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3 ASSESSING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN  
4 TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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7 Research Paper

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28 Christianne Zakour  
29 2022

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31 Department of Life Sciences  
32 Faculty of Science and Technology  
33 St. Augustine Campus

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50 **Abstract**

51 Young people have an increasingly strong social and environmental awareness and are key  
52 actors in climate action. The Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago in particular, is extremely  
53 vulnerable to climate change and must learn to become resilient to impacts. Integrating  
54 young people is a guaranteed way to become more resilient. This study is the first of its kind  
55 in the Caribbean and will set a baseline for data on youth engagement. Focus groups and a  
56 series of questions were used to collect data from active young people (n=24) and found that  
57 motivations were grounded more in environmental passion and responsibility, with some  
58 influence from environmental media and education, as well as climate anxiety; activities  
59 noted fell within the category of dutiful dissent; a number of barriers were described which  
60 hamper youth involvement but which broadly fell within the categories of cultural, financial,  
61 age, gender, and other; and youth are mainly using education and awareness to indirectly  
62 contribute to climate resilience.

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## Introduction

78 In the last two decades, youth of all ages between 10 and 35 years of age have become  
79 enmeshed in environmental activism around the world, particularly climate action, driven by  
80 concern for their future under a warming climate. Eco-anxiety, the chronic fear of  
81 environmental doom, is on the rise in young people. Of 10,000 participants in a survey on  
82 eco-anxiety, two-thirds reported feeling sad, afraid, or anxious [1], while 56% reported  
83 feeling that humanity is doomed. The youth climate movement is mainly underscored by  
84 urgency and the need for survival, alongside feeling responsibility to maintain a clean  
85 environment.

86

87 Youth aged between 15 and 24 make up 16% of the global population, or 1 in 6 people, and  
88 the number is projected to rise by 7% from the current 1.2 billion to 1.3 billion by 2030 [2].

89 The increasing social and environmental conscientiousness of this demographic sets them  
90 apart from older generations. They are key actors in climate action, working towards  
91 endgoals like conserving nature, supporting renewable energy, raising awareness,  
92 promoting sustainable lifestyles, running educational programmes, and implementing or  
93 supporting adaptation and mitigation projects, displaying a keen enthusiasm and resilience  
94 throughout. T&T activist Sean McCoon, at the Stockholm+50 Youth National Forum in April  
95 2022 [3], was quoted as saying, "*Our actions are what inspire the next generation. In my  
96 experience as an environmental activist, you'll find that it is the younger ones who are  
97 interested in doing.*"

98

99 Figureheads such as Greta Thunberg, Archana Soreng, and Vanessa Nakate exemplify a  
100 unified and dedicated mission to combat climate change, representing a tiny fraction of youth  
101 climate activists. Climate advocacy invites actions of all kinds, ranging from establishing  
102 networks, leveraging social media for education and visibility, building capacity through  
103 workshops or educational materials, and engaging in policy by both campaigning or directly

104 contributing [4]. The climate space is multidisciplinary and there are many avenues. For  
105 example, interactions and engagement with the United Nations by attending public events,  
106 membership in the major groups, or being consulted as a stakeholder are some examples of  
107 climate advocacy at the global multilateral level [5]. Youth are also making a presence at  
108 varying climate conference, most notably the United Nations Framework Convention on  
109 Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP) which is becoming very heavily subscribed.  
110 COP26 was attended by hundreds of youth and was accompanied by a massive street  
111 protest, the pre-conference Conference of Youth, and the Youth4Climate Pre-COP event in  
112 Milan, Italy. At the UN level, there is also Jayathma Wickramanayake who is the Secretary-  
113 General's Envoy on Youth, and the Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group of nine  
114 accomplished activists, among many other initiatives.

