

## *Draft Report: PROJECT CLIMATEZ*

### Introduction: Problem Statement

My project is called 'Project ClimateZ'. Project ClimateZ is a step towards reclaiming the climate fight narrative that has unfortunately been led by the false narratives propagated by capitalism, consumerism and patriarchy. Often called the '*doom and gloom*' approach to the fight against climate change, the so-called 'negative earth emotions' are in lockstep with the positive ones, as you cannot possibly have one without the other. Whether it is in casual conversations or academic and popular discourse, the narrative on climate change has been riddled with mysteries and tones of pessimism. More than anything else the indifference is plaguing our efforts for a collective climate future. Students like me have been taught to make laws, policies, and more so than not critique the institutions and the state. However, what we are not taught is to learn to ground ourselves or truly understand our emotions on climate change and justice. This is exactly why we fail to even respond to the issues of climate change and justice in a sensitive way. More so than not we tend to overcomplicate and stress over the data, numbers, graphs, information than look within to find emotional responses. Headlines such as, '*The narratives that developed nations are not doing enough*' do have an emotional baggage that we tend to forget. If nations are not able to tackle problems, how are we supposed to do it on such a small scale? On further inquiring whether they think they can do something to bring about a change at their respective individual levels, the answer has been a resounding no. Similarly, we often hear about how negotiations on climate are failing at international fora. This just shows that apocalyptic doom and gloom to get people to take climate change seriously is a busted flush. Feelings evoked are different however, all of them are products of a certain kind of doom and gloom.

Ideation of the project was not easy. I struggled for the longest time to come up with an idea. I stumbled upon two ideas before finally coming up with Project ClimateZ. I feel it is only when you cultivate mindfulness and stop overthinking that you start thinking in the right direction. I was in the class, watching the documentary on Sundarbans called '*Wade*'. On discussing with some of my other classmates about the movie, I realized that all of us shared a sense of despair. Very few (out of the 8 people I talked to, only 1) were able to have a positive takeaway. To quote one of my friends, *Aditya P. Phalnikar*, "*climate action is doomed to fail.*" Another friend of mine, *Esha Goyal* says, "*I don't think there is anything that can be done at this point*". I also undertook a poll

on whatsapp to understand how students were feeling about climate change (Annexure 1). I started asking a lot of questions to myself, this is also something I do for most of my other projects. Asking the what, how, why questions is very important for preliminary research. Once I answered these questions, I realized that unfortunately doom and gloom is extremely prevalent. Using doom and gloom so people take climate change seriously, just doesn't work. Upon research, I further came across books such as *'Earth Emotions'* and *'A Field Guide to Fight Climate Anxiety'* which soon formed the foundation on which I built the idea of Project ClimateZ. On reading some articles on it, I ideated this project.

### **Proposed Solution: Project ClimateZ (Instagram)**

By capitalising on the power of the youth and social media, this project seeks to speak to some of the most pressing yet unanswered questions on climate change. By highlighting alternative modes of thought and imagination and by coming up with bright-green solutions and communicative methods, Project ClimateZ believes it can truly transform the way we perceive our collective climate futures. On 26th April, I launched the page on instagram with its logo. The [first post](#) was the launch of the logo with Greta Thunberg's powerful voice in the backdrop. Since it went live, the post has gotten a lot of traction, i.e. 86 likes, 18 comments. The post has also gotten a total of 3,400 views in just a span of a few weeks. The logo was also launched with the motto-- "*think, reimagine and create*" along with [#nodoomandgloomhere](#). As of now, [the page](#) has about 110 followers (most of them are law students from NLSIU which was also my initial target audience) (Annexure 2). The page has also gotten support for its work from other well-established initiatives such as Climate Mental Health Network. The page is also followed by Climate Psychology Alliance, Initiative for Climate Action, Our Kids' Future, all of them are climate-based initiatives. For the short-term, Project ClimateZ focuses small steps some on which are:

- **Word. (Annexure 3):** Albrecht G had coined the term 'earth emotions' in his book, 'The Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World'. In this book he refers to the power of communication and how even the kind of words we use matters in evoking our emotions. It is on the basis of this idea that Project ClimateZ started the idea of 'Word.', a word-of-the-day initiative on climate justice and climate action. Under this initiative, we come up with words/phrases related to climate change and justice and explain it. While my initial thought was to only go with words of affirmative tones, however I realized that it wouldn't

serve the purpose. The idea is to identify and use the right words and for doing so we need to also know the words that cause anxiety, trigger stress. The first word of the day was climate optimism followed by eco-psychology and so on. We believe in taking this fight against doom and gloom, one word at a time.

