (10 minutes) - FOR GROUP 1 ONLY**

(The goal is to understand how participants learn about candidates' proposals and political alignments. This should also reveal how interested they are in politics and voting.)

1. *Where do you usually learn about a candidate's proposals?*
 - a. Social media? News? Manifestos? Friends / Family?

- **Section 3: Political engagement (information and voting) (10 minutes) - FOR GROUP 2 ONLY**

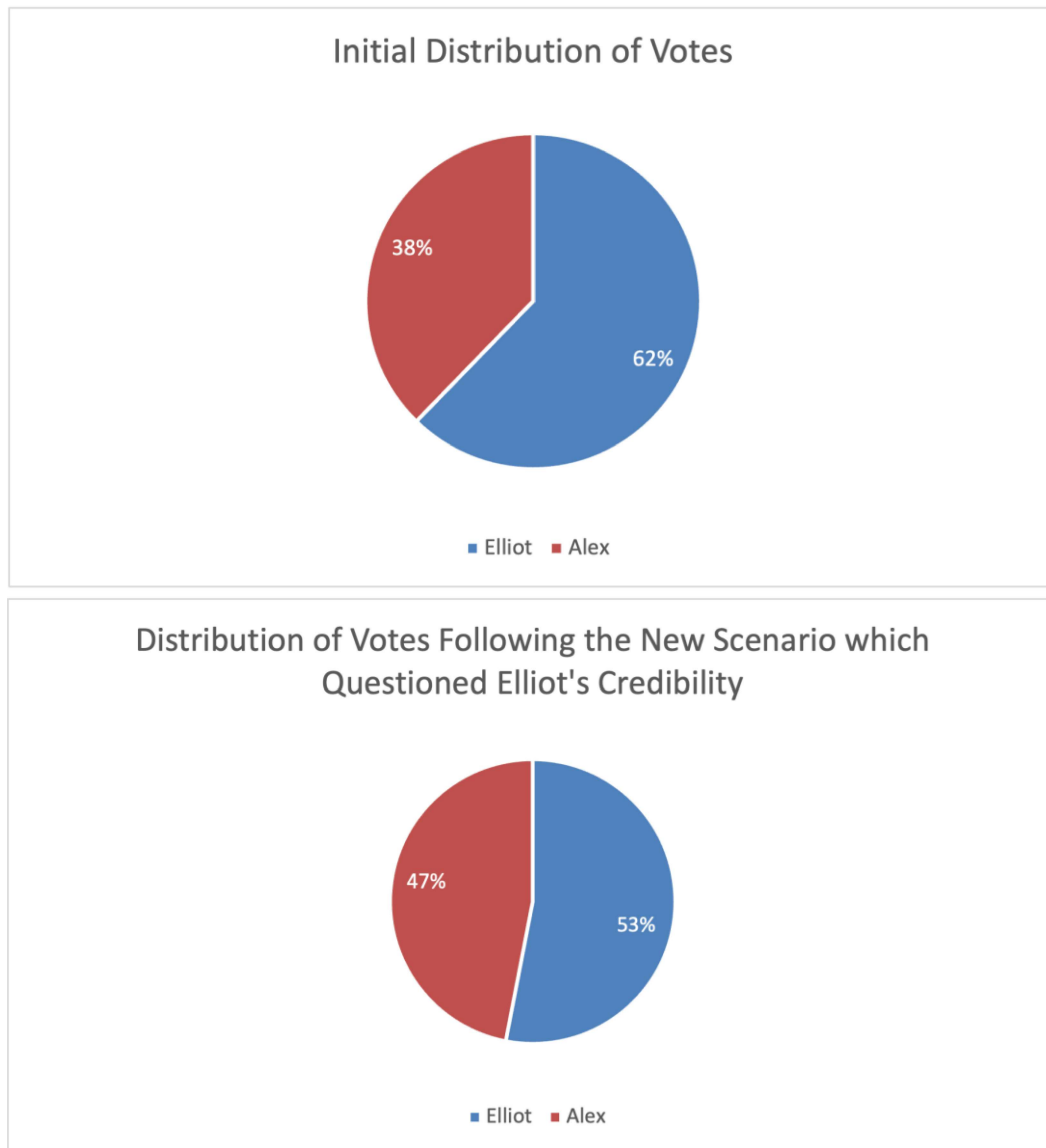
(The goal is to understand if participants are politically engaged and whether they believe that their vote is impactful.)

1. *What [would] motivate[s] you to vote, and what holds you back?*
2. *Do you think voting can bring about real change?*

Appendix E

Gender disparities emerged, with female voters 20.2 pp less likely to support the sustainability candidate than males ($p=0.038$). Graduates showed 24.1 pp higher support ($p=0.006$), though this marginal result requires further validation.

Appendix F



Appendix G