115

116 Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) has a vibrant civil society environment, with over 100 registered  
117 civil society organisations (CSOs) dealing with environmental protection [6] working largely  
118 in biodiversity conservation, environmental education, climate change, disaster risk  
119 reduction, waste management, and sustainable agriculture, effecting meaningful change on  
120 the ground and addressing priority needs. In terms of youth involvement, there are very few  
121 youth-focused CSOs (notable examples include the UWI Biological Society, the Caribbean  
122 Youth Environment Network T&T chapter, the T&T Youth Advocacy Network, and  
123 lamovement). Despite this, there have been a number of events and initiatives designed and  
124 populated by youth. In November 2015, lamovement hosted a climate march to show  
125 national support for adopting the Paris Agreement of COP21 [7], accompanied by an "Eco-  
126 Village" where attendees could visit booths and meet environmentally conscious  
127 organisations. In 2019, agitated students carried out a climate strike in opposition to  
128 government inaction [8]. The T&T chapter of the Caribbean Youth Environment Network  
129 successfully implemented a project called Learn and Flow, aimed at increasing awareness of  
130 water resource issues in selected watersheds around Trinidad [9]. T&T activism tends to be  
131 artistic in general, specifically making use of spoken word [10]. A prime example is the New

132 Fire Festival that was held annually between 2016 and 2019 [11], with an ongoing hiatus due  
133 to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a social entrepreneurship initiative using an eco-music and  
134 arts festival format, placing sustainability and community as its guiding focus.

135

136 In the Caribbean, climate advocacy becomes an issue of survival. The Caribbean, being  
137 largely made up of Small Island Developing States, is extremely susceptible to the changing  
138 climate, due to their small size, limited resource base, growing populations, relative isolation,  
139 high concentration of settlements and infrastructure along low-lying coastal strips, and a  
140 population dependence on agricultural activities [12, 13]. The 1.5 To Stay Alive campaign,  
141 launched ahead of COP21, was a desperate plea to UN member states to adhere to future  
142 warming of no more than 1.5C above the pre-industrial baseline [14] to minimise harmful  
143 positive feedback loops in the climate. As a result of this campaign, a maximum cap of  
144 warming was formalised as 1.5 degrees Celsius instead of the proposed 2. In preparation  
145 for the COP26 in 2021, the campaign was transmuted by CYEN in partnership with the  
146 United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund into Stay Alive and Thrive,  
147 expressing a vision for the Caribbean to be resilient in the face of disaster [15].

148

149 Climate resilience is now an endgoal of advocacy, alongside adaptation and mitigation. It  
150 occupies a unique niche in which the aim is not simply to reverse the effects of climate  
151 change or learn to live with it, but to actively thrive in an environment which may soon  
152 become unlivable. Climate resilience is defined as “the ability to anticipate, absorb,  
153 accommodate, or recover from climate change in a timely and efficient manner” [16], a  
154 suitable vision for the Caribbean when warming currently sits at 1.2C. Resilience is often  
155 seen as the other end of a spectrum, of which vulnerability is the reverse, though where the  
156 application of the vulnerability theory focuses on increasing adaptability, resilience in a  
157 practical sense will focus on ensuring the sustainability of natural resources and human  
158 communities [17]. The Caribbean, specifically T&T, must learn to become resilient to climate

159 impacts, and this can be reliably accomplished by taking stock of climate-conscious active  
160 young people and integrating them into the wider scope of action.

161

162 This paper examines the experiences of youth in the climate advocacy sector in T&T and  
163 makes the argument that youth are fundamental to climate resilience and should be explicitly  
164 considered as actors and stakeholders.

165

166 Research question: What are the experiences of youth (ages 18 to 35) in the climate  
167 advocacy sector in T&T, and how do young people in T&T contribute to climate resilience?

168

169 Hypothesis: Young people in T&T are key assets in moving towards climate resilience.

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172

### **Method**

173 Youth is defined here as 10 to 35 years of age [18] consistent with the National Youth Policy  
174 (2020-2025) which provides a demographic profile of youth and attempts a census of the  
175 main activities in which they are engaged. It is estimated that there are approximately  
176 436,000 young people (40% of the national population of Trinidad and Tobago). For the  
177 purposes of this study, only youth 18 years and older were considered, to eliminate ethical  
178 concerns of interviewing minors. To further narrow down the target population, only youths  
179 who are “active” were selected. For the purposes of this study, “active” was taken to mean  
180 those who are actively working in climate activism (within civil society as employee or  
181 voluntary position, or as an individual) or employed in any private or public organisation with  
182 a focus on climate work.

183

184 A qualitative approach was deemed necessary to answer the research topic. The research  
185 topic is previously unexplored in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, so hard data is  
186 largely nonexistent unless extrapolated from studies done elsewhere.

