

Sustainability Survey Report
IUSG Data Collection Project
Findings Compiled by Madeline Garcia

Introduction:

Climate change is a pressing threat to people, ecosystems, and cities globally. With environmental protection remaining a hot button issue for upcoming elections and global climate summits, there is great pressure on governments, corporations, and large organizations to divest from fossil fuel industries and create sustainable changes with goals of reducing emissions and waste. This survey was conducted to gauge student interest in sustainability issues and take student opinions regarding institutional actions and changes that can be done to create a more sustainable IU. The overall student body at Indiana University is very passionate in sustainability. It should be noted that this survey received over double the responses of any survey conducted by the IUSG Data Collection Team this year, with **over 1,100 students responding in a short four-day period.**

Methodology:

The survey was run on the web-based platform of Google Forms for four days, December 9-12, 2019. Over the course of these four days, the survey received 1,104 responses. Students were not required to answer each question, so some questions had slightly fewer responses. Blank forms were discarded. 1,072 responses remained. The survey was advertised by sharing electronically over group messages, GroupMe chats, personal social media, and in-person through tabling. On Wednesday, December 11, at the 10th and Fee Ln intersections, as well as Thursday, December 11, at the Woodburn Clock Tower intersection, IUSG members passed out small sheets of paper with the QR code linked to the survey.

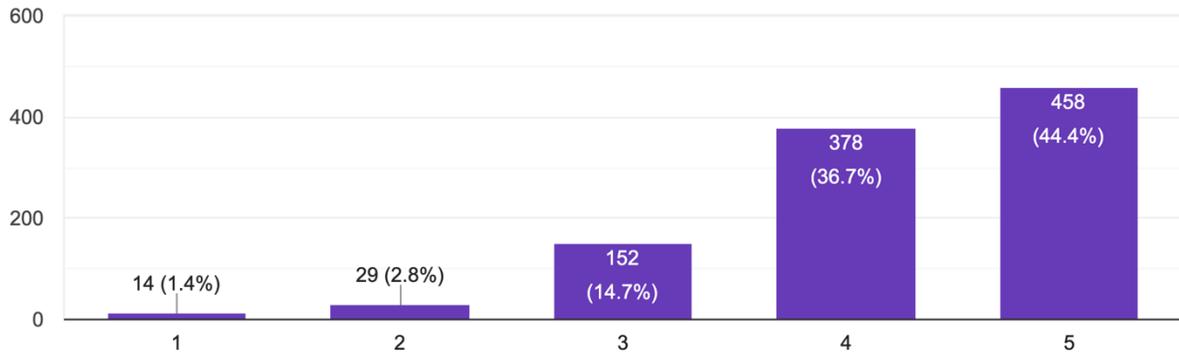
Due to the nature of the survey's distribution, the survey was targeted toward IU students. 96.4% (1,036) of the respondents reported they were a student. 21 alum, 9 staff, 3 parents and 2 faculty responded to the survey as well. Due to this, **data in this report only covers the 1,036 student responses.** All additional comments and thoughts have been provided to the IUSG Sustainability Committee. Certain ones are featured on this report that speak directly to the question, but all responses have been provided.

Importance of Sustainability:

This question asked how important sustainability was to the respondent and allowed respondents to select from one of five choices on a Likert scale. Out of all the response choices, 5 (extremely important) received the most responses. **458 (44.4%) students reported that sustainability was extremely important to them.** An overwhelming majority (81.1%) of students reported either 4 or 5, representing the high importance of sustainability to most

students. Only 14 (less than 2%) of the student respondents answered that sustainability was not at all important (choice 1) to them.

How important is sustainability to you? (1=not at all important to 5=extremely important)
1,031 responses



Note: Out of the 35 alum, staff, faculty, and parent responses, all but three reported that sustainability was either 4 (very important) or 5 (extremely important) to them.

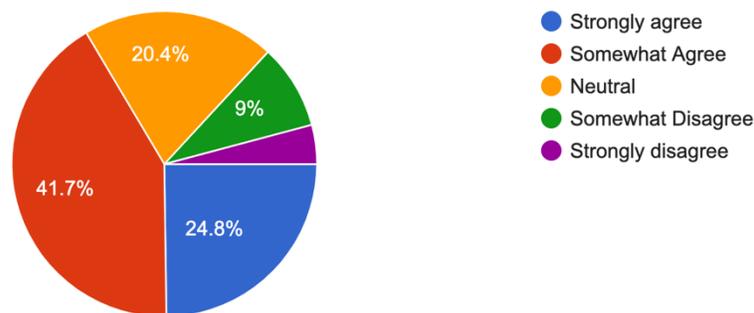
University Perception:

When asked if their perception of the university **was** impacted by its environmental impacts and sustainability commitments, **two-thirds (66.5%) of students agreed with the statement**. One in four students (24.8%) reported that they strongly agreed that their perception of the university was impacted by environmental and sustainability impacts.