- **Consciousness-raising (Annexure 4):** As I have mentioned above, the idea of Project ClimateZ was a product of tea-time conversations with friends. In order to make my motivation for this instagram be known, I curated a reel in which I interviewed a bunch of my friends on their feelings towards climate change and futures. With their consent, the reel was uploaded and garnered many likes and shares. The reel was used as a tool to educate people, raise consciousness about our feelings. This was also a way to come face to face with our emotions which is very important.
- **ClimateZ Playlist (Annexure 5):** Music can have a significant impact on anxiety and overall mental well-being. There are multiple ways to inculcate critical thinking, mindfulness and climate optimism. In addition to reading, writing and engaging in academic discourses, one of the finest ways of dealing with issues of doom and gloom is through the sound of the rain, the music of the mountains. Music, art and dance have always had the power of transformation and resistance. From slogans, chants, fashion to dance as an expression of revolt, forms of art have been tools of social movement, campaigning. Taking cue from this, we curated a [Spotify playlist of songs](#) related to climate, earth, environment etc. This was then shared not just on spotify but also on instagram. The post was uploaded on 16th May 2023, and has already garnered 530+ likes and a views of 1200 and counting. This reel has also helped the instagram page gain more traction from the youth people.
- **Open Letter (Annexure 6 and 7):** I penned down an emotional letter to the youth. In our efforts to fight doom and gloom, this letter evokes or at least tries to evoke the emotional side of the fight. We as students are most aware, educated on climate change, however somehow our emotions are the least accounted for. With this letter, we hope to make an impact in the way we think about climate change and justice. With this letter we plead with you to think, re-imagine and create our climate futures.

**Proposed solution (short term):** To create awareness among the youth about the ‘doom and gloom’ approach to climate change and its correlates. To educate youth about climate anxiety,

climate optimism, eco-grief and raise consciousness on it. Desired long term effect is to overthrow the doom and gloom approach with alternative approaches. First, expansion in platforms and modes to make information dissemination more accessible and available. We will go beyond Instagram and capitalise other social media and mainstream channels. Second, expansion in the consumer base by identifying different target groups. Once the project takes off and garners some following, it would be easier to conduct more holistic research and data collection from different sections of the society in order to cater to different aspirations of different people. Solution is to empower students to think, dream and create a newer future for themselves.

**Intended audience-** Students (short-term: NLSIU, long-term-college students)

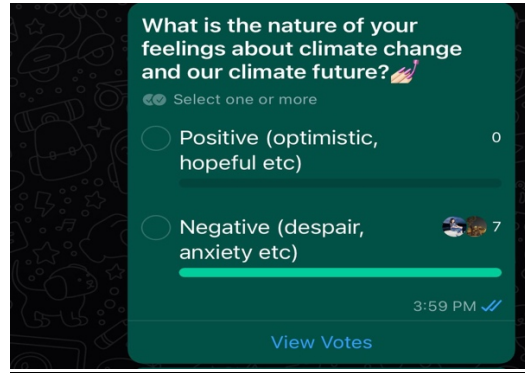
### **Empirical Analysis**

To assess the impact of the Project till now, there are two metrics: instagram statistics, google form.