187

188 The main data collection tool was an online focus group. A call for focus group applicants  
189 was made and a Google sign-up form was disseminated. Six focus groups were run in  
190 February-March 2022, consisting of 3-5 participants each, using the online video  
191 conferencing platform Zoom so that participants were not placed at risk of contracting  
192 COVID-19 in an in-person meeting. A series of premade questions were used to guide the  
193 discussion (see Appendix), and the primary investigator made notes of the discussion,  
194 including useful quotes.

195

196 The notes from the discussions were typed into a spreadsheet. Poignant quotes were  
197 included. The data was then run through a manual content analysis, looking for broad  
198 themes and notable points.

199

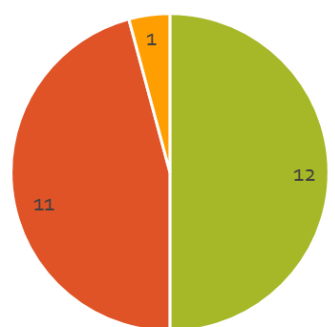
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### **Results and discussion**

202

Gender of participants



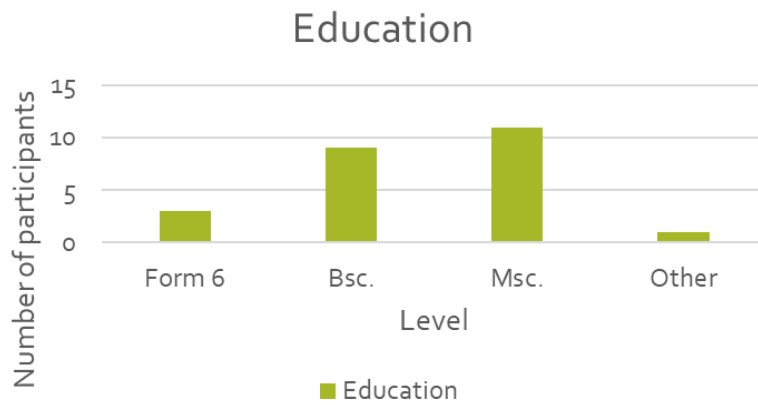
■ Male ■ Female ■ Non-binary

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Figure 1: Genders of participants

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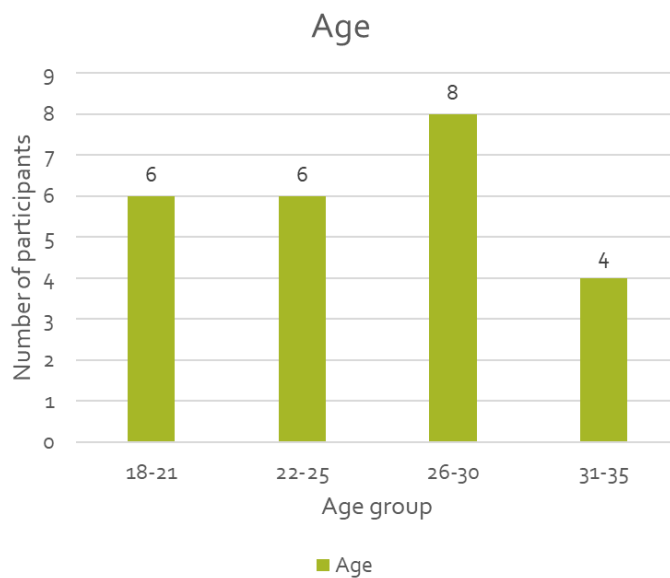
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Figure 2: Educational levels of participants

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Figure 3: Ages of participants

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214 Participants were roughly gender-balanced (Figure 1), so a gender bias in results is unlikely.

215 Of the 24 participants, the vast majority (21) had completed or were currently enrolled in a

216 tertiary education programme (Figure 2). Three participants were Form 6 students who were



217 members of their school environmental club. There was one outlier who completed  
218 secondary school and began a bachelor's degree in communications but dropped out  
219 without finishing. The high proportion of tertiary-educated participants likely had an effect on  
220 responses, in that they were more aware of climate impacts and were able to link it to  
221 science, and in terms of the activities they chose to do to tackle climate change. Similarly,  
222 there were 18 people spread between the three older age cohorts (Figure 3), at a time in  
223 their lives when they would be conceivably out of tertiary education and embarking on  
224 lifelong careers, so participants would be much more direct and self-assured in their chosen  
225 activities.