Only 13.1% of students somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, solidifying that a majority of students want to see their university making sustainable

My perception of the university is influenced by its environmental impacts and sustainability commitments.

1,037 responses



commitments and upholding environmental stewardship. Some students reported in the Additional Comments section that they felt:

- “disappoint[ed] being at a university that isn’t prioritizing [sustainability].”
- “IU should be doing much more. We are behind other Big-10 counterparts in terms of sustainability measures. Our dedication to fossil fuel investment is hurting our reputation and our students.”

Divesting in Fossil Fuels

When asked whether Indiana University should continue investing in the fossil fuel industry, an overwhelming majority answered “No.” **74.7% (over 700) of students believe it is time for IU to divest in fossil fuels.** 7.9% of students said they needed more information, where only 17.4% of students believe IU should continue investing in fossil fuels. Some comments from the additional comment section:

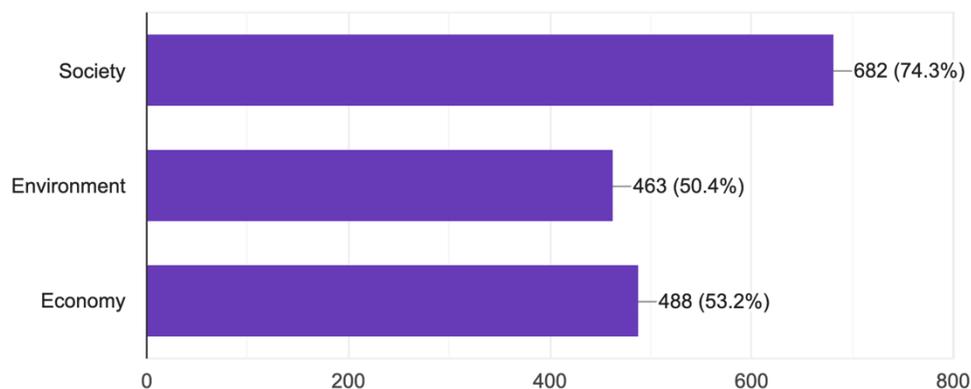
- “I would respect IU much more highly if they committed to divesting from the fossil fuel industry.”
- “IU needs to get its sustainable act together. A university cannot invest in the future of its students if it does not divest from the industries threatening that future.”

Major/Area of Study:

85.6% (918) of students reported that their major related to at least one of the three areas of sustainability principles: society, environment, or economy. 247 students checked all three principles, and 221 checked two of the three principles. An overwhelming majority of students have a vested interest in environmental preservation and sustainability. **Over 900 students surveyed are studying a field impacted by sustainability.** Students are creating pathways to careers in these areas and others through their studies.

Does your major/ area of study influence any of the following sustainability principles (check all that apply)?

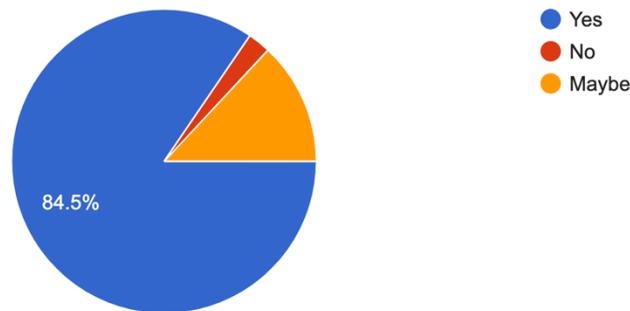
918 responses



Solar Panel Renovations

Survey respondents were asked whether or not building renovations would be a prime opportunity for solar power integration. **84.5%, or nearly 900 students, of the respondents agreed that yes, building renovations are a good time to implement solar panel technology** on the IUB campus. Another 13.1% of students reported “Maybe.” Only 2.4% of students said “No.” Overall, most students believe that the continued improvements and renovations to university buildings would be optimal chances to expand solar technology at IU.

