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RESEARCH

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WORLD 2013

## Dutch youth and global citizenship

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Young people today are certainly world citizens. But to what extent do they behave as *global* citizens, and how aware are they of what this role entails? This report focuses on the attitudes and behaviour of Dutch adolescents (aged 12 to 18) with regard to global issues and international solidarity. The researchers conducted a large-scale online survey to examine the extent to which adolescents can be said to be 'global citizens'. Global citizenship involves not only the social aspects of behaviour (volunteering, giving to good causes and support for development cooperation efforts) but also ecological aspects such as recycling and the responsible use of energy and water.

An understanding of the attitudes and behaviour of today's younger generation offers us a glimpse into the future, and an impression of the global citizens of tomorrow.

*Do young people in the Netherlands behave as global citizens?*

We examine specific behaviours which are linked to social or environmental sustainability. Young people in the Netherlands are reasonably frugal in their use of water and energy. Most tend not to leave taps running unnecessarily and will turn off the lights if they are the last to leave a room. Also, Dutch adolescents have a responsible attitude to waste. However, four in ten leave their mobile phone charger plugged in even when not in use, and young people rarely buy secondhand goods. Their meat consumption is conspicuously high: almost nine in ten respondents eat meat or meat products virtually every day.

*Young people rarely discuss world problems*

Television, radio and newspapers remain an important source of information about global issues, more so than the internet. However, the majority rarely discuss world problems such as poverty or the effects of climate change or express an opinion about global issues. A similarly small number show support for good causes via the social media, e.g. by using the Facebook 'Like' feature or joining a 'fan' group on the Dutch equivalent Hyves (now defunct).

*Voluntary work is popular, donating less so*

Almost forty per cent of the respondent group are engaged in some form of voluntary work over and above any mandatory 'community service' component of the school curriculum. Most voluntary work takes place in the context of a sports club. Donating happens less; approximately one in five have both given money to a good cause *and* have helped to raise funds by means of a sponsored run or similar event in this way. Almost half have done neither.

*Majority support principles of equality, mutual dependency and shared responsibility*

Global citizenship relies on three basic principles: human equality, mutual dependency, and shared responsibility. The principles of mutual dependency and shared responsibility are widely endorsed by young people in the Netherlands. The majority also support the principle of equal opportunities for all, although their support begins to waiver when they are asked to consider

whether a migrant worker has as much right to a job in the Netherlands as a Dutch citizen. Overall, adolescents believe that they can make only a very limited personal contribution to upholding the three principles of global citizenship.

#### Differences between 2012 and 2013

The survey on which this report is based was conducted in both 2012 and 2013, whereupon it becomes possible to examine whether there have been any changes in the respondents' behaviour. This appears to be the case. There are some areas in which average behaviour has become slightly less sustainable. The respondent group as a whole is now more likely to leave the mobile phone charger plugged in while not in use, and more likely to travel by car than by bicycle. Also, there has a slight increase in the number of respondents reporting the purchase of secondhand goods. There is only one aspect in which a marked deterioration in sustainable behaviour can be seen: our respondents now report purchasing a greater number of items which they know, or can reasonably suspect, to have been produced using child labour. However, this is probably due to greater awareness of working conditions in the low-wage countries rather than any conscience decision to buy such products.

Year-on-year comparison reveals that young people are now slightly more likely to turn to the internet in search of information, and more likely to show support for good causes via the social media. They are also more inclined to rebuke family and friends for any environmentally irresponsible behaviour. No overall change can be seen in the use of the traditional media to find information about global issues, in donating or collecting money for good causes, or in volunteering.

Alongside shifts in behaviour, the study also examined any change in the degree to which young people endorse the three principles of global citizenship. In both 2012 and 2013, awareness of global interdependency (or 'mutual reliance') is high. In 2013, however, adolescents appear less certain of the equality of all people worldwide, and show less support for the principle of shared responsibility. They give slightly higher importance to the interest of the

Netherlands and the Dutch than those of other nations and nationalities.

#### Explanations for global citizenship

Alongside altruism, the main determinants of sustainable behaviour appear to be education, world knowledge and the example set by parents. This suggests that sustainable behaviour is largely acquired: it is 'transmitted' from one generation to the next. Of the three principles of global citizenship, only the awareness of mutual dependency has any marked influence in terms of sustainable behaviour: the greater the awareness of mutual dependency, the more likely young people are to comport themselves as global citizens.

#### Support for development cooperation

A significant majority of the young people who took part in the survey consider it extremely important for the Netherlands to support the development of people in poorer countries. However, they are not in favour of any increase in the development cooperation budget. Most wish to see it maintained at the current level while a small minority advocate a reduction.

#### About this report

The report 'Young people and the World 2013' is soon available in English via [www.ncdo.nl/english](http://www.ncdo.nl/english), and already published in Dutch: [www.ncdo.nl/jongeren-en-de-wereld-2013](http://www.ncdo.nl/jongeren-en-de-wereld-2013)

#### About NCDO

This publication is part of a series of research by NCDO. NCDO is the Dutch expertise and advisory centre for citizenship and international cooperation. It promotes public awareness of international cooperation efforts and the importance of active national involvement in this domain. NCDO carries out research, provides information and advice, and stimulates public debate, working alongside government and politicians, the social midfield, the private sector and research institutes.



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