226

227 All participants were able to describe an understanding of resilience, either in the relevant  
228 terms of a natural disaster or in a general sense. In their descriptions, some were able to  
229 touch on concepts within resilience, such as how resilience is an ideal- it can only be striven  
230 towards but never fully achieved, while others talked about resilience as being a societal and  
231 economic capacity. When asked to describe Trinidad and Tobago as climate resilient, the  
232 majority of participants presented a nuanced view, hesitating to say "yes" or "no" but  
233 explaining in great detail. The general view was that Trinidad and Tobago has several  
234 projects and policies to improve climate resilience but they remain impeded by lack of  
235 political will and public support. There is also minimal disaster preparedness. Only two  
236 participants gave a concrete "no". When asked to describe how their work played into  
237 climate resilience, there was often hesitation as participants did not pursue the work towards  
238 a goal of resilience, rather to simply make changes where they could in the interest of  
239 environmental conservation and sustainable development. Twelve participants linked their  
240 work to the goal of educating the public and their peers, understanding that awareness is a  
241 first step, or as one participant said, "*Awareness leads to rethinking. The more the public is*  
242 *aware, the better they can be prepared and hold the government accountable.*" This seems  
243 to be the main way that youth are contributing to climate resilience.

244

245 Motivation fit into the following six broad themes:

- 246 ● Always been interested in environmental issues
- 247 ● Exposure and influence of education/media
- 248 ● Climate anxiety, needs to do something to change the course of history
- 249 ● Trying to soften the effects of the future or influence adaptation efforts (“collective  
250 responsibility”)
- 251 ● Environmental stewardship- inherited the earth and aren’t taking care of it (“leave the  
252 world as you found it or better”)
- 253 ● Caring about current and future generations, want to leave behind a livable world

254

255 There is a strong theme of responsibility and caring about environmental issues. Passion for  
256 the environment is a driver of action [19]. Interestingly, none of the participants were  
257 motivated to act because they had been personally affected by climate change. Most had  
258 been affected in some way, like one participant who lived in Greenvale, Trinidad at the time  
259 of the 2018 flood and suffered heavy material losses. It reinforced pre-existing ambition but it  
260 did not inform their actions. They were able to connect impacts experienced with science  
261 about climate change. This implies an awareness of climate science and the urgency  
262 needed. One could also infer a sense of altruism, of wanting to act for the sake of other  
263 people. There was a sense of disillusionment in a few participants who felt as though they  
264 were paying for the actions of other people, summarised in the following quotes: *“If no one  
265 else cares, then I have to care”* (speaking to the feeling of responsibility” and *“It feels like  
266 running a marathon I wasn’t prepared for”* (indicating the mental and emotional toll of taking  
267 on that responsibility to ensure what they believe is a brighter, more sustainable future).

268

269 A few people directly cited exposure to environmental media, like the animated show  
270 Captain Planet, and others said they had a primary/secondary school curriculum inclusive of  
271 environmental studies. Environmental education at a young age, particularly up to eight  
272 years old, can have a lifelong impact on literacy, environmental concerns, and participation

273 in pro-environment behaviours [20]. One participant said she only became interested in the  
274 environment because of a biology course she took for her bachelor's degree. In terms of  
275 school exposure, formal education has been observed to provide a strong multiplier effect on  
276 a person's initial pro-environmental feelings [21, 22] and despite no significant correlation  
277 existing between knowledge and activism on climate change, correlation can be made  
278 between knowledge and attitudes and between attitudes and activism [5].

279

280 Three participants admitted feeling a sense of climate anxiety, which is now becoming  
281 recognised as a mental health phenomenon explicitly related to climate change and feeling a  
282 sense of doom about the future. Children and young people are beginning to report higher  
283 rates of concern and anxiety about climate change and the future of the planet [5] especially  
284 those living in SIDS [23], as is dissatisfaction with government responses which can  
285 exacerbate negative feelings and impact daily functioning [1]. This is not a condemnation  
286 upon those suffering with climate anxiety as it can actually be the source of action. Fear  
287 motivates action by raising awareness of the threat of climate catastrophe [24]. The  
288 "paralyzing potential of fear" is mediated by hope: hope propels action while collective action  
289 generates hope and manages fear. However, this is a generalisation; Global South youth  
290 representatives in the same study did not only feel fear, but anger as a driving emotion; hope  
291 and anger combine to manage acute fear. Hope lies in collective action but also in the "angry  
292 ascription of responsibility to the Global North".