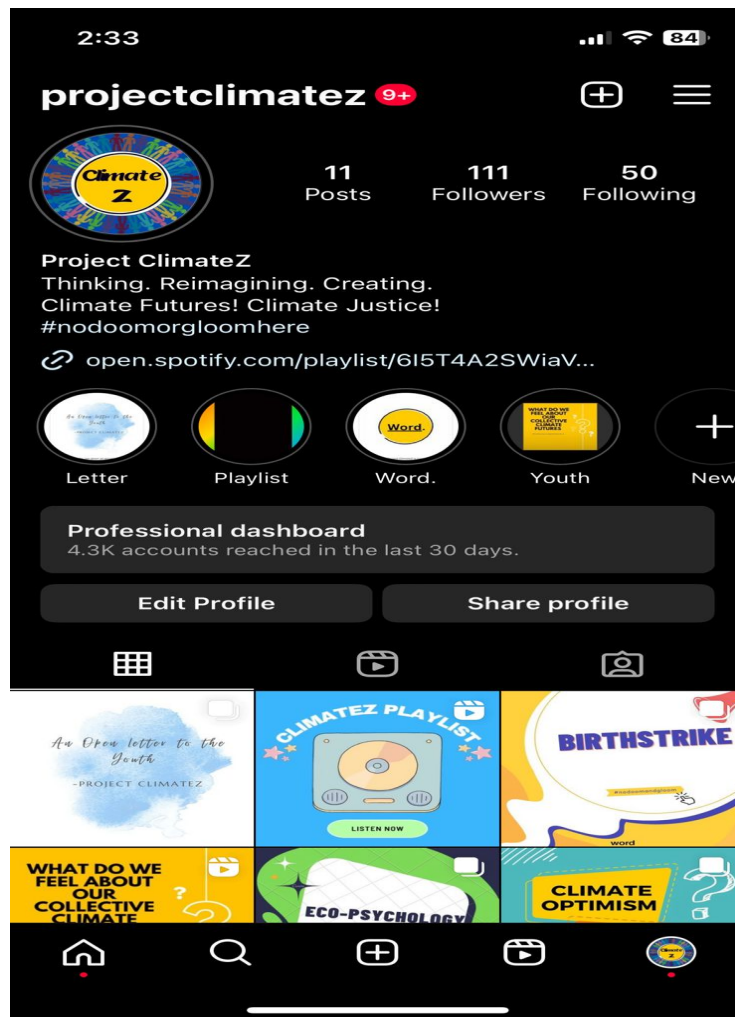
- **Instagram (Annexure 8):** The total number of followers is 111 (and counting) and the page follows about 49 accounts. The three reels that have been posted till date have cumulatively gotten more than 5000 views in the span of 20 days. The recently launched Spotify playlist has managed to get over 1000 views in just 2 days. This shows the potential this page has in making a meaningful impact on youth. According to instagram business analytics, about 4307 accounts were reached in the last 30 days out of which 4227 were not even followers of the page. There is a +3600% increase in the number of followers ever since we started and the total number of active engagements with accounts is 658.
- **Google Form:** A google form was circulated through whatsapp, instagram to gauge the impact of the page and each of its components. The detailed analysis can be found below in the annexures. Questions framed are annexed below. A bunch of 7 questions were asked out of which 6 were objective and one was subjective in nature. Out of the 24 responses received till now, the graphs show that the impact of the page has been substantial.

Therefore, Instagram along with google form results show that Project ClimateZ may have been able to move the needle, if not change the entire conversation altogether.

