



Education and **Climate Change**



Education is a critical tool to addressing the threat of climate change.

Education helps people understand the root causes and impact of climate change, shifting their behaviour and attitudes towards more sustainable lifestyles. Education builds the knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary to adapt and innovate to save our planet, transforming economies, and improving health and security. In particular, education benefits vulnerable groups that are disproportionately affected by climate change.

Make the case



- **Universal education and health interventions can have a direct impact on climate change.** The resulting reductions in emissions globally could be as high as 85.4 gigatons of carbon dioxide between 2020 and 2050 ([Project Drawdown, 2020](#)).
- **Girls' education is one of the most effective tools we have to fight climate change.** Using UNESCO data, projections show that educating girls could result in a massive reduction in emissions of 51.48 gigatons by 2050 ([Project Drawdown, 2017](#)).

- **Financing education can reduce carbon emissions.** Closing the education financing gap in low- and lower-middle-income countries could reduce emissions by 51.48 gigatons by 2050 ([GEM, 2020](#)).
- **Education increases the capacity to adapt, reducing the risk of climate-related disasters.** Education helps to foster the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to lessen and prevent additional environmental damage ([Feinstein & Mach, 2019](#)).
- **Providing environmental education to children has a ripple effect, with knowledge transferred to their families, inspiring action and reducing vulnerability.** In the United States, intergenerational learning has proven to be an influential pathway for parental adoption of environmental concerns, ultimately changing harmful behaviour ([Lawson et al., 2019](#)).
- **Education saves lives.** If universal upper-secondary was realised by 2030, 200,000 disaster-related deaths could be prevented in 20 years. If progress towards achieving education for all is halted, disaster-related deaths could increase by 20% per decade ([GEM, 2016](#)).
- **Increased education leads to higher levels of environmental concern and awareness.** A study of nearly 30 countries found that 37% of people with secondary education and 46% of those with tertiary education were concerned for the environment, compared with 25% of those who did not start secondary education. ([UNICEF, 2015](#); [Franzen & Vogl, 2013](#)).
- **Education changes behaviours and fosters sustainable practices.** In Ethiopia, a farmer with six years of education is 20% more likely to practise sustainable agricultural methods to adapt to climate change ([UNICEF, 2015](#)).
- **Slowing population growth through education can reduce carbon emissions.** A woman with 12 years of schooling has four to five fewer children than a woman with zero years of schooling, equivalent to a 25 metric ton reduction of carbon emissions ([Kharas, 2016](#); [Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, 2017](#)).
- **A better educated labour force is essential to ensuring the technological transformation required to combat climate change.** Education provides the basic, technical, and managerial skills necessary to innovate and develop green industries, transforming economies and food systems, and reducing environmental destruction. Green growth could produce up to 60 million additional jobs globally ([Technopolis Group, 2015](#); [ILO, 2012](#)).

- **Education promotes sustainable farming practices.** Farmers educated in field schools reduced their environmental impact by 39%, and decreased pesticide use by 17%, while increasing their yield by 13%, and revenue by 19% ([Waddington et al., 2014](#)).
- **Disaster resilience increases with girls' education.** Every additional year of schooling a girl receives on average, her country's resilience to climate disasters can be expected to improve by 3.2 points ([Brookings Institution, 2017](#)).
- **Teachers think climate change education is important.** In the United States, a recent study showed that 86% of teachers think climate change should be taught in classrooms ([Kamenetz, 2019](#)).

Key infographic



Financing education can reduce carbon emissions.

Closing the education financing gap in low- and lower-middle-income countries can reduce emissions by 51.48 gigatons by 2050

([GEM, 2020](#)).

Key talking points



- The more a country invests in education, the more prepared it is to address the climate crisis.
- Education is a tool for providing important information about the climate and environment to young people.

- Higher levels of education are associated with more environmentally friendly lifestyles, increased skills for green-based technology jobs, and better farming practices.
- Several studies demonstrate additional investment in education can reduce carbon emissions.