293

294 There were a wide range of jobs and activities recorded. The various activities are listed  
295 below as profiles:

- 296 • *Job working in Ministry of Youth Development and National Service*
- 297 • *Students in their secondary school environmental club*
- 298 • *Sustainability coordinator for T&T Red Cross*
- 299 • *Working in Antigua and Barbuda Department of Environment*

- 300 • *Founder and director of an environmental consultancy*
- 301 • *EMA GIS analyst*
- 302 • *Managing two local NGOs and lobbying Tobago House of Assembly*
- 303 • *Children’s book author and volunteer for over 10 years*
- 304 • *Members of Sustainable Ocean Alliance (Caribbean) and tertiary students in*
- 305 *environmental programmes*
- 306 • *World Bank energy consultant and runs a social media educational account*
- 307 • *Energy expert and podcast host on climate change in Caribbean*
- 308 • *Climate journalist*
- 309 • *Renewable energy master’s student*
- 310 • *Various other unpaid work like a voluntary analysis of T&T Nationally Determined*
- 311 *Contribution, offering time to the T&T Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity, CYEN-TT*
- 312 *members*

313

314 Activities were analysed in light of the topology presented by O’Brien, Selboe, and Hayward  
 315 [25], in which the authors discussed youth climate activism in terms of dissent, as not all  
 316 forms of activism are the same, ranging from symbolic acts to political mobilisation. They  
 317 identified three categories, those being dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous. Dutiful dissent is  
 318 expressed through joining or lending support to activities that endorse existing and emerging  
 319 institutions and social norms to express resistance to dominant practices. Disruptive dissent  
 320 seeks to modify or change existing political and economic structures, which include norms,  
 321 rules, regulations, and institutions. Dangerous dissent defies business as usual by initiating,  
 322 developing, and actualizing alternatives that inspire and sustain long-term transformations. It  
 323 is called “dangerous” because it actively subverts the status quo and generates new  
 324 systems. All of the activities noted in this research fell under “dutiful”, despite the expectation  
 325 that some examples of “disruptive” might crop up. For example, hosting a podcast on climate  
 326 change in the Caribbean, running a social media account to disseminate information,

327 lobbying a government body, and publishing cutting-edge climate journalism are all  
 328 proactive, but in no way disruptive or dangerous (in the sense described above). Dutiful  
 329 actions reflect a sense of responsibility for others but does not challenge structural issues  
 330 and power imbalances. However, dutiful dissent should not be mistaken for pandering to the  
 331 status quo; rather, it shows that activists in this category are committed to change and  
 332 appreciate the significance of “exploiting windows of opportunity within current structures  
 333 and systems” [25], and it plays a constructive role in keeping conversations about climate  
 334 change at the forefront and ensuring that responses are prioritised and enacted through  
 335 policies and practices. In fact, the environmental movement in the United States between  
 336 1970 and 2000 falls within this category (known in this context as “reformist  
 337 environmentalism”), and it paved the way for the “Big Ten” organisations such as the  
 338 Wilderness Society, Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club, and the National Wildlife  
 339 Federation to set up offices in Washington D.C. and join the lobbying establishment [26].

340  
 341 Participants were asked to describe any barriers to involvement they may have noticed or  
 342 experienced, and responses fell within cultural, financial, age, gender, and other,  
 343 summarised in Table 1. Responses within each category have been ranked from most  
 344 common to least common, in the order of top to bottom. It should be noted that these are  
 345 subjective responses and not all of the barriers can be addressed with the available  
 346 literature. The points that are discussed subsequently have been underlined in the table.

347

348 Table 1: Barriers to Youth Engagement in Trinidad and Tobago

<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Financial</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Other</b>
<u>Environment is not considered to be important</u>	Funding is limited	Older people are not willing to change their	Women are treated more disparagingly	Strong laws but slow bureaucracy

		ways or listen to young people. There is an age ranking for how important one's opinion is		and failure to enforce existing laws and policies
<u>Population doesn't know about climate impacts, understand the science, or care. Low scientific literacy and resistance to learning</u>	<u>Jobs in the climate space are limited, barrier to entry-level, compacency in employees in existing jobs, high competition among university graduates</u>	When included, the action tends to be tokenistic	Male perspectives are dominant and valued higher	Barrier of entry to set up NGOs
Lackadaisical attitude	Private sector is not open to finding projects	<u>Young people don't have the power and influence they need. Display more interest in climate change but tend to be</u>	Women are suspected to make up the majority of environmental volunteers in T&T but many CSOs are male-	Using environmental projects as a farce to look good to the public/investors