## Annexure I



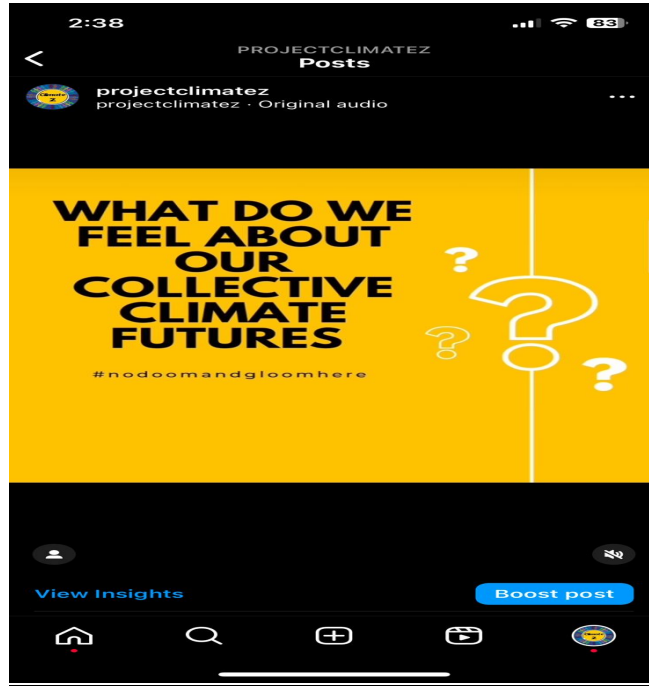
## Annexure 2



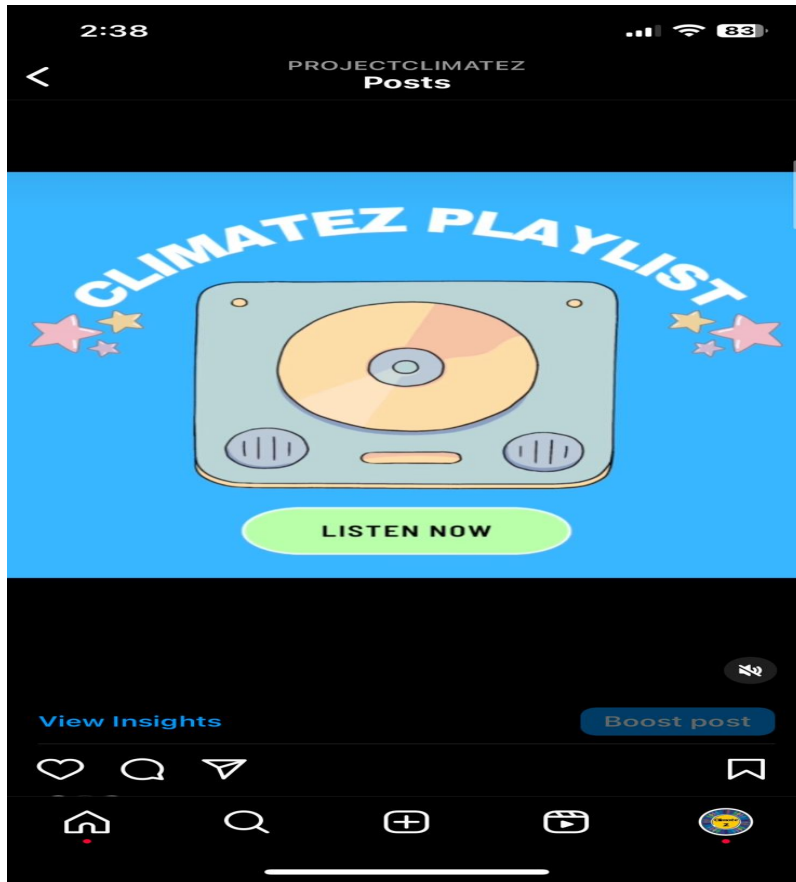
### Annexure 3



### Annexure 4



Annexure 5



## Annexure 6



## Annexure 7

Hello,

As I sit to write this letter, I am aware that as a generation we have seen and experienced a lot. From the pandemic to a war, we have witnessed death, despair and immense hardship. Irrespective of our background and where we find ourselves in life, I believe our lives have been tied to a common fate. Through the emissions to the rising sea levels, we tend to find our world in a chaos. As a generation, we have the baggage of doing things better than our elders and an obligation to do it well for our children. With such responsibility comes a sense of purpose. It also comes with a fair bit of anxiety, confusion, reluctance and indifference. While all of that is true, we have to be more cognisant in our approach and perspective to the issues of climate change and justice.

Let me tell you about the doom and gloom approach, as I have realized a lot of us fail to recognise its impact only because we don't understand it.

Elin Kelsey says that our worries about climate affect us personally. Kelsey says, "*they influence what we choose to eat or how we get to work, they keep us awake at night, they make us grieve for*



*the world we are leaving to our grandchildren. They trigger depression.*” In layman's terms, the doom and gloom approach to climate change refers to the communication and portrayal of the severe consequences and catastrophic scenarios associated with climate change. The all-humans-are-bad-for-nature narrative does not cultivate the agency that is required to get us up in the morning and get us working on the problems that affect our generation and our collective climate futures. The problem is much beyond lack of action, I believe it starts with the lack of understanding. As more and more forms of knowledge of environmental sciences come up with newer understandings of the world, it becomes even more difficult to agree upon even about what the ‘problem of climate change is’, let alone come up with a solution. The multiple epistemologies, be it scientific or traditional, makes climate change and the quest for climate justice elusive. The claims to know the “truth” about climate are themselves complicated by divergent histories, politics, identities, geographies, societies, cultures. What does the term ‘nature’ or ‘climate’ really entail is contentious and leads to structuring of competing epistemologies and subjective experiences, each claiming to be the most legitimate one than the other. Handling such competing truths at the same time is tough and stressful, something which I found to be the case of many of us over my informal conversations and chit-chats. Some of us feel surpassing the diplomatically-determined point of no-return to be the last straw while others just fall prey to confirmation biases. Even then if there is any space left, we find ourselves *‘infowhelmed’*. In the information world, the climate movement is led by what Kari Norgaard calls ‘the myth of information deficit’---an idea that in order to make a decision and have an impact on the climate, people need more sciences, information, knowledge and evidence. However, numbers and data are only as objective as their determiners. Furthermore, using numbers and data to get people to care about climate change devoids the entire movement of meaning, emotions and feelings.