Do you believe that building renovations are a prime opportunity for solar power integration?
1,034 responses



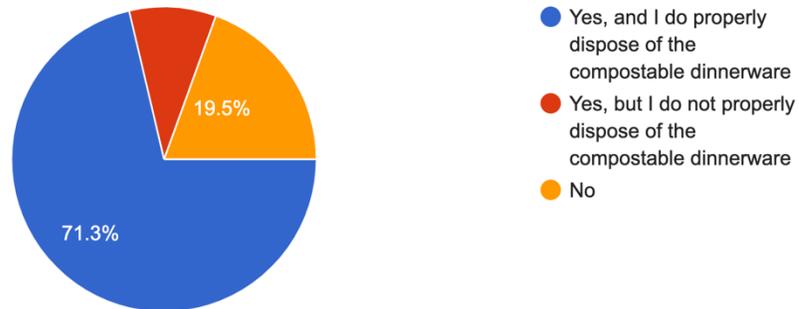
Reusable and Compostable Dinnerware

Currently, IU dining halls provide compostable organic-based plastic utensils. When asked whether or not students did know how to properly sort and dispose of their dinnerware at the dining halls, 71.3% responded “Yes, and I do properly dispose of the compostable dinnerware.” However, this leaves nearly three in ten students that do not know or choose not to properly dispose of the compostable dinnerware. **About 20% (19.5%) of students responded that they did not know how to dispose of these utensils. Standing efforts to educate students about the proper disposal have not reached every student.**

An alternative to the continued use of compostable dinnerware is the implementation of reusable (metal likely) dinnerware at the dining halls. When asked whether they would be willing to use reusable dinnerware, **over three in four (75.8%) of students responded they would be willing.** Another 140 students (13.5%) responded “Maybe.” A few concerns of the additional comment section related to this question, particularly in the potential for increased water usage needed to clean these dishes or the need to retain an option for the to-go dinnerware with some students taking their food outside. Additionally, many students wanted to ensure the sanitary nature of these utensils and that they would be cleaned properly.

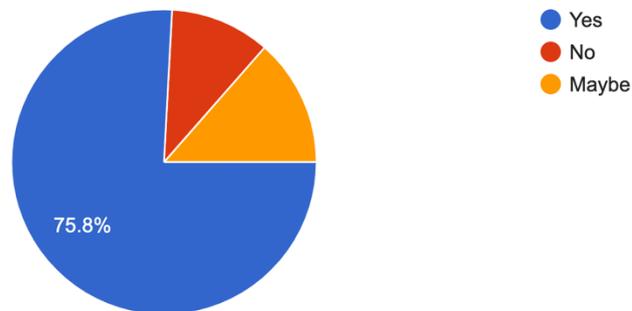
Do you know how to properly dispose of the compostable dinnerware in the dining halls?

1,032 responses



Are you willing to use reusable dinnerware in the dining halls?

1,035 responses



Conclusion/Policy Recommendations:

1. Over four in five (81.1%) of IU students believe sustainability is of high important (rating it 4 or 5 out of 5). Acknowledging that student interests lie in this area, the IUSG Data Collection Team advocates for increasing university-sponsored sustainability commitments and working with student panels to develop a more environmentally conscious campus in all possible capacities. Components of university life, ranging from transportation and bus services, to appliance efficiency and building light fixtures, to dining hall practices and classroom paper policies, all factor into upholding sustainable practices at the university level. Large scale investments are also of interest to students, and institutional change is critical to improving overall climate health and protection.
2. The IUSG Data Collection Team strongly recommends the maximum divestment of the fossil fuel industry by Indiana University with acknowledgement of the survey results. With three-quarters (74.7%) of students supporting the divestment, this would align strongly with student interests. Additionally, the Data Collection Team would advocate for a publicity campaign about the standing Indiana University investments in the fossil fuel industry, seeing that nearly 10% of students needed more information about the topic and could not confidently answer a “Yes” or “No” to this question.
3. Seeing that about 85% of students agreed that solar panels could be implemented during building renovations, the Data Collection Team recommends investigating current renovation plans for the coming five to ten years and discussing adding solar implementation to their construction plans. We also recommend investigating the costs associated with this technology and seeking local, state, or federal grant or rebates to lower the cost of this implementation.
4. Recognizing that 19.5% (nearly one in five) of students do not know how to properly dispose of the compostable dinnerware supplied at IU dining halls, the IUSG Data Collection Team recommends working with the Office of First Year Experiences or other entities to make this a part of freshman orientation curriculum. Additionally, we recommend creating other publicity materials to help students understand how to sort and dispose of trash in the dining halls. Inspired by some comments made by respondents at the end of the survey, we also recommend investigating the upcoming IMU (Indiana Memorial Union) renovation for the potential to implement reusable dinnerware. Reusable dinnerware is already used at the IMU Tudor Room and the Collins Living-Learning Center during the dinner buffet.
5. The IUSG Data Collection Team would be happy to discuss further recommendations and encourages all relevant parties to review the data and survey findings to create feasible and positive policy recommendations in their area of expertise. Any further questions should be directed to iusgsurvey@gmail.com.