		<u>dismissed due to age</u>	led or have a male figurehead and their opinions are treated as more valuable	
Assuming climate change and resilience are the responsibility of the government	T&T Green Fund is difficult to access for projects	Quote: “A young person walking into room to speak about critical issues will receive standoffish and skeptical response but they warm up eventually. ‘What he know about dem kinda ting’, ‘he’s a lil young boy’. There is emphasis placed on the age of messenger”	“Women want to step forward and become part of effort but because of cultural and gender culture, women are much less confident and assertive”	Collaborations between private sector and civil society- "transition needs to be a partnership". Fossil fuel energy producers in TT are resistant to change while CSOs refuse to collaborate

<p>T&amp;T culture does not treat young people with respect so it is harder to enact change</p>	<p><i>Quote: "There is a financial divide of have and have-nots. Steps are being taken to remove barriers but a long way off"</i></p>			<p>Lack of transparency- about climate policies that are happening and about gaps</p>
<p>Climate change is not an attractive topic so it is not widely appealing</p>				<p>Data gaps and inefficient data sharing systems</p>

349

350 Cultural

351 Caribbean culture, according to Hollis [27], can be distilled into three ideal types: a culture of  
352 non-participation, caused by a reluctance to embrace the turbulent past and which limits  
353 depth of vision for the future; a culture of non-maintenance linked to relaxed attitudes  
354 towards present and future; and that the present is "locked" into an "ephemeral state-of-  
355 being", characterised by fluidity in large portions of the population "constituted by a struggle  
356 with the past and an unclear vision of the future" [27]. Hollis describes these as determinants  
357 of social resilience in disaster risk management, but they can be extrapolated to understand  
358 the lax view of the environment expressed in Table 1. This is further supported by Persadie  
359 and Ramlogan [28], who note that developing countries, typically in the Global South, are not  
360 usually in a position to give priority to environmental management because they have not  
361 achieved certain development objectives and cannot afford to divert financial resources for



362 “lower priority” issues. With particular emphasis on this point, two participants described how  
363 their environmental passions were criticised by family and peers; one participant was told  
364 growing up that "*the work you do will not matter*", while another was criticized for choosing  
365 an environmental degree since it does not pay well and is for people who are “not smart”.

366

367 The Environmental Management Authority conducted a national environmental awareness  
368 survey in 2020 [29] and found that three key demographics, household, schools (forms 3-6),  
369 and industry all scored 56%, 51%, and 63% in terms of literacy, but found a “broken linkage”  
370 from attitude to behaviour. This was theorised to be because of historical and cultural  
371 behaviours and norms around interaction with the environment and a lack of support  
372 infrastructure and programmes for pro-environment practices.

373

#### 374 Financial

375 Small states are especially prone to brain drain, occurring at a rate five times that of all  
376 developing countries, twelve times that of high-income countries, and eight times the world  
377 average [30]. T&T has been dealing with brain drain which is compounded by a national  
378 economy that has been contracting for years and thus is unable to absorb the graduates  
379 exiting the numerous secondary and tertiary education institutions, according to former  
380 Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Kevin Ramnarine [31]. T&T has an On-the-Job  
381 Training programme and its National Youth Policy for 2020-2025 [18] has identified priority  
382 areas to engage youth in short-term employment programmes and to optimise employment  
383 opportunities in emerging green and blue economies, but this appears to be inadequate.  
384 This is corroborated by two participants who found it necessary to migrate in order to find  
385 jobs in the environmental sphere, one who is working for the Antigua and Barbuda  
386 Department of Environment and another who found employment as an energy consultant in  
387 Guyana. One other participant migrated to St. Lucia also attempting to find gainful  
388 employment, but she abandoned her original career dream of being a veterinarian or  
389 biologist in favour of starting an accounting firm since green jobs are limited.