How are emotions, especially ‘earth emotions’ not important in our fight for the future? Albrecht G had coined the term ‘earth emotions’ in his book, ‘The Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World’. It is on the basis of this idea that Project ClimateZ started the idea of ‘Word.’, a word-of-the-day initiative on climate justice and climate action. Just like Albrecht, I believe that positive and negative earth emotions are in lockstep, as you cannot have one without the other. On one hand, you have emotions of despair, anxiety and frustration, on the other hand you might also have optimism and contentment. What I feel is required is channeling of the positive ones over the others. To focus on *‘terrancia’* more than *‘terrathora’*.

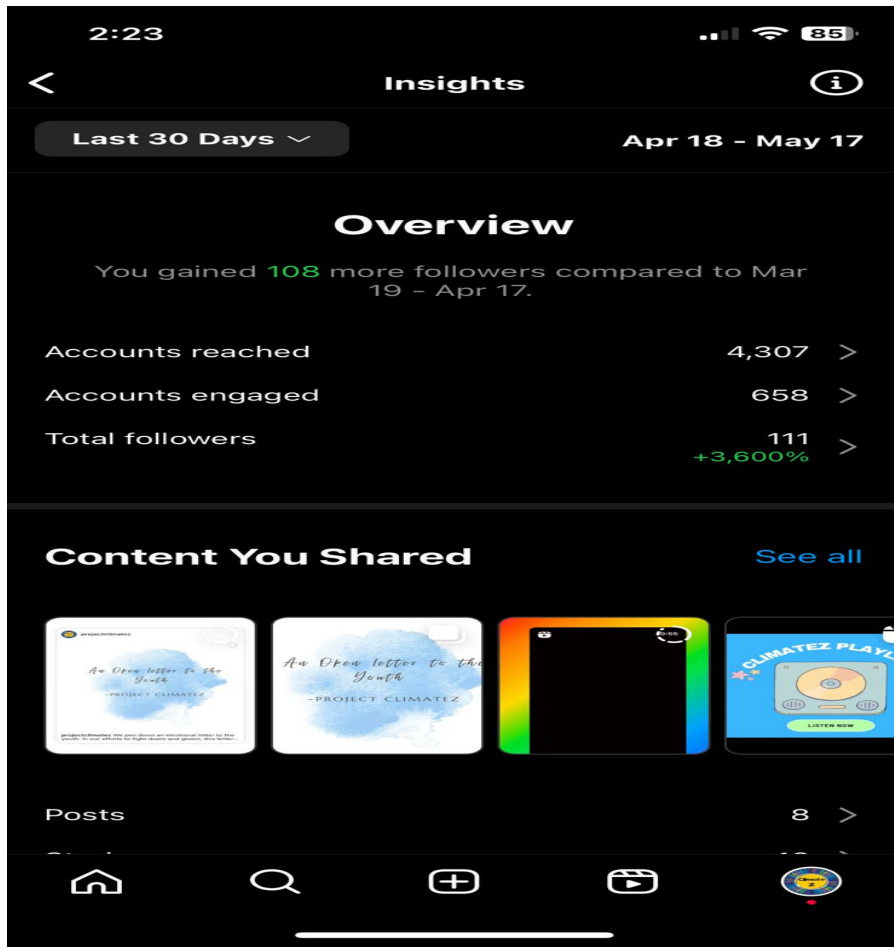
As law students, we find ourselves most familiar and comfortable with laws, treaties and texts. We are trained to compartmentalize our emotions. This is very similar to how we fail to account for our emotions in the fight for climate justice. There is a strange silence about the emotional impact of the ways in which we talk about the climate. While I am aware that climate change along with climate anxiety impacts and affects everybody differently, for some people it can exacerbate other sources of despair or stress, including colonization, military service, displacement and sexualised violence. Having done courses on climate change law, policy and environment, I concur with Esper Stoknes extension of Norgaard’s idea of information deficit. I agree that as we as students learn more and more about climate change in the way we are taught, there is a chance that we might grow to resist it altogether. This is also something that came across as the undertone of my preliminary research. We find ourselves in a hard place, particularly because for us climate disruptions isn't a hypothetical future possibility, it is already here. What makes the case of youth (us) even more precarious is how we are trapped in such narratives. As much as we all know and truly believe that climate change is real, the narratives around it are as Abhayraj Naik says is propagated by the likes of capitalism, consumerism and patriarchy. To quote Sarah J Ray, students

cannot visualize a future. Given the amount of doom-and-gloom content freely available in pop culture, such as movies, books and songs, we are at the receiving end of this capitalist-cum-consumer-project. As Mitul Baruah would say, young people are watching more apocalyptic content merely because it is produced more. No wonder, we face issues of eco-anxiety, climate despair, solastalgia, anticipatory grief. More than anything we face *'politics of passivity'* and believe that it's all over and done. Even climate change education fails to account for student's emotional lives, even though research shows that emotions are central to the movement. Therefore, there is a need to cultivate the muscle of radical imagination needed to dream together beyond fear. The very first step is to empower the youth to think and dream of a future.

With this letter, I ask you to ground yourselves. I ask you to connect with your inner-selves to know your emotions better. It is only when one identifies their emotions and feelings that one can act on it. While anxiety can be a rational response to the world that climate models predict, it is not sustainable. I also write to you to cultivate climate wisdom, an understanding that our ability to respond to climate change and justice is shaped more by our emotional selves than rational selves. I wish you to cultivate mindfulness. I hope you rethink who the 'enemy' is to change your emotional orientation towards climate futures. Critical thinking-induced radical imagination about the desire for a collective future is needed. I urge you to think, reimagine and create!

### Annexure 8

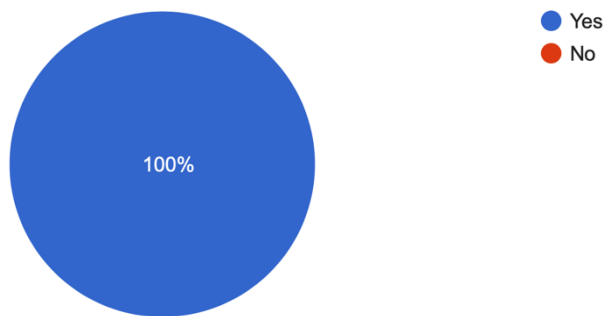




Annexure 9

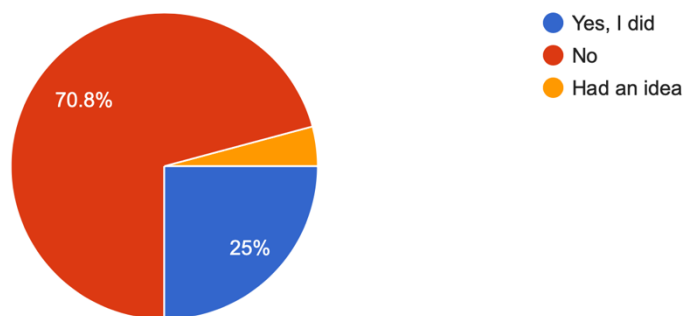
Do you follow ClimateZ on Instagram?

24 responses



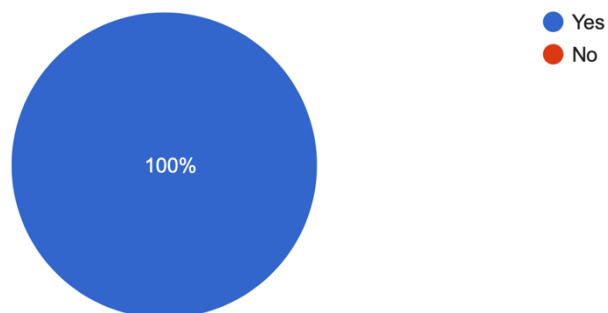
Did you know about doom and gloom approach before following ClimateZ