390

391 Age

392 The Caribbean is home to two contrasting perspectives regarding youth. Firstly, the “asset-  
393 based discourse” which takes a rights-based standpoint and “speaks to the recognition of  
394 young people as key agents for social change, economic growth and technological  
395 innovation” [32]. The asset-based discourse is the guiding philosophy of the majority of  
396 United Nations resolutions and publications relating to youth development, as well as  
397 global/regional youth-centred bodies like the Commonwealth Youth Programme,  
398 Commonwealth Youth Climate Change Network, and Caribbean Regional Youth Council.  
399 Conversely, the “deficit discourse” has been prevalent in the Caribbean for decades and can  
400 be traced back to the post-Emancipation period [32]. The deficit discourse posits youth as  
401 problems to be addressed, social deviants, broken or at risk of being broken. It is still  
402 prevalent in the relations between older and younger generations, evidenced by the  
403 examples given in Table 1. However, this seems to be a pliable barrier; as the excerpted  
404 quote in the table states, youth receive “standoffish” reception but the older generations  
405 “warm up eventually”. Despite this, another participant expressed frustration, saying, “*I can*  
406 *suggest a solution but I’m not in a position to influence*” because her age is disregarded.

407

408 Limitations of study

409 This study would have benefited from the use of a written survey, either independently or  
410 alongside the focus groups. Use of closed-ended questions would have provided  
411 quantifiable data points, like those in a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice survey format.  
412 The data was inherently biased as there were not as many people signing up to participate  
413 as was anticipated, so most of the participants were directly approached and beseeched to  
414 participate. These participants were either existing colleagues or were tracked down through  
415 networks. As such, the data was not truly random.

416

417

418 Management implications

419 The lack of funding was censured in the focus groups. It would be simplistic to suggest to  
420 provide more money, but this would be troublesome in a contracting economy that is  
421 influencing brain drain of passionate and educated young people. Where possible, funding  
422 should be provided for the facilitation of education and capacity building and to access  
423 resources to carry out resilience activities. The National Youth Policy states that one of its  
424 priorities is to “to optimise employment opportunities in emerging green and blue economies”  
425 [18]. If this goal is critically revisited for T&T, it would theoretically solve many problems at  
426 once: it would provide meaningful employment in the environmental sector and minimise  
427 youth brain drain, increase country resilience, improve sustainability (ILO 2019), and it could  
428 usher in economic upturn. A mentorship programme for young people who wish to advance  
429 in existing green jobs, as suggested by some participants, would facilitate the transfer of  
430 skills and experience to the incoming workforce. The Stockholm+50 Youth National Forum,  
431 hosted by the United Nations Development Programme in April 2022, concluded that there is  
432 a need for enhanced environment and climate education and awareness, support to youth  
433 green projects and innovations, and partnerships [34].

434

435

436

**Conclusion**

437 Youth have boisterously made their presence known in countries around the world and it is  
438 no different in T&T. This study is the first of its kind in T&T and in the wider Caribbean and  
439 may provide a baseline for structured youth engagement as it provides a qualitative view into  
440 the conditions experienced by active youth on the ground. Youth have long been  
441 acknowledged as changemakers and stakeholders, and having the scientific backing will  
442 ease any transitions into including youth on community and policy scales. In short, youth are  
443 highly motivated in climate action because of a deep passion for environmental protection  
444 and wanting to maintain a livable future for next generations. Motivations are influenced by  
445 exposure to environmental media and education, and spurred by climate anxiety. Several

446 activities were noted in how the participants interfaced with climate action. Upon further  
447 investigation, all were aligned to the category of “dutiful dissent” which indicates a  
448 commitment to climate action and simply that participants chose to exploit pre-existing  
449 windows of opportunity rather than forge new pathways. A number of barriers to  
450 engagement were collected, which fell into the categories of cultural, financial, gender, age,  
451 and other. As for how youth are contributing to climate resilience, education and awareness  
452 is the tool of choice, laying groundwork for the public to be more resilient and equipping  
453 them with the knowledge to demand stronger policies.

454 Research of any kind involving environmental attitudes and behaviours is sparse in the  
455 Caribbean despite its importance in the coming years. Any research into tangential fields  
456 such as educational exposure, individual behaviours, youth as a demographic (and not just  
457 the “activists”), perception of the environment by the general public, and even the input of  
458 LGBTQ+ members all have serious potential in climate resilience. Rather than keeping  
459 research broad, as demonstrated in this study, it is recommended to pick a niche topic.

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