24 responses



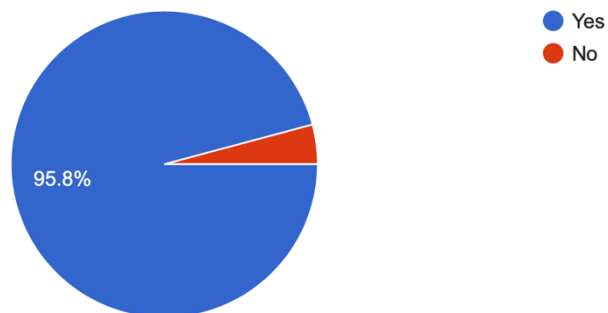
Do you think ClimateZ has contributed to your understanding of 'doom and gloom'?

24 responses



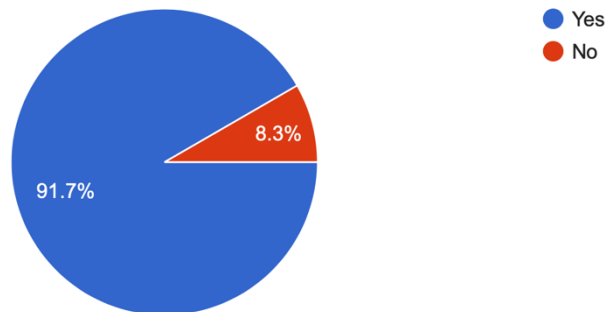
Did you listen to the ClimateZ Playlist?

24 responses



### Did you read the 'Open letter' to the Youth?

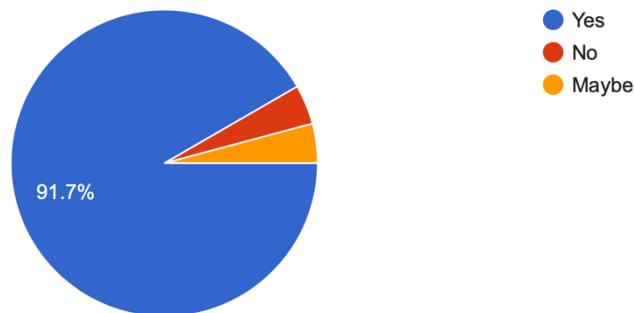
24 responses



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### Was the letter impactful?

24 responses



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It has made me more hopeful. Anyway things are bad, being sad about it won't help.  
I broadened my views on the subject and enlightened my understanding  
It has helped me understand climate change more effectively  
I believe that I myself was a gloom and doom person when it came to climate justice.  
ClimateZ Introduced me to this new way of thinking and for that I'm very thankful to it. The playlist compiled by ClimateZ was very interesting. Plus the way they introduced word of the day also introduced me to these new terms which I was not aware of before. All in all, ClimateZ has had a huge impact on my way of thinking towards climate justice.

yes  
Pretty enriching  
A better understanding of doom and gloom approach  
It helped me in acquiring a more clear, and coherent understanding of what can be the alternative options to deal with the different aspects of climate and the underlying changes  
Peaceful

## What impact ClimateZ has had on your understanding of climate justice ?

- Gave me a deeper perspective on eco anxiety
  - Yes
  - It has made me aware
  - Wow
  - It is an interactive way to understand complex ideas. Good job!
  - It helped me understand that constantly focusing on worst case scenarios can lead to feelings of helplessness, despair and disengagement.
  - Gave a lot of knowledge on climate change which I did not have
  - I think ClimateZ has broadened my understanding of the reality and seriousness of climate change, and that we need to take immediate action (even if in the form of small contributions) to tackle climate change.
  - Immensely increased my understanding and awareness about climate justice
  - ClimateZ has added to information dissemination of certain less-talked about issues. It has also helped increase youth participation in demanding climate justice.
- General conversations around climate change tend to be very pessimistic - ClimateZ has shown me that there is a fun and optimistic discourse to be had  
Definitely improved it
- I was not much aware about the field. Now, I know about and am willing to contribute in whatever manner possible.
  - Very informative and has lots of potential. Looking forward to more content.
  - The idea of climate justice has been essentialised majorly, leaving us with the insights from certain fixed perspectives. However, as said, more the number of approaches better it's in knowing the import of an issue. Approaches like gloom and doom certainly are auxiliaries in that direction.